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Reception, settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Norway: Experiences and perceptions of Ukrainian refugees and municipal stakeholders (2022-2023)

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Preface

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

The assignment was carried out by a team of researchers at the Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) at OsloMet consisting of Vilde Hernes (project manager), Aadne Aasland, Marthe Handå Myhre, Oleksandra Deineko, Trine Myrvold, Tone Liodden and Mariann Stærkebye Leirvik, and Åsne Danielsen.

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

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

NIBR, December 2023

Kristian Rose Tronstad
Head of Research, NIBR

Table of contents

Figures

Tables

Summary

Part 1: Introduction and background

Like most European countries, Norway has experienced significant fluctuations in the number of protection seekers and persons granted protection during the past decade. However, the situation in 2022 and 2023 was unprecedented. After the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, millions of displaced persons from Ukraine (hereafter referred to as 'Ukrainian refugees'[1]) have fled the war, both internally in Ukraine and to European countries.

By 1 December 2023, 67,500 persons had sought collective protection in Norway. The number of protection seekers, persons granted protection and refugee settlements in the municipalities far surpassed previous inflows. The inflow of protection seekers to Norway has remained high since March 2022. Norway has also had substantially larger arrivals of Ukrainian refugees than its Scandinavian neighbouring countries, a trend that elevated after the summer of 2023, when the number of arrivals from Ukraine started rising significantly from week to week.

During the initial months after February 2022, Norwegian authorities had to rapidly adapt legislation and practices to accommodate the large number of arrivals from one day to the next. After the initial shock and stress-test of the Norwegian reception capacity, the reception, settlement and integration has continued, as individuals and families from Ukraine have been settled in municipalities throughout the country and started their integration process into Norwegian society.

On assignment from the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) conducted a study with the following research questions:

1. How do Ukrainian refugees experience their reception, settlement and integration in Norway?
2. What are the frontline workers' assessments of the challenges and opportunities related to the reception, settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees?
3. What similarities and differences exist between the assessments and perspectives of the Ukrainian refugees and those of the frontline workers, and what are the main challenges and dilemmas?

The study builds on various types of data collections, conducted between May and November 2023, including: 1) individual and group interviews with 34 Ukrainian refugees in Norway, and 3) a survey of adult Ukrainians who had fled to Norway (1617 respondents), 3) focus group interviews with a total of 39 frontline workers, volunteers and employers, 4) survey of leaders in the municipal refugee service (59% response rate from all Norwegian municipalities), and 5) documentation of policy developments from February 2022 to October 2022.

The report is a follow-up study of the NIBR report "Ukrainian refugees – experiences from the first phase in Norway" (Hernes et al. 2022), which analysed the initial reception in Norway the first four months after the full-scale invasion started (referred to as the 2022 report). This new report focuses more closely on how the settlement and continuing integration procedures have unfolded during the past year and a half. Building on the 2022 report, we are also able

[1] In this report, we refer to displaced persons from Ukraine who seek or have been granted protection in Norway as 'Ukrainian refugees', in accordance with common usage of this term. However, it should be noted that Ukrainians seeking or benefiting from collective protection in accordance with Section 34 of the Immigration Act are not formally recognized as refugees under Norwegian law, as this requires individual assessment in each case (Immigration Act, Section 28).

to compare developments in the Ukrainian refugees' characteristics, experiences and perceptions over time.

Part 2: Ukrainian refugees' experience of the reception, settlement and integration in Norway.

Who are the Ukrainian refugees who have arrived in Norway?

Unlike earlier cohorts of protection seekers, the adult refugees from Ukraine comprise mostly women. Still, the gender balance was more skewed during the first three months and has stabilised at around 60% women and 40% men. About two-thirds were of working age (18–65 years). Around 30% were children, and about 5% were aged 66 years or older.

Most of the Ukrainian refugees in Norway previously lived in Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern parts of Ukraine, i.e., areas that have been most affected by the war.

The Ukrainian refugees generally have high levels of prior education. 59% have completed higher education, a further 16% have incomplete higher education, and 15% have vocational-technical education. However, only 36% speak at least basic English. We also find that the education levels and English proficiency were highest among the first cohorts arriving in Norway and have gradually decreased with new cohorts.

Concerning their family situation in both Norway and Ukraine, the majority of respondents (73%) have relatives from Ukraine living with them in Norway. Almost half are in Norway with their partner, and about one-third are in Norway with children aged below 18. The vast majority have close family members remaining in Ukraine; more than half of the respondents have parents and 17% have children left in Ukraine. Compared to 2022, fewer persons now have a partner remaining in Ukraine (11%).

Three out of four respondents arrived directly in Norway. One in four stayed (not just transited) in other countries before their arrival in Norway. Intermittent stays are more common in later cohorts than they were among the first arrivals. About half the respondents had a network in Norway before arriving. While earlier arriving cohorts often had network who lived in Norway before February 2022, the network of later arriving cohorts usually consisted of other Ukrainian refugees.

Three reasons for coming to Norway (instead of other countries) are most reported: protection of rights of Ukrainian refugees in Norway, a better choice compared with other potential countries, and having Ukrainian family or network in Norway. Coming to Norway had often been a deliberate and informed choice. A variety of aspects of Norwegian society and an introduction programme with possibilities to learn the language were common reasons given for selecting Norway.

Overall assessment of reception, actors and services

Ukrainian refugees expressed very high satisfaction with their overall reception in Norway, with mean satisfaction scores for three aspects of their reception experiences ranging between 4.4 and 4.7 on a scale from 1 (least satisfied) to 5 (most satisfied).

Although the overall assessment was also very positive in the 2022 survey, the 2023 survey indicates even higher satisfaction levels with their overall reception in Norway, especially regarding the functioning of the Norwegian reception system.

Almost all public and civil society actors, including the police, UDI and IMDi, and local and non-government actors received high scores, with mostly positive trends since 2022. Qualitative interviews support the positive survey findings, highlighting the role of language teachers and contact persons in municipalities facilitating positive experiences.

Furthermore, survey respondents expressed high satisfaction with most services and procedures, with notable improvements from 2022. There have been positive changes in the

registration process from 2022 to 2023, with smoother procedures, faster execution, and improved information availability. While the overall assessment is positive, respondents and interviewees pointed to some challenges. Several interviewees highlighted challenging living conditions at the reception centres. Although many of the interviewees were satisfied with the healthcare services provided to them, there is significant variation, and some prevailing challenges, such a culture clash between the Norwegian and Ukrainian cultures related to the threshold for seeking medical help from a doctor or a specialist, and to access to or use of medicine. Perceived pressure on municipal services due to large inflows, leading to delays and challenges in communication was also reported.

Evaluation of information provided by public authorities

Ukrainian refugees' access to relevant information has shown an overall improvement from 2022 to 2023, but there are still some challenges with what is described as unclear or insufficient information to address the respondent's particular situation, and that it has been difficult to navigate between different websites.

The most used sources of information are direct communication with other Ukrainian refugees, websites of Norwegian public actors, social media channels, contact persons in the municipalities, and the refugees' Norwegian networks. Social networks, especially Facebook groups, continue to play a crucial role as a source of and platform for asking questions, and seeking explanations and clarifications.

The ratings on sufficiency of information on registration and settlement have significantly improved from the 2022 to the 2023 survey. Areas where the Ukrainian refugees assess that there is not sufficient information are: information on the possibility of higher education in Norway; what happens after the introduction programme; how to start a business in Norway.

Settlement after protection was granted

The Norwegian settlement model builds largely on a publicly managed settlement model, but the model also allows for agreed self-settlement. The Norwegian settlement model has not been formally changed since February 2022, but in a period of large inflows, the Norwegian Government introduced a whole-country approach, where all municipalities are asked to settle refugees. We find that the Ukrainian refugees have settled in all regions of Norway, but with larger shares being settled on the west coast and in areas near the capital Oslo than in other parts of the country. More than eight in ten respondents have settled in their municipality through public assistance.

Respondents are generally very satisfied with the settlement process, and several interviewees reported that authorities have accommodated their wishes to be settled near family or friends if they had prior network in Norway. The vast majority is satisfied with their current dwelling, and only 6% are not satisfied. Interviewees mostly report that municipalities have provided them with well-equipped housing suitable for living.

With the whole country approach, refugees have been settled in all parts of the country. Survey respondents are generally equally satisfied regardless of the centrality and geographical location of their municipality, but settlement in remote rural locations have been raised as a concern, for example when it comes to long distances to services and opportunities in the labour market. Some Ukrainian refugees have reported, and some have come to accept, considerable variation in the reception and services refugees receive in different municipalities in Norway.

Language use and interpreting services

Among the respondents, there are slightly more people who speak Russian (94%) than Ukrainian (90%) fluently, but a large majority (85%) report speaking both languages fluently.

Ukrainians' self-assessments of their Norwegian language skills show that, regardless of time of arrival in Norway, most consider their level of fluency in Norwegian to be 'poor' or 'none at all'. Even among those who arrived in 2022, only 28% assess it to be at least 'basic'.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, only about one-third have (minimum) basic English language skills. Consequently, the majority of Ukrainian refugees (86%) have needed interpreting services. Of these, around two-thirds report having received such services every time they needed them, the remaining third only on some occasions. These new numbers implies that interpreting services has improved since the 2022 survey. The majority of respondents consider interpreting services to be good or excellent.

However, it seems that the improved access to interpreting services may have come at the expense of the quality of the services. The percentage reporting the interpreting services to be varying, unsatisfactory or poor has increased from 2022 to 2023. Respondents and interviewees point to challenges such as vocabulary deficiencies, inaccuracies and truncated translations. Particular problems were faced in medical care interactions, with inadequate vocabulary and inaccuracies on the part of interpreters leading to incorrect diagnoses and treatment. Some respondents also expressed concerns about interpreters' lack of proficiency in Russian, Ukrainian, English and, possibly, Norwegian, questioning the hiring process without thoroughly verifying qualifications. Additionally, there were concerns about interpreters commenting or adding information during interpretation sessions. Some respondents reported instances of Russian-speaking interpreters of Russian origin distorting words, aligning with certain political positions, and creating mistrust. Lack of access to Ukrainian-speaking interpreters was also highlighted by some respondents..

The introduction programme, language training and work practice

Ukrainian refugees in Norway are eager to participate in the introduction programme and Norwegian language training. The vast majority of Ukrainian refugees in our survey (who have been settled) participate in the introduction programme: 64% are either participating or on leave, 20% have already completed it, and 6% plan to participate. Almost half of those who did not attend or were not offered the introduction programme participated in Norwegian language training. Although the vast majority (86%) got extended introduction programmes between six months and one year, some interviewees explained that not knowing whether the programme would be extended or not created a lot of uncertainty.

A relatively moderate share (16%) of the respondents combined attending the introduction programme with paid work. Some respondents found this a positive experience because it allowed them to earn extra money, while others found it a negative experience because it left them with little spare time.

Overall, most respondents found the introduction programme useful for their future work plans. Virtually all respondents have had Norwegian language training as part of their programme, and about half have learned about Norwegian society and culture. Just over half of the respondents reported having work practice and/or language practice as part of their programme (two thirds of those who had already completed the programme), and 16% reported taking courses to qualify for work. Respondents were generally satisfied with the various elements in their introduction programme but were slightly less satisfied with the language/work practice at workplaces. Experiences with the work/language practice offered in the programme varied, with some highlighting positive outcomes such as subsequent employment, while others reported challenges related to relevance, time constraints, and opportunities for language learning in the workplace.

Interviewees reported that they appreciated the possibility the introduction programme provided to focus on studying Norwegian rather than having to combine this task with a full-time job. Norwegian language skills (or lack of thereof) are seen as directly related to possibilities in the labour market. Only 8% of the respondents believed they had reached language level B2 after completing the introduction programme. The overall impression is that one year of language learning (to which they are entitled) is not enough time to learn Norwegian at a sufficient level for getting a job.

In the interviews, some people expressed dissatisfaction with the slow progress in the Norwegian language training. Criticisms included the lack of structured teaching plans,

frequent teacher replacements, and a desire for a more demanding programme with additional testing and correction. Challenges also arose from varying motivation levels and progress among learners. The differentiation of groups based on level and progression was viewed as positive. The availability of English language courses within the introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees was quite limited; only 8% reported having English language training as part of their programme.

Employment in Norway: experiences and challenges

The Ukrainian refugees who were employed in Norway found their jobs via a variety of channels. About one in four found jobs via language or work practice in the introduction programme, and just over one in four found jobs with the help of the contact person in the municipality or by applying for an advertised position. The importance of networks was highlighted in the interviews, and frustration was expressed that without social contacts and references, interviewees often received no responses to their job applications. However, language teachers and contact persons in municipalities are reported to facilitate opportunities in the labour market.

More Ukrainian refugees work in the private sector than in the public sector of the economy. Permanent contracts are more common in the private sector than in the public one. The extent to which working Ukrainian refugees can use their previous education and work experience in their current job in Norway varies widely; around one-third report being able to do so ‘to a large extent’, one-third ‘not at all’, and one-third ‘to a minor extent’ or ‘to some extent’.

Most respondents find it more important to get any job at all than to find one where they can use their previous education and qualifications, especially if they consider it to be an otherwise ‘suitable job’. Qualitative interviews indicate that Ukrainian refugees recognise that it is difficult to find a job that matches their education and previous work experience in Norway, at least initially. Perceived loss of social status is a concern to some. For others, a desire to continue their life in Norway dissuades them from accepting just any job, since they believe that whatever job they eventually take may determine whether or not they will be able to remain in Norway in the future.

Those who are employed are generally very satisfied with the social environment, work tasks and work hours, somewhat less satisfied with their salary, and notably less with the opportunities for career development. Interviewees in the qualitative interviews report cultural differences in working life between Norway and Ukraine, such as shorter working hours, a healthier work–life balance, and more egalitarianism at work.

The vast majority (88%) continue Norwegian language studies while working, but self-studies and studies through the workplace being most common. Only four in ten continue language studies offered by the municipality.

Insufficient knowledge of the Norwegian language is by far the most frequently mentioned barrier to finding a (better) job in Norway, according to the survey respondents. Interviewees find that even proficiency in English is insufficient to secure employment in Norway. Lack of a network is the second-most frequently mentioned barrier. The demand for labour varies significantly between Norwegian municipalities, and finding employment is seen to be much more challenging in small Norwegian municipalities than in larger cities. Interviewees express a need for more practically oriented information about how to find a job. Discrimination or deliberate exclusion are rarely mentioned by Ukrainian refugees as barriers to finding a job.

Social intergration for children and adults

The 2023 survey shows that the respondents are very satisfied with both kindergartens and schools in Norway. In the interviews, people expressed great satisfaction with the opportunity to access these services and with the treatment of their children in these facilities. Several parents observed cultural differences compared with Ukrainian kindergartens and schools

(where more focus is placed on discipline and rules), and they reported that their children enjoyed going to Norwegian kindergarten and schools more.

In the 2023 survey, 37% of respondents with children aged below 18 report that their children attend Ukrainian school online (most often in addition to Norwegian schooling). Parents who chose that their children should continue with such dual educational courses explained this decision as stemming from the uncertainty about their own future, shaped by the temporary nature of collective protection and potential challenges their children might encounter in the Ukrainian school system upon returning to Ukraine.

Regarding children's social integration, about half of the respondents report that their children have Norwegian friends and that their children participate in organised activities outside school. The length of stay in Norway is an obvious factor here; those who arrived in 2022 are considerably more likely to have Norwegian friends and participate in activities outside school than those who arrived in 2023.

When respondents are asked whether they themselves have Norwegian friends or acquaintances, 11% report having close friends, 53% report having acquaintances, and 37% report having no Norwegian friends or acquaintances. The qualitative interviews suggest that interviewees often maintain close contact with other Ukrainian refugees or Ukrainian residents who were already living in Norway at the time of the full-scale invasion. Some commented that this might stand in the way for integration. Language cafés are mentioned as a venue for interacting with local Norwegians and some mention that they are on friendly terms with their neighbours. Others report that time for socialising is rather scarce due to other obligations. Interviewees highlighted the limited opportunities to engage with local Norwegians, citing the scarcity of shared spaces for interaction.

Economic situation

Half of the respondents find their household's current economic situation to be satisfactory, while 38% found it neither satisfactory nor difficult. One in 10 is struggling to make ends meet, but only 1% report living in poverty. When it comes to which categories of Ukrainians are struggling economically, we see a tendency where those who recently arrived in Norway and are awaiting registration or settlement more often report economic difficulties/poverty. This is also the case among those working part-time, among the sick/disabled, and among those reporting school/education as their main activity.

Interviewees enrolled in the introduction programme often reported that the support they receive is sufficient to live a modest life. The help from the Housing Bank – a means-tested government grant for people with low incomes and high housing expenses – is mentioned in several interviews as much appreciated. Although the majority express that they have enough to live a decent life, interviewees emphasise that they are eager to find work and to reestablish a sense of economic freedom.

While many are satisfied with the level of support, parents who are enrolled in the introduction programme found it surprising that there is no automatic increase in the financial support provided to parents with children during the introduction programme. Introduction programme participants under 24 years also react to the fact that the standard introduction benefit is lower for them (2/3 of the amount) than for those aged 25+ years.

Future prospects

While uncertainty about the duration of the war has increased, respondents in the 2023 survey are more inclined to want to stay in Norway than to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends. One in three answers in the affirmative to this question, while in 2022, the share was one in four. However, the majority (54%) is unsure about whether they will return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends.

The qualitative interviews provide some explanations for the indecisiveness and reluctance with regard to returning. Interviewees who had their homes in Ukraine damaged have no

homes to return to. Others reported that life in post-war Ukraine would be difficult and that it might be hard to find work. Several expressed a wish to live 'a normal life' and stressed the importance of stability, opportunities and education for their children. How well children as well as adults have adapted, and to what extent they have faced challenges with integration, impact how interviewees see their future.

Men are considerably less likely to consider returning to Ukraine than women, and those who report having children in Norway are more inclined to stay in Norway. Respondents with children and/or a husband/wife in Ukraine have higher aspirations to return. Similarly, those who believe the war will be over by 2025 are more motivated to return. The earliest arrivals to Norway are most reluctant to return to Ukraine. Thus, people's inclination to stay increases with their time of residence in Norway.

If their stay in Norway becomes long-term, the majority of respondents (84%) see themselves as employed or self-employed, and they are motivated to enhance their formal qualifications while in Norway. Several interviewees stressed that they wanted to earn their own living and not have to rely on state support. In the qualitative interviews, we see that thoughts of return are interlinked with the interviewees' perceptions of their status of temporary collective protection. Interviewees expressed significant concerns about whether or not they would be permitted to remain in Norway in the future and are eager to receive information from the Norwegian authorities regarding the fate of Ukrainian refugees when the three-year collective protection permit expires.

Part 3: The frontline workers' experiences with Ukrainian refugees and related policies.

Organisation, cooperation and governance in settlement and integration

There are two main ways of organising local refugee services: in a separate administrative unit or within the broader NAV office. Larger municipalities have to a greater extent chosen the NAV option. A third organisation form may be added: inter-municipal cooperation. This is usually small municipalities purchasing services from larger municipalities, alternatively small municipalities joining together to form a stronger unit.

Refugee service leaders generally assess the cooperation with other services as well-functioning. Cooperation with educational services, like kindergartens and schools, are ranked as particularly good, while the scores for health services are somewhat lower. Since health services are an issue also in the data from the Ukrainian refugees, it may be interesting to explore further whether lower satisfaction with health services can be understood as a result of limited capacity in these services or as an indicator of a culture clash between Ukraine and Norway in access to health services.

Refugee service leaders' assessments of IMDi's activities, information and guidelines are overall good, but with substantial variation. Satisfaction with information concerning interpreters achieves the lowest score. Generally, less experienced municipalities are less satisfied with IMDi's activities. Since this group of municipalities is in particular need of information and competence building, it is important that IMDi provides information that is easily available for – and known to – municipalities with no or little previous experience in refugee settlement.

Strained capacity in the refugee service

The settlement of a large number of Ukrainian refugees has proven to be a significant challenge for the capacity of the municipal refugee services. Most services report that they have needed to increased capacity. Up-scaling in form of employment of personnel is most common, but some refugee services have reduced or re-organised their services to the refugees. The temporary nature of refugee arrivals implies that many municipalities hesitate to employ personnel permanently. Temporary employment or hiring of temporary staff, formal

cooperation with voluntary organisations and buying services from other municipalities are used to increase capacity. The large upscaling of local refugee services implies, however, that many services are staffed with largely inexperienced employees.

Variation in introduction programme content and language training

Ukrainian refugees in Norway with temporary collective protection have the right to attend the introduction programme, but they are not obliged to attend. The introduction programme must contain language training, work-oriented elements and parental guiding (for those with children). Other elements are voluntary, both for the municipality to offer and for the refugees to attend to. There is large variation in whether municipalities provide non-mandatory elements in the introduction programme, particularly life skills and civic knowledge. Ukrainian refugees may be offered English training as part of the introduction programme, but many municipalities are not able to include English. On average, larger municipalities offer a wider spectre of content compared to smaller municipalities.

Most municipalities offer a full-time introduction programme, but about one out of four does not have the capacity to do so. Likewise, some prolong the introduction programme for all, but most municipalities prolong the programme based on individual assessment. A few do not prolong the programme at all. There seems to be different perceptions among interviewees and survey respondents about the criteria for extending the introduction programme. Some stress that the rules imply that only those who are likely to reach the goal of employment if they get an extension, should get it. However, others argue that such a practice would only transfer responsibility for the refugees to NAV. Vagueness in the criteria for extension may pave the way for unequal treatment.

As temporary protection holders, Ukrainian refugees can choose to participate part-time in the introduction programme, and they can exit and re-enter the programme. This flexibility is somewhat disputed, but most of our informants, both in the survey and in interviews, believe that part-time participation and the possibility of exiting and re-entering also should be available for other refugee groups.

It is not obligatory for municipalities to offer refugees over 55 years introduction programmes, or refugees over 67 years language training. There is great variation among the municipalities on these issues. Generally, the smallest municipalities are most ‘generous’ in their offer to older refugees. One reason is probably that the smallest municipalities receive fewer refugees, so when they establish the introduction programme and language training, they might as well fill up the groups, even if all the participants do not have a formal right to take part.

Work practice is perceived as the main work-oriented element in the introduction programme. However, many municipalities face problems in finding enough work practice placements for the large number of refugees needing such practice.

Language training is one of the mandatory elements in the introduction programme, but also an individual right irrespective of participation in the programme. For refugees with higher education, the right to language training is restricted to one year, but the municipalities may provide an additional six months. A major criticism concerning the language training of Ukrainian refugees is that it is highly unlikely for most of them to learn Norwegian at a B2-level within the short programme period. Most municipalities, but not all, offer more than one year of Norwegian language training for all or some of the Ukrainian refugees. Several factors limit the municipal provision of language training. First, the respondents state that the state grants for language training do not cover the actual costs. Second, some report lack of teachers in Norwegian. Finally, some municipalities struggle to find sufficient suitable rooms for teaching.

We observe a certain goal conflict between learning Norwegian versus promoting a rapid transition into employment. The conflict between these objectives is partially grounded in a long-term versus a short-term perspective. Some informants emphasise the importance of

ensuring that especially young refugees can utilise their potential, reaching a proficiency level in Norwegian that enables them to obtain more qualified jobs.

NAV's role in settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees

Municipal refugee services cooperate with NAV in several ways. Refugee services organised within the NAV office, as opposed to being a separate unit, rate the various forms of collaboration with NAV as better than other respondents. We also identified challenges in the collaboration with NAV. Some refugee services take on tasks that are NAV's responsibility, such as providing information about social assistance, filling out applications and explaining NAV decisions. In some municipalities, NAV is not accessible enough, and refugees struggling with access to NAV often ask the refugee service for help instead. The most frequent complaint appears to be that NAV enters the process too late, first after refugees have finished the introduction programme. Refugee service employees believe it would be highly beneficial for the labour market inclusion of refugees if NAV were actively involved from the beginning of the introduction programme to a larger extent.

The main reason for the challenges is perceived to be that NAV's capacity is not increased sufficiently in line with the influx of Ukrainian refugees. Although the budget for employment scheme benefits increased in the fall of 2023, there has been no increase in funding for more employees on the state side of NAV. In some NAV offices, assessment of applications for social assistance may overshadow other tasks, in particular work-oriented follow up of refugees. Some also claim that the central authorities do not have a clear strategy for NAV to handle the increase of Ukrainians in need of social assistance or help to enter the labour market.

Many Ukrainian refugees get support from NAV in the shape of social assistance. Interviewees emphasise that wage subsidies can be decisive in achieving employment. Some respondents claim that NAV has not been accommodating enough with the use of wage subsidies. Among our interviewees, there was some discussion about whether Ukrainian refugees fulfil the entry criteria of the qualification programme, particularly on the question whether they can be considered to have reduced work and income capacity. There were also various opinions among NAV employees about how NAV potentially can fund further Norwegian training for the refugees. Consequently, different NAV offices are likely to develop different practices in the follow-up of Ukrainian refugees.

Barriers and opportunities in the labour market

Insufficient Norwegian and English skills are perceived as the two most important individual barriers to labour market integration. Other barriers are poor alignment between expectations and opportunities in the labour market, lack of relevant work experience and lack of recognition of education obtained abroad. Employers in the health field in particular emphasise the challenge related to authorization of nurses and doctors.

Lack of motivation is not considered to be among the most important barriers overall, but respondents are rather divided on this issue. Many interviewees perceive Ukrainians as highly motivated to work, but the more disputed question is whether they are able and willing to take any vacant job. Four factors may affect motivation. First, there is a potential conflict between motivation for learning Norwegian and their motivation for entering the labour market as quickly as possible. *Second,* informants suggest that for some Ukrainians, there may be a mismatch between expectations about work and the possibilities in the labour market, in particular for Ukrainians who are highly educated. Third*,* the uncertain time frame for Ukrainians' stay in Norway can affect motivation. Those who are inclined to stay, appear to be more motivated to learn Norwegian and find a job. A wish to stay in Norway does not, however, automatically translate into motivation to take *any* kind of job. It can equally motivate people to invest in language training and further qualification. Fourth*,* some respondents believe that the introduction benefits and social assistance that Ukrainians receive may undermine motivation to work.

Poor alignment between refugees' skills and local labour market needs is seen as the most prominent systemic barrier to labour market integration. Other main barriers are lack of vacant positions locally and large distances between residence and workplace, in combination with poorly developed public transport. High language requirements, particularly in the public sector, is also a barrier to employment. At the same time, respondents say that the most prominent benefit of Ukrainians in the municipality is to meet local needs in the labour market.

The overall perception of Ukrainians and the war may facilitate labour market inclusion of Ukrainians. According to respondents, employers are more positive towards Ukrainian refugees than to other refugees, and many respondents also believe it is easier to integrate Ukrainian refugees into the workforce than other refugees. Based on the qualitative interviews, we suggest that these positive attitudes may stem from a sense of social responsibility among employers to help Ukrainians because of the war, and the perception that Ukrainians are more similar culturally to Norwegians than many other refugee groups.

Differential treatment of Ukrainian and other refugees

The perception of differential treatment can largely be divided into two dimensions: one is about different legal status, rights and obligations; the other dimension is about the reception in society more broadly. Positive attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees among landlords and employers can help facilitate integration. On the other hand, most leaders of municipal refugee services find it challenging to manage different regulations for various refugee groups. Several respondents and interviewees considered it to be their responsibility to counter what they perceived as unequal treatment or discrimination, by emphasising that all refugees should have the same rights and privileges, regardless of where they come from.

Voluntary organisations

Voluntary organisations are important actors in the provision of services and activities for refugees locally. Particularly in large municipalities, they provide a wide range of activities. The most important areas of cooperation between the refugee service and voluntary organisations are language practice, activities for children and youth, and activities for families with children. Some organisations have a longstanding formal collaboration agreement with the municipality, whereas other municipalities do not include voluntary organisations in their overall integration work. The assessment of the quality of the collaboration seems to be especially dependent on whether the municipality initiates cooperation or if the organisations must advocate such cooperation themselves.

Voluntary organisations find it challenging that their work is not prioritised in the municipal budgets. Relying on project-based funding makes it difficult to plan long-term. Some interviewees suggest that the high interest among Ukrainians in voluntary organisations' language training activities is a symptom that the municipality's offer is not sufficient. Also, some of the representatives of the voluntary organisations claim that their municipality does not pay sufficient attention to the elderly Ukrainians, which may be due to lack of governmental subsidies directed at this group.

Capacity as a challenge for further refugee settlement

Almost one in four municipal refugee services state that they have reached their capacity to settle more refugees, while three of four report that they are able to receive a limited number of refugees in the near future. However, capacity limitations, particularly in available housing, NAV services and health services represent serious challenges for further settlement.

Municipal refugee service leaders mention a wide range of measures from the national authorities that may be helpful for the local level in the settlement of refugees. Respondents call for state measures targeting the provision of housing: grants for buying, renting, building and renovating houses. Connected to the issue of housing, is the issue of public transport. Since rural municipalities often have available housing located relatively far from necessary

services, refugees are in need of public transport, alternatively private cars. Funding for transport or affordable car loans is suggested by some of our respondents.

Like other inhabitants, refugees need services from NAV, schools, kindergartens, health services and others. Our respondents mention the need for upscaling these 'ordinary' services in order to accommodate the increased local demand. Some also point out that recruitment of qualified staff can be a challenge and seeks help from national authorities in the recruitment process and in competence building of new employees.

Some of our respondents want clearer rules, regulations and standards for their work with refugee settlement. Some also demand more explicit expectations from the national level that refugees should enter the workforce and participate in society when they have a residence permit.

Part 4: Current and future challenges, opportunities and dilemmas

This study indicates that the reception of Ukrainian refugees in Norway has, for the most part, been highly successful. A record number of refugees have been settled in almost all municipalities throughout the country within a very short period. The refugees themselves are generally very satisfied with how they have been received and with the reception system. Nevertheless, our study has revealed some challenges and dilemmas. Many of these are linked to uncertainty about the duration of the war and the refugees' prospects for returning to a war-torn Ukraine.

The decision in most European countries to grant collective protection to displaced persons from Ukraine was a *temporary* solution to accommodate a large number of refugees. However, at the time of writing (in December 2023), there is no sign of an imminent end to the war in Ukraine.

This fluid time perspective creates uncertainty which actors at all levels – from the EU, national, and local level to the individuals who have sought refuge – have to deal with. The authorities must plan and adjust services related to reception, settlement, and integration in a situation with an unknown time perspective.

A general finding is that there are large differences *within* the groups we have interviewed and surveyed concerning how they interpret, understand and strategize to tackle the uncertainty that the temporary permits for Ukrainian refugees entail. For Ukrainian refugees and frontline workers alike, the uncertainty of the situation makes it difficult to plan ahead – whether it relates to integration strategies for each individual or to questions of upscaling services and housing at the local level. Furthermore, because many of the Ukrainian refugees and frontline workers assume that the war in Ukraine will be long-term, their perspective may collide with the Government's focus on a temporary stay followed by an expected (relatively rapid) return to Ukraine.

In the last chapter, we discuss different challenges with this temporary perspective, related to the dilemma of aiming for rapid labour-market integration versus a more long-term upskilling strategy to meet local labour market needs, and the question related to central-local governance and support. Furthermore, we present how both the Ukrainian refugees and the frontline workers assess and react to the question of differential treatment between Ukrainian refugees and other groups of asylum seekers and refugees.

Lastly, for many Ukrainian refugee parents in Norway, we find that the children's perspective influences every pivotal decision they make. However, less is known about how the temporary perspective affects the children's sense of security and their integration into Norwegian society. It appears crucial to more generally examine how the temporary nature of collective protection affects children's integration, education, mental health and future aspirations.

Part 1

Introduction and background

1 Introduction

After the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, millions of displaced persons from Ukraine have fled the war. The absolute and relative influx of displaced persons from Ukraine (hereafter referred to as 'Ukrainian refugees' in the report[2]) to European countries has varied substantially between countries and over time (Hernes et al. 2023a). However, for most countries, the situation has constituted the largest migration flow since the Second World War.

European countries met the situation in 2022 with a more unified response than earlier influxes, most importantly, with activating the EU Temporary Protection Directive (EU Directive 2001/55/EC) for the first time – or other national legislation mirroring the directive. However, there has still been great variety in the reception and policies towards this group (Hernes et al. 2023a).

As a non-EU member, on 11 March, Norway implemented national legislation mirroring the EUs Temporary Protection Directive. The following year, several changes in the existing legislation has been amended to accommodate a record-high number of protection seekers to Norway.

By 1 December 2023, 67,500 persons had sought collective protection in Norway (UDI 2023a). The number of arrivals to Norway has fluctuated significantly after the start of the Russian full-scale invasion in February 2022. Furthermore, Norway has also had substantially larger arrivals of Ukrainian refugees than its Scandinavian neighbouring countries, a trend that elevated after the summer of 2023, when the number of arrivals from Ukraine started rising significantly from week to week. The composition of the group has also changed: from having a large share of women the initial months, we now see that the gender balance is less skewed (as is also the trend in most European countries) (Hernes et al. 2023a)

During the initial months after February 2022, Norwegian authorities had to rapidly adapt legislation and practices to accommodate for the large number of arrivals from one day to the next. In the report "Ukrainian refugees – experiences from the first phase in Norway" (Hernes et al. 2022), NIBR documented and analysed the initial reception the first four months after the full-scale invasion started (up until July 2022).

However, after the initial shock and stress-test of the Norwegian reception capacity, the reception, settlement and integration has continued, as individuals and families from Ukraine have been settled in municipalities throughout the country and started their integration process into Norwegian society.

In this study, we map and analyse how the Ukrainian refugees themselves have experienced the reception, settlement and integration in Norway, and also, what their prospect are for the future. Further, the report also maps and analyses the experiences of local frontline workers', including the perspectives of various types of municipal employees, volunteers and employers.

[2] In this report, we refer to displaced persons from Ukraine who seek or have been granted protection in Norway as 'Ukrainian refugees', in accordance with common usage of this term. However, it should be noted that Ukrainians seeking or benefiting from collective protection in accordance with Section 34 of the Immigration Act are not formally recognized as refugees under Norwegian law, as this requires individual assessment in each case (Immigration Act, Section 28).

1.1 Assignment and overall research questions

In April 2023, the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) received an assignment from the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) to assess how displaced persons from Ukraine experienced their initial reception, settlement and integration in Norway, with a particular focus on qualification and labour market integration. The assignment is a follow-up study of the 2022 NIBR report 'Ukrainian refugees – experiences from the first phase in Norway' (Hernes et al. 2022), and part of a framework agreement for a study to be conducted annually from 2023 to 2026. The scope of the assignment for 2023 is extended to include a study of public and non-public frontline workers' experiences in their work with Ukrainian refugees. The assignment also includes an assessment of the alignment between the Ukrainian refugees and the frontline workers' experiences and perspectives. Thus, the main research questions in this study are as follows:

4. How do Ukrainian refugees experience their reception, settlement and integration in Norway?
5. What are the frontline workers' assessments of the challenges and opportunities related to the reception, settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees?
6. What similarities and differences exist between the assessments and perspectives of the Ukrainian refugees and those of the frontline workers, and what are the main challenges and dilemmas?

The report is structured in four parts, according to the three main research questions, including an introductory part with general background:

- Part 1: Introduction and background
- Part 2: Ukrainian refugees' experience of the reception, settlement and integration in Norway.
- Part 3: The frontline workers' experiences with Ukrainian refugees and related policies.
- Part 4: Current and future challenges, opportunities and dilemmas.

1.2 Overall research design

In this study, we use various types of data sources and methods to answer the research questions. We have a holistic and subsequent research strategy, where we actively build on data and preliminary findings from preceding steps in the research process. In this section, we present the overall research design for the whole research project. More detailed descriptions of the types of data and methods of data collection used for the respective subreports (parts 2 and 3) are provided in the introduction to each of the subreports.

Figure 1.1: Overall research design

Step 1: Policy analysis and qualitative interviews

Step 1 consisted mainly of two types of data collection: a policy analysis and qualitative individual and focus group interviews with both Ukrainian refugees and frontline workers.

In the first step, we conducted an updated mapping of national policy changes and other measures related to the reception, settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees (based on the initial mapping in the 2022 report). The policy analysis of recent developments heavily build on a Norwegian country report (Hernes et al. 2023b) written by two of the project members on this project for the GOVREIN project (Hernes et al. 2023a), which is based on a policy analysis and interviews with relevant national actors in Norway. The policy analysis was important to ensure that the interviews and surveys were based on an updated understanding of the policy developments which both the Ukrainian refugees and the frontline workers were subject to and affected by in order to develop relevant questions.

The majority of the qualitative interviews were conducted between May and July 2023. For a more detailed description of the data collection and method of analysis for the qualitative interviews, see chapter 4.1 on the interviews with the Ukrainian refugees and chapter 15.1 on the interviews with the frontline workers.

Step 2: Qualitative collective analysis and surveys

To ensure good interaction between the qualitative and quantitative data material, we organised a workshop in August for the entire research team based on the collective qualitative analysis procedure developed by Helga Eggebø (2020). The collective qualitative analysis procedure includes four steps: 1) a joint review of the data material (group discussion of interview notes), 2) a mapping of the main topics, 3) grouping of themes and subthemes, and 4) establishing the main topics and a work plan based on the themes and subthemes identified. The aim of the workshop was to conduct a preliminary analysis of the main themes that emerge in the policy analysis and interviews so that we could develop relevant questions for the two surveys.

The two surveys were developed in August/September and data collection took place in October/November. For a more detailed description of the data collection and method of analysis for the surveys, see chapter 4.2 on the survey of Ukrainian refugees, and chapter 15.2 on the municipal survey.

Step 3: Synthesising analysis and workshop with the reference group

In our analysis, we actively combined insights from the qualitative interviews and the surveys. The surveys enable analysis of the scope and extent of different experiences and background factors, in addition to more complex analyses of how different background variables correlate with selected depended variables. In addition to providing invaluable knowledge used to develop the surveys, the qualitative interviews enable more in-depth analysis of the mechanisms behind different assessments and experiences and the respondents' rationales in this regard.

In November 2023, we held a workshop with the project's reference group, which consisted of representatives from national agencies and organisations that play a central role in the reception, settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees. The following organisations were represented with one or more representatives: IMDi, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (AV-dir), the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir), the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), Caritas, the Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS), and Ukrainians in Norway. In connection with the synthesising analysis and the workshop with the reference groups, the project team first held an internal workshop to identify the main findings across both the qualitative and quantitative analyses and across the analysis of the Ukrainian refugees and the frontline workers.

In the workshop, NIBR presented its preliminary analysis and main findings, which the reference group then commented on. The purpose was to get their input on what were the most important and interesting findings and on any reflections or information that might be relevant to NIBR's further analysis, interpretation and discussion of the main findings in the report.

The report has been co-written by all the project members and quality assured by the project manager. The first draft of the report was finalised 1 December 2023 and sent to IMDi, AV-dir and UDI[3] for comments and clarification. Based on their comments and clarifications, NIBR revised the report and submitted the final version on 15 December 2022.

1.3 Continuation and expansion of the 2022 report on Ukrainian refugees' experiences

In April 2022, NIBR received a joint assignment from UDI and IMDi to evaluate how persons fleeing from Ukraine to Norway experienced their *initial* reception, resulting in the research report 'Ukrainian refugees – experiences from the first phase in Norway' (hereafter 'the 2022 report' or 'the 2022 study'). The main research question in the report was: 'How do Ukrainian refugees experience the initial phase in Norway: registration, reception, settlement and initial integration?'. The report was based on 1) interviews with frontline workers and volunteers, 2) individual and focus group interviews with Ukrainian refugees, 3) observation at the National Arrivals Centre in Råde, 4) a survey of Ukrainian refugees in Norway, and 5) an analysis of policy changes and the Norwegian Government's information strategy.

This report is a follow-up study of the 2022 report, though with a somewhat expanded and adjusted focus.

First, although this report pursues many of the same research questions as in the 2022 study, the focus has shifted somewhat. In the 2022 report, the main focus was on the initial reception, including the Ukrainians' experiences with permits, registration, the application procedure and the time until they were granted protection. Since the data collection was done mainly in May and June 2022, only three to four months after the full-scale invasion, the 2022 report was to a large degree a snapshot of the crisis management process during the initial phase. At that time, very few Ukrainian refugees had been formally settled in municipalities (after being granted protection) and started their integration process. Thus, in this new assignment for 2023, although the registration and application procedures are still covered, we focus more closely on how the settlement and continuing integration procedures have unfolded during the past year and a half.

Second, although the 2022 report included focus group interviews with frontline workers, it was mainly dedicated to the Ukrainian refugees' experiences and perspectives. The scope of the 2023 report has been expanded to investigate the experiences and perspectives of both the Ukrainians refugees and the frontline workers at the local level, using qualitative interviews with and surveys of both groups.

1.4 Structure of the report

The structure of report is as separate into four main parts.

Part 1: Introduction and background

After this introductory chapter, in chapter 2, we present statistics about the asylum and refugee situation in Norway over time, and particularly related to displaced persons from

[3] KS was also invited to comment on the first draft of the report, but unfortunately did not have the capacity to do so within the project's short deadline.

Ukraine after February 2022. In chapter 4, we describe the policy developments related to the reception, settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Norway.

Part 2: Ukrainian refugees' experience of the reception, settlement and integration in Norway

Part 2 presents the Ukrainian refugees' own perspective and experiences with their reception, settlement and integration in Norway. First, in chapter 4, we describe the data collection processes for both the interviews with and the survey of Ukrainian refugees. In chapter 5, we provide further background information about the Ukrainian refugees in Norway, based on the survey data. Chapter 6 presents the Ukrainian refugees' overall assessment of different services and actors, whereas chapter 7 focuses on their assessment of the information they have received in Norway. The continuing chapters focus on different topics related to the processes after being granted protection: the settlement process (chapter 9), language use and interpreting services (chapter 10), the introduction programme (chapter 11), and experiences and challenges with employment in Norway (Chapter 11). The social integration of children and adults – including kindergartens and schools as arenas for children's social integration – is the topic in chapter 12, before we present the Ukrainian refugees' own assessment of their economic situation in Norway. Lastly, chapter 14 presents the Ukrainian refugees' future prospects, including their thoughts on whether they think they will stay in Norway or return to Ukraine after the war.

Part 3: The frontline workers' experiences with Ukrainian refugees and related policies

Part 3 presents results of the investigations of the settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees, from the perspective of refugee service leaders and frontline workers. First, in chapter 15, we describe the data collection processes for both the interviews and the survey, as well as a dropout analysis of the quantitative material. In chapter 16, we present the main modes of organisation of the municipal refugee services. Chapter 17 discusses capacity challenges in the refugee services, whereas chapter 18 analyses variations and challenges in municipalities' provision of introduction programme and language training. NAV's role in the integration of Ukrainian refugees is the topic of chapter 19. Chapter 20 discusses barriers and opportunities for Ukrainian refugees in the labour market, while chapter 21 concentrates on perceptions of differential treatment between Ukrainian refugees and other refugees. In chapter 22, we present results on voluntary organisations' role in the refugee reception and integration, before this part of the report ends with a discussion in chapter 23 of municipalities' ability to receive more refugees in the near future.

Part 4: Current and future challenges, opportunities and dilemmas

In part 4, we synthesise findings across data sources, combining insights from the analyses of both the Ukrainian refugees and the frontline workers. We highlight some of the main and most prominent questions and topics, to discuss current and future challenges, opportunities and dilemmas in the continuing work with the reception and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Norway.

2 Statistics about Ukrainian refugees

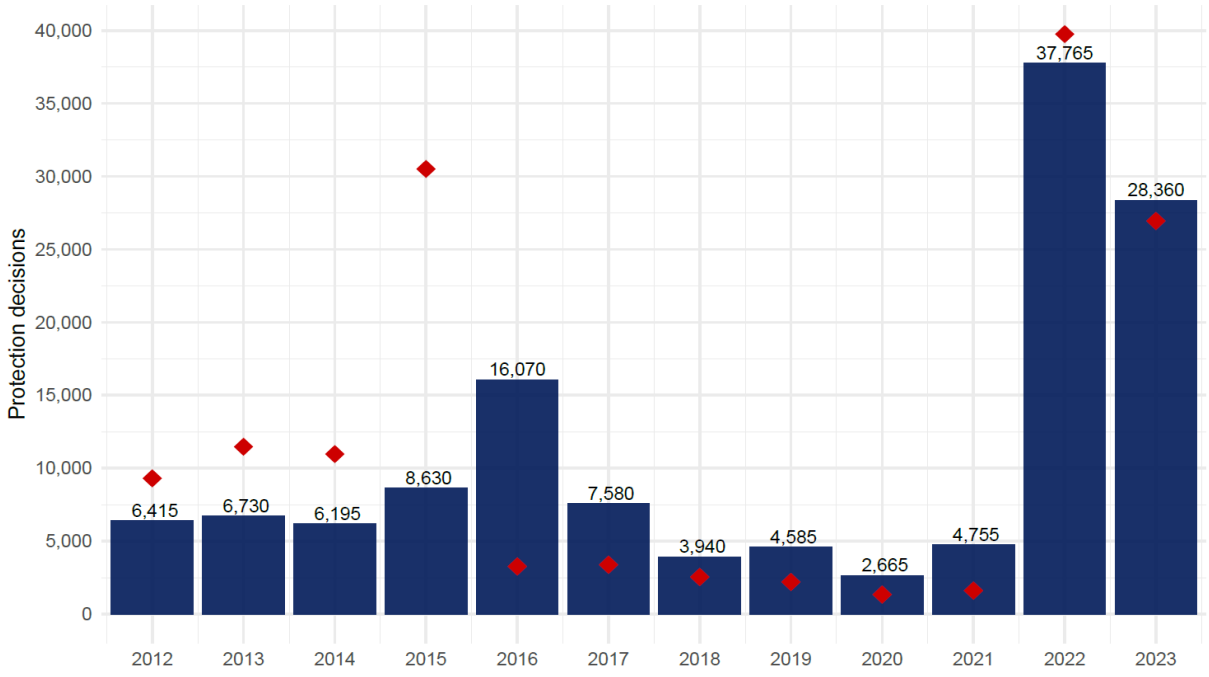
How does the situation of a large influx of people seeking protection in 2022 and 2023 compare with earlier arrivals of protection seekers to Norway? Have there been changes in the number of new arrivals and in gender and age composition during the first 18 months after the full-scale Russian invasion?

Like most European countries, Norway has experienced large migration fluctuations over the past decade, but the recent influx of displaced persons from Ukraine constitutes the largest influx of protection seekers to Europe and Norway since World War II (Hernes et al. 2023). To put the current influx of protection seekers into context, in this chapter we first present official statistics from Eurostat, UDI and IMDi, showing how the current situation differs from previous large influxes of protection seekers. Then, using data from UDI, we narrow in on developments after the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022 and analyse developments in the influx of persons from Ukraine and potential changes in the gender and age composition of this group. Lastly, we present recent statistics from Statistical Norway on the Ukrainian refugees' integration into the Norwegian labour market.

2.1 Inflows of protection seekers to Norway

Over the past decade, Norway has experienced significant fluctuations in the number of persons who have applied for and been granted protection.

Figure 2.1: Persons granted protection in Norway by protection decision (blue stack) and lodged asylum applications (red diamonds), 2012–September/October 2023.



*Data: The figure is based on data from Eurostat (2023a–g) for persons granted protection and data on asylum applications. However, because Eurostat does not have data on *applications* for those granted collective protection after February 2022, to calculate the total number of protection seekers in 2022 and 2023, we have merged Eurostat data on regular asylum applicants with data received from UDI (upon request) on applications for protection from Ukrainian citizens.

Figure 2.1 shows that there have been large fluctuations over the past decade in both the number of applications for protection (red diamonds) and the number of persons granted protection (blue stack). Before 2015, around 10,000 persons applied for asylum and around

6,500 persons were granted protection annually. In 2015, Norway experienced a significant increase in asylum applications, with over 30,000 applications for protection, mostly persons from Syria, Afghanistan and Eritrea. About two-thirds of those who applied for protection in the period 2015–2017 had their application for protection approved (Hernes et al. 2023). Due to relatively long processing times, many persons had their application approved in 2016 (over 16,000) and 2017 (over 7,500) as shown in Figure 2.1.

From 2016, Norway experienced a substantial drop in asylum applications, and the number of asylum applications lingered between 1,300 and 3,400 in the following years. In this period with low numbers of asylum seekers, Norway accepted a larger share of resettled UN quota refugees than previously. Still, the total number of persons granted protection (including resettled refugees) was around 4,000 between 2018 and 2021 (which exceeds the number of asylum applications, because about half of these were UN Quota refugees).

However, the large number of Ukrainians fleeing the war in Ukraine after the full-scale invasion by Russia led to record-high numbers of persons being granted protection, far exceeding the levels in 2015–2017. Since the majority of persons who fled Ukraine were eligible for temporary collective protection, almost all of them were granted protection. In 2022, over 37,000 persons were granted protection. By September 2023, almost 25,000 persons from Ukraine had already applied for protection, and the forecasts from UDI (2023c) (at the time of writing in December 2023) showed that Norway planned for the arrival of over 40,000 persons seeking by the end of 2023.

2.2 Settlement in municipalities

The temporary collective protection granted to most persons who fled the war in Ukraine also implied that most applicants did not have to undergo an individual assessment and the processing time was considerably shorter than for persons seeking asylum based on an individual assessment. While the average processing time for individual asylum applicants was around nine months for those who arrived around 2015, the average processing time for those applying for collective protection has been about two weeks. While the UDI is responsible for the applicants during the application process (e.g., in asylum centres or through AMOT/MAMOT), IMDi is responsible for the settlement process and distribution to the municipalities once protection is granted (see more detailed descriptions of these responsibilities and systems in chapter 3). Because the processing time was significantly reduced for most of those who were granted temporary collective protection, the settlement process began relatively soon after their arrival in Norway. Figure 2.2 shows that there have been substantial fluctuations in the number of refugee settlements in Norwegian municipalities.

Figure 2.2: Number of publicly registered settlements in Norwegian municipalities, 2011– October 2023.

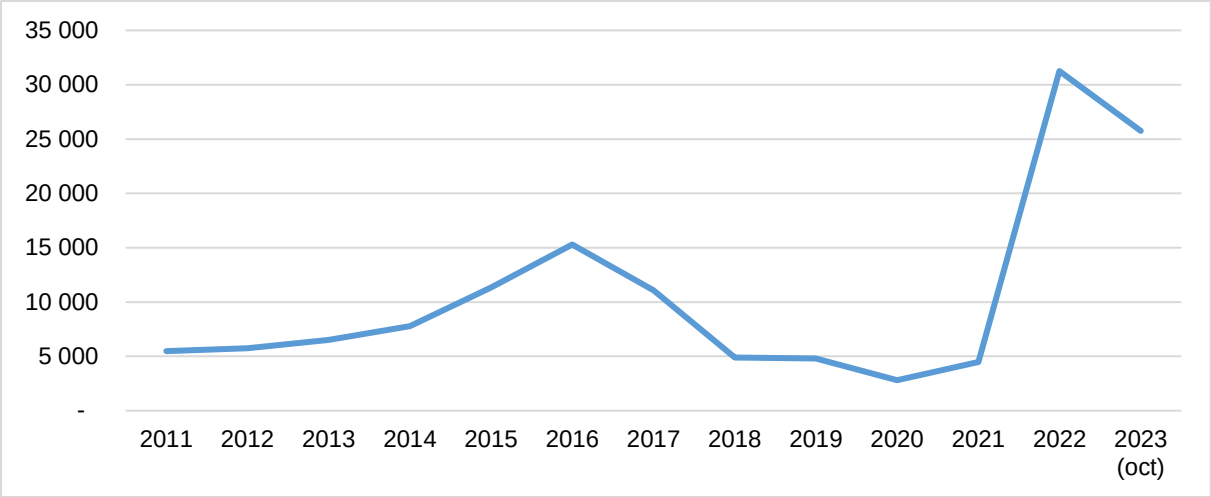


Figure 2.2 shows the annual number of registered settlements by those who have been granted protection in Norway. From 2011 to 2013, the annual number of settlements was around 5,000. There was a steep rise following the 2015 influx, peaking in 2016 with around 15,000. However, after increasing municipal capacity substantially to accommodate the large number that was to be settled in 2015–2017, the number of settlements was drastically reduced in the following years. This reduction made it necessary for many municipalities to downscale their settlement and integration capacity (Hernes et al. 2020).

When the number of protection seekers again rose dramatically in 2022, municipalities again had to upscale their capacities, and by even more than previously. With over 30,000 settlements, the number of settlements in 2022 was twice as high as in the peak year of 2016, The preliminary number as of October 2023 also shows a very large number of settlements (over 25,000 as of October), and the municipalities had agreed to settle over 35,000 in 2023 (IMDi 2023a).

Despite the large numbers of settlements in 2022 and 2023, the average time from granting of protection to settlement in the municipalities has actually decreased. Before 2022, it varied a lot from year to year, but the average time was over six months in 2020 and 2021, while in 2022, the average time was reduced to 2.2 months.

2.3 Developments in the total number of Ukrainian refugees in Norway

As in most countries in Europe, 2022 and 2023 were abnormal in terms of the number of protection seekers arriving in Norway, but there have also been wide variations in the numbers arriving from Ukraine since February 2022.

Figure 2.3: Total number of applications for protection from Ukrainian citizens, February 2022–September 2023.

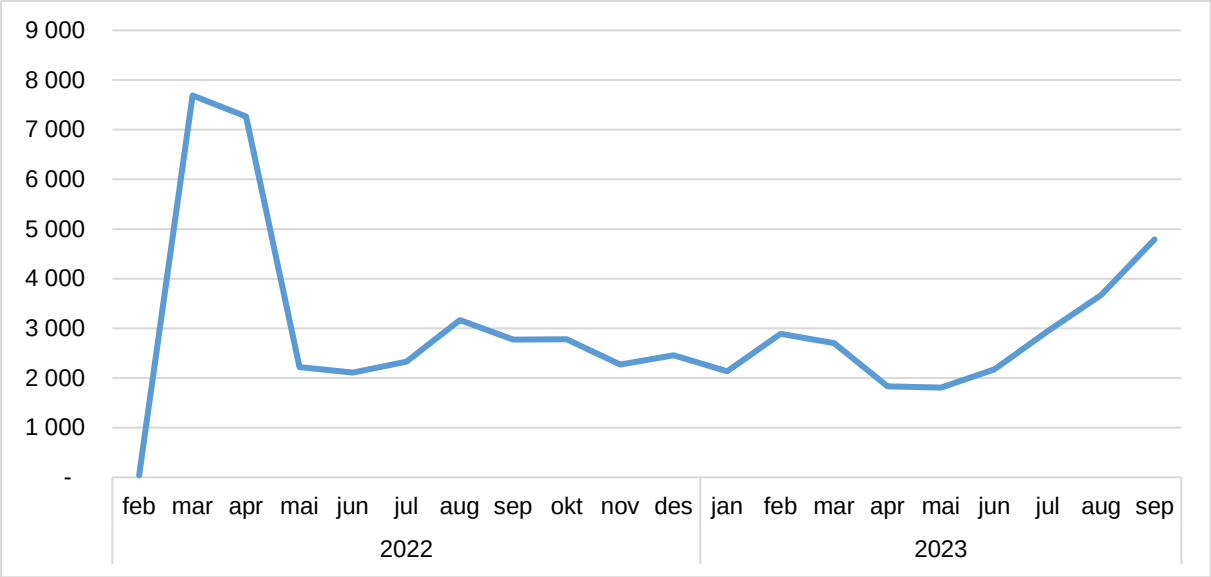


Figure 2.3 shows the number of applications for protection from displaced persons from Ukraine in Norway from February 2022 to September 2023. In February 2022, there were only 39 applications. The largest inflows came in March (7,689) and April (7,269). After the initial months, the number of applications lodged from May 2022 to June 2023 was around 2,000–3,000 per month. However, the numbers rose again during the summer of 2023. From July to September 2023, the number of applications rose by around 1,000 each month, reaching almost 5,000 in September 2023.

2.4 Gender composition

Historically, there has been a larger share of male asylum applicants in all of Europe. However, because most males of fighting age (18–60 years) were not allowed to leave Ukraine, the influx of displaced persons from Ukraine has shifted the gender balance, and Norway was no exception (Hernes et al. 2023). During the period from February 2022 to September 2023, the share of female versus male protection applicants from Ukraine was 59% and 41%, respectively. However, the gender composition of minors differed from that of adults.

Figure 2.4: Share of male and female protection applicants from Ukraine among minors (0–17 years) and adults (18+ years), February 2022–September 2023.

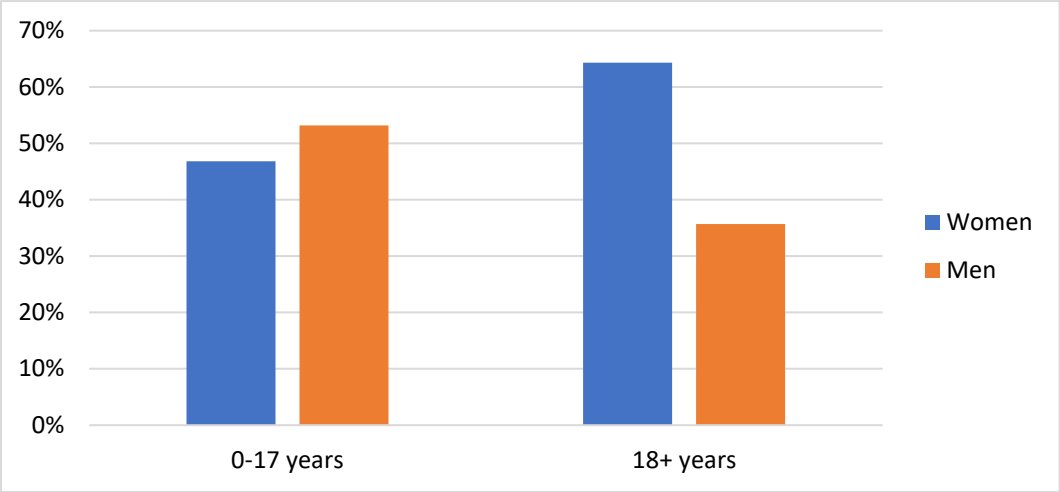


Figure 2.4 shows that the gender balance among minors was relatively equal, with 53% boys versus 47% girls. However, among adult applicants, the gender composition was more skewed, with about one-third adult men and two-thirds adult women. This skew was known from the start of the influx, and it is relevant to examine whether it has remained constant or whether the gender distribution has changed during this period.

Figure 2.5: Applicants seeking protection, by gender (18+ years), February 2022–September 2023.

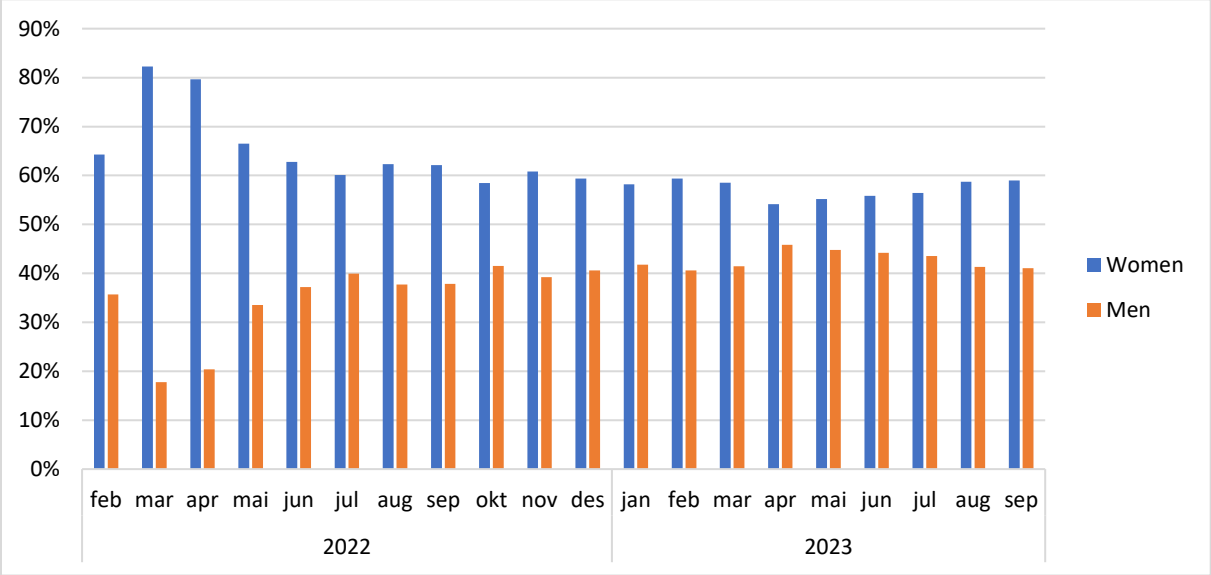


Figure 2.5 shows the gender distribution of adult applicants (18+ years) from Ukraine each month from February 2022 to September 2023. During the first three months after the full-scale invasion, about 80% of the adult applicants were women. After May 2022, the gender distribution levelled off somewhat, although female applicants were still in the majority. There were some fluctuations in the gender composition during these months, ranging from 66% women in May 2022 to 54% in April 2023, but the average gender distribution for the period from May 2022 to September 2023 was 60% women and 40% men.

2.5 Age composition

What is the age composition of Ukrainian refugees? Has it changed since February 2022 and are there gender differences in the age groups?

Figure 2.6: Total age distribution of Ukrainian refugees from February 2022–September 2023.

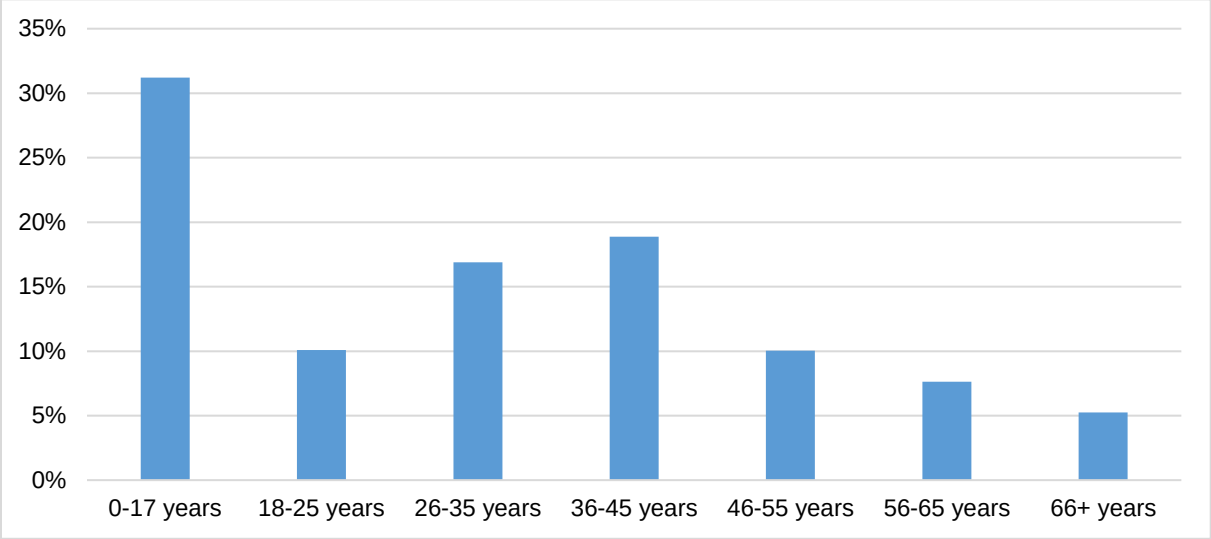


Figure 2.6 shows that just over 30% of those who applied for protection were children (between 0–17 years), which has also been the relative share of children among those seeking protection in Norway the past 10 years. However, since the total number of persons arriving in 2022–2023 was substantially higher than for previous influxes of protection seekers, the absolute number of protection-seeking children (19,000 as of September 2023) constituted an all-time high in Norway.

Two-thirds of the Ukrainian protection seekers were aged between 18 and 65 years. 10% were young adults aged 18–25 years, about 45% were aged 26–55 years, while 8% were aged 56–65 years.

Only 5% were aged 66 years or older. Although this does not constitute a very large proportion, it is significantly larger than previous cohorts of asylum seekers, where normally only 1–2% were within this age group (Hernes et al. 2023a). Given the scale of the total influx, the high absolute numbers of elderly refugees are unprecedented.

We may again ask whether the age composition has remained constant or changed from February 2022 to September 2023?

Figure 2.7: Ukrainian refugees from February 2022–September 2023, by age composition and month of application.

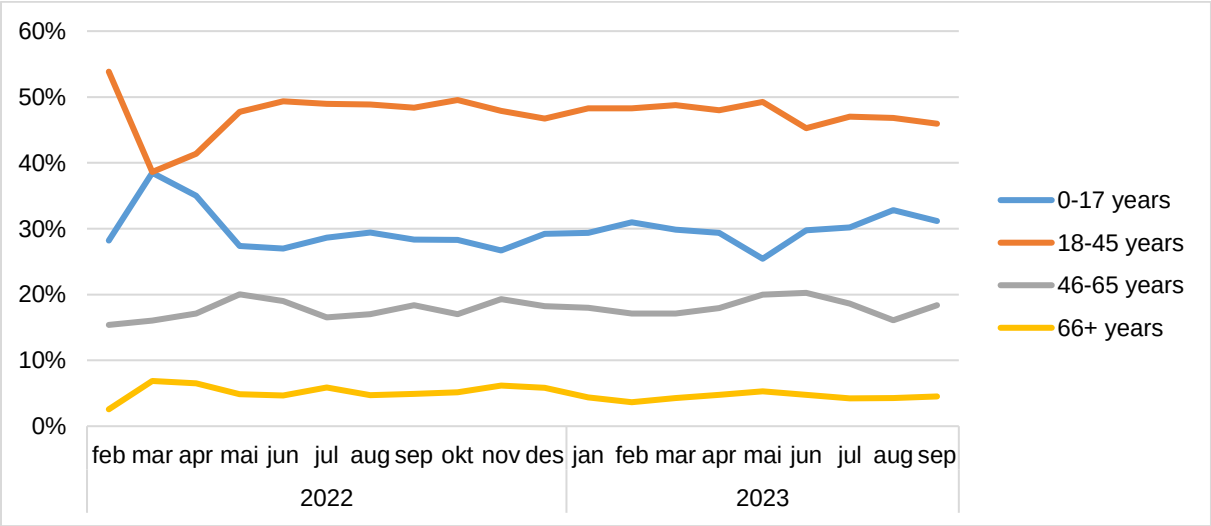


Figure 2.7shows that, except for the first three months (February[4] to April 2022), the age composition has been very stable. There was a higher share of children in March and April 2022, with a somewhat lower share of persons 18–45 years in the same period. Thereafter, the age composition has been relatively stable with only minor fluctuations. Just below half of the applicants were aged 18–46 years, while about one-third was composed of children. About 20% were between the ages of 46 and 55, while persons aged 66 or older constituted around 5%.

We can break down these numbers further by asking whether there are gender differences in the age composition during the period of analysis.

Figure 2.8: Adult female and male Ukrainian refugees from February 2022–September 2023, by age category and month of application.

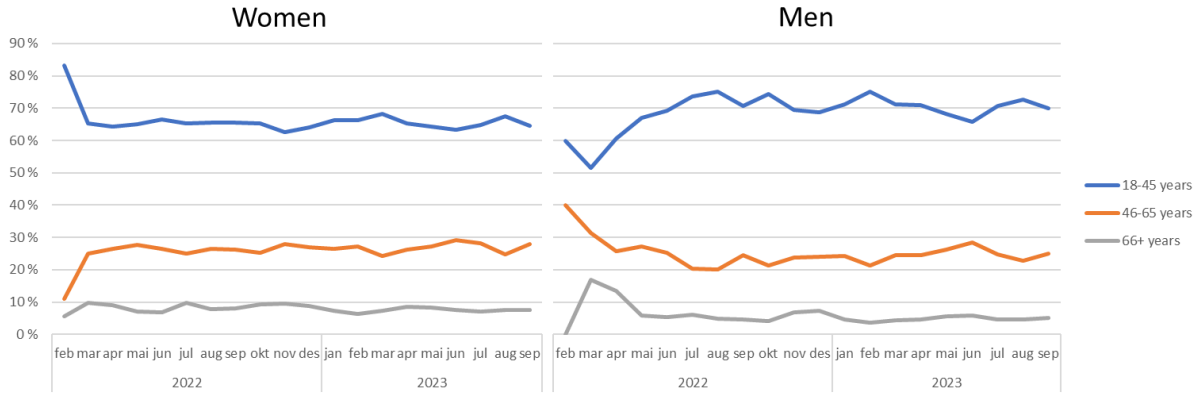


Figure 2.8 also shows that, except for February–April 2022, these patterns have been very stable for both male and female adult applicants. The figure shows only minor differences in the overall age composition of adult men and women. The share of adult female applicants compared with adult male applicants in the older age groups is slightly larger (8% versus 5%, respectively) and slightly smaller in the age group 18–45 years (65% versus 69%, respectively). Overall, however, the age distribution between adult male and female applicants is relatively similar and, except for the first three months, shows only minor changes during the period of analysis.

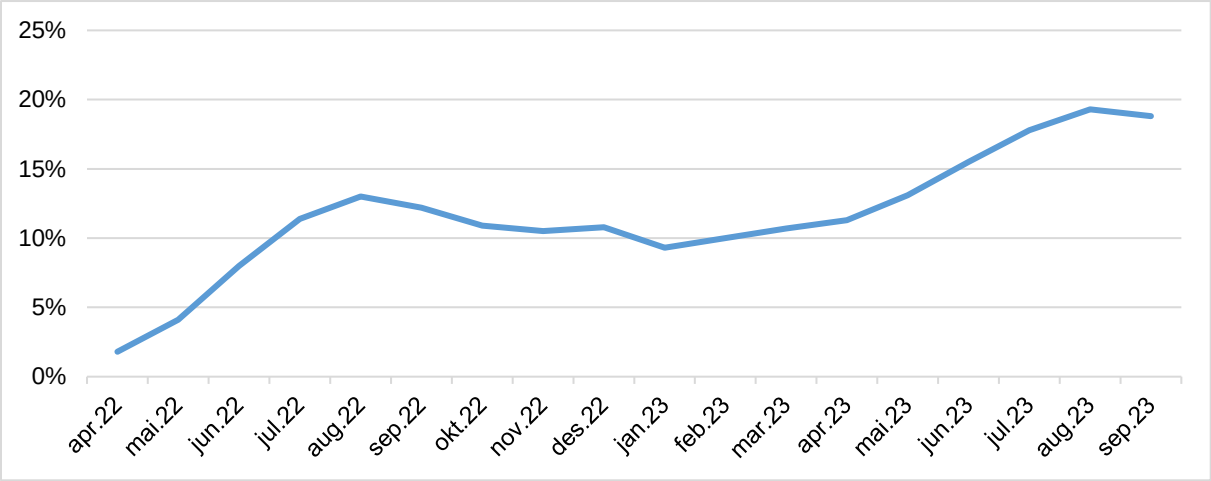
2.6 Employment outcomes for Ukrainian refugees in Norway

How many Ukrainian refugees in Norway are employed in the Norwegian labour market?

Contrary to many other European countries (Hernes et al. 2023), displaced persons from Ukraine are not allowed to work in Norway until after they are granted a residence permit, most often based on collective protection.

[4] The numbers for February are based on only 39 applications, thus the changes from February to March are not very relevant.

Figure 2.9: Share of Ukrainian refugees who were employed, aged 20–66, April 2022 – September 2023.



*Data: SSB (2023)

Figure 2.9 shows that the share of Ukrainian refugees that was employed was very small in the months immediately after February 2022, but that it gradually increased to around 10–12% in the period July 2022–April 2023. Since April 2023 it has risen steadily to approximately 19% in August and September 2023 (SSB 2023).

2.7 Summary

The statistical analyses in this chapter show that Norway – like most European countries – has experienced significant fluctuations in the number of protection seekers and persons granted protection during the past decade. However, the situation in 2022 and 2023 was unprecedented. The number of protection seekers, persons granted protection and refugee settlements in the municipalities far surpassed previous inflows.

Another important difference when comparing today's situation with that in 2015–2016 is that while Norway experienced a significant increase in asylum seekers in 2015, the number of arrivals dropped significantly in the following year. Moreover, in the intervening period, from 2016 to 2021, Norway received a relatively small number of asylum seekers. However, at the time of writing (December 2023), the inflow of protection seekers to Norway has remained high since March 2022, and is currently increasing at a high rate, implying continued pressure on Norway's reception capacity.

The composition of the groups arriving in 2015–2016 and 2022–2023 also differs. Unlike earlier cohorts of protection seekers, the adult refugees from Ukraine comprise mostly women. Still, the gender balance was more skewed during the first three months and has stabilised at around 60% women and 40% men. For children, the gender balance is more equal, with only a slight overweight of boys.

Concerning age distribution, about two-thirds were of working age (18–65 years). Around 30% were children, and about 5% were aged 66 years or older. Except for a larger share of children during the first three months after the full-scale invasion in February 2022, the age composition has been very stable for the past year and a half. There has also been a very similar age distribution among male and female applicants from Ukraine.

3 Policy changes from February 2022 to September 2023

What policy changes have been made to accommodate the large influx of displaced persons from Ukraine?

As described in chapter 2, the influx of protection seekers in 2022 and 2023 has been the largest migration flow to Norway since World War II. In this chapter, we outline the key changes to legislation concerning reception, asylum processing, settlement and integration since February 2022. We particularly focus on how the current approach to displaced persons from Ukraine differs from the previous system for receiving asylum seekers (or existing rules for other asylum seekers) and other refugees in Norway.

The changes and conditions in the initial months after February until July 2022 have been thoroughly presented in the report 'Ukrainian refugees – experiences from the first phase in Norway' (Hernes et al. 2022). Thus, in this chapter, we briefly summarise the main changes in the initial period from February to July 2022, and supplement with additional legislative and policy changes *after* July 2022.

We start by presenting regulations on protection permits for displaced persons from Ukraine, and the processes for registration and accommodation before being granted protection. Furthermore, we present changes in the regulations related to the settlement process, introduction programmes and language training, approval of education, and lastly, information and dissemination of information to Ukrainian refugees.

3.1 Protection permits and application procedures for displaced persons in Ukraine

3.1.1 National variant of temporary collective protection

After the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Norwegian Government triggered the use of section 34 of the Immigration Act in March 2022, providing temporary collective protection for the following target group:

a) Ukrainian citizens resident in Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022.
b) Third-country nationals and stateless persons who had received international protection or similar national protection status in Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022.
c) Third-country nationals and stateless persons who are close family members of persons mentioned in a) or b), such as spouse, cohabiting partner, child under 18 years old and other members of the person's household prior to 24 February 2022.

Section 34 of the Norwegian Immigration Act mirrors, but is not identical to, the EU Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), which the European Council decided to activate on 4 March 2022. Furthermore, on 29 April 2022, Norway extended the scope to include Ukrainian citizens legally resident in Norway as of 24 February 2022 or who arrived later on the basis of a previously issued permit. Thus, Ukrainian seasonal workers or students who were in Norway at the time of the invasion could remain in Norway and were allowed to continue working while waiting for a new permit (Hernes et al. 2022).

Persons who were granted collective protection in Norway were granted a residence permit for one year, with the possibility to extend it for up to three years. In January 2023, the Norwegian Government decided that persons who already had a permit under the collective

protection scheme would have this extended automatically for one year (Norwegian Government 2023a; 2023b).

3.1.2 Registering and applying for collective protection

Unlike many other European countries, displaced persons from Ukraine need to apply for protection through the regular asylum system, though most applicants do not have to undergo an individual assessment or asylum interview (Hernes et al. 2023). This simplified and shortened the application process for displaced persons from Ukraine compared with persons who had to undergo an individual asylum assessment.

Since November 2020, registration of all asylum applications took place at the National Arrivals Centre in Råde (south of Oslo). However, from March 2022, the Government allowed registration at other police districts throughout the country. Råde was still used to register individuals staying with friends or family in south-eastern Norway, as well as those who had nowhere to stay and had to be channelled into the regular reception system. Once an application for protection has been registered at either the National Arrivals Centre in Råde or a police district office, UDI processes the application. In order to qualify for collective protection, however, it must be determined whether or not the person falls within the scope of application of section 34 of the Immigration Act. For the majority of applicants from Ukraine, there were no individual asylum interviews. With this simplified process, the procedure was speeded up, especially for those with a biometric passport and identification. While the average time to process an individual asylum application was 255 days (based on numbers from 2019 to 2021) (Hernes et al. 2022), the average processing time for those who were granted temporary collective protection has been about two weeks[5]. Although the automated workflow process was used for many applicants, some applicants still had to undergo individual interviews (for example, unaccompanied minors, those who entered Norway through Russia and/or were from occupied territories, and those who held visas for other countries). For these applicants, the time from registration to decision may have been considerably longer.

As in other European countries, the collective protection status for displaced persons from Ukraine differs from other types of protection status in two important aspects. First, the time spent in Norway on this permit does not count as residence when applying for permanent residence. Second, while other protection beneficiaries are normally not allowed to visit their home country without the risk of having their protection status withdrawn, displaced persons from Ukraine are exempted from this rule and may visit Ukraine without losing their temporary residence permit (UDI 2022; Hernes et al. 2023).

3.1.3 Accommodation and financial assistance during the application period

During the application phase and until formal settlement in a Norwegian municipality, most asylum seekers live in reception centres. Asylum seekers are not obliged to reside in reception centres, but they normally forfeit their access to free housing and pocket money if they opt out of the reception system. The exception is a system called ‘alternative reception placement’ (AMOT), where an asylum seeker may live outside of the regular reception system without losing their rights to financial aid. However, the criteria are very strict, and the AMOT scheme has not been widely applied for before 2022.

In the first phase after arrival, many Ukrainians stayed with friends and family in Norway. In light of this, and due to the lack of adequate reception capacity, the Ministry of Justice decided to expand the AMOT system and in March 2022 introduced a new scheme:

[5] Information provided by correspondence with UDI.

temporary alternative reception placement (MAMOT). The scheme applied to displaced persons from Ukraine (and those who were in the target group of collective protection) only, and not to other groups of asylum seekers. Under this scheme, displaced persons from Ukraine who found a place to live in a municipality – either with family members, other private persons or homes organised by voluntary organisations or municipalities – could apply to be registered for MAMOT in the municipalities. This extended right – with less restrictive criteria than the original AMOT system – gave displaced persons from Ukraine more freedom to find alternative housing without losing their rights to public assistance. However, it was voluntary for the municipalities to accept a MAMOT application (and if they rejected it, the applicant would be referred to the general reception system). Since the start of the MAMOT scheme in March 2022, 6,392 places have been created in 238 municipalities (figures as of 15 November 2023, received from UDI).

Although almost half of those arriving in the initial months lived with family and friends in the months after February 2022 (Hernes et al. 2022), either formally through the MAMOT system or informally through their own efforts or with the help of their network, many also lived in reception centres. The reception centres are formally overseen by UDI but are run by private companies, NGOs or municipalities. The centres vary in size, set-up and location in various parts of Norway. When capacity needed to be expanded, UDI engaged in tender processes where new and existing operators could compete for contracts for new emergency reception centres (*akuttinnkvartering)*. Such emergency reception centres also included hotels, which were used to rapidly expand capacity in case of mass inflows.

During the spring and summer of 2022, several news articles (focusing on displaced persons from Ukraine) raised the question of the low cash benefits given to asylum seekers during the application process. As part of the general 2023 budget process, cash benefits for asylum seekers during the application process were increased by 50% (UDI 2022b). However, this increase in cash benefits targeted all protection seekers, not only protection seekers from Ukraine.

Asylum seekers living in reception centres normally have the right and obligation to participate in courses in Norwegian language and civic education, and in competence mapping (*kompetansekartlegging)* conducted by the host municipality in order to prepare for settlement. However, amendments to the Integration Act exempt displaced persons from Ukraine from these rights and obligations.

The reception centres are also responsible for conducting a settlement mapping – referred to as a settlement interview – which ordinarily includes 24 questions. When the processing time for collective protection was drastically reduced compared with the procedure for individual asylum processes, this settlement interview became a bottleneck in the settlement process. To speed up the process, this mapping was initially reduced on 4 April 2022 from 24 to three questions on 1) family and networks in Norway, 2) any health issues to be taken into consideration, and 3) whether the applicant had pets. The mapping was subsequently expanded in May 2022 to include questions about work experience and education, with the aim of ensuring better-targeted settlement (Ministry of Employment and Inclusion 2022). In March 2023, the mapping was further expanded to include question on whether the refugee has a driver's license and whether they have brought their own car to Norway.

3.2 Settlement in a municipality

Norway has had a publicly steered settlement model, where refugees are allocated to municipalities on the basis of agreements between the state and the municipalities. After 2015, the Norwegian system has also allowed so-called ‘agreed self-settlement’, whereby refugees may find their own housing, although they still must apply to the municipality to be formally settled there in order to retain their right to financial assistance and introduction programmes (Sørholt & Dyb 2021). The Norwegian settlement model has not been formally changed since February 2022. However, whereas most refugees in Norway previously

followed the traditional path' of living in a reception centre until they were assigned a municipality for settlement through IMDi, the Ukrainians have to a large extent made use of alternative paths to settlement, particularly through agreed self-settlement, where the refugee and the municipality agree directly on settlement (and later report this to IMDi) (Hernes et al. 2023b).

After the large upscaling of settlement and integration services in Norwegian municipalities in response to the influx in 2015, followed by the significant drop in the number of new arrivals in 2016–2021, most municipalities had to radically downscale their settlement and integration capacity (Hernes et al. 2022b). During this period, the Government introduced new distribution criteria for refugee settlements, where settlement should be limited to a number of experienced municipalities that could show good employment results for prior cohorts, a policy known as 'targeted settlement' (Lerfaldet, Høgestøl, Ryssevik & Åsheim 2020).

Although a higher share of Ukrainian refugees than previously found their own accommodation, the unprecedented number of arrivals in 2022 and 2023 led to a need for record-high numbers of settlement placements in Norwegian municipalities (see chapter 2.2). Although the Norwegian settlement model has not undergone any formal legislative changes, the Government introduced other strategies to ensure enough settlements. It introduced the whole-country strategy, where all municipalities were asked to settled refugees. The Government also introduced a new financial incentive encouraging municipalities to agree to settle more protection seekers, consisting of a per capita bonus for every person they settle beyond the number they agreed with the Government (Hernes et al. 2023b).

3.3 Integration measures

Persons who have been granted a residence permit on the basis of an application for asylum, and their family members, have a right and obligation to take part in the introduction programme offered by Norwegian municipalities. In April 2022, the Norwegian Government presented a comprehensive proposal for temporary amendments to various pieces of legislation in order to adapt to the influx of displaced persons from Ukraine. Overall, the amendments resulted in a programme with somewhat limited elements and duration, but with more flexible options for temporary protection holders than for other groups.

Ukrainian refugees have the right to attend the introduction programme but, unlike other refugees, they are not *obliged* to do so. However, those in need of financial assistance after settlement may be obliged to participate in an introduction programme in order to be eligible for such financial assistance.

Like the regular introduction programme, the introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees should contain language and work-oriented elements, but the language training element is shorter. Originally, the right to language training was limited to one year for this group, consistent with the duration of their initial permit (Hernes et al. 2022). No regulations apply to how many hours of Norwegian training the participants are entitled to within this current time frame. The municipalities' capacity to offer training can thus be of great importance for realising the participants' rights (Hurtigarbeidende gruppe 2023). From 1 July 2023, the Government allowed the municipalities to extend the language training element for Ukrainian refugees by an additional six months, along with additional funding. However, because many municipalities already experienced capacity challenges in providing sufficient language training to this group, this extension was not introduced as an entitlement for Ukrainian refugees, but rather as an option for the municipalities, with the possibility of additional state funding for municipalities that did so.

Concerning the other compulsory elements in the introduction programme, Ukrainian refugees must complete the parental guidance course (*foreldreveiledning)* if they have children. However, they have neither a right nor an obligation to attend civics classes, nor must they take the otherwise compulsory empowerment course (*livsmestring*), though the

municipalities may still provide these courses as part of the programme. Furthermore, refugees normally have the right and obligation to get a competence mapping and carrier guidance as part of the settlement and integration process. The amendments for Ukrainian refugees in June 2022 made competence mapping a right, but not an obligation for Ukrainian refugees, but from June 2023, competence mapping was also made obligatory for Ukrainian refugees. Concerning carrier guidance (which is the responsibility of the counties), Ukrainian refugees have the right, but not the obligation, to get career guidance (Hurtigarbeidende gruppe 2023).

Other differences between the regular introduction programme for refugees and the introduction programme for those with collective protection was that the latter could also include English language training. Unlike other refugee groups, they may complete the introduction programme on a part-time basis, and if they leave the programme they do not lose the right to return later (Hernes et al. 2022).

The Integration Act of 2021 introduced differentiated programme duration for participants according to age and educational background. For example, individuals with higher levels of education on arrival (upper secondary level or higher) would be entitled to enrol in a shorter programme lasting from three months to one year, while individuals aged under 25 should generally enrol in upper secondary school as part of the programme and have the option to participate in the programme for up to four years. Since the majority of the Ukrainians arriving in Norway have higher education (upper secondary level or higher, see chapter 5.2), most were entitled to a shorter introduction programme, normally lasting six months with the possibility of a six-month extension. The shorter programme complies with the regulations in the 2021 Integration Act, but one adjustment was introduced. According to the Higher Education Entrance Qualification (GSU) list (which is used to evaluate foreign education for admission to higher education in Norway) (HK-dir 2023a), the equivalent of completed Norwegian upper secondary education is Ukrainian upper secondary education *plus* one year of higher education. Thus, to be eligible for admission to higher education in Norway, Ukrainians with completed upper secondary school would need to have a minimum of one year of higher education from Ukraine in addition to their upper secondary diploma. Still, the amendments from April 2022 stated that persons with completed upper secondary education from Ukraine should be considered to have education at upper secondary level when the duration of their right to introduction programmes where to be calculated (Hurtigarbeidende gruppe 2023).

On 24 October 2023, the Norwegian government had a press conference where they proposed new temporary changes to the Integration Act. The proposed changes aimed to facilitate an increased focus on work-oriented measures early in the introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees, by specifying minimum requirement for work-oriented elements in the programme and to tighten the requirements for extension of the programme period. The ministry also proposed to remove the possibility to take the programme part-time and to allow the municipality to reject requests for an introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees who have a job, or a job offer (Ministry of Employment and Inclusion 2023a). The government also aimed to establish a digital system for Norwegian training, to make it more flexible and easier to combine with work (Ministry of Employment and Inclusion 2023b). The proposed changes were still in process at the time of writing in December 2023.

3.4 Approval of education and qualifications from Ukraine

Persons with a foreign education may apply HK-dir for a formal recognition of their education. Before 1 January 2023, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) had this responsibility.

In Norway, only a few professions are regulated by law and requires formal recognition in order to use a professional title or practice the profession in question. Except for these professions, there are no legal requirement to have foreign education recognised. Still, HK-

dir's general recognition of higher education or higher tertiary vocational education may be of help when applying for jobs, or for employers who are considering hiring someone with foreign qualifications.

HK-dir (and previously NOKUT) had years of previous experience with recognition of education and qualifications from Ukraine. If Ukrainian refugees in Norway want to get their education formally recognised by Norwegian authorities, they have to apply trough the regular system for education approval.

However, with the high influx of Ukrainian refugees from February 2022, NOKUT rapidly (in April 2022) developed an information document that Ukrainians could download and attach to job applications that compares their Ukrainian degree with the Norwegian education system. It can be used while waiting for approval or a substitute for regular approval. Employers can also submit anonymised documentation and receive a general statement on the level this would compare to in Norway. HK-dir also maintains a country database, with a separate entry for Ukraine (in Norwegian only). On this page, there is a description of the educational system of Ukraine, and information on how HK-dir recognises Ukrainian education and qualifications (NOKUT 2023).

3.5 Information measures

During the initial phase after February 2022, one of the main challenges was to provide Ukrainians, municipalities, volunteers and other frontline workers with updated information (and, for Ukrainians, in a language and format they understood). Continuous policy changes in the initial months also complicated the information strategy and dissemination of information (Hernes et al. 2022).

Since these initial (rather chaotic) months, few major legislative changes have been made, and relevant and targeted information has been posted in both Ukrainian and Russian on the websites of the relevant government agencies, often with links to other government agencies where necessary.

Since the spring of 2022, IMDi continuously posted aggregated information on its website about protection and residence in Norway, and about employment and qualifications for refugees from Ukraine, translated into Ukrainian, English and Russian. IMDi's websites target Ukrainian refugees directly, but also publishes information pages specifically for municipalities, volunteers and employers.

From the spring of 2022, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) published information about NAV's services and benefits on its website, aimed at Ukrainian refugees. The information was translated into Ukrainian and Russian. Information for employers looking to recruit refugees was published on a dedicated page on nav.no. Information for municipalities and partners about Ukrainian citizens' right to social assistance was also published there.

One of the major challenges reported by Ukrainian refugees during the initial months after February 2022 was finding the right information; they had to navigate between different websites and government actors, and information was perceived as unclear or insufficient (Hernes et al. 2022). In response to this identified challenge, and as part of the life event 'New in Norway', the Directorate of Integration and Diversity has collaborated with the Directorate of Immigration, the Directorate of Health, the Directorate of Labour and Welfare and the Norwegian Tax Administration on developing a separate website. Here, newly arrived Ukrainian refugees will find the information they need to register, apply for residence and start their life in Norway. The first version of the website aimed at people with temporary collective protection was published on 1 June 2023 (nyinorge.no). The website will be further developed and eventually expanded to apply to all newly arrived refugees and immigrants who come to Norway (Hurtigarbeidende gruppe 2023).

Part 2

Ukrainian refugees' experience of the reception, settlement and integration in Norway

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

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

4.1 Qualitative interviews with Ukrainian refugees

We interviewed a total of 34 Ukrainians who arrived in Norway since winter/spring 2022. In the interviews, we asked about the following topics: background, migration history, existing network in Norway, registration and application process, accommodation and settlement, expectations of Norway, knowledge about rights and opportunities, contact with various actors (public and non-public actors), interpreting services, everyday life and communication in Norway, school/kindergarten for children, where they got or sought information and their assessment of this information, the introduction programme, language courses, work experience in Norway, financial situation, and thoughts about the future.

We conducted 26 individual interviews, eight of which were longitudinal follow-up interviews with interviewees recruited for the 2022 report, and 18 of which were with new recruits. Most of the individual interviews were conducted in May 2023, but a few were conducted between June and October. We also conducted three focus group interviews, two with three participants, and one with two participants. The focus group interviews were conducted in September and October. All but one interview were conducted digitally. Use of the digital format made it possible to reach participants residing in different regions in Norway.

The new 2023 interviewees were recruited through several channels: 1) social media (an announcement was posted on the Facebook group 'Ukrainske flyktninger til Norge – info /Біженці з України до Норвегії' with information about the project and an invitation to contact us if they wished to participate in the study), 2) the Ukrainian community in Norway, 3) the researchers' networks (one project member is a refugee from Ukraine herself, and belongs to a network of Ukrainians in Norway[6]) and 4) by asking interviewees to provide us with contacts among their friends and acquaintances (snowball method). Interviewees from NIBR's previous research project were recruited through personal invitations.

The project investigates the experiences of a complex group. To ensure that we captured the perspectives of a wide range of people, we sought to recruit interviewees who differed in terms of the following characteristics:

- gender (9 men and 26 women)
- age (ranging from 21 to 67 years)
- arrived in Norway with/without children
- date of arrival in Norway
- participation in the introduction programme or language courses
- employment in Norway or not
- geographical location in Norway
- geographical region of residence in Ukraine

[6] In line with research ethical considerations, the Ukrainian researcher did not interview people she already knew prior to the start of the project but used her network to get in touch with other potential interviewees.

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

Figure 4.1: Map of regions in Ukraine.

At the time of the interviews, the Ukrainian refugees were spread geographically throughout Norway, staying in municipalities of various size and centrality located in Viken, Vestfold og Telemark, Vestland, Rogaland, Møre og Romsdal, Trøndelag, Nordland, Troms og Finnmark, and Oslo.

The focus group interviews had a thematic scope which also affected recruitment. The following topics/groups were covered in the focus group interviews: 1) one focus group interview included persons who had finished (or almost finished) the introduction programme and had *not* found a job in Norway (focusing on the transition from the introduction programme to NAV), and 2) two focus group interviews with persons who had succeeded in finding a job in Norway (one interview with female participants and one with male participants).

Two researchers participated in most (95%) of the interviews. One was responsible for taking notes while the other conducted the interview. Since one of the researchers was fluent in Russian but not in Ukrainian, interviewees were asked if it was acceptable for them to speak Russian (or English). If they preferred Ukrainian, the interviews were conducted in Ukrainian by the Ukrainian-speaking researcher.[7] The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. All interviews were taped so that the researchers could listen to them again to make more accurate notes, if needed. All the interviews were transcribed with Autotekst (https://autotekst.uio.no/nb), a digital tool for transcribing text from audio files. Transcripts were made in the original language of Russian or Ukrainian and in translation to English. Based on the notes from the interviews and the transcripts, the researchers wrote two- to four-page summaries of each interview. The summaries were reviewed by the research group during the four-step collective qualitative analysis workshop in August (as described in

[7] In total, out of 26 individual interviews 14 were conducted in Ukrainian, 11 in Russian and 1 in English. FG1 and FG2 were conducted in Russian while FG3 was conducted in Ukrainian.

chapter 1.2) where the main topics and subtopics were identified. These topics were further investigated by two of the researchers who, in addition to working closely with the summaries, conducted searches for key words in all the interviews using the qualitative data programme NVIVO and in individual interview transcripts. In this way, relevant citations in support of topics and subtopics identified were retrieved and checked.

The number of each interviewee/focus group interviewee and the date of the interview are cited in all references to the individual interviews and the focus group interviews that follow. We distinguish between interviewees recruited in 2022 and interviewees recruited in 2023 as follows: interviewees recruited in 2023 are cited with their participant number only, for example: (Interviewee 3, 12.05.2023), while interviewees recruited in 2022 are cited with their participant number followed by L' (for 'longitudinal'), for example: (Interviewee 3L, 15.05.2023). When reference is made to something an interviewee said during one of the focus group interviews they are cited with their participant number followed by 'FGI', for example: (Interviewee 2, FGI, 07.09.2023).

4.2 Survey of Ukrainian refugees in Norway

We development of the 2023 survey questionnaire was based on the 2022 survey and the preliminary analysis of qualitative data collected from refugees and municipal services (see description of the collective qualitative analysis in chapter 1.2).

To enable comparison with the 2022 survey, the 2023 questionnaire included questions asked in the 2022 survey about Ukrainians' experiences with the Norwegian authorities (e.g., the police, UDI, IMDi, the municipalities), how they obtained information about the system and their rights in Norway, the importance of personal networks and voluntary organisations, and future prospects. In addition, we asked about similar background characteristics such as gender, age, language skills, level of formal education, place of residence, family ties in Ukraine and in Norway, etc. However, as mentioned in chapter 1.3, while the 2022 study was more focused on the initial reception, the 2023 assignment places a stronger focus on the settlement and integration processes *after* protection was granted (which was a less relevant topic in June 2022). Thus, based on a collective qualitative analysis of the qualitative interviews and on the policy analysis (see description in chapter 1.2), we developed new questions on these topics.

The survey was first developed in English and sent to IMDi, NAV and KS for comments. After revisions based on the comments received, and internal quality assurance by project members at NIBR, the survey was translated into Russian and Ukrainian by one of the team members who has both languages as their mother tongues. The Russian and Ukrainian versions were then checked and piloted by two Ukrainian refugees in Norway, one Ukrainian-speaking and one Russian-speaking. Minor revisions were made based on their comments.

We had a twofold recruitment strategy. First, in the 2022 survey, we invited respondents to leave their email address if they were willing to be contacted for future research purposes (524 of the 680 respondents left their email address). These respondents were then sent a personal invitation (link) to participate in the 2023 survey. We also recruited new respondents through a variety of channels (see description below).

Data collection took place between 6 October and 23 October ('old' respondents from the 2022 survey) and between 16 October and 3 November (new respondents). We received 143 responses from respondents who had participated in the 2022 survey[8] and 1,474 valid

[8] The respondents who answered a second time are representative of those who answered in 2022 in terms of gender distribution, but the youngest age group (18–25) is overrepresented (29% against 15% in the 2022 sample), and the 26–35 age group underrepresented (11% in the 2023 survey compared with 29% in the 2022 sample).

responses[9] from new respondents. The two data files were merged and make up a joint data file with 1,617 respondents, almost 99% of whom were living in Norway at the time of the survey (1% had returned to Ukraine). This report focuses on the 1,596 respondents in Norway.[10]

4.2.1 Recruitment through different channels

Recruitment to the survey took place through several channels:

1. We sent emails to the respondents who had left their email address in the 2022 survey with an information letter about the new survey and an invitation to participate (personal link). Two reminders were sent.
2. We prepared a short information video about the survey in Ukrainian and shared it in multiple social media and online fora for Ukrainians.[11]
3. Emails with information about the survey (and links to all social media posts) were sent to all reception centres and municipalities in Norway and relevant volunteer organisations, inviting them to distribute the survey. In this email, we also included a flyer with a QR code that could be printed and displayed in relevant places. All members of UKRAINETT, a network of researchers on Ukraine in Norway with large networks in the Ukrainian community, also received an email with information about the survey which they were asked to help distribute.
4. We sent emails to participants in the qualitative interviews, inviting them to answer and to share the link with their networks and with refugees in the reception centres.
5. IMDi, UDI, NAV and KS shared the survey through their networks.

4.2.2 Sample and methodological limitations

The survey is based on open recruitment and self-selection (as opposed to a random sample). With a non-random sample, there is limited control over who answers and who chooses *not* to answer. If the non-response is random, this is not a major problem, but if the sample is selective, the biases may affect the results and, thus, the possibility of generalisation.

The population we want to study comprises Ukrainians over 18 years of age who fled to Norway on account of the Russian invasion in February 2022. UDI has provided statistics about the population at the time of the survey, making it possible to check whether our respondents differed significantly from the population on selected observable background characteristics.

Our survey had an overrepresentation of women compared with the overall population of Ukrainian refugees in Norway; 70% of our respondents were women, whereas UDI statistics

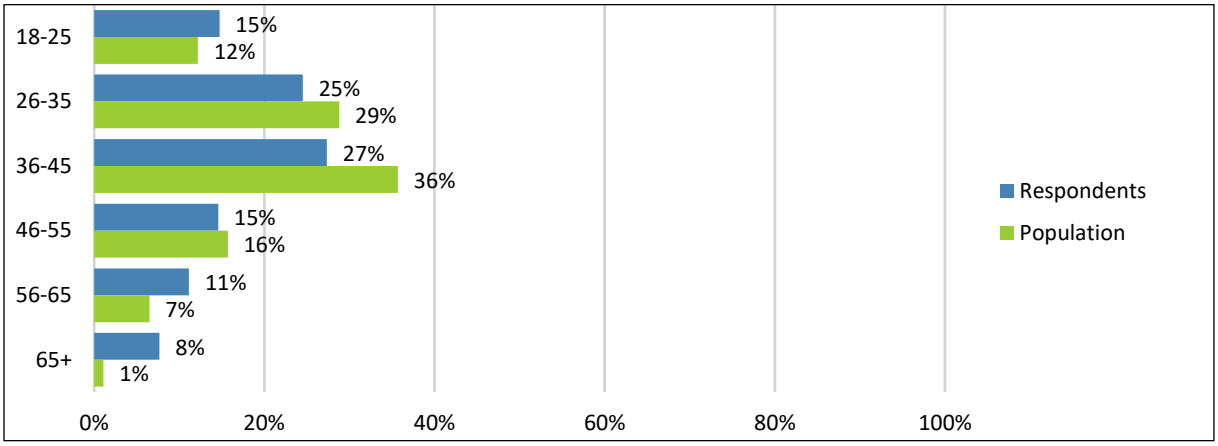
[9] 48 respondents did not respond affirmatively to the statement that they were a 'Ukrainian who has come to Norway as a result of the Russian military aggression in Ukraine from 24 February 2022' and were therefore removed from the rest of the questions in the survey.

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

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

(provided at the time of the survey) showed that 64% of adult Ukrainians over 18 years who had registered for protection were women (as of September 2023, just before the survey was released).

Figure 4.2: Comparison of age groups in sample and population.



*Population: Data from UDI on applications for protection lodged by Ukrainian citizens after 24 February 2022. Respondents: Respondents in the 2023 survey.

Furthermore, as shown in Figure 4.1, there was an (expected) underrepresentation of the two oldest age groups, from 55 years and upwards, and an overrepresentation of persons aged 26–45. This probably stems from difficulties in recruiting elderly people because they are less present in the arenas where recruitment mostly took place (digital platforms, integration arenas such as introduction programmes, language training, etc.).

Since there are certain differences between our respondent sample and the population with regard to age and gender, we include weights for gender and age in the statistical analyses. Weighting is a correction technique and refers to statistical adjustments that are made to survey data to improve the accuracy of the survey estimates and compensate for survey nonresponse (Bethlehem 2008). In our case, for example, we had a large share of nonresponses from men and, especially, elderly compared with the population of Ukrainian refugees in Norway. Since male and elderly respondents are underrepresented among our respondents, their responses will be weighted extra when calculating averages or percentages in the different analyses in the report.

We also checked for time of arrival in Norway to find out whether respondents arriving in Norway at certain points in time were over- or underrepresented in the sample. According to the statistics from UDI in September 2023, 58% of Ukrainian refugees had been registered in 2022, the remaining 42% in 2023. In our survey data the corresponding figures were 61% and 39% respectively. We decided not to adjust for this minor discrepancy.

The response rate in the 2023 survey among those who had completed the survey and left their email address in 2022 was lower than we had anticipated. This makes us somewhat apprehensive when it comes to the representativeness of the 2022 respondents. Therefore, we do not conduct comprehensive separate analyses for this category of respondents. However, since it is interesting to examine whether experiences and attitudes have changed during the almost 18 months that have passed since the previous survey was conducted, we report selected results for key variables, which can at least provide an indication of such developments.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Several research participants saw the interviews as a welcome opportunity to share their needs and experiences so that we could convey them to Norwegian authorities. Earlier studies the project members have conducted had also shown that research participants may find it particularly meaningful to be involved in focus group interviews, where they can discuss their experiences with others in a similar situation.

5 Who are the Ukrainians who fled to Norway?

What characterises the Ukrainian refugees in Norway in terms of their previous residence, education and main activity? How and why did they come to Norway? And are there differences between subgroups, particularly between those arriving in Norway during the first months after February 2022 and those arriving more recently?

As of October 2023, about 63,000 displaced persons from Ukraine have arrived in Norway and applied for protection. In chapter 2, we present characteristics about the group based on official statistics, including their time of arrival to Norway, gender and age. About 30% were children, two-thirds were of working age, and about 5% were aged over 65 years. While the age distribution of the children is quite even, there is an overweight of women among the adults, although the share of women and men has evened out over the past year.

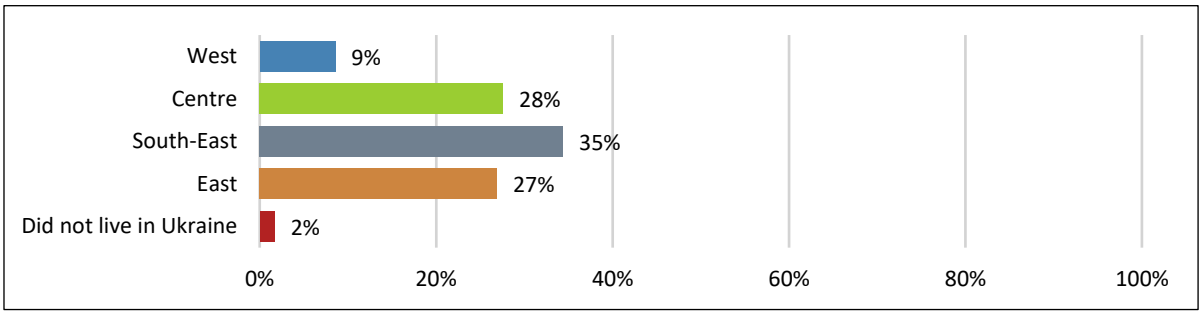
In this chapter, we present further background statistics about the Ukrainian refugees in Norway, based on the survey. First, we describe background factors such as where they lived prior to February 2022, their educational background, work experience and language skills. We then describe their current family situation, both in Norway and in Ukraine. Finally, we focus on how and why they came to Norway, exploring whether they stayed in other countries before coming to Norway and what their motivations were for choosing Norway over other countries.

The main findings in this chapter are presented in the figures, but we have also conducted cross-tabulations of the main variables with relevant background variables to explore whether there are relevant subgroup differences (e.g., gender, age, etc.). We particularly focus on whether there are differences between arriving cohorts, meaning those who arrived in Norway at different points in time after February 2022.

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

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

Figure 5.1: Residence in Ukraine before the full-scale Russian invasion February 2022 (N=1602).



*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 5.1 shows that, before arriving in Norway, the vast majority of Ukrainian refugees in Norway resided in the central and (south)-eastern parts of Ukraine; in other words, the regions that have been most affected by the Russian full-scale invasion (see the map in chapter 4.1 and the footnote below for the distribution of oblasts into different regions).[12]

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

Further analysis (not depicted in Figure 5.1) shows that a majority (57%) reported that, at the time of the full-scale invasion, they lived in a place which had not been occupied by Russia. Another 13% lived in a place which had previously been occupied but which was no longer occupied, while 28% lived in a place which was occupied by Russia at the time of the survey (territories in the East and South-East of the country).

When comparing differences between cohorts (according to month of arrival in Norway), we find that in the first wave (February–June 2022), a larger share came from the Central parts of Ukraine (including areas that were occupied but later liberated). After July 2022, the largest share has come from the Eastern and South-Eastern regions.

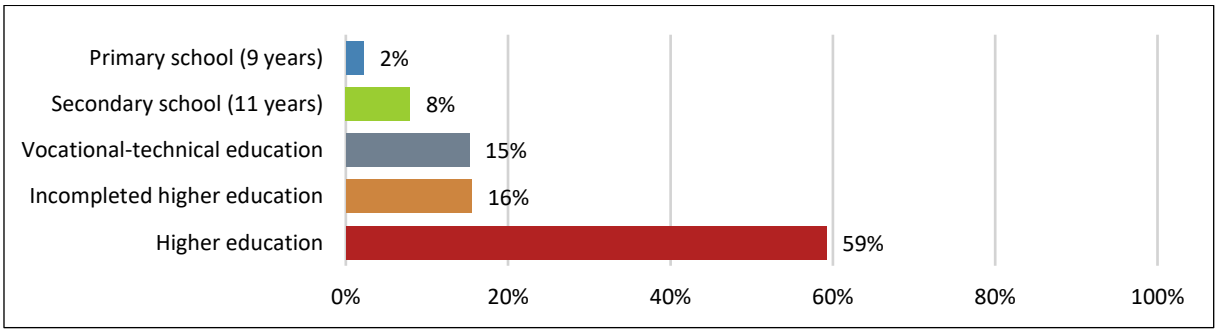
A larger share of the male refugees fled from Eastern parts of Ukraine (33% compared with 24% of women) and from areas that are currently occupied by Russian forces (36% compared with 24%), i.e., the regions that have been most affected by the war. Female refugees, on the other hand, are overrepresented among those who lived in the Western and Central regions before Russia's full-scale invasion.

5.2 Previous education, work experience and language skills

What levels of education do the Ukrainians refugees in Norway have, and are there differences between cohorts, for example, between those arriving during the first phase and those arriving more recently?

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

Figure 5.2: Education level (N=1594).



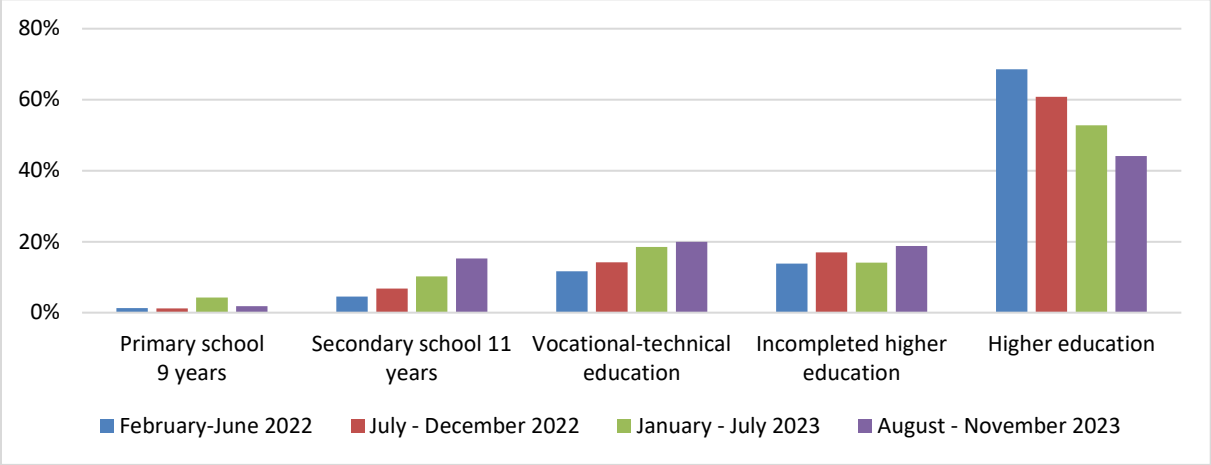
*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 5.2 shows that a large share of Ukrainian refugees have higher education: 59% have completed higher education, a further 16% have incomplete higher education, and 15% have vocational-technical education. Only 1% of the respondents reported having only primary and basic secondary education. Thus, Ukrainian refugees have higher levels of education on arrival than did previous refugee groups in Norway, where the majority have often had primary or equivalent lower levels of education (Hernes et al. 2022).

Cross-tabulations of education level with age groups and gender show that there are few differences in education levels based on these characteristics. The exception is the youngest age group (18–25 years) where, naturally, fewer have started or completed higher education.

However, the educational composition of different cohorts (depending on month of arrival in Norway) varies significantly.

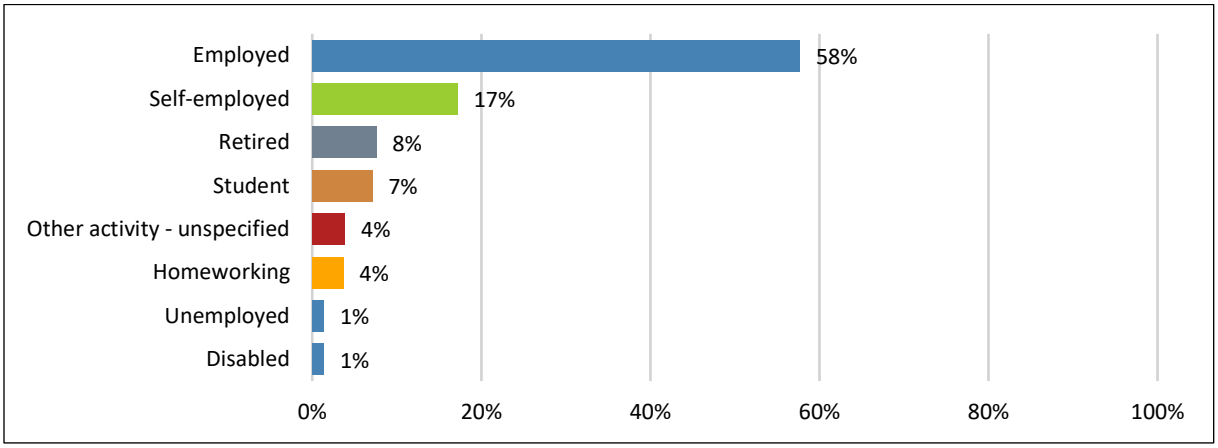
Figure 5.3: Education level separated by time of arrival in Norway (four categories) (N=1594).



*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 5.3 shows the large differences in education levels between cohorts, depending on time of arrival in Norway. The cohorts that arrived in the first months after February 2022 had higher education levels on arrival than those that arrived more recently, with a clear downward trend relative to time of arrival. For example, of those who arrived in February–June 2022, 69% had completed higher education, while the corresponding share among those who arrived in August–September 2023 was 44%. The percentage of those with secondary school or vocational-technical education have correspondingly increased among more recently arrived cohorts.

Figure 5.4: Main activity before arrival in Norway (N=1594).

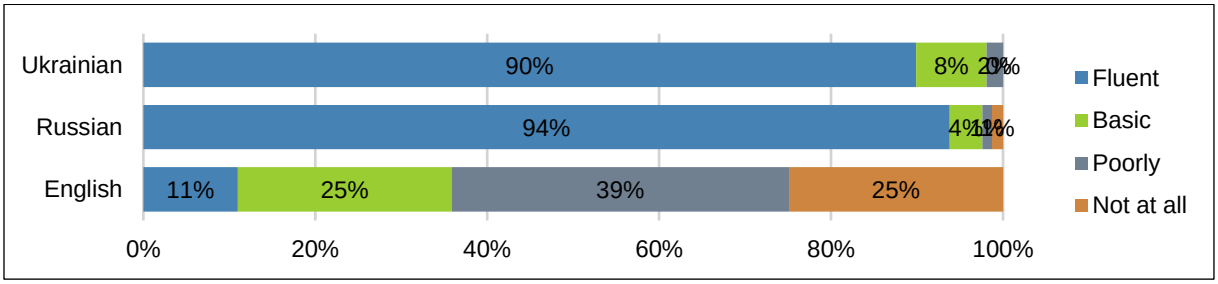


*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 5.4 shows the main activity the respondents had at the time of the Russian full-scale invasion. As many as three in four were either employed (58%) or self-employed (17%), and 8% were retirees. A further 7% were students, 4% homemakers, 1% disabled and 1% unemployed.

In the qualitative interviews with employees in the municipalities, several interviewees said that there was often a mismatch between the Ukrainians' formal education and their previous work experience in Ukraine (see chapter 2.1). Thus, we asked the respondents whether they had used their education in the job they had in Ukraine. 71% answered yes while 29% answered no. Not unexpectedly, those in the youngest age groups were the least likely to have used their education in their job.

Figure 5.5: Language proficiency (Ukrainian, Russian, English) (N=1593).



*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 5.5 shows that there are slightly more people who speak Russian (94%) than Ukrainian (90%) fluently, but a large majority (85%) reported speaking both languages fluently. Their English levels vary much more: only 11% reported speaking English fluently, 25% assessed their own English skills as basic, and almost two-thirds (64%) reported speaking English poorly or not at all. While 43% of the cohort that arrived before July 2022 reported having at least basic English, subsequent cohorts reported poorer English language skills, the lowest being among those arriving in the autumn of 2023, with only 29% reporting to have at least basic English.

Additional analysis shows that those aged over 45 generally have poorer English language skills than younger age groups. Still, in the age groups up to 45 years, the shares that answered 'fluently' were only between 10% and 20%, so very few of the younger respondents have good English language skills. In the age groups from 46 years and above, between 44% and 56% reported not speaking English at all.

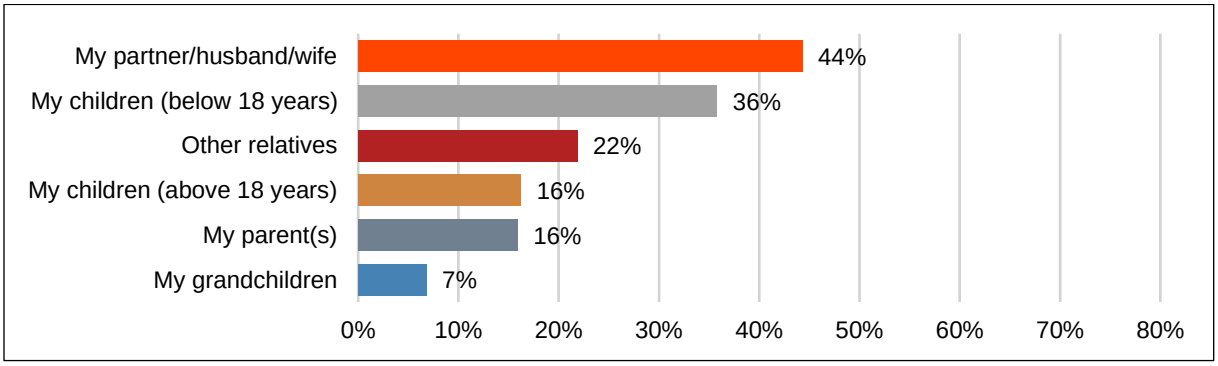
One interesting development we see among those who answered the survey in both 2022 and 2023 (who have lived in Norway for at least 15 months) is that that their (self-assessed) English language skills have improved. The percentage reporting that they did not speak English at all has more than halved, from 36% to 17%.

5.3 Family situation in Norway and Ukraine

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

According to our survey results, 45% of the respondents have children under 18 years (42% reported having children in our 2022 survey), and the vast majority of these parents have one or two children. However, some of the parents with children below 18 years do not live with their children in Norway: 6% say that they do not live with any of their children, while 11% live with one or some, but not all, of their children aged under 18.

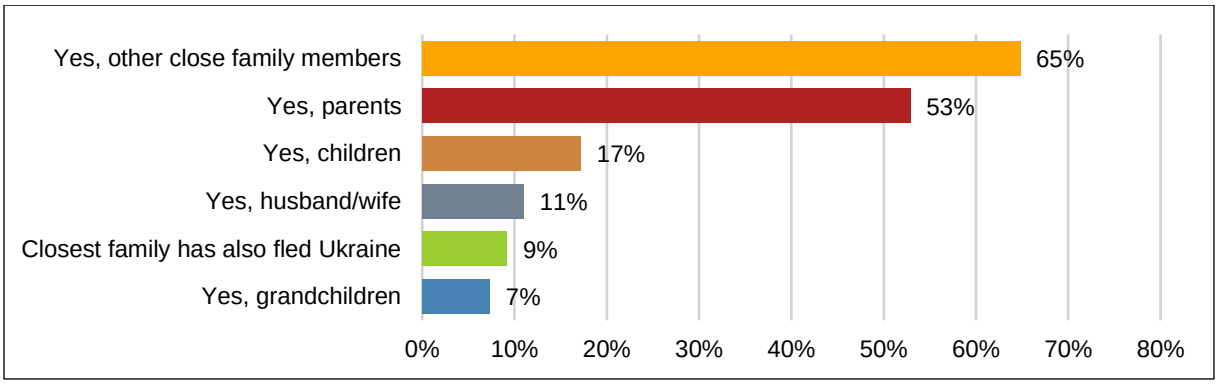
Figure 5.6: Family and friends in Norway (N=1593).



*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 5.6 gives an overview of the respondents' current family situation in Norway. The majority of respondents (73%) have relatives from Ukraine living in Norway. Almost half (44%) are in Norway with their partner, and 36% are in Norway with children below 18 years. A considerable share (both at 16%) have their parents or children aged 18 or older living in Norway, and 22% have more distant relatives.

Figure 5.7: Family remaining in Ukraine (N=1593).



*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 5.7 shows that the vast majority have close family members remaining in Ukraine. For example, more than half the respondents have parents left in Ukraine and 17% have children remaining there.

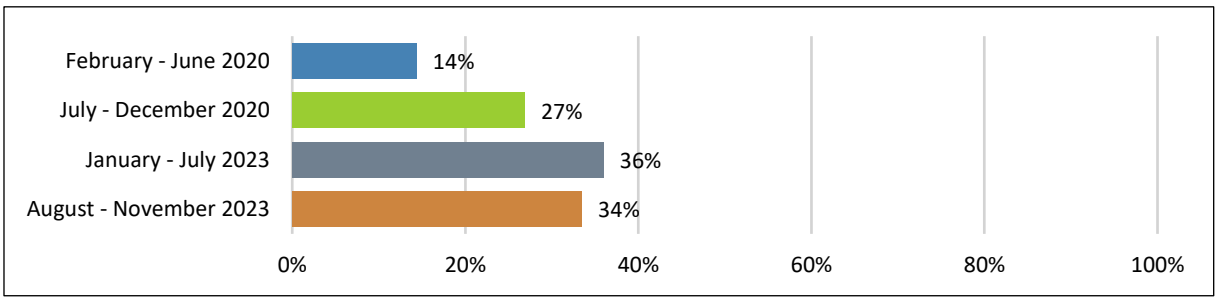
When comparing the results from the previous survey in June 2022, we see an interesting change related to whether or not partners are with the respondents in Norway or remain in Ukraine. While 27% of respondents in the 2022 survey reported travelling to Norway with their partner, we now see that 44% have their partner in Norway. Similarly, the share of respondents with a partner remaining in Ukraine has decreased; while 24% reported this in the 2022 survey, only 11% report likewise in the 2023 survey.

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

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

While most Ukrainian refugees (74%) came directly to Norway, one in four stayed (not just transited) in other countries before their arrival in Norway. However, this has become more common for cohorts arriving in 2023 than for those that arrived in 2022, as shown in Figure 5.8.

Figure 5.8: Percentage that stayed in other countries on their way to Norway (N=1573).



*Weighted by gender and age

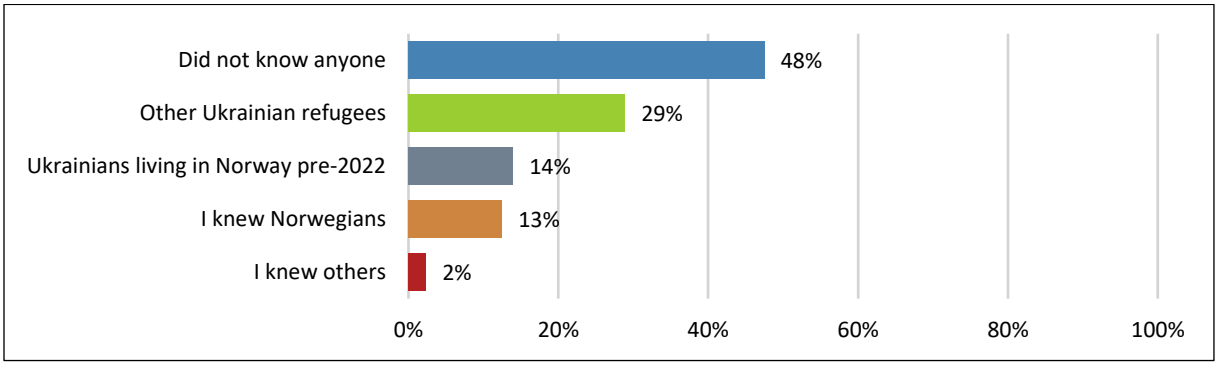
Figure 5.8 shows that the share of those that stayed (and not just in transit) in other countries before arriving in Norway has increased significantly from the first wave in 2022, reaching more than one-third of the refugees arriving in Norway in 2023.

Of those who stayed in other countries on their way to Norway, the most common country for such an intermittent stay was Poland, reported by four in 10 of these respondents, followed by Germany and then Slovakia, Sweden, and Italy (between 3% and 5% each). Russia was not given as an option in the survey question, which is probably why a relatively large share (19%) of the respondents selected 'other European country'. That some refugees have taken a longer route to Norway is also evidenced by the fact that almost one in 10 selected 'other non-European country'.

5.5 Pre-existing network and reason for coming to Norway

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

Figure 5.9: Previous networks in Norway (N=1593).



*Weighted by gender and age

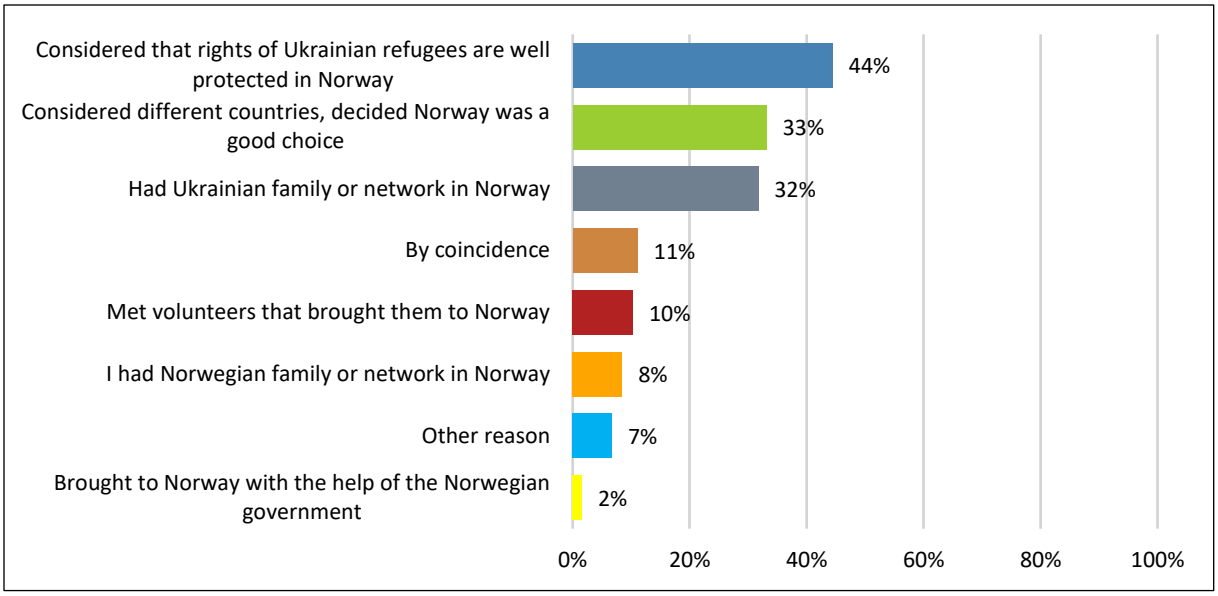
Figure 5.9 shows that just over half the respondents had a pre-existing network in Norway before they arrived. Further analysis shows that the share of respondents that reported not knowing anyone remained relatively stable between the different cohorts of refugees. However, there are large differences between cohorts concerning the type of network they had before arrival. The share of respondents that knew Norwegians in advance has decreased considerably (from 21% in the first wave to 4% in the autumn 2023 cohort). The share of respondents that knew other Ukrainians who lived in Norway before February 2022 has also decreased, while the share of respondents that knew other Ukrainian refugees before arrival has increased, though with the largest share in the January–July 2023 period (43%).

Respondents who reported knowing *Ukrainian non-refugees* (who lived in Norway before February 2022) before their arrival in Norway were further asked about their relationship with these Ukrainians. The majority answered that they had friends or acquaintances (85%), 12% had their children in Norway, 7% their partner and 4% their parents.

Correspondingly, those who reported knowing *Ukrainian refugees* residing in Norway before their own arrival were asked about their relationship with these Ukrainians. About one-third answered that the relationship was family members, friends or other acquaintances, respectively.

During the autumn of 2023, Norway has received more Ukrainian refugees than all the other Nordic countries combined. A pertinent question to ask, therefore, is why Ukrainian refugees chose to come to Norway?

Figure 5.10: Reasons reported for coming to Norway (N=1592).



*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 5.10 shows that almost half (44%) of respondents chose Norway because they considered that refugees' rights are well protected in this country. One-third had considered different countries but decided that Norway would be the best choice, and another third chose Norway because they already had family members living here. About one in 10 came to Norway simply by chance.

The main reasons for coming to Norway have changed with the different cohorts of Ukrainian refugees arriving. Both the first and the second options in Figure 5.10 have become much more common over time. For example, among those who arrived between February and June 2022, 23% chose the first option and 21% chose the second, but the corresponding figures for those who arrived in the autumn of 2023 were 40% and 69%, respectively. On the other hand, having Norwegian family members or networks in Norway, being brought to Norway by volunteers or ending up in Norway by coincidence were reasons more often given by the first arrivals. Among the 7% that reported coming to Norway for some 'other reason', some stated medical evacuation and medical treatment, that they had been to Norway before or that they had always wanted to visit Norway. A few also reported having found work in Norway prior to arrival or having worked in Norway previously.

In the survey, we also posed the open question: 'Why did you think Norway was a better choice than other countries?' which many took their time to answer. We find that there was a variety of reasons for choosing Norway.

Many highlighted what they see as positive qualities of Norway and Norwegian society. Here they mention rule of law, democracy, high standard of living, low levels of corruption and crime. Some also mentioned that Norway is a NATO member and that they felt secure here. Quite a few mentioned nature, clean air, Norwegians' attitude towards the environment and a climate that suits them.

> Laws are respected here, people are great, and the nature is wonderful. I also knew that Norway has a good adaptation programme.

> My family was choosing between Finland and Norway. Norway is warmer, the language is easier, there is a good integration programme for refugees.

As the above quotations indicate, many also emphasise the existence of what they consider a good integration programme and/or a generally good reception of Ukrainian refugees. The possibility to learn the Norwegian language was also highlighted:

> Because I got to know about the existence of an introduction programme. Opportunities to learn the language and work in the longer perspective.

Several emphasised that Norway is a good country for children to live in, and where children are treated well and are protected.

> The best conditions for the future of my children.
>
> High level of assistance and safety for children.
>
> Great attitude towards children.

Good attitudes towards people with disabilities and sexual minorities in Norway were also among the reasons people mentioned for coming here:

> Tolerant attitude towards special children [with special needs]. There is an opportunity for such children to attend an ordinary kindergarten and an ordinary school and feel like a full-fledged member of society.
>
> I spent several months in Poland. I belong to the LGBT community. In Poland, I was attacked because of my sexual orientation, and I chose Norway because here I have the same rights as other people. My partner and I are recognised as a family, we can officially get married here. And the main thing is that in Norway, we don't have to worry about our safety.

Some respondents mentioned the high standard of healthcare services as a reason for deeming Norway a better choice than other countries. The fact that Norwegian is an English-speaking society was also mentioned by several. Finally, some stated that they previously had dreamed of visiting Norway or had visited as tourists or had worked here. A few reported thinking it likely that they would find work in Norway given their profession, which they knew was in demand here.

The qualitative interviews also strengthen the findings from the survey that indicate that coming to Norway was often a deliberate and informed choice. Some of the interviewees reflected on how their decision to come to Norway was a conscious choice based on information they obtained from other Ukrainian refugees residing in Norway and/or by searching for information online. Some described how they went through a process of selection:

> We looked at different countries, just googled them, looked at photos of different cities and said that we can live here and it's beautiful, but here it's not so beautiful. When we looked at Norway, we realised that it was quite good, and it corresponds to my high idea of beauty. We also found out that there is a reception programme here. (Interviewee 2, 12.05.2023)

A woman whose husband was abroad at the time of the full-scale invasion first travelled to the country where he was at the time. They worked remotely from abroad for about six months. However, as the war dragged on and their savings were depleted, they needed a more permanent solution, which they did not consider possible in the non-European country they were temporarily residing in.

> I said, look, my friend [who had already fled to Norway] told me about Norway, let's try there, especially since we lead an active lifestyle, we love mountains, we love hiking, we love fishing. And we don' know this culture, and we were very interested in changing something and simply experiencing something new. And I talked with him [her husband] like that and made the decision to go. I looked at Facebook, there were a lot of chats, I searched a lot for information. (Interviewee 9, 22.05.2023)

Some interviewees had initially gone to another European country but found it difficult to remain there over time. Thus, they started looking for a long-term solution, eventually opting for Norway. One woman, who had first gone to Portugal, explained that when she realised that their migration would be long-term, she started to search for possibilities to study, but found out that it was quite difficult to accomplish there. She then started to investigate what countries had good conditions for integration: 'I heard that Norway approves Ukrainian diplomas. I came here in September 2022.' (Interviewee 14, 09.08.2023, 22 years)

Another couple had fled to Russia on the first day of the invasion because, as the interviewee explained, it was the only possibility for him to exit Ukraine after restrictions on men to leave the country were imposed. After having problems finding work in Moscow and

another European country, their savings were quickly being depleted. They got in touch with Ukrainians who had fled to Norway through someone they met abroad. Based on the information provided about the reception of Ukrainians in Norway, they decided to go to Norway (Interviewee 5, 19.05.2023).

For some, the fact of having a relative in Norway, combined with their knowledge of the country, influenced their decision:

> Due to the fact that I had a sister and a nephew [in Norway], and we understood that later we could bring my parents here from Ukraine, who at that time categorically did not want to go. It would still be better for all of us to be in one place. And knowing about Norway, that Norway is a European country with European standards of living, being fluent in English. I had such confidence about myself and my near future that I would be able to get a job, be a part of society. (Interviewee 8, 21.05.2023)

5.6 Summary

This chapter presented findings from the survey and qualitative interviews about the background and characteristics of the Ukrainian refugees who have arrived in Norway.

Most of the Ukrainian refugees in Norway previously lived in Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern parts of Ukraine, i.e., areas that have been most affected by the war. However, the majority (56%) lived in territories that have not been occupied by Russian forces.

Most of the Ukrainian refugees have higher education: 59% have completed higher education, a further 16% have incomplete higher education, and 15% have vocational-technical education. The education levels were highest among the first cohorts arriving in Norway and have gradually decreased with new cohorts.

The refugees' knowledge of English is limited. Only 36% speak at least basic English. Later cohorts reported poorer knowledge of English.

The majority of respondents (73%) have relatives from Ukraine living in Norway. Almost half (44%) are in Norway with their partner, and 36% are in Norway with children aged below 18. The vast majority have close family members remaining in Ukraine; more than half of the respondents have parents and 17% have children left in Ukraine. Fewer (11%) than in 2022 now have a partner remaining in Ukraine.

Three out of four respondents arrived directly in Norway. One in four stayed (not just transited) in other countries before their arrival in Norway, with Poland being the most common country of stay before coming to Norway. Intermittent stays are more common in later cohorts than they were among the first arrivals.

About half the respondents had a network in Norway before arriving, consisting usually of other Ukrainian refugees.

Three reasons for coming to Norway (instead of other countries) are most commonly reported: protection of rights of Ukrainian refugees in Norway, a better choice compared with other potential countries, and having Ukrainian family or network in Norway.

The open-ended survey questions and qualitative interviews confirmed that coming to Norway had often been a deliberate and informed choice. A variety of aspects of Norwegian society and an introduction programme with possibilities to learn the language were common reasons given for selecting Norway.

6 Overall assessment of reception, actors and services

What are the Ukrainian refugees' overall experiences with their reception in Norway? How do they assess specific actors and services, and have their overall impressions changed since the initial phase in 2022?

The descriptive analyses of the survey results in this chapter are presented as the average of the Ukrainian refugees' assessments. In the figures we also present the standard deviation (the thin black lines on the stacks in the figures). The standard deviation represents the average distance from the mean, and serves as a measure of the spread, or dispersion, of the distribution of answers (implying that the longer the lines, the more variation or differences in the respondents' answers).

In the analysis, we present the results from the 2023 survey, but we also describe differences between subgroups and compare the results from the 2023 survey with the answers from the 2022 survey (in text only). When relevant, we use the longitudinal data for the respondents who completed both the 2022 and the 2023 surveys to identify any changes in individuals' assessments over time.

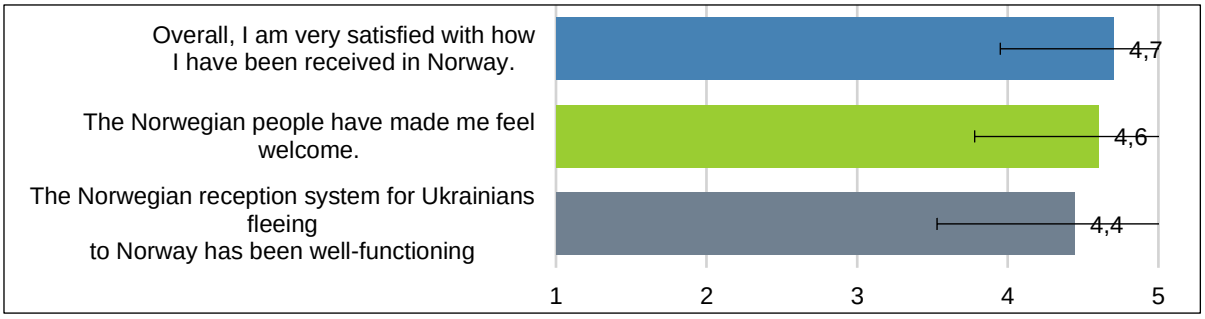
In this chapter, we first examine the Ukrainians' overall assessment of their reception in Norway, and investigate whether assessments differ between subgroups (e.g., depending on time of arrival, gender, age, etc.). We also examine and compare their assessments of various national, local and non-government actors and various types of services.

Since the main focus in this study is on settlement and integration, the overall assessment is presented in these chapters to compare them with other services, but these topics will be covered in depth in chapters 8–13. However, after we present the overall assessment of services presented in this chapter, we present shorter analyses of selected topics that have been explored in the survey and interviews, but to a lesser extent, namely registration and application, reception centres, healthcare services, and recognition of education.

6.1 Ukrainians are generally very satisfied with their reception in Norway

What is the Ukrainian refugees' overall assessment of their reception in Norway?

Figure 6.1: Assessment of overall experience in Norway (N=1593).



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

Figure 6.1 shows that the respondents are very satisfied with their overall reception in Norway, with mean scores ranging between 4.4 and 4.7 on a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 is indicates that they are very satisfied (strongly agreeing with the statement posed).

The 2022 survey demonstrated that the first wave of Ukrainian refugees were on average also very satisfied with their reception in Norway. When comparing the results from the 2022 and the 2023 survey, we find an *even higher* level of satisfaction in 2023 than in 2022. This is especially the case for the level of agreement with the statement 'The Norwegian reception system for Ukrainians fleeing to Norway has been well-functioning'. In the 2022 survey, respondents on average gave a score of 3.8, and in 2023 this score has increased to 4.4. The average score for agreement with the statement that, overall, they have been satisfied with how they have been received in Norway has increased from 4.4 to 4.7. The level of agreement with the statement that Norwegian people have made them feel welcome is stable, with a high score of 4.6 in both surveys.

6.1.1 Regression analysis of satisfaction and background variables

Do certain subgroups of Ukrainian refugees express higher levels of satisfaction than others?

To explore this, we initially examined whether satisfaction with the three key aspects mentioned above (overall satisfaction, perception of feeling welcomed by Norwegians, and satisfaction with the reception system) are internally correlated. Such correlation would indicate that these aspects collectively represent a single dimension. The results of our reliability analysis confirmed such high internal correlation[13], justifying the creation of an index termed 'reception experience'. This index takes into account the combined satisfaction across the three aforementioned aspects.

We then conducted a multiple linear regression with the new index variable 'reception experience' as the dependent one and various independent variables which potentially could have an effect on satisfaction levels. Table 6.1 shows the results.

[13] The reliability analysis with the three variables resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79, i.e., a quite high internal correlation between them.

Table 6.1: Multiple linear regression. Dependent variable: Reception experience index. High value = expressed high satisfaction (N=1557).

	Unst. coeff	Std. err.	Stand. coeff.	Significance
Constant	4.30	0.10		0.000**
Male sex (vs. female)	0.05	0.04	0.03	0.192
Age (in years)[14]	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.044*
Has children 18 yrs of age (vs. none)	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.125
Education 11 yrs or less (vs. higher)	0.02	0.06	0.01	0.693
Education vocational (vs. higher)	-0.08	0.05	-0.04	0.140
English basic/fluent (vs. poor/none)	-0.09	0.04	-0.06	0.042*
Previous network in Norway (vs. none)	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.236
Centrality of municipality (6 levels. 1 = big city)	-0.02	0.01	-0.04	0.160
Arrived 2nd cohort (vs. 1st cohort before July 2022)	0.15	0.05	0.09	0.003**
Arrived 3rd cohort (vs. 1st)	0.20	0.05	0.13	0.000**
Arrived 4th cohort (vs. 1st)	0.31	0.07	0.13	0.000**
Organised own accommodation (vs. others)	-0.05	0.05	-0.03	0.310
Currently working (vs. all others)	0.15	0.06	0.07	0.014*

**Significant at 0.01 level

*Significant at 0.05 level

Adjusted R^2 = 0.024

The analysis reveals that there are very few differences between subgroups in terms of level of satisfaction. Only a few of the variables have a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of being satisfied with reception in Norway, and the variables do not explain much of the variation in responses to these questions. However, arrival time in Norway matters somewhat; the most recent arrivals have been most satisfied with the reception. Furthermore. elderly respondents are somewhat more likely to be satisfied than the younger ones. People who have already found work in Norway are also on average more satisfied than those not working. Finally, knowledge of English is associated with slightly less satisfaction. We do not know exactly why this is the case, but one explanation may be that these respondents might have had somewhat higher expectations of their reception in Norway than others. None of the following variables have statistically significant effects on satisfaction levels: gender, having or not having children, education level, type of settlement in Norway, mode of finding accommodation and previous network in Norway. The main conclusion drawn from the analysis, however, is that satisfaction with reception in Norway is on average very high, regardless of which category a respondent belongs to.

[14] Since this is a continuous variable with one-year intervals, the unstandardised coefficient is close to zero. However, despite its apparent lack of effect in raw units, the standardised coefficient reveals the variable's effect on the dependent variable.

6.1.2 Changes with length of residence

Has the level of satisfaction changed with longer length of residence in Norway?

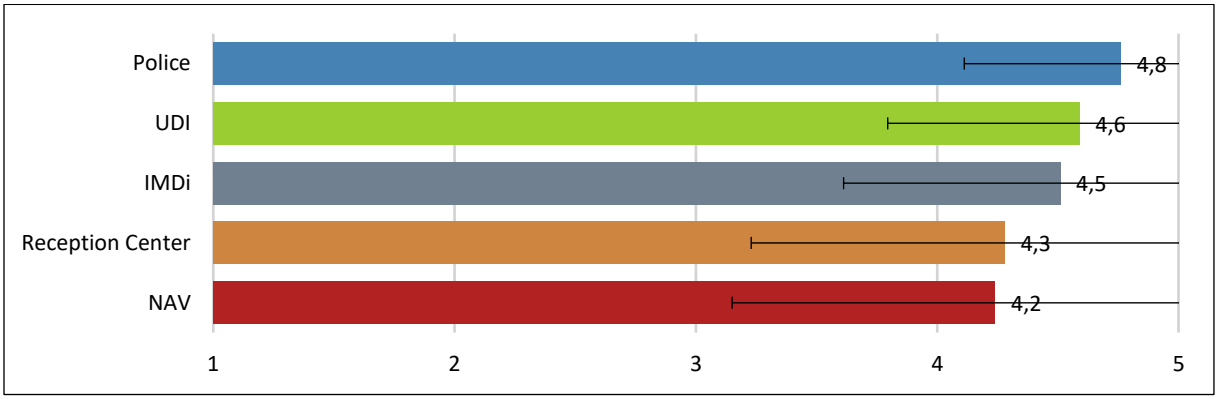
Based on the longitudinal data from respondents who completed both the 2022 and 2023 surveys, we are able to analyse whether their assessment of the overall reception in Norway has changed since they answered in June 2022. In 2022, their mean scores for the three components presented in the above sections were 4.4 (overall reception), 4.6 (welcomed by the Norwegian people), and 3.9 (the Norwegian reception system), aligning closely with the overall means of the 2022 survey participants. By 2023, reported satisfaction had increased to 4.7 for the overall reception and 4.3 for the Norwegian reception system, while the perceived welcome by Norwegians remained high at 4.6.

Noteworthy fluctuations were observed in individual responses over time. Regarding the overall reception in Norway, 65% gave the same score as in the 2022 survey, 25% gave a higher score and 11% a lower score. In the statement regarding feeling welcomed by Norwegians, 74% gave an identical score as in 2022, 11% gave a higher score and 15% a lower score. The most significant changes were related to perceptions of the Norwegian reception system, where half of the respondents gave the same score as in 2022, while as many as 37% gave a higher score and 13% a lower score.

6.2 Positive overall assessment of public and civil society actors

In the survey, we asked respondents to assess the various government and non-government actors they may have been in contact with during their stay in Norway. We start with some key actors which most refugees are likely to have dealings with after arriving in Norway.

Figure 6.2: Assessment of public actors (N = 1202-1431).

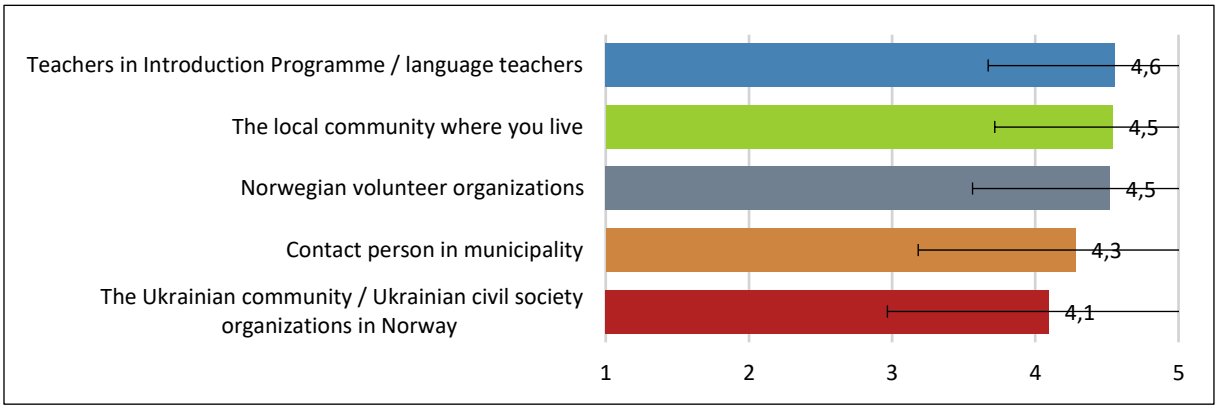


*Means and standard deviations. Scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied)
** Weighted by gender and age
*** Respondents indicating that they had not been in contact with or did not have any opinion about these actors are excluded from the analyses

Figure 6.2 illustrates the very positive assessments of all actors, with especially high scores for the police, UDI and IMDi. It should be stressed that reception centres and NAV also receive good scores, thought with somewhat larger standard deviations, implying more variation among respondents. When comparing these responses with those given in 2022, we see improvements for all actors, particularly for UDI and IMDi (up 0.5 and 0.4 points respectively from a score of 4.1 in 2022). The average improvement for the rest of the actors is 0.2 points.

We also find similarly positive assessments of the local and non-government actors, as presented in Figure 6.3 below.

Figure 6.3: Assessment of local and non-government actors (N = 915-1400).



*Means and standard deviations. Scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied)
** Weighted by gender and age.
*** Respondents indicating that they had not been in contact with or did not have any opinion about these actors are excluded from the analyses.

Figure 6.3 shows that all the listed actors received mean assessments above the second-highest score of 4, and the mean score for several actors is close to the top score of 5. As for the actors we also asked about in the 2022 survey (local community, Norwegian volunteer organisations, the Ukrainian community), there is little change, but we observe a small drop in the rating for the Ukrainian community, from 4.4 in 2022 to 4.1 in the present survey.

6.2.1 Contact with local authorities after settlement

The qualitative interviews support the overall findings in the survey and provide insights into what aspects the Ukrainian refugees have particularly appreciated, along with some identified challenges.

Several people mentioned that they turned to the teachers in the Norwegian language courses with various questions and challenges that arise. There are also examples of teachers who have gone beyond their formal responsibilities: 'My teachers also bought me furniture for the apartment. Very nice people here' (Interviewee 15, 09.08.2023). One interviewee had problems acquiring a BankID, because the nearest bank was far away and was closed outside the hours when they attended the introduction programme. Because they were unable to get help to solve this elsewhere, their teachers arranged for them to travel to the bank during opening hours.

The interviewees have experienced that they have had someone to turn to with their various questions and that they have been able to solve their problems by writing text messages and/or by physically meeting up at a public office:

> Look, we have our municipal *Flyktningekontor* [refugee services]. They are five people, well, that is, they work in a team. And if there are any questions, we contact them via text message or simply come directly to *flyktningkontoret* and resolve the issue. They hired a [Ukrainian] girl. In principle, she knew English, learned Norwegian, she already works there. And it makes it a little easier because issues are resolved faster (Interviewee 9, 22.05.2023).

As the last part of the above quote illustrates, several interviewees were particularly positive when Ukrainian- or Russian-speaking staff were available at NAV or the refugee services in their municipality. This made communication easier and more efficient. For elderly individuals, the language barrier has been a particular challenge. They found it immensely helpful to encounter Ukrainian- and/or Russian-speaking staff in the municipalities or NAV departments who could help them if, for example, they received a letter they had problems understanding: 'When we came to the municipality, we have a curator, [Ukrainian name], she always communicated with us, she was a translator for us' (Interviewee 12, 25.05.2023).

Interviewees also emphasised situations where they had received much appreciated help from NAV or the refugee services. When asked about her communication with NAV and the municipality, one woman said that NAV representatives were very helpful with settling her mother, who arrived in Norway after she had been settled in a municipality. The mother had health issues, and NAV made arrangements so that she could come straight to the municipality where her daughter lived in order to be settled there without staying at a reception centre first (Interviewee 9, 22.05.2023).

The refugees are often assigned a contact person in the municipality who follows them up and to whom they can address questions directly. Some had established very good contact, and even friendly relations, with their contact person. The interviewees often spoke warmly of the help they received from these individuals, and appreciated having a contact person that they could reach out to directly.

However, some were concerned about their dependency on this one person and had concerns about what would happen if their regular contact person was replaced.

> My [introduction] programme ended on the 22nd, August 22nd, and the payment will end in two weeks. I'm also nervous about this because our personal contact at NAV has changed. He [the new contact person] is an inexperienced person, and everything is going slowly, and it is unclear when we will have the next payments. With work, such a fluid situation, we are a little nervous. (Interviewee 3, FGI, 09.07.2023)

One interviewee commented that he had ‘been lucky’ with this person, also implying that there are others who are less lucky with their contact person:

> Not everyone is so lucky with their curators. There are curators who do not answer for a long time. Even in our group of students this happens, and accordingly, this leads to some slightly stressful situations. (Interviewee 2, 12.05.2023)

Some reported that, although they were grateful, they also felt that they were very dependent on this one person. Whether the refugee office was able to solve problems – and how efficiently – very much depended on this person’s abilities and capacity.

One interviewee pointed out that because NAV staff had helped to such a large extent, she did not have a full overview of her own situation, and felt that she lacked information about her rights and responsibilities in Norway:

> All the documents, everything that is related to me, they took the responsibility for. I signed a document that I trust them with this. And accordingly, all financial issues – NAV solves them. On the one hand, it makes my fate easier. On the other hand, I don't quite understand what's going on: What rights and obligations do I have? (Interviewee 1, 16.05.2023)

6.2.2 Municipal services under pressure

Some interviewees had the impression that the municipal services were under pressure, and that solving problems took very long because the system was slow or overburdened. For example, some had explained something to their personal contact that was not followed up on or taken into account, e.g., getting in touch with a relevant workplace for prospective work practice/language practice:

> We [the personal contact and I] agreed that I need work practice in a direction where I can be useful. And I came, and it turned out that the curator forgot and hadn’t done it – apparently because the workload was heavy. I also understand that. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

An interviewee who said his family was the second to arrive in his municipality reported that he was more hesitant to contact NAV/the refugee services because of the many new arrivals of Ukrainian refugees in the municipality:

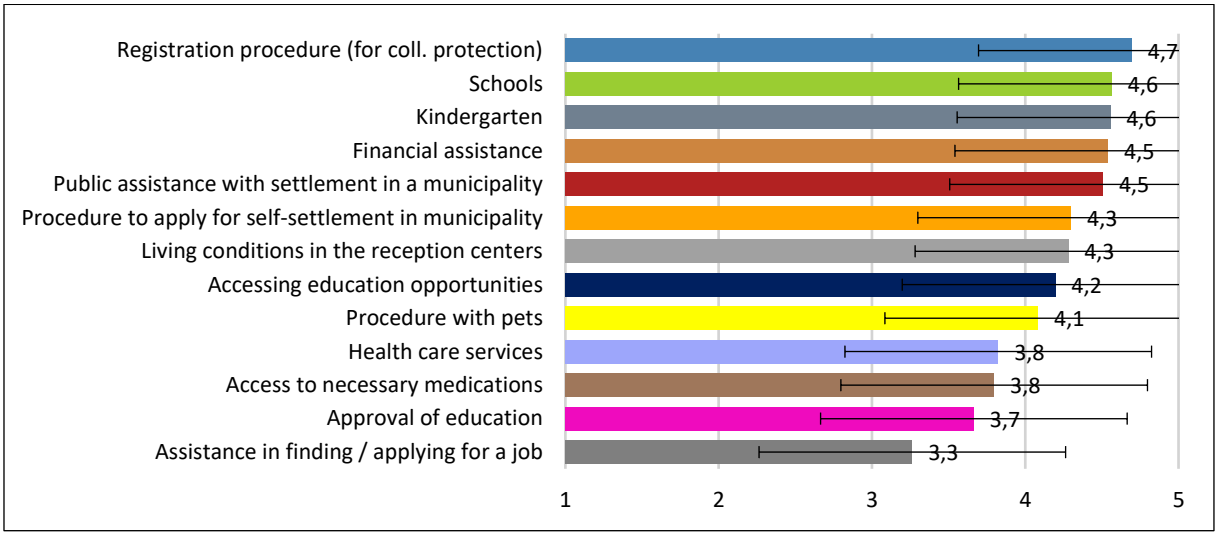
> We have difficulties with communication. When you ask for something, they are either not ready or don't know, or you must remind them two or three times. They really don’t have enough time. More and more people arrived. They had to adapt the educational programme, arrange accommodations, and solve firewood issues. I tried not to burden them, I had to handle everything myself. (Interviewee 8L, 04.08.2023)

Nevertheless, many emphasise that they understand that this is a challenging situation for Norwegian authorities, and stress that they have been satisfied with the help: ‘There are moments when there is a certain delay in the transfer of documents or something like that, but this is because of the huge number of refugees’ (Interviewee 2L, 07.05.2023). One interview clearly expressed that: ‘They [the municipal services] need more people’ (Interviewee 6, 20.05.2023).

6.3 Improved assessments of services and procedures

We asked survey respondents to assess the services and procedures that they may have been in contact with after their arrival in Norway. They were asked to use a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

Figure 6.4: Assessment of services and procedures (N = 506-1564).



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

Figure 6.4 shows that, for most services, the level of satisfaction is high, with averages above 4. Healthcare services and access to necessary medication are rated below the other services on the list, and the same is the case for recognition of education. It is noteworthy that the clearly lowest assessment is given for assistance in finding or applying for a job, with an average just above the middle of the scale.

Most of the listed services and procedures were also covered in the 2022 survey. Our results indicate considerable positive change. The registration procedure, for example, which in 2022 scored an average of 4.1, is now at the very top with a mean score of 4.7. Likewise, financial assistance is up from 3.8 in the 2022 survey to 4.5 in the 2023 survey. The procedures for public assistance with settlement in a municipality and for applying for self-settlement have also seen similar rises in satisfaction levels. The biggest improvement is found in connection with procedures for pets, which scored a low 3.2 in 2022 but scores 4.1 in 2023. The scores for other services show only minor changes.

To examine whether certain categories of respondents systematically give different assessments than others, we computed an index with mean scores on the list of services and procedures. Further analysis (not shown here) demonstrates that older people are more satisfied than younger people, those who arrived in Norway in later cohorts (2023) are more satisfied than those who arrived earlier (2022), and those who have found work are more satisfied than those who are unemployed. It is worth noting that the size and centrality of the municipality is not correlated with the score on the index, indicating that respondents are about equally satisfied whether they live in a central urban municipality or in a more remote rural district.

6.3.1 Registration and application procedure

As described above, the registration procedure received the highest average assessment of all the services, with a score of 4.7 out of a possible 5. The assessment had also improved since 2022, when it scored 4.1.

In the 2022 report, two primary obstacles were identified in the initial months following the arrival of Ukrainian refugees: extended waiting periods and insufficient information regarding the procedural steps in Råde. By March–April 2022, registration became feasible within police districts, and additional facilities were set up at Gardermoen to facilitate the process.

In line with the overall assessment in the survey, the interviews conducted in 2023 suggest that the registration process has improved. The interviewees reported that procedures were executed swiftly, and that ample information was available from diverse sources, including insights from Ukrainian refugees who had arrived during the initial wave. Unlike in 2022, in 2023 people experienced no problems with getting their passports back.

Interviewees who arrived in Norway in July mentioned that many Ukrainians were coming during that period, and that several public services were on vacation, resulting in delays in obtaining collective protection (Interviewee 18, 17.10.2023). Extra time was required for those who arrived from the Donetsk, Luhansk regions and the Crimea because they were also interviewed by the police (Interviewee 16, 17.10.2023).

However, those interviewees who came to Norway after July encountered no significant challenges in the registration process. We have interviewed individuals registered both in police districts and at Gardermoen. Overall, people expressed satisfaction with the reception, reported no bureaucratic hurdles, and found the registration process to be relatively swift.

Experiences during the stay in Råde still varied among interviewees. Some felt a sense of relief because they ‘got a place to sleep after an 11-day journey to Norway’ (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023). Conversely, others expressed a strong desire ‘to leave this place as soon as possible’ (Interviewee 8, 21.05.2023).

6.3.2 Assessment of staying in reception centres

In NIBR's 2022 survey, Ukrainian refugees conveyed favourable assessments of the reception centres, with an average rating of 4.1 out of 5 (on a scale from 1, indicating strong dissatisfaction, to 5, indicating strong satisfaction). Still, people's perceptions varied significantly since reception centres were run by different actors and differed considerably in terms of location and building type and provided different nutritional and accommodation options (Hernes et al. 2022).

The results of the 2023 survey (see Figure 6.2 on overall assessment of public actors) show that the favourable assessments have been even further strengthened with a mean score of 4.3 (compared with 4.1 in 2022). Only 9% are somewhat or very dissatisfied (1 or 2 on the scale), while 59% gave the top score of 5. As regards living conditions in the reception centres (see Figure 6.4), the same average score (4.3) was given, with only 7% giving scores of 1 or 2.

The interviews conducted in 2023 have, to some extent, followed the trends observed in the previous year. More frequently, individuals expressed positive feedback regarding their experiences at the reception centres. They reported receiving the necessary assistance, including medical care, and participated in various activities offered at these facilities.

However, several interviewees also highlighted challenging living conditions at the reception centres. The most challenging issues were related to having to share rooms with individuals not from their own families and to the financial support provided for food, which some interviewees considered insufficient. At least, such comments were made by interviewees who arrived in Norway during the first phase (between March and May 2022), a period coinciding with UDI's notification of challenges related to the disbursement of pocket money for Ukrainian refugees:

> I don't want to talk about this camp because we heard there were many journalistic investigations. There were really bad conditions. But the main problem was that we were brought into a room with strangers, and my child has an autistic spectrum. It is very difficult with strangers. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

> There are different types of reception centres. They did not feed us, and we received four thousand kroner for two persons per month. I communicate with people and know that they have changed the payments. Now two people will receive eight or nine thousand per month.

> This, believe me, is a big difference, especially when you cook yourself'. (Interviewee 5, 19.05.2023)
>
> We were given money, but this money was barely enough for food with a discount (Interviewee 4, 16.05.2023).

Several interviewees emphasised the invaluable assistance provided by volunteers, which played a crucial role in addressing everyday challenges in those settings:

> The reception centre was in a poor condition. Thanks to volunteers, we got light in the corridor. There was no special food for children or people who need a special diet. Volunteers helped and brought fruit and other things. (Interviewee 13, 26.05.2023)
>
> Volunteers provided us with bicycles and furniture for our room. (Interviewee 4, 16.05.2023)

Experiences varied significantly, however, and more often than not, interviewees expressed their gratitude and satisfaction with their stay at the reception centres. They spoke warmly of the dedicated staff who assisted them and organised various activities:

> We got money and could buy our own food. For us it was fine. We were happy to cook for ourselves. There were many nice events. The reception was always open. We could always ask. The staff were very nice. (Interviewee 14, 09.08.2023)

One of the activities that were emphasised as highly appreciated was the language courses. As described in chapter 3, Ukrainian refugees are exempted from the right and obligation to take Norwegian language courses during their stay in reception centres, which other refugees are required to do under the Integration Act of 2021. Some interviewees explained that they were provided with the opportunity to study Norwegian and English while residing at the reception centres. In most cases, language learning was organised by local volunteers or Ukrainians who were permanent residents of Norway. The interviewees greatly appreciated these opportunities and emphasised the importance of language courses at this stage of their stay in Norway. Some of them reported that because of this initial language training, they were able to begin at higher levels (e.g., A2 level) when they subsequently started the introduction programme in their settlement municipality, which enabled them to reach a higher level of language proficiency by the end of the programme. Many interviewees also stressed the immense value of participating in language courses, preventing what they considered to be 'a waste of time' while staying at the reception centres. Some emphasised that establishing language courses at this stage, with the assistance of volunteers and civil society, would be a wise decision:

> Look at the situation in Norway now. The period of staying in the motel is increasing all the time. And I think there is a waste of time during this period. I think that an improvement for the administration of the reception centres would be some kind of assistance, some kind of language courses for people staying there. (Interviewee 1, 16.05.2023)

The duration of people's stay at the reception centres varied significantly, as reported by the interviewees. Some spent no more than two months there, while others had to wait for settlement for over half a year. One woman, who resided at the reception centre for 7.5 months, shared the challenges she faced during this period. These challenges included a lack of activities available to residents at the centre, social isolation (inability to communicate with people outside the centre), and a feeling of depression:

> As for us, we were not busy with anything. People were stuck in transit for a long time. The reception centre we were in is detached from the infrastructure, from the city, it is in a field. And people, like us, were seven and a half months there. We were just in the rooms. And some felt aggression. There were reactions to stress. Group conflicts began. People didn't have anyone to just show all of their pain. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

This woman explained that residents at the reception centre tried to ask the administration to organise 'psychological support groups' facilitated by individuals with basic knowledge of psychology, but their requests went unanswered. Many refugees experienced depression and sought assistance from specialists in Ukraine:

> I also had depression, for the first time in my life. For three or four months I was in a very bad condition. My colleagues from Ukraine helped me. They offered free psychologist from Zaporizhzhia. We met online. And then I felt relieved. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

The overall impression from the interviewees' reflections is that Ukrainian refugees were not asked about their mental health or potential psychological problems.

People had varying experiences with the medical care provided at the reception centres. Some interviewees expressed satisfaction with the free medical assistance they received, while others were dissatisfied with the prescribed treatments: 'I needed to order medicine in Ukraine, because I did not get any results from the doctor's referral, where the reception centre sent me. I have rheumatoid arthritis'. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

Additionally, interviewees reported that in some cases the approach to providing medical care changed over time:

> First medical help was free, later people had to pay. In the beginning, there was a nurse there. The nurse made an appointment for me, and the doctor came to the reception centre. Later people had to pay themselves for medical help. (Interviewee 14, 09.08.2023)

6.3.3 Healthcare services: still a 'culture clash'

In the assessment above, the healthcare services are given a score of 3.8, and it is the only service that received a lower score in 2023 than in 2022 (although a very minor decrease of only 0.1 on the scale, from 3.9 in 2022).

Although many of the interviewees are satisfied with the healthcare services provided to them, there is significant variation, and some prevailing challenges continue. The 2022 report pointed to a 'culture clash' between the Norwegian and Ukrainian cultures regarding the threshold to see a doctor or a specialist and access to or use of medicine. The findings from the qualitative interviews indicate that this culture clash is still apparent. In general, there is a sense that the threshold for seeking medical attention or medication for milder ailments is lower in Ukraine than in Norway. The interviewees explained that emergency room queues were shorter, and access to various medicines was easier in Ukraine. Also, their expectations of additional examinations by specialists – a common practice in Ukraine – were not met, leading to frustration and a sense of vulnerability. To bridge this gap, interviewees have reached out to Ukrainian doctors or, when feasible, sought medical examinations in other countries:

> I did not like the communication with the family doctor [*fastlegen*]. I asked him about some analysis that I used to take in Ukraine. The doctor said there was no reason to send me to a specialist at this stage, but in Ukraine, a specialist had always checked me. I am not sure that I will get the help I need – it will be easier to ask my Ukrainian doctor. (Interviewee 14, 09.08.2023)

A few interviewees recounted experiencing deteriorating medical conditions in Norway due to insufficient treatment or access to medication. For instance, one interviewee suffering from rheumatoid arthritis described how her condition deteriorated during her stay at the reception centre. She had to arrange for medication from Ukraine to be delivered to her in Norway:

> I ordered medicine in Ukraine because I did not get any results from the doctor's referral. Finally, for the first time in my life, I experienced seizures just lying in the room. Now I have one leg with a defect, and I will have to go to Lithuania or Ukraine for treatment, because I have not received it here. The doctor sent a letter to the clinic in [Norwegian city] with results. After a month, I received a letter from [Norwegian city]. They received the results, but it seemed to them that there is little evidence that I need help. I was offered to return to the clinic, where I started to undergo an additional X-ray. I returned, but it was another doctor who did not know anything about me. She gave me a pack of Panadol. She did not prescribe the additional treatment. She said that she could help me sign up for physiotherapy. But the physiotherapist wrote me a letter two months later, when I was already leaving the reception centre. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

A few interviewees reported that their children developed psoriasis while in Norway. One interviewee, who had been settled in the north, expressed her concern when the doctor prescribed only topical ointments that proved ineffective. The interviewee requested a comprehensive examination to better understand the issue, but her request was denied. She explained that psoriasis is treated differently in Ukraine, and she believed there were better chances of resolving the problem there. This situation left her feeling frustrated as she saw few options for addressing the issue in Norway (Interviewee 6, 20.05.2023).

The long queues for public healthcare services were also mentioned:

> I was lucky that I got gastroscopy within one month, because I had heard of people waiting for ages for medical help in Norway. There is a huge difference from Ukraine, where you can see a doctor quickly and most issues are solved within a week. (Interviewee 13, 26.05.2023.

However, there were also some who had adapted and gained a better understanding of the Norwegian system: 'I understand that I am not the only one who is waiting for a doctor. I understand that there is no one to blame' (Interviewee 6, 20.05.2023).

Despite these challenges, the interviewees emphasised that the treatment of severe illnesses and elderly care was notably more proficient in Norway than in Ukraine. For example, interviewees whose children have diabetes or asthma reported that they received all the necessary medication and prompt access to doctors when needed (Interviewee 4, 16.05.2023). Several interviewees also acknowledged that when it came to serious medical issues, the assistance provided in Norway was more comprehensive and genuinely free of charge:

> My impression is that things are much slower here compared with Ukraine. And you need prescription for all kinds of medicine. However, when people are seriously ill, they get help, and it is for free. (Interviewee 6, 20.05.2022)

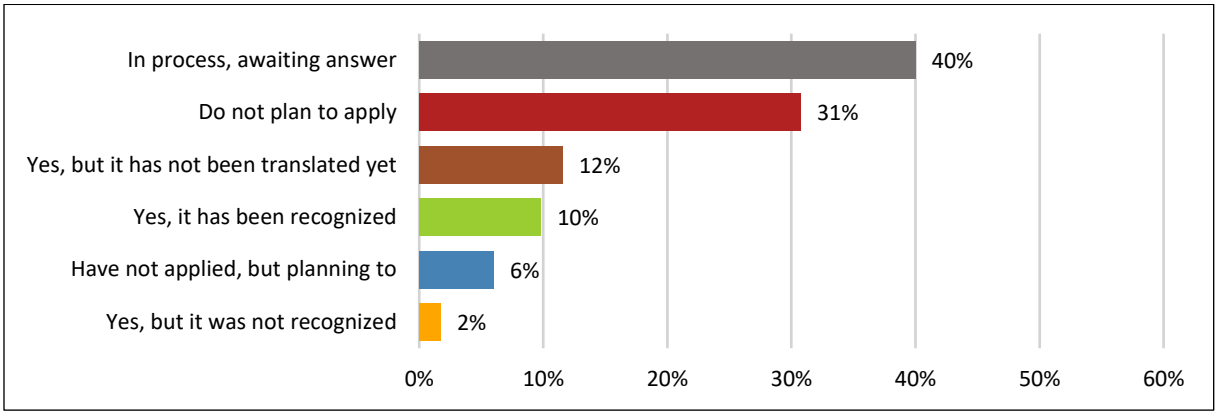
Elderly people often reported that they sought medical assistance in Norway after their arrival, and that, overall, they were very satisfied with the treatment they received in Norwegian hospitals and from Norwegian doctors. While many younger refugees mentioned facing challenges with medical services, some emphasised their high satisfaction with how their parents were treated in the Norwegian healthcare system.

6.3.4 Formal recognition of education from Ukraine

To have educational qualifications recognised in Norway, one can apply to HK-dir (previously NOKUT, see chapter 3.4). Degrees or educational programmes are then evaluated against the Norwegian degree structure (HK-dir 2023c). HK-dir also offers automatic recognition of some qualifications from selected countries.[15] In the overall assessment of services presented in Figure 6.5, recognition of education was among the services with the lowest score, at 3.7.

[15] Automatic recognition is a standardized statement describing the Norwegian degree to which a foreign degree may be equated. The document can be used without having to apply for recognition or upload documents for assessment. It is not, however, a recognition procedure and involves no assessment of your ID and academic qualifications (NOKUT 2023 https://www.nokut.no/en/news/recognition-of-education-and-qualifications-from-ukraine/).

Figure 6.5: Current status of recognition of formal education from Ukraine (N=1558).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those answering 'Not needed/not relevant' (2%) have been excluded.

Figure 6.5 shows that when asked whether they had applied to have their education from Ukraine formally recognised in Norway (by HK-dir/NOKUT), only one in 10 confirmed that their education had been recognised, whereas 2% had been turned down. A large share (four in 10) respondents reported that they were in the process but were waiting for an answer. A further 12% replied that they were in the process, but that their application had not yet been translated. One-third of the respondents do not plan to apply (including the 2% who said that the question was not relevant to them).

When it comes to recognition of Ukrainian education in Norway, the refugees reported varied experiences in the interviews. Representatives of some professions, such as doctors and psychologists, reported that it is not possible for them to obtain recognition. Meanwhile, others have initiated this procedure or have even obtained recognition. Some refugees mentioned that the municipalities had been helpful in translating the necessary documents. In some cases, Ukrainian refugees highlighted that they had not received enough information from the contact persons in the municipalities regarding recognition of their education and expressed a desire to receive more information about this process: 'I have not hearted any specific recommendations from my curator regarding the diploma approval. I'm trying to understand what to do by myself' (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023).

6.4 Summary

This chapter presented Ukrainians' assessments of and experiences with the reception in Norway, and with services and procedures at national and local levels.

Ukrainian refugees expressed very high satisfaction with their overall reception in Norway, with mean satisfaction scores for three aspects of their reception experiences ranging between 4.4 and 4.7 on a scale from 1 (least satisfied) to 5 (most satisfied).The 2023 survey indicates even higher satisfaction levels than in the 2022 survey, especially regarding the functioning of the Norwegian reception system. Longitudinal data from the same respondents who completed the 2022 survey show an increase in overall satisfaction levels with their reception in Norway and with the Norwegian reception system.

Subgroup analysis confirms that satisfaction with reception in Norway is consistently high across different categories of respondents. Factors such as arrival time, age, employment status, and knowledge of English show some statistically significant effects on satisfaction but explain only a limited variation in responses.

Public and civil society actors, including the police, UDI and IMDi, received very positive assessments, with improvements from 2022. Local and non-government actors also received high scores, with mostly positive trends since 2022. Furthermore, survey respondents

expressed high satisfaction with most services and procedures, with notable improvements from 2022. Qualitative interviews support the positive survey findings, highlighting the role of language teachers and contact persons in municipalities facilitating positive experiences. Some concerns were expressed about dependency on a single contact person. Some interviewees reported perceived pressure on municipal services due to large inflows, leading to delays and challenges in communication.

There have been positive changes in the registration process from 2022 to 2023, with smoother procedures, faster execution, and improved information availability. While the overall assessment is positive, several interviewees highlighted challenging living conditions at the reception centres.

Although many of the interviewees were satisfied with the healthcare services provided to them, there is significant variation, and some prevailing challenges, such a culture clash between the Norwegian and Ukrainian cultures related to the threshold for seeking medical help from a doctor or a specialist, and to access to or use of medicine.

Few of the respondents had so far had their education recognised by HK-dir/NOKUT, but many were in the process and waiting for an answer.

7 Assessment of information provided by the public authorities

How do the Ukrainian refugees assess access to information about different services related to reception, settlement and integration in Norway, and has their assessment changed since the situation in June 2022? What have been the main challenges and which services do they want more information about?

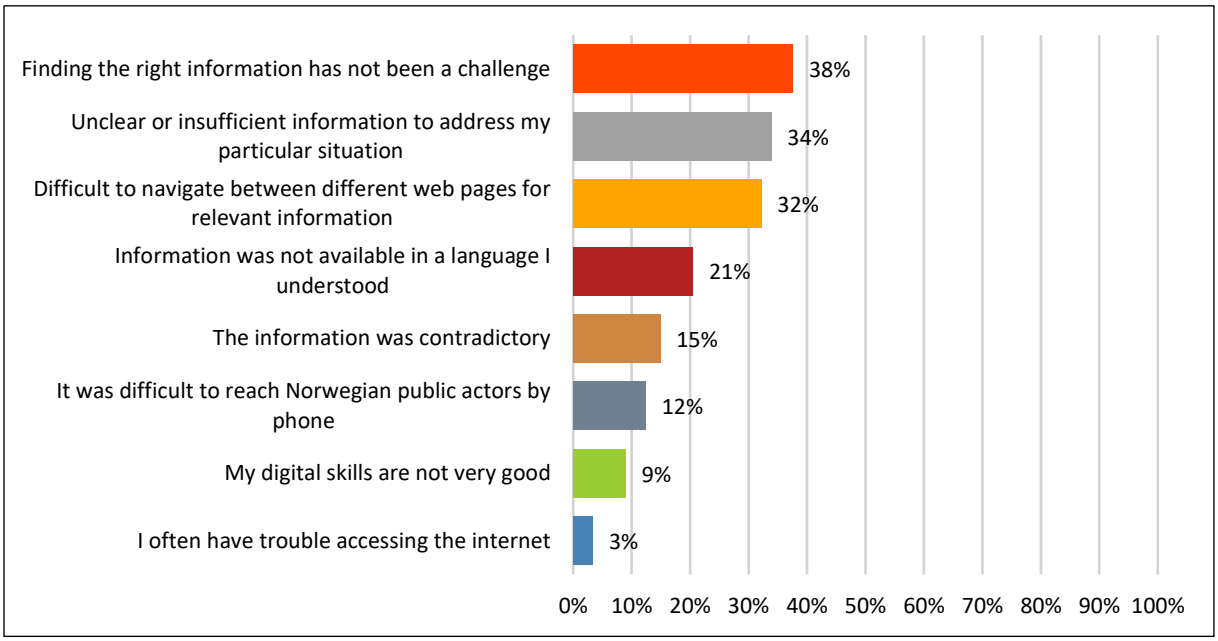
In NIBR's report for 2022 (Hernes et al. 2022), obtaining information was highlighted as one of the biggest challenges, particularly during the registration and settlement stages. Individuals found themselves bewildered and disheartened due to the involvement of multiple authorities with overlapping jurisdictions and a plethora of information sources that sometimes contradicted each other.

In this chapter, we start with an overall assessment of the information challenges and a description of the main sources that Ukrainian refugees use to find information. We continue with the Ukrainians' assessment of whether information about specific services related to their stay in Norway was sufficient. Since many of the questions are identical to those asked in the 2022 survey, we also compare results in the 2022 survey (conducted in June) with the 2023 survey.

7.1 Main information challenges

What have been the main challenges with finding the right information, if any?

Figure 7.1: Challenges with obtaining information (N=1593).



*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 7.1 shows that a substantial share (38%) reported that they had not experienced any challenges with finding the necessary information. For those who had experienced challenges with finding such information, two challenges stand out. The first is that the information has been unclear or insufficient to address the respondent's particular situation (34%). The second was that it had been difficult to navigate between different websites to find relevant information (32%). One in five responded that the information had not been available in a language they understood and 15% that the information was contradictory.

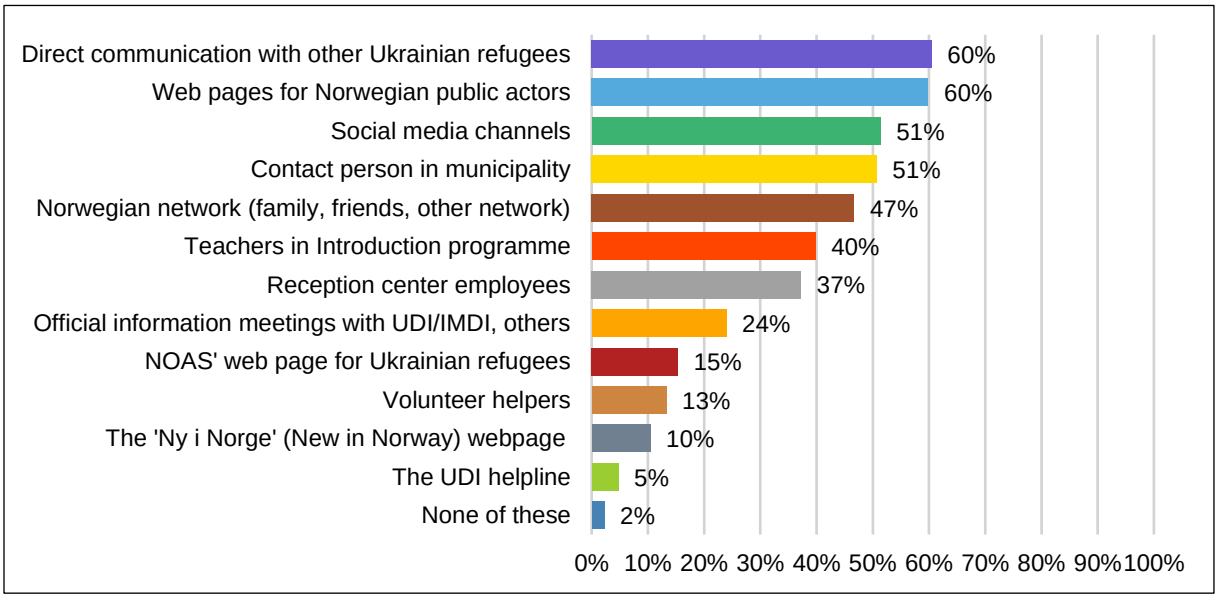
When comparing the 2022 and 2023 surveys, we see an overall improvement in the Ukrainian refugees' assessment, though some challenges still remain. While 72% of respondents in the 2022 survey selected some information challenges, this share decreased to 62% in the 2023 survey. Furthermore, with one exception, the percentage affirming each of the listed challenges has decreased, often substantially. For example, the share stating that there was unclear or insufficient information to address the individual's situation has decreased from 46% to 34%. While in 2022, 40% reported difficulties with navigating between different websites for relevant information, the 2023 figure is 32%. The only item showing an increase relates to individuals' own qualifications; 9% now say that their own lack of digital skills is a challenge, compared with 4% in 2022. However, this latter challenge is more of an assessment of individuals' own skills rather than of the Norwegian authorities' information services (which most of the other challenges address).

Further analysis shows that some groups find it more challenging to obtain information than others, and these include respondents in the age group 66 years and older, respondents with higher education (!), early arrivals in Norway, and respondents who have organised their own accommodation.

7.2 Main sources for information

What sources do the Ukrainian refugees use to find information in Norway?

Figure 7.2: Use of information sources (N=1593).



*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 7.2 shows that Ukrainian refugees use a variety of sources for obtaining the information they need. The most widespread sources are respondents' Ukrainian networks, as well as the websites of Norwegian public actors. More than half the respondents also reported that they obtain information from social media and their contact persons in the municipality. These are followed by Norwegian networks, teachers in the introduction programme, and employees at the reception centres.

We also asked the respondents to rank the three information sources that they considered to be the most important. Websites of Norwegian public actors were ranked highest: 36% had this as their first choice, followed by contact persons in the municipality (21%). If we look at respondents' ranking of the three most important sources, it is still websites of Norwegian public actors they rank the highest (52% had this as one of their three choices), with contact

persons in municipalities immediately behind (51%), followed by communication with other Ukrainian refugees (34%) and their Norwegian network (31%).

In the qualitative interviews, interviewees reported that they use official websites to find information, but often in combination with other sources: 'I search information myself at the official websites. If I can't find it, I ask at school [the introduction programme] or at NAV' (Interviewee 15, 09.08.2023). Furthermore, after they had been settled in a municipality, they lean on the support of information resources provided by NAV employees, contact persons in municipalities, schoolteachers, or local Norwegian–Ukrainian networks, often in combination:

> If I am looking for official information or information about legislative changes, I write to the Ukrainian diaspora in Norway, and there are girls who are competent in all related issues. If I need to get some kind of certificate, I write to the curator [contact person in the municipality] about where I can get it. I also ask my friend who has lived here for 20 years, because there are a lot of small things to fix in my house. (Interviewee 4, 16.05.2023)

However, as in the 2022 survey, social networks, especially Facebook groups, continue to play a crucial role as a source of and platform for asking questions, seeking explanations or obtaining specific clarifications:

> Well, I have a Facebook group to ask some questions. There are a lot of people in this group, a lot of comments, you can read how people do it, how they have experienced it. (Interviewee 6, 20.05.2023)

Several interviewees mentioned that they belong to chat groups consisting of other Ukrainian refugees who are settled in the same or neighbouring municipalities, where they share information. One interviewee shared his experience with setting up a business in Norway, based largely on information from other Ukrainians who had already gone through that process:

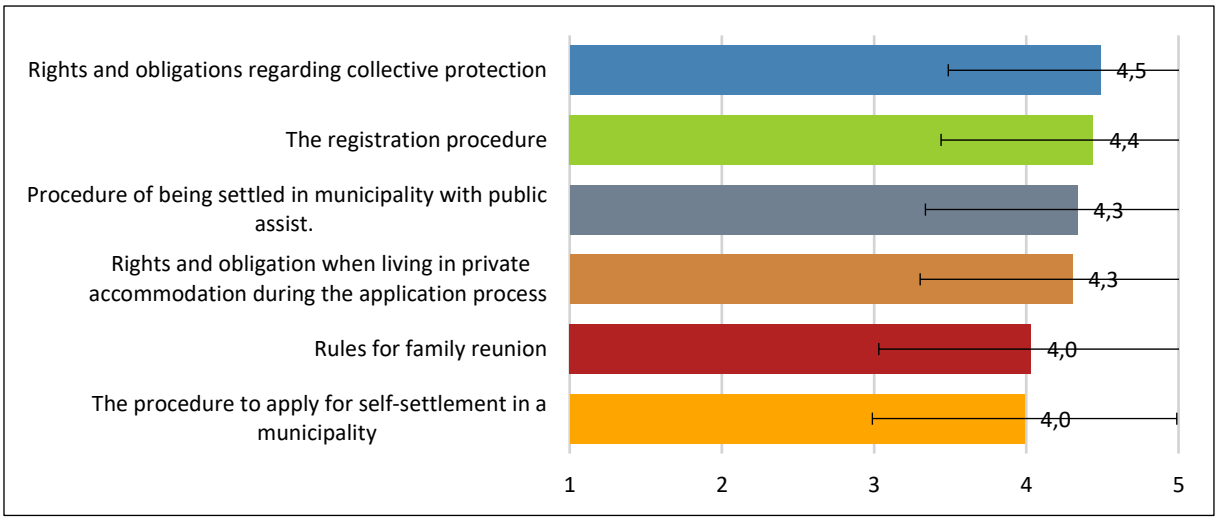
> There are [...], many thousands of people in these chats […] I got a lot of information about [how to set up] a business, because again, neither in English nor in Norwegian is it clear to me what accounting is, I have never done this in my life, but here I want to do it, because I want to pay taxes, everything above board. (Interviewee 2, 12.05.2023)

The participants have not provided a definitive assessment of how reliable these information channels are, but some have been able to effectively utilise this information. It was pointed out that practices and the accuracy of information may vary, and this should be considered when assessing the relevance of the information. The overall impression is that Ukrainian refugees prefer to receive information through face-to-face interactions and tend to rely on the practical experiences of others rather than relying solely on the official, legalistic language presented on official websites.

7.3 Varying assessments of information about specific services

Does the assessment of the sufficiency of information vary for different services?

Figure 7.3: Sufficiency of information about services and procedures for reception and settlement (N = 866-1556).



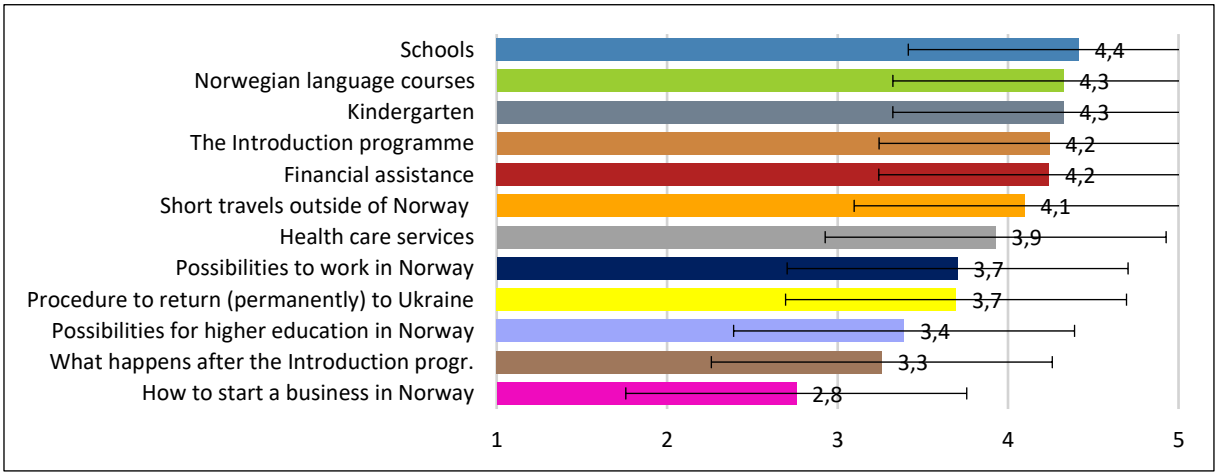
*Means and standard deviations. Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)
** Weighted by gender and age
*** The figure excludes those who have not been in contact with the respective service or procedure and those responding 'don't know'.

Figure 7.3 shows that most of the respondents confirm having received sufficient information regarding various services and procedures for registration and settlement, with all services receiving an average score of 4 or higher out of 5. The lines of standard deviation, however, indicate considerable variations among respondents in this respect. Information about rules for family reunion and about the procedure to apply for self-settlement in a municipality are rated slightly below the others, though still with a mean of around 4.

There has been a substantial improvement in the ratings on sufficiency of information on registration and settlement from the 2022 to the 2023 survey, with increases in scores ranging from 0.2 (rights and obligations regarding collective protection) to 0.6 (rules for family reunion and the procedure to apply for self-settlement).

The interviews confirmed this picture. The interviewees reported that they now receive ample information regarding collective protection, the registration process, and settlement in Norway, and that access to this information was easy.

Figure 7.4: Sufficiency of information about services and procedures (N = 449-1549).



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

Finally, respondents were asked whether they had found or received sufficient information about a variety of other aspects of the integration process that they may have encountered after their arrival in Norway; see Figure 7.4. The overall picture is that for most services, Ukrainians report having received sufficient information. About half the items were given a score above 4 on the five-point scale. Three items with lower scores than the rest stand out. The first is about the possibility of higher education in Norway, the second about what happens after the introduction programme, and the third – which received the lowest score by far – is about how to start a business in Norway.

Many of the items on the list were also asked in an identical way in the 2022 survey.[16] Again, improvements are the major trend. The rise in scores for individual items varies between 0.1 and 0.7, and the biggest improvements were for information about financial assistance, information about Norwegian language courses, and information about short trips outside of Norway.

In line with the survey results above, the most challenging issue identified in the qualitative interviews was the lack of information after the conclusion of the introduction programme, leading to a sense of uncertainty. Some of the interviewees reported that they lacked information about what would happen after the introduction programme, particularly if they were unable to secure employment promptly:

> The contract I have for work is 20%, and it also ends in June. There is no understanding of what will happen next. I'm somehow calm about it […] but I see that among my classmates, they are in a worse condition emotionally, due to the fact that it is not clear what will happen next. (Interviewee 3L, 07.05.2022)

Others were not particularly informed, but had some thoughts about what the situation after the introduction programme would be:

> We were somehow, well, not given any guidance, but we understood that if the programme ends, if you are unemployed, then it will be social assistance […] or you quickly need to look for work. (Interviewee 3, FGI, 07.09.2023)

At the conclusion of one interview, an interviewee made a request to the researchers to convey her message to NAV representatives, urging them to provide refugees with more detailed information about what to expect after the introduction programme ends. She expressed concerns that many people in her municipality feared being 'kicked out' and becoming homeless if they did not find a job quickly. She wanted NAV to clarify that this would not be the case for those with collective protection status, and to reassure them that support with housing and food would still be available after the introduction programme:

> Even when the [introduction] programme is over, I am absolutely sure that if people do not have the opportunity to work, they will receive help with housing and food. Because many think that the programme will end and we will be kicked out, we will be homeless. And it would be great if NAV could somehow explain to everyone that this will not happen. (Interviewee 15, 09.08.2023)

Ukrainian refugees are keen to receive more information, particularly regarding setting up their own businesses in Norway, with a focus on legal matters. Many of them were self-employed entrepreneurs in Ukraine prior to the full-scale invasion. Some interviewees have inquired with NAV and contact persons in municipalities for guidance on this matter, but the response has been that it is considered a complex endeavour, even for Norwegians. These refugees are determined to continue their entrepreneurial activities in Norway and are enthusiastic about gaining more knowledge about the opportunities available to them:

[16] Note that the options 'What happens after the introduction programme' and 'How to start a business in Norway' were not included in the 2022 survey and were therefore not included in this comparison.

> The information about how to open your own business is not enough, it's not available. There's no information on how to open an account, how to register, there's really no such thing. (Interviewee 8, 21.05.2023)

7.4 Summary

In this chapter, we have presented findings about Ukrainians' use of, access to, and assessments of information relevant for their settlement and integration in Norway.

Ukrainian refugees' access to relevant information has shown an overall improvement from 2022 to 2023. Almost four in 10 respondents (up from three in 10 in 2022) report that they had not experienced any challenges in finding the information they need. Still, many experience challenges in this regard, and those most frequently mentioned are that the information is perceived to be unclear or insufficient to address the respondent's particular situation, and that it has been difficult to navigate between different websites for relevant information.

The most commonly used sources of information are direct communication with other Ukrainian refugees, websites of Norwegian public actors, social media channels, contact persons in the municipalities, and the refugees' Norwegian networks.

In qualitative interviews, interviewees report that they use official websites to find information, but often in combination with other sources. Social networks, especially Facebook groups, continue to play a crucial role as a source of and platform for asking questions, seeking explanations and obtaining specific clarifications.

The ratings on sufficiency of information on registration and settlement have significantly improved from the 2022 to the 2023 survey. When it comes to sufficiency of information on various other services, three items score lower than the rest. The first is about the possibility of higher education in Norway, the second about what happens after the introduction programme, and the third – with the lowest score by far – is about how to start a business in Norway.

8 Settlement after protection was granted: where and how?

Where in Norway do Ukrainian refugees live after they have been granted protection? And how do they evaluate the settlement process and their dwelling?

As described in chapter 3 on Norwegian settlement policies, the Norwegian settlement model (for those who have been granted protection), builds largely on a publicly managed settlement model, where refugees are assigned to municipalities on the basis of agreements between the state and the municipalities. The model also allows for agreed self-settlement, where refugees may find their own housing and then apply for formal settlement in the respective municipalities to retain their right to financial assistance and introduction programmes (Søholt & Dyb 2021). The Norwegian settlement model has not been formally changed since February 2022, but in a period of large inflows, the Norwegian Government introduced a whole-country approach, where all municipalities are asked to settle refugees (Hernes et al. 2023b).

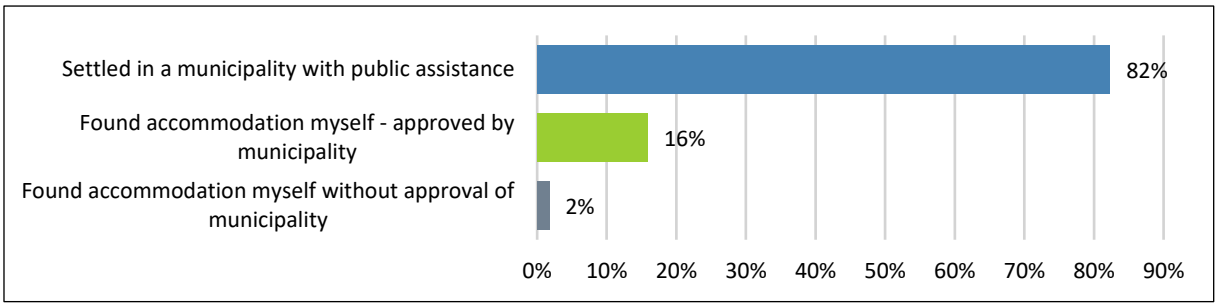
At the time of data collection for NIBR's 2022 report – mainly between May to June – the majority of the interviewees and respondents were either in the middle of the application process or awaiting settlement after being granted protection. Thus, the 2022 report mainly investigated the Ukrainian refugees' thoughts about the settlement process, and there were two questions that dominated: *where* and *when* they would be settled (in a municipality)?

In this chapter, we first present statistics on the share that was settled with public assistance and on those who found their own accommodation before describing where in Norway they have settled. We then present their assessment of the settlement process and their dwellings.

8.1 Path to settlement

How many of the Ukrainian refugees were settled through public assistance, and how many found accommodation themselves (after protection was granted)?

Figure 8.1: Path to settlement in a municipality (N=1362).



By the time of the survey (October–November 2023), the majority of respondents had been settled in municipalities (almost 90%). Figure 8.1 shows that the majority (over 80%) had received public assistance to find their accommodation. Just below one out of five found their own accommodation, and the majority of these had it approved by the municipality (so that they were still entitled to financial assistance and integration measures). Only 2% found their own accommodation without any public help or approval.

8.2 Whole-country approach

According to the survey respondents' own assessment, 29% live in big cities, 42% in small towns, and the remaining 30% in rural settlements. A more refined geographical distribution

of our respondents has been found by using Statistic Norway's centrality index[17], based on proximity to workplaces and service facilities for Norwegian municipalities. Centrality 1 denotes the big cities and highly central municipalities, while Centrality 6 denotes the most remote rural municipalities.

Figure 8.2: Distribution of respondents across municipalities of different centralities (N=1404).

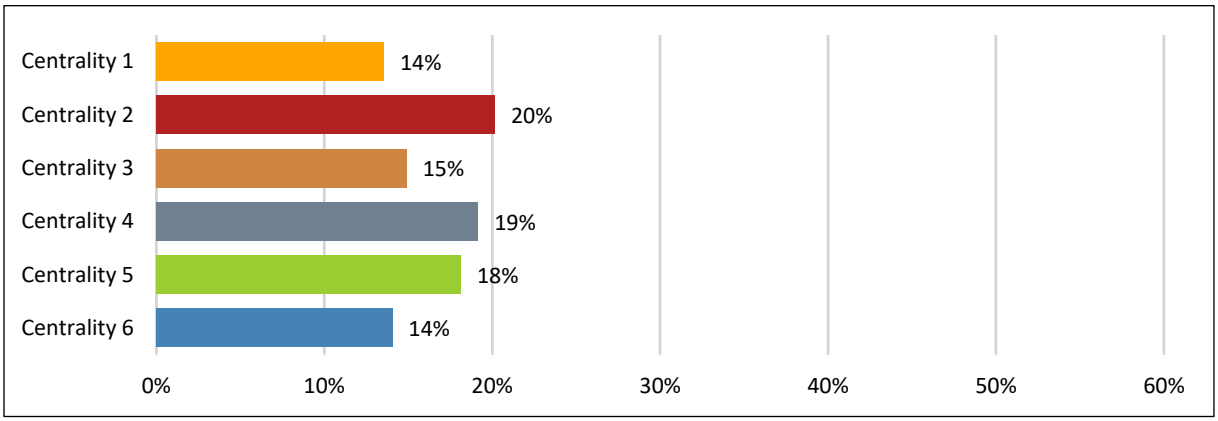


Figure 8.2 shows the distribution of our respondents (those who have been settled in a municipality) according to SSB's centrality categories. We see that Ukrainian refugees are spread across municipalities with different types of centralities[18], which corresponds well with the whole-country strategy (see chapter 3.2) that has been implemented to provide enough settlement locations.

Figure 8.3: Distribution of respondents across different regions of Norway (N=1404).

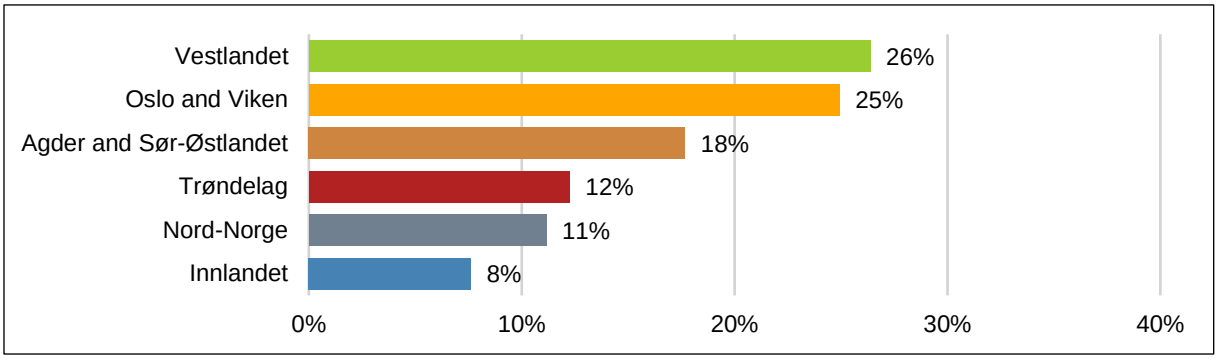


Figure 8.3 shows the distribution of the Ukrainian respondents across the various Norwegian regions after settlement in a municipality. Once again, we see that Ukrainian refugees have been settled across the whole country, but with the western coast and the central areas around the capital Oslo being the most common regions of settlement.

In the following sections, we will use both centrality and region as background variables when we check for variations in responses among different categories of respondents.

[17]For more on the centrality index, see Statistic Norway's explanations here: https://www.ssb.no/klass/klassifikasjoner/128/versjon/1427/koder .

[18] This variable should be regarded as an illustration rather than as completely accurate figures, as we cannot rule out that the recruitment process has facilitated recruitment of respondents in certain types of municipalities.

8.3 Assessment of the settlement process and dwelling

As shown in chapter 6.2 about Ukrainians' overall assessment of services, the settlement process – be it with public assistance through IMDi or through agreed self-settlement – received a high score of about 4.5. Thus, although the 2022 report showed that the Ukrainian refugees were challenged by the uncertainties during the initial period (as described in the introduction to this chapter), they have been very satisfied with the overall process.

The qualitative interviews show that refugees who had family members or friends in Norway were most often settled in or near the municipalities where their network resided.

> I wanted [to be settled] closer to Oslo, where my cousin lives. [...] It seems to me that they simply took this into account. [...] As they explain to us, the most important thing is to have relatives [...] And she [the relative] already has citizenship, she has lived here for a long time. Someone even called her, I believe. They asked about Oslo. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

Relatives already living in Norway also took part in the process of accommodating settlement to their municipality.

Several of the interviewees reported having relatives who had come to Norway after they themselves had been settled in a municipality. In such cases that we encountered in the interviews, the municipalities have shown willingness to settle their relative in the same municipality. An elderly lady, who had fled from an occupied territory but remained in Ukraine when her son and his family went to Norway, said:

> I was still in Odesa, everything started to get worse. Due to the missiles and drones, they shelled Odesa and violated this institutional structure. There was no light, no gas, I was alone there. [...] They said, mum, come to us, let's go to the municipality. [...] They [her children] went to the municipality and asked about whether their mum could come, and the municipality gave their permission. (Interviewee 12, 25.05.2023)

The municipalities have also accommodated changes after the first settlement. A woman who came to Norway with her mother explained that they were settled in the same apartment to begin with, but later separated:

> We didn't change municipality, but my mother and I moved away from each other. We decided it was a bit difficult for us to live together, so with the permission of the curators at NAV, we found separate housing. (Interviewee 15, 09.08.2023)

There are also examples where municipalities, according to the interviewees, had settled them after requests from local people they got to know while residing at a reception centre in the municipality. After being settled in a completely different part of Norway, they were allowed to return for settlement in the municipality of the first reception centre, where their children had been included in sport activities. The Norwegian coach of the sports activity had found accommodation for them and asked the municipality to accept them. This was highly appreciated (Interviewee 4, 16.05.2023).

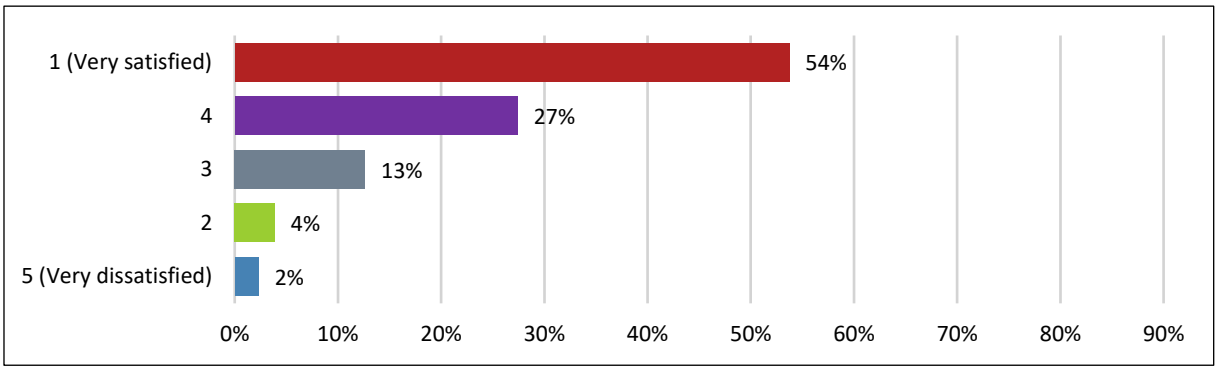
Based on the interviews, it seems that existing networks have generally been taken into account when Ukrainians are being settled. However, other considerations or wishes, for example to be settled near a university, were not accommodated:

> Actually, during the interview in the reception centre, we were asked for wishes and so on. I voiced my wishes, that I looked there, I want to study further. My consideration was that it would be cool if it was Oslo or Trondheim, since there is a university in or near these cities, and, in principle, more opportunities for me with regard to further integration. It turned out completely differently, of course it did. And now, in fact, I am in the south-west, in a small municipality, so it has its own difficulties in this regard. (Interviewee 14, 09.08.2023)

8.3.1 Satisfaction with the dwelling

The vast majority of the Ukrainian refugees are satisfied with their current dwelling, as shown in Figure 8.4.

Figure 8.4: Satisfaction with dwelling (N=1551).



*Weighted by gender and age
** The 2% who answered 'hard to say/don't know' are not included in the figure.

On the scale from 1 to 5, 54% give the top score 5 and 27% give 4. Only 6% are dissatisfied (scores 1 or 2). The mean score is 4.3. Further analysis shows that the most satisfied are those in the older age groups. Whether the refugees have settled in a municipality with public assistance or found accommodation themselves (with or without approval of the municipality) has little effect on the level of satisfaction.

The interviewees mostly report that municipalities have provided them with well-equipped housing suitable for living. Several interviewees reported that the municipality had done more than could be expected to make the refugees feel welcome.

> When we arrived, there was newly purchased furniture there. A new sofa, new beds, two sofas, a dining table, a stove were already in the house, new dishes were purchased, forks, even an oven glove, this thermal one. We were very touched by this (Interviewee 2, 12.05.2023).

> Housing, yes, it is an important point, and I am very grateful. Although they were searching for it for three months, they provided us with housing. And the apartment fully corresponded to what I imagined. In principle, it is enough for us. We had hoped for a bigger one, but there is a time for everything. We got new bedding, a nice bed, there was a TV, a new sofa, new dishes, a vacuum cleaner. Everything was there. The only thing that was missing was a microwave, but later they got us one. (Interviewee 9, 22.05.2023)

Still, a few interviewees reported some negative experiences. One interviewee reported that there were problems with mould and the air quality in their first apartment, but as she said, the problems arose after they started living there, thus, the municipality was not to blame. It took some time to find a new apartment, but they were eventually allowed to move to a different apartment. Another interviewee reported that when offered an apartment with help from NAV, they were told that they had to accept it, or they would lose their rights to public assistance. This made them accept an apartment that they were quite unhappy about:

> We had our first proposal for an apartment, and we accepted it. We were not asked whether we liked it or not. She [from NAV] just called me and said if you refuse, they wouldn't look for other options for you, so you would decide on your own. […] The integration programme, kindergarten, or anything else you could get access to while being settled – all of this would be taken away from you [if they rejected the apartment]. (Interviewee 8, 21.05.2023)

Nonetheless, when she and her husband started the introduction programme, they were able to move to another apartment.

An opposite challenge for some was that their apartment was larger than they needed and that they therefore had to spend more than necessary on rent and other related costs. For these interviewees, it was difficult to find a smaller and cheaper apartment in their area, so they continued to live in the apartment that the municipality had found for them. In this regard, other interviewees also explicitly highlighted that they appreciated that their apartment was not that big, because it meant lower rent.

As shown in chapter 8.2 above, Ukrainian refugees have been settled throughout the country, including more rural municipalities. Some refugees described the challenges with being settled in rural areas with long distances to shops and services, especially when public transport is scarce and expensive. One woman, who previously had lived in a reception centre in Bergen and had then been settled in a small village, reported that she missed some of the opportunities in the bigger city, such as going to language cafés and other activities.

An unfavourable location, however, could be especially challenging for refugees with special needs – or those with children with special needs – who need to travel far to go to special education facilities in neighbouring municipalities.

> I still don't understand why we need to live 20 km from the city where he [their child] is attending a special institution. […] Why could we not be settled in that city from the very beginning? (Interviewee 8L, 04.08.2022)

Some Ukrainians who were settled in more rural areas also expressed worries about finding a job, because they viewed the possibilities on the local labour market in their municipality as rather limited.

> In our case, we had a meeting with NAV about a week ago. We came and were told that we needed to open the website *arbeidsplassen.no* and also fill out our skills there, like a CV in a new way on this site. We filled it all out, and then we asked what the prospects are, what should we do, and he says, well, the prospects are not particularly good, as you can see, there are three vacancies in [village] now, there is such and such, such and such, well, when there are more, then we will contact you, you can contact me. (Interviewee 2, FGI, 07.09.2023)

8.3.2 Differences between municipalities

While many interviewees express gratitude for how they have been welcomed in their municipality, several have reported that conditions, services and help provided vary widely between municipalities. One interviewee described settlement to a municipality as a lottery:

> Everything depends on the municipality to which you come; it depends on a lot. We all communicated with each other, and some people got into, well, not very good municipalities, some into better municipalities. And everyone was waiting for this moment when they would tell you the municipality [which they would be settled in]. (Interviewee 5, 19.05.2023)

Another interviewee similarly reflected on the differences between municipalities in Norway and on how her municipality was not the best when compared with others. However, she said that, compared with countries like Poland and the Czech Republic, all Ukrainians in Norway were well received (Interviewee 4, 16.05.2022).

In NIBR's report from 2022, the differences between municipalities had been unexpected and very surprising to the many Ukrainian refugees. Now, at least some had come to accept this as 'this is how things are in Norway':

> The main thing in Norway is to understand that each individual person, that everyone has their own story, everyone has their own situation. They write about this in many groups for Ukrainians. This is some of the most useful information that I took away from there [these fora] at the stage of settlement and waiting, because you should not compare with anyone else. You have your own path here, because some people can have better homes, apartments, better housing, some got an apartment with a view of the sea, some got a three-room apartment, others got a room in the basement with mould. (Interviewee 2, 12.05.2023)

8.4 Summary

This chapter has presented findings about how Ukrainian refugees have been settled, their geographical distribution, assessment of the settlement process, and satisfaction with their dwelling.

More than eight in 10 respondents have settled in their municipality through public assistance, 16% have found accommodation themselves which has been approved by the municipality, and the remaining 2% have found accommodation themselves without municipality approval.

Refugees from Ukraine have settled in all types of municipalities, from big cities to remote rural districts, in line with the whole-country approach. They have settled in all regions of Norway, but with larger shares being settled on the west coast and in areas near the capital Oslo than in other parts of the country.

Respondents are generally very satisfied with the settlement process, and several interviewees reported that authorities have accommodated their wishes to be settled near family or friends and that arriving relatives have been settled in the same municipality on request.

The vast majority of the refugees are satisfied with their current dwelling, and only 6% express dissatisfaction. Interviewees mostly report that municipalities have provided them with well-equipped housing suitable for living. Some challenges were reported in qualitative interviews, but they have usually been resolved with time.

Remote rural locations have been raised as a concern, for example when it comes to long distances to services and opportunities in the labour market, but survey respondents are generally equally satisfied regardless of the centrality and geographical location of their municipality.

Ukrainian refugees have reported, and some have come to accept, considerable variation in the reception and services refugees receive in different municipalities in Norway.

9 Language use and interpreting services

What are the Ukrainians' self-assessed Norwegian language skills, and which language (Ukrainian or Russian) do they prefer to use in their daily communication? Have they received interpreting services when needed in Norway, how do they assess these services, and has this changed over time?

As described in the report from 2022, access to qualified interpreters in Russian, and particularly Ukrainian, was initially an organisational challenge for several public actors. As of March 2022, although there was a relatively large number of registered qualified Russian-language interpreters (129), there were only 13 registered Ukrainian-language interpreters. As an immediate measure, OsloMet – which trains qualified interpreters – admitted an extra group of students with Ukrainian language into their interpreter training programme in May 2022 (Hernes et al. 2022). The number of interpreters qualified in Ukrainian in the National Register of Interpreters reached 88 by January 2023 and 131 by December 2023.

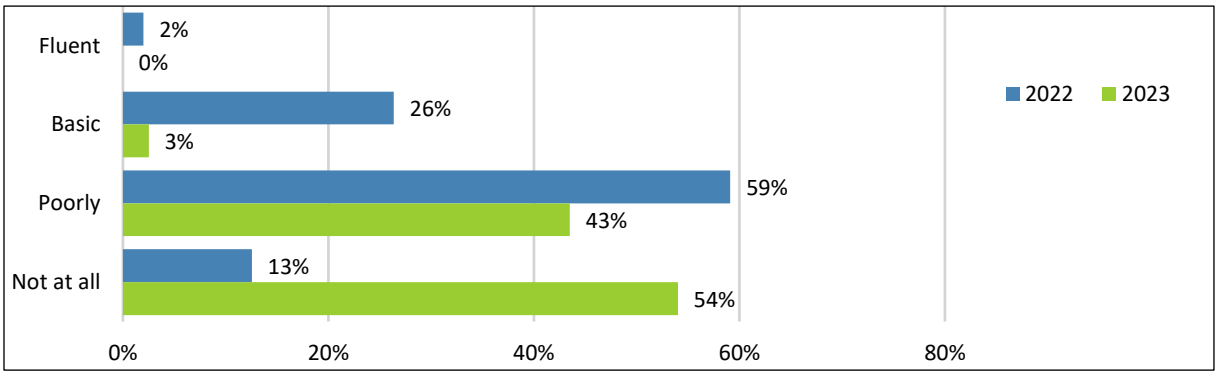
In January 2022, Norway's Interpreting Act entered into force. The purpose of the act is to 'safeguard due process and ensure the provision of proper assistance and services to persons who are unable to communicate adequately with public bodies without an interpreter'. It should also ensure that interpreters meet sound professional standards. In May 2022, IMDi issued an online guide for managers and employees in municipalities concerning the provision of interpreting services to refugees from Ukraine. A relevant point for the discussions below is that the guideline emphasises that 'public actors may not emphasise the interpreter's ethnicity when deciding on interpreting assignments. Nor is the ethnicity of the employee/contractor registered with the employer/contractor.'

In this chapter, we start by presenting the Ukrainian refugees' own assessment of their Norwegian language skills before presenting which language they prefer (Ukrainian or Russian) to speak in their everyday life (descriptions of their language skills in English, Ukrainian and Russian are described in chapter 5.2). Furthermore, we analyse their assessments of the standard of and access to interpreting services in Norway, and of what challenges they have faced with these services.

9.1 Knowledge of Norwegian language

As shown in chapter 5.2, the majority of the refugees have rather poor English language skills. Based on the refugees' self-assessments, it is clear that their proficiency in the Norwegian language is also rather poor, including among those who have lived in Norway for a year or more.

Figure 9.1: Level of fluency in Norwegian by year of arrival in Norway (N=1593).



* Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 9.1 shows a comparison of the self-assessments of Norwegian language skills by respondents who arrived in 2022 with those who arrived in 2023. Only 28% of those arriving in 2022 have reached at least a basic level of Norwegian, and only 3% of those arriving in 2023 report having basic language skills in Norwegian (none state that they are fluent). Over 70% of those arriving in 2022 and 97% of those arriving in 2023 report that their knowledge of the Norwegian language is either poor or non-existent. The majority of those who arrived in 2022 report having poor knowledge of Norwegian (60%), while over half of the respondents from 2023 report having no knowledge of Norwegian at all.

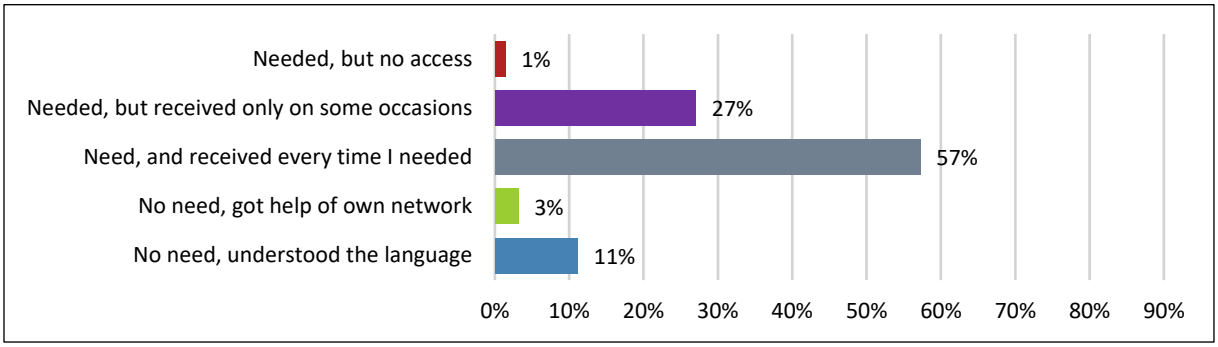
9.2 Preferred use of Ukrainian and Russian in daily communication

Many of the Ukrainian refugees have lived in parts of Ukraine where Russian is the most common language of communication. Even though many have been in a process of transferring to more use of Ukrainian after the Russian full-scale invasion, Russian is still in widespread use. We asked the respondents which language they preferred to use in their daily communication with family and friends from Ukraine. Less than one-third (32%) answered Ukrainian, 23% answered Russian, while as many as 44% selected 'both Ukrainian and Russian'. There are, as expected, significant differences based on geographic background in Ukraine, where people from East and (albeit it less so) South-East Ukraine are less likely to prefer Ukrainian than are those from Central Ukraine and, especially, the Western parts of the country. While there are few systematic age differences (though those in the oldest age group are more likely to select Russian), we find a gender difference. Women are much more likely to report a preference for Ukrainian than are men (37% compared with 24%). However, further analysis shows that men more often than women have fled from the territories that are occupied by Russia, i.e., areas with more widespread use of Russian, which may explain at least some of this difference.

9.3 Generally good access to and quality of the interpreting services

Given the rather poor knowledge of English and Norwegian among Ukrainian refugees, interpreting services have been necessary for most refugees.

Figure 9.2: Need for and access to interpreters (N=1586).



*Weighted by gender and age.

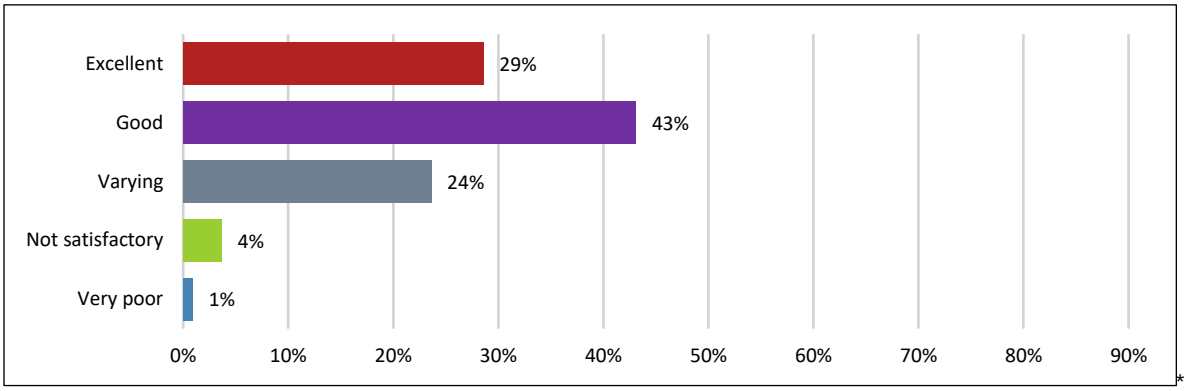
Figure 9.2 shows the respondents' need for, and access to, interpreting services in Norway since their arrival. It shows that only 14% reported not needing interpreting services, either because they understood the language used or because they received help from their network. Closer analysis of the experiences of individuals in need of interpreting services indicates that there has been a slight improvement in accessibility. The data reveal that,

among those who arrived in Norway in 2022, 63% had received such services whenever they needed them. In contrast, the corresponding figure for those arriving in 2023 is 72%, indicating a positive trend. Respondents in larger cities and highly central municipalities (categorised as centrality level 1 in Statistic Norway's centrality index) reported slightly lower access to interpreting services than those in other parts of the country. In those areas, 60% received the services whenever they needed them, compared with the national average of 67%.

The picture presented above is also confirmed when the responses are compared with the same question asked in the 2022 survey. More respondents in 2023 reported needing an interpreter (86% compared with 70% in 2022), probably explained by better knowledge of English among the first wave of Ukrainian refugees. Of those who needed an interpreter in 2023, two-thirds were provided with one each time they needed one, while the same was true of just over half the respondents (53%) in 2022. Accordingly, 7% of those in need did *not* get access to interpreting services in 2022 compared with only 1% in 2023.

The respondents who had used interpreters were also asked to assess their quality.

Figure 9.3: Assessment of skills and qualifications of interpreters in Norway (N=1319).



*Weighted by gender and age.
** The 1% who answered 'don't know' are not included in the figure.

Figure 9.3 shows that the majority of respondents assessed the services as either good or excellent. However, a substantial share – one in four –indicates that skills and qualifications of interpreters vary, and 5% indicate poor or very poor interpreting. The share reporting them as varying or unsatisfactory services has increased compared with the 2022 survey, where 15% selected 'varying', 5% 'unsatisfactory', and 1% 'very poor'. Thus, it seems that improved access to interpreting services may have come at the expense of quality. As mentioned, the rapid increase in the number of certified interpreters in Ukrainian has risen from 13 in March 2022 to 131 by December 2023, which naturally implies that there is a large share of relatively new and less experienced interpreters.

9.4 Challenges and concerns with interpreting services

Respondents who had used interpreting services during their stay in Norway were also asked whether there had been any challenges or concerns with the interpreters or use of interpretation in their encounters with public services. 23%, reported such challenges or concerns, while 7% responded 'don't know'. Thus, the majority, comprising 71%, had not encountered any issues. Those who expressed concerns were invited to provide details on the nature of their specific concerns through an open-ended question in the survey.

9.4.1 Lack of vocabulary, inaccuracies and comments by interpreters

Overall, Ukrainian refugees have been satisfied with the skills and qualifications of interpreters in mediated meetings. The poorer assessment of interpreting quality in 2023 compared with 2022 can partially be explained by the fact that as Ukrainians gradually learn the Norwegian language, they are better able to assess the quality of translation and therefore notice translation flaws. An open-ended question in the questionnaire yielded nearly 300 comments (virtually all of those who reported challenges gave comments) on difficulties respondents encountered in communication with interpreters.

The most cited problems had to do with the quality of interpretation, encompassing deficiencies in vocabulary for both Russian and Ukrainian translations, interpreting inaccuracies, and truncated translations adversely affecting communication, particularly in interactions with the municipality, NAV, and medical personnel. Approximately 70% of all comments related to these issues. Some respondents expressed concerns about interpreters' lack of proficiency in Russian, Ukrainian, English and, possibly, Norwegian, questioning the hiring process without thoroughly verifying qualifications.

Many misunderstandings occurred in connection with medical care and interactions with doctors (approximately 10% of all the comments). Insufficient vocabulary and translation inaccuracies resulted in adverse outcomes, such as incorrect treatment or diagnosis. One respondent recounted a doctor inquiring about weakness in the joint of the right knee, which the interpreter translated as 'Do you feel pain in your muscles?'. Others received incorrect diagnoses, necessitating clarification due to the subpar qualifications of interpreters. Comments highlighted instances where a three-minute explanation from a doctor was condensed into three sentences by the interpreter, a concern echoed in the qualitative interviews:

> This is a very important topic. I had an experience where a person who does not know medical terminology came to me to help in medical issues. This was the first meeting. The first and the main one. We came here with children. Finally, I had to search on the internet for the names of the infections, diseases. She didn't know elementary things. It was an unpleasant experience. I didn't tell anyone about it. We just arrived. We didn't want to create a conflict. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

In the report 'Minority language residents' experiences with interpreting in the public sector', Berg et al. (2023) concluded that migrants rarely report quality challenges in interpreting when they experience them. As the last quote shows, this is relevant for some of the Ukrainian refugees as well.

Respondents also pointed out that medical translations conducted over the phone displayed poor levels of quality and accuracy. Interpreters encountered challenges with medical terminology, and there were instances where they struggled to properly hear the doctor. Similar challenges were also evident in the above-mentioned report by Berg's et al. (2023).

Some of the feedback highlighted instances of communication with public authorities and municipal workers, where inaccurate translations led to adverse outcomes, serving as the basis for incorrect decisions made by the authorities. One respondent mentioned having to clarify to the responsible person in the municipality their reasons for being unable to proceed with the suggested work practice. However, the interpreter translated the respondent's reply to the effect that the respondent 'did not want to take on work practice at all', failing to convey the underlying reasons.

Another prevalent challenge (approximately 15% of all comments) was a tendency by interpreters to comment or add information during interpretation. Instances were mentioned where interpreters interrupted conversations and replied themselves instead of letting the refugees do so. Some respondents reported instances where interpreters introduced additional information or shared personal experiences even though it was unnecessary. Such conduct is also in violation of the Interpreting Act § 14 and the associated provisions in the

Interpreting Regulations (*tolkeforskriften*). Others mentioned cases where interpreters decided for themselves ‘what piece of information to translate or not to translate’.

A significant portion of interpreting in Norway is carried out by people without interpreting qualifications (see the report ‘Tolkemonitor LOV 2022’ by Agenda Kaupang (2023)). Consequently, it is challenging to discern whether these experiences arise from situations where the interpretation was made by certified interpreters, or by those with no professional qualifications in interpreting.

9.4.2 Use of Russian and of interpreters of Russian origin

In NIBR's report for 2022, concerns were raised about the use of interpreters of Russian origin for Ukrainian refugees, highlighting issues of mistranslation and potential mistrust. Some of the refugees' comments in 2023 (approximately 10% of all comments) regarding the use of interpreters focused on this challenge. People reported instances where Russian-speaking interpreters distorted words and conveyed political positions in support of Putin's regime and the ongoing war. Some respondents reported experiences where interpreters intentionally avoided using the word ‘war’ when translating ‘krig,’, opting instead for the term ‘situation’. Interpreters also refrained from mentioning the name of the respondent’s country, ‘Ukraine’. Another example involved the translation of war crimes committed by Russian soldiers, with one respondent observing that this part had disappeared from a translation by a Russian-speaking interpreter.

Refugees observed that certain Russian-speaking interpreters aligned with Russia's official political discourse and ideological positions, leading to inaccurate translations of the events of the war in Ukraine, often downplaying it as a ‘minor conflict’. One informant mentioned how, during an appointment with a psychologist, the interpreter deliberately omitted information related to ‘bombs, explosions, how scared we were, and how we hid in bomb shelters.’ According to the respondent, the interpreter simply skipped these crucial details. This transmission of political orientation and subjective approach by some interpreters was also discussed in qualitative interviews:

> First, when I was interviewed by the police, a woman who was Russian translated for me online. I can hear it well because it’s impossible to confuse the accent. When she translated, I experienced the devaluation of some things I was saying. It was when I arrived, I was in a shock, I didn't know what to say or do. She twisted some of my answers, she could devalue me and say: ‘Don’t say this, it could not have happened’. It was during the interview. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

Described above is a serious violation of paragraph 14 of the Interpretating Act. It is not clear whether the actions described were carried out by qualified interpreters or by other people who undertook interpreting assignments without having an authorization license or interpreting training.

Another example reported in response to the open question in the survey highlights instances where words and meanings are distorted. The respondent reported having a Russian-speaking interpreter twice, a woman from Russia, who translated the intended meaning completely differently. For instance, when the respondent in question expressed a desire for a permanent job after the introduction programme, the interpreter translated it as ‘We don't want more work practice or language practice’. While the reason or motivation behind the interpreter's actions is not entirely clear, the respondent emphasised the interpreter's country of origin in this context.

Furthermore, some respondents expressed concerns about a potential risk of mistrust and fear of Russian-speaking interpreters. One respondent stated: ‘If the interpreters were Russian-speaking, I lost confidence that the translation would be correct. I was afraid to talk about myself and my family, to mention names and surnames’ (response to the open-ended

question in the questionnaire). Some respondents found it traumatic having a Russian-speaking interpreter, viewing them as representatives of “the enemy country”’.

Many mentioned that they would like to have Ukrainian-speaking interpreters (without mentioning the reason), but this opportunity was limited because of the insufficient number of such interpreters in the municipality. Some found that interpreters who claimed to speak Ukrainian were in fact unable to translate into Ukrainian. The low level of quality of interpretation into Russian was also noticed several times in the open answers of the survey.

9.5 Summary

In this chapter we have presented findings on Ukrainians’ language skills in Norwegian, their preferred language use in daily communication with other Ukrainian refugees, and experiences with and assessment of interpreting services.

Ukrainians’ self-assessments of their Norwegian language skills show that, regardless of time of arrival in Norway, most consider their level of fluency in Norwegian to be ‘poor’ or ‘none at all’. Even among those who arrived in 2022, only 28% assess it to be at least ‘basic’.

Russian is still in widespread use among Ukrainian refugees. Less than one-third of the respondents state that they prefer to use Ukrainian in their daily communication with family and friends from Ukraine, 23% prefer to use Russian, and 44% prefer using ‘both Ukrainian and Russian’.

The majority of Ukrainian refugees (86%) have needed interpreting services. Of these, around two in three report having received such services every time they needed them, the remaining third only on some occasions. Access to services has improved since the 2022 survey.

The majority of respondents consider interpreting services to be good or excellent. Still, the percentage reporting them to be varying, unsatisfactory or poor has increased from 2022 to 2023.

Comments in an open-ended question in the survey (and echoed in qualitative interviews) about challenges with interpreting services revealed problems such as vocabulary deficiencies, inaccuracies and truncated translations. Particular problems were faced in medical care interactions, with inadequate vocabulary and inaccuracies on the part of interpreters leading to incorrect diagnoses and treatment.

Additionally, there were concerns about interpreters commenting or adding information during interpretation sessions. Some respondents reported instances of Russian-speaking interpreters of Russian origin distorting words, aligning with political positions, and creating mistrust. Lack of access to Ukrainian-speaking interpreters was also highlighted.

10 The introduction programme, language training and work practice

What are the Ukrainian refugees' experiences with the introduction programme? How do they assess the different elements in the programme, particularly Norwegian language training and work practice?

As described in chapter 3.3 on policy changes, Ukrainian refugees have the right to attend the introduction programme, but the programme has been adapted and includes fewer compulsory elements. The introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees should – similar to the regular programme – contain language and education- or work-oriented elements, but the language training is shorter for Ukrainian refugees. Unlike other refugee groups, they can complete the introduction programme on a part-time basis, and if they leave the programme, they do not lose the right to come back later.

In this chapter, we first present the share that participates in the programme and their experiences with the programme scope in terms of the practice of allowing extensions and part-time/full-time participation. We then describe the elements the participants are offered and their assessment of these elements. Furthermore, we focus on their experiences with two of the main elements in the programme, namely language training and work experience.

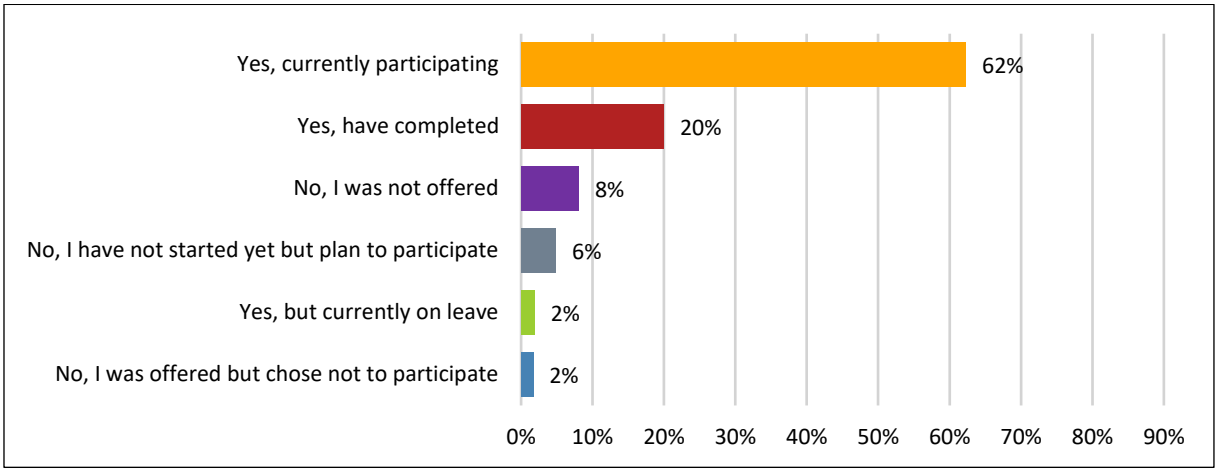
10.1 Participation in the introduction programme

Official (preliminary) figures from IMDi[19] show that among Ukrainian refugees between 18 and 55 years who as of the beginning of October 2023 were entitled to an introduction programme, about 73% participated in the programme. For those aged 55–67 who are not entitled to introduction programmes but may be offered programmes by the municipality, the percentage was only 8%.

How many of the respondents have participated, are currently participating or plan to participate in the introduction programme?

[19] Figures obtained through correspondence with IMDi. It is important to emphasise that these figures are preliminary. In accordance with the Integration Act, the municipalities are to register information in the National Introduction Register (NIR) within two months of its availability, but the municipalities are not always up to date with the registrations within this time limit. Thus, exact figures for participation will first be available some months after the respective month of analysis.

Figure 10.1: Participation in the introduction programme (N=1409).



* Weighted by gender and age.
** Those who have not yet been settled in a municipality or found their own accommodation without public approval are excluded from the analysis.

Figure 10.1 shows that the vast majority of Ukrainian refugees (who have been settled) participate in the introduction programme. 64% are either participating or on leave, 20% have already completed it, and 6% plan to participate. Only 2% were offered participation but chose not to do so.

A total of 8% report that they have not been offered participation in the introduction programme, and further analysis reveals that this predominantly applies to individuals aged 56 years and above. Still, even among those over 55 years, a large share has been offered and has attended the programme. Thus, among respondents aged 56–65 years, only 24% report not being *offered* participation in the introduction programme. The same applies to 71% of respondents aged 66 and above. The few who reported choosing not to participate did so for reasons of age, poor health or difficulties in combining participation with other commitments such as work, childcare, etc.

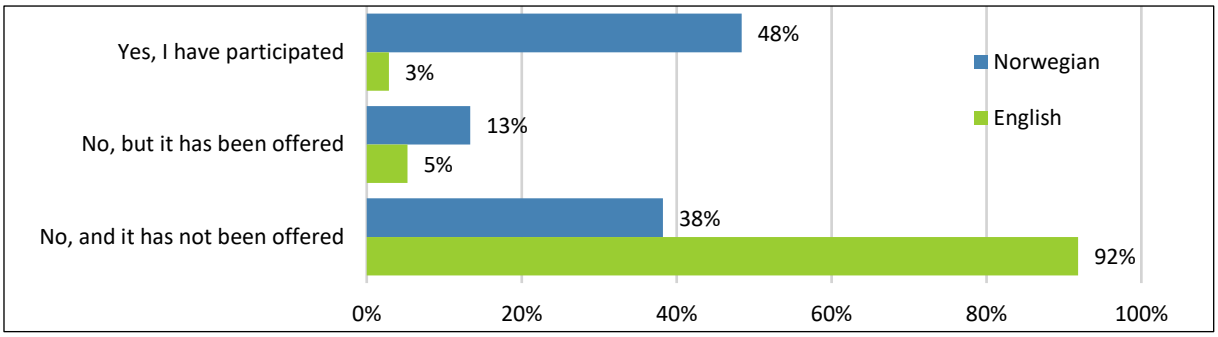
Most interviewees were enrolled in the introduction programme at the time of the interviews or had recently completed it. Some, however, had chosen not to take the programme or had postponed commencing it. Two elderly interviewees had chosen not to participate because they had to take care of their grandchildren:

> They didn't deny me to take the courses. They told me, if you want, you can attend these courses and study something, get acquainted with the language and the country. There are women here at my age, and they attend courses three times a week. I could also go with them, but my grandson gets sick very often, and I need to take care of him. Now he is better, but the courses, they have already come so far. (Interviewee 12, 25.05.2023)

Some young interviewees had postponed commencing the introduction programme due to ongoing studies in Ukraine which they wanted to complete digitally in order to get a Ukrainian degree. NAV or the refugee services in the municipalities had agreed that they could start the introduction programme later, and they had already started Norwegian classes.

Those who have not attended the introduction programme (either because they did not want to or because it was not offered) were asked whether they had nonetheless attended Norwegian and/or English language training

Figure 10.2: Participation in language training for those not in the introduction programme (N=142/118).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those answering 'Not relevant or I don't know' (2–4%) have been excluded.

Figure 10.2 shows that almost half of this category of respondents had participated in Norwegian language training, and only 3% had participated in English language training.

10.1.1 Scope of the introduction programme

As mentioned, Ukrainian refugees have the right, but not the obligation, to attend a six-month introduction programme with the possibility for a further six-month extension. They may also participate in the programme part-time if they want.

Of those who had already completed the introduction programme, only 10% had attended for six months or less. The vast majority (86%) had attended between six months and one year, while 4% had attended for more than a year. More men than women have participated for only six months or less.

Although the survey results show that the vast majority were granted extensions beyond the first six months, some interviewees explained that not knowing whether or not the programme would be extended created a lot of uncertainty. One interviewee was just about to finish the first six months of the introduction programme at the time of the interview. Although the six-month period was ending in less than two weeks, he had not received confirmation that the application for extending the programme had been approved. In his opinion, it would have been better to be allowed to participate in the introduction programme for at least one year to begin with:

> Ukrainian refugees, when they come to the municipality, don't know how much time they are given for the [introduction] programme […]. Sometimes six months, sometimes nine, sometimes maybe 12. Because according to the law, you can only give six, as I understand it. At the moment, the situation is like this, maybe next week it will change, and we will be given another three months. I'm only supportive of it [extending the programme]. But you understand that I cannot arrange my life somehow if I don't know exactly what will happen next. (Interviewee 5, 19.05.2023)

> For some reason, we were given a programme for half a year, until September. Then our personal contact noticed it and said, oh, everyone has a longer programme, you have half a year. Write an [application for] continuation yourself. She gave me a form …. Although I know that many other Ukrainians received it [the introduction programme] for a year from the very beginning. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

10.1.2 Combining programme participation with work

When asked whether they had combined attending the introduction programme with paid work, a relatively moderate share (16%) of the respondents said they had done so (1% preferred not to answer, the remaining 83% said 'no'). In an open follow-up question, some

specified that they worked evenings after the programme or at weekends or that they had only worked during the summer holiday. Positive aspects reported of combining work and the introduction programme were that it meant extra money and that it was the best way to practise the language with native speakers: 'By combining the programme with work, you have additional income and practice the Norwegian language more'. Challenges with combining programme participation with work that were mentioned included lack of spare time (e.g., due to childcare or homework). Also, one respondent found that they were excluded from further programme participation because they had found a summer job.

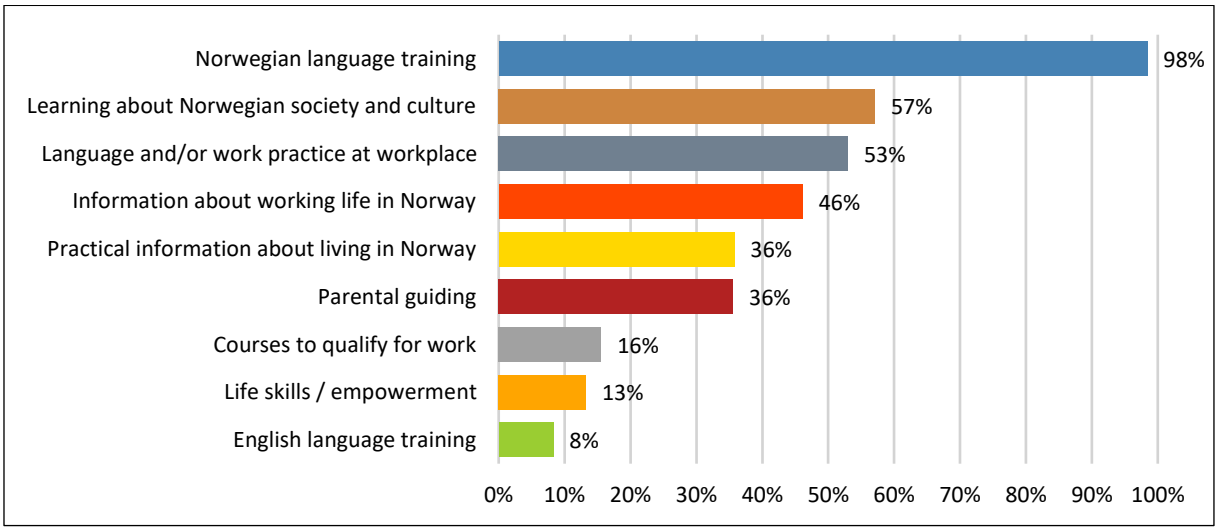
> I was deceived. I was offered to work during the summer vacation (summer job). But then I was removed from the programme because I worked for a month, although we initially discussed this point.

Among the interviewees, however, there were examples of individuals who had taken advantage of the opportunity for Ukrainian refugees to be able to go in and out of the programme. Two reported having worked full-time for a month or two. In this period, they took a leave of absence from the introduction programme but returned when their work contracts came to an end.

10.2 Introduction programme content and assessment

As described in chapter 3, the introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees ought to include language training and elements that are work- or education-oriented. Concerning the other compulsory elements in the regular introduction programme for other refugees, Ukrainian refugees must complete the parental guidance course (*foreldreveiledning)* if they have children, but they have neither the right nor the obligation to attend civics classes, nor must they take the otherwise compulsory empowerment course (*livsmestring*). The municipalities may still provide these courses as part of the programme. Other than these regulations, the municipalities have considerable leeway in how they tailor the programme to individual needs and to local conditions. Thus, we asked those who have participated or who were currently participating in the introduction programme about the various elements covered in the programme.

Figure 10.3: Content of the Introduction programme (N=1189).

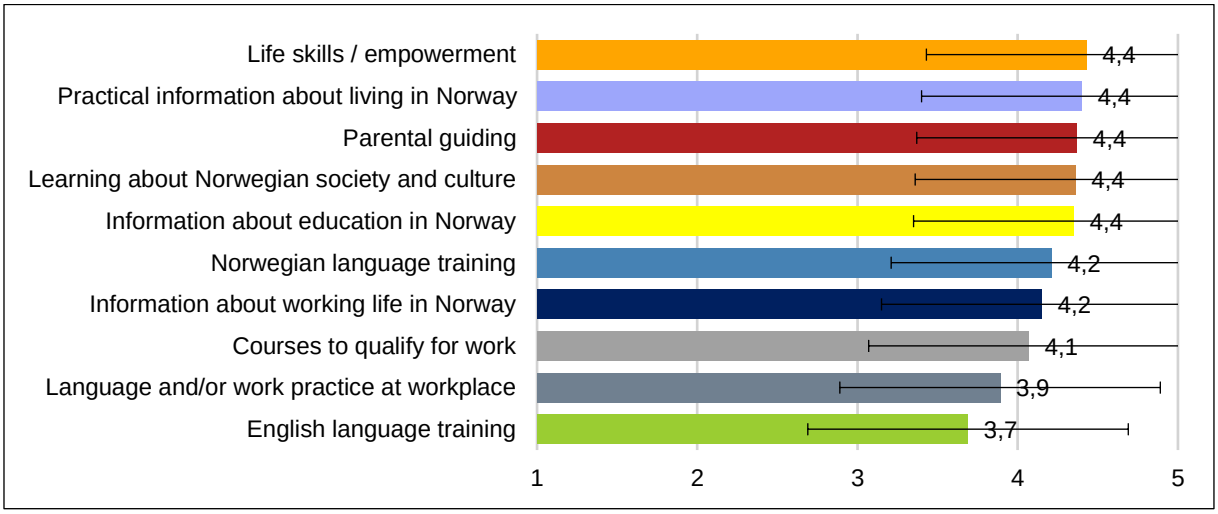


* Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 10.3 shows that virtually all respondents have had Norwegian language training as part of their programme. Although formal civics training is neither a right nor an obligation for Ukrainian refugees, over half of the respondents report having learnt about Norwegian society and culture (this may not necessarily imply that they have received regular civics training, but that these topics are covered in the language training). Just over half of the respondents say they have had work practice and/or language practice as part of their programme (however, two thirds of those who have *completed* the programme have had this), and 16% have taken courses to qualify for work.

Those who reported having participated in the various elements listed in Figure 10.3 were followed up with a question on how their assessment of these various elements.

Figure 10.4: Assessment of the quality of the various elements in the introduction programme (N = 79–1145).



* Weighted by gender and age.
**Means and standard deviations. Scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).
***Only those who have indicated each element has been asked. Those answering 'Hard to say/not relevant' have been excluded.

Figure 10.4 shows that most of the items scored above 4 on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 5 indicates 'very satisfied' and 1 'very dissatisfied'). We find slightly lower satisfaction levels for two of the items, namely language practice/work practice in a workplace and English language training. As can be seen from the standard deviations indicated in the figure, respondents' assessments vary widely.

The respondents were further asked to assess whether the introduction programme was useful for their future work plans. Only 2% of the respondents did not find the introduction programme useful for what they were going to work with after the programme, 20% found it a little useful, while the rest (78%) found it useful (excluding the 6% for whom the question was not relevant). A larger share of those arriving after July 2022 found the programme to be useful for their future work plans compared with those arriving during the first wave from February to June 2022.

The interviewees often made a distinction between 'Norwegian language training' and what they called 'intro'. 'Intro' meant courses/content other than Norwegian language training, such as Norwegian history and society, parental guidance and information from NAV about working life, how to create a CV, etc.

One criticism of these other elements was that they were not specifically directed at Ukrainians as a group, since some information or elements felt redundant while other elements – that would have been welcome – were lacking. Some experienced being taught useful practical things about life in Norway, for instance, how to prolong their stay in Norway,

aspects of Norwegian law and how to understand Norwegians better. Other interviewees missed this more practical focus in the introduction programme in their municipality. They often compared the content they were offered in their municipality with the content they had heard that others were offered:

> I talked to those who were in Oslo […], they were taught practical things. For example, how to register on a particular portal, for example, for taxes, how to register for a certain programme, how to register for a doctor's appointment. How to see yourself there, in all systems. (Interviewee 1L, 05.05.23)

Another criticism was that there were redundant elements in the programme and that the time spent on those could have been used on language learning:

> Revise the education programme, treat adults as adults, not as children. Stop baking buns and going on tours and start focusing on learning the language. Take learning more seriously. (Interviewee 8L, 04.08.2022)

> They have language in the mornings until about 12 and that's fine. But afterwards, there is 'intro'. Whereas in the beginning, there was some real content, it got less and less interesting for people. They sit there knitting and drawing. And they have to be present. If not, they don't get the financial support. (Interviewee 13, 25.05.2023)

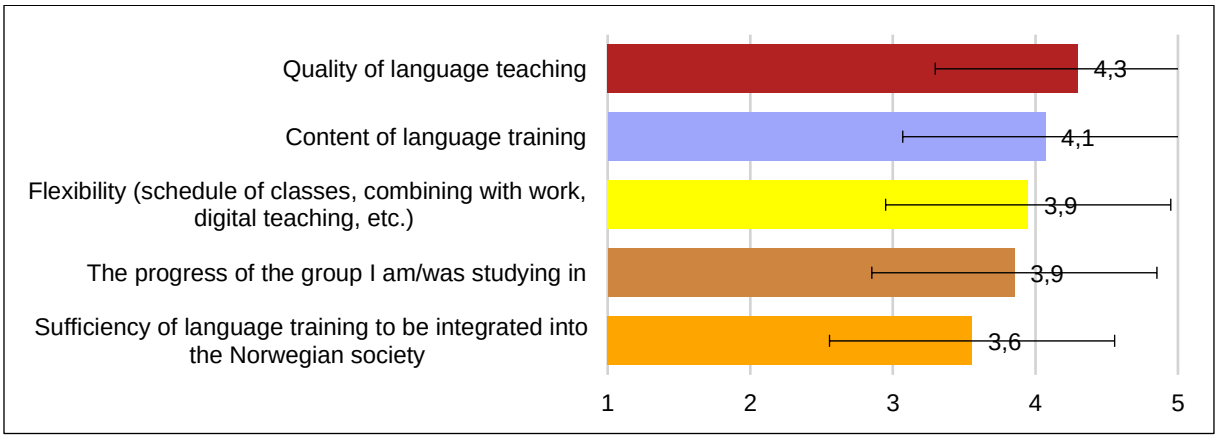
Opinions differed, however. One interviewee liked how learning Norwegian was incorporated into other activities besides formal language training. In that way, the 'intro' part not only provides useful information but also complemented the formal language learning. Other interviewees appreciated learning about different aspects of Norwegian society and culture:

> I also like that our municipality shows life in the city from the inside. They show how they usually spend their weekends, what traditions they have. They did a lot, they also set up an international language café on Thursdays. (Interviewee 3, FGI, 07.09.2023)

10.3 Language training

Norwegian language training received a high score of 4.2 out of a 5 possible, as seen in Figure 10.4 above. Different aspects of the language training were also assessed in more detail by the survey respondents.

Figure 10.5: Assessment of various aspects of the language training in the introduction programme (N = 916-1283).



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

Figure 10.5 shows that although there is considerable variation, respondents are on average satisfied with the quality and content more generally, with a score of over 4 out of 5. The assessment of the flexibility and progress of the language training also receives good scores,

though somewhat lower, with 3.9 out of 5. However, a fair share of the respondents do not consider the language training they receive to be sufficient to become integrated into Norwegian society.

The introduction programme is appreciated by many Ukrainians as an opportunity to get started with their life in Norway, particularly to learn Norwegian. Several interviewees reported that they were well aware that not all countries provide such programmes, and that in some European countries Ukrainian refugees have to seek employment immediately after their arrival out of financial necessity. Some interviewees reported that they particularly appreciated the possibility to focus on studying Norwegian rather than having to combine this task with holding a full-time job.

> First, I learn the language, and then look for it [a job]. We're learning the language because we still want to enter the working environment with some level. At first, we thought we would work right away, and now I weigh everything for myself. I understand that when I start working, I won't have time to learn the language. […] The payments in the introduction programme provide [a high] enough level and cover basic needs. This is such a unique opportunity to learn the language. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

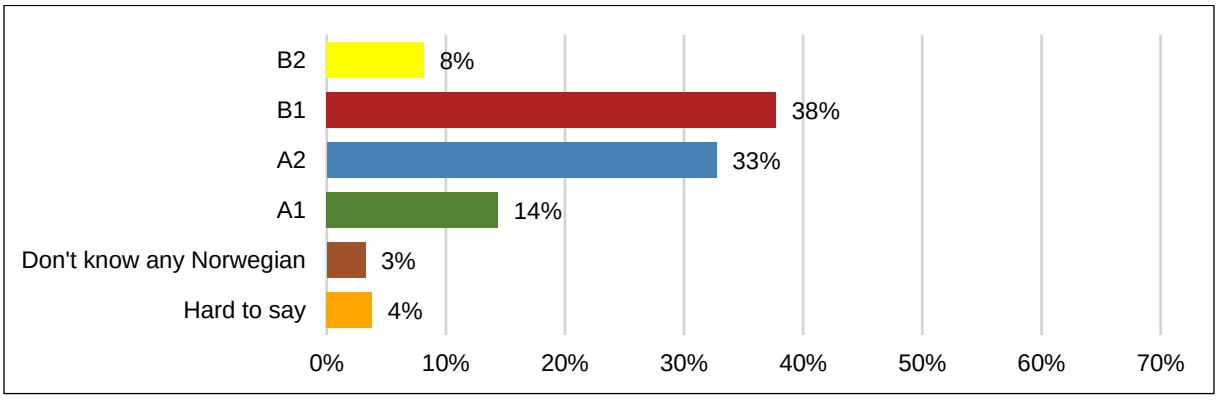
In the interviews, people stressed the importance of learning Norwegian, and they relate skills in Norwegian (or lack thereof) directly to their opportunities in the labour market, believing that a fairly good level of Norwegian is required to enter it. Several interviewees reported that improving their Norwegian was a main priority for them, and they considered the Norwegian classes the main and most important element in the introduction programme. Younger Ukrainians were well aware of the B2 requirement to be enrolled in higher education institutions in Norway, and some interviewees saw B2 as a required level even for getting a job.

10.3.1 Sufficient language traning to reach level B2?

As shown, most Ukrainian refugees possess higher levels of education (see chapter 5.2). Formal guidelines (*integreringsforskiften*) state that the goal for persons with higher levels of education (upper secondary or higher) upon arrival is that they should reach language level B2. Many jobs set formal requirements for a B2 level of Norwegian language skills.

In the qualitative interviews, several interviewees stated that one year of language learning (which they are entitled to) was insufficient to learn Norwegian at a level good enough for getting a job. In the survey, we asked those who had completed the introduction programme about their level of Norwegian.

Figure 10.6: Assessment of own proficiency in Norwegian among those having completed the introduction programme (N=282).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 10.6 shows that only 8% of those who had completed the introduction programme reported having reached the B2 level. The majority had reached A2 or B1 levels. The rest were either at A1 or below (17%) or were unsure about their proficiency level (4%).

As mentioned in chapter 3 (and further explored in the municipal survey in chapter 18.3), since July 2023 municipalities may provide an additional six months of language training, though they are not obliged to do so. Some interviewees reported that their municipality offered free Norwegian courses after they completed the introduction programme. Two interviewees, who were about to complete the introduction programme, said that they would continue Norwegian courses for another six months after the introduction programme, but they questioned the scope of what they would actually be offered.

> I decided to prolong for half a year. For some reason, it is called 'half a year', but in reality, they gave us Monday and Tuesday until 11.30. I think this is a minus. I think if it was for six months intensively, it would have helped people. (Interviewee 3, FGI, 07.09.2023)

Like several others, this interviewee pointed out that the amount and frequency of the language learning were crucial for what level they were able to reach within a certain period of time.

10.3.2 Structural, pedagogical and individual challenges

Quite a few interviewees made critical remarks about the Norwegian teaching and language learning process. Some felt that their progress was very slow and believed that the training could have been improved with some structural and pedagogical changes. Many interviewees, and Ukrainians generally who have arrived in Norway, have considerable experience with education processes since many of them have completed one or several study programmes after completing upper secondary school. This is likely to affect their expectations of any learning process. In other words, they have quite high expectations of the structure of and pedagogical approach to the learning process. Several reported a lack of a structured teaching plan and that teachers were replaced a number of times:

> On Mondays, we talk about our weekends, and it takes a whole lesson. We just sit. We sing a song. And that's it. I don't see the methodology. There's no such system. No topics that follow each other. […] It would be good to have an annual plan, for example, to understand what topics you will study. (Interviewee 6, 20.05.2023)

> As for Norwegian, there's a lack of systematic material delivery. Today it's this, tomorrow it's that. Months were lost, some [teachers] fell ill, there was a lot of confusion, tablets weren't working, there was no software. […] I thought I could really achieve B2, but in reality it didn't work out. (Interviewee 8L, 04.08.2022)

Several interviewees reported that much depended on the teacher and their ability to engage them, to find interesting material and create a suitable programme. Some were calling for a more demanding programme with more testing and correction.

Interviewees also link the scope of their language learning to their success or failure in reaching the desired level of Norwegian during the introduction programme.

> It's great that it [the introduction programme] exists. But it seems to me that after all, a year of this intro programme is – with the intensity that we have now – it's somehow not enough. Well, as for me, because in order to study further, well, to get into any university you need a B2 level. This is not a particularly realistic goal at the moment. Therefore, it's good that this exists, but I would like it either to last a little longer or to be more intensive. (Interviewee 14, 09.08.2023)

Another reason for the slow progress mentioned by the interviewees was the huge differences in the level of Norwegian language proficiency among the students in their groups. When differentiation of groups was practised, it was considered as very positive:

> That is, at the beginning, when we started the A1–A2 course, they simply randomly selected people. Some simply did not learn […] And at first, we had only a Ukrainian group. Then they

> did some control tests […] and for the next term the groups were already mixed. We got another group, a little stronger. Well, you could feel that people came to learn, to talk. (Interviewee 16, 17.10.2023).

> I think it [the language learning] has been great, though we didn't have translation [use of an auxiliary language]. Norwegian [was taught] in Norwegian, also, mostly the Ukrainians had a low level of English or none at all. But very quickly, the groups were structured. […] If a person turned out to be weak, they started from the start with the new ones. This seems to me to be a plus. (Interviewee 3, FGI, 09.07.2023)

Interviewees also reported different motivations to learn Norwegian among some Ukrainians, which called for differentiation of groups: 'There are Ukrainians that want to go home, and we have noticed that they are more negative to everything'. (Interviewee 14, 09.08.2023)

Some interviewees remarked that the language training would have been more efficient if English, Ukrainian or Russian could have been used to explain Norwegian grammar, so that they would understand the basic structure of the language.

> Because when a teacher is dancing with his hands, on his feet, showing something. It could be more effective [if it was thought in Russian], and people would not be so frustrated. (Interviewee 2L, 07.05.2022)

While explanations in English could have benefitted a few, others mentioned that using English as an auxiliary language would not be of any help, rather the contrary. A young woman in her twenties who had arrived in Norway together with her parents expressed her frustration:

> I remained, for example, at the B1–B2 level. My parents remained, as they were at A1, and remained so due to the fact that they were not separated from that teacher in time, who explained everything in English. Only recently, they started being taught by teachers who know Russian. (Interviewee 1, FGI, 07.09.2023)

10.3.3 Possibility to learn English

After temporary amendments for Ukrainian refugees were made to the Integration Act from June 2022, English language training could be included in the introduction programme. As seen in Figure 10.3 above, only 8% had English language training as part of the programme.

None of the interviewees had English language training as part of their programme, but one interviewee (from the 2022 interviews) had hoped to take advantage of that opportunity. She contacted the learning centre (l*æringssenter*) in her municipality regarding the opportunity to study English.

> We were motivated by the fact that it would be much easier for us to improve our English to try to find a job, then to learn Norwegian from scratch, but we were refused. They did not give any written answer, although it was an official letter. But since the idea was mine, the management [in the municipality] talked to me, and they explained their position. Well, the position is that there are general norms, and Norwegian language must be learned by law, and so they offer Norwegian. (Interviewee 2L, 07.05.2023)

She had argued that other municipalities offered a combination of English and Norwegian, but her municipality had explained that there were no resources for offering English. Another interviewee explained that her municipality promised to provide English courses but said: 'We signed up for English courses, but they were never provided' (Interviewee 8L, 04.08.2023).

10.4 Work practice/language practice

In the overall assessment of the elements in the introduction programme, work/language practice received 3.9 out of 5, but the respondents' assessments varied widely.

In the interviews, there were very different opinions on and experiences with work /language practice. The interviews revealed that the municipalities varied widely in how they arranged work experience/language training, from encouraging interviewees to find placements themselves to telling them they had to find work practice placements on their own (often due to high demand with many refugees).

> In February, we were told that in March, we should find a place for language practice ourselves, because my leader in NAV very clearly stated that she could not help with this. (Interviewee 8, 21.05.2023)

One interviewee reported that they were encouraged to search for work practice placements themselves, but that if they did not succeed, there would be three options in their municipality: working at an hotel, in a restaurant or at a supermarket:

> I can go to the supermarket. But it seems to me that if I already have some competencies and a desire to use them, then why not go in that direction, where you can strengthen them, and then look for a job. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

People's motivations to have work practice outside their field of competence varied greatly, and some found that there was no relevant work available to them in the municipality where they were settled: 'My municipality is very small, so, well, the work practice was absolutely irrelevant to all [the people] I know' (Interviewee 2, FGI, 09.07.2023). Some interviewees also reported being hesitant to agree to work practice not related to their education or work experience, because they have heard that they would only be allowed to stay in Norway if they are able to find work related to their education (we will return to this aspect in chapter 14 on future prospects).

Some felt that the municipality had clear preferences in sending Ukrainians to work practice placements where labour was needed, without considering their individual competences:

> The *læringssenter* [learning/competence centre] offers, well, it is very insistent that we should have work practice in the shops, *barnehagen [*kindergarten*]* or restaurants. Any other "higher needs", when one has a special education, when you want something closer to that specialty, you face resistance. (Interviewee 2L, 07.05.2023)

Regarding the assessment of the work practice, some had very positive experiences with their work practice placement/internship. They mentioned that the work practice had been interesting, allowed them to become acquainted with new people, and had given them new insights. For some it had even led to employment (as will be shown in chapter 11.1, about one-third of those who were employed had found their job through work experience). One interviewee was offered a permanent job as a driver after a few weeks of work practice. He was an experienced long-distance truck driver, and when the Norwegian authorities decided to accept the driving licences of collective protection seekers from Ukraine, he was hired almost immediately (Interviewee 2, FGI, 19.10.2023).

However, the interviewees also raised many challenges with the work practice placements. First, and related to the previous point, many had heard that others had become employed after work practice and were discouraged if they realised that there were no realistic job opportunities at their placements: 'I went for an internship, but I understood that there were no vacancies there. I trained, I began to understand this vocabulary [work-related terminology], but there are no vacancies there'. (Interviewee 3, FGI, 09.07.2023)

A second challenge was that some felt that the time spent on work practice 'robbed' them of valuable time that could have been spent learning Norwegian in the initial phase. One interviewee found that she was one of few people in her Norwegian language group who had to acquire language/work practice working in a café while the others could concentrate on their language learning. The woman had worked at a café two days a week to gain work experience, while most of the refugees in the group were at school five days a week learning Norwegian. Keeping up with the others who had five days of language courses was a challenge, because she was 'missing out' on the days when she worked. However, in this

case, the work practice in the cafe had led to actual employment, and she admitted she liked liking working there.

Third, some reported that the language/work practice was in placements where they did not actually get to practise their Norwegian. The lack of language training at the workplace was either due to the actual tasks given to them there or because most of the other staff were not Norwegian speakers. One respondent described it as a negative aspect of the introduction programme that people were 'chased' into placements very shortly after entering the programme:

> It is announced as *språkpraksis* [language practice], but in fact, I have many acquaintances who worked in hotels who worked with people from either Ukraine or Eritrea. As such, there was no Norwegian language training. (Interviewee 16, 12.10.2023)

Another interviewee explained that in their municipality, those who did not find a language/work practice placement for themselves were all sent to the same workplace, which was not conducive to practising Norwegian:

> Interviewer: In your opinion, was it [language practice] useful for you?
>
> Interviewee: For me – no. Not much, no, no.
>
> Interviewer: Why?
>
> Interviewee: Because many of our people came there and we spoke mostly Ukrainian. And they somehow distributed it in such a way that everyone was in one place, many people, many Ukrainians. Anyone who had the opportunity took another place. (Interviewee 17, 17.10.2023)

10.5 Summary

This chapter looks into Ukrainian refugees' participation in and experiences with the introduction programme. The vast majority (who have been settled) participate in the introduction programme: 64% are either participating or on leave, 20% have already completed it, and 6% plan to participate. Only 2% were offered participation and chose not to participate, whereas 8% were not offered participation in the introduction programme. Almost half of those who did not attend or were not offered the introduction programme participated in Norwegian language training.

Of those who had already completed the introduction programme, only 10% attended for six months or less. The vast majority (86%) attended for between six months and one year, while 4% attended for more than a year. Some interviewees explained that not knowing whether the programme would be extended or not created a lot of uncertainty.

A relatively moderate share (16%) of the respondents combined attending the introduction programme with paid work. Some respondents found this a positive experience because it allowed them to earn extra money, while others found it a negative experience because it left them with little spare time.

Virtually all respondents have had Norwegian language training as part of their programme. Over half of the respondents report having learnt about Norwegian society and culture. Just over half of the respondents reported having work practice and/or language practice as part of their programme (but two-thirds of those having completed the programme), and 16% reported taking courses to qualify for work. Respondents were generally satisfied with the various elements in their introduction programme but were slightly less satisfied with the language/work practice at workplaces and, especially, with the English language training. Most found the programme useful for their future work plans. Qualitative interviews revealed some concerns that the elements that were not part of language training were not directed specifically at Ukrainians as a group and therefore felt redundant, while other elements that would have been welcome were not offered.

While language training was generally assessed positively, there was some concern as to whether it was sufficient to enable integration into Norwegian society. Interviewees reported that they appreciated the possibility the introduction programme provided to focus on studying Norwegian rather than having to combine this task with a full-time job. Norwegian language skills (or lack of thereof) are seen as directly related to possibilities in the labour market. However, only 8% of the respondents believed they had reached language level B2 after completing the introduction programme. In the qualitative interviews, several interviewees reported that one year of language learning (to which they are entitled) is not sufficient to learn Norwegian at a level good enough for getting a job. Several Ukrainian refugees in Norway expressed dissatisfaction with the slow progress and perceived deficiencies in the Norwegian language teaching and learning process. Criticisms included the lack of structured teaching plans, frequent teacher replacements, and a desire for a more demanding programme with additional testing and correction. Challenges also arose from varying motivation levels and progress among learners, and differentiation of groups was viewed as positive.

The availability of English language courses within the introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees was quite limited; only 8% reported having English language training as part of their programme.

Experiences with the work/language practice offered in the programme varied, with some highlighting positive outcomes such as subsequent employment, while others reported challenges related to relevance, time constraints, and opportunities for language learning in the workplace.

11 Employment in Norway: experiences and challenges

How have Ukrainian refugees found employment in Norway? What characterises the jobs they have found, and are they satisfied with them? And what barriers do they encounter when trying to get a job in Norway?

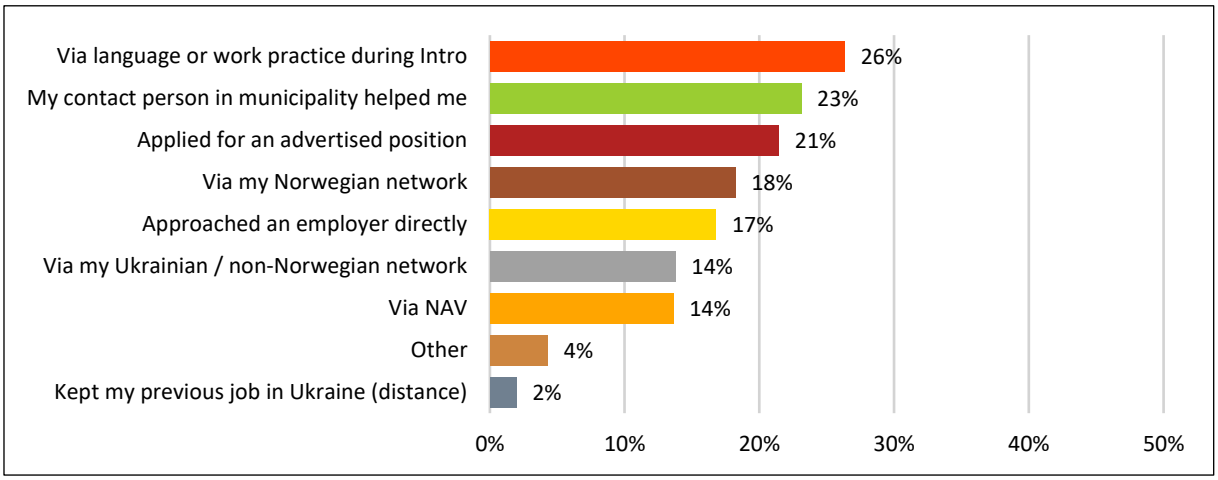
Based on official register data, NAV and IMDi report monthly results to the Ministry of Employment and Inclusion concerning Ukrainian refugees' participation in Norwegian language training, the introduction programme, and labour market integration (Hurtigarbeidende arbeidsgruppe 2023). Furthermore, from June 2022, Statistics Norway began publishing monthly statistics on how many Ukrainian refugees were employed. As shown in chapter 2.6, 18.8% of Ukrainian refugees were employed as of September 2023 (SSB 2023).

In this chapter, we first explore how the respondents who were employed in Norway had found their jobs and the job characteristics, including scope (full-time/part-time, permanent/temporary), sector and match with prior education and experience. We then present which aspects of their jobs they are satisfied and dissatisfied with. Finally, we look at the barriers Ukrainian refugees encounter when seeking employment in Norway.

11.1 Finding a job in Norway

How did the respondents who were employed find their job? Before presenting the results, it should be noted that in our survey, the majority of respondents were still attending the introduction programme. However, 10% of those who had settled in a municipality and were aged 20–65 years were employed in our sample, thus a lower share than the population based of the SSB numbers.

Figure 11.1: How respondents found their jobs in Norway (N=163).



*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 11.1 shows that there are many ways of entering the Norwegian labour market. The most frequent way of finding a job among our survey respondents has been via language or work practice during the introduction programme. The contact person in the municipality is also a valuable resource for jobseekers; almost one in four found work with their help. About 20% got their jobs by applying for an advertised position, and 17% by directly approaching an employer. It is worth noting that more respondents reported receiving assistance with finding employment from their Norwegian rather than their Ukrainian networks.

Even though assessments of the quality of work practice as part of the introduction programme were more varied (see chapter 10.4), the qualitative interviews also indicated that work practice placements have proven to be an effective path to finding employment for some. Several interviewees who gained work practice that aligned with their education or prior qualifications often found jobs afterwards, as drivers, hotel workers, technical assistants and teacher assistants, etc. For some, 'work practice evolved into a permanent job' (Interviewee 2, FGI, 19.10.2023).

Another crucial aspect which Ukrainian refugees highlighted in their labour market integration efforts was the importance of networking in Norway. They expressed frustration, reporting that without social contacts and references, they often received no response to their CVs or job applications: 'In Oslo, there's a lot of work. They promised a lot. But in reality – sure, we'll call you back, but no one calls back' (Interviewee 8L, 04.08.2022).

The establishment of networks with Norwegians was significantly facilitated by teachers from the introduction programme and the contact persons in the municipalities. In a case from a small and remote municipality, one refugee reported that her initial attempts to secure a job had been unsuccessful and met with no response. It wasn't until she shared her experiences with the staff at the language courses that things changed. Subsequently, the school director personally helped her find employment:

> There are two kindergartens. I went to the one and spoke with an assistant first and then with the director, and they took my phone number. Every day during the week I was waiting for them to call me, but nobody called. I went to another kindergarten – the same. Then I went to a hotel. There were four vacancies in the hotel for the summer. They said we will call you. Then I came to Rema. The head of the shop asked me if I want to return to Ukraine. He said that they had a job and told me that he would call me, but nobody called. I came to my teacher and asked why nobody called – because I'm Ukrainian? My teacher went to the director of the school [*læringssenter/voksenopplæring*]. The next day I received a call from the kindergarten. The day I came, I saw that the person was waiting for me and had prepared all the documents. It was because the director of the school asked [them] to hire me and gave good recommendations. (Interviewee 6, 20.05.2023)

Certain Ukrainian refugees have found their own methods of creating connections with locals, including volunteering and participating in social events. One refugee managed to establish a network and secure a job as a teacher's assistant in the municipality through their local volunteer work and fund raising for Ukraine:

> During the planning of this project, I made a lot of contacts with different Norwegians. I did not look for a job, but I was offered. I have a contract with the municipality, it is 20%. I am *lærerassistent* [teaching assistant] for language courses for elderly Ukrainians who did not get into the introduction programme. I like this job because I see how important it is and if this project continues, I would like to continue working on it. (Interviewee 3L, 07.05.2022)

In certain instances, the professional networks individuals had in Ukraine proved to be quite valuable in Norway. For instance, one of the interviewees, who was a professional ballgame referee, reported that he had reached out to the national federation of this ballgame in Norway, which was in need of referees. Before accepting him, the federation in Norway requested confirmation of his qualifications, and he contacted the national federation for this ballgame in Ukraine asking for verification. Consequently, he secured a job and received invitations to referee various tournaments in the municipality where he was settled.

Several of the interviewees pointed out that they managed to secure a job in Norway without assistance from their network or workplace experience. After completing the introduction programme, they created a CV, conducted a job search on finn.no, and received job interview invitations. Those who followed this approach mentioned that it was not particularly challenging and that they quickly found employment:

> I started searching for work one and a half months before the end of the introduction programme. I searched on finn.no and I now work in a restaurant in a kitchen. The work is not

> easy, but the salary is ok. It's fine working here, and we have a lot of international staff. My plan is to pass B2 and find a better job. (Interviewee 16, 12.10.2023)

Some interviewees emphasised that it was their personal responsibility to find employment in Norway, and that they had to rely on their own efforts, just as they were accustomed to doing in Ukraine. This acknowledgment has motivated individuals to take action and actively seek out opportunities rather than passively wait for something to happen:

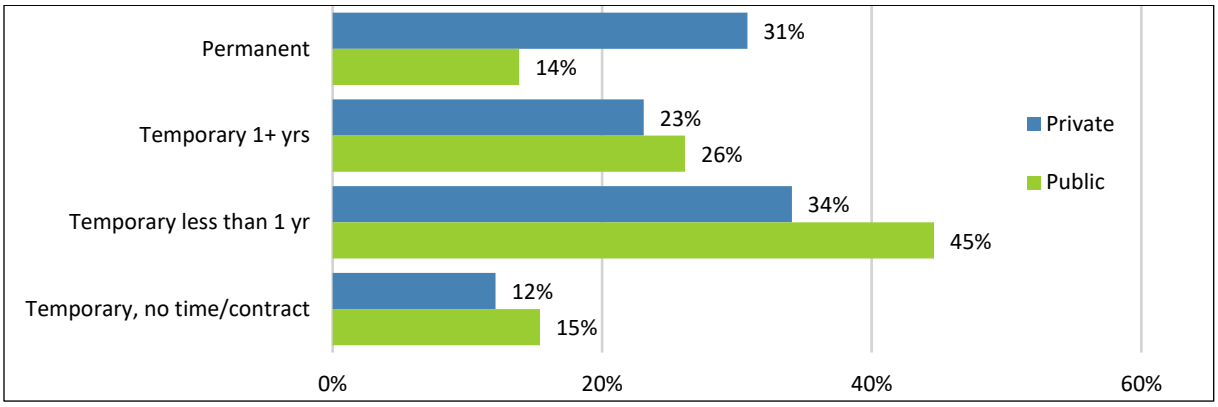
> I understood that no one owes me anything. It's my business if I want to have a job in my field, I don't need to wait for someone to give me this job; I need to do everything on my own. (Interviewee 18, 17.10.2023)

This interviewee mentioned that after completing her work practice at the local newspaper, she asked the editor about the possibility of a job. The editor applied to Fritt Ord and secured funding for her and one more refugee to continue working as newspaper journalists.

11.2 Type of work

What type of work have Ukrainians refugees found in Norway? Are their jobs temporary or permanent, full-time or part-time, and are there differences between private and public sector employment?

Figure 11.2: Types of contracts in public/private sectors of the economy (N=156).



*Weighted by gender and age

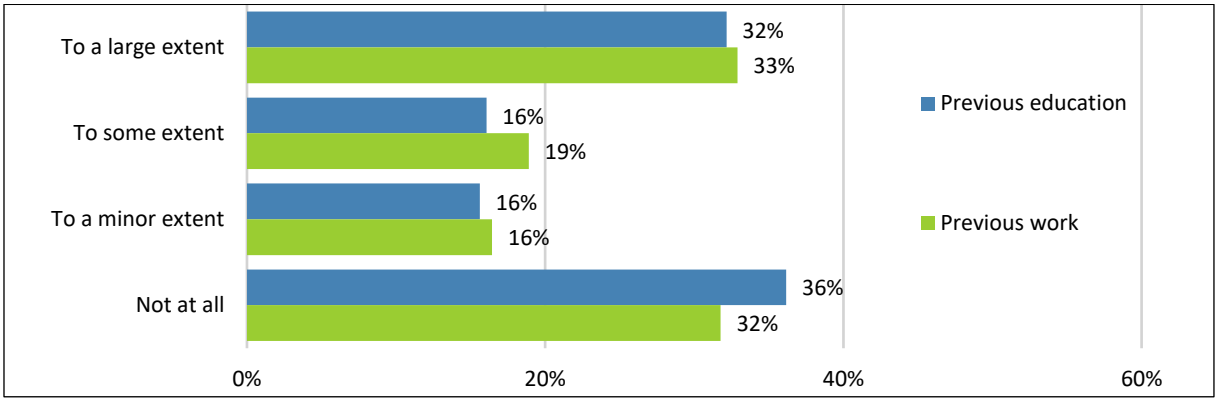
Figure 11.2 shows the types of employment Ukrainian refugees have found and compares the private and public sector. Overall, more respondents work in the private (57%) than in the public (40%) sector of the economy; the remaining 4% are unsure. Among those working in the private sector, almost one in three have a permanent job. The same applies to only 14% of those working in the public sector, where 45% have contracts for less than a year and 15% have contracts with no specific time limit.

Of those reporting work as their main activity, 41% say that they work full time (35 or more hours per week), 27% work part time 20-34 hours per week, and the remaining 32% work less than 20 hours per week.

11.2.1 Use of previous education and work experience

Are Ukrainian refugees in Norway able to use their previous (often higher) education and work experience in their current job? First, it needs to be stressed that not all respondents had used their education and qualifications while working in Ukraine. According to our survey data, almost one-third (32%) of those who had worked in Ukraine had *not* used their education in their previous jobs there.

Figure 11.3: Use of previous education and work experience in current job (N=155/151).

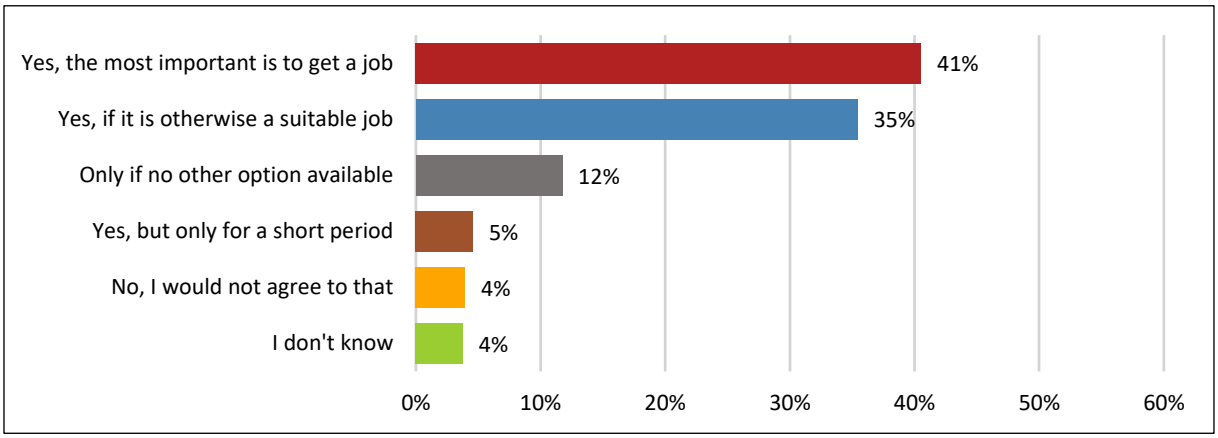


*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those answering 'Not relevant/I don't know' (1%) have been excluded.

Figure 11.3 shows that the extent to which respondents use their previous education and work experience in their current jobs varies widely. About one-third are able to do so to a large extent, but a similar proportion report being unable to do so at all. The remaining third are somewhere in between. As expected, those who had used their education in their previous jobs in Ukraine were more likely to continue doing so in Norway. Refugees aged between 36 and 55 are also more likely to use their previous education and work experience in their current job than both younger and older refugees. Those with vocational-technical education are most likely to report using their education and work experience to a large extent, with 50–56% confirming this to be the case. Knowledge of English and Norwegian are also contributory factors. Finally, early arrival in Norway makes it more likely that respondents use their previous education and work experience in their current job.

In the survey, we also asked whether the Ukrainian refugees were open to finding work that did not correspond with their previous education and work experience.

Figure 11.4: Willingness to work outside previous education and qualifications (N=1489).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those answering 'It is not relevant for me to take a job in Norway' (3%) have been excluded.

Figure 11.4 indicates that Ukrainian refugees are motivated to find a job in Norway even if it does not exactly fit with their previous education or experience (although it is hard to interpret from the responses exactly what jobs Ukrainians are willing or unwilling to take). Only 4% are categorically against taking in such a job, even for a short period of time. Three in four say either that the most important thing is to find a job or that they are willing to take an otherwise 'suitable' job, regardless of whether or not they can use their prior competence from Ukraine.

The overall impression from the qualitative interviews is that Ukrainian refugees recognise that it is difficult to find a job that matches their education and previous work experience. Even getting any job is also seen as a formidable challenge by many. The qualitative interviews highlight three strategies regarding refugees' views on their prospects of finding a job in Norway. First, there are those who are willing to take any kind of job: 'It's not about what you want to do, but what's available' (Interviewee 8L, 04.08.2022). Second, there are those who only oriented towards qualified jobs that aligned with their education or previous job experiences:

> I don't agree with taking any job because I have invested a lot in myself. I have experience that I can share and be useful, really. I will only look for something that is relevant to me. If I don't find it, I will even look for jobs in Ukraine. I still want to live my life doing my job'. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

Third, there are those who are willing to take any available job initially, but who aspire to find a more suitable position over time: 'It would be great eventually to find a job related to my speciality, and in the meantime, I will just work where I find work' (Interviewee 14, 09.08.2023).

Related to the prospect of having to work (at least temporarily) in a new type of occupation, some interviewees view this as an opportunity 'to do something new and different' (Interviewee 5L, 23.05.2023).

For certain highly qualified interviewees with extensive work experience, the dilemma between finding any kind of job and finding one that matched their prior experience and education was viewed as a pivotal challenge, and one that was intertwined with a potential loss of social status (Interviewee 8, 21.05.2023). Conversely, others did not see this situation through the lens of a loss of social status but rather as a realm of new opportunities for self-development, and were eager to explore something new in life:

> For many years I have worked in leadership positions. I don't even know what I would like to work with here. Here is a completely different life. I want to find a job that would just be fun for me, honestly, to go to it with joy. Maybe I would even like to work with refugees, because I know for myself what it is. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2022)

The stay or return dilemma frequently emerges in the narratives of interviewees when discussing job searches. Interviewees articulate a sense of lack of information about the prospects of remaining in Norway after the war ends, especially if they engage in work that does not align with their education and job experience. For certain interviewees, the strong desire to continue their life in Norway has evolved into a significant barrier, dissuading them from accepting any job whatsoever:

> There's gossip that the possibility to stay in the country will only be for those who [perform] work [based on their] education, diploma. I don't want to waste time being a kindergarten teacher, although I love my two children very much. I understand that I won't be able to remain a kindergarten teacher after the war is over, and then everything that I am building, setting up can collapse again. And I will have to return to Ukraine and start building a new life again, when everything is robbed, and no one is waiting for me there. (Interviewee 4, 16.05.2023)

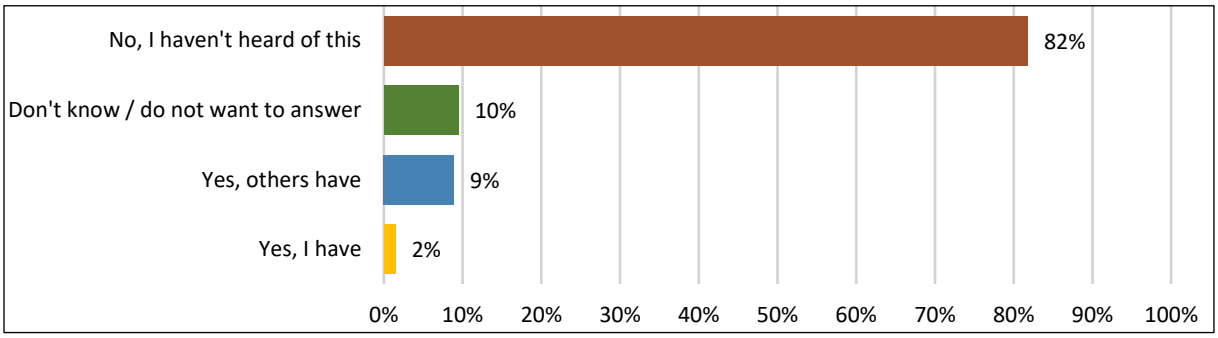
The interviewees who managed to secure jobs that match their education or previous work experience express concerns about the temporary nature of collective protection. One interviewee, who has obtained a permanent position as a driver, expressed the fear that his Ukrainian driving licence would become invalid once the collective protection expires due to legislative regulations. This situation causes frustration and uncertainty.

> When the war ends and our collective protection ceases, my driver's license from Ukraine will no longer be valid for work. In other words, not only will I lose my job, but I won't be able to study, either, because I need to live somehow and pay for the apartment. (Interviewee 2, FGI, 19.10.2023)

11.2.2 Work in the informal economy

Respondents in the survey were asked whether they or other Ukrainian refugees they know have worked in the informal or irregular economy (e.g., without a contract and/or without paying taxes) while in Norway. This could, of course, be perceived as a sensitive question, and the respondents were assured that the responses would be treated anonymously and confidentially and would not lead to any negative consequences for them. Nevertheless, there is a potential for underreporting on such matters, particularly when respondents are asked to share details about their own involvement in such activities. Only 2% reported having worked in this section of the economy themselves, but 9% reported knowing of other Ukrainians who have. In addition, 10% preferred not to answer the question or answered 'don't know' (see Figure 11.5).

Figure 11.5: Work in the informal/irregular economy while in Norway (N=1586).



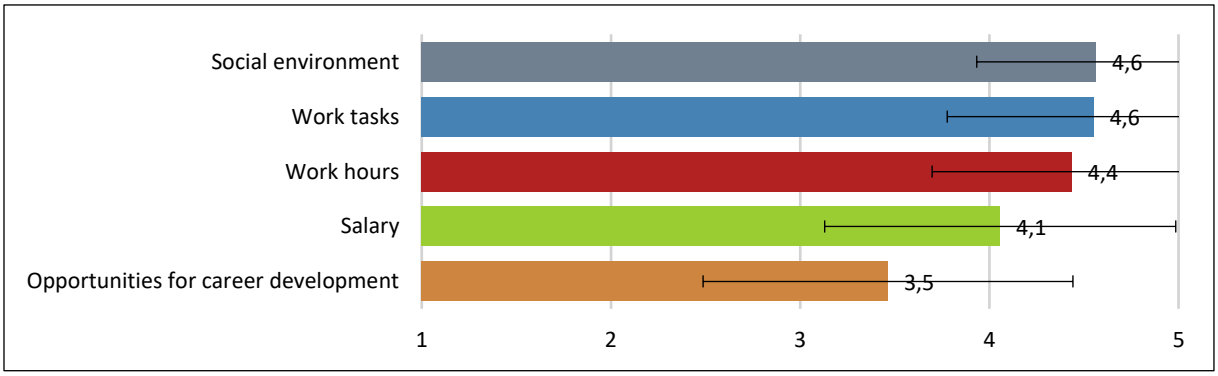
*The percentages add up to more than 100% because it was possible to select more than one option.

There are few differences between different categories of respondents, but those who had arrived recently were, as expected, less likely to have heard of such informal work. People in employment were somewhat more likely to say yes than those not working.

11.3 Satisfaction with different aspects of the job

How do the Ukrainian refugees assess their new job in Norway?

Figure 11.6: Satisfaction with different aspects of the job (N = 108-160).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Means and standard deviations. Responses on a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).
***Those answering 'Hard to say' (2–21%) have been excluded.

Figure 11.6 shows that the majority are satisfied with the social environment, work tasks and work hours. There is slightly more concern about salary levels. Less satisfaction is reported with regard to opportunities for career development. For this particular item, the variation in responses is also especially large, as shown by the large standard deviation. The percentage answering 'hard to say' for this item was also much larger (21%) than for the other items

asked. Among the few who are dissatisfied with their work hours, it is most often a matter of too few rather than too many work hours.

In the qualitative interviews, Ukrainian refugees have observed several cultural differences between working life in Ukraine and Norway. These differences include shorter working hours in Norway (in contrast to Ukrainian work hours from 09:00 to 18:00 or 19:00), as well as the generally less emphasis placed on work in everyday life. This shift towards a healthier work–life balance is considered an attractive feature of Norwegian work culture:

> I like it much more here than in Ukraine because I had jobs where I 'lived' there all day, and it was like your duty to work till eight o'clock in the evening. Here it's like three o'clock. Once I disassembled a dishwasher and one of my colleagues told me "Let's go. Don't do this, it's for the next shift". People here respect your time. (Interviewee 7L, 26.05.2023)

Ukrainian refugees who have already found employment express satisfaction with the regularity of salary payments, a comfortable and amicable working atmosphere, and the fact that people are not used to sharing so many personal matters with colleagues in the workplace.

Interviewees have also emphasised that working life in Norway exhibits a higher degree of egalitarianism in the sense that the 'boss' may also 'help the people cleaning or serving' (Interviewee 5L, 23.05.2023). Furthermore, the Norwegian labour market doesn't perpetuate social inequality in terms of the respect shown for all kinds of work, whether skilled or unskilled. This respect is evident in the attitudes of locals towards unskilled workers and minor variations in salary levels across different fields:

> Here in Norway, they don't have it like we do [in Ukraine] – if you're a cleaner, it means that you are a person of the second class [in Ukraine]. And there's no such thing [in Norway]. There is personal freedom and respect. No one has the right to tell others what to do. (Interviewee 11, 25.05.2023)

One of the interviewees, who had previously worked abroad, expressed appreciation for the adherence to rules, norms and respect for people's rights in Norwegian working life. He reported that he had never been assigned additional tasks in Norway without prior negotiation and personal agreement, which was in contrast to his experiences of working in other European countries (Interviewee 2, FGI, 19.10.2023). Another interviewee pointed out that Norwegian employers seem to consider not only professional qualities but also personal characteristics. At least, that was the impression she had gained:

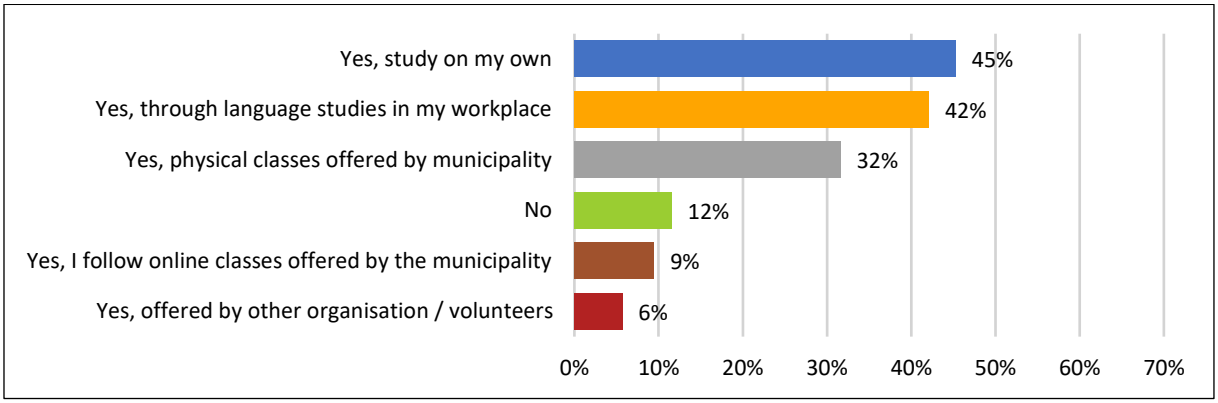
> I feel that in the job market, there's not so much competition among professionals as we have. It's important to be quite easy-going, friendly, not to create conflicts. That's it. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

11.4 Work and continued language learning

Do Ukrainian refugees who find jobs continue their language training, and if so, where and how?

In chapter 9, we found that respondents assess the language level they have after the introduction programme to be too low to enable full integration into working life. Thus, it is interesting to find out how many continue learning Norwegian (or English) after they complete the programme, and to what extent they participate in formal language training inside or outside the workplace.

Figure 11.7: Combining work with continued language studies (N=163).



*Weighted by gender and age.

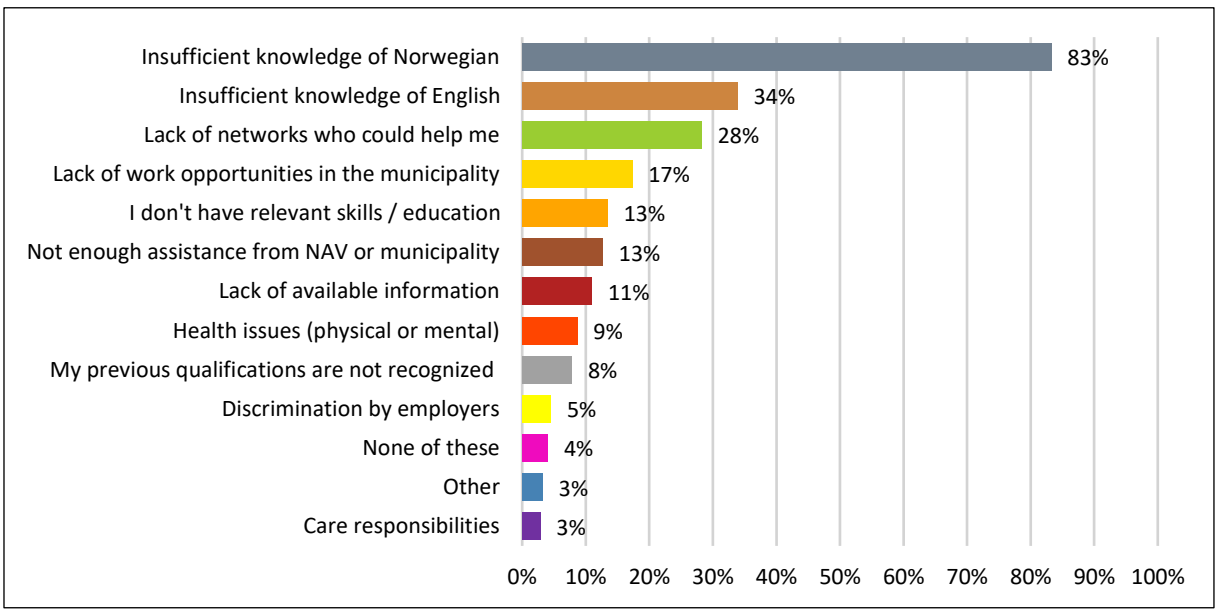
Figure 11.7 shows that the vast majority continue language studies while working, with only 12% answering 'no'. More than four in 10 attend language studies offered by the workplace. However, only 40% continue language training through the municipality, either by following in-person language classes (32%) and/or through online classes (9%). It is less common to attend language training offered by local organisations or volunteers.

In the interviews with those who are employed, there were different ways in which they continue learning Norwegian. Some invest their own money in online courses. One refugee who had acquired a permanent job in his profession, said that he had previously attended an evening course provided by the municipality. However, when his work schedule changed and it collided with work, he signed up for an online course which he paid for himself.

11.5 Barriers to finding a job in Norway

What do the Ukrainian refugees consider to be the main barriers to finding a job in Norway?

Figure 11.8: Barriers to finding a (better) job in Norway (N=1536).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those answering 'Not relevant/I'm not going to work in Norway' (4%) have been excluded.

Figure 11.8 shows that insufficient language skills stand out as the most important barrier to finding a (better) job in Norway according to the respondents' own assessments. Insufficient

knowledge of Norwegian is the response given by the vast majority of respondents, but insufficient knowledge of English is also highlighted by one in three. Further down on the list, but still mentioned by between 10% and 20%, are: lack of workplaces in the municipality, lack of relevant skills or education, insufficient assistance from NAV or the municipality, and lack of information. The response 'lack of work opportunities in the municipality where I live' clearly shows geographical variations, where the centrality of the municipality makes a big difference. Innlandet stands out as the region where this aspect is mentioned most often (33%) and Oslo and Viken least often (8%).

The language barrier is also mentioned in almost all of the qualitative interviews – the need to be fluent in Norwegian. Even those interviewees who were proficient in English found it insufficient to secure employment in Norway. For instance, one highly qualified individual with a background in management and business administration had been attempting to find a job in Norway since receiving collective protection but described this endeavour as entirely unsuccessful. His lack of a network and poor Norwegian language skills were identified as the main barriers:

> I sent my resumé, more than 300 letters. Someone called and asked about the Norwegian level. I said that I learn it by myself, I have not yet started the introduction programme. They told they need at least B2. A new Norwegian friend recommended me where to send a CV. The people wrote 'you fit us'. And then just silence. When I wrote to follow up a month later, they just never answered. The biggest obstacle: the lack of job experience in Norway, the lack of references from a former *Norwegian* employer, and the fact that I don't have the network that everyone is talking about. (Interviewee 8, 21.05.2023)

The demand for labour in the job market varies significantly across Norwegian municipalities. The interviewees report that finding employment is much more challenging in small Norwegian municipalities than in larger cities. Interviewees who settled in small, remote areas observed that it is even difficult for local Norwegians to find jobs. The areas they were settled in offer few employment opportunities, often limited to 'a shop, pharmacy, and nursing home.' This situation has led to frustration:

> There are problems with work here. There are too many of us here, it's a village. The only work available here is on a farm. (Interviewee 8L, 04.08.2023)

> This is a very small town. There are many Norwegians that are unemployed. There is no job for us here. (Interviewee 6, 20.05.2023)

Furthermore, some participants expressed their intention to relocate to larger cities after completing the introduction programme, where the job prospects are more promising:

> Here in northern Norway, finding a normal job is very difficult. Why? The *kommune* [municipality] is very small, very small. I'll tell you honestly, Norwegian themselves try to reserve places for their own relatives and the like. I'm telling you honestly, that means, but let's say here, if you open up arbeidsplassen.no, then there will be 80 vacancies, 90 vacancies for the entire [municipality], yes. If we look at Oslo and the like, then there are 2,000 or so on vacancies open there. Naturally, I want to go where there is work. (Interviewee 5, 19.05.2023)

An additional challenge raised in this regard is the mismatch between Ukrainian refugees' education and previous qualifications and local labour market needs. One of the interviewees mentioned that of the six women who were settled in his small rural municipality, five have worked in Ukraine as accountants (Interviewee 8L, 04.08.2023), and there were no positions for this occupation in the municipality.

The transition from the introduction programme to employment has created additional challenges that were not apparent previously. Fixed working hours and the remote distances in Norway make it challenging for many refugees to address their childcare needs, especially for those who arrived with children alone. Childcare has become a central concern for some of the interviewees as they search for employment: 'I travel far to work and I have two

children I need to pick up – I need to find some work that I can combine with that' (Interviewee 2, FGI, 12.09.2023).

Issues related to information and a lack of practical skills in how to find a job in Norway were also mentioned in the interviews as barriers to finding a job. People reported that they received some information about writing CVs, registering at NAV, and using Finn.no, as well as the importance of having a network when looking for a job. However, many felt that the information provided was more theoretical and not practically oriented. One interviewee living in a small municipality reported that he followed all the recommended steps but received no feedback from employers. He felt frustrated about waiting for a response and considered the possibility of looking for a job in other municipalities:

> There's a lack of information about local job opportunities. They told me – look for a job. Write on your own, send a CV. I did it but have not received any feedback. If they do not want to employ us. No one will tell you directly – don't waste your time for nothing. So, I sit and wait. But maybe I shouldn't. (Interviewee 8L, 04.08.2023)

Meanwhile, people do not believe that discrimination or exclusion from the Norwegian side are relevant obstacles to finding a job in Norway. Interviewees reported that they encounter an inclusive approach in their communication with Norwegians:

> I know for sure that the Norwegian society will not create obstacles on the way to finding a job […]. I don't see any cynicism or snobbism, as seen in other countries. I see a very good attitude towards me. Here the challenge is that I will not reach the language [level required]. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

11.6 Summary

Ukrainian refugees who work found their jobs via a variety of channels. About one in four found jobs via language training or work practice in the introduction programme, and between one in four and one in five with the help of the contact person in the municipality or by applying for an advertised position. Language teachers and contact persons in municipalities are reported to facilitate opportunities in the labour market.

The importance of networks was highlighted in the interviews, and frustration was expressed that without social contacts and references, interviewees often received no responses to their job applications.

Many respondents find it more important to get any job at all than to find one where they can use their previous education and qualifications, especially if they consider it to be an otherwise 'suitable job'. Qualitative interviews indicate that Ukrainian refugees recognise that it is difficult to find a job that matches their education and previous work experience. Perceived loss of social status is a concern to some. For others, a desire to continue their life in Norway dissuades them from accepting just any job, since they believe that whatever job they eventually take may determine whether or not they will be able to remain in Norway in the future.

Those who had found jobs in Norway worked more often in the private sector than in the public sector of the economy. Permanent contracts are more common in the private sector than in the public sector. The extent to which working Ukrainian refugees can use their previous education and work experience in their current job varies widely; around one-third report being able to do so 'to a large extent', one-third 'not at all', and one-third 'to a minor extent' or 'to some extent'. Respondents are generally very satisfied with the social environment, work tasks and work hours, somewhat less satisfied with their salary, and notably less (though still with a score of 3.5 on a scale from 1 to 5) with the opportunities for career development.

Interviewees in the qualitative interviews report cultural differences in working life between Norway and Ukraine, such as shorter working hours, a healthier work–life balance, and more

egalitarianism at work. The vast majority (88%) continue language studies while working, self-studies and studies through the workplace being most common. Four in ten continue language studies offered by the municipality.

Concerning barriers to find employment in Norway, insufficient knowledge of the language is by far the most frequently mentioned barrier to finding a (better) job in Norway, according to the survey respondents. Lack of a network is the second-most frequently mentioned barrier. Interviewees find that even proficiency in English is insufficient to secure employment in Norway. The demand for labour varies significantly between Norwegian municipalities, and finding employment is seen to be much more challenging in small Norwegian municipalities than in larger cities. This is particularly the case if the aim is to find a job where one can use one's previous education and experience. Interviewees in qualitative interviews express a need for more practically oriented information about how to find a job. Discrimination or deliberate exclusion are rarely mentioned by Ukrainian refugees as barriers to finding a job.

12 Social integration for children and adults

How do the Ukrainian refugees assess their own and their children's social integration in Norway: have they made Norwegian friends, and do they participate in local activities? For those with children: how do they assess Norwegian kindergartens and schools, and do their children also follow Ukrainian online schooling?

Integration into Norwegian society is not only about finding a job and being settled in a municipality, but also about getting to know the locals and participating in joint activities. Although the main focus of this study is on labour market integration and qualification, we also asked about the respondents' and their children's social integration.

In this chapter, we first present the Ukrainian refugees' assessment of their children's social integration, with a particular focus on how kindergartens and schools function as a socialising arena, and the parents' assessment of how their children thrive in these arenas. We also disclose to what extent Ukrainian children continue to follow Ukrainian online schooling (usually in addition to Norwegian schooling), and the parents' concerns and reflections in this regard. Finally, we present the respondents' assessments of their own social integration.

12.1 Children's social integration, including kindergarten and school

In the 2022 report, Ukrainian refugees expressed their gratitude for the swift enrolment of their children in Norwegian schools. As shown in chapter 6.3 (Figure 6.4), the 2023 survey also shows that the respondents are still very satisfied with both kindergarten and schools for children, with a score of 4.6 out of 5, where 5 denotes very satisfied.

Interviewees considered these arenas not only an essential space for learning but also a significant arena for socialisation and leisure activities. Of those who reported having children below 18 years of age in Norway, 31% have children attending kindergarten, 70% have children attending grades 1–10, and 15% have children attending Norwegian upper secondary school (*videregående)*. Not all Ukrainian children in Norway attend kindergarten or school: 5% reported having children who do not attend any of these. These are likely predominantly children of pre-school age.

12.1.1 Kindergartens

Although the Ukrainian refugees rated the Norwegian kindergartens very highly in the 2022 report, (4.3 out of 5), a recurring topic in the interviews was *access* to kindergartens. Some mentioned that their children were able to enrol in kindergartens shortly after their arrival, while others were still waiting for such opportunities at the time of the interviews. In the interviews conducted in 2023, questions regarding access to kindergartens did not arise, and there were hardly any challenges reported by parents regarding kindergartens in general. The majority expressed great satisfaction with the opportunity to access this service and with the treatment of their children in these facilities:

> We went to the kindergarten in July. My child is very communicative and social. He likes going to the kindergarten because there are different children there. He can interact in different ways. (Interviewee 8, 21.05.2023)

One elderly interviewee shared a story about her grandson who began to cry in the kindergarten, but the personnel could not understand what he needed due to the language barrier. He needed to use the toilet but couldn't express it verbally. The following day, the kindergarten staff placed pictures on the table: a toilet, a glass, water, and bread. This

allowed the child to show the appropriate picture when he needed something. The interviewee greatly appreciated this approach.

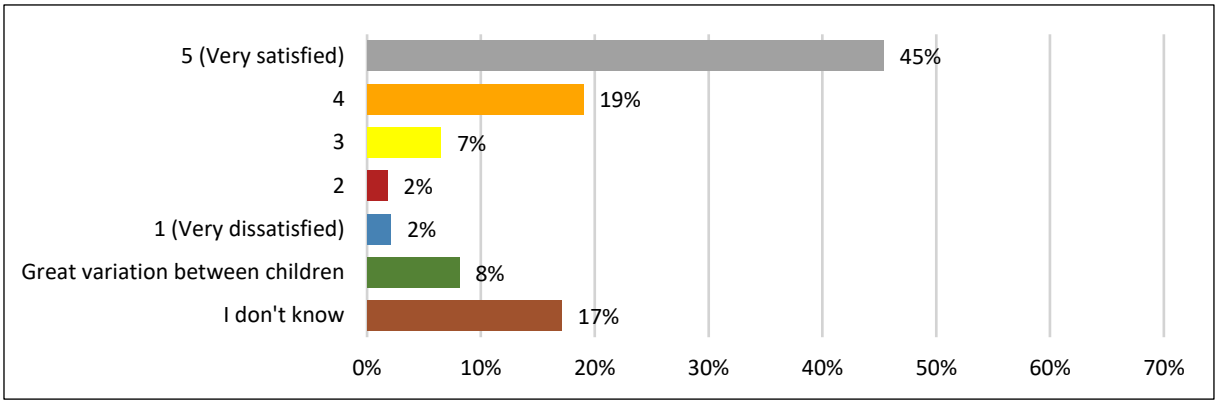
Some parents observed cultural differences in terms of discipline and rules in Norwegian kindergartens. Several interviewees mentioned that their children had never enjoyed going to kindergarten in Ukraine but found great enjoyment in attending Norwegian kindergartens, where they had more fun, played a lot, and felt that 'everything is acceptable':

> I'm a little shocked how they treat the children in the kindergarten here. Everything is acceptable, the children go there with pleasure. We take them from there wet, dirty, but the children have a lot of fun. (Interviewee 12, 25.05.2023)

12.1.2 Schooling in Norway

How do parents assess their children's satisfaction with schooling in Norway?

Figure 12.1: The respondents' assessment of their children's satisfaction with school in Norway (N=570).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 12.1 shows that close to half the respondents gave the top score (very satisfied), and almost two-thirds gave one of the two top scores. Only 4% reported that their children were dissatisfied (option 1 or 2). It should be noted, however, that 8% reported wide variation between their children, and an even larger share responded 'don't know'.

As of 2023, several of the interviewees said that their child/children have acquired a sufficient command of the Norwegian language to interact with their peers and teachers, achieving successful integration into various school and extracurricular activities:

> She writes joint projects with Norwegians, about the kingdoms, about nature. She goes on tourist trips with them. She is happy. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

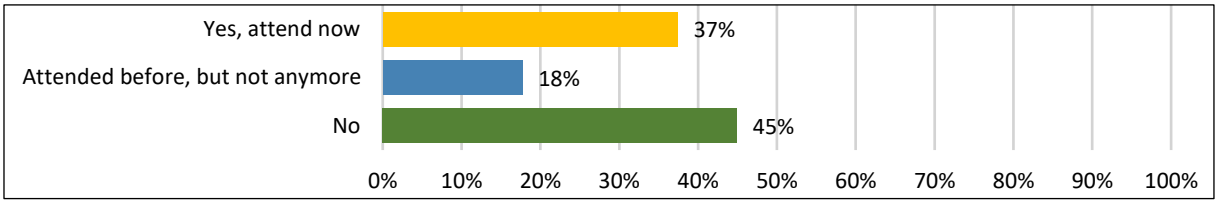
> He really likes the Norwegian school. He said that he would like to finish school here, not in Ukraine. The school is cool, the teachers are cool. The child play chess with a teacher on breaks. (Interview 7L, 26.05.2023)

Many interviewees highlight the cultural differences between Ukrainian and Norwegian educational practices. In Ukraine there is typically more strict discipline during classes, a strong emphasis on following the curriculum, and intensive training with a focus on the child's achievements. In Norwegian schools, the educational process is less focused on children's achievements and more on pleasure, games and freedom.

12.1.3 Online Ukrainian schooling

In the 2022 report, the issue was raised of children participating in online Ukrainian schooling, either instead of or in addition to Norwegian schools. In interviews with participants from 2022, we observed that some of them decided that their children would stop following Ukrainian schooling (remotely). Parents conveyed that this was a challenging decision and had been an open question for some time. They argued that it became too demanding and stressful for their children to juggle two educational programmes concurrently. The emphasis was placed on their successful integration into the Norwegian school system: 'We formally signed to stop. It was very hard to continue the Ukrainian programme and two schools' (Interviewee 3, 2022). However, the extent to which parents made their children continue online Ukrainian schooling was not mapped in the 2022 survey. The overall impression was that this was not widespread, and that it was more of a topic during the initial period. However, in the 2023 survey, we were able to explore this further.

Figure 12.2: Parents reporting whether their child/children attend online Ukrainian schooling (N=570).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Question answered only by those who have children below 18 years of age in Norway.

Figure 12.2 shows that many Ukrainian children continue online Ukrainian school. According to our survey data, 37% of respondents with children aged below 18 report this to be the case. Another 18% say that they did so before, but not anymore, while the remaining 45% say they have not attended Ukrainian school after arriving in Norway. Further analysis shows that there are only small differences between cohorts (depending on time of arrival in Norway). Thus, a significant proportion of those children who have resided in Norway since the initial months following the full-scale invasion still attend online Ukrainian schooling.

In the interviews, parents who chose to continue education for their children in both Ukraine and Norway explained this decision as stemming from the uncertainty about their own future, shaped by the temporality of collective protection and potential challenges they might encounter upon returning to Ukraine. More often, such a choice was made by parents who had not yet found employment in Norway and expressed uncertainty about their future and whether it would be possible to continue their lives here. Interviewees reported differences between the Ukrainian and Norwegian education systems and believed it might be challenging to have the years spent in a Norwegian school officially approved in the Ukrainian education programme.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, studies abroad will be accepted when children return to Ukraine.[20] However, some subjects, such as Ukrainian language, literature, and history, are often mandatory for national university entrance exams in Ukraine. Therefore, many of the parents we interviewed were frustrated about the fact that children may fall behind in these subjects while abroad. This topic has been on the political agenda, and in August 2023, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine issued an

[20] Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine https://mon.gov.ua/ua/ministerstvo/diyalnist/mizhnarodna-dilnist/pidtrimka-osviti-i-nauki-ukrayini-pid-chas-vijni/updated-potochni-vikliki-organizaciya-navchannya-dlya-ukrayinskih-ditej-za-kordonom-ta-vstupna-kampaniya/yak-organizuvati-navchannya-dlya-ukrayinskih-ditej-za-kordonom

instruction outlining the situation for the education of children who left Ukraine due to Russia's full-scale invasion and who are simultaneously receiving education in schools in both the host country and in Ukraine. In the instructions, the Ukrainian Ministry encourages children to continue their Ukrainian education online, particularly Ukrainian language, literature and history, subjects which in many cases are not offered in other countries.[21]

Most of the interviews were conducted before these legislative changes, and they revealed deep-seated concerns among parents regarding these matters. Some interviewees said that they pushed their children to continue their Ukrainian education, even though the children 'are more satisfied with the Norwegian school than the Ukrainian one' (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023). Parents report that teachers in Ukrainian schools are facilitating evening study and showing other forms of flexibility necessary during these challenging circumstances:

> I make him study in a Ukrainian school because, you know, we don't know, because the education here (in Norway) is not recognised in Ukraine. So, if we don't study online in Ukraine, when we return, they'll put us back in the seventh grade, from where we left off. (Interviewee 4L, 21.05.2023)

Parents of teenagers who had been close to completing their upper secondary education in Ukraine before the full-scale invasion also reported challenges related to the differences between the Ukrainian and Norwegian education systems. 'Jumping' between two countries could result in a scenario of dual educational exclusion. For instance, children might not complete their *videregående* (upper secondary education) in Norway by the time collective protection ends, while also potentially missing those years in the Ukrainian school system. This situation could render them ineligible for Ukrainian universities. This challenge emerged in several interviews:

> I have a daughter, and I need to think about her, and she needs to have an education. And jumping between countries is not good. She needs to have a completed education. If it will be *videregående* in Norway, then it will be *videregående*. I want it to be finished somehow. Because if she goes right now to Ukraine – or not now, but in the future – I'm afraid that she cannot enter any college. So, I just want her to have an education. (Interviewee 5L, 23.05.2022)

This is why parents are keen to provide their children with the opportunity to complete their education in Norway, in order to avoid the issues described above in the future. This motivation frequently arises in interviewees' reflections on their own future:

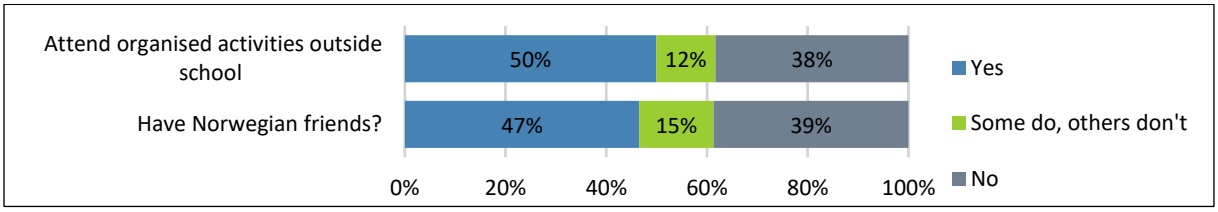
> If I have to make a decision about returning or about a job, the only thing I will not change is that I want my child to study and graduate here, because I see the effect on her. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

12.1.4 Other arenas of social integration of children

How do the parents assess their children's social integration in Norway; do they have Norwegian friends, and do they participate in organised activities?

[21] Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine from 21.08.2023 https://mon.gov.ua/ua/npa/pro-zabezpechennya-navchannya-uchniv-yaki-viyihali-z-ukrayini-vnaslidok-povnomasshtabnogo-vtorgnennya-rosijskoyi-federaciyi-i-zdobuvayut-osvitu-v-zakladah-osviti-krayini-perebuvannya-

Figure 12.3: Children's social integration (N=570).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 12.3 shows wide variation in the responses to these questions. Although the most common answer is that the children do participate in activities outside school and have Norwegian friends, there are also large numbers that do not. Length of stay in Norway is an obvious factor here; those who arrived in 2022 are considerably more likely to have Norwegian friends and participate in activities outside school than those who arrived in 2023.

There is no systematic pattern in terms of centrality of the respondents' municipality when it comes to their children's social integration, although the highest percentage reporting having Norwegian friends (57%) and attending organised activities outside school (58%) is found in the most central municipalities (centrality level 1). There are also some geographical differences: the most likely to have Norwegian friends (57%) are found in Trøndelag, the least likely in Northern Norway (38%). When it comes to attending organised activities outside school, the highest percentage is found in Innlandet (63%), while Northern Norway again comes out with the lowest number (33%).

Some of the interviewees report that their children are facing challenges with integration, related particularly to learning the Norwegian language. This often results in their children not having Norwegian friends and experiencing a sense of isolation. One woman, who has already found a job in her municipality, explained that she initiated a social project involving Ukrainian and Norwegian teenagers to help her son make new friends:

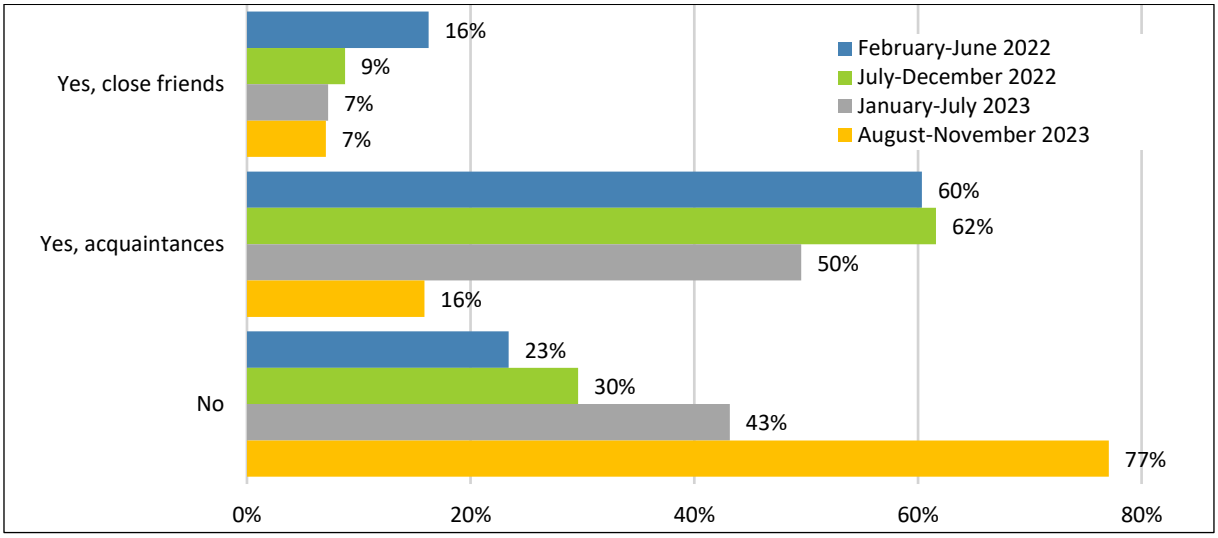
> I initiated a project for my son to help him and his friends because of the adaptation problems and the feeling of guilt. It was a very difficult time for them, and they could not communicate with Norwegians because of the language. This project […] helped them to be united and to become interested in other Norwegians. There was much contact between them and the Norwegian children, and this helped a lot. (Interviewee 3L, 07.05.2023)

Parents value the opportunities available to their children to participate in after-school activities such as sports and music classes, which is also common practice in Ukraine. However, some interviewees report challenges related to their children's after-school activities, mentioning long waiting lists and difficulties getting into these programmes.

12.2 Adults' social integration

What about the respondents' own social integration in Norway?

Figure 12.4: Norwegian friends by time of arrival in Norway (N=1563).

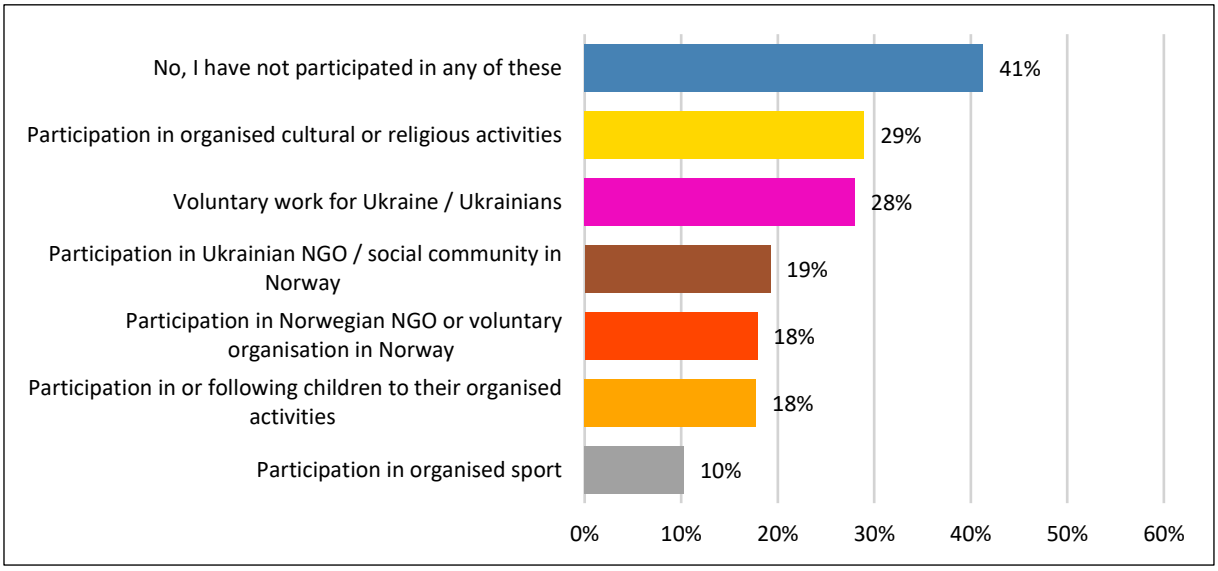


*Weighted by gender and age
**Those answering 'I don't know/prefer not to answer' (1%) have been excluded.

When asked whether they have Norwegian friends or acquaintances, 11% of respondents reported having close friends, 53% having acquaintances, and 37% having no Norwegian friends or acquaintances. We find virtually no difference between men and women or between different age groups in this respect. However, as could have been expected, the time factor is important: the more time spent in Norway, the more likely the network of Norwegian friends and acquaintances will grow, as illustrated in Figure 12.4. There are no systematic differences between those living in municipalities of different centrality levels. Those who had a Norwegian network before arriving in Norway are much more likely to report having Norwegian friends (39% said they have close friends, another 51% acquaintances and only 11% have neither Norwegian friends nor acquaintances) than those without such a previous Norwegian network.

A majority (59%) of the respondents say that they participate in at least one of the activities listed in Figure 12.5 below.

Figure 12.5: Participation in voluntary activities during past 12 months (N=1615).



* Weighted by gender and age.

Just over one in four participates in only one of the activity types listed in the figure, 15% in two, and 18% in three or more. Participation in organised cultural and religious activities, as well as voluntary work for Ukraine and Ukrainians, stand out as the most frequently mentioned forms of activities. One can assume that these activities are more oriented towards fellow Ukrainians than towards Norwegians, and it is hard to estimate their potential for social integration with the local Norwegian community.

The impression drawn from the qualitative interviews suggests that interviewees often maintain close contact with other Ukrainian refugees or Ukrainian residents who have been living in Norway for an extended period. Some of the interviewees mentioned that integration is a challenge because Ukrainians tend to 'lean' on Ukrainians: 'We live in a small municipality, and there are a lot of us [Ukrainians], and people are very close to each other [Ukrainians to Ukrainians], so integration is not very successful' (Interviewee 1, FGI, 07.09.2023).

Interviewees highlighted the limited opportunities to engage with local Norwegians, citing the scarcity of shared spaces for interaction. Only two such areas were mentioned: the neighbourhood and the language cafés. One interviewee reported having contact with neighbours, visiting each other and spending time together:

> 'We have neighbours, almost all of them are Norwegians. And they are very friendly. I even used to get up in the morning when it was snowing, and they cleaned the path for us from the snow. It's so nice'. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

People also appreciate the opportunity to meet locals in language cafés launched in some of the municipalities. Those who combine work and studying Norwegian language reported that they are more focused on family ties and have limited time to get acquainted with other locals (Interviewee 16, 12.10.2023). The overall impression is that Ukrainian refugees are eager to come into contact with locals and report that Norwegians are very 'calm and polite people that talk to you in a friendly way' (Interviewee 2, FGI, 19.10.2023). While most experiences were positive, one instance was cited where an attempt to establish a relationship with Norwegians was unsuccessful:

> I wanted to have some contact with Norwegians. I wanted to be friends with them, to communicate. My neighbour here is an elderly woman. I baked a pie and brought it to her before Christmas. She took it and said goodbye to me. They don't want to have contact. (Interviewee 6, 20.05.2023)

12.3 Summary

In this chapter, we examined how the Ukrainian refugees assess their own and their children's social integration in Norway and to what extent they have made Norwegian friends and participate in local activities. The chapter also includes parents' assessments of Norwegian kindergartens and schools, and their thoughts on their children continuing Ukrainian schooling online.

The 2023 survey shows that the respondents are still very satisfied with both kindergartens and schools. These services received a score of 4.6 out of 5, where 5 signifies very satisfied. In the interviews, people expressed great satisfaction with the opportunity to access these services and with the treatment of their children in these facilities. Several parents observed cultural differences compared with Ukrainian kindergartens, where more focus is placed on discipline and rules, and they reported that their children enjoyed going to Norwegian kindergarten more.

When asked to assess their children's satisfaction with schooling in Norway, almost two-thirds gave one of the two top scores; that is, they perceive their children to be satisfied or even very satisfied. However, 8% reported great variation between their children in this respect and 17% said 'they don't know'. Several interviewees report that their children

interact with their peers and teachers, integrating successfully into various school and extracurricular activities.

In the 2023 survey, 37% of respondents with children aged below 18 report that their children attend Ukrainian school online. Another 18% say that they did so before but not anymore, while the remaining 45% say they have not attended Ukrainian school after arrival in Norway. In the interviews, parents who chose to continue education for their children in both Ukraine and Norway explained this decision as stemming from the uncertainty about their own future, shaped by the temporary nature of collective protection and the reported challenges they might encounter upon returning to Ukraine.

Regarding children's social integration, 47% report that their children have Norwegian friends and 50% report that their children participate in organised activities outside school. The length of stay in Norway is an obvious factor here; those who arrived in 2022 are considerably more likely to have Norwegian friends and participate in activities outside school than those who arrived in 2023.

When respondents are asked whether they themselves have Norwegian friends or acquaintances, 11% report having close friends, 53% report having acquaintances, and 37% report having no Norwegian friends or acquaintances. The qualitative interviews suggest that interviewees often maintain close contact with other Ukrainian refugees or Ukrainian residents who were already living in Norway at the time of the full-scale invasion. Some commented that this might stand in the way for integration. Language cafés are mentioned as a venue for interacting with local Norwegians and some mention that they are on friendly terms with their neighbours. Others report that time for socialising is rather scarce due to other obligations.

13 Economic situation

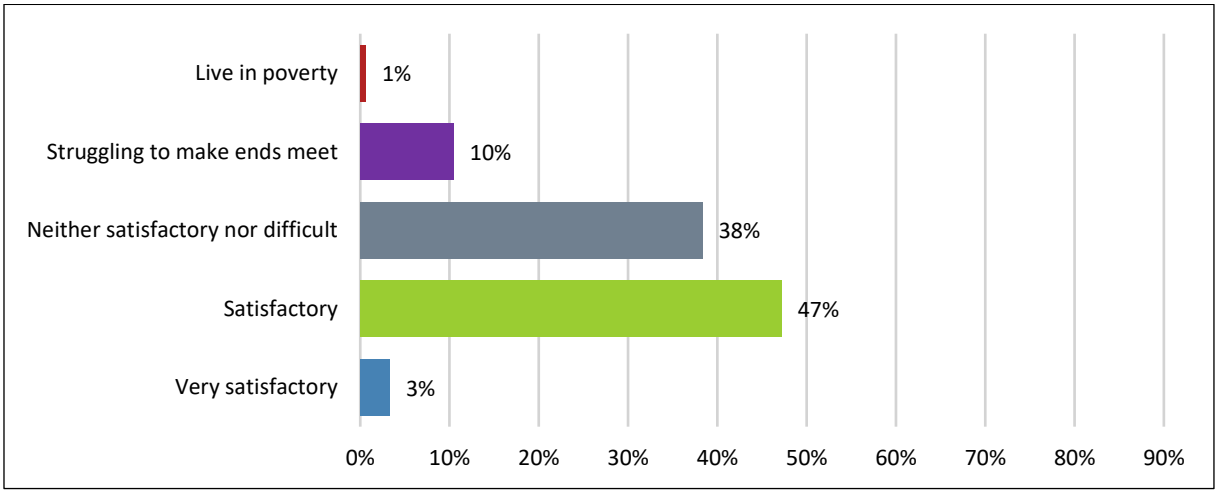
How do the Ukrainian refugees assess their own financial situation in Norway?

Ukrainian refugees are entitled to public support after they have registered their application for protection. Different rules for financial support apply depending on status and participation in the introduction programme. In reception centres, participants receive a small amount of pocket money to cover necessary expenses (the amount depends on family situation and whether or not food is served in the reception centre). After settlement in a municipality, those who participate in the introduction programme are entitled to a standard introduction benefit, a sort of 'salary' for participating in the programme (which may be cut if the participant is absent without a valid reason from the programme activities). Ukrainian refugees are not entitled to regular child benefit (*barnebidrag*) until after one year of residence. After the introduction programme, regular means-tested benefits apply for those who are eligible. Such assistance is based on an individual assessment of the situation of the whole family, and what is covered will differ from one municipality to the next (Hernes et al. 2022).

In this chapter, we first present the respondents' assessments of their financial situation in the survey and then provide examples from the qualitative interviews regarding their assessments and particular challenges.

13.1 Overall assessment of the households' financial situation

Figure 13.1: Assessment of household's current economic situation (N=1540).



* Weighted by gender and age.
** The 3% who answered 'hard to say/prefer not to answer' are not included in the figure.

Figure 13.1 shows that half of the respondents report that their household's current economic situation is satisfactory, while 38% report that it is neither satisfactory nor difficult. One in 10 is struggling to make ends meet, and 1% say that they live in poverty.

Who are the refugees who struggle to make ends meet or say they live in poverty? The responses show only minor differences between the genders and between age groups (those in the age groups 18–24 and 26–35 report more or less similar assessments of their economy). Nor do we find differences between respondents with and without children. However, we see a tendency whereby those newly arrived in Norway and awaiting registration or settlement more often report economic difficulties/poverty (18%) than the average (11%). The same applies for those working part-time (20%) compared with only 4% of those working full-time. Similarly, economic difficulties or poverty are reported by 15% of

sick/disabled respondents and by 24% of those reporting school/education as their main activity. Those currently participating in the introduction programme are closer to the average (9%).

The qualitative interviews provide more insight into what the Ukrainian refugees base their assessment on. Interviewees enrolled in the introduction programme often report that the support they receive is sufficient to live a modest life, thus confirming the picture derived from the survey.

> I can't complain about our payments. They are enough. We don't have the opportunity to buy a house or to travel. But to buy clothes and food, and to pay for the apartment, it's enough. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

> It's enough if you can reduce expenses. We don't have any harmful habits, which cost a lot of money. We don't have a car, which would cost a lot of money. We received a lot of things from Ukraine. Clothes, shoes. (Interviewee 4, 16.05.2023)

In addition to the integration benefit that participants in the introduction programme receive, they may also be eligible for extra support from the Housing Bank (*Husbanken)*, which is a state institution that may provide a *housing allowance:* a means-tested government grant for people with low incomes and high housing expenses.[22] The help from the Housing Bank is much appreciated and is mentioned in many interviews.

In addition to the support from Husbanken, some municipalities have granted other types of support. In the interviews, we heard about municipalities covering expenses for dental treatment (up to a certain amount) and extra grants for buying winter/summer clothing, new glasses, furniture for their apartment, and firewood for heating. The interviewees express a lot of gratitude for these extra services and help from the municipality.

> We were given money for clothes for the child, despite the fact that I didn't even ask. And I was very impressed by it because it is such a human relationship. And we have a fireplace and they brought us firewood. And this suggests that they focus on our needs, feel our needs and adequately cover them. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

Although the majority report having enough to live a decent life, some interviewees said they were eager to reestablish the sense of economic freedom that they had before the war. Some spoke of how their current limited financial situation motivated them to find work and improve their financial situation:

> First of all, I don't have the freedom I had before the war. I could plan something, live the way I want, go where I want. I was a free person who lived without restrictions. I had a normal income, so to speak. And here [in Norway], I have enough money, I don't complain. But, for example, I don't go to cafés anymore. I don't go to concerts because it's too expensive for me. If I go to the [public] pool, for example, I understand that I can do it once a month. (Interviewee 3, 15.05.2023)

> This is also a motivation to go to work. To be more independent in this matter. (Interviewee 1, 16.05.2023).

13.2 Challenges and questions about the financial benefits

In the interviews, some challenges and questions about the system for financial benefits were raised.

First, several interviewees found it surprising that there is no automatic increase in the support parents with children receive during the introduction programme. Requests for such extra support, if needed, have to directed to NAV, and is granted on a case-by-case basis. As one interviewee put it: ‘I can't understand. We are two children and two adults. Yet we

[22] https://www.husbanken.no/english/housing-allowance/

receive the same amount as just two adults' (Interviewee 8,2022). An elderly woman who was living with her son and his family explained that they found the financial situation difficult. She personally did not participate in the introduction programme, but her son and daughter-in-law both participated in introduction programme:

> One intro salary goes to paying for housing, transport and kindergarten. The other intro salary, we use for food for five people. The intro salary does not consider the presence of children in the family. (Interviewee 12, 25.05.2023)

Second, for introduction programme participants under 24 years, the standard introduction benefit is lower (2/3 of the amount) than for those aged 25+ years. The interviewees in this age group could not see why they should be in less need of financial support because of their age, when expenses for housing, clothes, and food are the same for all. These persons were calling for a reasonable explanation for why they were disfavoured financially due to their age. One of the interviewees aged below 25 stated: 'In Ukraine, I was an adult, but here I am dependent on my mum. (Interviewee 14, 09.08.2023)

Third, a couple of interviewees who earned some income pointed to the fact that one then quickly loses the support from *Husbanken*. In their experience, they ended up having less when they had small earnings from employment than when they received assistance from *Husbanken*, which they thought was strange.

Finally, two interviewees who considered the possibility of studying in Norway expressed concern about taking up a loan with *Lånekassen.*[23] They were well aware that the loan would have to be paid back after completing their studies. However, if they were to return to Ukraine, the prospective sum to pay back would be huge, taking into account the lower level of salaries in Ukraine.

13.3 Summary

In this chapter, we first presented how respondents in the survey have assessed their financial situation. We then provided examples from the qualitative interviews of particular challenges as well as positive aspects of support that were mentioned by the interviewees.

Half of the respondents find their household's current economic situation to be satisfactory, while 38% found it neither satisfactory nor difficult. One in 10 is struggling to make ends meet, but only 1% report living in poverty. When it comes to which categories of Ukrainians are struggling economically, we see a tendency where those who recently arrived in Norway and are awaiting registration or settlement more often report economic difficulties/poverty. This is also the case among those working part-time, among the sick/disabled, and among those reporting school/education as their main activity.

Interviewees enrolled in the introduction programme often reported that the support they receive is sufficient to live a modest life, confirming the picture derived from the survey. The help from the Housing Bank – a means-tested government grant for people with low incomes and high housing expenses – is mentioned in several interviews as much appreciated. Although the majority express that they have enough to live a decent life, interviewees emphasise that they are eager to find work and to reestablish a sense of economic freedom.

While many are satisfied with the level of support, parents who are enrolled in the introduction programme found it surprising that there is no automatic increase in the financial support provided to parents with children during the introduction programme. Introduction

[23] 'Lånekassen is both a bank and a part of the welfare state. Since its inception, Lånekassen has provided support to pupils and students for the purpose of ensuring that all Norwegian citizens get access to education, regardless of background.' (See https://lanekassen.no/en-US/presse-og-samfunnskontakt/about-lanekassen/ for more information).

programme participants under 24 years also react to the fact that the standard introduction benefit is lower for them (2/3 of the amount) than for those aged 25+ years.

Some interviewees earning some income pointed to the fact that one then quickly loses the support from *Husbanken*. Other interviewees who were considering the possibility of studying in Norway expressed concern about taking up a loan with *Lånekassen* in case of a prospective return to Ukraine, where salaries are lower.

14 Future prospects

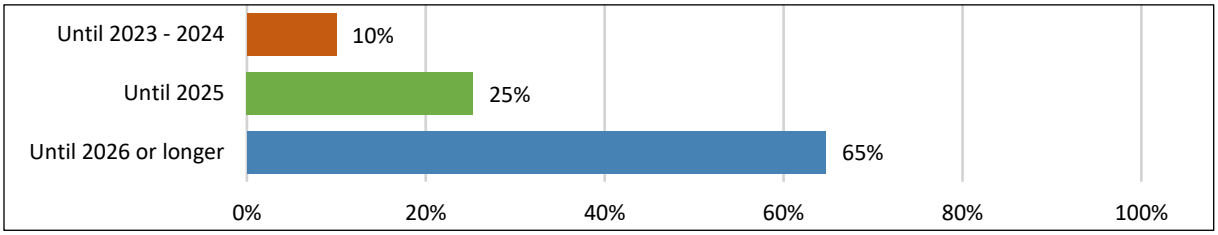
The previous chapters have examined how Ukrainian refugees have experienced their reception in Norway so far – but what are their thoughts about and prospects for the future?

In this chapter, we first present the respondents' thoughts about how long the war will last as an important background variable to understand their future prospects. Thereafter, we show the Ukrainian refugees' responses to different statements about their future stay in Norway and potential return to Ukraine and, based on the qualitative interviews, explore the rationales underlying these different positions. We also present what they see themselves doing if their stay in Norway becomes long-term. Finally, we show how the insecurity of the temporary permits for collective protection affects them.

14.1 Thoughts about how long the war will last

In both the 2022 and the 2023 surveys, we asked the respondents how long they thought the war in Ukraine would last. They were provided with specific alternatives, along with the option 'Hard to say/I don't know'. In the 2022 survey, 45% responded that they were uncertain when the war would end. This uncertainty has increased to 59% of respondents in the 2023 survey. Among those who do give an estimate, there are now also more respondents who believe it will last for several more years than was the case in June 2022.

Figure 14.1: Estimation of the duration of the war (N=655).



* Weighted by gender and age.
**Those who answered 'Hard to say/don't know' (59%) have been excluded.

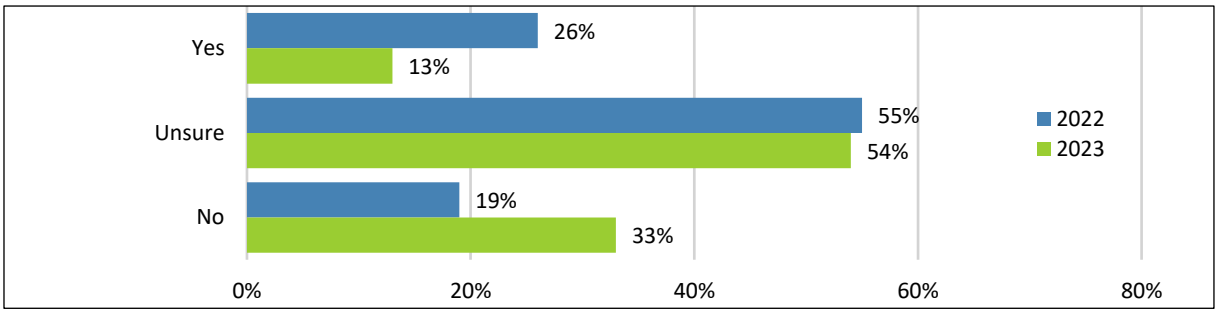
Figure 14.1 presents the respondents' estimated duration of the war (excluding the 59% who expressed uncertainty about its end). Almost two-thirds now believe it will last until 2026 or longer, and only one in 10 believes that the war will be over by the end of 2024.

Additional analyses of differences between subgroups show that late arrivals (those who arrived from August 2023 onwards) are somewhat more optimistic about a faster end of the war than those who arrived earlier. Those who at the time of the full-scale invasion lived in territories of Ukraine that are now occupied give more varied answers to the question than other respondents; they have the largest share of optimists but also of pessimists about the length of the war. Men are considerably less optimistic than women, and the young and middle-aged are more pessimistic than those in the age groups from 56 years and above.

14.2 More people are inclined to want to stay in Norway, but the majority is uncertain

What do the Ukrainian refugees think about the future: do they want to stay in Norway or return to Ukraine when the war ends?

Figure 14.2: Statement: 'I will return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends', comparing answers from the 2022 and 2023 surveys.



*Weighted by gender and age in both surveys.

Figure 14.2 compares results from the 2022 and 2023 survey related to the Ukrainian refugees' future prospects for return to Ukraine when the war ends. In the 2022 survey, 26% said they would return to Ukraine immediately after the war, 19% said they would not return, and the rest were unsure. The trend since then shows more reluctance to return to Ukraine and more motivation to remain in Norway. In 2023, while the majority is still unsure, only 13% now report that they will return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends. One in three say that they will not return.

We asked those who answered 'no' or 'unsure' to this question whether they 'will eventually return to Ukraine'. Only an additional 8% said yes, 31% still said 'no', while the largest share (61%) is unsure about their future residence. Thus, by combining the two questions, we find that only 21% of the refugees plan to return to Ukraine at some point in the future, and that the majority is uncertain.

From the qualitative interviews, we gained more insights into the complex rationales behind their aspirations to return or remain. Generally, a growing realisation among people that the war might be prolonged influenced their outlook on the future.

Some said that they simply had no place to return to, due to damaged homes or occupied territories. Individuals from war-torn areas who have lost their homes in Ukraine are grappling with a challenging life situation. Some aspire to return to their homes in Ukraine, but the reality is that there is no longer a viable place or space to return to. Staying in Norway appears to be the only feasible option for these people:

> Honestly, while I had a whole house, I thought I would return home – I didn't think otherwise. Now, not only was my house bombed, but our city was also destroyed. […] There is not a single house, nothing, it's just a nightmare, ruins. My life was destroyed, my school, the cemetery where my dad lies, there is nothing. I watch videos from the drone. We had such a garden – only holes now. If I were told: '[interviewee's name], your house is ok', I would go home on foot. I don't know how it will be when I leave the introduction programme, how I can somehow realise myself. I'm also very worried because I also want to find a job. I'm inclined to stay here. (Interviewee 7L, 26.05.2023)

Others said there were no family or friends left, no job opportunities or that they anticipated significant financial and other challenges in post-war Ukraine. Interviewees from Ukrainian-controlled territories that had been severely affected by the war remained uncertain about when it would be safe to return home, even after a Ukrainian victory.

Aspirations to forge ahead with their lives in Norway were often linked to the vision of a 'normal life'. In Norway, people have the opportunity to work, make life plans, and simply relish life:

> My plans are to stay here and to live normally. Norway shows how to live in a humane way. And the Norwegian model is great. (Interviewee 11, 25.05.2023)

> I will also look for work because it's important to have some stability. All I want is some stability and a normal life for my daughter first of all, and for me. (Interviewee 5, 19.05.2022)

> I'm not young anymore. Right now, it's uncertain how long all of this will last and what will happen next. We've already settled everything with the older child; it's easier for him here. I'm too old to start from scratch again. I would like to stay here. (Interviewee 8L, 04.08.2023)

The stability and opportunities for their children were again often mentioned: 'There's no future for my child in Ukraine in the immediate future because of the war. Especially in our territory' (Interviewee 6, 20.05.2023).

For those who want to return, the presence of their own accommodation in Ukraine is a significant factor that influences future plans. Interviewees who have well-maintained homes in Ukraine exhibit a higher level of psychological stability and a greater willingness to return to Ukraine when it becomes safe there:

> We really want the war to end, and we want to return home. This is what we want, my husband and me. My son, of course, also wants to go to Ukraine because it is his home. And he asks me every day: 'Mum, is the war over? When will we go home?' The plan is to wait for the victory of Ukraine and go home. Because we have the apartment there. That [having an apartment] is a start to build your presence. (Interviewee 8, 21.05.2023)

Those who have attempted to find employment in Norway but have faced challenges express feelings of disappointment and a sense of unfulfillment. Some contemplate returning to Ukraine, where they feel like 'a part of society,' while others consider exploring opportunities in other countries:

> I don't want to stay in Norway. I will learn the language and pass B2. If during this period nothing changes with work. The point is not only to find a job, but to find a place where you realise yourself. And to feel yourself, not as a person being hosted. I'm already being told that it is time to pack my bags. I really don't like this feeling. So, for now, the option is to stay here, but in the long-term perspective we're not thinking about such options. Maybe to go to another country. Maybe. I don't know yet. (Interviewee 8, 21.05.2023)

Those who find that their children face challenges with integration into their new cultural environment emphasise that they would take this into account when eventually deciding on whether to stay or return:

> It's also very important for me how the children will be here. There are very difficult periods for my daughters, when they really want to come back to old acquaintances, to old friends. It's difficult to explain to them that there is no such thing, that nothing will not be like it was. So, the feelings of my children in this country will also be significant for me. (Interviewee 4, 16.05.2023)

Some interviewees find the question about their future plans uncomfortable, as it seemingly corners them. They say this is a question riddled with numerous unknown variables that could significantly influence their decision to stay in Norway or return to Ukraine. Frustration arises from the uncertainty about when the war will end and the fate of their homes in Ukraine.

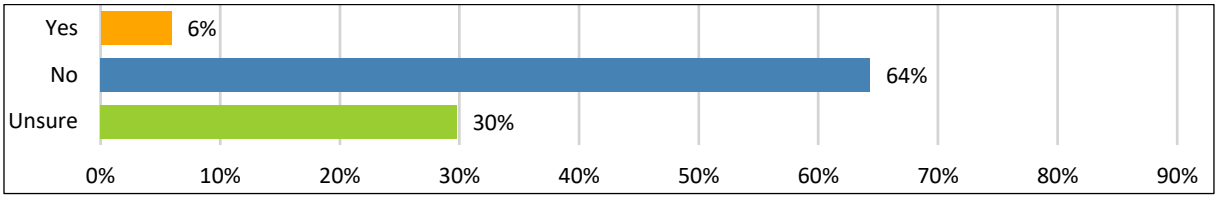
> We are often asked this question, and I have already started to confess to people that this is a very difficult, emotionally difficult question. It puts me in a corner. I don't know. How can I make a decision without the facts I work with? I don't know if the war will end, or when it will end. What will happen to the occupied territories? When they are liberated, there is a high probability that there will be great devastation. So, I don't know. But the only thing I have realised, I saw how my child is changing here, and how she likes it here. I would like her to get education in a safe environment. (Interviewee 7, 21.05.2023)

14.2.1 Assessment of different scenarios

In a battery of questions, we asked respondents in more detail about their thoughts on returning depending on different hypothetical scenarios. Figures 14.3 to 14.8 display the distribution of responses. Several observations can be made. Most importantly, given the uncertain outcome of the war and the prospects of being able to stay or to move, the

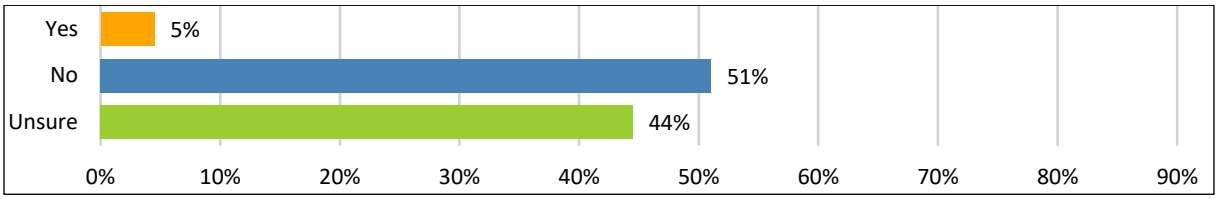
proportion of respondents that report being ‘unsure’ is substantial or high for almost all scenarios.

Figure 14.3: Statement: ‘I will consider moving to a different part of Ukraine than my hometown if only selected areas of Ukraine become safe’ (N=1586).



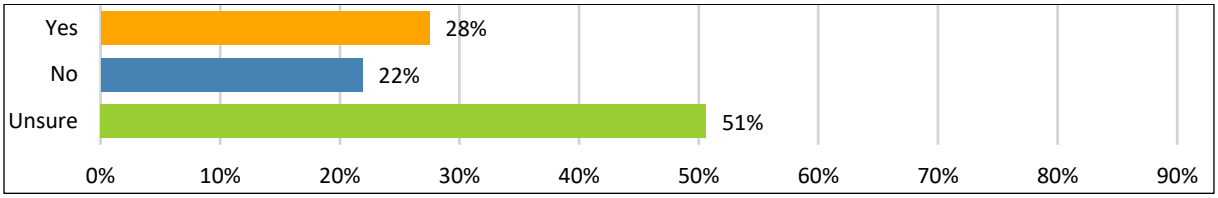
*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 14.4: Statement: ‘I will return to Ukraine as soon as it is safe in my hometown (even if the war is still ongoing in other parts of Ukraine)’ (N=1586).



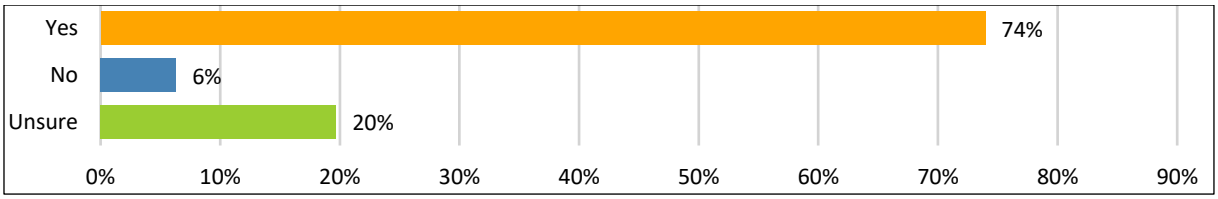
*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 14.5: Statement: ‘I do not think I will ever be able to return to my hometown’ (N=1586).



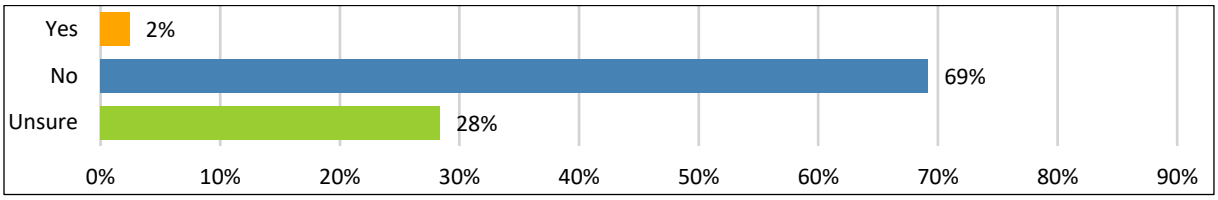
*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 14.6: Statement: ‘I would rather continue living in Norway than restart my life in a new city in Ukraine’ (N=1586).



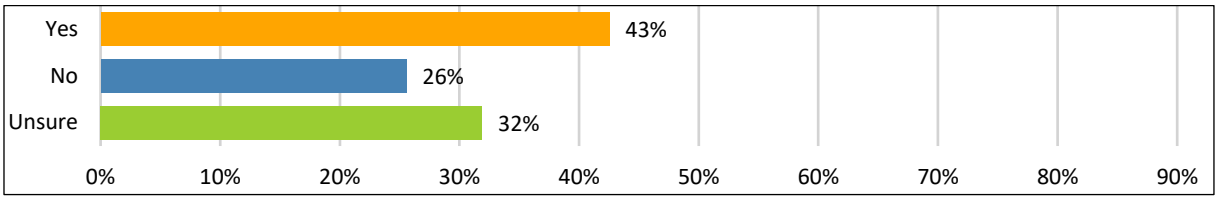
*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 14.7: Statement: 'I will consider leaving Norway and move to another country' (N=1586).



*Weighted by gender and age

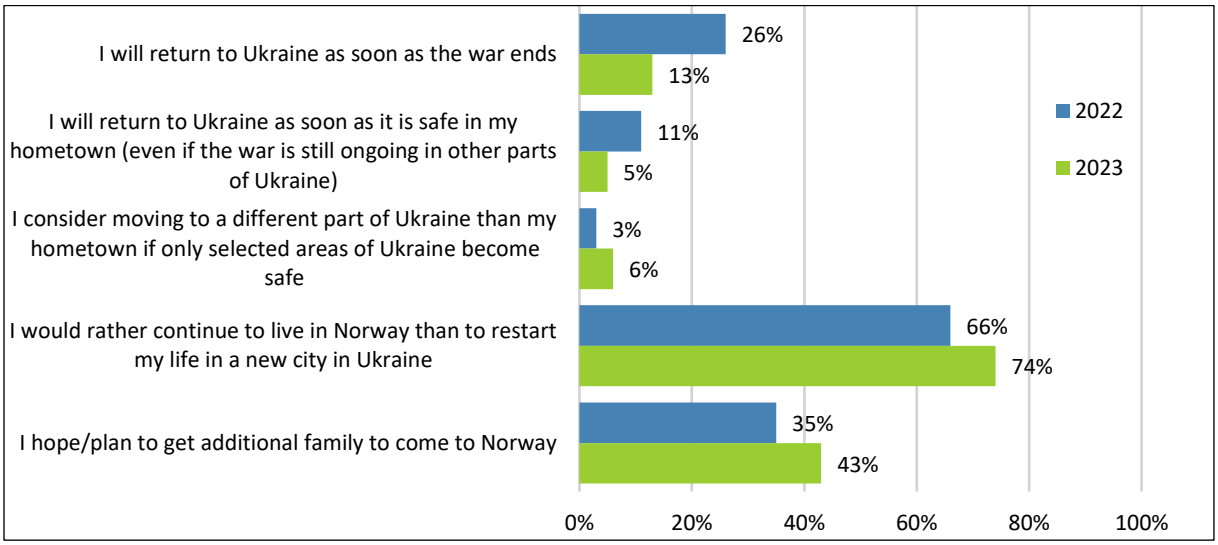
Figure 14.8: Statement: 'I hope/plan to get additional family members to come to Norway' (N=1586).



*Weighted by gender and age

Respondents are generally reluctant to move to parts of Ukraine other than their hometown if only certain areas of Ukraine are safe (Figure 14.3). Still, the percentage responding 'no' has decreased from 76% in the 2022 survey to 64% in the current survey. Very few are inclined to return to Ukraine as soon as it is safe in their hometown if the war is still ongoing in other parts of Ukraine (Figure 14.4). Almost eight in 10 are either uncertain or believe they will not be able to return to their hometown (Figure 14.5). Another noteworthy finding is that three in four would rather continue to live in Norway than restart their life in a new city in Ukraine (Figure 14.6) (increased from two in three in 2022). There seems to be little interest in moving from Norway to other countries, though 28% are unsure about what the future will bring in this respect (Figure 14.7). A fair share (43%) of the respondents wish to bring other family members to Norway, which is higher than those who do not (26%) or are unsure (32%) (Figure 14.8).

Figure 14.9: Percentage answering 'yes' to a battery of questions on future plans, by year of survey.



In Figure 14.9, we compare the percentages answering 'yes' to the questions that were asked in both the 2022 and the 2023 surveys. With one exception, the figure shows that reluctance to return to Ukraine has grown in the time period between the two surveys. Also,

more people now hope to have additional family members come to Norway than was the case in 2022.

14.2.2 Who wants to return and who wants to stay?

Are some subgroups of Ukrainian refugees more inclined to want to stay in Norway or return to Ukraine?

To analyse this question, we first explored the internal correlation between the variables that indicate inclination to return to Ukraine, inclination to remain in Norway or being uncertain. Some of the variables had a high internal correlation[24], and we therefore computed an additive index[25] as a dependent variable. For the index, a low score indicates inclination to return, and a high score indicates motivation to stay in Norway (or rather not to move back to Ukraine). Those who are unsure are given a medium score. This index was used in a multilinear regression analysis, where we included independent variables which we believed could have an impact on refugees' prospects of future residence. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 14.1.

[24] We used only the variables with the highest internal correlation for computing the index, i.e. the following: I will return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends; I will return to Ukraine as soon as it is safe in my home town; I will eventually return to Ukraine; I consider moving to a different part of Ukraine than my home town if only certain areas of Ukraine become safe; I would rather continue to live in Norway than restart my life in a new city in Ukraine (with opposite values as for those above). The index was computed by recoding and calculating the mean score on these variables for each of the respondents.

[25] We applied a reliability analysis to check the internal correlation of the index, and with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77 it is reasonable to assume that the index demonstrates a satisfactory level of internal consistency.

Table 14.1: Multiple linear regression. Dependent variable: Prospects of future residence index. High value = expressed high motivation to stay (i.e., not to return) (N=1550).

	Unst. coeff	Std. err.	Stand. coeff.	Significance
Constant	2.09	0.09		0.000**
Male sex (vs. female)	0.18	0.02	0.19	0.000**
Age (in years)[26]	0.00	0.00	-0.12	0.000**
Has children 18 yrs of age (vs. none)	0.06	0.02	0.07	0.008**
Education 11 yrs or less (vs. higher)	-0.03	0.04	-0.02	0.373
Education vocational (vs. higher)	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.307
English basic/fluent (vs. poor/none)	0.07	0.02	0.08	0.002**
Previous network in Norway (vs. none)	0.00	0.02	-0.01	0.827
Centrality of municipality (6 levels. 1 = most central)	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.994
Arrived 2nd cohort (vs. 1st, i.e., before July 2022)	-0.12	0.03	-0.12	0.000**
Arrived 3rd cohort (vs. 1st)	-0.10	0.03	-0.10	0.001**
Arrived 4th cohort (vs. 1st)	-0.06	0.04	-0.04	0.138
Currently working (versus all others)	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.256
'War ends by 2025' (versus all others)	-0.18	0.03	-0.14	0.000**
Husband/wife/partner left in Ukraine	-0.09	0.03	-0.06	0.010**
Children left in Ukraine	-0.09	0.03	-0.08	0.003**
Parents left in Ukraine	-0.04	0.02	-0.04	0.117
Satisfaction with reception in Norway	0.07	0.01	0.12	0.000**

**Significant at 0.01 level

*Significant at 0.05 level

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.14$

Several variables have a statistically significant correlation on the perceived prospects of return. Men are considerably less likely to consider returning than women, and those with children under 18 (most of these children are in Norway with the respondents) are more inclined to stay in Norway. The respondent's age also matters; young respondents are more likely to wish to remain in Norway than older respondents. Whether or not the respondent has family left in Ukraine also has, as expected, an effect on motivation to return. However, it is only those with children and husband/wife left in Ukraine that express higher aspirations to return, while having parents left in the country does not have a similar effect.

A variable with a large effect on considerations about future residence is the respondents' estimation of the duration of the war: those believing that it will be over by 2025 have considerably greater motivation to return. It is also noteworthy that the first arrivals to Norway (the cohort arriving by June 2022) are least motivated to return to Ukraine. This finding indicates that the inclination to stay increases with longer length of residence in Norway.

The centrality of the municipality in Norway, whether or not the respondent has found work, and having a previous network in Norway do not affect return aspirations much. However,

[26] Since this is a continuous variable with one-year intervals, the unstandardised coefficient is close to zero. However, despite its apparent lack of effect in raw units, the standardised coefficient reveals the variable's effect on the dependent variable.

overall satisfaction with reception in Norway makes a difference; those who were more satisfied are more likely to wish to remain in Norway. Furthermore, previous level of education does not affect return aspirations, but knowledge of English reduces motivation to return to Ukraine.

The qualitative interviews conducted in 2022 indicated that the Ukrainian refugees were rapidly shifting their focus towards integrating into Norwegian society rather than planning an immediate return to Ukraine. Thus, not surprisingly, many interviewees in 2023 expressed their desire to continue their lives in Norway. Many refugees mentioned they had already forged new friendships in Norway, settled into their daily routines, embraced the Norwegian lifestyle, and acquired a sufficient command of the Norwegian language to secure simple jobs. Some arrived in Norway with their entire families. Those who had found employment articulated their integration into the host society by paying taxes, striving to communicate in Norwegian, and achieving financial independence.

Taking a longitudinal perspective, we conducted follow-up interviews with some of the refugees we initially interviewed in 2022. This approach allowed us to track their evolving future plans over the course of a year spent in Norway. In NIBR's report from 2022, we categorised the interviewees into three groups based on their future intentions: 1) those confident of returning to Ukraine, 2) those wishing to remain in Norway, and 3) those who were 'lost in-between'. In the follow-up interviews in 2023, we observed changes in their outlooks on the future. Some of those who had expressed a strong desire to return to Ukraine as soon as possible in 2022 had altered their plans in 2023, based on their successful integration experiences in Norway[27]:

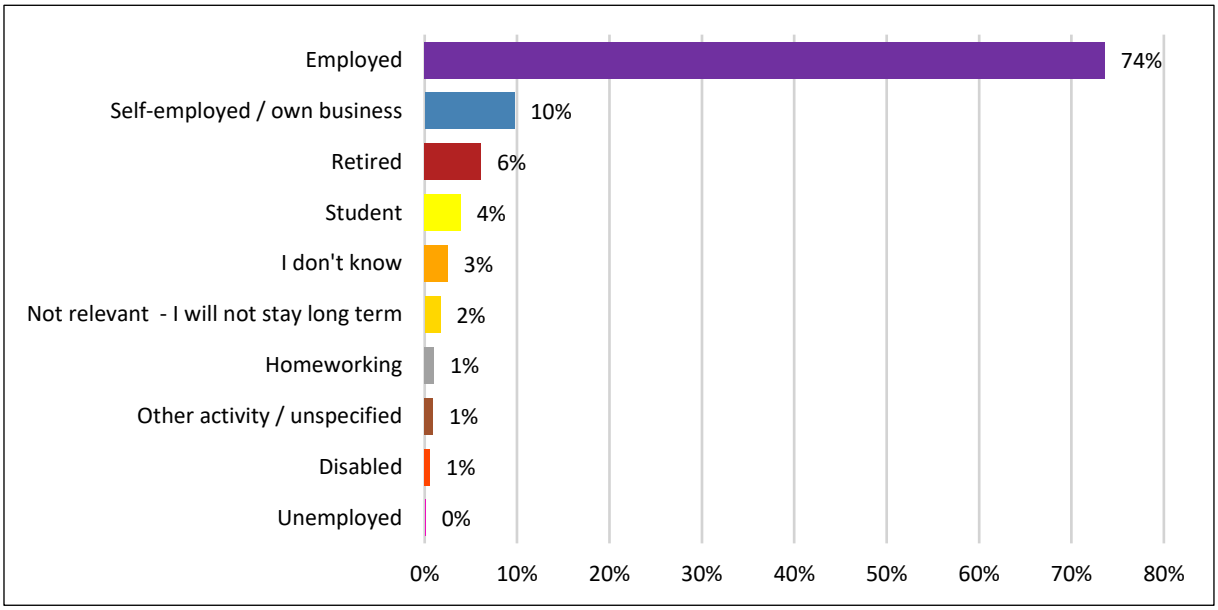
2022	**2023**
We are here temporarily. It's dangerous to return now, a shell hit the house. We're waiting for the opportunity to return when it is safe. My work is tied to language. There is no opportunity to do that here. I am ready to study here, but not to be a burden. (Interviewee 6, 13.05.2022).	I have high adaptability. I adapt to the proposed conditions quite quickly. I have a project, a job. My child is ok, and my mother is healed. I can't sit on my suitcase and wait for everything to be solved. I want to live every day. I do everything to create my home where I am now and not to wait. (Interviewee 3L, 07.05.2023).

[27] The two quotes are from the same interviewee, but the references differ becuase they refer to different interviewees with that person.

14.3 Future plans for the stay in Norway

What do the Ukrainian refugees envision for their future if their stay in Norway becomes long-term?

Figure 14.10: Future activity if the stay in Norway becomes long-term (N=1586).



*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 14.10 shows that if the stay in Norway turns out to be long-term, the vast majority of Ukrainian refugees hope to work, either as employed or as self-employed. Some are obviously at the age when they will be retired, and there is also a small percentage, mainly young people, who will study (we assume that there could be different interpretations of what long-term implies, as respondents planning to study may also have chosen work as the long-term activity).

Many of the interviewees expressed a desire to achieve financial independence from state support as soon as possible. While opinions diverge on the specific nature of the work they seek, people are enthusiastic about find a job and working hard:

> I will stay in Norway if I get a job. I want to have a job. I would really like to stay here. I'm not used to living on loans, I'm not used to social payments. I was always dependent on my own money, without any help. (Interviewee 4, 16.05.2023)

> I really want to work here and earn money to take care of my family. I worked in Kyiv, I always worked, I worked a lot. (Interviewee 8, 21.05.2023)

Furthermore, that a significant share of Ukrainian refugees wish to enhance their education and qualifications in Norway is confirmed by two questions asked in the survey. First, we asked whether the respondents had thought of enhancing their *education* in order to qualify for a new profession in Norway. Close to half (45%) had considered this, one-third (32%) answered 'perhaps', and only 17% answered 'no' (the remaining 7% found the question not relevant).

The second question asked was about whether the respondents aimed to enhance their formal qualifications while in Norway and provides more details on the different types of qualification enhancement they aimed for.

Figure 14.11: Intentions to enhance formal qualifications while in Norway (N=1586).

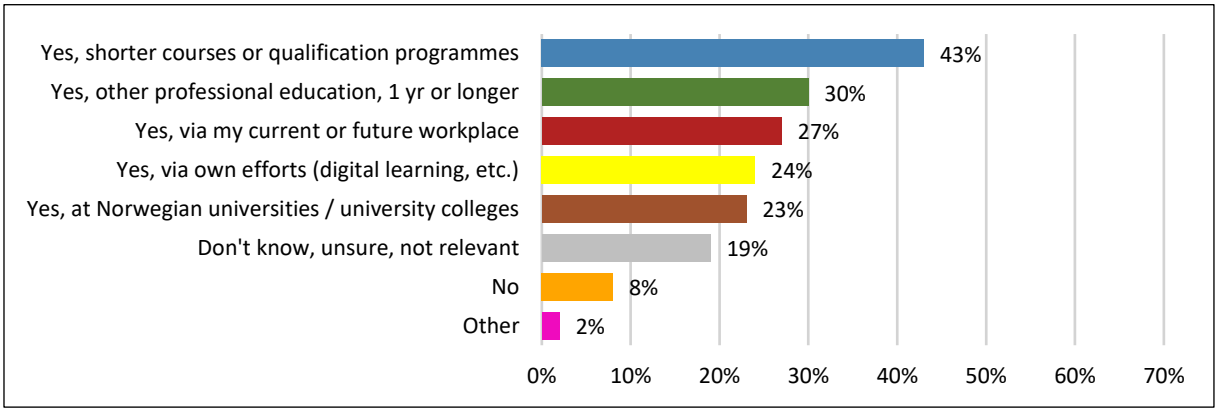


Figure 14.11 shows the strong motivation for enhancing such formal qualifications in different ways, both via short qualification programmes, various other types of professional education, via the workplace and even by entering higher education institutions (the latter applies to 50% of those in the 18–25 age group). Only 27% answered that they do not intend to enhance their qualifications or that they are unsure (mostly those in age groups from 55 and above). Men are generally more inclined to give affirmative answers to the various forms of qualification enhancement than women.

14.4 The temporary nature of collective protection as a factor of uncertainty

Thoughts about returning to Ukraine are linked to the perception of the temporary nature of collective protection. Some interviewees are certain that they 'must' return to Ukraine when their collective protection status expires. In this context, the legal status of collective protection is viewed as a factor that triggers existential uncertainty and frustration. This situation creates fear for some, as they worry about having to rebuild their lives entirely from scratch in the future, a prospect that is particularly traumatising for them and, notably, for their children:

> I don't know. […] Again, to settle here, to accept the fact that I am staying in Norway – and then the war ends, and we are sent straight home. (Interviewee 2L, 12.05.2023)

> Because, honestly, it all depends on how things go. Because if I can work and have a stable life, then it's very hard to jump from one country to another and get used to new things all the time. (Interviewee 5L, 23.05.2023)

In general, the interviewees expressed significant concerns about whether they would be permitted to remain in Norway in the future, especially after three years of collective protection. People recognise that the war could last for an extended period. Many are eager to receive information from the Norwegian authorities regarding the fate of Ukrainian refugees when the three-year collective protection permit expires. They really want to have prior knowledge about whether or not they will be allowed to stay if the war continues at that time. The lack of information is causing frustration among people and affecting their integration progress.

14.4.1 Feeling of differential treatment due to the temporary perspective of their stay in Norway

Some interviews compared the situation for Ukrainian refugees with that of refugees from other countries who are granted individual asylum. These Ukrainian refugees found

themselves disfavoured due to the uncertainty about return embedded in temporary collective protection and the shorter introduction programme:

> When there are different nationalities in the class, we feel the difference in attitudes and treatment. The municipality takes care of them regarding transport to the school: they have a taxi, and we don't. They [the other refugees] are better treated here, as we see it. Precisely because they have individual protection. We have temporary protection, and they think that we will go home. When the war ends, we go home. And these refugees from Sudan, from Africa, they have a different situation. They are here forever. Therefore, they experience different treatment. (Interviewee 6, 20.05.2023)

> You want us to do the same as ordinary refugees, you give us an ordinary programme for refugees, who often don't know how to read and write. You did not change the programme when we asked you to give us at least a little English translation of Norwegian grammar so that we could understand it faster. In some way you compare us to ordinary refugees, but at the same time, you say that we have collective protection, that at any moment, the war will end, and you will be sent home'. (Interviewee 2L, 07.05.2022)

14.5 Summary

This chapter examined the Ukrainian refugees' thoughts and prospects for the future. A majority of respondents (59%) in the 2023 survey answered 'Hard to say/I don't know' to the question of how long they thought the war with Russia would last (in 2022 the share was 45%). Among those who did give an estimate, almost two-thirds believed that the war would last until 2026 or longer, and only one in 10 believed that the war would be over by the end of 2024.

While uncertainty about the duration of the war has increased, respondents in the 2023 survey are more inclined to want to stay in Norway than to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends. One in three answers in the affirmative to this question, while in 2022 the share was one in four. However, the majority (54%) is unsure about whether they will return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends.

The qualitative interviews provide some explanations for the indecisiveness and reluctance with regard to returning. Interviewees who had their homes in Ukraine damaged have no homes to return too. Others reported that life in post-war Ukraine would be difficult and that it might be hard to find work. Several expressed a wish to live 'a normal life' and stressed the importance of stability, opportunities and education for their children. How well children as well as adults adapt and to what extent they face challenges with integration have an impact on how interviewees see their future.

The survey delved deeper into the question of returning by asking the respondents to assess potential future scenarios where parts of Ukraine are considered safe even if the war is still ongoing elsewhere in Ukraine. Respondents are generally reluctant to move to parts of Ukraine other than their hometown if only certain areas of Ukraine are safe. Still, the percentage saying 'no' to this question has decreased from 76% in the 2022 survey to 64% in the current survey. Almost eight in 10 are either uncertain or believe that they will not be able to return to their hometown. As many as three in four would rather continue to live in Norway than restart their life in a new city in Ukraine (increased from two in three in 2022). Quite a few (43%) of the respondents wish to bring other family members to Norway.

Men are considerably less likely to consider returning to Ukraine than women, and those who report having children in Norway are more inclined to stay in Norway. Respondents' age also matters; young respondents are more likely to want to remain in Norway. On the other hand, respondents with children and/or a husband/wife in Ukraine have higher aspirations to return. Similarly, those who believe the war will be over by 2025 are more motivated to return. The earliest arrivals to Norway are most reluctant to return to Ukraine. Thus, people's inclination to stay increases with their time of residence in Norway.

If their stay in Norway becomes long-term the majority of respondents (82%) see themselves as employed or self-employed, and they are motivated to enhance their formal qualifications while in Norway. Several interviewees stressed that they wanted to earn their own living and not have to rely on state support.

In the qualitative interviews we see that thoughts of return are interlinked with the interviewees' perceptions of their status of temporary collective protection. Interviewees expressed significant concerns about whether or not they would be permitted to remain in Norway in the future and are eager to receive information from the Norwegian authorities regarding the fate of Ukrainian refugees when the three-year collective protection permit expires. Some interviewees compared the situation for Ukrainian refugees with that of refugees from other countries who are granted individual asylum and they found themselves disfavoured due to the uncertainty about return.

Part 3

The frontline workers' experiences with Ukrainian refugees and related policies

15 Data and methods for analysing frontline workers' experiences and assessments

A description of the overall research design is presented in chapter 1.2. In this section, we will describe the data and methods of analysis of the frontline workers' experiences in their work with Ukrainian refugees and related policies. First, we conducted focus group interviews to gather insights from various stakeholders involved in the integration of Ukrainian refugees. The qualitative collective analysis (see chapter 1.2), where the main topics were explored, was used as a starting point for designing the questionnaire for the refugee services. Additional meetings were arranged to discuss the design. Thus, the qualitative material served as input to designing the survey. In the following chapters in part 3, we combine the qualitative and quantitative data to explore different topics related to the frontline workers' experiences with the reception, settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees.

The overall project, along with the specific data collected, have been registered and approved by the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (SIKT) (formerly NSD) and has followed the research ethics guidelines from the National Research Ethics Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH). All interviewees and survey respondents were provided with a detailed consent form containing general information about the research project, voluntary participation, the person's rights in terms of withdrawing from participation and the researcher's obligations with regard to storage of data, etc. In the survey, respondents had to actively accept these conditions before completing the survey. The interviewees received their consent forms via personal email and consented in writing or orally before the start of the interview. Throughout the analyses, we have taken care to treat the research data in ways that ensured confidentiality. Data from the survey and interviews have been stored on OsloMet's password-protected server, accessible only for researchers involved in the project. In this report, we have anonymised any information that might make it possible for individuals to be identified.

In this chapter, we first present the interviews, which include descriptions of recruitment and how the interviews and analyses were conducted. We then describe the survey procedure and data.

15.1 Interviews

The interviews were conducted in May and June 2023, except for one interview with NAV, which was conducted in August. The reason for conducting one of the NAV interviews in August was that many Ukrainians had begun to exit the introduction programme around that period, and we wanted to capture experiences with the transition period. The purpose of the qualitative interviews was to understand the perspectives and experiences of both public and private actors in Norwegian municipalities. We interviewed 39 people from 15 municipalities. We conducted focus group interviews with five different stakeholders: the refugee service (9), the adult education centre (7), NAV (6), employers (7), and voluntary services (10). Focus group interviews are well suited to eliciting various perspectives and opinions on the topics discussed (Puchta & Potter 2004; Barbour & Kitzinger 1999).

Recruitment of interviewees

To ensure a diverse composition of interviewees, we aimed to recruit individuals from municipalities with different characteristics, such as geographical location, municipality size, labour market conditions and differences in experiences with refugee reception.

It was challenging to recruit interviewees to the focus group interviews because many municipal employees struggled to cope with their main work tasks. Therefore, several of the

people we contacted declined to participate. The employers were the easiest group to recruit; they seemed quite eager to be asked to contribute with their perspectives. We recruited a variety of leaders and frontline workers from the integration services and the voluntary organisations. From the 'employer group', we mainly interviewed managers.

To ensure the interviewees' anonymity, we do not disclose the specific municipalities. Apart from their 'group affiliation' (refugee service, employer, etc.), we do not provide any other identifying information. In some instances, we have also altered their gender in the analyses.

We use codes to indicate the different interviews and interviewees when we use quotations. For example, 'refugee service, 9, 01' refers to an interview with employees in the refugee service, where 9 is the code for the interview and 01 refers to participant 1.

Conducting the interviews

We included people from the same service or group in the focus group interviews (e.g., employees from the refugee service in one focus group interview, representatives for voluntary organisations in another, etc.). This enabled the participants to reflect with others who worked with similar tasks but with different structural prerequisites and experiences. We believe that this strategy resulted in richer data. For instance, an interview with employees from the adult education centre for immigrants consisted of participants from one large and one small municipality. In this interview, the differences in the challenges they faced became more apparent as they related their own experiences to the experiences of the other participants in the group. In order to include participants from different parts of the country simultaneously, we conducted the interviews digitally (mainly via Teams). Most of the interviews consisted of four to five participants, though some consisted of only one or two. Interviewers ensured turn-taking among participants to capture the experiences and opinions of everyone in the group. We designed specific interview guides for each group of participants. The interview guides consisted of the main topics we wanted to discuss, but we maintained a flexible approach during the interviews to allow for new experiences and perspectives.

Analysis

After each interview, we wrote a summary of the main points. These summaries were used in the workshop for the qualitative collective analysis (see chapter 1.2). The summaries were also helpful in identifying main topics in the analysis. We recorded the interviews and transcribed them. For the analysis, we used Nvivo to code the interviews. The process was done inductively, which means that the codes were made while reading the interviews and not in advance. The codes consist of 'mother codes', that is, broader themes, which in turn were divided into more refined codes.

15.2 Survey

In the autumn of 2023, we conducted a digital survey of all municipal refugee services. The survey was distributed by e-mail to all municipal e-mailboxes, requesting it to be forwarded to the leader of the refugee service in the municipality. The survey was distributed on 17 October, and three reminders were sent. The survey was closed on 9 November. A similar survey was sent to Oslo's 15 city districts in parallel with the survey sent to the municipalities.

209 municipalities completed the survey, a response rate of 59%. Some municipalities cooperate closely on the refugee services, and a couple of the service leaders contacted us to communicate that they would only complete the survey for the host municipality. We have not taken this into account while calculating the response rate.

Six of 15 city districts in the municipality of Oslo completed the survey, representing a response rate of 40%. The results of the two surveys were combined in the analyses.

Quantitative data material

The main data material from the survey consists of quantitative data on a wide range of issues concerning refugee services. The respondents appear to have completed the survey very conscientiously. Few data are missing, apart from answers to questions obviously not relevant for all the respondents.

Data from the survey were combined with register data from Statistics Norway about the municipalities, namely population, location/centrality, number of refugees settled and unemployment in 2022 and 2023.

The analyses conducted in this report are mainly simple means, frequency distribution and bivariate correlations. There is substantial variation in the data. We have analysed the material with the general hypothesis that municipality size (population), location and refugee settlement experience are variables that may explain some of the variance. However, these three variables are highly correlated. Usually, we show the results for one of the variables and only make comments on correlations in the text if there are results of particular interest.

Qualitative data material

In addition to the quantitative data, we asked several open-ended questions in the survey, where respondents were asked to formulate their viewpoints in their own words. We also asked informants for supplementary comments on several issues. These answers constitute more than 60 pages of text. Due to the time available to prepare this report, we have not yet been able to analyse this qualitative data material systematically. These data are therefore used mainly for illustrative purposes, and when cited in this report, each quotation is marked accordingly with '(respondent, survey)'.

Dropout analysis

In order to see whether the participating refugee services are representative, we conducted a dropout analysis. We primarily analysed the distribution of participating municipalities on two main variables: population size and location (county).

Table 15.1: Participating municipalities as share of all municipalities, by population size. Oslo excluded.

Municipality size	Number of municipalities	Participating municipalities	Percent participating
3000 and fewer	130	78	60%
3001-9000	105	58	55%
9001-30000	86	50	58%
30001 and more	34	23	68%
Total	355	209	59%

Table 15.1 shows that all categories of municipalities (by size) are represented in our material with at least 55% of the total number of municipalities in the category. The largest municipalities have the highest representation rate, with 68% of the municipalities participating in the survey.

Table 15.2: Participating municipalities as share of all municipalities in the county. Oslo excluded.

County	Number of municipalities	Participating municipalities	Percent participating
Viken	51	29	57%
Innlandet	46	28	61%
Vestfold og Telemark	23	14	61%
Agder	25	14	56%
Rogaland	23	14	61%
Vestland	43	29	67%
Møre og Romsdal	26	14	54%
Trøndelag	38	24	63%
Nordland	41	21	51%
Troms og Finnmark	39	22	56%

Table 15.2 shows that all counties are also 'represented' by at least 50% of the municipalities in the county. While Nordland has 51% of the municipalities participating, 67% of the municipalities in Vestland is represented in the data. All in all, there are no obvious regional biases in the material since all main parts of the country seems to be well represented in the survey data.

Oslo aside, 66% of the Norwegian population live in the municipalities participating in the survey. If Oslo is included, the share is 63%.

16 Organisation, cooperation and governance in the settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees

Norwegian municipalities play a crucial role in the settlement and integration of refugees. Through local refugee services, they are responsible for providing all frontline public services to refugees within their municipalities and for providing introduction programmes and Norwegian training.

Municipalities function in a multi-level governance system in which the legal framework, guidelines and resources are provided by the national authorities. Even though municipalities are responsible for implementing national policies towards refugees, they have significant flexibility in how they address the task. As this part of the report will show, there are considerable differences between municipalities in their follow-up of 'their' refugees. Some of these differences occur due to the wide variation between Norwegian municipalities. The smallest municipality has a population of 211, the largest over 700,000. Some municipalities include large cities or are located close to varied labour markets and a wide range of public services. More rural municipalities are located far away from such services. Basically, irrespective of population size and location, they have the same responsibilities towards refugees settled in their area.

Moreover, due to the small number of refugees arriving in Norway between 2017 and 2021, some Norwegian municipalities had little or no experience with settling refugees before the arrival of the Ukrainian refugees in 2022. Because of the large numbers arriving, all municipalities were mobilised in refugee settlement and integration processes. This means that municipalities had different prerequisites for working with the Ukrainian refugees. Some already had a robust municipal organisation for handling the refugee service, albeit it in need of reinforcement, while others had to build up the service from scratch.

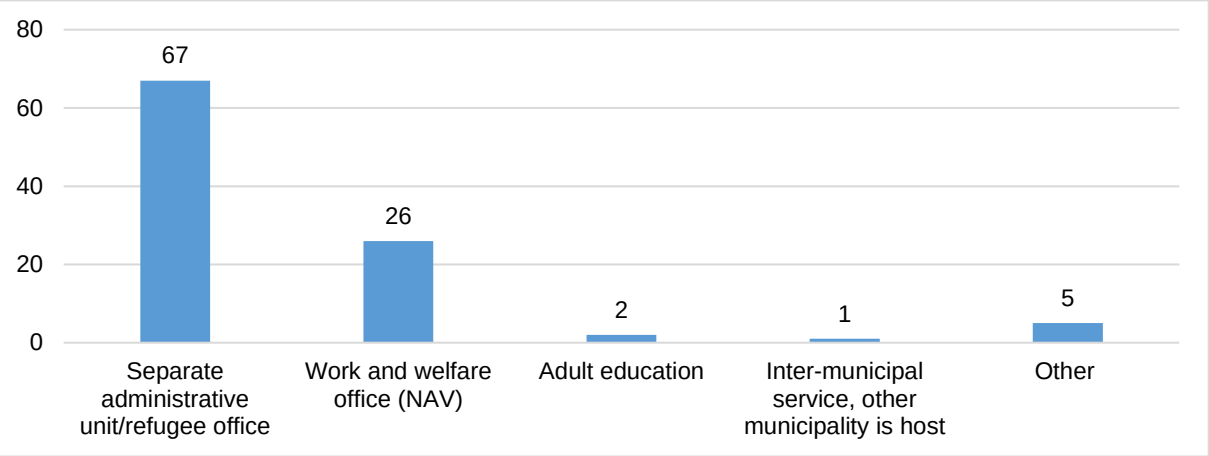
This section addresses five main questions:

- How do the municipalities organise their work with refugees? Has the organisation changed in recent years?
- Do municipalities engage in inter-municipal cooperation for refugee services?
- How is refugee work anchored within the municipal organisation?
- How is cooperation between local actors and services working with refugees assessed?
- How do leaders of local refugee services consider information and guidance from national authorities?

16.1 Organisation of municipal refugee services

Norwegian municipalities have great autonomy in organising their services, which is also the case for services for refugees settled in the municipalities.

Figure 16.1: Which municipal unit is responsible for newly arrived refugees? (N = 215)*



*Frequencies

Figure 16.1 shows that most municipalities choose to organise refugee services either as a separate service/office or as a unit within NAV. Two in three municipalities have established a separate administrative unit – a refugee office – and one in four has organised the services for refugees within NAV. Small and large municipalities tend to organise their services in different ways.[28] Almost half of the largest municipalities have their refugee office in NAV, whereas only one of 10 of the smallest municipalities have chosen this form of organisation. Very few municipalities have organised their work with refugees using inter-municipal cooperation, with another municipality as host. However, there is reason to assume that this number might be higher, but that municipalities with this form of organisation have chosen to let the refugee service in the host municipality answer the survey.

Thirty per cent of the municipalities report that the organisation of services for refugees has been changed since the arrival of Ukrainian refugees. For many municipalities, this implies either that they have established a new unit within the municipal organisation or within NAV or that they have restored a service which was shut down some years ago due to few refugee arrivals.

Furthermore, Norway has a majority of rather small municipalities, and not all of these had experience with settling refugees before the arrival of the Ukrainian refugees in 2022.

[28] Small municipalities are defined as municipalities with fewer than 3,000 inhabitants (78 municipalities in our study), large municipalities have more than 30,000 inhabitants (29 municipalities). Medium-small municipalities have 3,000–9,000 inhabitants (58 municipalities), and medium-large municipalities have 9,001–30,000 (50 municipalities).

Figure 16.2: Did your municipality have experience with settling refugees before the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in 2022? (N = 215).

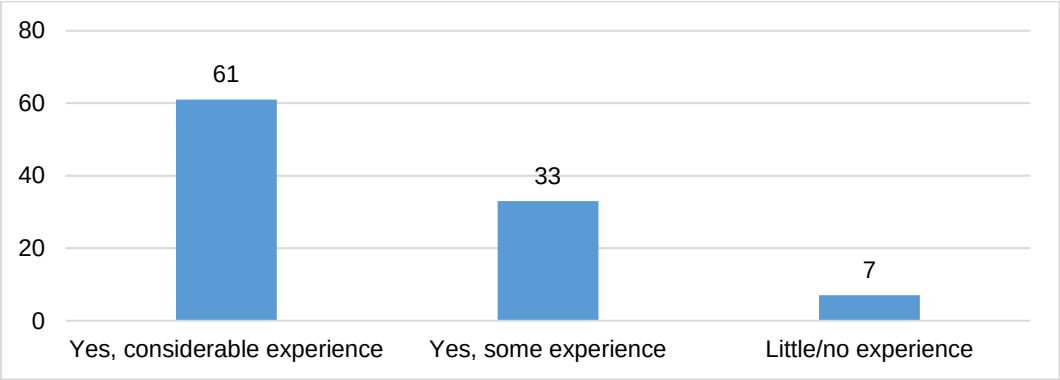


Figure 16.2 shows that 7% of the respondents of our survey work in municipalities with little or no experience with working with refugees. More than 60% say their municipality has considerable experience, while one in three have some experience. The inexperienced municipalities are small, with an average population of 2,270, whereas the average population of the most experienced municipalities is almost 24,000. Moreover, municipalities with some experience are relatively small. On average they have less than 5,000 inhabitants.

Although municipalities that agree to settle refugees have the overall responsibility for providing services to those they have settled, they are free to decide how to provide those services, and some enter into inter-municipal cooperation.

Figure 16.3: Does the municipality offer the introduction programme through inter-municipal cooperation? (N = 215).

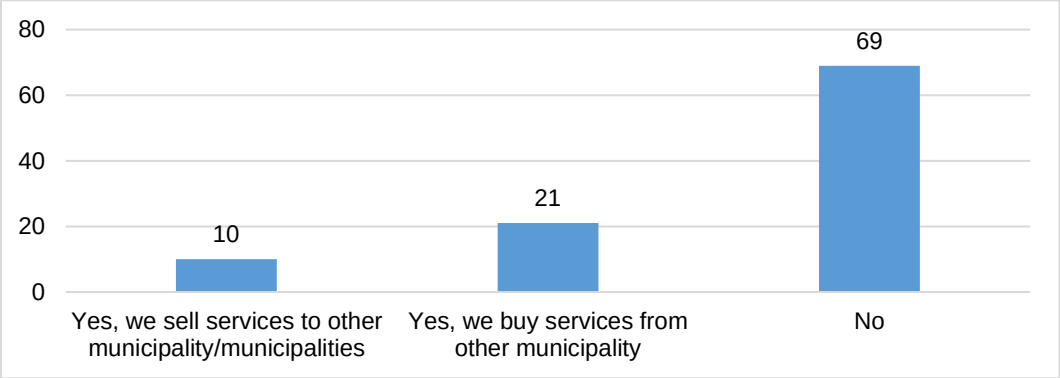


Figure 16.3 shows that about three in 10 municipalities are involved in inter-municipal cooperation in providing the introduction programme for refugees, either as sellers or buyers of services. While almost 30% of the small and medium-small municipalities procure services related to the introduction programme from other municipalities, none of the large municipalities do this. To the extent that large municipalities engage in inter-municipal cooperation, it is as service providers. The majority of municipalities (76%) engaged in inter-municipal cooperation did so before the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, whereas 21% entered into such cooperation on account of the large number of refugees arriving in 2022.

16.2 Political and administrative anchoring and cooperation between local actors and services

Refugees settling in a municipality in a new country need a wide range of services depending on health, education and family situation. In order to provide good, coordinated services and

facilitate integration into society, the refugee office will need to cooperate with other services locally.

First, we asked whether the refugee work is anchored within the municipal organisation.

Figure 16.4: How is the work with Ukrainian refugees anchored in the municipal organisation? (N = 215).

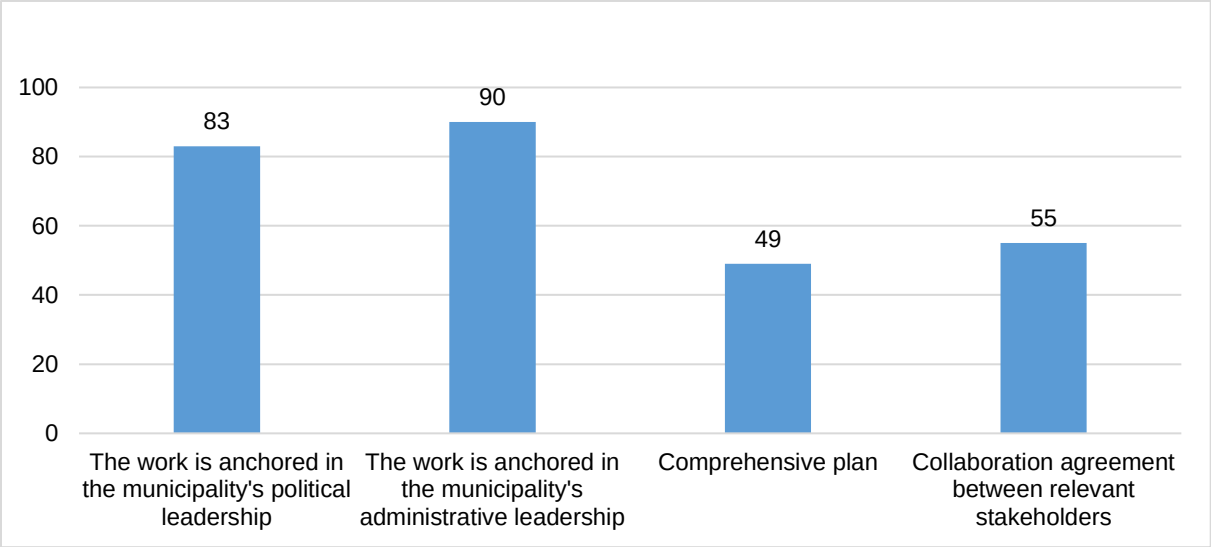
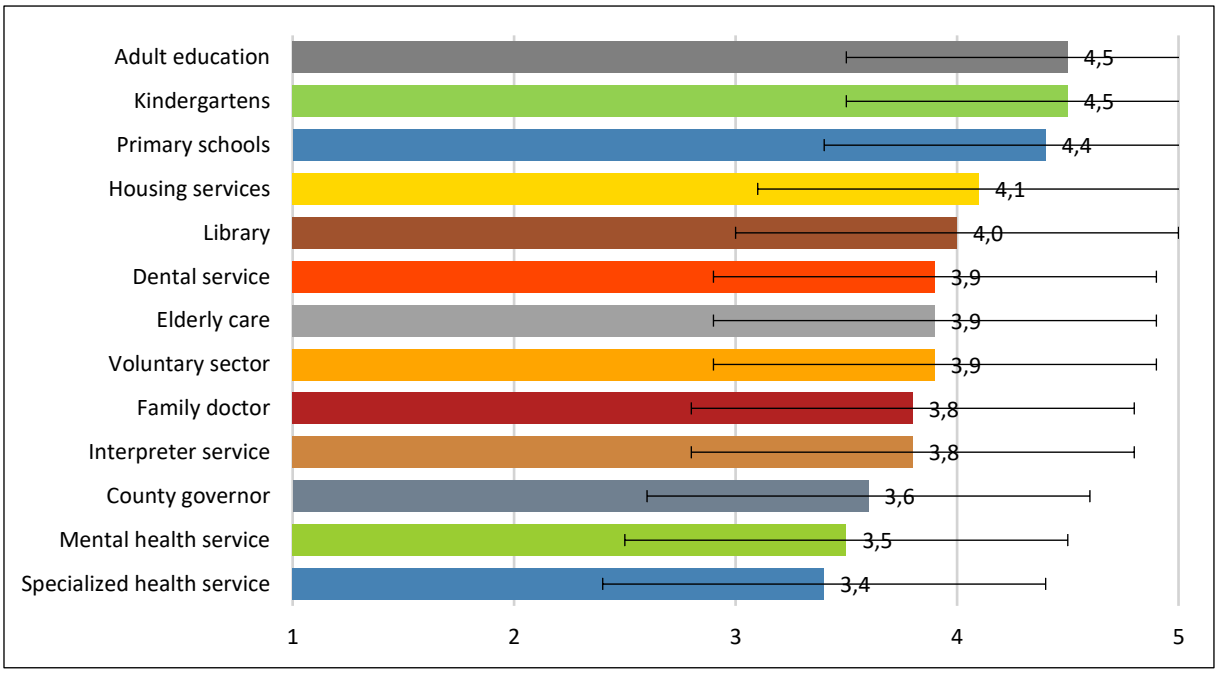


Figure 16.4 shows that most local refugee services have anchored their work in the municipality's political and administrative leadership. Political anchoring may imply that they have a formal decision in the municipal council on the settlement of refugees. Irrespective of size, more than 80% of the refugee services report having political and/or administrative anchoring of their work. About half of the services have a comprehensive plan for the work with refugees. In particular the large municipalities are inclined to have a plan including all relevant local services. Moreover, the larger municipalities have to a somewhat greater extent cooperation agreements between relevant stakeholders.

These two tools for service cooperation and accountability are, however, correlated: 31% of the refugee service respondents report having neither a plan nor a cooperation agreement. Whether these measures actually help coordinating the different services' efforts must be further examined.

We also asked how the leaders of the municipal refugee services assess the cooperation with relevant actors in pursuit of integrating Ukrainian refugees.

Figure 16.5: How do you assess the cooperation with the following actors and services in facilitating the integration of Ukrainian refugees?* (N = 211-215).



* Means and standard deviations. Scale: 1 = Very bad, 5 = Very good

Their answers, presented in Figure 16.5, show great satisfaction with the cooperation with actors within the education sector; that is, adult education, kindergartens and primary schools. These actors receive a score of 4.5 in 5 (where 5 is 'very good). Cooperation with housing services and library services are also rated very positively.

At the other end of the scale, we find health services, mainly mental health services and specialised health services. Refugee office satisfaction with cooperation with these services is considerably lower, though still on the positive side. These results correspond with the Ukrainians' assessment of services: schools and kindergartens receive a significantly higher score than health services (see 6.3). In chapter 23, we show that capacity in the health services is seen as one of the most important barriers to further refugee settlement in many municipalities. Our data may indicate that limitations in health service capacity, both primary and specialised health services, contribute to less satisfactory cooperation with the refugee services, and hence lower scores in refugees' assessment of those services. However, as discussed in section 6.3.3, the culture clash between Norway and Ukraine seems to be particularly prominent when it comes to health services. There is reason to believe that local refugee services, faced with the dissatisfaction arising from this culture clash, demand closer cooperation with health services.

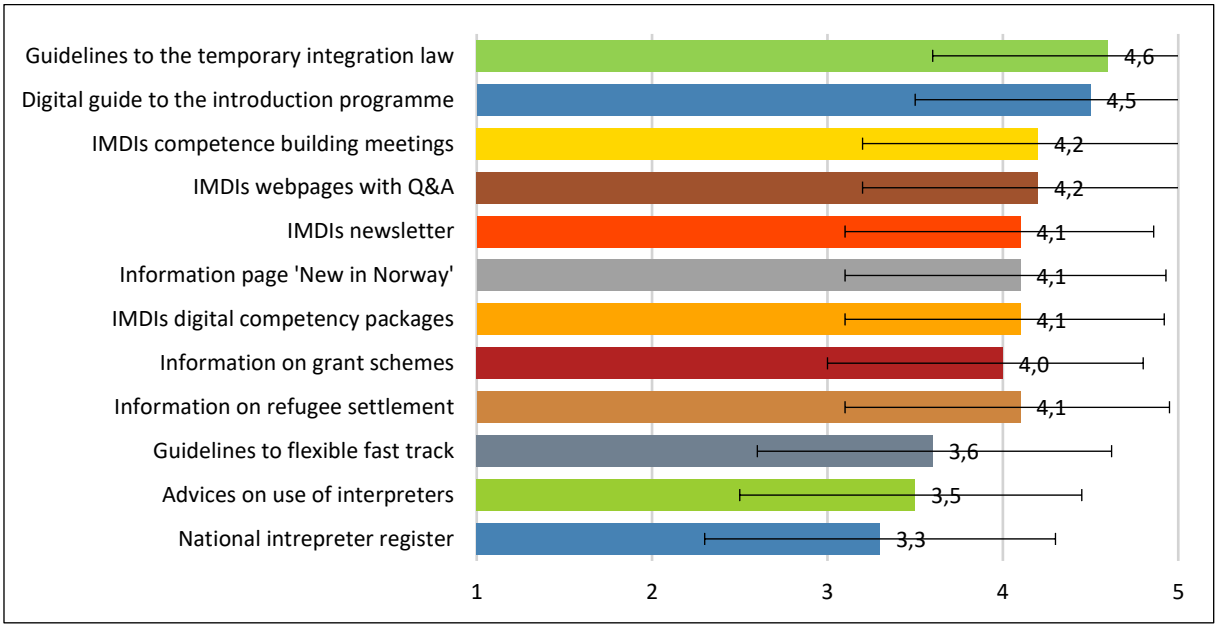
In chapter 19, we address NAV's role in the settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees. The respondents from local refugee services assess NAV's work very differently, depending on whether their refugee service is organised as an office within NAV or as a separate administrative unit. Refugee services organised within NAV are considerably more satisfied with other NAV services compared with refugee services organised outside NAV. We do not observe the same differences in their assessment of cooperation with other services. On the contrary, refugee offices in separate units assess the cooperation with adult education, kindergartens, family doctors, and the county governor slightly better than do refugee offices within NAV.

16.3 Information and guidance from IMDi

In this section we look at how the local refugee services assess the activities of the national authority, namely IMDi.

There are two main reasons for upscaling the information and guidance activities of IMDi after February 2022: the need for information to the many inexperienced and overloaded refugee services, and the need to secure a minimum level of quality and equal treatment across municipalities. Moreover, with the increasing number of Ukrainian refugees, several changes were made to national policies addressing this group (see chapter 3). These changes have to be communicated to the municipalities in charge of implementing those policies, and we asked the leaders of the municipal refugee service about their assessment of IMDi's information and guidance activities.

Figure 16.6: How do you assess the following activities, information and services from IMDi?* (N = 215).



* Means and standard deviations. Scale: 1 = Not at all useful, 5 = Very useful

Figure 16.6 shows that the municipal refugee services are generally quite satisfied with IMDi's information and guidance activities, even though the variation on certain issues is large. The respondents find the guidelines on temporary integration law and the digital guide to the introduction programme (*fagressurs for introduksjonsprogrammet*) most useful. The high scores on these issues are given by respondents in municipalities of all sizes. We observe less satisfaction, though still largely on the positive side, with issues concerning interpreters and guidelines on the flexible fast track programme. There is no information in our material on what the respondents miss when it comes to these services.

We find relatively limited differences between experienced and non-experienced municipalities in their assessment of IMDi's information and guidance activities. Generally, less experienced municipalities are less satisfied with IMDi's activities. They give lower scores for guidelines on temporary integration law, digital guide to the introduction programme, guidelines on the flexible fast track programme and on the national interpreter register. This gives cause for concern, since the least experienced local refugee services are particularly dependent on information and guidance from national authorities. The only IMDi service they are more satisfied with is the information website 'New in Norway'.

16.4 Summary

In this chapter, we have discussed how the municipalities organise their work with refugees, whether they cooperate with other municipalities on this issue, and how refugee service leaders assess information and guidance from the national authority, namely IMDi.

We have documented that local refugee services are organised either as a separate administrative unit or as an office within the broader NAV office. Large municipalities have chosen the NAV option to a greater extent. A third organisational form may be added: inter-municipal cooperation on refugee services. This usually takes the form of small municipalities purchasing services from large municipalities, alternatively small municipalities joining together to form a stronger unit.

Refugee service leaders generally assess the cooperation with other refugee-related issues to function well. Cooperation with educational services, such as kindergartens and schools, is ranked as particularly good, while the scores for health services are somewhat lower. Since health services are also an issue that features in the data from the Ukrainian refugees, it may be interesting to explore further whether less satisfaction with health services can be understood as a result of limited capacity in these services or as an indicator of a culture clash between Ukrainian and Norwegian cultures regarding access to health services.

Some municipalities have changed their refugee service organisation after the arrival of the Ukrainian refugees. Some have had to revive a slumbering service which had been downscaled due to the sharp decrease in the number of refugees arriving between 2017 and 2022. Other municipalities had no experience with refugee settlement and had to establish a new refugee service. The large-scale upscaling of local refugee services implies that many services are staffed with largely inexperienced employees. Up-scaling will be further discussed in chapter 17.

This chapter also reports the refugee service leaders' assessment of IMDi's activities, information and guidelines. The scores are good overall but vary substantially. Satisfaction with information about interpreters receives the lowest score. Less experienced municipalities are generally less satisfied with IMDi's activities. This may be a result of less use of these guidelines and other information activities in the less experienced (and often very small) municipalities. On the other hand, this group of municipalities has a particular need for information and competence building, and it is important that IMDi provide information that is easily available to – and known to – municipalities with no or little previous experience in refugee settlement.

17 Capacity in the refugee service

With the large number of Ukrainian refugees arriving from February 2022 onwards, Norwegian municipalities have settled refugees as never before. The influx of refugees seems to continue (see chapter 2). This section discusses how municipalities and refugee services address capacity challenges in their work. We discuss the following questions:

- How has the arrival of large numbers of Ukrainian refugees affected the capacity situation in the municipal refugee services?
- How have refugee services addressed the need for increased capacity?

17.1 Capacity challenges

The arrival of Ukrainian refugees from early spring of 2022 onwards posed a challenge for many Norwegian municipalities. Even though a majority of municipalities had experience with refugee settlement, many had downscaled their refugee services due to the low arrival numbers from 2017 onwards. Moreover, municipalities without experience with refugee settlement were activated from 2022 in response to the large numbers of Ukrainian refugees arriving. Many of these quite small municipalities had to establish a new service.

The large number of arrivals implies a need for increased capacity in most municipalities. In the survey, we find that nearly all municipalities needed to increase capacity to meet the large influx of refugee settlements; 81% report needing a considerable capacity increase in their refugee service, and an additional 17% report a need for some increase. Only 2% report that they have no need to increase capacity. In the qualitative interviews, several interviewees also describe a high workload.

The municipalities in need of higher capacity used different strategies to meet this challenge.

Figure 17.1: How has the municipality addressed the need for increased capacity? (N = 196).

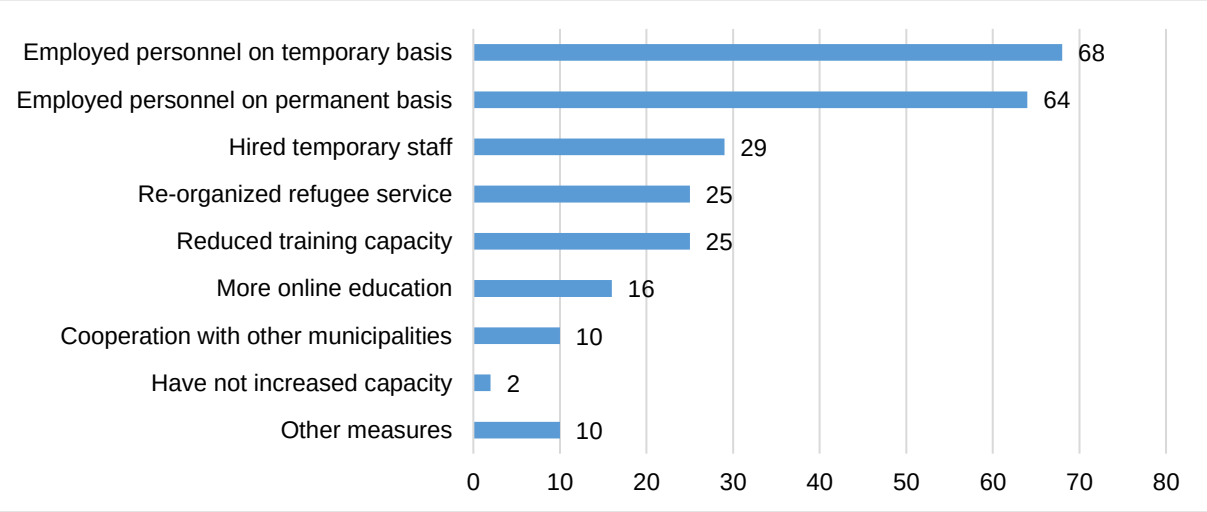


Figure 17.1 shows that, to a large extent, the municipalities employed more personnel on a temporary or permanent basis. Some chose to reorganise their refugee service (25%) or engage in cooperation with other municipalities (10%) in order to meet the increased demand for services. Others reduced the content or scope of the services provided.

17.2 Scaling up – scaling down?

In the qualitative interviews, all the interviewees from the refugee services mentioned that they hired more people in the past few months. Several municipalities more than doubled the

number of staff in the refugee service after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. While this alleviates capacity challenges in the long run, recruitment and training of new employees is resource-intensive in the short run.

Furthermore, scaling up the number of employees also brings certain dilemmas. Asylum seeker arrivals can fluctuate rapidly, a fact which employees in Norwegian municipalities experienced first-hand in 2015/2016 and in the following period. Several respondents in the survey reported that the local refugee offices had been more or less shut down after 2016 and needed to be revived or completely re-established after February 2022. One interviewee reported that her municipality scaled up the refugee services significantly in 2016. When very few refugees arrived in Norway in subsequent years, the municipality initiated a downsizing process that was completed only a few months before the Ukrainian refugees began to arrive: 'We went through a terrible process after the previous refugee crisis, with a refugee office with far too many employees, a downsizing process that was very painful' (refugee service, 9, 01). This specific municipality has a policy of always hiring people in permanent positions, following an agreement between union representatives and the municipality. Thus, people did not lose their jobs, but they lost their tasks or were placed elsewhere. The process has been difficult for both individuals and the municipality. This backdrop means that staffing up feels risky: 'I feel a little queasy about this, it makes my stomach turn a bit' says the interviewee, 'we are terrified of ending up in the same situation again' (refugee service, 9, 01).

Another interviewee reported that they hired several people in temporary positions to prepare for the day when they would need to downsize. One of the municipalities where the refugee office is under NAV was inspired by the model used in NAV to procure external services. To address the capacity challenge, they hired a private company to follow up participants in work practice. The advantage of procuring services in this way is that the municipality can increase capacity without expanding its own staff.

In the survey, we observe two local strategies used to avoid permanent employment of people in the refugee services. More than two in three respondents report that their municipality employs people on a temporary basis, and almost 30% report that they hire personnel temporarily from staffing agencies. As we discuss further in chapter 22, municipalities' comprehensive *formal* cooperation with voluntary organisations as service providers can be seen as a way of providing services while avoiding permanent employment. Another possibility is inter-municipal cooperation. When asked whether the municipality procures educational services for refugees from other municipalities, 21% report procuring services from other municipalities and that the scope has increased since February 2022. Relatively few, about 6%, choose to procure language training from private providers.

Some interviewees express frustration over how the municipality *as a whole* does not understand that it has collectively taken on responsibility for settling refugees: 'I have worked in this municipality since 2010. Still, on a daily basis, I have to push for people to understand that it's not just the refugee service that should handle the job alone' (refugee service, 9, 03). Newly arrived refugees will require all the different services in the municipality, but these services have not increased their capacity to the extent that is necessary: 'The schools are full. The doctor's lists are full. The kindergartens are full [...] Even the bank has started asking us to find another bank' (refugee service, 9, 03). One municipality, for example, has only one employee working in the NAV office responsible for following up regular jobseekers. He has to handle all the Ukrainians who will need assistance from NAV if they have not found work on completion of the introduction programme. One of the other interviewees reports that local politicians have made it clear that they would provide extra funding to service providers in the municipality if they asked for it. Surprisingly, many services have not done so, according to the interviewee. She believes one explanation may be that municipal actors are 'still hoping it will pass, there are no stable, long-term solutions in place that are sustainable over time' (NAV, 10, 01).

17.2.1 Reduced services and changing work methods

As shown in Figure 17.1, one in four interviewees reported having to decrease training capacity for the refugees. The interviewees we spoke to have mostly managed to maintain a full-time introduction programme in their municipalities, with a couple of exceptions. One municipality has maintained a full-time programme for other refugees but has reduced the scope of the introduction programme for Ukrainians. Another municipality had to downscale the programme after a few months, and now offers only the elements it is legally obliged to provide. This means that the programme is no longer full-time due to capacity constraints, but participants still receive the full introduction allowance.

The advantage of scaling up is that it is possible to implement a clearer division of labour, with frontline workers specialising in specific tasks. With more employees, some can focus on the introduction programme while others take responsibility for finding housing, daycare placements, and everything else. In some places, programme advisors also specialise in working with Ukrainians or other refugees. The arrival of large numbers of Ukrainians also necessitates and enables more group-based work methods. Because there are many Ukrainians, it is easier to create courses or information sessions that are tailored to the needs of Ukrainians. One interviewee said they could rarely do this with other refugees who come from many different countries. At the same time, she pointed out that Ukrainians may receive less individually tailored introduction programmes. Another interviewee expressed a similar sentiment: ‘We worked more closely [with refugees] before, when we didn't have Ukrainians; now it feels a bit more like an assembly line’ (refugee service, 9, 03).

17.3 Summary

The settlement of a large number of Ukrainian refugees has significantly challenged the capacity of the municipal refugee services. Most refugee services report a need for increased capacity. Upscaling in the form of employing more personnel is most common, but some refugee services have reduced or reorganised their services to refugees. The temporary nature of refugee arrivals implies that many municipalities are reluctant to employ personnel permanently. Temporary employment or hiring of temporary staff, formal cooperation with voluntary organisations, and procuring services from other municipalities are methods used to increase capacity.

18 Introduction programme and language training

As described in chapter 3.3, Ukrainian refugees have the right to attend an introduction programme. Although it is not obligatory, those in need of financial assistance after settlement may be obliged to participate to be eligible for such financial assistance. The introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees should – similar to the regular programme – contain language- and work-oriented elements, but the programme consists of fewer obligatory elements. Ukrainian refugees must complete the parental guidance course if they have children, but they have neither a right nor an obligation to attend courses in civics education, career guidance or life skills. Nonetheless, the municipalities may still provide these courses as part of the programme. Other differences between the regular introduction programmes for refugees and the programme for Ukrainian refugees with collective protection are that it may also include English language training and that participants may complete the programme on a part-time basis and may leave and re-enter the programme.

Because the arrival of Ukrainian refugees happened rather suddenly and in large numbers, many municipalities had to quickly upscale or (re-)establish refugee settlement and integration services. In this chapter we investigate the following questions:

- Have the municipalities been able to provide full introduction programmes and language training for the Ukrainian refugees, and what challenges have they faced in their service provision?
- How has implementation of the legislative changes been practised across municipalities (regarding, e.g., programme extensions and content)?
- How do respondents and interviewees view the introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees? What challenges do they emphasise?

18.1 Introduction programme: scope of provision and extensions

18.1.1 Capacity constraints challenge the provision of full-time programmes

Because the arrival of Ukrainian refugees happened suddenly and in large numbers, it took time before some of the refugee services were fully operational. In the survey, we asked the respondents in the refugee services whether their municipality had the capacity to offer a full-time introduction programme and whether capacity has changed over time. The results are presented in Figure 18.1 below.

Figure 18.1: Does the municipality have the capacity to offer a full-time introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees? (N = 209).

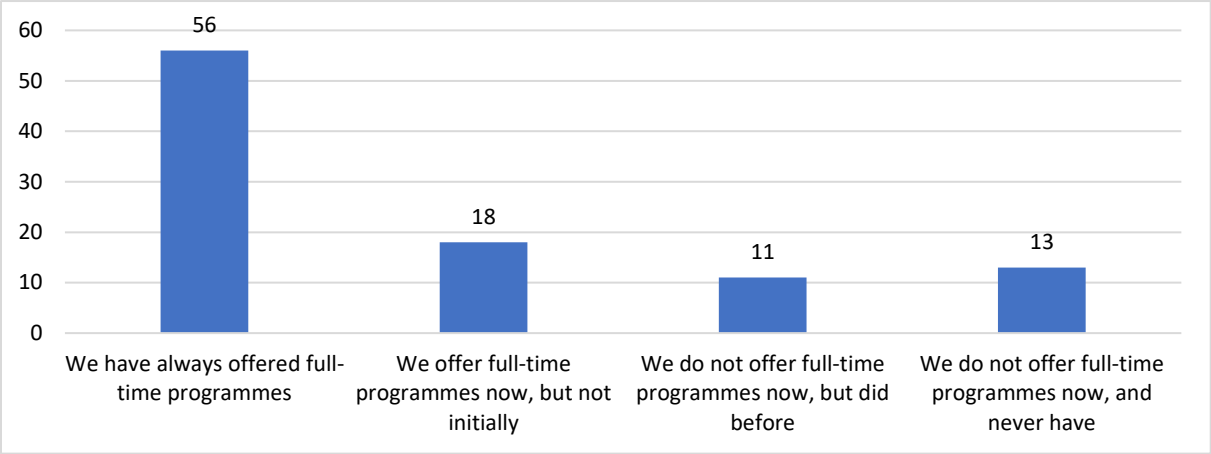


Figure 18.1 shows that more than half of the respondents report having always offered a full-time introduction programme. Eighteen per cent have spent time building up a full-time programme, and although they did not offer a full-time programme initially, they do so at the time of the survey (October/November 2023). About one in four refugee services report that they do not offer full-time introduction programme, although 11% of these did so initially. The large number of arrivals has apparently stretched the capacity of some of these municipalities so far that they are unable to offer full-time programmes. However, a large share of the municipalities has been able to provide full-time programmes from the start.

18.1.2 Varying practice and assessment of the possibility to extend the programme

Most Ukrainian refugees first enrol in the introduction programme for six months, which is the regular length for anyone who has completed secondary school according to the Integration Act of 2021. It is, however, possible to extend the programme for up to one year. In the survey of Ukrainian refugees on this matter (see chapter 10.1.1), we found that the majority of those who had completed the programme had been allowed to extend the programme beyond the initial six-month period. The results from the municipality survey point in the same direction.

Figure 18.2: How common is it for the refugee service to extend the introduction programme beyond what is mandatory for Ukrainian refugees? (N = 215).

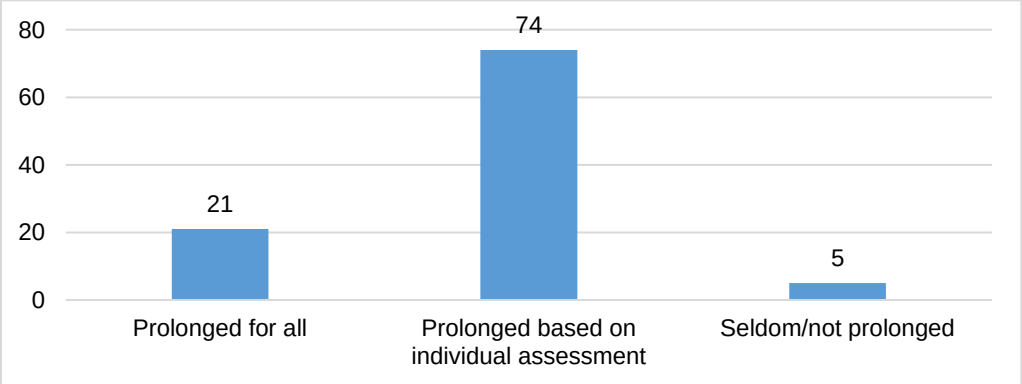


Figure 18.2 shows that one in five local refugee services report that they extend the introduction programme for all Ukrainian refugees, whereas three in four extend the

programme based on individual assessment. Very few report that they rarely or never extend the programme.

Although many Ukrainian refugees are allowed to extend the programme, the question of extension may create uncertainty. The qualitative interviews with the Ukrainians revealed that the question of extensions created a lot of uncertainty among the refugees, and several interviewees pointed to different practices between municipalities. Analyses of the municipal employees' practices and perceptions on this matter also revealed similar conclusions regarding uncertainty and differences in municipal practices.

We also asked about how the refugee services assess the clarity of the criteria for extending the introduction programme.

Figure 18.3: The criteria for extending the introduction programme are clear (N = 215).

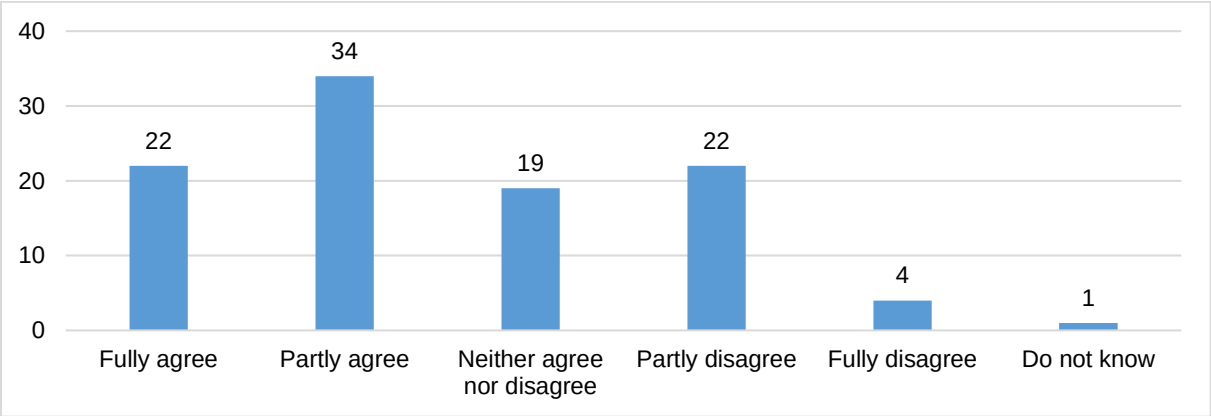


Figure 18.3 shows wide variation in the responses. About half of the respondents fully (22%) or partly (34%) agree that the criteria are clear. One fifth neither agree nor disagree, and about one in four either partly or fully disagree. This shows that although many find the criteria to be clear, some find them to be unclear.

During the group interviews with representatives for the municipalities, it became evident that the practices related to programme extension varied between municipalities. One interviewee had unsuccessfully attempted to clarify interpretations of the criteria with both IMDi and the county governor. In some municipalities, extension was more or less automatic for all Ukrainian refugees. For example, one interviewee reasoned that they extended the programme for everyone based on a general perception that six months was too short. In other municipalities, programme advisors undertook individual assessments, which meant that some Ukrainian refugees were granted an extension while others were not.

These differences spurred a discussion in the focus group interviews about the interpretation of the criteria that regulate the extension. Some interviewees emphasised that the refugee service should only extend the programme if it is clear that an extension will result in attainment of the goal set in the integration plan, which is usually to find employment: 'An extension realistically needs to contribute to reaching that goal' (refugee service, 9, 01).

In practice, this could mean that individuals who struggle to follow the introduction programme because of, for example, health issues or difficulties getting a footing in the labour market, will not be granted an extension. Moreover, some of the interviewees and respondents emphasised that the short introduction programme means that the responsibility for Ukrainian refugees is merely transferred to NAV. One of the respondents in the survey puts it this way: 'By shortening [not extending] the programme, we produce many social benefit recipients' (Survey respondent, 2023). Likewise, one of the interviewees from a small municipality explained that they extended the introduction programme because they were aware that NAV did not have sufficient resources to follow up Ukrainian refugees sufficiently if they did not extend. The municipality has a small NAV office which had not (yet) upscaled

its services to accommodate Ukrainian refugees who would need assistance after the introduction programme. In another municipality, where the refugee service is part of the NAV office, an interviewee reported: 'We work in NAV. So [not extending the programme] merely entails pushing the problem over to our colleagues, which perhaps is more difficult when we work side by side' (NAV, 13, 03). As this NAV employee points out, it does not necessarily become easier to achieve the goal of employment when NAV takes over the responsibility:

> When they are transferred to NAV, you see that they should never have left [the introduction programme]. They still need to learn more Norwegian. But they say that [the Ukrainian refugees] are unable to reach the goals in the introduction programme. And the goal is to get a job. But when they are transferred to NAV, you see that they are not able to achieve that goal within the NAV system because they lack [Norwegian] language skills, and some of them don't speak English either. (NAV, 13, 01)

In reality, the interviewee felt that those who are not granted an extension to the introduction programme are often the ones with the poorest prospects to enter the labour market. She adds: 'You feel like the challenge is pushed over to NAV'.

Finally, there were also different perceptions about whether or not part-time work gave sufficient grounds to end the programme after six months. Some interviewees considered part-time work to be enough to terminate the programme, while others said that they did not necessarily come to the same conclusion. For example, they might consider it to be important for an individual to learn more Norwegian in order to obtain a full-time position in the longer run or to move on elsewhere in the labour market. Thus, the criterion attached to labour market participation may be applied in ways that lead to different outcomes for Ukrainian refugees. In practice, this means that in one municipality a Ukrainian in the same situation could live off a part-time salary (and supplementary social support if eligible) while in another municipality, she or he would live off a part-time salary and partial introductory benefits.

18.1.3 Discretion, municipal autonomy and (un)equal treatment?

Some interviewees reported that they considered the criteria in the law to be too vague, leaving a lot of discretion to individual programme advisors. One interviewee pointed out that the vagueness of the law paves the way for unequal treatment, a point which Ukrainian refugees brought up in their dialogue with her:

> I have received a lot of questions from Ukrainian refugees who complain: why does this person get one year, and I get six months? There have been some objections, because Ukrainian refugees talk to each other, they know about what people in other municipalities get. (NAV, 13, 01)

Another interviewee had a different point of view. She did not think it would be fruitful to have clearer criteria, because she thought that the scope of discretion was necessary for the autonomy of the municipalities. In her view, the law is deliberately flexible to ensure that different municipalities can use it in their specific contexts. Another interviewee emphasised that:

> We have room for manoeuvre, which means that we can improvise. We can customise things. Otherwise, we could not accept that many refugees. And we want them to work, we don't want them to become social clients. (refugee service, 3, 01)

Some interviewees said that the vagueness of the criteria had prompted them to create internal guidelines in the municipality to ensure equal treatment internally. For example, some interviewees said that they had set work practice as an important precondition for extending the programme in some municipalities:

> We quickly found out that six months does not work at all. Most Ukrainian refugees don't speak English. Learning Norwegian takes a long time. So, we have extended the period for six

> months to everyone, on the condition that they need to find practice during that period. That has actually worked very, very well. (refugee service, 9, 04)

Since most programme participants in these municipalities obtained work practice during the introduction programme, this criterion meant that most Ukrainian refugees received an extension.

18.1.4 Possibilities for part-time participation and re-entering the introduction programme

As temporary protection holders, Ukrainian refugees have more flexibility in the introduction programme than other refugees. Ukrainian refugees can participate part-time if they want to, and they can exit the programme for shorter or longer periods and then re-enter (see chapter 3.3).

Our analyses show that this flexibility is somewhat disputed, but most municipal refugee service leaders believe that part-time participation and the possibility to exit and re-enter should also be available to other refugee groups.

Figure 18.4: Attitudes towards introduction programme flexibility. (N = 215).

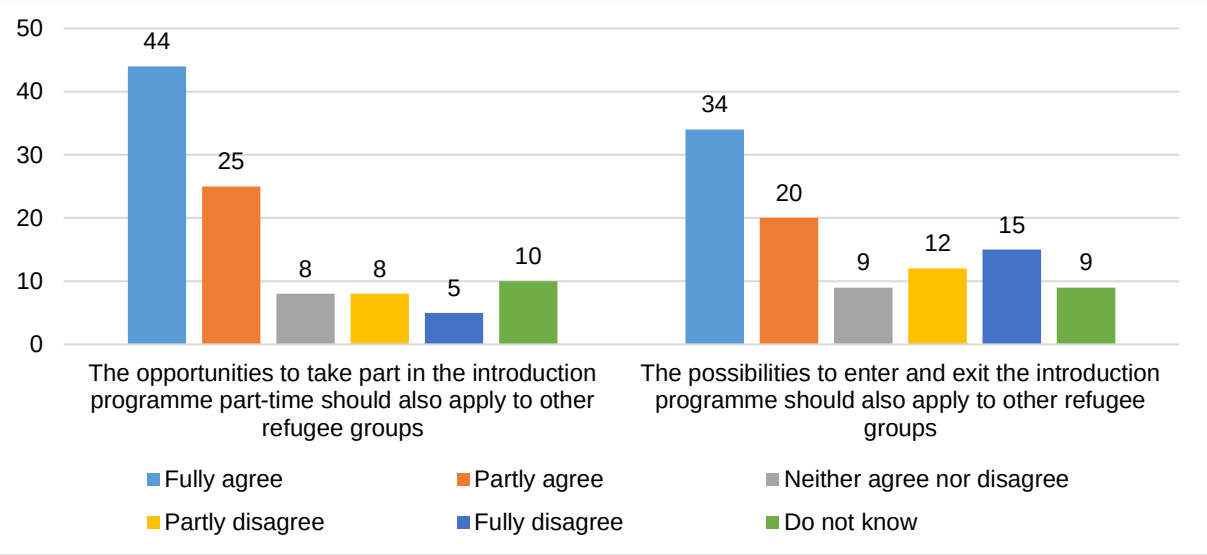


Figure 18.4 shows that the opportunity for part-time participation is perceived as particularly positive. Almost 70% fully or partly agree that this arrangement should apply to other refugees as well. Although to a lesser extent, over half of the respondents answer that they fully (34%) or partly (20%) agree that other refugees should also be able to exit and re-enter the programme.

Most interviewees consider this flexibility to be advantageous and that it should be extended to other refugee groups, even if it represents a new situation for the refugee services: ‘This kind of fluidity is completely new to those of us who have worked with refugees for a long time. They come and go’ (Refugee service 9, 01). Interviewees said that some Ukrainian refugees travel back and forth to Ukraine quite frequently. The reasons vary; some return because a family member is sick or has died, others to participate in a wedding or other social occasions.

> We are perhaps more used to having a hand on the steering wheel. But now we see that the participants themselves run the show to a large extent. It’s actually quite nice, but it makes it a bit difficult to work in a goal-oriented way. (Refugee service 9,01)

Such flexibility also entails extra administrative work for the municipalities. For shorter trips, Ukrainian refugees receive paid leave, but when the trips are longer, the refugee service

must subtract introduction benefits for the days they are missing. This entails extra work, and often means that Ukrainian refugees need supplementary social benefits instead, which requires bureaucratic capacity on NAV's side. Moreover, the option to exit and re-enter the programme creates unpredictability, making it difficult to plan ahead:

> The differences related to the Integration Act are challenging. The fact that Ukrainian refugees can enter and exit the introduction programme makes is challenging for the municipality to plan capacity-wise. (Survey respondent, 2023)

To make part-time participation more manageable from an administrative perspective, one interviewee said that they made an agreement with participants that they could be enrolled part-time at 40, 60 or 80 per cent.

One interviewee also pointed out that a potential challenge with the flexibility and geographical proximity might be that some Ukrainian refugees felt under pressure from family members at home to return to Ukraine frequently and help out with various things. Such pressure can be difficult to balance with their commitments in Norway: 'The possibility to travel poses major ethical dilemmas for them, and they have pressure from the family as well' (refugee service, 9, 01). Another survey respondent expressed concerns about the opportunity for Ukrainian refugees to exit and re-enter the programme:

> I find it strange that the possibility to enter and exit the introduction programme was introduced for Ukrainian refugees, while the arrangement for leave due to full-time work was discontinued for others in the new Integration Act. It should be the same for everyone. The option to enter and exit the introduction programme is also a confusing arrangement for refugees, as it is difficult to distinguish between a final conclusion due to work/achieved goals or a "break" from the introduction programme to work. (respondent, survey)

As already mentioned, the survey (see Figure 18.4 above) showed that respondents were more positive towards the option for part-time participation than for the exit and re-enter option. In the interviews, it was mentioned that the part-time option for example is useful to young participants who study online in Ukraine to complete a degree. They are then able to take a certain number of Norwegian lessons weekly through part-time participation in the introduction programme.

Some interviewees stressed that the part-time option for Ukrainian refugees is useful because it means they have an opportunity to forge ties to the labour market through part-time work while they are in the introduction programme which may amount to a full-time job when they complete it. It is not clear, however, how this option differs from the previous opportunity to *combine* work with the introduction programme by formally including 'paid work' as a measure in the programme. Both options mean that participants' introduction benefits are subtracted from the number of work hours. Since some interviewees view this as a new option, it may indicate that they have not previously used regular work as a measure for other refugee groups.

18.1.5 Introduction programme and language training for elderly Ukrainian refugees

All municipalities are obliged to offer Ukrainian refugees aged 18–55 years participation in an introduction programme. Municipalities may also offer the introduction programme to Ukrainian refugees aged 55–66 years, though this group is not entitled to participate.

Figure 18.5: Are Ukrainian refugees aged 55-66 offered an introduction programme? (N = 215).

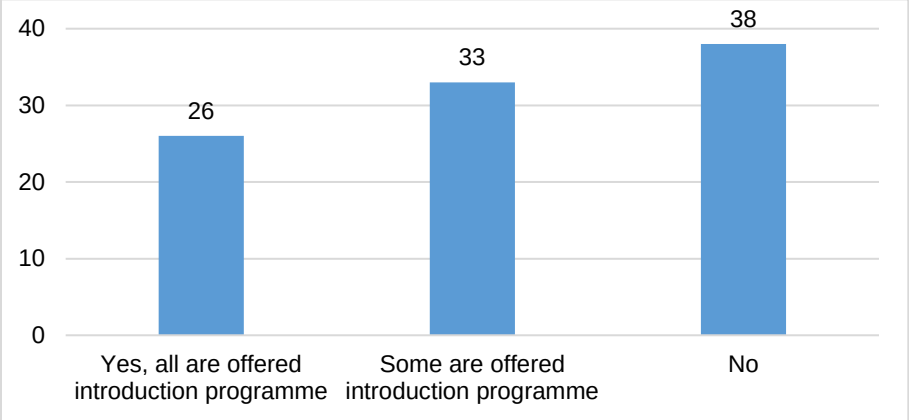


Figure 18.5 shows that one in four respondents (26%) reports that their municipality offers the introduction programme to all refugees aged 55– 66 years, and one in three (33%) say that some in this group are offered participation in the introduction programme. Thirty-eight per cent of the municipalities do not offer the introduction programme to refugees aged over 55 years. Differences between small and large municipalities are considerable. While 51% of the smallest municipalities give all refugees aged 55–66 years the possibility to attend the introduction programme, only 3% of the largest municipalities do likewise. Fifteen per cent of small municipalities and 69% of the largest municipalities report that they do not offer the introduction programme to this group.

Furthermore, knowledge of the Norwegian language is important for labour market integration. The age group 18–67 years is therefore prioritised for language training, but the municipalities are also free to offer training to refugees aged over 67 years (and still receive state subsidies).

Figure 18.6: Are Ukrainian refugees over 67 years offered language training? (N = 215).

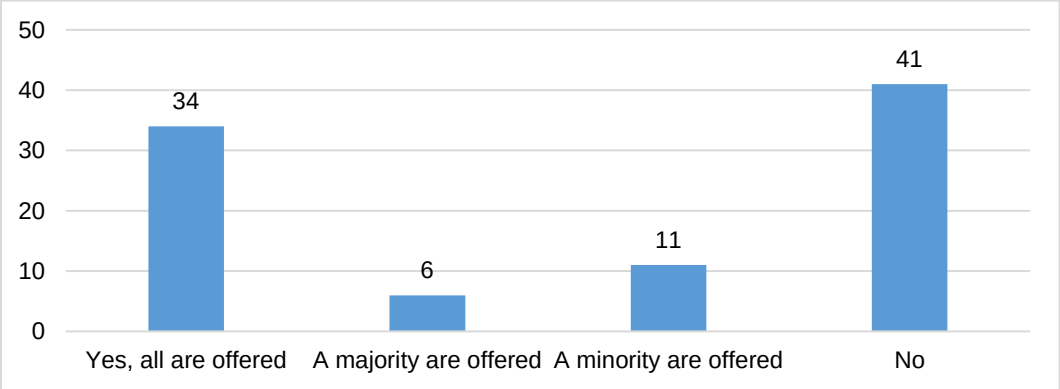


Figure 18.6 shows that 40% of municipalities offer Norwegian language training to all or a majority of refugees in this group, whereas 41% report that they do not give older refugees language training.

Small municipalities tend to a larger extent to offer refugees aged over 67 years Norwegian language training. More than 50% of municipalities with fewer than 3,000 inhabitants offer language training to this group. Only 14% of the largest municipalities, with more than 30,000 inhabitants, offer Norwegian language training to Ukrainian refugees older than 66 years.

18.2 Introduction programme content

Although the introduction programme ideally should be individually tailored to each participant, the Integration Act (2021) also sets out some mandatory elements. As described in chapter 3.3, according to the temporary amendments, the introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees should encompass the mandatory elements (language training, work-related or educational measures, and parental courses for parents with under-aged children), while the others are optional for the local refugee service to include (civics education, carrier guidance, life skills, etc.).

In the survey of the municipal leaders of the refugee service, we asked whether they include different elements in their introduction programme. Their assessment is an overall assessment of whether the different elements are used (at least for some) participants but should not be read as statistical data on the share of participants that have received different measures. See section 10.2 for such an analysis, where the Ukrainian refugees describe which elements were included in their individual introduction programme.[29]

However, in the following, we explore whether there are differences between municipalities related to the measures they include in the programme, differentiated by municipal size.

Figure 18.7: Elements included in the introduction programme, by municipality size (population) (N = 215).

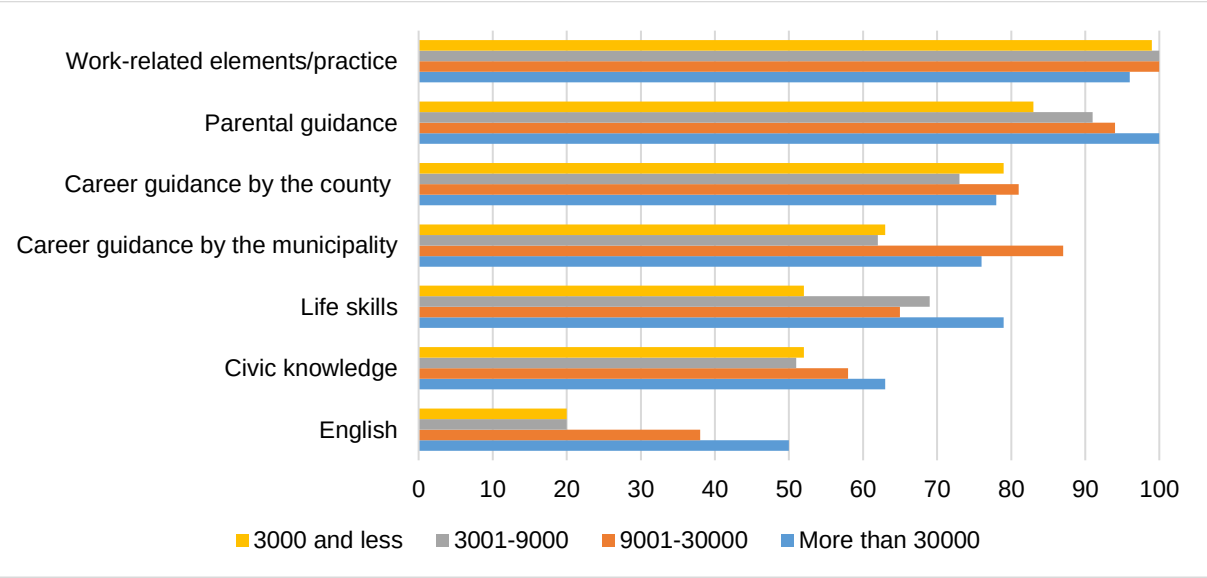


Figure 18.7 shows that almost all local refugee services include work-related elements in the introduction programme. Most of them also include parental guidance. Since this is now a mandatory element, the respondents answering 'no' might not have refugees with children in their programme at present. There is much wider variation in the non-mandatory elements, particularly life skills and civics education. On average, about one-third of the refugee service respondents report that their municipality does not include these elements in their introduction programme.

Small municipalities have a more limited administrative capacity compared with larger municipalities. They have also – naturally – received fewer refugees. This may imply that the introduction programme is somewhat narrower in content in small municipalities. Our data support this assumption, showing that the smallest municipalities include parental guidance,

[29] Furthermore, the municipalities register different measures in the introduction programme through NIR, which may provide more accurate data on the subject. However, it has not been part of this assignment to analyse NIR data.

career guidance by the municipality, life skills, civics education and English to a lesser degree in their introduction programme.

18.2.1 Work practice as a main component

Looking at the qualitative interviews, it appears that most interviewees who work with the introduction programme view *work practice* as the main work-oriented measure. There is, however, local variation. In some places, efforts are being made to involve Ukrainian refugees in work or language practice from day one in the introduction programme, while in other municipalities, work practice is introduced later.

One main challenge is the difficulty for many municipalities to find enough work practice placements for the large number of refugees that need them. An interviewee in one of the largest municipalities reported that previously, almost all participants in the introduction programme had participated in work practice, but that now the demand exceeded the supply. The number of individuals resettled in the respective municipalities is significant, and the entire system is under pressure. This finding illustrates that it is not necessarily easier to secure work placements in large municipalities with a large number of workplaces.

Some interviewees consciously focus on placing Ukrainian refugees in the private sector for work practice because they believe Ukrainian refugees can find work more quickly there. This contrasts with the approach taken to other refugees, who more often find work practice in the public sector (municipality) as part of a more extended qualification process. Municipalities typically set formal language and qualification requirements, and for other refugees the goal is often to set up a plan so that they can supplement previous education or gain further qualifications to fulfil these requirements.

The interviewees generally mention language practice less than work practice. One reason could be that in some municipalities, language practice is currently not a priority. Several interviewees report that when it is challenging to find enough work practice placements, they prioritise work practice because it is a more job-oriented measure:

> We have reduced the offer to Ukrainian refugees now by cutting language practice as a major component because language practice is mainly language training and is not geared towards getting a job. So, we have cut that. What matters is work practice (refugee service, 3, 04)

The interviewees report that the distinction between language practice and work practice may not always be clear to Ukrainian refugees and employers, and sometimes they are combined, i.e., termed “work and language practice”. The difference between work practice and language practice may, however, turn out to be important. In some municipalities, there is a requirement that participants must participate in work practice (not language practice) to have the introduction programme extended. Moreover, in proposed changes to legislation that are under consideration (see chapter 3.3), this is a measure which the authorities suggest should apply overall.

In the potential transition from work practice to employment, it may be particularly important to follow up Ukrainian refugees and employers very closely and, potentially, to give employers incentives to hire someone. In chapter 11, we find that about 25% of the Ukrainian refugees who were employed had found their job through work or language practice. Thus, it has been an important gateway into the labour market for some Ukrainian refugees. Interviewees from NAV and the refugee service were, however, more pessimistic about the transition from work practice to actual employment: ‘Very few actually get a job afterwards’ (adult education, 1, 03). A couple of the interviewees reported that, in their experience, employers are positive as long as they are not spending any money. Some of the interviewees are concerned that employers may extend work practice instead of hiring Ukrainian refugees: ‘I can’t call it exploitation, but [they] sort of use the situation to their advantage. So, we need to be a bit conscious about that’ (refugee service, 9, 02). In these

situations, it may be important to follow Ukrainian refugees in the workplace closely to avoid some employers extending work practice to their own benefit for a long period.

18.2.2 Other work-oriented components

Interviewees stressed the importance of courses in working life in Norway because they considered it important for Ukrainian refugees to learn about Norwegian working life, systems and culture. One interviewee reported that they also offer career counselling in group-based sessions as part of this course. For example, they focus on specific occupations, the labour market, and how to find a job.

Another course that interviewees considered to be important was in entrepreneurship. Interviewees said that several of the Ukrainian refugees in the introduction programme were interested in starting their own business and were very eager to learn how to do it: 'We have some foot care specialists, nail designers, hairdressers and car mechanics who want to work for themselves, to have their own firm' (refugee service, 9, 02). This finding aligns well with the finding in section 7.3 that the Ukrainian refugees were eager to get more information about how to start a business in Norway. Entrepreneurship courses are usually not arranged for Ukrainian refugees specifically, and participation normally requires a certain language level. Therefore, some interviewees said they had arranged preparatory courses ahead of the entrepreneurship course and had hired a Ukrainian interpreter. However, one interviewee mentioned that some refugees quit the introduction programme to start their own business, a situation she did not approve of, given that it takes quite a lot of time to start a business. Therefore, she tried to guide them back to the programme.

18.2.3 English language training

Ukrainian refugees may be offered English language training as part of the introduction programme, which is not the case for other refugees enrolled in the introduction programme. However, as described in section 10.2, only 8% of respondents in the survey of the Ukrainian refugees reported having English language training included in their programme.

Figure 18.7 above also shows that there are large discrepancies across municipalities of different sizes as to whether or not they offer English to (selected) participants; while 50% of the largest municipalities offer English language training, only 20% of the smaller municipalities do likewise.

Few of the interviewees from the municipalities mentioned this option. One interviewee explained that one reason for not providing English language training is that the municipality cannot offer a sufficient number of English lessons per week to fulfil the requirements of a full-time introduction programme. One interviewee confirmed that the municipality offers English as a supplement to Norwegian, but only to Ukrainian refugees who know some English already. Those who do not speak any English receive Norwegian language training only.

One of the employers we interviewed said that in her workplace, English is the main language. She was not aware of the possibility that the Ukrainian refugee she had hired (potentially) could receive English language training instead of Norwegian. To her, this option would have been advantageous. However, other interviewees stressed that English cannot replace Norwegian, because many employers do not consider English to be sufficient when hiring people.

18.3 Norwegian language training

All refugees under the age of 67 – including Ukrainian refugees – are entitled to Norwegian language training. However, the Ukrainian refugees' right to Norwegian language training

differs for those with higher education (upper secondary level or higher), which constitutes the majority of Ukrainian refugees. For this group, the right to language training is restricted to one year, compared with the general rule of 18 months for other refugee groups with similar education levels. The municipalities may provide an additional six months of language training (which will trigger extra state subsidies), but this extension is not an entitlement for Ukrainian refugees (see chapter 3.3).

It is also important to underscore that Norwegian language training is one of the mandatory elements in the introduction programme, but in the legislation it is also an individual right, irrespective of whether or not one participates in the introduction programme (Integration Act 2021). As shown in section 10.1, the large majority of Ukrainian refugees participates in the introduction programme, and of those who do not, almost half still take Norwegian language courses.

18.3.1 Scope and type of Norwegian language training

We asked respondents from local refugee services whether their municipality offers more than the mandatory one year of language training to Ukrainian refugees.

Figure 18.8: Are Ukrainian refugees in your municipality offered more than one year of Norwegian language training? (N = 215).

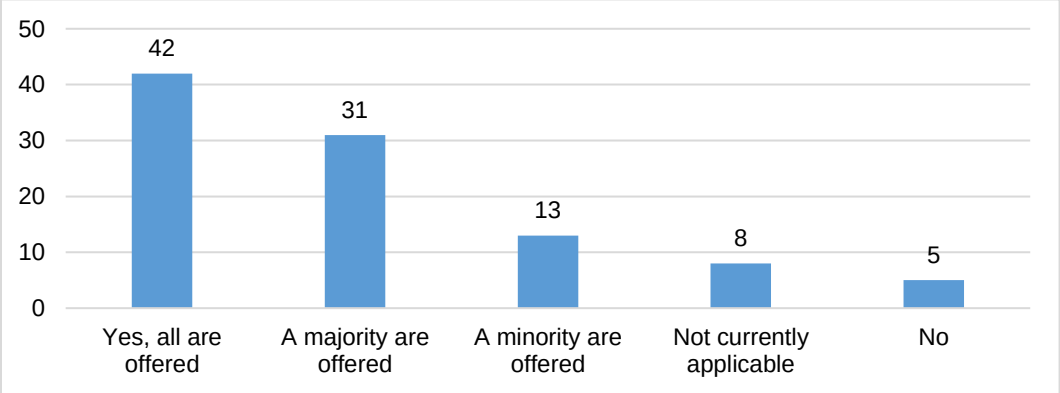


Figure 18.8 shows that more than 40% of the refugee service leaders report that their municipality provides extended Norwegian language training to all refugees who request more training. Moreover, 31% report that they offer more than one year of language training to the majority of the refugees from Ukraine. Only 5% report that they do not offer extended language training.

There are interesting differences in the responses depending on municipal size. Twice as many in the group of small municipalities offer language training for more than one year to all Ukrainian refugees compared with the group of large municipalities. The reason for this may be that the small municipalities, when establishing a teaching group, have spare capacity to include refugees outside the group with formal rights. The smallest municipalities receive fewer refugees and might find it appropriate to include all in the services they have created. This interpretation aligns with the finding in section 18.1.5 above, which shows that smaller municipalities are also more likely to offer introduction programmes for Ukrainian refugees aged 55–65 years (who may be offered programmes but are not entitled to them).

However, the large municipalities, receiving a larger number of refugees, may be more pressed on capacity. On the other hand, they are able to offer more flexible language training.

Figure 18.9: Are refugees in your municipality offered flexible Norwegian language training? (N = 215).

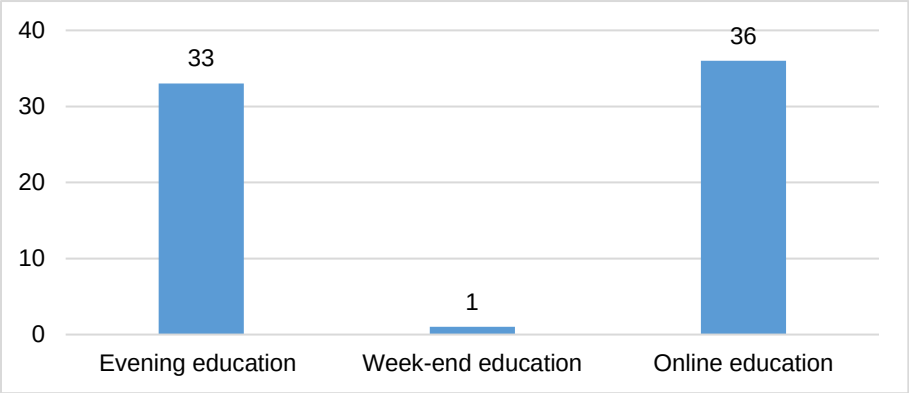
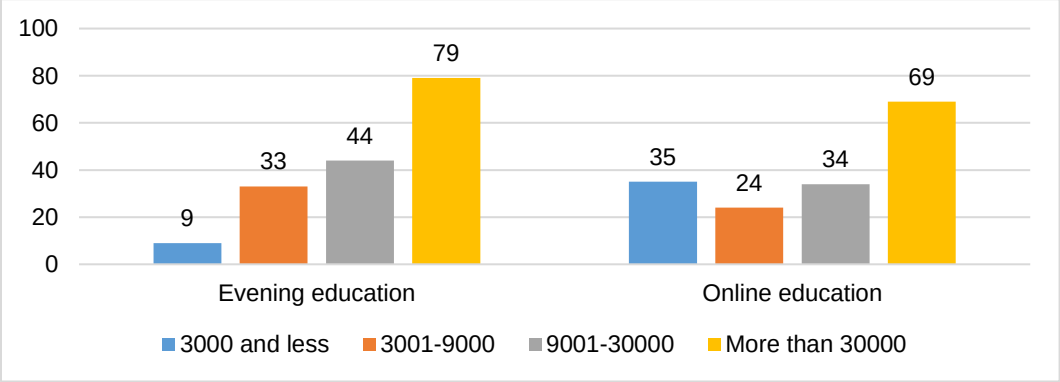


Figure 18.9 shows that one-third of municipalities offers the possibility for evening language classes for refugees who work during the day or are otherwise prevented from attending classes during the daytime. One-third also provides online language training, but only 1% offers courses during weekends.

Figure 18.10: Are refugees in your municipality offered flexible Norwegian language training? By municipality (population) size* (N = 215).



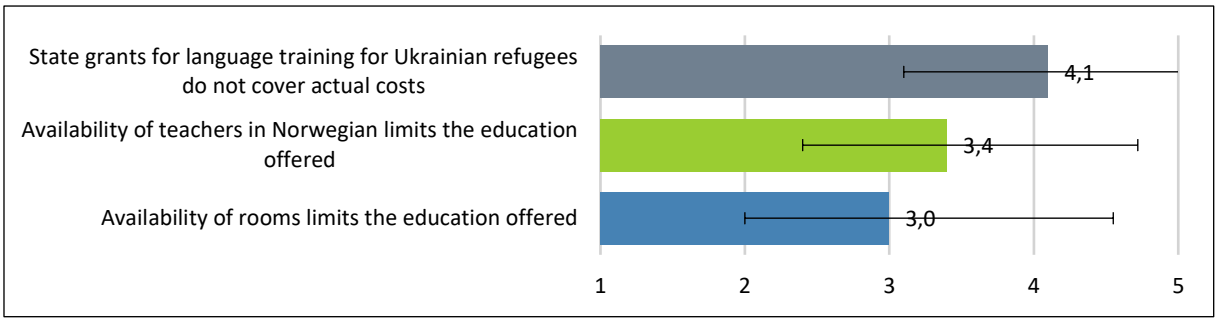
*Percent answering 'yes'

Further analysis, presented in Figure 18.10, shows that almost 80% of the largest municipalities offer evening education compared with only 9% of the smallest municipalities. The same tendency, though not as pronounced, can be observed for online education.

18.3.2 Challenges with providing sufficient Norwegian language training: state subsidies, capacity and uncertainty

In the survey, we asked respondents from local refugee services to assess selected statements concerning the language training for Ukrainian refugees in their municipality.

Figure 18.11: Please state your agreement with the following statements concerning Norwegian language training* (N = 215).



* Means and standard deviations. Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

First, the grants for language training for Ukrainian refugees follow a different distribution formula than for other refugees (Hurtigarbeidende gruppe 2023). In our interview with KS for the policy analysis for this study, the representatives from KS mentioned that the new distribution formula had been up for debate. In their experience, several municipalities believe that the new distribution did not sufficiently cover the expenses for providing language training, particularly for smaller and less experienced settlement municipalities (Interview with KS 2023). Figure 18.1 supports this impression. There is overall agreement among the leaders of the municipal refugee services that the government grants for language training for Ukrainian refugees do not cover the municipal costs for providing this service.

The next two statements in Figure 18.1 address questions about which aspects may challenge municipal capacity to offer Norwegian language training. In many municipalities, the lack of teachers limits the training offered, whereas some have problems with finding venues that are suitable for language classes. Limited availability of classrooms is particularly important in the larger municipalities.

Limited availability of classrooms was also mentioned as a main challenge in our interviews with Norwegian teachers: 'If the war does not end soon, we will have to set up a lavvo [Sami tent] outside' (adult education, 11, 01) said one teacher. One municipality no longer offers a full-time introduction programme to Ukrainian refugees due to lack of classroom facilities. Others offer some Norwegian classes online instead of in person or have merged multiple classes into one. The latter option is only available in places that have large enough classrooms, which is not always the case. Refugees may also have to wait longer before they can start the language training (and thereby the introduction programme).

Some municipalities have established classes for Ukrainian refugees in places outside the education centre that have available rooms. This solution poses some organisational and logistical challenges, however, in terms of equipment and communication between teachers and between teachers and the management. For example, teachers may not be available for meetings, and may not have access to printers or computers in the temporary classrooms.

All the interviewees from the adult education sector also reported that they had hired more teachers to keep up with the demand. One interviewee reported that they normally hired teachers in permanent positions, but now they had permission to hire them temporarily. It can be difficult to find enough qualified teachers in some places. Some interviewees reported having to lower the requirements for teachers' qualifications. For example, one interviewee said that they hired people who do not have pedagogical qualifications (specifically, practical pedagogical education (PPU) or Norwegian as a second language). 'With teachers, I use almost anyone right now. […] I hire new teachers almost every week. I've used everyone' (adult education, 1, 02).

Furthermore, uncertainty about the number of Ukrainian refugees that will arrive in the next few months, combined with the uncertainty about whether the government will extend

collective protection, makes planning difficult. It is difficult to know how many teachers will be needed in a few months' time. If the municipality first accepts to resettle 60 refugees but later accepts 60 more, then the number of teachers will need to be doubled in a short space of time.

One interviewee also pointed out that it can be challenging to recruit and retain the best teachers in a context of uncertainty, with mainly temporary contracts: 'The way the system works, we don't know how many people we need – and then it's incredibly difficult to compete for the best people' (adult education, 2, 01). When they cannot extend the contract because they do not know whether they will have work for them in six months' time, there is a strong likelihood that the good teachers find other jobs in the meantime.

18.3.3 Different groups with varying progress

Interviewees report differences between Ukrainian refugees in terms of how quickly they are able to learn Norwegian which partly overlap with their time of arrival. In their experience, and in line with the mapping of the changes in the educational level of Ukrainian refugees depending on time of arrival in Norway (see section 5.2), those who arrived in the initial phase had higher educational levels than those who arrived later on. The interviewees find that those with prior higher education understand grammar and use learning tools because they attended university quite recently; 'they have learned to learn' (volunteer, 7, 02). According to one interviewee, most of the Ukrainian refugees in this category will manage well. They are also capable of learning a lot of Norwegian on their own, and they participate in various arenas where they practise and learn the language.

However, not all Ukrainian refugees who arrive have this capacity and prior knowledge. Many of them have less education than the first to arrive and have fewer tools at their disposal to learn Norwegian. Not all of them know the Latin alphabet, in which case it is necessary to start with the basics of reading and writing. Interviewees point out that some of the later arrivals have also experienced the war up close and have more trauma.

Several interviewees report that they do not think Ukrainian refugees are much different from other refugee groups. Some of the interviewees identify the same pattern in different cohorts of Syrians or Afghans who came in 2015. 'The resourceful people often leave first' (adult education, 1, 02), as one of them pointed out. They find that the main factors that determine progress are age and educational background. Young people with higher education and who speak English progress faster, regardless of whether they are Ukrainian, Syrian or Afghan. Thus, the idea that Ukrainian refugees would be able to learn Norwegian and enter the labour market faster than other refugees is only partially correct, according to interviewees.

18.4 Non-aligned rights to the introduction programme and language training

As mentioned in section 18.3, although Norwegian language training often is an essential part of the introduction programme, the legislation distinguishes between rights to the introduction programme and rights to language training. Most Ukrainian refugees have the right to 12 months of free Norwegian language training. However, the introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees with higher education only lasts for six months, with a possibility for a six-month extension. When the time frame for the introduction programme and for rights to Norwegian language training do not overlap, it can cause confusion, as this interviewee points out:

> The central authorities have added a funny twist here, which we don't really understand. Nobody understands it. We believe that the introduction programme and the Norwegian language training should correspond timewise – stopping one of them but continuing the other one, that's…. If we're confused, you can imagine how [Ukrainian refugees] feel. (NAV, 13, 02)

So far, however, the introduction programme and the Norwegian language training have often overlapped, since most Ukrainian refugees are granted an extension and thus follow the introduction programme for 12 months. However, from July 2023, it is possible for Ukrainians to receive up to 18 months of Norwegian language training (which again extends the period beyond the introduction programme for most Ukrainian participants), but it is up to the municipalities if they have the capacity to offer an extension beyond the initial 12 months.

18.5 Criticism of short introduction programmes and reduced right to language training

> Way too short introduction programme!!! (respondent, survey)

The sentence above, complete with three exclamation marks, is one of the answers to the open-ended question in the survey: 'Are there other barriers to the integration of Ukrainian refugees in the labour market?' Many respondents took this opportunity to express their view that the introduction programme was too short for Ukrainian refugees to learn sufficient Norwegian and get a foothold in the labour market. One respondent put it this way:

> For the great majority, half a year for the introduction programme is completely unrealistic to get a job. […] They need more time in the programme if the goal is a lasting foothold in the labour market. (respondent, survey)

Many of the interviewees emphasise this point as well. This is particularly connected to the goal for participants who have secondary education or higher, as the goal for Norwegian language skills that they should reach at the end of the introduction programme is usually set at B2: 'It seems very unfair to set this goal when they don't have the time to reach it whatsoever' (adult education, 2, 02), one interviewee pointed out.

Almost all respondents in the municipal survey think it highly unlikely that most Ukrainian refugees will learn Norwegian to B2 level with short programmes. Some interviewees question the logic that refugees with higher education get less time in the introduction programme than people who have not finished high school, since people with higher education also need a high level of Norwegian to be able to use their educational background and qualifications in the Norwegian labour market:

> [Ukrainian refugees with higher education] want to use their education. And in those jobs or professions, there are even higher Norwegian language requirements. So, in that way, there is a conflict between the expectations and demands of the authorities and where we stand right now. (adult education, 1, 01)

One concern raised by some interviewees was that measurement errors may occur if the government measures the Norwegian language level Ukrainian refugees achieve against the limited language training they receive. One interviewee pointed out that other refugees participating in the introduction programme have to take a Norwegian language test within six months of completing the programme, but no such deadline applies for Ukrainian refugees. Ukrainian refugees often want to use the test as documentation of their Norwegian language skills in job interviews or university entrance applications, etc. Some teachers report that many Ukrainian refugees postpone taking the test to see if they can further improve their Norwegian language skills before taking it. Since they know they can take only one test for free, they do not want to 'waste' it until they know they are close to achieving their Norwegian language goal. Some of the interviewees therefore caution about using the test to measure the effect of the programme: 'If these tests are used in statistics at IMDi to check how many Ukrainian refugees reached their Norwegian language goal with only one year of classes, it will give a completely wrong result' (adult education, 2, 01).

18.6 Goal conflicts between work (practice) and language training

Several interviewees point out that different professional groups may have different – and sometimes conflicting – objectives on behalf of Ukrainian refugees in the introduction programme. Teachers often consider learning Norwegian to be the main goal, which they believe is a precondition for (long-term) integration in the labour market. Employees in the refugee service or in NAV, on the other hand, tend to emphasise rapid transition into employment as the main goal. The conflict is, in other words, partly grounded in a long-term versus a short-term perspective.

Some Norwegian teachers are concerned that early work practice interferes with Norwegian language classes. They explain that Ukrainian refugees have work practice at various times during the week, making it challenging to schedule Norwegian lessons for them. Some Ukrainian refugees find this problematic, according to teachers: 'They believe it results in less Norwegian language training. They don't think that work practice makes them any better in Norwegian. They think they benefit more from being at school' (adult education, 2, 02). In some instances, Ukrainian refugees have work practice in workplaces where most employees do not speak Norwegian. This situation, coupled with the potential for missing Norwegian classes, can result in participants learning less Norwegian. Other Ukrainian refugees are, however, eager to obtain work practice: 'Those who think it's good are often those who are in a work practice placement that is relevant [to their previous work experience or education]. They believe that they might get a job ' (adult education 2, 01). The hope of getting a job means that they tend to prioritise work practice over attending Norwegian language lessons. Some teachers are concerned about this, since they believe that 'Ukrainian refugees are not going to get a permanent job, and then it gives false hope that they will be able to start working here' (adult education 2, 01). Sometimes work practice results in work, according to interviewees, but the chance of getting a job is particularly small when their Norwegian language skills are poor, which is the case for most Ukrainian refugees after only a few months in the introduction programme.

One interviewee from the adult education services described the challenge from their point of view. For instance, when a Ukrainian progresses quickly in learning Norwegian, programme advisers (in NAV) are keen to get that person into any job as swiftly as possible. In her view, however, the primary objective should instead be to further improve their proficiency in Norwegian:

> If they had received more [Norwegian language education], they could have reached a higher level and obtained a different type of job. I feel that some people in NAV are very quick to put them on the job track [...] We have students making good progress who unfortunately have to quit before their potential is reached. (adult education 2, 02)

She is further concerned about the fact that almost all Ukrainian refugees have 'employment' set as the main goal in their integration plan. The plan is made shortly after arrival, and she believes many Ukrainian refugees are unaware that the goal that is set there may have a significant impact on their trajectory: 'Your goal is a job. It's not about pursuing education or learning as much Norwegian as possible' (adult education 2, 01). She knows Ukrainian refugees who want to complete their education or pursue a master's degree but who are encouraged or almost 'pushed' into work. If they find (any) work within the six months of the introductory programme, the programme is not extended because the employment goal has been achieved. The interviewee believes that the downside of this is that Norwegian language training ends too soon for the participant to reach a level where they can use their education or continue further studies. She points out that if young, ambitious Ukrainian refugees now take jobs in shops or as waiters, they might easily remain in those jobs without realising their potential: 'We miss out on a huge resource a few years down the line if they do not get the time they need now.' Another aspect of this situation is that older Ukrainian refugees aged 40–50 plus without education might lose out in the competition for unskilled

jobs. In this way, it becomes a double loss; the young, ambitious Ukrainian refugees do not get to use their competencies and the older, uneducated ones do not enter the labour market.

18.7 Summary

Ukrainian refugees in Norway with temporary collective protection have the right to attend the introduction programme but are not obliged to do so. The introduction programme must contain language training, work-oriented elements and parental guidance (for those with children). Other elements are voluntary, both for the municipality to offer and for the refugees to attend. In this chapter, we have investigated the municipalities' provision of the introduction programme and language training. There have been certain regulatory changes applicable only to Ukrainian refugees, and in the chapter, we have discussed how municipal refugee services and other local services view the introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees and what challenges they emphasise.

Generally, the municipalities have some leeway in their provision of the introduction programme and language training, and we observe variations in what municipalities offer. Most offer a full-time introduction programme, but about one in four does not have the capacity to do so. Likewise, some extend the introduction programme for all participants. Most municipalities extend the programme based on individual assessment. A few do not extend the programme at all.

Both the survey and the interviews reveal different perceptions of the criteria for extending the introduction programme. Some believe that the rules imply that only those who are likely to reach the goal of employment if they get an extension, should get it, while others argue that such a practice would only transfer responsibility for the refugees to NAV. Some interviewees emphasise that they consider the criteria for extension to be too vague, and that the vagueness of the law paves the way for unequal treatment. Others value the autonomy that the ambiguity affords municipal services in adapting to local conditions.

As temporary protection holders, Ukrainian refugees can choose to participate part-time in the introduction programme and can also exit and re-enter it. This flexibility is somewhat disputed, but most of our informants, both in the survey and in the interviews, believe that part-time participation and the possibility to exit and re-enter also should be offered to other refugee groups. However, such flexibility imposes extra administrative work on the municipalities.

It is not obligatory for municipalities to offer refugees aged over 55 the introduction programme, nor refugees aged over 67 language training. The municipalities vary widely on these issues. Generally speaking, the smallest municipalities are more generous in their offer to older refugees. One reason for this is probably because the smallest municipalities receive fewer refugees, so when they establish the introduction programme and language training, they might as well fill up the groups, even if all the participants do not have a formal right to take part.

Work practice is perceived as a main work-oriented element in the introduction programme. However, many municipalities face problems in finding enough work practice placements for the large number of refugees that need them. The extent to which municipalities provide non-mandatory elements in the introduction programme varies widely, particularly regarding life skills and civics education. Ukrainian refugees may be offered English language training as part of the introduction programme, but many municipalities are not able to include it. On average, larger municipalities offer a wider range of content than do smaller municipalities.

Language training is one of the mandatory elements in the introduction programme, but it is also an individual right irrespective of participation in the programme. For refugees with higher education, the right to language training is limited to one year, but the municipalities

may provide an additional six months. Most, but not all, municipalities offer more than one year of language training.

Several factors limit the municipal provision of language training. First, according to the leaders of the municipal refugee services, the government grants for language training for Ukrainian refugees do not cover the municipal costs for providing this service. Second, some report a lack of Norwegian language teachers. And third, some municipalities, particularly in larger towns and cities, have problems finding suitable venues for teaching classes.

A major criticism concerning the language training of Ukrainian refugees is that it is highly unlikely that most of them will learn Norwegian to B2 level in the short programme. The possibility (but not the right) to receive additional language training was extended from 12 to 18 months in July 2023, but there is not yet enough experience with this longer training period to conclude about the effects.

We observe a certain conflict of goals between language training and work experience. Different professional groups may have different objectives on behalf of Ukrainian refugees in the introduction programme: learning Norwegian versus rapid transition into employment. The conflict between these objectives is partly grounded in a long-term versus a short-term perspective. Some informants emphasise the importance of ensuring that especially young refugees can realise their potential and reach a proficiency level in Norwegian that enables them to obtain more qualified jobs that benefit both them and Norway.

19 NAV's role in the settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees

NAV is an important actor in Norwegian welfare service provision, also when it comes to refugees. In many municipalities, NAV has a triple role: as an administrative unit for refugee services, as an entity providing social assistance and other benefits, and as a central actor in helping refugees enter the labour market.

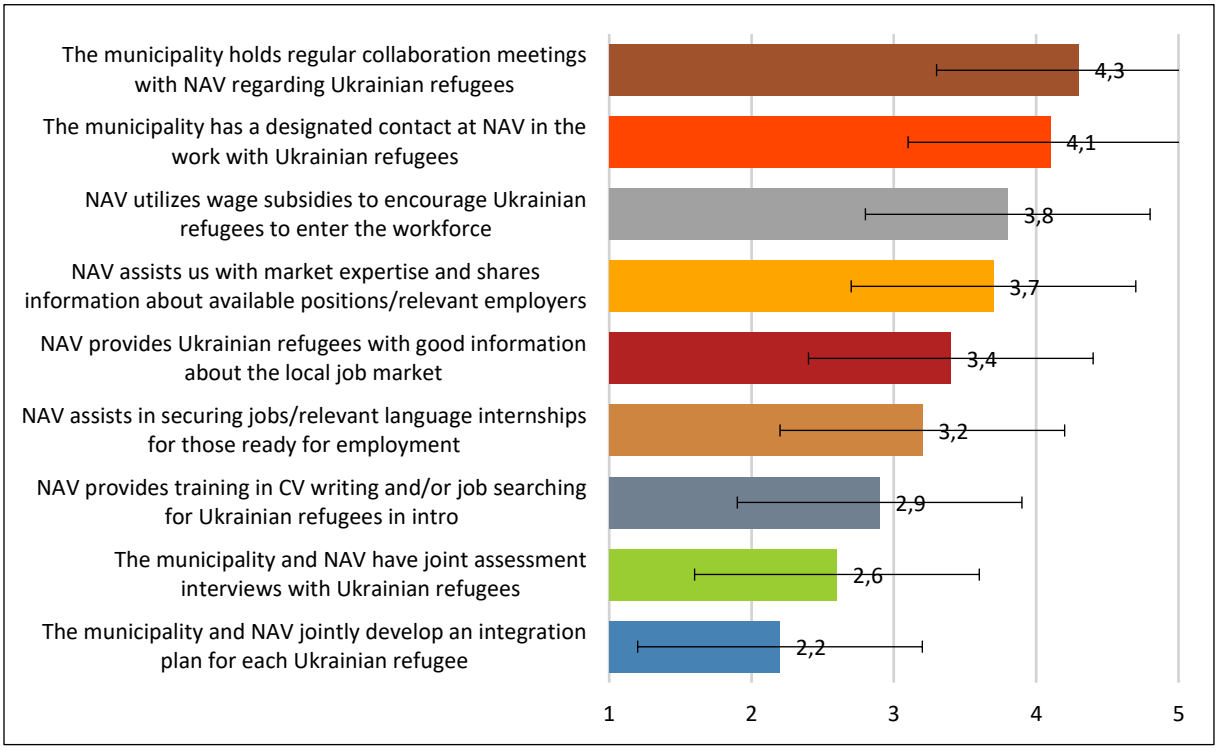
This chapter discusses the following issues:

- In what ways do the municipal refugee services cooperate with NAV in their efforts to assist Ukrainian refugees to integrate into the labour market?
- How does the organisational structure of the refugee services (within NAV or in a separate unit) influence cooperation between services locally?
- What cooperation challenges vis-à-vis NAV do the refugee services describe?
- Has NAV's capacity increased in line with the growing influx of refugees?
- What measures does NAV employ to facilitate the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees?

19.1 Cooperation with NAV

Cooperation between the municipal refugee service and NAV is often crucial for the integration of refugees into the labour market. We asked the refugee service leaders about their cooperation with NAV and their assessment of NAV's work.

Figure 19.1 : Please state your agreement with the following statements about NAV* (N = 215).



* Means and standard deviations. Scale: 1 = fully disagree, 5 = fully agree

Figure 19.1 shows that almost all municipal refugee services have regular cooperation meetings with NAV. It is also very common for the services to have a designated contact in NAV who communicates with the refugee services. This way of working was also brought up in the interviews. For example, one of the interviewees explained that the NAV office where

she works provides services for three municipalities. They have one employee in the NAV office who spends half a day at the refugee service/adult education centre in each municipality every week. By spending time there, they get to know programme advisors and can answer questions from refugees about NAV's services. Having a designated contact in NAV appears to be important for cooperation, particularly when the refugee service is not part of the NAV office. One of the respondents in the survey reported: 'At the beginning of the war, we did not have a designated contact person in the NAV office. We see that after this was put in place, cooperation has improved a lot and more refugees find work' (Survey respondent, 2023).

The third most common measure is to utilise wage subsidies to integrate Ukrainian refugees into the labour market (see point 19.3.1 below), and many respondents also report that NAV assists with information on the labour market and available positions. Relatively fewer refugee services have joint assessment interviews with NAV or cooperate with NAV on developing an integration plan for the refugees. When this does not happen, it may be related to the fact that NAV often enters the process late in the introduction programme (see point 19.1.2).

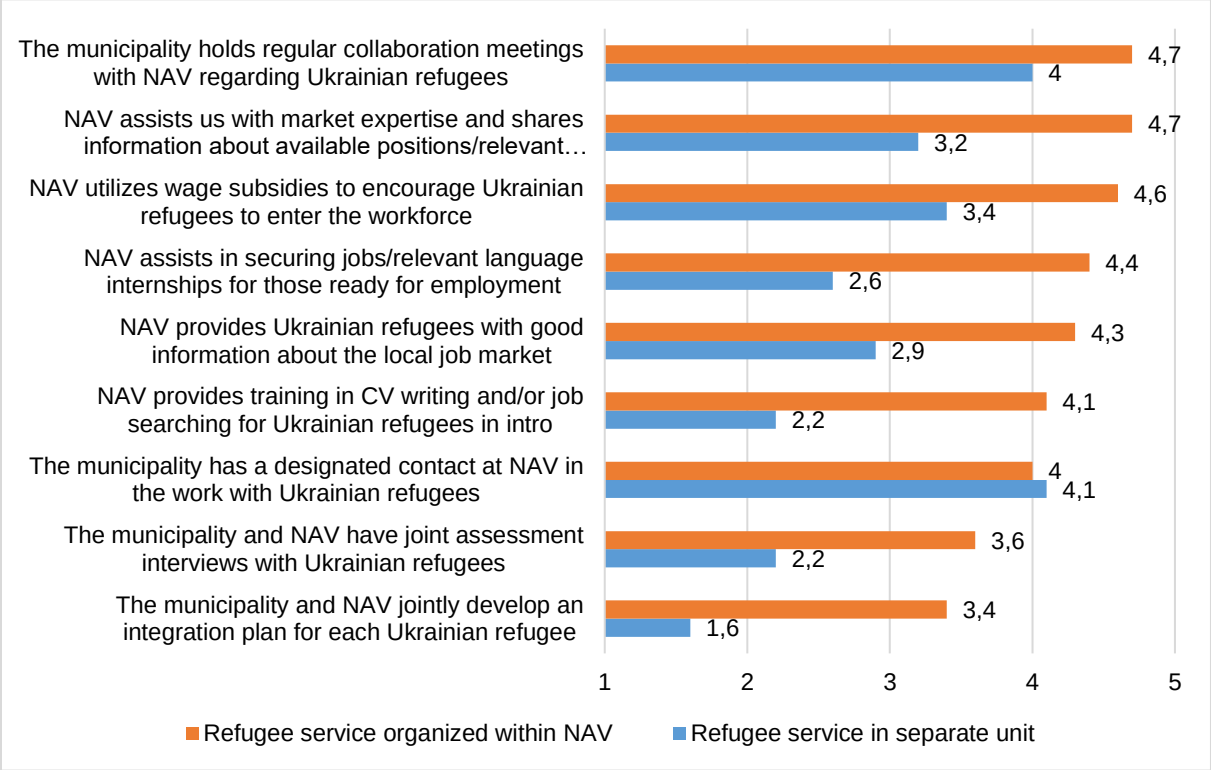
In the open survey answers, some respondents emphasised the importance of work specialists ("Jobbspesialister") who work together with programme advisors in the refugee service to follow up Ukrainians who are in work practice or employment. Some reported having close and good cooperation with employees in NAV's market team, who provide information about vacant positions, or they put weight on close cooperation between the refugee service and NAV about finding language and work practice. One respondent put it this way: 'The refugee service and NAV cooperate so closely that we see each other as colleagues, we pull in the same direction, and we support each other'.

In the open-ended survey question and interviews, participants reported a few other forms of cooperation with NAV that were not included as options in the questionnaire. For example, in some municipalities, NAV employees regularly visit adult education centres to provide information about NAV's services and how to access them. Several interviewees also stressed the importance of cooperation between NAV and the refugee service during the transition period when Ukrainian refugees finish the introduction programme but are still in need of assistance. One of the bigger municipalities has a 'transition counsellor' who works specifically with this phase. He regularly meets refugees and programme advisors to discuss possible assistance from NAV after the introduction programme. Moreover, the transition advisor is easily accessible to both the refugee services and the refugees, since he can be contacted directly by phone (not only through NAV's main number). Some respondents complained about the lack of accessibility in NAV, which will be elaborated below in section 19.1.2.

19.1.1 Integration of the refugee service in NAV facilitates cooperation

In section 16.1, we observed that about one in four refugee services are organised within NAV and that two in three services are separate administrative units in the municipality. One obvious hypothesis is that refugee services operating within NAV have a closer relationship with other parts of NAV than do refugee services that are organised differently. Our findings confirm this hypothesis.

Figure 19.2: Agreement on the statements about NAV, by refugee service organisation. (N = 215).



* Means and standard deviations. Scale: 1 = fully disagree, 5 = fully agree

Figure 19.2 above shows that respondents in municipalities where the refugee service is organised within NAV generally rate the various forms of cooperation as better than respondents in municipalities where the refugee service is a separate unit. This could indicate better access to NAV services and measures both for the refugee service and for the refugees in these municipalities.

Several of the respondents who write about well-functioning cooperation in the open-ended survey questions attribute it explicitly to the fact that the refugee service is integrated into the NAV office. These are examples:

> The refugee service is a part of NAV – therefore the cooperation works very well. We use NAV's toolbox and the opportunities in NAV during the introduction programme as well. (Survey respondent, 2023)

> The refugee service in the municipality is organised under NAV. This makes it easier to cooperate about what we can offer both with regard to the introduction programme and which state measures that we can use when [Ukrainians] are entering the labour market. (Survey respondent. 2023)

Some of the employees in the integrated offices work both with the introduction programme and with other NAV services. For example, one respondent in the survey explained that they have a NAV counsellor who works 50% with social assistance and 50% in the refugee service. She deals with all applications for social assistance from refugees, which according to the respondent, is a 'fantastic' way of organising the work. Some NAV offices have units that combine work with the introduction programme with services after the programme is completed. Thus, the same NAV employee follows refugees throughout the process.

19.1.2 Challenges in the cooperation with NAV

Several respondents describe various challenges in their cooperation with NAV. The main challenges voiced are 1) that the refugee service has to assist with services that are NAV's

responsibility, 2) that NAV is not accessible enough, and 3) that NAV enters the integration process too late. One of the main sources of these challenges is NAV's lack of capacity, which we return to in 19.2.

First, some respondents report having to a large extent taken responsibility for tasks that belong to NAV: 'NAV delegates tasks that are clearly NAV's responsibility to the refugee service' (Survey respondent, 2023). For example, respondents report providing information about social welfare benefit rights, aiding with writing NAV applications, and explaining decision letters from NAV:

> We have had to do NAV's work tasks when it comes to applications for social assistance, going through decisions and appealing rejections. It's demanding when we don't work in NAV ourselves and don't know what kinds of assessments they make. (Survey respondent, 2023)

> I feel that NAV pushes a lot of the responsibility related to integration onto the municipality. Lots of social assistance applications that the municipality fills out. I believe refugees should get much better information about the NAV system. (Survey respondent, 2023)

One respondent reports that one solution has been to organise a 'Ukraine corner' with dedicated staff in the NAV office during opening hours, with a Ukrainian interpreter, that help with applications. This 'helped a lot with the burden the refugee service faced in terms of helping out with NAV applications' (Survey respondent, 2023).

Second, respondents write that NAV is not accessible enough. For example, one respondent writes that NAV employees are rarely in the office, the opening hours are limited, and that NAV often does not respond. Another respondent writes that it would be very useful if Ukrainian refugees got a direct phone number to a NAV counsellor, particularly when they do not have bank ID and cannot use the digital platforms in NAV. When Ukrainian refugees are unable to access NAV, they tend to contact the refugee service instead, so that 'all contact between the refugee and NAV goes through the refugee service' (Survey respondent, 2023). This increases the workload of the employees in the refugee service, particularly when they too struggle to get a reply from NAV.

Third, perhaps the most frequent complaint among respondents is that NAV enters the integration process too late, often only at the end of or after the introduction programme:

> NAV should have gotten involved a long time ago!! It's too late to get into the process when participants have finished the introduction programme. They say they don't have enough staff and that they haven't received any extra funding after Ukrainians came to Norway. (Survey respondent, 2023)

> It's very important that NAV enters the picture early during the introduction programme if we are to succeed with rapid transition to employment. NAV could have a more committed and clearer role during the introduction programme, they could enter already at the beginning. (Survey respondent, 2023)

> It seems like we in the refugee service are supposed to do everything. NAV enters the picture only afterwards when we have found work for [Ukrainians]. (Survey respondent, 2023)

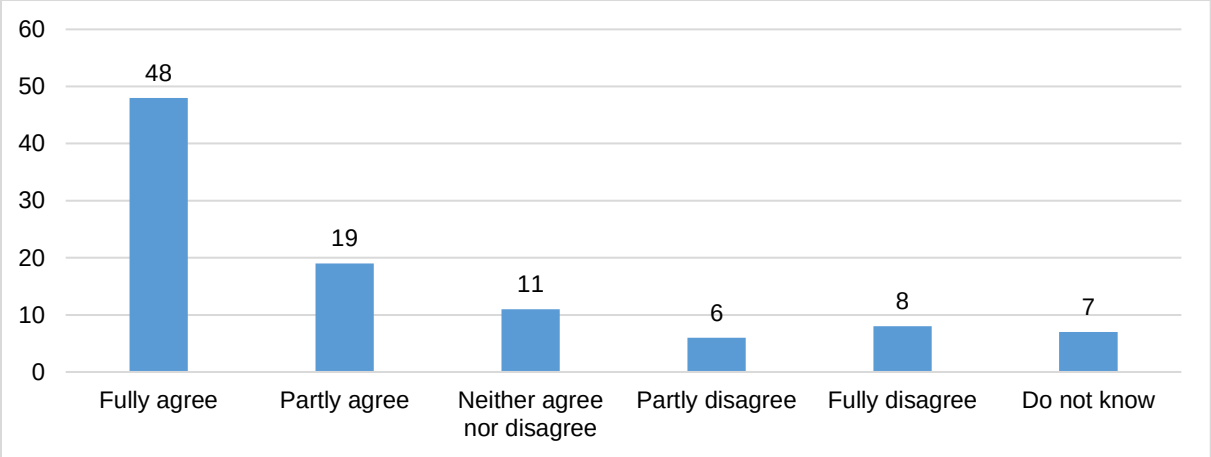
Respondents report that they would like to cooperate more with NAV at the beginning of the programme when they set up an integration plan for each individual refugee. They would also like more information during the programme about the labour market and job vacancies, and to cooperate more on finding work and language practice placements.

19.2 Capacity challenges in NAV

NAV is in a position to play an important role in the process of integrating refugees in the labour market. NAV has both market information and several standardised work-oriented measures. However, many respondents and interviewees maintain that NAV has insufficient capacity to fulfil this role.

Figure 19.3 below shows that two in three survey respondents think that NAV has insufficient capacity in its work with Ukrainian refugees. The answers from respondents in refugee services that are organised within NAV do not differ significantly from those organised outside NAV.

Figure 19.3: Please state your agreement with the statement: 'NAV has insufficient capacity in the work with Ukrainian refugees'. (N = 215).



Several interviewees expressed concerns about NAV's ability to take responsibility for Ukrainian refugees who have not secured employment or who are not enrolled in educational courses by the end of the introduction programme. Some interviewees highlighted a recent surge in work pressure due to Ukrainian refugees entering the regular NAV system. 'The pressure is now almost overwhelming the NAV office. We are in a very extreme situation' (NAV, 10, 03). Another interviewee elaborated: 'NAV is not prepared to handle such a large influx of people within a short timeframe' (adult education, 1, 02). While the refugee services have upscaled its services (see chapter 17), NAV has only done so to a very limited extent. As an example, while one municipality's refugee office expanded by hiring 22 new staff members, NAV recruited only two new counsellors during the same period. As one respondent put it:

> We don't have challenges with cooperation, the challenge is NAV's [lack of] capacity. In our region, one NAV employee has to cover three municipalities that are geographically dispersed, where today there are more than 100 Ukrainian refugees. (Survey respondent, 2023)

According to some interviewees, the central authorities do not appear to have a strategy for handling the inevitable increase in people who need assistance from NAV to enter the labour market in the upcoming months. One respondent puts it this way:

> There appears to be a lack of guidance from the Directorate of Labour and Welfare early on about prioritising this group. This guidance is coming only now that we, not surprisingly, see increased unemployment in the group. It would have been beneficial if the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion had made as much effort as the municipalities in the beginning of the emergency […]. (Survey respondent, 2023)

According to one NAV employee, the question about NAV's capacity to deal with Ukrainian refugees has been raised in meetings between management in NAV, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion and KS. 'There are never any answers about what they are thinking or what they plan. I find it interesting that there doesn't appear to be a plan' (NAV, 10, 01).

One interviewee suggests that a major reason for the unpreparedness in NAV is that the Government believed the dominating narrative in the media in the beginning when Ukrainian refugees began to arrive. The idea was that Ukrainian refugees would enter the workforce after only a few months, in which case it would not be necessary to increase NAV's capacity. 'But they were wrong', the interviewee concluded.

19.2.1 Lack of funding for staff on the state side of NAV

NAV provides both state and municipal services, which means that the funding comes from both the state and the municipalities. The municipalities primarily handle social assistance, while the state oversees labour market support. Many Ukrainian refugees need both kinds of services.

Interviewees mainly consider the failure to upscale to lie with the state side of the equation. There is a sense that municipalities are left on their own in the face of an increasing number of Ukrainian refugees who turn to NAV. As one interviewee pointed out: 'I believe the authorities need to increase the budget to the NAV offices, but instead, they have left [Ukrainian refugees] to the municipalities' (NAV, 13, 01). While the municipality has received increased funding, the state side of NAV has not done the same thing, according to this interviewee: 'We have a huge increase in social benefit payments, both because of refugees and due to other challenges. The municipality has upscaled in its areas, but there is no plan for those who work with employment'. Note that municipalities receive money for each refugee they resettle. This money is not earmarked, which means that municipalities may use some of the funding for municipal services in NAV that need to be upscaled on account of the increasing number of refugees.

Instead of increasing resources on the state side of NAV, interviewees say that the Norwegian parliament has reduced funding for NAV in the past year, which means that the state has had to cut positions or stall funding for new employees (*ansettelsesstopp*). In one office, the municipality funded two new positions because the office needed more capacity in the introduction programme and to assess applications for social benefits. However, simultaneously, the office lost some state-funded positions. Since some employees handle both municipal and state tasks concurrently, the municipality ends up financing tasks that fall under the state's responsibility, such as labour market activation. Consequently, when the municipality funds new positions while the state cuts back, the state's lack of funding becomes less apparent. One respondent in the survey suggests that NAV should have earmarked state funding for employees who work with refugees.

One interviewee says that their 'silent, simple strategy' to bring attention to the number of Ukrainian refugees who need assistance with entering the labour market is to register them as quickly as possible in Modia, the state system for jobseekers. 'Like that, they are at least not merely a hidden mass in a social assistance database, we show that they are jobseekers' (NAV, 10, 02). When Ukrainian refugees are registered already while participating in the introduction programme, they 'count' as jobseekers, and therefore also become the responsibility of the state side of NAV and have access to NAV's measures for labour market activation.

19.2.2 The budget for employment scheme benefits (*tiltakspenger*)

Some of the interviewees were also concerned that there had been no increase in the budget for employment scheme benefits, given that many Ukrainian refugees will need such schemes to enter the labour market. The interviews with NAV counsellors were conducted in June and August 2023, at which time NAV had not increased the budget, hence the concern. In the revised national budget later that autumn, however, the central authorities increased the budget for employment scheme benefits in NAV, and the Directorate of Labour and Welfare stated that Ukrainian refugees should be a priority in the allocation of such schemes. From September to October 2023, there was an increase in the number of Ukrainians receiving such schemes. By the end of October, the number was 1,800.[30] Several survey respondents were aware that there has been an increase in NAV's budget for employment

[30] E-mail correspondence with the Directorate of Labour and Welfare.

scheme benefits after November 2023, and view it as a positive development. They also point out, however, that the increased budget does not solve the capacity problem related to staff.

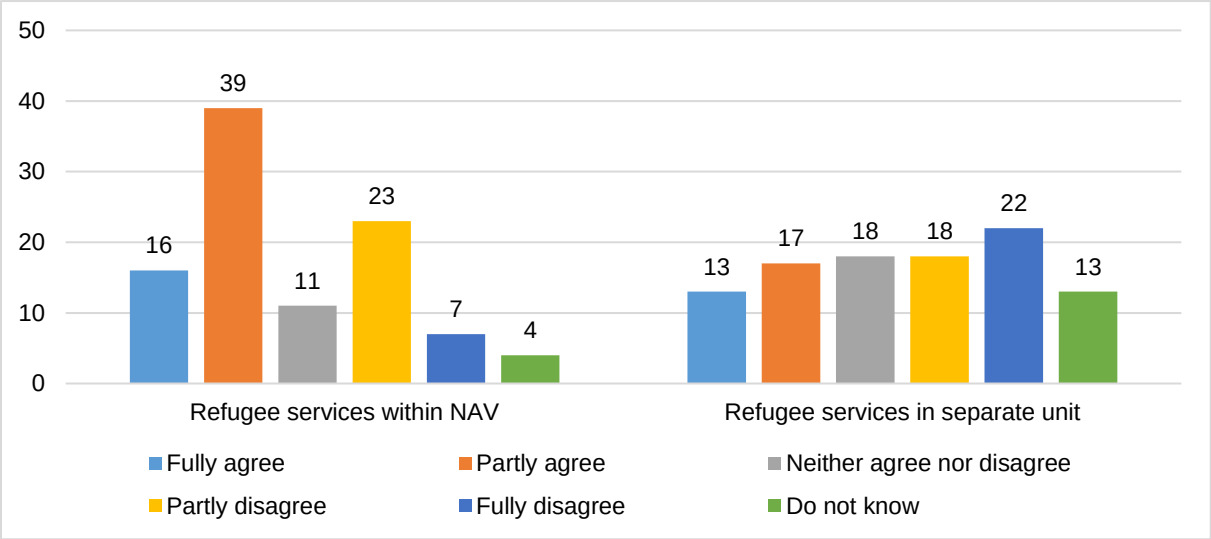
19.2.3 Difficult prioritisations

According to some interviewees, the heavier workload associated with assessing applications for social assistance seems to overshadow the support provided to individuals in securing employment ('work-related follow-up' in NAV terminology). 'The resources are channelled into NAV's social services', one respondent wrote. This is particularly the case when counsellors do not specialise in either municipal or state services but work with the provision of both ('generalist model'). This means that a larger workload in one area affects capacity in another: 'When you get a full bag of applications every day, then it's pretty obvious that the work-oriented follow-up [of NAV clients] is bleeding now' (NAV, 10, 03). NAV has recently introduced a 'youth guarantee' to emphasise that young people should be one of the main priorities in NAV. In one office, employees in the same unit is responsible for working with both young people and Ukrainian refugees. According to the interviewee, assisting Ukrainians comes at the cost of assisting young people. 'The pressure with regard to refugees directly affects what we are able to offer to young people'. She says that this is visible when you look at quantitative goals (*målekort*) that guide the work in the office. The use of measures and the number of meetings between NAV counsellors and young people have decreased, even though counsellors work harder than ever, she says. 'These are two groups that are set up against each other. It was not intended that way, but that is what it's like in a NAV office' (NAV, 10, 03).

19.3 Use of NAV measures

We asked the leaders of municipal refugee services about their views on NAV's measures. Figure 19.4 demonstrates substantial differences between services organised within and outside NAV. While 55% of refugee service managers operating within NAV agree that NAV's measures are well suited, this holds for only 30% of the services organised outside NAV. It is, once more, also worth noting that a much higher percentage of respondents who work outside of NAV report that they do not know, which may indicate that they do not know enough about what NAV can offer Ukrainian refugees.

Figure 19.4: Please state your agreement with: 'NAV has employment-related measures that are well suited to newly arrived refugees from Ukraine' (N = 215).

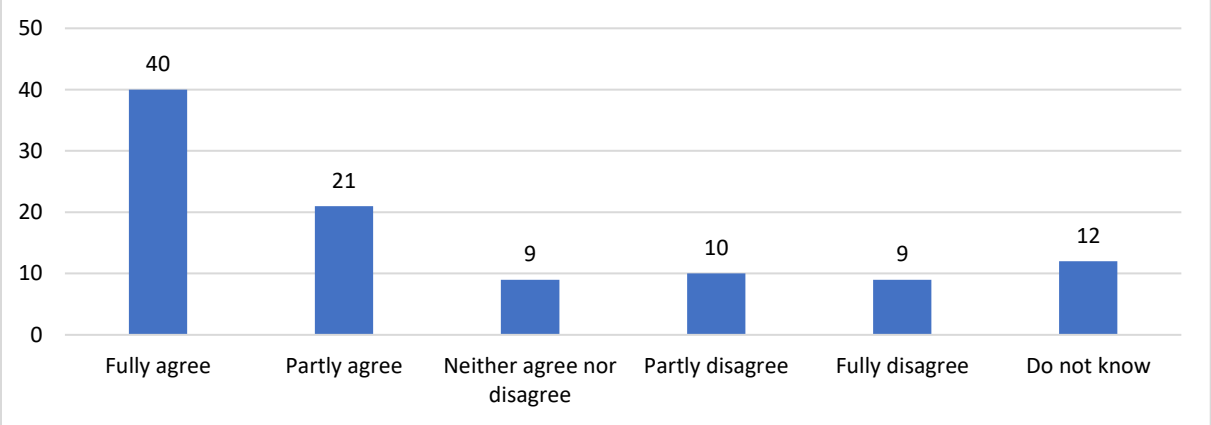


19.3.1 Wage subsidies

We asked the leaders of municipal refugee services about NAV's use of different measures to facilitate integration of Ukrainian refugees into the labour market.

Figure 19.5 shows that 61% of respondents in the survey partly or fully agree that NAV utilises wage subsidies (*lønnstilskudd*) to assist Ukrainian refugees transition into the workforce. Interviewees from the refugee service confirm that they use wage subsidies both during and after the introduction programme, sometimes in combination with subsidies for a mentor at the workplace. The latter entails that NAV pays the employer extra so that someone in the workplace can take time off from their regular work tasks to provide training or supervision for the new employee.

Figure 19.5: Please state your agreement with: 'NAV utilises wage subsidies to encourage Ukrainian refugees to enter the workforce' (N = 215).



Some of the employers we interviewed reported that wage subsidies can be decisive when they are considering hiring someone. Wage subsidies can lower the threshold, especially if the person in question needs more training before they are able to be a fully productive staff member. One of the employers who works as a manager in a kindergarten reported that she uses wage subsidies to transition someone from work practice to regular employment. The wage subsidies make it possible for a new employee to work in the kindergarten several days a week, even on days when the kindergarten is fully staffed. That is particularly useful,

because on such days, there is more time to provide training, explain routines, and practise Norwegian. In her experience, it is also good for Ukrainian refugees to be able to come to work several days a week. She believes having a job is important for their dignity and self-respect.

Some respondents in the survey report that NAV has not been accommodating enough with its use of wage subsidies. For example, one respondent reports that they wish it was easier to get approval from NAV to also use wage subsidies when the employer cannot say for certain that there is going to be paid work at the end of the subsidised period. They also find it challenging that NAV tends to grant wage subsidies for one month at a time instead of, for example, three months, which would ensure more predictability for the employer and for the refugee. Another respondent reported that NAV rarely allows them to use wage subsidies in the early phase of the introduction programme because NAV requires a certain language level and a clear commitment from the employer about future employment.

19.3.2 The qualification programme

The qualification programme is a programme run by NAV for individuals who need assistance to enter the labour market. It is similar to the introduction programme in the sense that it is a full-time programme, which means that it should have a duration of 37.5 hours a week. A counsellor in NAV plans the programme together with the participant. Activities can be, for example, Norwegian language training, courses, work-related measures and counselling. The programme normally runs for one year, with the possibility of a one-year extension.

The qualification programme is quite a common pathway in the NAV system for regular refugees who have difficulties finding a job and who have not obtained other welfare rights related to participation in the labour market. An important criterion for entering the programme is that the individual should have 'reduced work and income capacity' (*redusert arbeids- og inntektsevne*). The programme is largely targeted at individuals who otherwise would become dependent on social assistance over an extended period.

The Directorate of Labour and Welfare has confirmed that Ukrainians may be entitled to the qualification programme if they fulfil the entry criteria. NAV counsellors we spoke to said, however, that there were discussions in the offices about whether most Ukrainians actually do fulfil the criteria. The assessment involves some degree of discretion, which means that employees in different offices appear to come to somewhat different conclusions about Ukrainian refugees in similar situations.

The main point of discussion was whether Ukrainian refugees fulfilled the criterion for 'reduced work capacity'. Normally, individuals who are enrolled in the qualification programme need further qualifications or education. Lack of Norwegian language skills alone is not considered to be sufficient. Other refugees who lack Norwegian language skills *in combination* with low education may enter the programme. Since most Ukrainians have higher education, one counsellor said that they generally do not consider Ukrainian refugees to be candidates for the programme. The interviewee also referred to the principle of equal treatment, since they previously have not given, for example, Syrians with higher education access to the programme. Changing the interpretation now – and thereby allowing Ukrainian refugees into the programme – would amount to discrimination, in his view.

A couple of the other interviewees said that they enrol Ukrainian refugees in the qualification programme quite frequently in their offices. One of them argued that lack of Norwegian language skills in combination with health issues or other circumstances related to the war in Ukraine can be sufficient for Ukrainian refugees to qualify. A couple of the other NAV counsellors had the following arguments for allowing Ukrainian refugees into the qualification programme: if Ukrainian refugees do not speak sufficient Norwegian to be able to use their education, they will have difficulties finding a job. They need more Norwegian language skills

to be able to make use of their qualifications. Moreover, many Ukrainians have not worked in their field of education, and therefore need further qualifications to obtain work. They also place weight on the fact that many of the Ukrainian refugees need the close follow-up that the qualification programme offers. Finally, one of the main objectives of the programme is to prevent people from becoming long-term recipients of social assistance, which is a likely outcome for some Ukrainian refugees.

Since the qualification programme is funded through the municipal budget in NAV, the discussion about participation in the programme is also relevant to the debate about whether it is primarily the state or the municipality that takes responsibility for Ukrainian refugees after they finish the introduction programme. 'Whether they get the qualification programme or not has consequences for whether it is the state or the municipal part of NAV that will follow up [Ukrainians]' (NAV 10, 02)

19.3.3 Social assistance

Interviewees report that there has been a substantial increase in social assistance payments in the past two years. As noted, the increase in social assistance applications also means a heavier workload for NAV employees. Ukrainian refugees apply for social assistance before they start in the introduction programme or as a supplement to the introduction benefits, and some of them need social assistance if they have not found employment when they finish the introduction programme. One concern that was raised is that NAV employees do not have access to information about the resources and funds that Ukrainian refugees have in their home country. One of the interviewees from NAV reported that they 'spend a lot of time writing social assistance decisions that are based on uncertain information'.

19.3.4 Other measures

Several interviewees and respondents point out that it can be difficult to use many of NAV's regular work-oriented measures for Ukrainian refugees because they often require a certain level of Norwegian language skills. Thus, there is a language barrier to using some of NAV's available tools. However, in the interviews, the interviewees mentioned several measures that they used for this group:

- *Employment specialists:* NAV employees who are dedicated to facilitating contact with employers and following up both employers and employees after they find a job. They often work with 'supported employment' methods.
- *Courses for establishing a business*: As noted in chapter 7.3, many Ukrainian refugees are interested in starting their own business.
- *Inclusion support:* funding for employers who need extra resources to test or hire someone who needs extra support or training in the workplace.
- *Job opportunity programme* (*Jobbsjansen*): Municipalities can apply for funding for this programme, which is then often organised by NAV. The aim is to provide qualifications for women with immigrant background and help them enter the labour market. Women who are in the target group for the qualification programme should not be included here.
- *Mentor subsidies*: The employer receives funding so that a person in the workplace has time to train and communicate with refugees who are new to the work tasks.
- *Employment preparation training measures* (*arbeidsforberedende tiltak, AFT*): Use of these measures requires an assessment of the individual's work capacity, which needs to be lowered for them to qualify.
- *A variety of work-oriented measures:* These are often provided by external service providers that have an agreement with NAV.

19.3.5 The use of state funding for further Norwegian language training

Ukrainian refugees finish the introduction programme after six to 12 months (depending on whether they get an extension or not). They are entitled to 12 months of language training, but the municipalities now have the possibility to provide a further six months of language training (but are not obliged to do so) for which they would also receive extra state subsidies. However, there was no consensus among interviewees about whether the state side of NAV could fund further Norwegian language training through 'employment scheme benefits' (*tiltakspenger*).[31] Note that it is not always entirely clear whether interviewees speak of covering the expenses for the *Norwegian courses*, or the *cost of living* while attending the courses. One of the interviewees reported that they are not allowed to do use employment scheme benefits for Norwegian language training:

> In our office, it is completely prohibited to use employment scheme benefits to finance Norwegian language training, because this is funding from the state. Here in NAV, our managers have always been clear that Norwegian language training is a municipal and not a state responsibility. So, the municipality must take that responsibility. (NAV, 13, 01)

Contrary to this view, some of the other interviewees reported that they did use (state-funded) employment scheme benefits for Norwegian language training. One interviewee describes what she sees as a shift in NAV towards a greater willingness to provide support for Norwegian language training: 'We believe language is important. There has been a change in NAV. Previously, we were not supposed to pay for that' (NAV, 10, 03). For example, in one office, they procure Norwegian courses externally and register them as employment schemes. One interviewee reported that they use 'labour market training' (*arbeidsmarkedsopplæring (AMO)*) in combination with state funding to cover Norwegian language training. This option has not always been available in NAV: 'The requirement [for entering an AMO course] used to be that participants should be able to go straight into a job. For many years, Norwegian classes, for example, were not considered to be legit [*stuerent*]' (NAV, 13, 02).

There was a legal amendment in 2016 that made it possible to include Norwegian training as part of AMO courses. According to the Directorate of Labour and Welfare, NAV should still not, however, pay for Norwegian courses for individuals who have the right to get Norwegian courses from the municipality. As noted, another question concerns the cost of living while attending the courses. Many Ukrainians may have right to (municipally funded) Norwegian courses after they finish the introduction programme, but they do not have the means to financially support themselves while they are enrolled in the courses. The Directorate has now communicated to NAV offices that it is possible to register Norwegian courses (which are paid for by the municipality) as AMO courses, which means that individuals can get money to support themselves while they take the course. It is also possible to register part-time Norwegian training in combination with part-time work as a labour market scheme ("*arbeidstrening*").

19.4 Summary

In this chapter we have described some of the most common forms of cooperation between NAV and the refugee service, which comprise regular cooperation meetings, appointing a designated contact in NAV to work with Ukrainian refugees, use of wage subsidies, and provision of information about the labour market and job vacancies.

[31] As is often the case in the NAV system, the division between state and municipal responsibilities become visible, in particular when it comes to budgetary concerns. If Ukrainian refugees, for example, enrol in the qualification programme, which is funded by the municipalities, Norwegian language training can be included as part of the programme.

We hypothesised that integration of the refugee service with the NAV office, as opposed to being a separate unit, is likely to have a positive effect on cooperation. Our findings confirm this hypothesis. The respondents in municipalities where the refugee service is organised within NAV rate the various forms of cooperation with NAV better than do other respondents.

We also identified some challenges in the cooperation with NAV. Some respondents reported that the refugee service takes on tasks that should be NAV's responsibility, such as providing information about social assistance, filling out applications and explaining NAV decisions. They also find it challenging that NAV in some municipalities is not accessible enough. The offices in some municipalities have limited opening hours and it is hard to get through to counsellors. When refugees struggle with access to NAV, they often ask the refugee service for help instead. Finally, the most frequent complaint appears to be that NAV enters the process too late, often only when refugees have finished the introduction programme. Refugee service employees believe it would be highly beneficial for the labour market inclusion of refugees if NAV were actively involved from the beginning of the introduction programme.

The main reason for the above challenges is probably that NAV has not increased its capacity in line with the growing number of resettled Ukrainian refugees. Two in three survey respondents believe that NAV has insufficient capacity for its work with Ukrainian refugees. The qualitative interviews corroborate this finding. Although the budget for work-oriented measures increased in the autumn of 2023, there has been no increase in funding for more employees. The municipal side of NAV has funded new positions in NAV in some places, but the same thing has not happened on the state side due to budgetary constraints. Some interviewees say that the assessment of applications for social assistance overshadows other important tasks, in particular work-oriented follow-up of Ukrainian refugees and other groups. Some interviewees say that the central authorities do not appear to have a clear strategy for handling the increasing number of Ukrainians who need social assistance or help with entering the labour market.

Many Ukrainian refugees receive support from NAV in the form of social assistance, both before, during and after the introduction programme. Interviewees also emphasise that wage subsidies can be decisive when employers are considering hiring someone. In the survey, however, some respondents reported that NAV has not been accommodating enough with its use of wage subsidies. As for the qualification programme, there was some discussion among interviewees about whether Ukrainian refugees fulfil the entry criteria. The assessment involves a degree of discretion, particularly in the assessment of whether or not Ukrainian refugees can be considered to have reduced work and income capacity. NAV employees also held different opinions about the ways in which NAV potentially could fund further Norwegian language training for Ukrainian refugees or the living expenses while they are enrolled in Norwegian classes. Consequently, different NAV offices are likely to develop different practices for following up Ukrainian refugees.

20 Barriers and opportunities in the labour market

Relatively few Ukrainian refugees settled in Norway are in paid employment as of October 2023 (see section 2.6). One main message from the interviewees is that the expectation that Ukrainians would enter the workforce quickly and seamlessly has not been realistic: 'In the spring of 2022, the idea was that Ukrainians would go into the labour force almost before they had crossed the border – it didn't happen that way' (adult education, 1, 01). For many Ukrainians, the path to entering the workforce is much longer than first anticipated. In this chapter we ask the following questions:

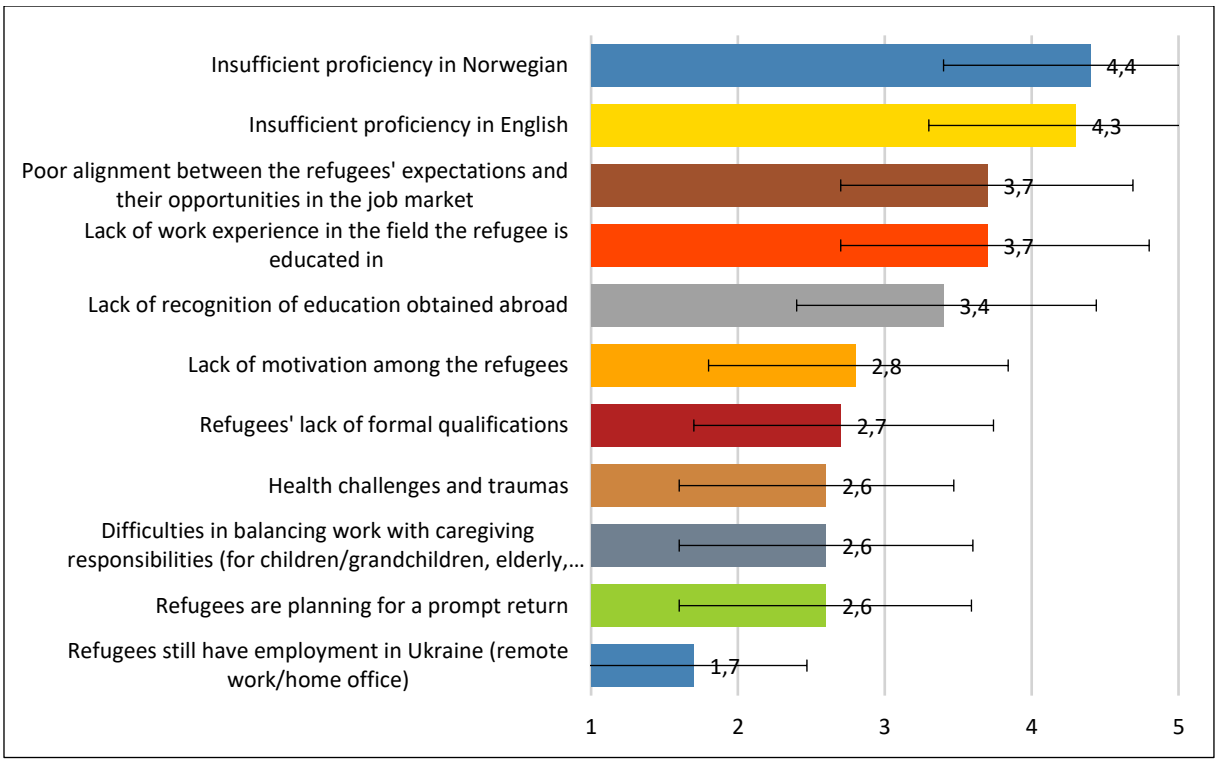
- What barriers do the frontline workers identify as hindering the Ukrainian refugees' labour market participation in terms of both individual factors and more local and/or systemic factors?
- What opportunities do Ukrainians represent in their local community?
- In the view of interviewees and survey respondents, are Ukrainian refugees more easily integrated into the local labour market than other groups of refugees, and if so, why?

In the survey and interviews, we asked about what the local actors perceive as the main barriers to employment for Ukrainian refugees in Norway. We have distinguished between predominantly individual factors (section 20.1) and local/systemic factors (section 20.2).

20.1 Individual factors

Figure 20.1 illustrates that respondents perceive the most important barrier at the individual level to be insufficient Norwegian and English language skills (4.4 and 4.3 out of 5 on the scale, respectively, where 5 indicates 'to a very large extent'). This finding is in line with the Ukrainian refugees' own perceptions of what constitutes the main barrier to integration into the Norwegian labour market, as presented in section 11.5.

Figure 20.1: Barriers to integration of refugees in the labour market, individual factors* (N = 215).



* Means and standard deviation. Scale: 1 = very small extent, 5 = very large extent

Other barriers which some respondents believe hinder the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the Norwegian labour market is a perceived gap between refugees' expectations and actual opportunities in the job market, lack of work experience in their field of education, and lack of recognition of foreign education (between 3.4 and 3.7 out of 5 on the scale).

The other factors are less perceived as general obstacles to Ukrainian refugees' labour-market participation (between 2.6 and 2.8); municipalities' assessments of these statements vary widely. In the following, we present findings on the assessments of barriers that were discussed in the qualitative interviews and in the survey respondents' open-ended answers.

20.1.1 Qualifications, recognition of education and (relevant) work experience

As noted in chapter 5.2, Ukrainian refugees have a higher level of education than most other refugee groups. The Norwegian labour market sets generally high demands for formal qualifications and there are quite few low-skilled jobs. Thus, Ukrainian refugees have an advantage over other refugee groups, which generally have lower levels of formal qualifications and education. In line with this, respondents in the survey do not think that lack of formal qualifications is an important barrier to labour market participation. However, lack of Norwegian and English language skills, in combination with other barriers that we will discuss next, may entail that Ukrainian refugees are not able to use their qualifications in Norway. Some interviewees also point to another dilemma: when Ukrainian refugees with higher education are not able to get work in line with their qualifications, they instead take jobs in the low-skilled end of the labour market. In turn, Ukrainian (and other) refugees who *do not* have higher education might lose out in the competition for the low-skilled jobs, which are relatively scarce in the Norwegian labour market.

According to survey respondents, the fact that Ukrainian refugees often have not worked in their field of education is considered to be the fourth-most important barrier among the individual factors that respondents rated in the survey. In the survey of Ukrainian refugees, 32% report not having previous work experience in line with their education (see 11.2.1). Fifty-four per cent of respondents in the municipal survey consider this to be a barrier to a large extent or very large extent. This barrier was also brought up in some of the interviews. One interviewee said:

> They sometimes have the kind of education that we need in the local labour market, but they haven't worked in the field. They've been mushroom pickers in Poland or concrete workers in Germany instead of working as engineers or something else for which they are educated – or psychologists, which we also need here, but they don't have any practical experience. (refugee service, 3, 02)

Some respondents also point out that they see that refugees' education and experience from Ukraine cannot be transferred directly to the Norwegian context. For this reason, some Ukrainian refugees may need further qualifications or training if they plan to find a job in their field of education in Norway.

According to the survey respondents, the lack of recognition of educational qualifications obtained abroad constitutes another significant barrier to labour market participation. Among survey respondents, 43% report that this represents a barrier to a large extent or very large extent, and 36% consider it a barrier to some extent. As described in chapter 6.3.4, Ukrainian refugees may apply to (HK-dir, previously to NOKUT) to have their foreign education recognised and assessed against the Norwegian degree structure. In the survey of Ukrainian refugees, only one in 10 confirmed that their education had been recognised. About half of the respondents had applied but not yet received an answer or were in the middle of the application process, and one-third does not plan to apply. Many professions – for example in the fields of health, accounting or law – set strict criteria for authorisation, in addition to language requirements.

Two of the employers we interviewed worked in the health sector. They reported that there is a high demand for nurses, health workers and doctors in their municipality, and that they considered authorisation of educations in the health field to be one of the major barriers to employing Ukrainian refugees in their institutions. At the moment, they have doctors and nurses from Ukraine in work practice or part-time positions. Since they do not have authorisation, they are for the time being performing simple tasks like making sandwiches. In the short term, one of the interviewees suggests that nurses from Ukraine can get approval as health workers in Norway. That can open a few doors. But she suggests that it might be too costly and time-consuming for Ukrainian nurses to obtain authorisation in Norway:

> They have to achieve B2. They have to study for a year. They need practice in a hospital. It requires travelling, and then they must live in other places in Norway while they do this. And various other things that are costly for them. From start to finish, they need a three-year perspective. I'm quite sure that the nurse we have here, she could have been as good as any other newly educated nurse. She has the competence. She has worked in a hospital in Ukraine for many years. (employer, 6, 04)

The interviewee adds that such efforts require a long-term perspective – and not all Ukrainian refugees imagine themselves living long-term in Norway or are certain of being allowed to stay long-term. She finds it strange that nurses from the EU can work in Norway without difficulties, but not Ukrainians. 'The regional parts of Norway struggle to get enough workforce. […] We're shooting ourselves in the foot by saying that they're not good enough when we really need their competence' (employer, 6, 04).

20.1.2 Motivation to work

Another possible barrier that we asked about in the survey is whether respondents perceived lack of motivation to hinder employment. Lack of motivation is not considered to be among the important barriers overall, but respondents are rather divided on this issue. A total of 45% answer that lack of motivation to work may to some extent be a barrier, but more respondents consider lack of motivation *not* to be an important factor (33%) than the percentage that does (20%). The results in this particular question are also somewhat difficult to interpret: when respondents answer that lack of motivation is a barrier, we do not know whether respondents believe that it is a barrier for *most* Ukrainian refugees or whether they believe that it is a barrier for *certain* Ukrainian refugees.

There were some interesting differences in perceptions of motivation as a factor, depending on the data source. In the qualitative interviews, there was almost general agreement that Ukrainian refugees are motived to enter the labour market. For example, the employers we interviewed spoke of the Ukrainian refugees in their workplace as grateful, humble and highly motivated to work and learn Norwegian. In the open-ended questions in the survey, respondent expressed more varied opinions; some considered Ukrainian refugees to be highly motivated whereas others considered motivation to be contingent on, for example, Ukrainian refugees' intention to stay in Norway. As we will demonstrate, some of the respondents also commented that Ukrainian refugees may not have sufficient economic incentives to work.

One explanation for these differences could be that the two data sources include participants with different roles and professional affiliations. The interviewees were Norwegian teachers, employees from the refugee service and NAV, employers, and people from the voluntary sector, whereas the survey respondents were employees who work in the refugee service only. It is also possible that the option to provide anonymous answers in the survey facilitated more direct and open responses from some of the respondents than a group interview setting would have done. In the following, we will explore four main factors which survey respondents and interviewees believe affect Ukrainian refugees' motivation to work.

Ukrainians prioritise Norwegian language training

In the interviews and the answers to open-ended survey questions, respondents describe a potential conflict between Ukrainian refugees' motivation to learn Norwegian, on the one hand, and their motivation to enter the labour market as quickly as possible, on the other. Some say that Ukrainian refugees could enter the labour market faster than they do, but their access to the introduction programme – and particularly Norwegian language training – undermines their motivation to enter work rapidly. These are typical answers in the open-ended parts of the survey that underscore this point:

> Some Ukrainian refugees prefer to study Norwegian. Several turn down regular job offers. The reasoning is often that the jobs are not in line with their wishes and that it is too hard to combine work and language training. (Survey respondent, 2023)

> One challenge is that some chose to be in the introduction programme instead of taking paid work. Some have received a job offer while they are in the introduction programme, which they have turned down. Their argument is that they need to learn Norwegian. (Survey respondent, 2023)

Some municipalities report that if Ukrainian refugees insist on completing the introduction programme instead of taking a job, the refugee service decides not to extend their introduction programme (in line with the new government proposal; see chapter 3).

Several respondents describe what they believe is a misunderstanding about the introduction programme among Ukrainian refugees. Ukrainian refugees often want to stay in the programme until the programme period finishes, while some programme advisors expect them to exit the programme as soon as they find (any) job. 'It should be made much clearer that it is expected that those who can work should provide for themselves as soon as they get a job offer', one respondent wrote. Another respondent wrote that, in their municipality, they have many jobs in the tourist industry. In her view, some Ukrainian refugees would be able to enter the labour market directly without participating in the introduction programme at all. This has become a point of disagreement with some Ukrainian refugees, who want to enrol in the introduction programme instead: 'We believe that it isn't right to offer the introduction programme when they have the opportunity to take paid work for which they are qualified', she wrote. As an interesting contrast to these opinions, many interviewees believe that the introduction programme is too short for Ukrainian refugees to gain Norwegian language skills that will allow them to obtain a *proper foothold* in the labour market, beyond stray jobs and unskilled work. Norwegian teachers in particular emphasise this point (see 18.5 and 18.6).

Expectations about work

According to our survey respondents, poor alignment between Ukrainian refugees' expectations and their actual opportunities in the job market constitutes a considerable barrier to labour market integration. A total of 53% consider this to be an important factor (to *a large extent* or *a very large extent,* combined) and 36% consider it a barrier to employment to some extent. Less than 10% place little emphasis on poor alignment between expectations and reality.

According to both survey respondents and interviewees, Ukrainian refugees' motivation to find any job as quickly as possible depends in part on their status and education. Some Ukrainian refugees do not want to take any job, in particular low status jobs or manual work. These were typical remarks in the survey:

> Many of the resettled Ukrainians are clear about the fact that they are not willing to take a job just to have a job. Work in, for example health or farming, has low status among them. (Survey respondent, 2023)

> Our experience is that some have unrealistic expectations about what kind of work they can get in Norway early on. (Survey respondent, 2023)

> It is particularly challenging to get Ukrainian refugees into paid work and even work practice as part of the introduction programme. It is mainly because of Ukrainians' expectations about what kind of work they are willing to do and what they can obtain right away. We use a lot of time to clarify expectations and have long discussions about this. (Survey respondent, 2023)

Some respondents suggest that Ukrainian refugees need to lower their expectations and accept that they will not get a job that corresponds to the one they had in Ukraine right away. They argue that it is often necessary to start with a simpler job, outside of one's field of education, and then advance to more relevant jobs in time. Some respondents report spending a lot of time clarifying expectations, explaining the importance of getting a job, and motivating Ukrainian refugees to accept jobs that are not in line with their expectations. According to some interviewees, it is not always easy: 'If you have quite a good education, and then you're going to take on a cleaning job or work the cash register in Rema 1000 or something like that' (adult education, 11, 01).

Despite the mismatch between work tasks and previous education and experience, other interviewees say that Ukrainian refugees are very motivated to work. One of the employers said that in the nursing home where she is the manager, doctors from Ukraine make sandwiches for old people or work as nursing assistants. They are grateful to have this opportunity, even though their long-term wish is to have their education approved and obtain work in line with their qualifications.

Time perspective

A factor that can undermine Ukrainians' motivation to work is the uncertainty about how long they can stay in Norway – both because of the war itself and because they have a temporary permit. We asked the refugee service leaders whether they perceive refugees' time perspectives to constitute a barrier to labour market integration. The impression is that refugee service leaders generally put less emphasis on the time perspective as an important factor. Only 12% say that this is a barrier to a large or very large extent, while 38% say that is a barrier to employment to some extent.

In the open-ended answers, however, some survey respondents do discuss uncertainty about the future as a barrier to labour market integration. For example:

> They feel like their life is on pause because of the temporariness and therefore it can be difficult to find motivation for work and language training (Survey respondent, 2023).

> We need to clarify the situation of those who have collective protection. Are we merely keeping them here until the war is over? Or are there opportunities for people to stay after the war? I think this can matter a lot for their motivation (Survey respondent, 2023).

Some interviewees say that they notice higher motivation among Ukrainian refugees who intend to stay in Norway: 'If Ukrainians have a long-term goal to stay in Norway, we see that they are more motivated to work', one respondent wrote. Conversely, if they are focused on returning, they are less focused on work: 'As it is now, they're going to return "tomorrow", a lot of them, so they don't think about [work] as much as other – let's say normal – refugees who want to start over' (adult education, 11, 01). In line with the findings about the Ukrainian refugees' return aspirations presented in chapter 14.2.2, some interviewees say that their impression is that young people tend to envision their lives in Norway while people who are a bit older are more oriented towards returning. People with children also seem more determined to stay in Norway, especially Ukrainian refugees who have children of school age.

A wish to stay in Norway does not, however, automatically translate into motivation to take any kind of job. It can equally motivate people to invest in language training and further qualifications, as this interviewee pointed out: 'They [young Ukrainians] have a plan for the future, and that future is in Norway. They look far ahead. They want to work in the field in which they are educated, they want a high level of Norwegian, and they want to study more' (adult education, 2, 02). Moreover, some Ukrainian refugees are concerned that they will

lose the right to stay in Norway if the government withdraws the temporary permit. They are aware, however, that they may be able to stay if they get a job that is relevant to their education. Because of this, they are more motivated to learn Norwegian instead of taking any job. Thus, a wish to stay long-term in Norway can also undermine motivation for taking a low-skilled job that is not in line with previous education or work experience.

One interviewee suggests that it has taken time for some of the Ukrainian refugees to accept the fact that they will probably need to stay in Norway for quite a while. It can be difficult to find the motivation to take a job before that realisation sinks in. Her perception is that accepting a job in Norway can for some be symbolic of a reorientation away from a future in Ukraine and towards staying in Norway: 'Taking a permanent job in Norway means that you put aside the feeling that you will return quite soon. And then you acknowledge that you will begin to build a life here. That's a difficult transition for a lot of people' (NAV 10, 01). Perceptions vary here, too, however. One interviewee said that many Ukrainian refugees have been very eager to find a job as quickly as possible, precisely because they have a short-term perspective and plan for a prompt return.

Economic (dis-)incentives to work?

Another topic that came up is the economic support that Ukrainian refugees receive when they come to Norway, such as introduction benefits and support from NAV. Whether lower economic benefits generally function as an incentive to make people more motivated to work is a debated political question more broadly. Some respondents believe that the introduction benefits and the social assistance that Ukrainian refugees receive are too generous. These are examples from the survey:

> Our experience is that good access to money can decrease motivation and the need for a job. It is perhaps not a politically correct thing to say, but it is a reality in our everyday work. (Survey respondent, 2023)

> They have a one-sided and heavy focus on how much money they can get from the municipality and NAV. They don't have a wish to provide for themselves and they have little or no focus on work. (Survey respondent, 2023)

One respondent suggested that 'bad economic conditions motivate everyone to find a job'. These arguments almost did not come up at all during the interviews. Only one interviewee said that her perception was that many Ukrainian refugees were not that interested in finding work. She explained it as follows: 'I think a lot of the things the Norwegian state has done, as opposed to very many other countries in Europe, is that we have given [Ukrainians] a lot of Norwegian language training and good conditions – which means that they don't have to work' (adult education, 11, 01).

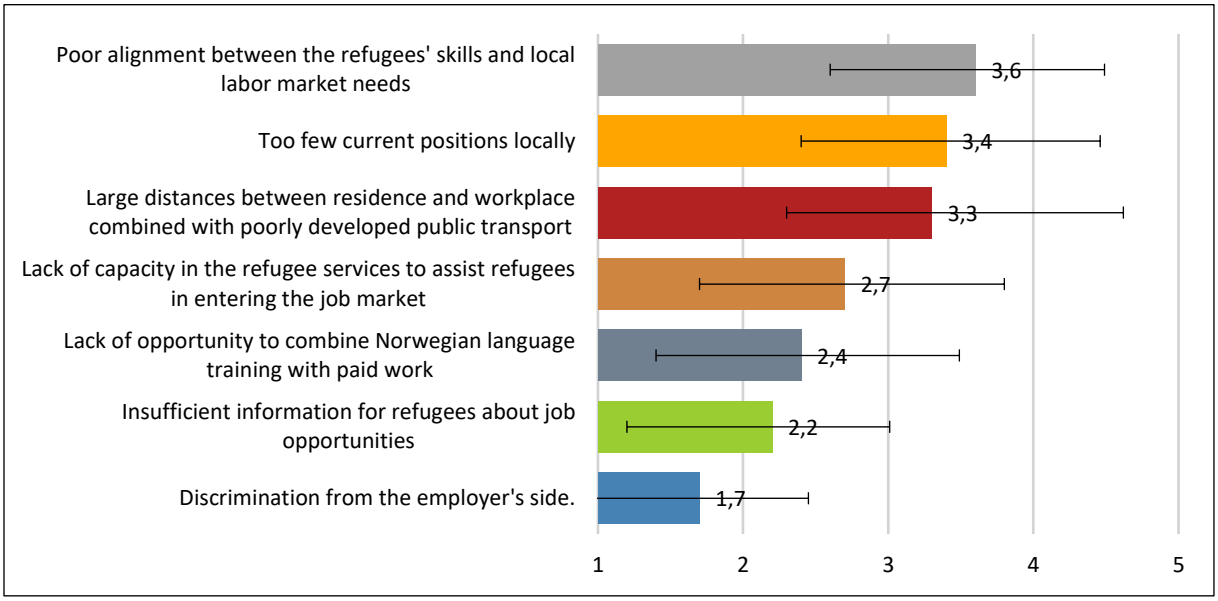
20.1.3 Health challenges and traumas

Figure 20.1 presented earlier in this chapter shows that, overall, health challenges and traumas are not considered to be among the most important barriers to labour participation. Only 10% of respondents consider them to be a barrier to a large or very large extent. However, a much larger proportion, 41%, consider them to be a barrier *to some extent*. We did not ask specifically about this topic during the interviews, but we did pose open questions about challenges to labour market participation in general. Some Norwegian teachers said that trauma from the war can interfere with learning Norwegian, and a couple of interviewees from the voluntary sector mentioned trauma and mental health problems among Ukrainian refugees as a problem that has not received sufficient attention so far.

20.2 Local and systemic factors

Compared with the individual factors, the local and systemic factors in Figure 20.2 below are, on average, perceived as less important barriers to labour market integration than the individual factors described above in Figure 20.1.

Figure 20.2: Barriers to integration of refugees in the labour market, local/systemic factors* N = 215.



* Means and standard errors. Scale: 1 = Not at all important, 5 = Very important

Figure 20.2 shows that poor alignment between refugees' education and skills on the one hand, and local labour market needs, few available positions locally and long travelling distances from residence to potential workplace on the other, are seen as barriers, with an average score of around 3.5 out of 5. Poor alignment between the refugees' skills and local labour markets needs corresponds well with the findings from the analysis of individual factors, where lack of or mismatch between language skills and (validated) formal qualification are identified as important barriers to Ukrainians' local labour market participation.

Lack of capacity to assist refugees in entering the job market, lack of opportunity to combine Norwegian language training with paid work and insufficient information have lower average scores. However, there are very large standard deviations, implying large variation in the municipalities' answers to these questions. Finally, very few believe that discrimination on the part of employers poses a great barrier, with only 1.7 out of 5 on the scale.

In the following, we present more in-depth analyses of selected barriers based on interviewees' responses and open-ended survey responses on the topic.

20.2.1 Geographical distance and different local labour markets

Norwegian municipalities differ in population, centrality, and location. These differences imply wide variations in the character of and distances to labour markets. Further analysis shows that there are two local barriers that are seen as particularly relevant for smaller municipalities: too few available jobs locally and too long distances between residence and potential workplace. We have checked the correlations between the respondents' assessment of these factors and the population size and centrality of the municipality (population size and centrality are highly correlated). Not surprisingly, we find strong correlations between assessments of these two factors on the one hand and municipality size and location on the other. By comparison, the other barriers presented in Figure 20.2

above show only small differences in the assessments between municipalities of different size and location.

Small municipalities are sparsely populated but often large geographically speaking. Several interviewees say they have begun to choose accommodation in less central areas because the number of refugees has increased and there is lack of available accommodation. They report that the very limited public transportation can make it challenging to live in these areas. Several survey respondents raise this point. They report that there is little or limited public transportation, few Ukrainian refugees have cars, and many do not have a driving licence. For example:

> Lack of cars and driving licences is a problem since the municipality is stretched out and there is limited public transportation apart from school buses. (Survey respondent, 2023)

> Lack of public transportation makes resettlement and employment outside of the core centre very challenging. (Survey respondent, 2023)

One interviewee said that one solution has been that the municipality has given Ukrainian refugees a loan of up to NOK 50,000 to buy a used car. They do not have to pay interest or loan instalments for the first few years. One respondent writes that they contribute NOK 15,000 towards a driving licence/car, but 'regardless, it's a lot for them to pay' (Survey respondent, 2023).

20.2.2 Capacity to assist Ukrainian refugees in entering the labour market

Respondents in the survey do not consider lack of capacity in the refugee services to assist refugees in entering the labour market to be very important barrier, but this topic was debated in the qualitative interviews. One dimension of this barrier is related to the process *before* Ukrainian refugees enter a workplace, i.e., finding vacant positions or work experience placements. For example, we mentioned previously that in some municipalities it has been challenging to secure enough work practice placements. Another dimension may be related to the capacity of the refugee service and/or of NAV to have close dialogue with employers *after* they include Ukrainian refugees in the workplace. Some interviewees said that this can be decisive to ensure that employers do not feel as if they are on their own when they encounter bumps in the road. Hiring the wrong person can be a costly business. If employers have a bad experience, they may also be reluctant to try again later. Thus, it is important to avoid 'spending' employers, as one interviewee put it, since they are a limited resource. This interviewee is concerned that employers often do not get the attention they need:

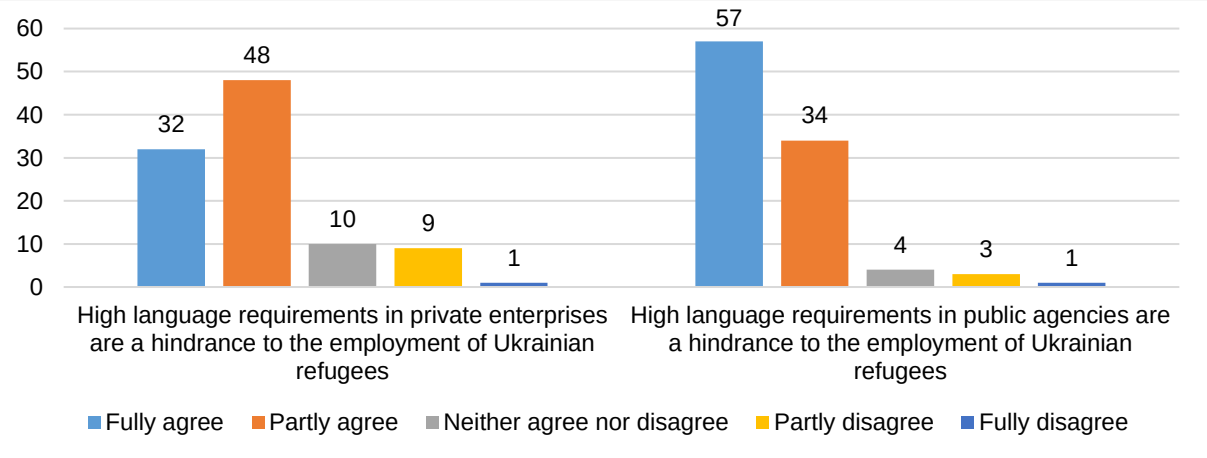
> We often get a work practice placement started, and then it just keeps going on its own. That's the danger – that we have a positive response from an employer who is eager, but then they feel a bit like NAV disappears from sight. And then it keeps going without much direction, without achieving the goals that we set a long time ago. [….] I think we need to follow up much more closely. (NAV,10, 01)

It is particularly the transition between work practice and actual employment that can be a major hurdle. For work experience to amount to actual employment, the interviewee stresses the importance of continuous contact with employers during the work experience placement. It requires sufficient capacity among NAV counsellors or refugee programme advisors. One respondent in the survey reported that in their municipality, many refugees got jobs almost right away, but there have been many conflicts and misunderstandings with employers, and the refugee service did not have the capacity to follow up along the way.

20.2.3 Greater barriers in the public sector

The municipality is the largest employer in many places in Norway, since it is in charge of workplaces such as nursing homes, kindergartens, primary schools, etc. In many municipalities there is a high demand for labour in some sectors, especially in healthcare. Despite this, several of the interviewees believe it is more difficult to get municipal workplaces to accept Ukrainian refugees (or refugees in general) for work practice placements or regular work than is the case in the private sector. They give several reasons for this. First, municipalities often demand formal qualifications, even for jobs such as cleaning. Second, some interviewees perceive the municipalities to be more bureaucratic and rigid than employers in the private sector, who are described as more open and flexible, and less concerned with formalities. Third, municipalities tend to have high language requirements, though it depends on whether it is a matter of work practice or actual employment and on the level of responsibility. For example, the language requirement for a job as an educational leader is higher than for an assistant in a kindergarten, and the language requirement for doctors and nurses is higher than for healthcare workers. Some sectors, such as kindergartens, set national requirements, whereas in other sectors it is up to each municipality to set the requirements.

Figure 20.3: To what degree are high language requirements a barrier to employment?*



* Scale: 1 = fully disagree, 5 = fully agree

Figure 20.3 shows that high language requirements are generally perceived as a major challenge in both the public and private sectors, with 80% fully or partly agreeing that it poses a barrier in the private sector and over 90% in the public sector. However, while 57% of respondents in the survey fully agree that high language requirements are a barrier to employment for Ukrainian refugees in the public sector, only 32% fully agree that the same applies in the private sector.

Some respondents in the survey suggest that public institutions and municipalities should lower the language requirements: ‘Municipalities/public sector should lead by example by giving refugees work and lowering the language requirements. That would make it easier for us to convince employers in the private sector to take their share and get refugees into employment’ (Survey respondent, 2023).

20.2.4 Potential to fill local labour market needs

There are also local factors that may facilitate labour market participation.

Figure 20.4: What are the most prominent benefits for your municipality in settling Ukrainian refugees? (N = 215).

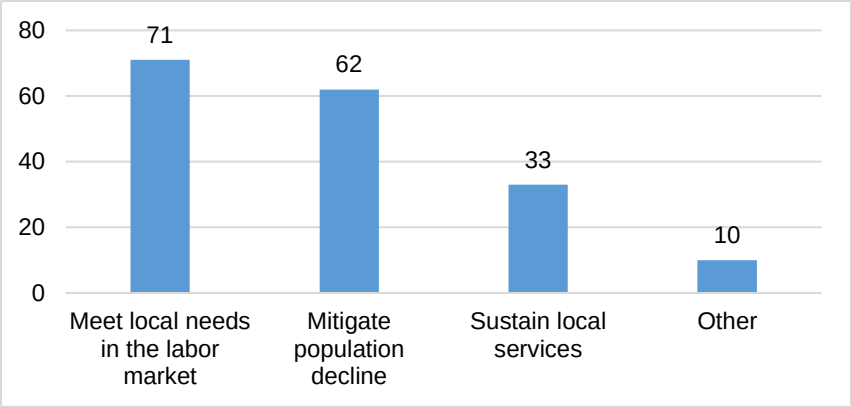


Figure 20.4 shows that respondents believe that Ukrainian refugees can be a major resource in meeting the needs of the local labour market (71%) and to mitigate population decline (62%). Their presence can also contribute to sustaining local services, although fewer respondents consider this to be important. One reason may be that local services are under significant pressure in many municipalities due to the rapid increase in resettled Ukrainian refugees.

Several interviewees confirm that they are in great need of labour locally, as these two employees express:

> We have way too few people. There's competition for apprentices. For our part, foreign labour or new arrivals in the municipality are worth their weight in gold. The labour market is tight. The salaries become artificially high because of the competition. (employer, 4, 01)

> We have zero unemployment. We have way too few people, so we have to invest in those that are here. A lot of Ukrainians are arriving now. I believe it is good that NAV too can contribute [through wage subsidies], that there is cooperation between different parties in order to make use of the resources we have. We have zero substitute workers. We have zero everything, because there are no unemployed. (employer, 6, 01)

In some places, there are specific industries that need labour, such as the fishing industry. More generally, there is a particularly high demand for labour in the health sector and in kindergartens. A challenge that we have already pointed out above is that it can take time and effort to obtain authorisation as a nurse or doctor. One interviewee says that they are considering setting up courses or qualification processes targeted at the health sector for Ukrainian refugees. She points out that one barrier is the high language requirements in the municipality, which they need to comply with in connection with, for example, work practice placements.

20.2.5 Perceptions of Ukrainians and the war

Interviewees and survey respondents generally describe the attitude towards Ukrainian refugees in their local communities as positive. This positive attitude may facilitate labour market integration. As we showed in section 11.5, only 5% of Ukrainian refugees state that discrimination by employers is a barrier to finding work in Norway, and respondents from the refugee service similarly consider this barrier to be a minor one (see Figure 20.2 above). In line with this finding, the interviewees from the refugee service and NAV say that employers appear to be very positive about including Ukrainian refugees in the workplace. For example, they say it is easier to find work practice placements for Ukrainian refugees than for other immigrants.

In the survey, we asked whether respondents find that employers are more positive towards Ukrainian refugees than towards other refugees.

Figure 20.5: We find that employers are more positive towards Ukrainian refugees than towards other refugees. (N = 215).

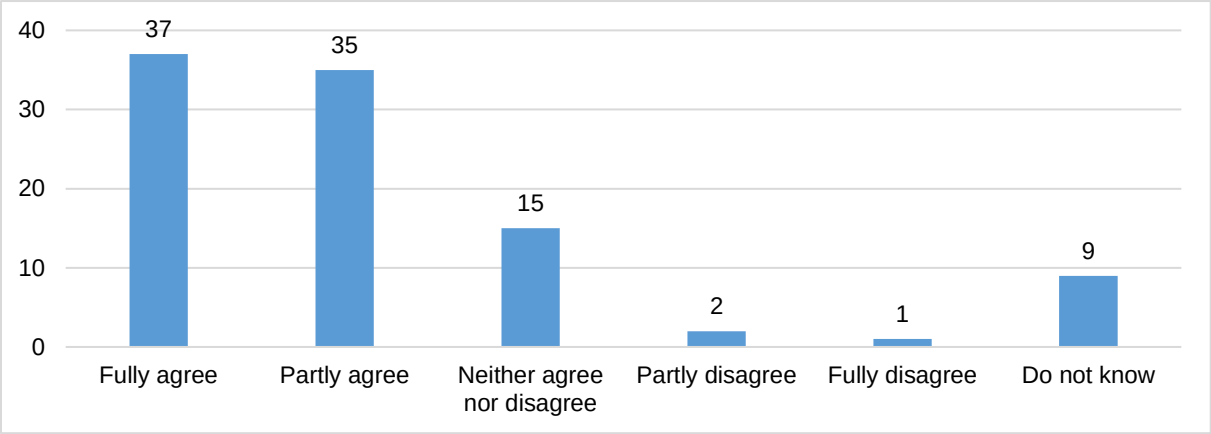


Figure 20.5 shows that 72% 'fully' or 'partly' agree. Thus, a majority of respondents from the refugee services believes that employers are more positive towards Ukrainian refugees than towards other groups.

We also asked whether respondents believe that it is easier to integrate Ukrainian refugees into the workforce than other refugee groups.

Figure 20.7: It is easier to integrate Ukrainian refugees into the workforce than other refugee groups (N = 215).

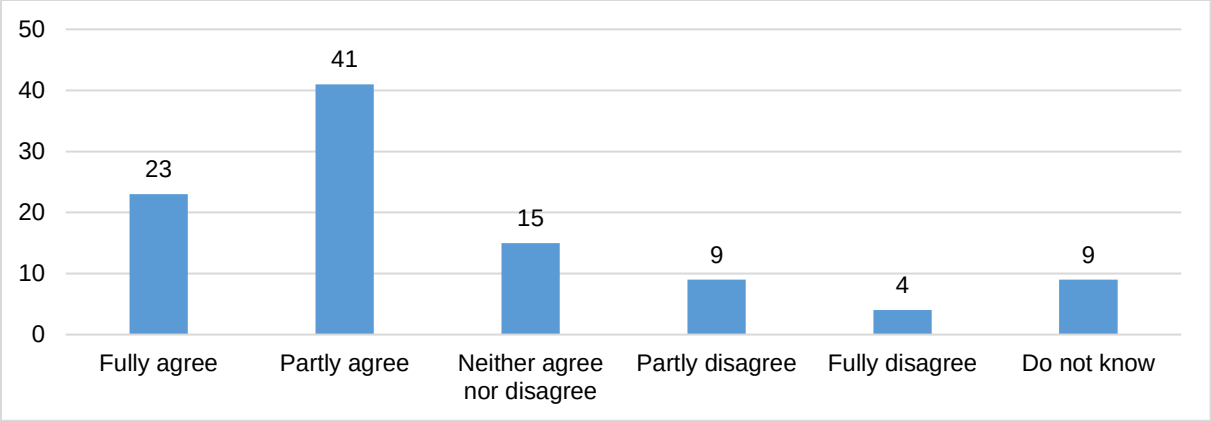


Figure 20.7 shows that a clear majority of the respondents from the refugee offices agrees with this statement, where 23% 'fully agree' and 41% 'partly agree'

As noted in section 20.2.4, some employers view Ukrainian refugees as a very important resource in municipalities where there is a high demand for labour. In the following sections, we will explore some further explanations for the positive attitude towards Ukrainian refugees and for the belief that Ukrainian refugees are easier to integrate into the workforce than other refugee groups.

A sense of social responsibility

Interviewees describe solidarity and sympathy with Ukrainian refugees in local communities in Norway. One of the interviewees from the adult education centre compares the societal attitudes towards the Ukrainian refugees with the situation in 2015, the last time the influx of refugees was high. In her opinion, attitudes in the community in 2015 were also positive, but the sentiment did not last as long as it has with the Ukrainian refugees. An employee in NAV puts it this way:

> Compared with other refugees, there's been a different attitude towards Ukrainian refugees in Norway. There's been […] numerous initiatives that have emerged, which have been extraordinary. This is also the case throughout society. Volunteers are very eager to help Ukrainians. Employers are enthusiastic and would gladly hire a Ukrainian. (NAV, 10, 01)

She notes that employees 'would gladly hire a Ukrainian', which resonates with our interviews with employers. Several of the employers spoke of a sense of social responsibility vis-à-vis Ukrainian refugees because of the war. This, in turn, prompted employers to go the extra mile to support Ukrainian refugees. Some of them contacted the refugee service themselves to see how they could hire Ukrainian refugees. For example, the director of a foundation that owns a nursing home told his managers that they should hire Ukrainian refugees and that the foundation would pay for their salary. This had never happened before.

> He said, you just have to hire them. They will send you applications, I'll give them your e-mail address. I received an application in the Cyrillic alphabet. I didn't even understand their names! I was not very happy. But at that time, we were very keen on helping them. I was bombarded with how horrible it was [the war in Ukraine]. The media have calmed down now, but everyone, even the patients in the nursing home, understood that we needed to help them, and wanted to do it. (employer, 12, 01)

There are other examples as well. One employer says that his head of staff picks up the Ukrainian who works for them every morning because he lives quite far away and does not have a car. Another employer explained that they did not really need more people in the company, but that they hired a Ukrainian because they wanted to help in any way they could.

Different perceptions of cultural similarities and differences

The perception of Ukrainians as culturally similar to Norwegians may also contribute to inclusion in the labour market. Several interviewees suggest that Ukrainians are more like Norwegians than members of other refugee groups. They describe this as a relatively widespread perception. Because Ukrainians are 'more like us', there is an expectation that integration will proceed more easily. For example, one of the interviewees from an adult education centre says that they have spent less time on basic training in working life with Ukrainian refugees than they usually do with other refugee groups. In her experience, Ukrainians are familiar with Norwegian working life requirements and cultural codes. The quotations below are other examples from across interview groups that illustrate the emphasis on cultural similarity:

> It's a bit different, in a way, to integrate these Ukrainians, because they are a bit similar to us. (volunteer, 8, 05)

> Our experience with Ukrainians is very positive. They learn Norwegian very fast, and they learn it well enough. But it might be that it is easier to integrate because our culture is not very different. (employer, 6, 01)

> Their culture is not very different from Norwegian culture. In that sense, I believe the transition to Norway is not as difficult as it has been for some other groups. They probably will manage a bit quicker or more easily socially than other groups, for example in the workplace. (adult education (1, 01)

Several interviewees also make explicit comparisons with other groups that work in favour of Ukrainian refugees:

> I have worked in this field for many years. We've had people who say that they for example used to be tailors. And then we find a place where they can work as tailors. And it turns out they don't know centimetres and millimetres. Things like that. Or we have people who say that they have built houses, but they have never seen a chipboard or a drill. So obviously these Ukrainians come from a society that is very, very similar to our society as a whole. (NAV, 10, 01)

Employers in particular compare Ukrainian refugees with other refugee groups. One of them, who is a manager in a kindergarten, believes that the child-rearing practices among Ukrainian refugees are more like those in Norway, especially compared with other refugees who come from countries outside Europe. In this sense, it is easier to hire a Ukrainian to work in a Norwegian kindergarten. Employers also compare Ukrainian refugees with other immigrants from eastern Europe. For example, one of the interviewees, who works in a nursing home, says that she often finds that eastern Europeans are overly efficient, sometimes at the expense of showing care for the elderly. By contrast, she says: 'Ukrainians have been humbler and more thoughtful, almost like they're a bit more like us. They have that care' (employer, 12, 01). She adds that it might, of course, be accidental. But one of the other employers in the group interview immediately confirmed her perception by stating that the employee in his workplace acts in a similar way. Another employer compared Ukrainians with a specific eastern European country and remarked that workers from that country were much more demanding, cunning, and selfish.

Not everyone emphasises the cultural similarities between Ukrainians and Norwegians. Some interviewees argue that Ukrainians culturally are more different than expected: 'It may not be as visible – we have similar clothes and things like that. But there are really big differences' (NAV, 10, 01). A respondent in the survey suggests that the expectation that it would be much easier for Ukrainian refugees than others has not been fulfilled: 'Our experience until now is that it is not easier to integrate Ukrainian refugees into the labour market or into society'. Some interviewees argue that, like other refugee groups, Ukrainian refugees should have received more information during the introduction programme about working life and social codes in Norway. For example, one of the employers we interviewed told us that because Ukrainians are used to more hierarchical workplace relationships, they become excessively polite and alert at the presence of the workplace manager:

> They get on their feet in an instance when the boss arrives. They give presents to the boss. I've had to say that it's not customary for us to do that here. And we can't accept gifts. They won't get more work by giving me gifts. (employer, 12, 01)

Some state that expectations of how easily the Ukrainian refugees would fit into the workplace is overrated. For example, one of the interviewees from NAV says that the employment specialists from the refugee office are surprised by how difficult it has been for the Ukrainian refugees to fit into Norwegian workplaces. Their experience is that Ukrainians are used to a more hierarchical and competitive culture. In the interview, one of the other employees from NAV supports this perception. He says that in his experience, Ukrainians prefer to work individually, not in groups, and he reckons they will have to adapt to the Norwegian working life, which is organised on more group-based principles.

Thus, there are mixed perceptions among interviewees about cultural similarities with Ukrainians. There appears, however, to be a relatively widespread perception that cultural similarities make labour market integration easier for Ukrainians than for other immigrant groups.

20.2.6 Sufficient flexibility to continue Norwegian language training?

One possible barrier to employment may be that it can be difficult to combine Norwegian language training with paid work.

Figure 20.8: To what degree is lack of opportunity to combine Norwegian language training with paid work a barrier for labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees? (N = 215).

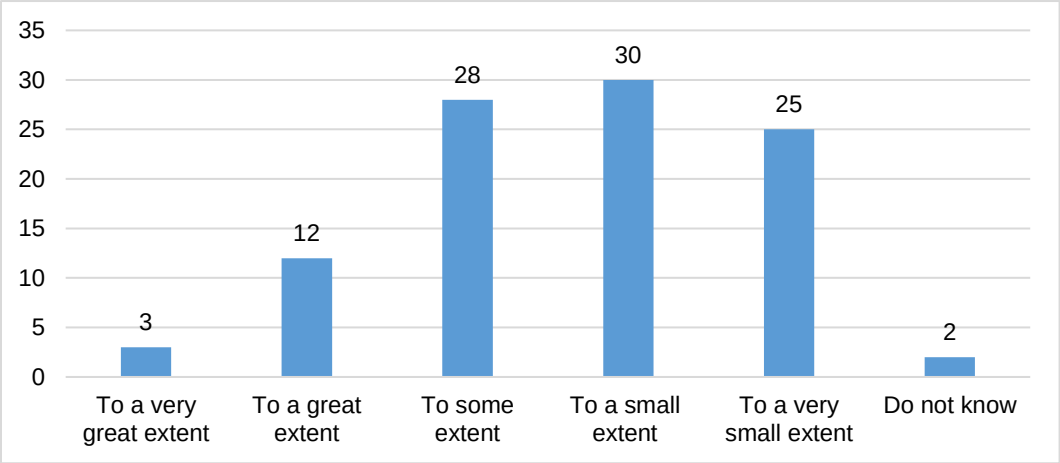


Figure 20.8 illustrates that the majority of the respondents does not consider this to be an important barrier, especially compared with other barriers presented in figure 20.2 above. Most respondents (55%) tend to consider it a minor challenge. Only 15% consider it a barrier to a large or very large extent, but 28% consider it a barrier to some extent.

As discussed above, some interviewees believe that some Ukrainian refugees prioritise Norwegian language training over rapid transition into employment. This corresponds with the findings in both this chapter and in chapter 10.3, where many Ukrainian refugees voice concern that they will not learn Norwegian sufficiently in the introduction programme period. Furthermore, there is a general perception among Ukrainian refugees that the introduction programme equals Norwegian language training, and few are probably aware that their rights to Norwegian language training continue irrespectively of whether or not they participate in an introduction programme. Nevertheless, as shown in chapter 18.3.1, the majority of municipalities does not provide Norwegian online language training or classes outside of regular working hours (evenings or weekends), making it difficult to combine regular work with continued language training in many municipalities. This point will be further discussed in chapter 24 (overall challenges and dilemmas).

20.3 Summary

Among individual barriers to labour market integration, respondents rate insufficient Norwegian and English language skills as the two most important barriers. Other important barriers are poor alignment between expectations and opportunities in the labour market, lack of work experience in the field in which refugees are educated, and lack of recognition of education obtained abroad. In the qualitative interviews, employees in the health field in particular emphasise the challenge related to authorisation of, for example, nurses and doctors.

Lack of motivation is not considered to be among the most important barriers overall, but respondents are rather divided on this issue. Many interviewees perceive Ukrainians as highly motivated to work, but the more disputed question is whether they are able and willing to take any vacant job. We identify four factors that may affect motivation to enter the labour market as quickly as possible. *First*, there is a potential conflict between Ukrainians' motivation to learn Norwegian and their motivation to enter the labour market as quickly as possible. *Second,* the mismatch between Ukrainians' expectations about work and the opportunities in the labour market, mentioned above, may undermine their willingness to take any job as quickly as possible, particularly if they are highly educated. *Third,* the uncertainty about how long Ukrainians can stay in Norway can undermine motivation to learn Norwegian and find work. A wish to stay in Norway does not, however, automatically translate into

motivation to take any kind of job. It can equally motivate people to invest in language training and further qualification. *Fourth,* some respondents believe that the introduction benefits and social assistance that Ukrainians receive undermine their motivation to work.

Among systemic barriers, poor alignment between refugees' skills and local labour market needs was the barrier that respondents considered to be the most important. The other main barriers were too few vacant positions locally and large distances between residence and workplace, in combination with poorly developed public transport. Both the survey and qualitative interviews also indicate that it is more difficult to get municipal workplaces to accept Ukrainian refugees compared with private enterprises. In particular, respondents report that high language requirements in the public sector represent a barrier to employment of Ukrainian refugees. Since labour demands in the public sector in municipalities are often higher, this finding is significant. In line with this, respondents say that the most prominent benefit of having Ukrainians in the municipality is to meet local needs in the labour market.

The overall perception of Ukrainians and the war may facilitate labour market inclusion of Ukrainians. For example, according to respondents, employers are more positive towards Ukrainian refugees than to other refuges, and many respondents also believe it is easier to integrate Ukrainian refugees into the workforce than other refugees (see also chapter 21 about differential treatment). Based on the qualitative interviews, we suggest that these positive attitudes may stem from a sense of social responsibility among employers to help Ukrainians because of the war, and the perception that Ukrainians are more similar culturally to Norwegians than many other refugee groups and therefore will be easier to integrate into the workplace. However, some interviewees point out that the cultural differences are in fact much greater than assumed.

21 Differential treatment of Ukrainian and other refugees?

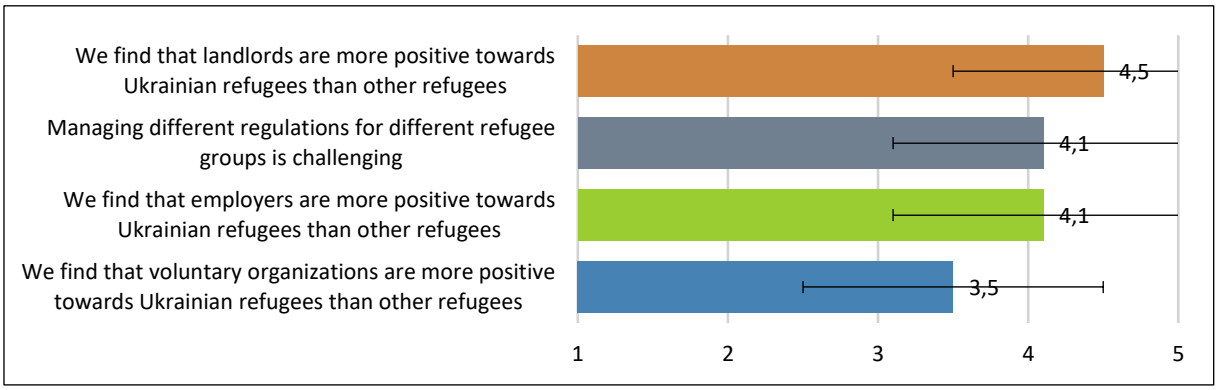
Almost all the interviewees we talked to believed that the reception of Ukrainian refugees has been more open and hospitable than the reception of other refugee groups. The open-ended questions in the survey about differential treatment of refugees also spurred many responses, which illustrates that respondents consider it to be an important topic. In this chapter we present findings on the following questions:

- Do frontline workers find that Ukrainian refugees are treated differently from other refugee groups?
- How does this differential treatment unfold?

21.1 Certain actors are more positive towards Ukrainian refugees

In almost all of the interviews with frontline workers, the question of differential treatment of Ukrainian refugees and other groups of refugees was raised. Thus, in the survey, we asked the respondents to assess some statements on this topic.

Figure 21.1: Perceptions of differences and differential treatment of Ukrainians compared with other refugees * (N = 215).



*Means. Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

Figure 21.1 shows that many respondents agree with the statement that landlords and employers are more positive towards Ukrainian refugees than other refugees, with respectively 4.5 and 4.1 out of 5, where 5 denotes ‘strongly agree’. There are more mixed results for the statement that voluntary organisations are more positive towards this group than other groups of refugees, with a score of 3.5 and a large standard deviation implying mixed results. Over 70% also answered that they strongly or partly agree with the statement that managing different regulations for different refugee groups is challenging, resulting in a score of 4.1 out of 5 on the scale.

21.2 Perceptions of unequal treatment and discrimination

Several respondents and interviewees considered it their responsibility to counter what they perceived as unequal treatment or discrimination by emphasising that all refugees should have the same rights and privileges, regardless of where they come from. The perception of differential treatment can largely be divided into two dimensions: one to do with different legal status, rights and obligations, the other to do with reception in society more broadly.

21.2.1 Different legal status, rights and obligations

One important difference between Ukrainian refugees and other refugees is the temporary collective permit. Ukrainian refugees receive a permit for one year at the time, which can be renewed up to three times. Other refugees, whose applications are assessed on an individual basis, receive a permit for three years when they are granted asylum. The central authorities have in the past few years stressed the temporariness of these permits as well, in the sense that it is possible to reassess the need for protection after three years and withdraw refugee status if the situation in the home country changes. However, this happens relatively rarely. People who are granted asylum in Norway are mostly allowed to stay long-term. Thus, Ukrainian refugees are, in this sense, in a more precarious situation than other refugees. Their situation is clearly defined by the idea of temporariness. As described in section 14.4, the temporary status leads to a lot of insecurity for many Ukrainian refugees. Some of them describe how they feel they are treated differently than other refugees, citing the fact that they themselves get fewer options or rights on account of Norway's temporary perspective regarding their stay and integration here.

In the interviews with frontline workers, the interviewees rarely emphasise this dimension explicitly when discussing differential treatment. However, more implicitly, they do mention some of the challenges related to temporariness when they say that uncertainty about the future can lead to stress for Ukrainian refugees, and perhaps can undermine their motivation to invest in a future in Norway. Some of them also mention that they are aware that Ukrainian refugees feel like they are in a less favourable position than other refugee groups because of the temporary permit.

Differences in rights and obligations between Ukrainian and other refugees come up somewhat more frequently than does legal status. A few respondents appear to believe that the short introduction programme is specific to Ukrainian refugees, which they consider to be unfair. In reality, the short programme applies to all refugees who have secondary school education or higher. Perhaps this perception has surfaced because the short programme was introduced quite recently and has not been used much until the Ukrainian refugees arrived. A couple of respondents in the survey also mention that Ukrainian refugees have rights to shorter Norwegian language training than other groups (12 months versus 18 months), which can be perceived as unfair. Finally, some interviewees and respondents stress that Ukrainian refugees have some advantages in the introduction programme with regard to flexibility, such as the part-time option and the option to exit and re-enter the programme, etc. They argue that this flexibility should be extended to other groups.

In the questionnaire, some respondents made quite sweeping remarks about unequal treatment or discrimination on the part of the Norwegian state. For example:

> It's demanding for us as a municipality that we have a state that doesn't treat refugees equally. (Survey respondent, 2023)
>
> It's hard for us as public employees to defend the substantial unequal treatment or discrimination that the authorities impose on us. (Survey respondent, 2023)
>
> Since the Ukrainian refugees arrived, the authorities have been engaged in unequal treatment of refugee groups, and this has only continued in the municipalities, in the voluntary sector and in organisations. The same goes for private business. Gifts, advantages, different offers that are only for Ukrainian refugees. The authorities have engaged in discrimination. In our municipality we care about resettling refugees, we don't care about their nationality. Thus, the offer and the legal framework should be the same for all of them. (Survey respondent, 2023)

The two first quotes illustrate that some municipal employees find it challenging to enforce rules which they believe lead to unequal treatment and even discrimination. They do not, however, explain what lies behind these statements, making them difficult to interpret. In the third quote, it becomes clear that the respondent believes that the state has taken the lead in discriminating other refugee groups, which has also been the general practice in society more broadly. We will explore this point further in the next section.

21.2.2 Unequal treatment in society more broadly

Respondents and interviewees describe a more positive approach to Ukrainian refugees in a number of different arenas: in the labour market, among volunteers, in the housing market, and even in public institutions in some cases. Quite a few interviewees and respondents say they are aware that other refugees feel like 'second-class' refugees compared with Ukrainian refugees, and that they find it painful that Ukrainian refugees are made more welcome in Norway than they are.

As mentioned above, the interviewees find that employers seem generally positive towards including in Ukrainian refugees in work practice placements or employment. Some interviewees who have experience with other refugee groups report being surprised by how much easier it was to find employers who were willing to open their workplace to Ukrainian refugees. One employer even reported that Ukrainian refugees got a part-time job ahead of other people with immigrant background who had more experience at the workplace and spoke more Norwegian. 'So, in a way, they went ahead, past everyone else. That was perhaps not totally ok' (employer, 12, 01). Interviewees from the refugee service report that some houseowners prefer hiring out apartments to Ukrainian refugees. According to one interviewee, people were eager to collect clothes and equipment for Ukrainian refugees who came to the municipality. Initially, Ukrainian refugees received things for free, whereas other refugees who came in the same period had to pay.

Several of the voluntary organisations report that they have experiences an increased influx of volunteers, especially leading up to last summer. They also notice that the people volunteering are somewhat different from what they are used to. Some of the new volunteers have not previously been engaged in voluntary work, and they explicitly state that they wish to help Ukrainian refugees. Although their help is needed and their intentions are good, the voluntary organisations are sceptical about engaging people who only wish to help certain groups: 'It may sound a bit cold-hearted, but we don't want people who only wish to work with Ukrainians' (7 voluntary organisations, 04). The representative for the organisation says that because they conduct intake interviews of people signing up to voluntary work, they can avoid this type of volunteers.

The interviewees also mention examples of what they perceive as discrimination on the part of public institutions or companies in Norway. For example, in March 2022, companies in charge of public transport in Oslo and the surrounding county[32] announced that all Ukrainian refugees could travel for free on buses and trams in the area. The companies are owned by Oslo municipality and/or Viken county. Ukrainian refugees – regardless of their status in Norway – were allowed to travel for free, but other asylum seekers or refugees were not. Many of the interviewees considered this offer to constitute an act of discrimination. It was also one of the most frequently raised examples in the open-ended question about differential treatment in the survey. For example, one respondent wrote: 'It's shameful that Ukrainian refugees can travel by bus for free, but the other refugees cannot. This encourages racial hatred and discrimination. It's thoughtless!'. It is important to mention that about a year later, in 2023, the rule was changed to make public transportation free for all asylum seekers who travel in the region, regardless of background. The initiative to extend the offer and make it more inclusive came from politicians on the city council in Oslo.

Another example of discrimination on the part of a public institution which several interviewees mentioned came from IMDi. Soon after the full-scale invasion and the ensuing arrival of Ukrainian refugees to Norway, IMDi announced that NGOs could apply for money for activities directed at Ukrainian refugees. As in the case with public transportation, other refugees were excluded as a target group.

[32] Ruter, Brakar and Østfold Kollektivtrafikk.

Some interviewees also pointed out that the municipalities appear to be more eager to facilitate the integration process of Ukrainian refugees than that of other groups. For example, new positions have been established in the municipalities or human resource departments in the municipalities are involved in finding work for Ukrainian refugees, which has not happened before. They have created a database for Ukrainian CVs but not for the CVs of refugees from other countries.

Some interviewees see it as their duty to counter discrimination and promote equal treatment. For example, in the case above, when other refugees had to pay, Norwegian teachers intervened and insisted that all refugees should be treated the same with regard to equipment. Similarly, in one municipality, employees in the adult education sector and in the refugee service organised an anti-war event that focused on peace more broadly, not only on the Ukrainian war. They did this in order to draw attention to the commonality between Ukrainian refugees and other refugees in their war experiences, and to balance what they perceived as a one-sided focus on the war in Ukraine in the public sphere. Finally, interviewees from NGOs were highly critical of the funding from IMDi that was directed at activities for Ukrainian refugees only. Some of them said that they applied but that when they got the money they used it to set up activities for all refugees, not only Ukrainian refugees. In practice, some of the activities mainly benefited Ukrainian refugees (e.g., because the majority of the people in reception centres were Ukrainians), but they did not exclude other refugees.

Some interviewees believe the differential treatment is the result of the attention the war in Ukraine has received in the media and among politicians in Norway. One of the interviewees compared the situation today to that of 2015, when a lot of other asylum seekers arrived in Norway. She considers the positive attention that Ukrainian refugees receive compared with other groups to be a symptom of racism in Norway. Some of the employers do not, however, share this point of view. They believe that it natural that the cultural and geographical proximity of Ukraine to Norway, and the focus in the media on the war, contribute to empathy for Ukrainians. The war feels very close to home, and there is a perception that that it is ‘our war’ in a different way than with other conflicts. The perceived injustice of the invasion and Ukrainian fight for freedom naturally leads to increased engagement for Ukrainian refugees among Norwegians.

21.3 Summary

The survey shows that many municipal leaders of the refugee service agree with the statements that landlords and employers are more positive towards Ukrainian refugees than other refugees. Over 70% also answered that they strongly or partly agree with the statement that managing different regulations for different refugee groups is challenging.

In almost all of the interviews with the frontline workers, the question was raised of differential treatment of Ukrainian refugees and other groups of refugees. Almost all believed that the reception of Ukrainian refugees has been more open and hospitable than the reception of other refugee groups. The perception of differential treatment can largely be divided into two dimensions: one to do with different legal status, rights and obligations, and the other dimension to do with the reception in society more broadly. The frontline workers emphasised the second dimension the most, giving several examples of how different actors (both public and civil society at large) have prioritised Ukrainian refugees or of how this group has been given more favourable treatment than other refugees. Several respondents and interviewees considered it to be their responsibility to counter what they perceive as unequal treatment or discrimination by emphasising that all refugees should have the same rights and privileges, regardless of where they come from.

22 Voluntary organisations

Civil society and voluntary organisations are important arenas for integration and community participation. Voluntary organisations serve as social meeting places where people can integrate into social communities locally and, thereby, into society more broadly. Through participation in voluntary organisations, immigrants can, for instance, establish a broader social network and practise the Norwegian language (Espegren et al. 2022). In this section, we will not discuss the role of voluntary organisations as such but will explore the significance of voluntary organisations for the integration of Ukrainian refugees:

- What types of activities do voluntary organisations provide to (Ukrainian) refugees?
- What types of cooperation do voluntary organisation have with the local public services and other voluntary organisations, and how do they assess that cooperation?
- What challenges do they face in their work with (Ukrainian) refugees?

First, we briefly present the activities voluntary organisations provide. Second, we use the qualitative interviews with voluntary organisations and the survey to describe the cooperation between voluntary organisations and the municipalities. Based on the qualitative data, we further explore some of the challenges voluntary organisations and other actors in civil society have experienced in their integration efforts.

22.1 Activities

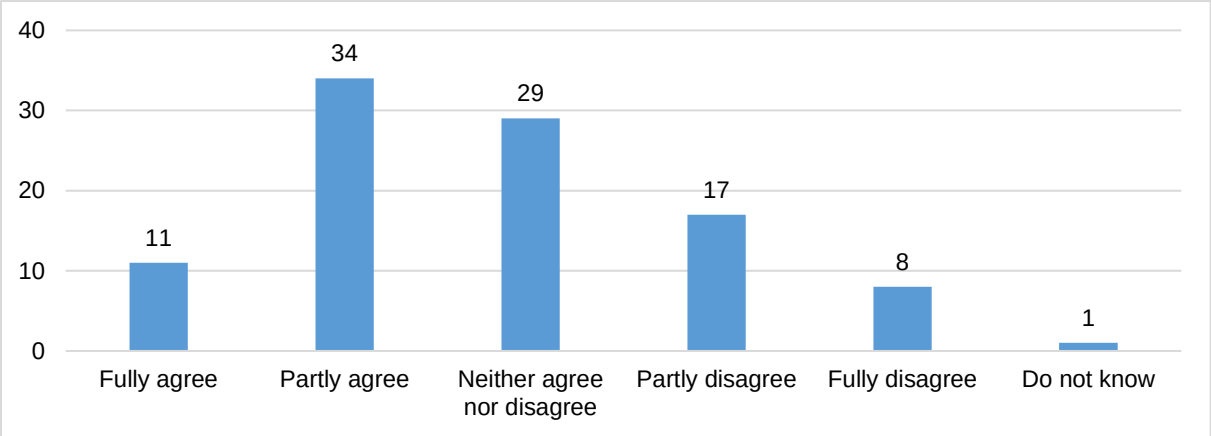
We interviewed 10 representatives for voluntary organisations or voluntary activities. They mainly represent large and well-established organisations. We also spoke to a representative for civil society who, by virtue of her position in the municipality, was also engaged in voluntary work for Ukrainian refugees. The representatives are mainly engaged in organisations located in large and mid-sized cities, but a few reside in small places.

Several interviewees argue that, because many Ukrainians arrive at the same time, they find social support in each other. They described the Ukrainian community as tightly knit, due largely to the efforts of the Ukrainian association in Norway. Some interviewees suggest that because of this, Ukrainians appear to be in lesser need of the help provided by the Norwegian voluntary organisations.

Organisations located in large or mid-sized cities typically engage in a variety of activities, from the reception of Ukrainian refugees (accommodation, distribution of clothes and food, activities for families at asylum reception centres) to assistance in the integration process (social interaction between Norwegians and refugees, language training, assistance with job-seeking, homework assistance, computer courses). Some also provide information about rights and help the refugees navigate the welfare system. A few organisations also have activities aimed at elderly Ukrainian refugees. Organisations or representatives for civil society located in small places offer a smaller range of activities.

In the survey, we asked the respondents from municipal refugee services about their general impression of the voluntary organisations' activities targeting Ukrainian refugees (22.1).

Figure 22.1: Please state your agreement with this statement: 'Ukrainian refugees in my municipality have a wide range of activities provided by voluntary organisations.' (N=215).



In many municipalities, voluntary organisations play an important role in providing activities for refugees. A total of 45% of respondents state that they fully or partly agree that Ukrainian refugees in their municipality have a wide range of activities provided by voluntary organisations. We also checked whether municipal size mattered for this response. Not surprisingly, we find that voluntary organisations provide a wider range of activities in large municipalities than in small municipalities. This is in line with what we observed for the content of the introduction programme: large municipalities usually have wider and more differentiated services.

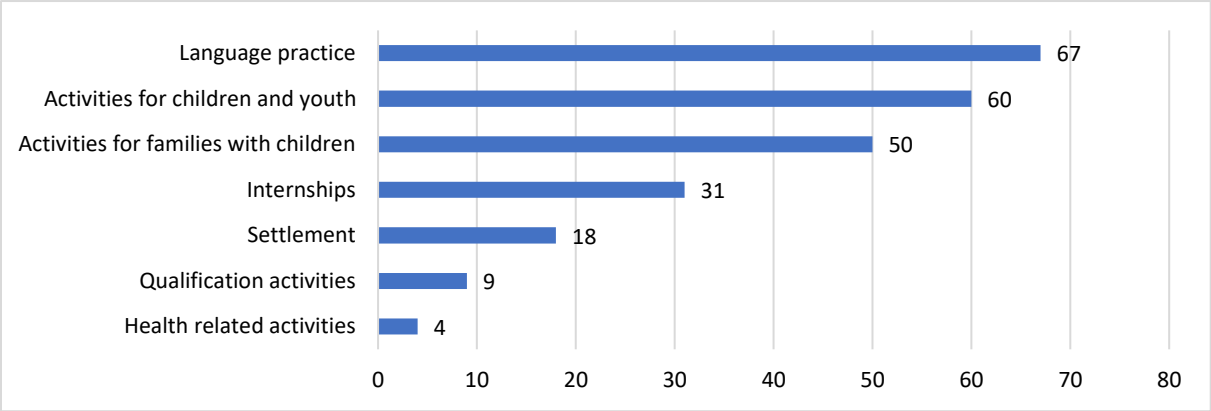
22.2 Cooperation between voluntary organisations and the municipality

In the survey we asked the refugee service respondents about their cooperation with voluntary organisations. Forty per cent agree (fully or partly) with the statement that 'Formal cooperation has been established between the municipality and voluntary organisations', while just as many report that no such formal cooperation has been established in their municipality. More formal cooperation agreements have been established in large municipalities than in small municipalities.

Some interviewees report having a longstanding formal cooperation agreement with the municipality, and that this formalisation makes it easier to come to agreement on what role voluntary organisations should play in the integration of refugees and immigrants. The voluntary organisations find that some municipalities do not include voluntary organisations in their overall integration work and that sometimes they must advocate for strengthening cooperation with the municipality. On interviewee said that she wished the municipality took more of the initiative for facilitating and improving cooperation: 'Sometimes we feel that there's no system for cooperation in place and that the municipality doesn't offer cooperation. We have to request it' (volunteer, 8, 01).

We also asked in which areas the refugee service has established cooperation with voluntary organisations, the answers to which are presented in Figure 22.2. The figure does not represent the range of activities performed by voluntary organisations but gives an indication of typical activities performed by voluntary organisations which involve some kind of cooperation with the refugee service.

Figure 22.2: Has the refugee service established cooperation with voluntary organisations in the following areas? Percentage answering 'Yes' (N = 215).



Based on the figure above, we see that the most typical activity is language training, where 67% of the refugee services have established cooperation with voluntary organisations. This is followed by activities for children and youth (60%) and activities for families with children (50%). A large proportion also engages in cooperation with voluntary organisations on internship (31%). The proportions for settlement, qualification activities and health-related activities are much smaller.

In the qualitative interviews, the representatives for voluntary organisations explained what kind of cooperation they engage in with the refugee services and other relevant services. The cooperation often entails the public service organisations providing information to Ukrainian refugees about the services the voluntary organisations offer. As such, the refugee services and other relevant services serve as a communications channel for the organisations, passing on information to the refugees. One of the representatives said they usually have four cooperation meetings per year with NAV (both the introduction programme and 'ordinary' NAV) where they provide information about their activities. When large numbers of Ukrainian refugees started to arrive, they increased the number of cooperation meetings. Some interviewees criticised the municipalities' lack of overview of the activities provided by the organisations. They find that the municipalities lack information about 'what they do and how they can contribute' (volunteer, 8, 05)

Cooperation with the public services can also involve more direct contact with the refugees. For instance, one of the interviewees mentioned having close cooperation with the municipality's adult education centre for immigrants: 'We visit them, go to classes and open school events, set up stands. We also welcome visits from school classes to our activities, so that the threshold becomes even lower for them to come through the door later' (volunteer, 7, 03).

In addition to providing information about their activities, some interviewees said they use the cooperation with the municipality's services as an opportunity to discuss more generally the boundaries, roles and responsibilities between voluntary organisations and the municipality. Several organisations also pointed out that they play a role of 'watchdog'; through their close contact with refugees, they are able to describe and voice potential concerns on their behalf.

The qualitative material demonstrates that there is variation in the content and assessment of the cooperation between the voluntary organisations and the municipalities. There is variation in how the cooperation is organised (formal cooperation agreements or more informal cooperation), what role the municipality takes on (coordination or more individualised cooperation with different organisations, and whether the local public services initiate the cooperation or whether the organisations themselves must take the initiative). Assessments of the quality of the cooperation seem to be especially dependent on whether the municipality initiates cooperation or whether the organisations must advocate such cooperation themselves. A more active role on the part of the municipality is appreciated, as

well as a more coordinating role. Voluntary organisations also value more formal cooperation.

One of the interviewees is not an employee in a voluntary organisation, but she engages in a lot of voluntary activities by virtue of her work in the municipality. She reported that the municipality tends to include mainly the large voluntary organisations when they cooperate with civil society and may forget to involve more informal actors. Such actors play a particularly important role in smaller municipalities, where there are fewer voluntary organisations, and the scope of their activities is limited. Including actors from civil society in places like these may be more important than in medium-sized and large cities.

22.3 Cooperation among voluntary organisations

The voluntary organisations also cooperate with each other. They exchange information about each other's activities and discuss the needs of refugees and immigrants. They compete for the same funds, and when they consider which activities to provide, they strive to avoid providing similar services and to not 'step on each other's toes'. Some municipalities facilitate this kind of cooperation by initiating meetings with the large voluntary organisations and the municipality. Interviewees from voluntary organisations report finding this useful. First, because it provides the organisations with information about each other's activities. Second, because in this way the municipality gains an overview of the total range of services that the voluntary organisations provide. However, what role the municipality or specific service play varies widely, and while some organisations find that the municipality takes on a coordinating role, others emphasise the municipality's lack of initiative.

22.4 Challenges

In this section we discuss the challenges voluntary organisations and other actors in civil society face in their integration efforts directed at Ukrainian refugees.

Several interviewees report that the municipality does not prioritise voluntary work in their budgets. Short-term funding from the state results in project-based activities, which means that voluntary organisations cannot hire people in permanent positions. This instability in funding makes it harder to retain qualified personnel. The interviewees suggest that if they are going to organise activities more regularly over time, the municipality must start prioritising voluntary work in their budgets.

The survey shows that voluntary organisations are particularly active – or provide a wider range of activities – in large municipalities compared with small municipalities. The qualitative data corroborate this finding. According to interviewees, one explanation is that there are fewer potential volunteers in small places. One interviewee says that mostly young people engage in volunteer work. However, they have no colleges or universities in her (small) municipality, and therefore no potential students to recruit. Because they lack volunteers, the voluntary organisation have not been able to organise activities such as language training.

Some interviewees from the voluntary organisations report that the arrival of Ukrainian refugees led to increased pressure on the activities they provided, particularly in the beginning, before Ukrainians were enrolled in the introduction programme. Some of them report that the increased influx illustrates that the services provided by the municipality are insufficient, and that they take on some of the responsibilities of the municipality. In particular, some of the representatives of the voluntary organisation emphasise the elderly Ukrainians as a group which the municipality does not pay sufficient attention to. Interviewees from the voluntary sector say they would like to assist elderly Ukrainians, but they find it difficult due to the lack of government subsidies allocated to this group. Much more funding is available for children, youth and adults, but many elderly also need meaningful activities. Hence, the interviewees report that more funding is needed for this

particular group to make it easier for voluntary organisations to establish activities for them. That said, some interviewees also report that it can be difficult to engage the elderly in activities, and that they prefer to stay at home and focus on caregiving tasks directed at their grown-up children or their grandchildren. For instance, they find that the elderly refugees are not keen on participating in language cafés.

22.5 Summary

A total of 45% of respondents state that they fully or partly agree that Ukrainian refugees in their municipality have a wide range of activities provided by voluntary organisations. Voluntary organisations provide a wider range of activities in large municipalities than in small municipalities. Voluntary organisations typically engage in a variety of different activities, from the reception of Ukrainian refugees to assistance in the integration process. Some also provide information about rights and help the refugees navigate the welfare system.

Some interviewees report having a longstanding formal cooperation agreement with the municipality, and that this formalisation makes it easier to come to an agreement on which role voluntary organisations should play in the integration of refugees and immigrants. Some voluntary organisations report that the municipalities do not include them in their overall integration work.

The most important areas of cooperation between the refugee service and voluntary organisations are language training, activities for children and youth, and activities for families with children. Public service organisations often provide information to Ukrainians about what the services voluntary organisations offer. Some representatives of voluntary organisations also visit adult education centres to talk about the activities they offer. Assessments of the quality of the cooperation seem to be especially dependent on whether the municipality initiates cooperation or on whether the organisation must advocate such cooperation itself. A more active role on the part of the municipality is appreciated, as well as a more coordinating role. The voluntary organisations cooperate as well with each other. They exchange information about each other's activities and discuss the needs of refugees and immigrants. They compete for the same funds, and when they consider which activities to provide, they try to avoid providing similar services and to not 'step on each other's toes'.

Representatives from voluntary organisations highlight some challenges. First, several interviewees report that they often rely on project-based funding, which makes it difficult to plan long-term. Second, voluntary organisations tend to be more active in larger municipalities, partly because it is difficult to recruit enough volunteers in small places. Third, some interviewees suggest that the high level of interest among Ukrainians in language training indicates that the municipality's offer is insufficient. In particular, some representatives of the voluntary organisation identify elderly Ukrainians as one group which the municipality does not pay sufficient attention to. There is a lack of governmental subsidies allocated to this group.

23 Capacity as a challenge in further refugee settlement

As we have seen in chapter 17, local refugee services have been upscaled in most municipalities. However, the refugees need a wide range of services in their new community, and there may be several local obstacles and capacity challenges in the settlement of refugees in the time to come.

In this chapter we address the following questions:

- Are the municipalities able to settle more refugees than they already have?
- What factors are perceived as the main obstacles to further settlement?
- What would the municipalities need from state authorities to be able to settle more refugees?

23.1 Strained capacity is a barrier to settlement

We asked the refugee service leaders whether their municipality has the capacity to receive even more refugees than they already have.

Figure 23.1: Does your municipality have the capacity to settle more refugees? N = 215*

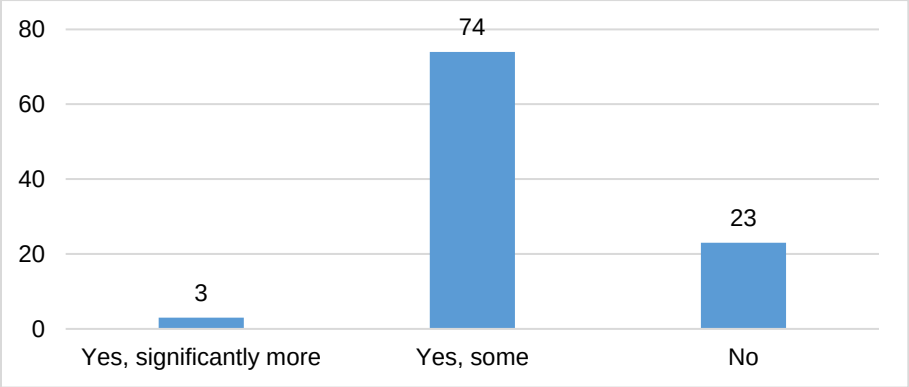
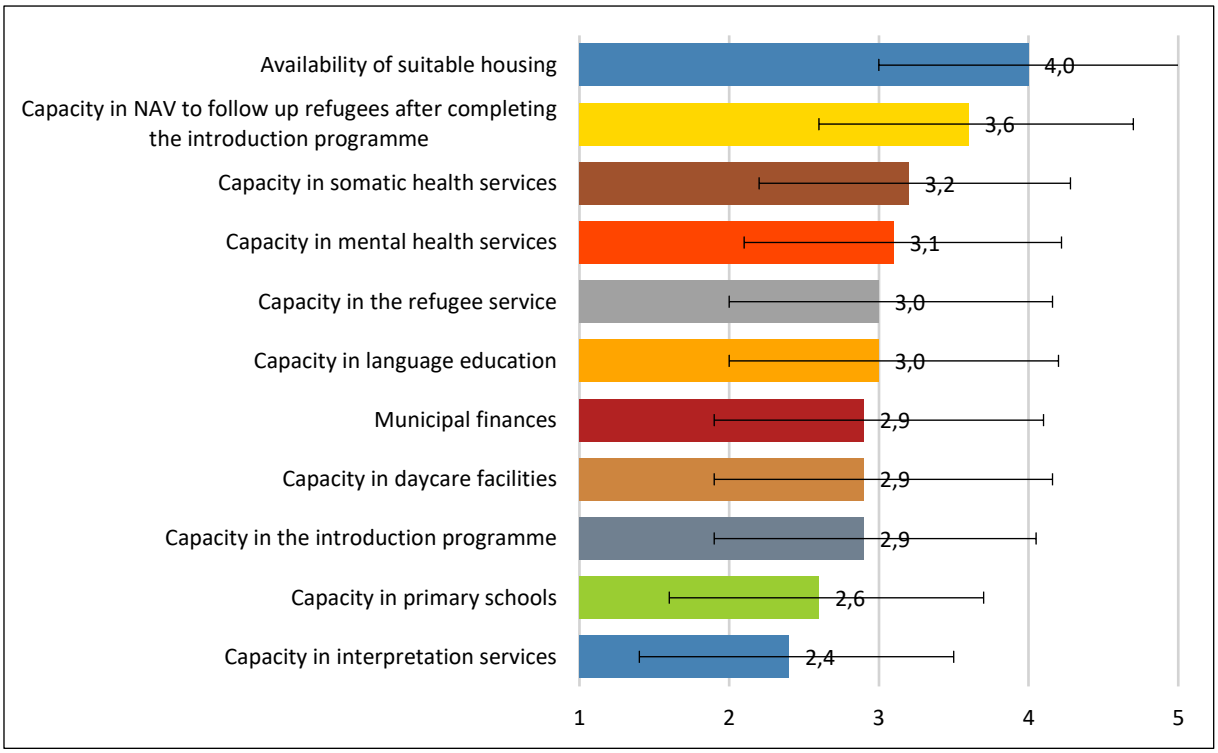


Figure 23.1 shows that almost one in four local refugee service leaders report that they do not have the capacity to receive more refugees. Three in four report that they can settle some more refugees, and only 3% are able to receive significantly more. The proportion of municipalities with capacity to settle additional refugees is relatively similar irrespective of population size.

The respondents were also asked about issues that challenge further settlement of refugees in their municipality.

Figure 23.2: To what extent do these issues challenge the settlement of refugees in your municipality?* (N = 215).



* Means and standard deviations. Scale: 1 = Very small extent, 5 = Very large extent

Figure 23.2 shows that the most prominent challenge seems to be the lack of suitable housing, followed by NAV's capacity to follow up refugees after completing the introduction programme. Limited capacity in the health services and in the refugee service itself poses a larger problem in many municipalities than capacity in the education sector. In chapter 16, we found that refugee service leaders were less satisfied with IMDi's handling of interpreting services. Capacity in interpreting services do not, however, appear as a major challenge for further municipal refugee settlement.

In chapters 17–19, we discussed some of these challenges more thoroughly (capacity in NAV, in the refugee service and in language training). In this section we will briefly comment on housing capacity, since almost all municipal refugee service leaders perceive this issue as the most prominent challenge in settling more refugees. It is interesting to see what *aspects* of the housing situation are found to be the most challenging.

Figure 23.3 What aspects of the housing situation in your municipality pose particular challenges for the refugee service? (N = 215).

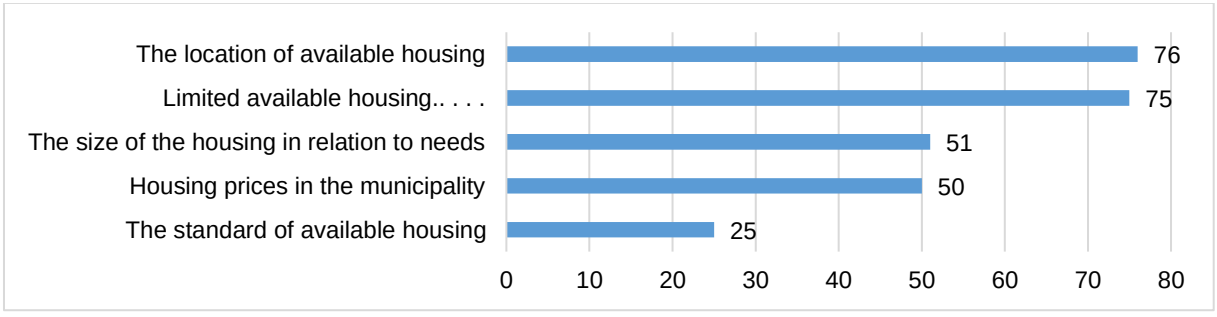


Figure 23.3 shows that the location of available housing and the limited availability of housing are mentioned by three in four refugee service leaders, while about half of the respondents mention housing prices and discrepancies between the size of available housing and the

refugees' needs. Typically, respondents from larger or more centrally located municipalities are more concerned about housing prices, while respondents in small municipalities located in rural areas tend to emphasise their location.

In addition to using public housing, interviewees report using the private market actively. Two approaches are available to them, one of which is the agreed self-settlement, where refugees find housing themselves and apply to have the contract approved by the refugee service. This was a relatively common practice in one of the larger municipalities, where they have used this model for a long time prior to the arrival of the Ukrainians. The other approach entails the refugee service locating housing in the private rental market for refugees. In this case, the municipality rents the housing and sometimes covers the rent before the refugees arrive.

23.2 What would the municipalities need from central authorities?

In an open-ended question in the survey, we asked the respondents from municipal refugee services what they would need from the state to settle more refugees. Their answers fill 12 densely written pages. Two elements stand out: measures to obtain more housing and increased grants. Otherwise, a wide range of desired measures from the state are mentioned, including competence development and other support, changes in regulations, and clarification of roles and tasks. It is important to note that it is refugee service leaders who completed the survey, not top political or administrative leaders in the municipality. As we discuss below, the perspectives of sector or service leaders may differ from those of top leaders, particularly on issues concerning state governance and municipal autonomy.

23.2.1 Housing is crucial

Almost all the respondents mention measures related to housing. There is a great need for more housing, and many mention state measures in the form of increased support for buying or building municipal housing, renting homes or providing incentives for private individuals to renovate and rent out. Some respondents propose that grants for purchasing or building new municipal housing could be a good tool. Others propose a grant scheme for private individuals to upgrade homes for this purpose.

One respondent highlights inflation generally as a challenge:

> With steadily increasing costs in society as well as a specific price increase in the local housing market, it will be important for us as a municipality to ensure that integration grants and other subsidies are adjusted upwards so that the incentive scheme works as intended. Some processes, such as the procurement of housing, are more resource-intensive now than at the beginning of the crisis. (Survey respondent)

Some are also concerned that refugees may displace other disadvantaged groups in the municipality. For instance, one respondent reports that there is a need for resources to purchase or build homes, otherwise other vulnerable groups in the municipality could be displaced from the housing market. Similarly, another respondent states:

> Government grants to build homes for refugees. The housing market limits settlement, and the municipality now exclusively uses subletting of private homes to Ukrainian refugees. This also contributes to the limited opportunities in the housing market for other local residents. (Survey respondent. 2023)

A refugee service located in a rural area puts it this way:

> Economic grants to be able to set up more homes near the city centre because there is no public transportation within the municipality. This narrows down our settlement area significantly, and now there are no more available within walking distance to schools, daycare centres, adult education, the refugee office, and stores. (Survey respondent, 2023)

One respondent believes there is room for improvement in the system for matching municipalities and refugees:

> Most municipalities in [name of county]] struggle with access to housing. The system in IMDiNett, where municipalities can enter available housing, should be utilised much better. Currently, this doesn't work or isn't used by IMDi. This leads to a situation where large families are assigned to municipalities that only have small units available, and vice versa. When it comes to housing being so challenging; the right family/single person to the right municipality would make settlement work more smoothly, and municipalities could work more efficiently. (Survey respondent, 2023)

Increased and more predictable state subsidies

Increased government grants and predictability in grants are mentioned by many. The following quote illustrates this view:

> State guarantees that, for example, integration support would be provided for a minimum of one year after the refugee has returned home. For the first two years, the expenditure on refugees is greater than the integration grant. Municipalities invest quite a lot and take significant risks with municipal finances when there is no such guarantee. The same applies when [the refugees] move to other municipalities, because they lose the integration grant when it follows the registered address. If they move after one year, the settling municipality incurs more expenses than income from the refugee, and the new municipality benefits from the work that the settling municipality has put in by receiving the integration grant. (Survey respondent, 2023)

Some mention grants in general, while others link increased grants to the need for funds to increase capacity in regular services, such as kindergartens, schools, NAV, and health services:

> The municipality will need grants for the construction of homes. In addition, there are challenges related to integration funds and insufficient capacity in schools and kindergartens. The municipality may need grants to cover increased social costs, because the risk is that this will lead to reduced services to the population in general. (Survey respondent, 2023)

> There will soon be a shortage of homes of the right size and at the right price. It will also be more difficult to get everyone into employment because the market is starting to become saturated. So, if we are to settle the same number, municipalities need more grants because the expenditure on social services will multiply. (Survey respondent, 2023)

Some also mention extra grants for refugees with major health problems:

> If the municipality receives more refugees requiring close follow-up due to health issues, there is a need for additional resources. Perhaps the state should consider an extra grant scheme that can provide the municipality with funds/more employees for significant expenses. As it is now, employees are using more and more time on following up refugees with health problems, which reduces the pace of future settlements. We find that we don't receive sufficient information from IMDI about refugees' health problems. They should improve on this so that we as a municipality know in advance what we are dealing with. (Survey respondent, 2023)

Upscaling of NAV

As discussed in chapter 19, many refugee services feel that NAV is not scaled up to meet the increased needs the influx of refugees suggests. This involves a lack of capacity in the NAV system, and some respondents from municipal refugee services believe that NAV should receive more funds so that it can provide municipalities with more and better support in their work with refugees:

> We need NAV to receive funds to work with this group so that their expertise can benefit the municipality and the Ukrainians. Until now, they haven't had the capacity to assist, which is very unfortunate. They possess expertise about the job market, local opportunities, and knowledge of employers. Additionally, they have experiences and competence that could have been utilised in the employment-focused introduction programme, but unfortunately we cannot take advantage of it because they lack the capacity. (Survey respondent, 2023)

Recruitment to the refugee service

The refugee service has been scaled up in most places, but there is still a need for an increase. Some respondents say their municipality cannot recruit staff to work in the refugee service, and call for help from the state in facilitating recruitment:

> We need help with recruitment, funds to run campaigns, marketing. We must find new ways to attract people to our municipality, which is outside the commuting area. This is a major challenge for us at the top of [this valley] as we have long distances. We also have few houses to offer those who may be looking for a job with us, but with help to find new ways to recruit and market, this can lead to a new initiative for those who build houses or dare to invest. (Survey respondent, 2023)

Others mention the need for increased grants for Norwegian language training, and some also underscore the need for extended Norwegian language training.

Public transport

As mentioned in chapter 20 on barriers to labour market integration, many respondents emphasise that geographical distances and public transportation pose a problem for the municipality's integration efforts. As they see it, solutions to these problems might be to expand public transportation or, alternatively, to enable refugees to purchase their own cars. Such solutions, however, require:

> Funds! It costs to settle refugees, especially as we have to use larger parts of the municipality with limited public transportation options. (Survey respondent, 2023)

> Increased funds/grants, so that refugees settled in decentralised areas can receive even more support to obtain a driver's license. This will enhance job opportunities and expand the areas where they can secure employment. (Survey respondent, 2023)

Better support, information and training from the state

Many respondents argue that to strengthen the municipal integration work, the state should to a greater extent provide them with support, information and training. Some respondents call for better competence packages from the state, including training in laws and regulations as well as courses for newly hired staff. Due to the upscaling, municipalities have hired more people, and '(t)here are many new people in the refugee services in the municipalities, and they need training' (Survey respondent, 2023). Several respondents also report that the services in general are in need of education programmes initiated by the state:

> Professional development for staff beyond conferences; there is a need for more formal continuing education programmes for refugee-focused employees in municipalities, adult education, and NAV. (Survey respondent, 2023)

Certain refugee services want advance information about the refugees that are to be settled in their municipality. Such knowledge is important to make them better prepared:

> Smooth allocation of refugees. Good dialogue with settlers to match refugees' family size with available housing. More and better information about the health situation or other factors that require adjustment to and coordination of services. (Survey respondent, 2023)

Some also point to the need for state-initiated training for the refugees themselves, and argue that digital training for refugees, both in Norwegian and in civics education, would be a positive contribution.

Clearer guidelines and changes in legislation

The guidelines and rapid changes in legislation also pose a problem. Some respondents want greater local freedom to tailor the offering to local needs. One respondent writes that the municipality needs 'Good economic framework conditions and the freedom to tailor education and duration based on local needs'. Others mention that they want clearer and more unambiguous rules on what the municipalities' tasks are (see also chapter 18):

> There must be clear language about what the task is, what is specified in the law that the municipality should manage. Less room for doing the tasks differently. Not just regarding the introduction programme. Who is responsible for courses, who is responsible for full-time [introduction programme]. What are the requirements for enough housing, and what is mandated and what is up to the municipality. There is a risk that there will be too many differences [between municipalities] as the “recipe” looks different in every municipality. If municipalities have to do a task, it must also be clearly stated, and preferably with a recipe for the overarching points in the tasks. (Survey respondent, 2023)

> There must be supervision of the state governors, who interpret the integration law very differently and give very different advice to the municipalities. With so many changes and temporariness in a very new law that has not been tested in practice before high arrival numbers, it is inefficient for the state governors to interpret the law; it should be IMDi that gives all advice to the municipalities directly. (Survey respondent, 2023)

As discussed in several chapters above, some respondents demand clearer guidelines for the refugees' rights and responsibilities:

> Clearer guidelines for the right to financial assistance and requirements for activities will help the municipality. Ukrainian refugees are very rights-focused. Municipal administration and NAV use significant resources to set boundaries and provide guidance on opportunities for financial assistance. (Survey respondent, 2023)

> Clear expectations to participate in society despite the temporary nature of the residence permit. There must be a connection in the regulations between the state’s expectations of early entry into the workforce and the requirements for participation, with clear consequences if they are not followed. Each municipality cannot be responsible for this. (Survey respondent, 2023)

Some respondents call for changes in the regulations about how long and how often Ukrainians can stay in Ukraine or other countries without consequences regarding their obligations in Norway such as rent, school, kindergarten, etc.

There is also a demand for decisions on what will happen to the Ukrainian refugees after three years: ‘Clear guidelines on what will happen after three years since Ukrainian refugees received collective protection. How should municipalities address this, and what support can be expected from the state (grants, etc.)?’ (Survey respondent, 2023).

Concerning the issue of clearer rules for the municipalities’ tasks and the refugees’ rights, it is particularly important to bear in mind that it is the refugee service leaders’ voices we hear. Leaders at this level will often have to argue for prioritisation of their field of work, and hence demanding more specific rules and regulations may prove a useful strategy in the struggle for resources. The top-level managers, however, will usually want more freedom to prioritise according to local wants and needs.

23.3 Summary

Almost one in four municipalities report that they have reached their capacity to settle more refugees, while three in four refugee services report that their municipality is able to receive a limited number of refugees in the near future. However, capacity limitations, particularly in available housing, NAV services and health services, represent serious challenges for further settlement.

Municipal refugee service leaders mention a wide range of measures from the national authorities that may be helpful for the local level in the settlement of refugees. Since housing capacity is perceived as the most prominent barrier to further settlement in many municipalities, respondents call for state measures targeting the provision of housing: grants for buying, renting, building and renovating houses. Connected to the issue of housing is the issue of public transport. Since rural municipalities often have available housing located relatively far from essential services, refugees are in need of public transport or, alternatively, private cars. Some respondents therefore demand funding for transport.

Like other inhabitants, refugees settling in a municipality will need several services, from NAV, schools, kindergartens, health services and others. Several of our respondents mention the need for upscaling these ‘ordinary’ services in order to accommodate the increased local demand. Some also point out that recruitment of qualified staff can be a challenge and seek help from national authorities both in the recruitment process and in competence building for new employees.

Some of our respondents want clearer rules, regulations and standards for their work with refugee settlement. Some also demand more explicit expectations from the national level that refugees should enter the workforce and participate in society when they have a residence permit.

Part 4

Current and future challenges, opportunities and dilemmas

24 Current and future challenges, opportunities and dilemmas

This study indicates that the reception of Ukrainian refugees in Norway has, for the most part, been highly successful. A record number of refugees have been settled in almost all municipalities throughout the country within a very short period. The refugees themselves are generally very satisfied with how they have been received and with the reception system. Later arrivals express even greater satisfaction compared to the initial wave of Ukrainian refugees that arrived in late winter and spring 2022. Nevertheless, our study has revealed some challenges and dilemmas. Many of these are linked to uncertainty about the duration of the war and the refugees' prospects for returning to a war-torn Ukraine.

In the previous chapters, we have separately mapped and analysed the perceptions and experiences of the Ukrainian refugees themselves and of the frontline workers and other key actors in the municipalities, such as volunteer organisations and employers. In this final chapter, we aim to synthesise our findings across topics and data sources and discuss some of the most prominent challenges, opportunities and dilemmas.

24.1 Challenges with a temporary perspective

The decision in most European countries to grant collective protection to displaced persons from Ukraine was a temporary solution to accommodate a large number of refugees. The Norwegian variant grants Ukrainian refugees protection and residence for one year at a time, for a maximum of three years. Like most European countries covered by the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) or other national legislation mirroring the TPD, Norway has not decided what will happen after March 2025 if the war is still ongoing in Ukraine.

In the Norwegian Government’s press conference in October 2023, the Minister of Justice emphasised that the residence permit for Ukrainian refugees is *temporary*, and that Ukrainian refugees should return when the war is over. However, at the time of writing (December 2023), there is no sign of an imminent end to the war in Ukraine.

This fluid time perspective creates uncertainty which actors at all levels – from the EU, national, and local level to the individuals who have sought refuge – have to deal with. The authorities must plan and adjust services related to reception, settlement, and integration in a situation with an unknown time perspective: are the Ukrainian refugees here for one year, five years, or indefinitely?

In this section, we will summarise what the uncertainty associated with the temporariness of the collective permits entails for the Ukrainian refugees and for the various actors in Norwegian municipalities.

Uncertainty and insecurity for the Ukrainian refugees

For some Ukrainian refugees, the temporary status is viewed as a factor that triggers existential uncertainty and frustration because they are not in control of their own lives. This situation creates fear for some, as they worry about whether they will still be granted protection and residence in Norway if the war continues after the three-year period or whether they will once again have to rebuild their lives entirely (either in Ukraine or in another country). Parents particularly worry about stability for their children and the implications of several disruptions in their education (see also the discussion of the children’s perspective in chapter 24.5 below). Many are eager to receive information from the Norwegian authorities regarding the fate of Ukrainian refugees when the three-year collective permit expires.

The majority of the Ukrainian refugees in our study say that they are highly motivated to integrate into Norwegian society and the Norwegian labour market. However, some frontline

workers believe that the uncertain timeline and the Government's message that Ukrainians will be required to return once the war ends can undermine some refugees' motivation to learn Norwegian and integrate.

Our analysis shows that Ukrainian refugees handle the uncertainty about their future in Norway in different ways. Since most Ukrainian respondents and interviewees think that the war will be long-lasting and that the situation in Ukraine will be difficult for years to come, many plan for a more long-term stay in Norway. We find that many Ukrainian refugees are prepared to take jobs that are not related to their formal education, at least in the short term. However, the long-term perspective sometimes influences their strategies for integration and employment in a way that may not always align with the Government's focus on a swift transition to employment. We see that some want to use the initial period to invest in upskilling language and other qualifications so that they can aim for a more relevant job in line with their qualifications – and with Norway's labour needs – in the longer term. Some even reason that the type of job they find in Norway might determine whether or not they may stay on in the country when temporary protection ends. This rationale builds on the assumption that if their temporary protection permit stops, they could apply for a work visa, but in that case, the type of job they have might determine whether or not their application is successful.

Uncertainty as a challenge for municipalities

In the survey of the municipal leaders of the refugee services, over 70% believe that Ukrainian refugees can be a major resource in meeting the needs in the local labour market and over 60% believe that it can help mitigate population decline in their municipality. Thus, many municipalities – particularly smaller and more rural ones – see opportunities and potential in the Ukrainian refugees for their local community. Some employers also emphasise this point by stating: 'New arrivals in the municipality are worth their weight in gold'. Still, we find that the short-term perspective hinders a more long-term strategy for how to take advantage of this potential.

Although Ukrainian refugees have higher education, their English language skills are generally poor, and many lack work experience in their field of education. Moreover, there is not necessarily a match between the individual's qualifications and the needs of the local labour market. Thus, to make use of Ukrainians as a resource in the labour market, there is often a need to upscale or supplement their qualifications to match actual needs in the local labour market. There might often be a potential conflict between the view of Ukrainians as a resource in the municipalities and the short-term perspective of the Government, which requires that Ukrainians enter the labour market as quickly as possible.

Another major challenge with the temporary perspective for the municipalities is related to municipal capacity and the question of whether municipalities should (dare to) upscale services or not. In our analysis, we find that although the refugee services have been upscaled in most municipalities, other public services have not been upscaled to the same degree to accommodate the large number of arrivals. One concrete challenge with temporary upscaling of capacity for an uncertain time period is that many municipalities try to avoid using temporary contracts for employees. Thus, it is a risk for the municipality to upscale general services by hiring new employees in permanent positions.

Conflicting perspectives

A general finding is that there are large differences *within* the groups we have interviewed and surveyed concerning how they interpret, understand and strategize to tackle the uncertainty that the temporary permits for Ukrainian refugees entail. For Ukrainian refugees and frontline workers alike, the uncertainty of the situation makes it difficult to plan ahead – whether it relates to integration strategies for each individual or to questions of upscaling services and housing at the local level. Furthermore, because many of the Ukrainian refugees and frontline workers assume that the war in Ukraine will be long-term, their perspective may collide with the Government's focus on a temporary stay followed by an

expected (relatively rapid) return to Ukraine. Consequently, the Government's expressed rationale, which builds on an assumption that the Ukrainian refugees' stay in Norway will be relatively short, conflicts with both the frontline workers' and the Ukrainian refugees' own assumptions about the duration of the war and, consequently, about their stay in Norway as long-term.

24.2 Language training versus rapid employment or work practice

Investment in Norwegian language training in the initial period

Most interviewees among the Ukrainian refugees and the frontline workers agree that one year is insufficient to acquire Norwegian language skills at B2 level, and even more so if that year is to be increasingly combined with employment or work practice.

The discussion of whether to prioritise language training (often voiced by Norwegian teachers/Adult education centres (VO)) or rapid employment/work practice (often voiced by refugee service and NAV employees) in the initial period after settlement is not new (see discussion in chapter 18.6), but we see that it is put to the test with the large inflow of Ukrainian refugees. The relatively new Integration Act (2021) introduced differentiated durations of the introduction programme depending on the participant's age and prior education level. Since most Ukrainians have higher education (which is operationalised as having completed upper secondary level), the majority of this group would be entitled to shorter – mainly work-oriented – programme periods lasting between six months and one year. Thus, with the arrival of many Ukrainian refugees, these shorter work-oriented programmes were put to the test for the first time. It is important to emphasise that in the public consultation on the policy process leading up to the 2021 Integration Act, several municipal actors voiced concerns about these shorter programmes. Much of the criticism voiced by municipal actors in both the interviews and the survey is directed at these shorter programmes for refugees with higher education more generally, and not limited to the specific rules for Ukrainian refugees. At the same time, many of our informants argue that the lack of English language proficiency among Ukrainian refugees contributes to making the goal of the short programme particularly unrealistic for this group.

Another challenge identified is that many Ukrainians themselves want to prioritise intense language training during the initial period before entering the labour market. The interviews show that they often see this as an opportunity to learn the language that they will never get again, and they see it as an important investment to ensure better integration in a medium- or long-term perspective. They particularly emphasise that enhanced language skills would make it more likely for them to find jobs in line with their previous education and qualifications. Some frontline workers see this as a barrier to rapid employment because refugees sometimes want to prioritise learning Norwegian over taking a job where they may have a better chance of using their prior education and qualifications. In this regard, we again see the conflict between the goals of the Norwegian Government's temporary and short-term perspective and those of the refugees' more long-term perspective (linked to their belief that the war will be long-lasting and that the postwar situation in Ukraine will be difficult).

Varying access to and assessments of work practice placements

Assessments of work practice placements also vary. Work practice placements were indeed the most common pathway into the labour market for those Ukrainians in the survey who reported being employed. Overall, those who attended work practice placements were generally satisfied (3.9 out of 5), but access to and assessments of them vary widely. First, access to work practice placements in different municipalities varies substantially. The municipalities have very different practices related to whether they arrange language or work practice placements for the refugees or whether they encourage the refugees to find such placements on their own.

Second, the overall impression is that the relevance and quality of the work practice matters a lot to the participants. Generally, those who had work practice at workplaces related to their previous work experience and education were satisfied. Those who had work practice at workplaces where there were no realistic job opportunities or where they did not get to practice their Norwegian (either due to the task appointed to them or because most of the other staff were not Norwegian speakers) were often less satisfied. Some interviewees also point out that when Ukrainians participate in work practice, they miss out on Norwegian language lessons, creating a perception that work practice may come at the cost of learning Norwegian.

Thus, there is a challenge both with accessing sufficient work practice for all participants in many municipalities and with gaining work practice at relevant workplaces where it is also possible to practice Norwegian.

Language training in combination with work (practice): misunderstandings about and few options for flexible language training

Related to the question of rapid employment or work practice versus language training is the complexity of the legislation, which distinguishes between rights to language training and the introduction programme. As mentioned in this report, most of the Ukrainian refugees that we interviewed talked about language training first and foremost as the main (or only) component of the introduction programme and not as something they are entitled to independent of the introduction programme. Even municipal refugee counsellors highlight how the complexity of the legislation may cause confusion. This complexity may pose a challenge, as it can be hard to communicate that the right to Norwegian language training does not stop when the introduction programme ends. However, to have access to Norwegian training after the introduction programme, the municipalities must actually offer flexible language training that can be combined with work.

According to the legislative amendments to the Integration Act made to accommodate Ukrainian refugees, the right to language training continues irrespective of whether or not the individual finds a job or exits the introduction programme before the one-year period expires. With the new amendments from July 2023, the municipality may (but are not obliged to) also offer an additional six months of language training However, as shown in chapter 18.3.1, flexible Norwegian language training only offered to some extent in some municipalities. Only about half of the municipalities offers Norwegian language training outside of regular working hours, either in the evenings, at weekends or online. The municipal refugee service leaders do not rank the lack of flexible language training as one of the most prominent barriers to labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees, although over 40% say that it is a barrier to at least some extent. However, more flexible language training may be important from two perspectives. First, because a large share of municipalities does not offer Norwegian language training outside of regular working hours, there is a real trade-off for many Ukrainian refugees between Norwegian language training and finding employment as soon as possible. For some, this may prove a barrier to rapid employment. Second, the lack of flexible language courses may also – at least in practice – constitute a violation of Ukrainians' right to continued language training if the only training opportunities offered are incompatible with having a regular job. At a press conference in October 2023, the Government announced that flexible language training would be a priority. HK-dir, in collaboration with IMDi, has been instructed by the Government to establish a national offer of digital teacher-led training in Norwegian that can be combined with work, and implemented as early as possible in 2024 and no later than the end of the first quarter of 2024 (HK-dir 2023b).

Thus, making continued language training combined with work a real option is important to ensure rapid transition to (any kind of) employment and self-sufficiency. Furthermore, it is also important to ensure continued upskilling of language proficiency to enable individuals to

eventually find employment that is in line both with their previous qualifications and with Norwegian labour market needs if Ukrainians' stay in Norway becomes more long-term.

24.3 State subsidies, support and regulations

During the autumn of 2023, Norway received a substantially larger share of Ukrainian refugees compared to its neighbouring countries, and UDI's (2023) prognoses assume a continued large influx. Although current arrivals in Norway and settlement in Norwegian municipalities have already topped previous records both in numbers and speed, the prospects of a continued swift settlement process are less bright. In the survey, almost one in four municipalities state that they have reached their full capacity when it comes to settling refugees and cannot settle more refugees in the future, while three in four refugee services report that their municipality is only able to receive a limited number of refugees in the near future. The capacity limitations, particularly in available housing, NAV services and general municipal services, represent serious challenges for further settlement.

First, housing capacity is perceived as the most prominent barrier to further settlement in many municipalities, and respondents call for state measures targeting the provision of housing: grants for buying, renting, building and renovating buildings/houses.

Another major challenge cited by a very large share of the municipalities is the capacity of NAV. We find that, in most municipalities, the capacity of the refugee service has been upscaled to tackle the large increase in new arrivals from Ukraine. However, according to the municipal survey respondents and the interviewees (including NAV employees themselves), there has been no general upscaling of capacity to accommodate the large numbers of refugees who will need public assistance after the introduction programme. A large share of introduction programme participants are still not employed after the programme period ends, and most of them transfer to NAV to obtain financial support and labour market assistance. The lack of capacity in NAV poses a major challenge both to ensuring the goal of increased labour market participation for Ukrainian refugees (e.g., because many NAV offices do not have sufficient staff to follow up with labour market measures) and to the municipalities' capacity to settle more refugees in the future.

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the temporary perspective of the Ukrainian refugees' stay in Norway makes it challenging for the municipalities to plan and potentially upscale capacity in general services. Some municipalities point to the instability and unpredictability of future funding as a barrier to upscaling capacity. The municipalities receive a per capita introduction grant over five years for refugees they settle in their municipality. These grants only continue as long as the refugee lives in the municipality. Thus, if the refugee moves (either back to Ukraine or to another Norwegian municipality), the state funding stops. This situation makes it challenging for the municipality to plan ahead because it may involve a substantial financial risk, particularly if the municipalities strive to avoid temporary positions. Furthermore, for many municipalities there is not only the question of stable funding, but also the major challenge of recruiting (qualified) staff needed to upscale services.

Finally, central governance does not only come in the form of increased funding, but also in the form of national regulations. In the Government's press conference in October 2023, the Government proposed several new regulations that would increase central steering of the content and length of the introduction programme (these government proposals are undergoing public consultation at the time of writing this report). The question of central steering versus local autonomy in the municipal service provision is a general topic of discussion within the field of integration. Although there has been a tendency towards increased central steering in more recent years, Norwegian municipalities have generally had a high degree of local leeway in their role as implementer of national integration policies (Hernes 2017; 2022). In the survey and interviews with municipal employees, we see general disagreement over the dilemma of central steering versus local autonomy. On the one hand,

there are municipalities wanting clearer signals and more detailed regulations to ensure the right interpretation of the legislation and equal treatment across municipalities. On the other hand, there are municipalities that emphasise the need to have local leeway to adapt the national regulations to local and individual conditions, particularly in situations of large influxes.

24.4 Differential treatment of different refugee groups

The question of differential treatment of Ukrainian refugees and other groups of refugees was raised in the interviewees with and the survey of both the frontline workers and the Ukrainian refugees. However, the perception of differential treatment can largely be divided into two separate aspects, and the Ukrainian refugees and the frontline workers focus mainly on different aspects. The first aspect concerns the reception of Ukrainian refugees in Norwegian society more broadly, while the other aspect concerns differences in legal status, rights and obligations for Ukrainian refugees compared to those for other refugees.

First, the question of differential treatment was raised in almost all of the interviews with frontline workers, and they mainly emphasise the first aspect related to reception in Norwegian society more broadly. The survey shows that many municipal refugee service leaders agree with the statements that landlords and employers are more positive towards Ukrainian refugees than to other refugees. Many of the interviewees and respondents generally report that the reception of Ukrainian refugees has been more open and hospitable compared to that of other refugee groups.

When the question of differential treatment is raised by the Ukrainian interviewees themselves, the focus is more on the second aspect, and on how their temporary protection permit affects the time perspective and their rights in Norway compared to other groups of refugees. Some interviewees think that that other refugees have better rights and are more invested in because they have individual protection with a more long-term perspective for their stay in Norway. ‘They are here forever’, as one of them put it. They explain that because of their temporary protection, there is the expectation that they will return to Ukraine. This uncertainty about the future corroborates the feeling that other refugees have better rights because their legal status will allow them to stay in Norway in the long run.

24.5 The children’s perspective: from choice of country to future prospects

Our research shows that, for many Ukrainian refugee parents in Norway, the children’s perspective influences every pivotal decision they make.

First, safeguarding their children and securing their future emerges as one of the most compelling motives for seeking refuge in Norway in the first place. Many emphasise that Norway is perceived as a good country for children to live in, where children are treated well and are protected. The perception that Norway is a good country for children was explicitly highlighted by several refugees as a key motivation for coming to Norway.

It also appears that these expectations have indeed been validated; Ukrainian refugees express high satisfaction with Norwegian kindergartens, schools, and the overall social integration. Children adeptly acquire languages and find ample opportunities to forge friendships within various social environments. Consequently, they attain both structural integration (access to institutions) and relational integration (establishing social contacts and identities) (Strange & Ager: 2010). Understandably, we find that refugees with children under 18 years exhibit a stronger inclination to remain in Norway. Even those who initially were uncertain about whether they wanted to stay in Norway or return to Ukraine now indicate that they may want to stay in Norway in order to prioritise their children's future in a secure environment with uninterrupted education.

Second, and related to the latter point, the most pressing issue related to the children's perspective revolves around the question of dual education. According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, studies abroad will be accepted when children return to Ukraine. However, some subjects, such as Ukrainian language, literature, and history, are often mandatory for national university entrance exams in Ukraine. Therefore, many of the parents we interviewed were frustrated about the fact that their children may fall behind in these subjects while being abroad. Uncertainty about their own future, shaped by the temporary nature of collective protection, actualises potential challenges refugees might encounter upon returning to Ukraine. Recognising the disparities between the Ukrainian and Norwegian educational systems, many of the Ukrainian refugees worry about the potential difficulty in obtaining official recognition for the years spent in a Norwegian school within the Ukrainian educational framework upon their potential return. Caught between two societies and two educational systems, Ukrainian refugees grapple with critical choices and face the risk of dual educational exclusion for their children.

In the survey, we find that almost 40% of parents report that their children continue Ukrainian school online, most often in addition to entering the Norwegian school system. How such a dual approach affects the children's sense of security and their integration into Norwegian society has been outside the scope of this study but should be subject to further studies. As this study generally focuses on adult Ukrainian refugees, it also appears crucial to more generally examine how the temporary nature of collective protection affects children's integration, education, mental health and future aspirations.

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