

Explaining the gender gap in young refugees' transition to VET in Germany

Franziska Meyer

Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg, Institute for Sociology

franziska.meyer@soziologie.uni-halle.de

Abstract

Despite the central role of vocational education and training (VET) in young refugees' long-term socio-economic integration in Germany, previous research suggests that refugee women enter VET at lower rates than refugee men (Meyer, 2025; Meyer & Winkler, 2023). However, the extent of this gender gap, its development over time, and its underlying mechanisms remain largely unexplored. To address this research gap, this study draws on established theoretical perspectives to identify several domains that are assumed to be associated with gender differences in refugees' transition to VET. These include care responsibilities, host-country-specific network resources, host-country-specific human capital, country-of-origin-specific human capital, and host-country-specific opportunity structures. The empirical analyses use data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees covering 18–30-year-olds who arrived in Germany between 2013 and 2019. First, the development of the gender gap in young refugees' transition to VET over the observation period from 2016 to 2022 is examined using the Kaplan-Meier estimator. In a second step, a discrete-time event history model is employed, and the Karlson-Holm-Breen (KHB) method is applied to decompose the gender gap and assess the mediating contribution of the identified domains.

Descriptive results show that refugee women entered VET at roughly half the rate of refugee men during the seven-year observation period, with the gap widening over time. Multivariate analyses further indicate that this disparity is no longer statistically significant once differences in care responsibilities, measured by the presence of children, and host-country-specific network resources, reflected in contact frequency with Germans, are taken into account. Differences in host-country-specific human capital, particularly German writing skills, further contribute to explaining the observed disparity, whereas country-of-origin-specific human capital and opportunity structures are not significantly associated with it. Based on these findings, the study develops targeted policy recommendations aimed at reducing gender disparities in young refugees' transition to VET.

Literature

Meyer, F. (2025). Refugee Women's Transition to VET in Germany: Examining the Role of Gender Norms and Human Capital Endowments. *Social Inclusion*, 13(0).

<https://doi.org/10.17645/si.9559>

Meyer, F., & Winkler, O. (2023). Place of Residence Does Matter for Educational Integration: The Relevance of Spatial Contexts for Refugees' Transition to VET in Germany. *Social Sciences*, 12(3), Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12030120>