

# DIW Weekly Report

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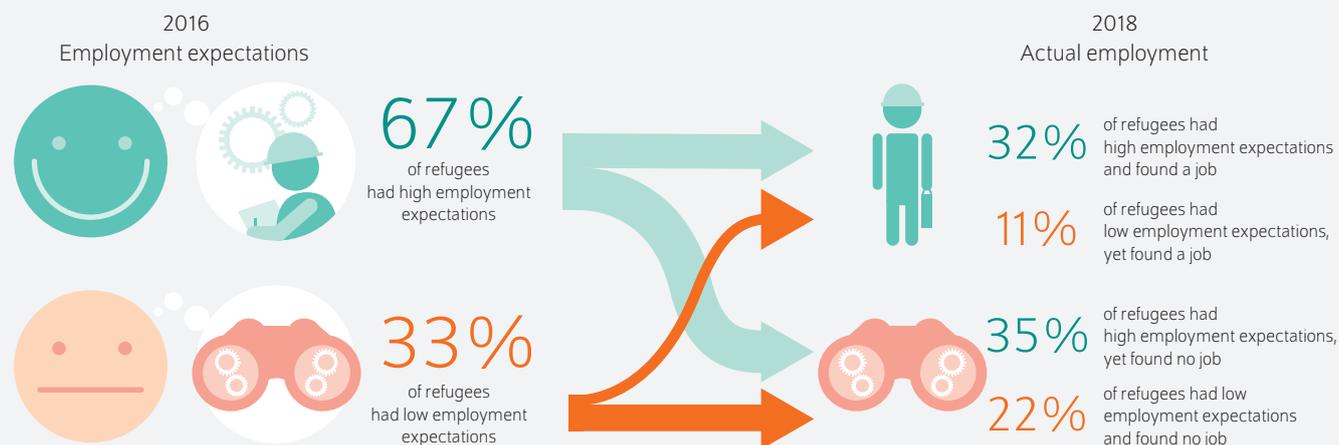
AT A GLANCE

## Refugees' High Employment Expectations: Partially Met

By Daniel Graeber and Felicitas Schikora

- In 2016, two in three refugees reported that the probability they would find employment within two years was high
- Male refugees had higher expectations than their female counterparts; refugees with higher education and better mental health had higher expectations than others
- Although expectations were met for around half the refugees, about one-third did not find a job despite their high expectations
- Female refugees, refugees with poor mental health, or with primary education, in particular, had high expectations that were not met
- Poor mental health or structural variables such as a lack of childcare may have impacted the refugees' entry into employment

### Most refugees reported a high probability of finding employment within two years



Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, v.35.

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### FROM THE AUTHORS

*“The majority of refugees reported that the probability they would find employment within two years was high. Refugees should receive sufficient information on the German labor market and the necessary qualifications in order to avoid disappointment, which can hamper their integration.”*

— Felicitas Schikora —

### MEDIA



Audio Interview with C. Katharina Spieß (in German)  
[www.diw.de/mediathek](http://www.diw.de/mediathek)

# Refugees' High Employment Expectations: Partially Met

By Daniel Graeber and Felicitas Schikora

## ABSTRACT

This report compares employment expectations among refugees in Germany in 2016 with their actual employment situation in 2018, using the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany. In 2016, the majority of refugees reported that the probability they would find employment within two years was high. Employment expectations were met by 54 percent of all refugees; yet 35 percent of refugees who articulated high expectations in 2016, had no job in 2018. The findings show that both structural factors, such as a lack of childcare, and individual level characteristics, such as mental health, impacted entry into employment. Extra support for refugees seeking employment—the provision of information and advice on the German labor market, better childcare options, or support for those with mental health issues, for example—could help ensure that employment expectations are met more frequently. Further studies are needed to provide a better understanding of the different mechanisms at play here.

The number of refugees and displaced persons worldwide has increased markedly over the past ten years.<sup>1</sup> These people leave their homes expecting to find safety and security in the receiving country. Besides safeguarding their physical integrity, refugees also hope to obtain greater financial security and have the chance to build a new life in the host country, including having a good education and gainful employment.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, refugees find themselves facing very many uncertainties in the receiving country, for example they lack knowledge of the local labor market and face uncertain prospects of staying. These uncertainties cause refugees to form expectations on which they base their actions. Examples include expectations regarding future employment and earnings. Unlike other immigrant groups, in the majority of cases, refugees are unable to access information on the current labor market or on whether they will be able to have their qualifications or degrees recognized. If refugees' expectations are not met, this directly impacts on their material welfare. This can also negatively affect their sense of well-being that, in turn, can hamper their further integration. For instance, qualitative studies in Germany show that disappointment over unsuccessful integration can cause refugees to have psychological problems,<sup>3</sup> which in turn correlate with a deceleration of the integration process.<sup>4</sup> Other studies have found that the high level of motivation among children with a migration background often goes hand in hand with better academic achievement.<sup>5</sup> In light of this, it is vital to know which individual characteristics impact expectation formation among refugees and what

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, *Global trends 2008 – Refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, internally displaced and stateless persons* (Geneva, 2009) (available online, accessed July 23, 2020; this applies to all other online sources in this report unless stated otherwise); UNHCR, *Global trends 2018 – Forced displacement in 2018* (Geneva, 2019) (available online).

<sup>2</sup> This fundamental right is also expressed in the 1951 Refugee Convention in Geneva 1951. According to this, refugees shall be accorded in the host country as favorable as possible and, in any event, not less favorable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, as regards the right to education and employment. See UNHCR, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951, Articles 17–19, Article 22 (1951)* (available online).

<sup>3</sup> Bundesforum Männer e.V., "Male refugees in Germany: Needs, Challenges, and Resources – Summary," (2019) (available online).

<sup>4</sup> Isabella Buber-Ennser et al., "The Effect of Stressors and Resilience Factors on Mental Health of Recent Refugees in Austria," *wiiw Working Paper* no. 169 (2019).

<sup>5</sup> Grace Kao and Marta Tienda, "Optimism and achievement: The educational performance of immigrant youth," *Social science quarterly* 76, no. 1 (1995): 1–19.

groups of refugees gauge their chances of finding employment wrongly.

At the same time, the host society often articulates high expectations of the refugees. This *Weekly Report* switches the perspective, analyzing for the first time refugees' employment expectations in 2016, their actual employment in 2018, and the extent of associated expectation errors, i.e., the deviations from the articulated expectations. The study specifically examines what individual characteristics are linked with expectation errors.<sup>6</sup>

A unique data source is used for the analysis: the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany.<sup>7</sup> With the same refugees being surveyed over a number of years here, it is possible to compare the refugees' subjective employment expectations in 2016 with the actual employment situation in 2018.

This *Weekly Report* thus identifies sub-groups of refugees which are frequently prone to expectation errors. The findings of this report are a useful starting point for politicians to identify refugees with unmet employment expectations, enabling them to develop targeted policy measures. Interviews with refugees conducted as part of the asylum process, for example, could be used to inform refugees better about their prospects on the German labor market. This form of expectations management could reduce the occurrence of false expectations among refugees and would at the same time provide concrete proposals as to how to facilitate integration into the labor market (e.g. language courses for refugees, training or career reorientation programs, alternative training options). It could also help remove any obstacles that make it hard for refugees to enter the German labor market.

### Refugees' expectations about future employment high in 2016

In the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees conducted in 2016, refugees were asked how likely they feel it is that they will have a job in Germany in two years' time (Box 1).

On the whole, the refugees' responses in 2016 about their employment situation in 2018 were optimistic (Figure 1). Around one-third of the respondents said it was "definitely likely" ("100 percent") they would have a job in 2018. The median of the distribution<sup>8</sup> of responses is "80 percent;" in other words, exactly 50 percent of the respondents answered with "80 percent" or more. Around two-thirds answered "60 percent" or more, i.e., two in three refugees articulated high employment expectations. Only seven percent of the

<sup>6</sup> To differentiate by individual characteristics, we use every variable from 2016 without exception. This approach serves to prevent biases arising from the correlation between individual characteristics and expectation errors. Expectations that are not met can impair mental health, for instance. In this case, we would overestimate the correlation between expectation errors and mental health.

<sup>7</sup> "IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany," DIW Berlin (available online).

<sup>8</sup> The median or middle score splits a dataset, sample or distribution into two equal parts such that the values in one half are not greater and those in the other half are not smaller than the median.

Box 1

#### Questionnaire Content Used for Our Analysis

This report analyzes refugees' expectations on the basis of information provided by refugees in 2016. To find out what future expectations refugees have about various aspects of their integration, the respondents were asked to estimate their own situation in two years' time. This report focuses on information provided on expected employment in 2018.

"How likely is it that you will have a job in Germany in two years' time? 0 means "Not likely at all". 100 means "Definitely likely". You can use the in-between ratings to tailor your response."

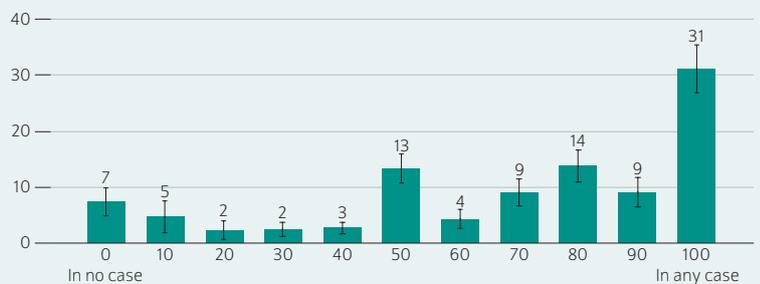
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

The survey questionnaire may not use percentage values for the responses. The question type and form, however, suggest that these are percentages. This report thus refers to percentages when characterizing the different response categories.

Figure 1

#### Refugees' expectations in 2016 regarding their employment in 2018

Distribution of answers in percent



Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany, v.35, survey data for 2018, N = 1,407, weighted.

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More than half of the respondents estimated the probability of having a job in two years' time to be "80 percent" or higher.

refugees said it was not likely at all that they would have a job in 2018.

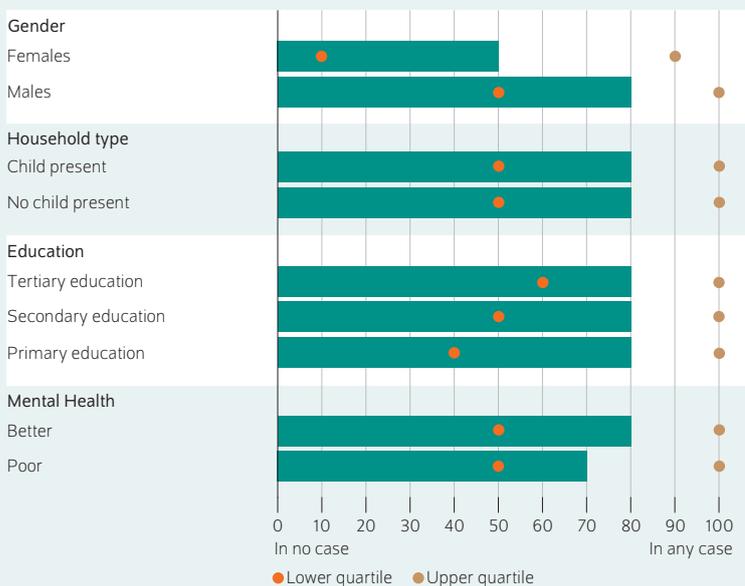
#### Women refugees feel they are less likely to find employment in future

Employment expectations differ between men and women, however (Figure 2, Gender). Male refugees generally expressed higher subjective expectations in 2016 than their female counterparts, with 34 percent of male respondents stating in 2016 that it was "definitely likely" that they would have a job in 2018 compared with as little as 23 percent of female refugees who gave the same response—this is

Figure 2

**Refugees' expectations in 2016 regarding their employment in 2018, by subgroups**

Median as well as the lower and upper quartile of answers



Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany, v.35, survey data for 2018, N = 1,407, weighted.

© DIW Berlin 2020

Male refugees generally expressed higher expectations in 2016 that they that they would have a job in 2018 than their female counterparts.

equivalent to a difference between female and male respondents of 11 percentage points or 32 percent. The median for male and female respondents is “80 percent” and “50 percent,” respectively. That is, half of the male refugees estimated the probability of having a job in two years’ time to be “80 percent” or higher, while half the female respondents estimated this to be “50 percent” or higher.

One possible reason for this is that when women flee their home countries, they often do so with the rest of their family;<sup>9</sup> at the same time, these women come from countries with more traditional gender roles.<sup>10</sup> Underpinning this assumption is the fact that the median for female refugees with a partner is “50 percent,” while that for single female refugees is “70 percent.” The median for male refugees, by way of contrast, is “80 percent,” irrespective of relationship status.

<sup>9</sup> Ludovica Gamaro et al., “Refugees in Germany with children still living abroad have lowest life satisfaction,” *DIW Weekly Report*, no. 42 (2018): 905–916 (available online).

<sup>10</sup> Initial studies on attitudes towards democracy and the rule of law show that refugees in Germany have traditional values. Among the refugee respondents in Germany, however, there was far less agreement with antidemocratic statements than among the respondents in the World Value Survey in crisis regions. See Herbert Brücker, Nina Rother, and Jürgen Schupp, “IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees: overview and first results,” *Policy advice compact*, no. 116 (2016) (in German; available online). Furthermore, qualitative studies show that gender roles among female refugees from Syria have changed dramatically since 2011. See Nisren Habib, “Gender Role Changes and their Impacts on Syrian Women Refugees in Berlin in Light of the Syrian Crisis,” *WZB Discussion Paper*, no. SP VI 2018-101 (2018) (available online).

No systematic differences were found between households with and without children (Figure 2, Household Type). Thus, we can assume that the presence of children in the household has no influence on employment expectations.

**Higher education and better mental health correlate positively with employment expectations among refugees**

Refugees’ employment expectations also differ depending on their level of education.<sup>11</sup> Refugees with a secondary school or university education have slightly higher expectations than those with primary school education only (see Figure 2, Education). While the median for all educational groups is “80 percent,” refugees with school education, whether primary or secondary, however, report lower employment expectations more frequently than those with university qualifications. The lower the level of education, the lower the lower quartile,<sup>12</sup> for example.

This study also shows that refugees with poor mental health had lower employment expectations in 2016 than refugees with better mental health (Figure 2, Mental Health). Here, a distinction is made between refugees whose Mental Component Summary Score (MCS),<sup>13</sup> an index-based measure of mental health, is below the median and those whose score is above it. The median of employment expectations for refugees with a low MCS is “70 percent” compared with “80 percent” for those with a high MCS.

**Integration into labor market continues to make progress**

A transnational comparison shows that in the first years after arrival, refugees have far lower employment rates and wages than other migrant groups.<sup>14</sup> In line with these findings, the labor force participation (rate) of refugees in Germany is lower than for other immigrants, although it has grown continually over the years. While in 2016, the labor force

<sup>11</sup> The report distinguishes between primary, secondary, and university education. This categorization is based on information on the total years of schooling as well as details of qualifications obtained in the country of origin: primary education (up to eight years of schooling), secondary education (nine to 12 years of schooling), university education (more than 12 years of schooling and/or a completed university degree).

<sup>12</sup> The lower (upper) quartile describes the response category for which the first (last) 25 percent of the information provided is smaller than (larger than) or equal to the respective response category. 50 percent of the responses lie exactly between the lower and the upper quartile.

<sup>13</sup> The Mental Component Summary Score is the second factor of a principal component analysis of the 12 items in the short-form 12 Questionnaire. In the short-form 12 Questionnaire, respondents provide information on their mental and physical health. The MCS is standardized, meaning a value of 50 corresponds to the average value for the German population and higher values determine better mental health. See Maria Metzger, Diana Schacht, and Antonia Scherz, “Psychische und körperliche Gesundheit von Geflüchteten im Vergleich zu anderen Bevölkerungsgruppen,” *DIW Wochenbericht*, no. 5 (2019): 64–72 (available online).

<sup>14</sup> Courtney Brell, Christian Dustmann, and Ian Preston, “The Labor Market Integration of Refugee Migrants in High-Income Countries,” *CREAM DP*, no. 10/20.

participation of refugees was 14 percent,<sup>15</sup> it had increased by 29 percentage points to an average of 43 percent until 2018.<sup>16</sup>

**Lower employment among female refugees, refugees with children in the same household, and refugees with primary education**

In 2018, similar to employment expectations, the refugees' actual employment situation also displays considerable heterogeneity. First, there is a clear gender gap in refugee employment, with 52 percent of male refugees in employment compared to just 14 percent of female refugees. A further crucial characteristic is the refugees' school education: Some 33 percent of refugees with primary school education were in gainful employment in Germany in 2018. In contrast, 49 percent of refugees with secondary or tertiary education had found employment by 2018. Furthermore, 26 percent of refugees with at least one child living in their household had entered employment in 2018. Of those refugees with no children living in their household, 56 percent were employed in 2018. Refugees' mental health in the reference year 2016 was also found to play an important role, with 32 percent of refugees with poor mental health in employment in 2018—23 percentage points higher for those with good mental health in 2016.

**35 percent of refugees had high employment expectations in 2016, yet no job in 2018**

A comparison of refugees' subjective employment expectations and actual employment in 2018 shows to what degree these expectations were met. There are four possible scenarios (Table). Expectations are considered positively met if, in 2016, a refugee responded there is a high probability (more than 50 percent) of having a job in 2018 and then actually does have a job, whereas expectations are considered negatively met if, in 2016, a refugee responded there is a low probability (less than or equal to 50 percent) of having a job and then does not have one in 2018. The expectation is considered surpassed (positive deviation) if a refugee is employed in 2018 despite having had low employment expectations in 2016. In contrast, expectations are considered negatively met (negative deviation) if a refugee is not employed in 2018 and had high employment expectations in 2016.

In 2016, 32 percent of refugees expected to have employment in future and did in fact have a job (positively met), while 22 percent of refugees had low expectations of having future employment in 2018 and were not in employment (negatively met). Overall, 11 percent of all refugees surveyed

<sup>15</sup> Herbert Brücker et al., "IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees".

<sup>16</sup> The labor force participation rate includes those in full- and part-time employment, self-employed, trainees, and those in internships. In our analysis, no distinction is made between different types of employment. The IAB Brief Report 04/2020 specifies a labor force participation rate of 35 percent. Here, only refugees with a job and a positive income are regarded as gainfully employed. This *Weekly Report* does not factor in remuneration. Including remuneration in the evaluation would reduce the percentage of employed in our sample specification from 43 to 35 percent. See Herbert Brücker, Yuliya Kosyakova, and Eric Schuß, "Fünf Jahre seit Fluchtmigration 2020, Integration in Arbeitsmarkt und Bildungssystem macht weitere Fortschritte," *IAB Brief Report*, no. 04 (2020) (in German; available online).

Table

**Fulfilment of refugees' employment expectations**

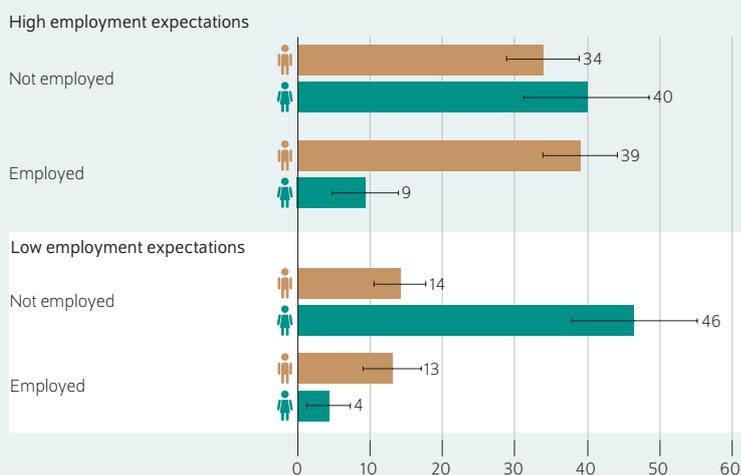
	Employment expectations	
	High	Low
Gainfully employed	(Positively) met 32 percent	Positive deviation 11 percent
Not in gainful employment	Negative deviation 35 percent	(Negatively) met 22 percent

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany, v.35, survey data for 2018, N = 1,407, weighted.

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Figure 3

**Fulfilment of refugees' employment expectations, by gender**  
In percent



Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany, v.35, survey data for 2018, N = 1,407, weighted.

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The expectations of male and female refugees regarding their employment prospects in 2018 are equally likely to be wrong. Yet, female refugees articulated expectations that were too high more often than their male counterparts.

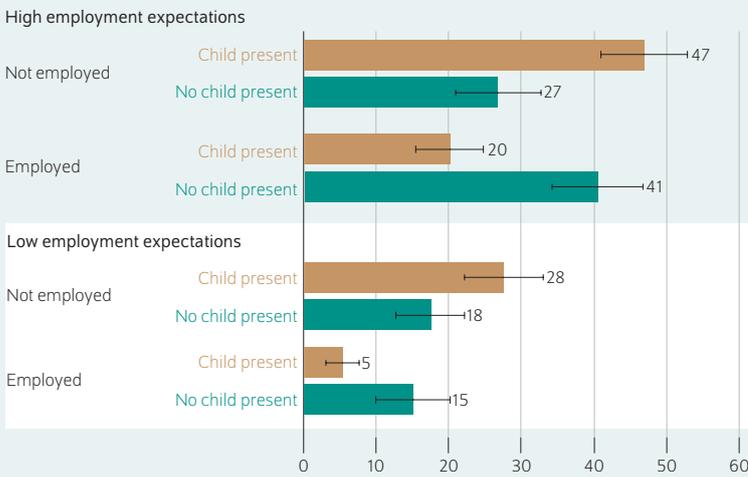
had low employment expectations in 2016, but actually had a job in 2018 (positive deviation). A total of 35 percent of refugees had high employment expectations in 2016, but did not have a job in 2018 (negative deviation).

All in all, the expectations of 46 percent of all refugees were not met. Of those refugees who had made an expectation error, 24 percent had responded too pessimistically and 76 percent too optimistically. The latter are consequently in the clear majority. Since disappointment and unsuccessful integration often correlate with mental health problems,<sup>17</sup> this group warrants particular attention from stakeholders and politicians. In light of this, it is important to understand

<sup>17</sup> Bundesforum Männer e.V., "Male Refugees in Germany."

Figure 4

**Fulfilment of refugees' employment expectations, by household type**  
In percent



Source : IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany, v.35, survey data for 2018, N = 1,407, weighted.

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Refugees with children made expectation errors more often than refugees with no children living in the household.

to what extent the different expectation errors are associated with individual refugee characteristics (Figure 3–6).<sup>18</sup>

Generally speaking, the expectations of male and female refugees regarding their employment prospects for 2018 are equally likely to be wrong, with 47 percent of male and 44 percent of female refugees making expectation errors (Figure 3). Strikingly, female refugees articulated expectations that were too high more often than their male counterparts (40 compared with 34 percent). In addition, 39 percent of male refugees had high employment expectations in 2016, which were met, in contrast to the mere 9 percent for female counterparts.

Of the refugees with children living in the household, 47 percent had expressed high employment expectations in 2016 but had no job in 2018 (Figure 4), compared to 27 percent for refugees with no children living in their household.

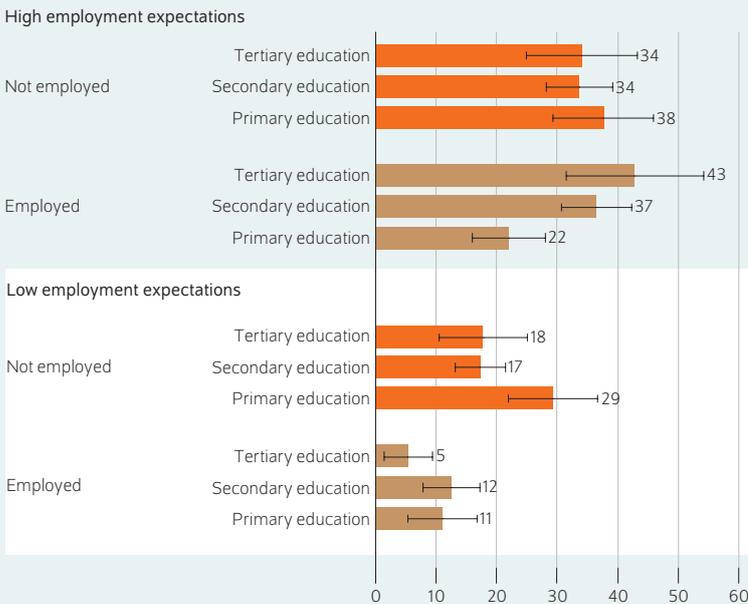
Expectation errors were observed in 52 percent of refugees with children living in the household, compared to 42 percent of refugees with no children living in the household. This is particularly interesting given that barely any difference was observed in the employment expectations of these two household types in 2016. This suggests that children living in the household played no more than a minor role in the formation of employment expectations, although differences were found when it came to taking up employment. Consistent with this observation is the hypothesis that structural reasons that were not anticipated in 2016 made it more difficult for the respondents to take up employment. Structural reasons include, for instance, inflexible work arrangements or a lack of childcare. In fact, existing empirical evidence already shows that childcare makes it easier for displaced or refugee parents to integrate into the host society. In the case of mothers of children under six years, for example, the employment expectations were higher if the child or children had a place in a day care establishment.<sup>19</sup>

A look at the different educational biographies shows that the positive expectations of refugees with a university or secondary education are met far more often than those with primary education only (Figure 5). A further observation is that of the refugees with a university education as little as five percent expressed too low expectations, while those with primary or secondary education expressed too low expectations more frequently (11 and 12 percent, respectively).

As regards mental health, the expectations expressed in 2016 by refugees with good mental health were found to be met

Figure 5

**Fulfilment of refugees' employment expectations, by education**  
In percent



Source : IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany, v.35, survey data for 2018, N = 1,407, weighted.

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The positive expectations of refugees with a university or secondary education are met far more often than those with primary education only.

<sup>18</sup> Of those whose expectations were not met and who did not have a job in 2018, some are in trainee programs or are taking part in an integration course (14 percent for those with a negative deviation, 19 percent for those whose expectations were negatively met). What is not known is whether these are lock-in effects (the person postpones entering the job market because they want to invest in education), or these individuals start training or an integration course because they have failed to find employment. Further studies into causality are needed.

<sup>19</sup> Ludovica Gambaro, Guido Neidhöfer, and C. Katharina Spieß, "The effect of early childhood education and care services on the social integration of refugee families," *DIW Discussion Paper*, no. 1828 (2019).

more often: Expectation errors were observed in around 40 percent of refugees with better mental health compared to 52 percent with poor mental health. This difference is especially evident for refugees whose expectations were too high (Figure 6). Better mental health was also found to correlate with the positive fulfilment of expectations: While among refugees with better mental health, 44 percent articulated high expectations and had a job in 2018, the equivalent share for those with poor mental health was just half as high (at 22 percent). Finally, of the refugees with poor mental health, the share who had expressed negative expectations about finding a job and actually failed to find a job was also higher.

**Conclusion: Measures needed to help refugees form rational expectations**

The formation of realistic expectations is instrumental in situations of uncertainty. This is especially important for migrants whose decision to migrate is usually based on a cost-benefit analysis.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, when expectations are not met, the result is often disappointment and mental health problems.

In this context, this report analyzes employment expectations of refugees for the first time. This study looks at employment expectations of refugees in Germany in 2016, the actual employment situation in 2018, and the associated expectation errors. This report shows that in 2016 refugees generally had high expectations with regard to their employment situation in 2018. These high expectations, however, were only partially met. The employment expectations of female refugees, refugees with poor mental health, and refugees with primary school education, in particular, were not met in 2018.

The findings of this report suggest that the role played by individual and structural variables such as children living in the household or work-family balance were underestimated. Mental health would also appear to play an important role: The better the mental health in 2016 the more likely it is for the refugees' expectations to be positively met. This is particularly relevant given that, on average, refugees have poorer mental health than German nationals.<sup>21</sup>

The findings of this *Weekly Report* propose measures in the following three areas: First, when they arrive, refugees should

<sup>20</sup> Larry A. Sjaastad, "The costs and returns of human migration," *Journal of Political Economy* 70, no. 5 (1962): 80–93.  
<sup>21</sup> Maria Metzger et al., "Psychische und körperliche Gesundheit von Geflüchteten," 64–72.

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JEL: D84, F22, J61

Keywords: refugees, expectation formation, integration, expectation error

Figure 6

**Fulfilment of refugees' employment expectations, by mental health**  
 In percent



Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany, v.35, survey data for 2018, N = 1 407, weighted.

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The expectations expressed in 2016 by refugees with better mental health were found to be met more often.

receive sufficient information on the German labor market and the necessary qualifications. This would guarantee more accurate management of expectations from the very beginning. Second, the low expectations of female refugees and the discrepancy between the expectations and actual employment situation of households with children suggest that these groups of refugees have to be given greater consideration and/or that additional support measures or services are needed for these groups. The bivariate analyses in this *Weekly Report* are somewhat limited in the conclusions that can be drawn from them. In combination with other empirical findings,<sup>22</sup> however, these findings show the importance of facilitating access to employment for these groups through more flexible working hours or suitable childcare options, for example. Third, refugees with poor mental health need additional support.

<sup>22</sup> Ludovica Gambaro et al., "The effect of early childhood education and care services on the social integration of refugee families".

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## EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS

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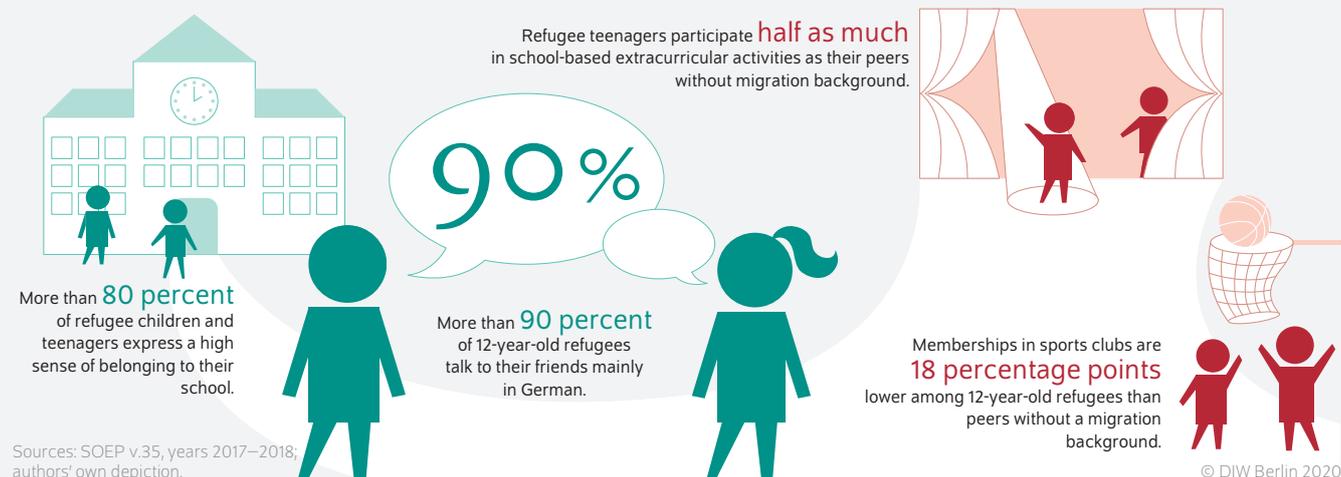
AT A GLANCE

## Integration of Refugee Children and Adolescents In and Out of School: Evidence of Success but Still Room for Improvement

By Ludovica Gambaro, Daniel Kemptner, Lisa Pagel, Laura Schmitz, and C. Katharina Spieß

- Extracurricular activities, whether school-based or out-of-school, can help refugee children and adolescents to integrate in German society
- Representative IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey of refugees shows that most children and adolescents with a refugee background feel a high sense of belonging to their schools
- They often attend after-school programs
- Targeted offers in this area can further promote the integration of refugee children and adolescents
- Participation in school-based extracurricular activities and in out-of-school sports clubs is lower for refugees than for their peers without a migration background

Measured by some indicators, the integration of refugee children and adolescents has been successful; more work is needed in other areas



### FROM THE AUTHORS

*“Many schools have managed to successfully integrate refugee children and adolescents into daily school life, to the extent that most of them feel at ease at school and are able to establish positive social contacts. That said, more targeted activity programs are needed to encourage young refugees to participate, especially in school-based extracurricular activities and out-of-school recreational programs, such as sports clubs.” — Laura Schmitz —*

### MEDIA



Audio Interview with C. Katharina Spieß  
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# Integration of Refugee Children and Adolescents In and Out of School: Evidence of Success but Still Room for Improvement

By Ludovica Gambaro, Daniel Kempfner, Lisa Pagel, Laura Schmitz, and C. Katharina Spieß

## ABSTRACT

Germany has seen the arrival of a large number of displaced children and adolescents in recent years. Integration is vital for their lives today and in the future. Key indicators of successful integration are a sense of belonging to school, participation in extracurricular activities, both within school and outside it, and social contacts. The present report examines these indicators based on data from the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), the IAB-SOEP Migration Samples, and the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees. The findings show that the integration of 12-, 14-, and 17-year-old refugees who came to Germany with their families is essentially moving in the right direction: These young people feel a sense of belonging to their school community and are increasingly attending after-school programs (provided by the school). This gives them the opportunity to spend the whole day with peers who have lived in Germany for longer. The relatively low levels of participation in school-based extracurricular activities among young refugees, however, shows that these programs are not being fully exploited. In this context, further efforts should be made to increase participation. Similarly, there is also untapped potential when it comes to organized leisure and sport activities outside school. Sports clubs, for example, should actively reach out to refugee children and adolescents encouraging them to participate.

Integrating refugee families that have come to Germany is one of the key tasks of German integration policy. However, to successfully achieve this objective, it is necessary to implement measures that are tailored to the specific needs of each respective age group. Ten percent of people who applied for asylum between 2015 and 2016 were aged between 11 and 18.<sup>1</sup> This report analyzes the level of integration of this age group based on their take-up of school-based extracurricular activities and out-of-school recreational programs.

Successfully integrating adolescents comes with its own particular set of challenges. For example, they need to learn German very quickly to be able to understand the lessons in schools where German is the language of instruction. Not only is this important in the short term, for their school careers, but also for the transition to vocational training and ultimately living an independent life. Out-of-school leisure activities, such as sports clubs, are an accessible way for young people to establish social contacts and interact with others; for instance, to exchange information about future job prospects.<sup>2</sup> Thus, this universe of activities—attending regular classes, staying at school in the afternoon, and extracurricular activities both on- and off-campus—are jointly important for increasing the integration of adolescents. Such activities provide additional opportunities for young people to hear and speak the German language and also to familiarize themselves with German culture.

The present report analyzes participation in these programs and activities among refugee children and adolescents aged 12, 14, and 17, who live with at least one adult family member. In this report, we refer to 12-year-old refugees as children, while we refer to the two older age groups as adolescents. We also compare refugees' participation in these activities with

<sup>1</sup> See BAMF, *Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2015. Asyl, Migration und Integration* (Nuremberg: 2016) (in German; available online, accessed August 14, 2020; this applies to all other online sources in this report unless stated otherwise) and BAMF, *Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2016. Asyl, Migration und Integration* (Nuremberg: 2017) (in German; available online). This also includes children and adolescents who came to Germany unaccompanied, however. These are not part of the data basis of the current report. This does not imply, however, that their integration is any less important. It simply means that this subject would require its own dedicated analysis.

<sup>2</sup> See Bundesregierung, *Nationaler Aktionsplan Integration. Zusammenhalt stärken – Teilhabe verwirklichen* (Berlin: 2011) (in German; available online).

that of their peers, both those with a migration background and those with native parents who do not have a migration background.<sup>3</sup> This is intended to show whether, in terms of integration, refugee children and adolescents exhibit any specific characteristics compared to their peers with a migration background but without a specifically refugee background. Comparing young refugees with their non-migrant peers also provides information as to whether we can anticipate a process of convergence with mainstream society. Our analysis is based on the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) and, in particular, the IAB-SOEP Migration Samples and the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees (Box 1).

Differences between these groups of children and adolescents can—but do not always—point to a lack of integration. These differences can, however, also be attributed to the socio-economic characteristics of the families. It is well documented, for example, upon arrival, refugees have a lower level of education and a lower employment rate than the resident average.<sup>4</sup> There is evidence that the children of the first generation of migrants, in particular, are often affected by a combination of cultural, social, and financial hardships.<sup>5</sup> Bearing this in mind, the comparisons in the present report also take into account the socio-economic characteristics that other studies show are relevant for differences in the participation in extracurricular and leisure activities (Box 2).<sup>6</sup>

### Around two-thirds of refugee children and adolescents attended separate classes

A variety of organizational models are used by schools to help young refugees integrate into the German education system. Besides immediately enrolling them in mainstream classes (generally with additional language support), many arrivals are initially taught, either entirely or partially, in separate classes.<sup>7</sup> Different regions give these classes different names (welcome class, transitional class, intensive class, language-learning class, etc.) but the objective is always to facilitate rapid language acquisition for school-age children who have recently arrived in Germany and lack adequate German

<sup>3</sup> All children and adolescents in the comparison group with a migration background live in households with a direct migration background. The children and adolescents themselves foreign-born (around one-quarter) or native-born (around three-quarters). A comparison of only first-generation migrant children and adolescents would not be meaningful due to the small number of cases.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Herbert Brücker et al., "Language skills and employment rate of refugees in Germany improving with time," *DIW Weekly Report*, no. 4 (2019): 49–61 (available online). See also the report in this issue: Daniel Graeber and Felicitas Schikora, "Refugees' High Employment Expectations: Partially Met," *DIW Weekly Report*, no. 34 (2020) 337–343. These low employment rates are due to the employment restrictions refugees are subject to in the recipient country, however.

<sup>5</sup> See Deutsches Jugendinstitut e.V., Susanne Lochner and Alexandra Jähner, eds., *DJI-Kinder- und Jugendmigrationsreport 2020 – Datenanalyse zur Situation junger Menschen in Deutschland* (Munich and Halle an der Saale: 2020) (in German; available online).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Jan Marcus, Janina Nemitz, and C. Katharina Spieß, "Ausbau der Ganztagschule: Kinder aus einkommensschwachen Haushalten im Westen nutzen Angebote verstärkt," *DIW Wochenbericht*, no. 27 (2013): 11–23 (available online, in German) and also Adrian Hille, Annette Arnold, and Jürgen Schupp, "Freizeitverhalten Jugendlicher: Bildungsorientierte Aktivitäten spielen eine immer größere Rolle," *DIW Wochenbericht*, no. 40 (2013): 15–25 (in German; available online).

<sup>7</sup> See Mona Massumi et al., *Neu zugewanderte Kinder und Jugendliche im deutschen Schulsystem* (Cologne: 2015) (in German; available online).

#### Box 1

### Data and Definition of Comparison Groups

Data from the Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP), which includes the IAB-SOEP Migration Samples and the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey, serves as the basis for our report.

In the SOEP, respondents were asked about their country of birth and their nationality. Foreigners and other respondents who were not born in Germany were also asked when they immigrated to Germany or which country their parents migrated from and what their legal status was on arrival. Households and the young people living in these households are divided into three comparison groups according to the response given by the adult household member answering the SOEP questionnaire (referred to as head of household; in most cases the mother or father): (1) The adult household member immigrated to Germany after 2013 and arrived as a refugee; (2) the adult household member and, where applicable, their partner immigrated to Germany but not as refugees; or (3) the adult household member and, where applicable, their partner were born in Germany and have no migrant background.

In the SOEP, defined cohorts were asked to complete age-specific questionnaires, which children who turned 12 in the survey year completed themselves. Likewise, adolescents who turned 14 or 17 in the survey year answered specific questions. Since the children and adolescents in these age groups could provide information about their schools and extracurricular activities themselves, the analyses in the current report are based on this self-reporting. However, not all three age groups were asked questions about all three subject areas, meaning that some of the figures are only based on partial samples. These are specified accordingly in the figure headings.

language skills.<sup>8</sup> Separate classes should, however, only be a temporary solution (for no more than one or two years). Which form of provision is most beneficial for integrating refugees is a controversial topic of debates. Separate classes are frequently criticized because of the limited opportunities they provide for contact with other peers and the considerable risk of exclusion and stigmatization. At the same time, separate classes can be a more targeted way of meeting the needs of young refugees.<sup>9</sup>

Regional studies show that virtually all school-age children who have recently arrived in Germany are initially taught

<sup>8</sup> See Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, eds., *Bildung in Deutschland 2016: Ein indikatorengeprägter Bericht mit einer Analyse zu Bildung und Migration* (Bielefeld: 2016).

<sup>9</sup> For an account of the arguments for and against separate classes, see Aladin El-Mafaalani and Mona Massumi, "Flucht: Forschung und Transfer," *IMIS und BICC State-of-Research Papier 08a* (2019) (available online).

Table

**Attendance in separate classes by refugees (12-, 14- and 17-year-olds)**

In percent

Type of schooling at start of school	Age group				Percentage of those who stayed in a separate class for more than 12 months <sup>1</sup>
	12-year-olds	14-year-olds	17-year-olds	Average	
Regular class	30	40	38	36	
Separate and regular classes	23	22	18	20	18
Exclusively separate class	47	38	45	44	22

1 Average across all age groups. After being taught in a separate class, pupils usually switch to a regular class.

Note: values based on 677 interviewed refugee children and adolescents aged 12, 14, and 17 who provided information on their schooling.

Sources: SOEP v35, years 2017–2018, weighted; authors' own calculations.

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## Box 2

**Methodology**

Multivariate regression models were used to examine differences in the participation in school-based and out-of-school extracurricular activities between refugees and their peers living in Germany, both with and without migration backgrounds. The least squares method was used to generate estimates from two different types of regression models.

Model 1 determines the statistical significance of the differences between the groups of children and adolescents. To achieve this, participation in activities is regressed on group belonging: (1) children and adolescents with a migration but not a refugee background and (2) children and adolescents without a migrant background compared to (3) children and adolescents with a refugee background. Indicators for the 12-, 14-, and 17-year age groups are also included. The estimated coefficients for the first two groups, corrected for differences in the age composition of the two groups, show the differences between the refugee group and the respective comparative group. Here we are particularly interested in whether this difference is statistically significant or not.

Model 2 additionally considers whether a part of the difference can be explained by the family background of the children or adolescents. To achieve this, indicators of the family's socio-economic characteristics were included in the regression as additional explanatory variables. These included years of education of the household head, net equivalized household income,<sup>1</sup> household size, household type (single-parent or couple household) as well as an indicator of whether neither the main adult nor his or her partner is gainfully employed. In this way, we factor out the share of the differences that is correlated with socio-economic differences between the refugee children and adolescents and their comparison groups.

<sup>1</sup> Net equivalized household income is based on the OECD equivalence scale, which, by weighting members within a household, makes it possible to compare the income situation of households of different sizes and compositions, see glossary (available online, in German).

in separate classes.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, the empirical findings outlined in this report indicate that more than one-third of refugees aged 12, 14, and 17 went straight into mainstream classes upon starting school in Germany (Table)<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, the fear that refugees will be permanently segregated also appears to be unfounded as only around one-fifth of refugees reported having spent more than a year being schooled in a separate class before moving into a mainstream class. That said, almost half (44 percent) of all refugee children and adolescents initially had all their lessons in separate classes and were thus taught completely separately from their native peers. This form of teaching has been particularly heavily criticized because of the lack of connection with a mainstream class and the difficulties it causes when transitioning to mainstream schooling.

**Most refugee adolescents have a sense of belonging to their school**

Irrespective of whether taught in a separate or a mainstream class, attending school can have a stabilizing effect on refugee children and adolescents and provide structure to their daily lives. Young people who feel accepted and supported by their school community show higher levels of motivation to learn and are more self-confident.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, devel-

<sup>10</sup> See Juliane Karakayali et al., "Die Kontinuität der Separation: Vorbereitungsklassen für neu zugewanderte Kinder und Jugendliche im Kontext historischer Formen separierter Beschulung," *DDS – Die Deutsche Schule* 109, no. 3 (2017): 223–235 (in German; available online) and also Argyro Panagiotopoulou, Lisa Rosen, and Stefan Karduck, "Exklusion durch institutionalisierte Barrieren. Einblicke in die pädagogische Praxis einer sogenannten Vorbereitungsklasse für geflüchtete Kinder und Jugendliche in einem marginalisierten Quartier von Köln," in *Neue Mobilitäts- und Migrationsprozesse und sozialräumliche Segregation*, eds. Rauf Ceylan, Markus Ottersbach, and Petra Wiedemann (Wiesbaden: 2017), 115–131 (in German; available online).

<sup>11</sup> Based on the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, the DJI Kinder- und Jugendmigrationsreport 2020 states that in 2017 almost one-third of refugee schoolchildren attended a separate class (see page 211). The analyses presented in the report are based on the 2017 survey wave and include all school-age refugees, while the present report evaluates the information on the type of schooling received by 12-, 14-, and 16-year-olds at the start of their education in Germany. This might explain any discrepancies in the findings, see DJI, Lochner et al., *DJI-Kinder- und Jugendmigrationsreport*.

<sup>12</sup> For an overview, see Karen F. Osterman, "Students' need for belonging in the school community," *Review of Educational Research* 70, no. 3 (2000): 323–367 (available online).

oping a sense of belonging to their school can make it easier for refugees to integrate into school life.<sup>13</sup>

The majority of the 12-, 14-, and 17-year-old refugees surveyed had a strong sense of belonging to their school. On average, refugees' responses to the six statements concerning sense of belonging to school showed that they had a statistically significantly stronger sense of belonging than the comparison group of 15-year-olds responding to the same statements in the 2018 German PISA study (Figure 1).<sup>14</sup> In response to each of the aforementioned six statements, between 80 and 90 percent of refugees surveyed indicated that they (strongly) agreed with the statement or, in the case of the negatively formulated statement, (strongly) disagreed. Refugees agreed considerably more frequently with the statements "I feel I belong to this school" and "I find it easy to make new friends in school" than participants in the PISA test conducted in Germany.

This shows that many schools have successfully managed to integrate recently arrived refugee children and adolescents into school life to the extent that most feel at ease in the school environment and are able to establish positive social contacts with others. Given that the sense of belonging to school among children with a migration background is typically lower or the same as their peers without a migration background,<sup>15</sup> this finding is particularly positive.<sup>16</sup>

### A particularly large share of refugee children and adolescents attend school for the whole day

Attending school in the morning only (as is typical in Germany) allows young refugees to come into contact with their German peers and non-refugee children with a migration background being taught in mainstream classes. If refugee children and adolescents have the opportunity to interact with peers who have lived in Germany all their lives, or at least for a long time, in the afternoon as well, this can further support integration efforts. All-day schooling and after-school programs provide young refugees with precisely this opportunity. As a rule, they attend every day of the school week both in the morning and in the afternoon, thus being able to interact with their peers for longer hours. However, extracurricular activities, whether at the school or elsewhere,

<sup>13</sup> See Maryam Kia-Keating and B. Heidi Ellis, "Belonging and Connection to School in Resettlement: Young Refugees, School Belonging, and Psychosocial Adjustment," *Clinical Child Psychology* 12, no. 1 (2007): 29–43 (available online).

<sup>14</sup> The mean difference was calculated using data on 3,939 participants in the 2018 PISA Study conducted in Germany. See Julia Mang et al. (forthcoming): *PISA 2018 Skalenhandbuch. Dokumentation der Erhebungsinstrumente*. The difference between this and the data used for the present study is statistically significant at the one percent level.

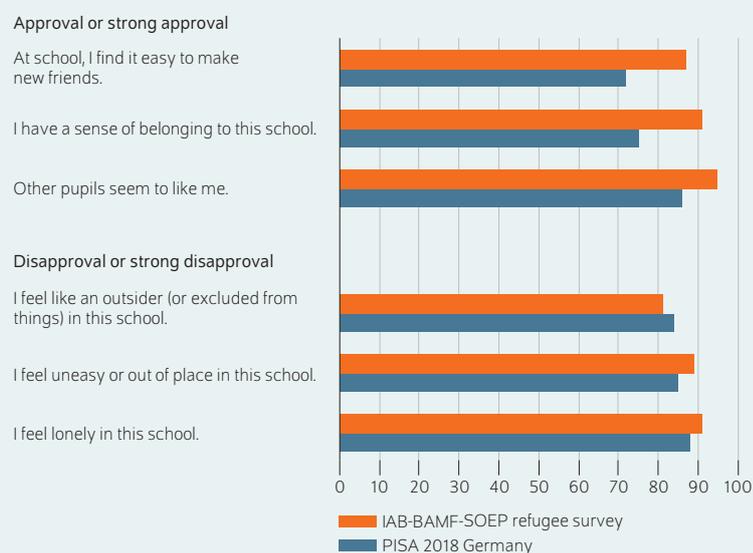
<sup>15</sup> OECD, "Students' sense of belonging at school and their relations with teachers," in *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*, ed. OECD (Paris: 2017) (available online).

<sup>16</sup> In contrast to this finding, the 2018 IQB-Bildungstrend indicates that, although young refugees demonstrate a high degree of social integration and school satisfaction, this is significantly less pronounced than for comparable schoolchildren with a migration but no refugee background and those without a migration background. See Sofie Henschel et al., "Zuwanderungsbezogene Disparitäten," in *IQB-Bildungstrend 2018. Mathematische und naturwissenschaftliche Kompetenzen am Ende der Sekundarstufe I im zweiten Ländervergleich*, eds. Petra Stanat et al. (Münster, New York: 2019), 326–330 (in German; available online).

Figure 1

### Sense of belonging to school by refugee children and adolescents (12-, 14- and 17-year-olds)

In percent



Note: IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey: refugees at the age of 12, 14 and 17 (depending on the statement, N= 606–614). PISA 2018 survey: students aged 15 (depending on the statement, N = 3,870–3,939).

Sources: SOEP v35, years 2017–2018, weighted; Julia Mang et al. (in preparation): PISA 2018 Scale Manual. Documentation of the survey instruments; authors' own calculations.

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Most refugees show a (strong) sense of belonging to their schools.

can also offer exposure to the German language as well as the chance for refugees to become more familiar with the everyday life of children and adolescents in Germany.

In terms of whole-day school attendance, the data show that refugee children and adolescents aged 12 and 14 are more likely to be in school mornings and afternoons or attend an after-school program (Figure 2). Participation among refugees is 51 percent, while among their peers with a migration background, the corresponding share is 41 percent, and for those without a migration background, it is just 32 percent. The difference between the high participation rate among refugees and the rate among children without a migration background is statistically significant (Figure 3, Model 1).

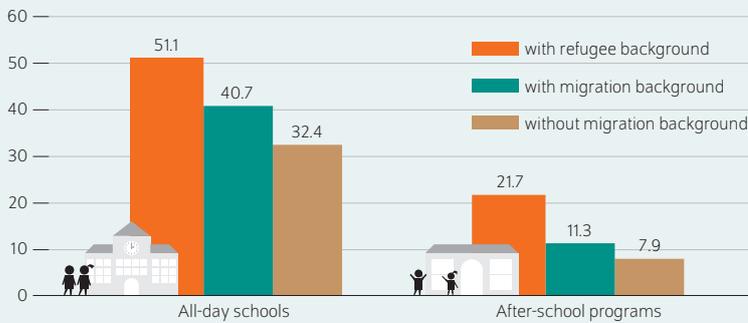
However, this difference can be explained by parental and household characteristics, i.e. the family background of the children and adolescents (Figure 3, Model 2). If a multivariate regression is used to factor out the share of the difference that is explained by family characteristics, the difference becomes smaller and statistically insignificant. These findings therefore suggest that the family background of refugee children and adolescents contributes to whether or not they attend all-day schooling, although it is not the only factor.

Regardless, attending all-day schooling makes integration easier. Studies suggest that participation in all-day schooling

Figure 2

**Participation rates in all-day schools (12- and 14-year-olds) and after school programs (12-year-olds)**

In percent



Notes: Attendance rates in all-day school were reported by the head of household (N = 2,221). The use of after school programs refers to information provided by the 12-year-olds themselves (N = 996).

Sources: SOEP v35, years 2017–2018, weighted; authors' own calculations.

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Children and adolescents with a refugee background are more likely to attend all-day schools and after-school programs.

programs can have a positive impact on social skills, particularly for children with a migration background.<sup>17</sup> All-day schooling programs, therefore, have enormous potential for integrating children and adolescents with a migration or refugee background, although there is still room for improvement.<sup>18</sup>

The situation is similar regarding the use of after-school programs by 12-year-olds. The share of refugee children attending after-school is around 22 percent, while the corresponding share among children with a migration background is only 11 percent, and among those without a migration background, it is a mere eight percent (Figure 2). Again, the difference in the take-up rates between the refugee children and the children from a migration background is statistically significant (Figure 3, Model 1). Yet again, the difference becomes smaller and statistically insignificant once socio-economic characteristics of the family are taken into account (Figure 3, Model 2).

**Refugee adolescents participate less frequently in school-based extracurricular activities**

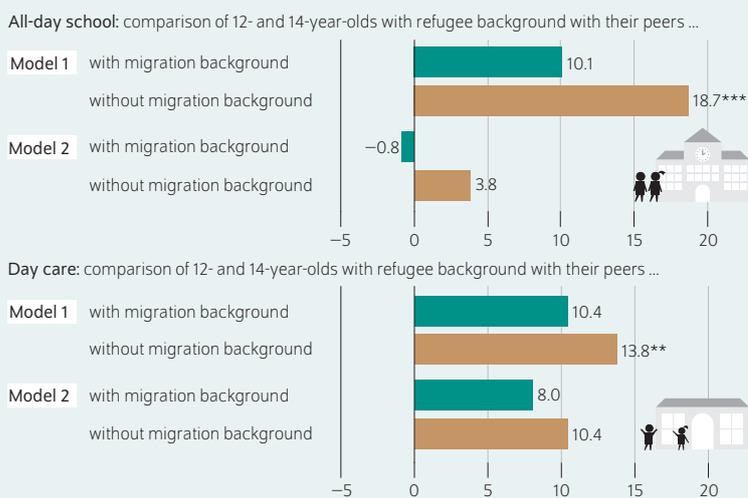
Besides all-day schooling and after-school programs, in the afternoon schoolchildren also frequently take part in school-based extracurricular activities. In this setting too, children and adolescents who have come to Germany as refugees can interact with peers with different backgrounds and this interaction can positively influence their integration.<sup>19</sup> The data show how frequently respondents participate in school-based activities that take place in the afternoon, after regular classes, for example music or dram clubs, sports, the school newspaper, but also activities related to school-life such as class or school council representative. Where adolescents indicated that they participated in one or more of these activities, this is defined as participation in extracurricular school activity. Data is available for 14- and 17-year-olds.

Overall, the participation rate among refugee adolescents is 32 percent, while the corresponding figure for adolescents with a migration background is 51 percent, and for those without a migration background, it is 63 percent (Figure 4). The difference between the participation rates of the refugees and the adolescents without a migration background is statistically significant (Figure 5, Model 1). The other multivariate estimates indicate that around half of these differences can be explained by family characteristics. If we remove the

Figure 3

**Use of all-day schools and after school programs by children and adolescents with refugee background compared to their peers**

In percentage points



Notes: Participation rates in all-day school were reported by the head of household (N = 2,221). The use of after-school programs refers to information provided by the 12-year-olds themselves (N = 996). Model 1 determines the statistically significant differences between children and adolescents with a migration background and those without a migration background compared to those with a refugee background. Model 2 additionally controls for a number of socio-economic characteristics (Box 2). Statistical significance levels of the differences compared to the group with a refugee background: \*\*\* 1 percent, \*\* 5 percent, \* 10 percent. Significance tests are based on standard errors clustered at the household level.

Sources: SOEP v35, years 2017–2018, weighted; authors' own calculations.

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The increased use of all-day schools and after school programs by refugees can be explained to large parts by socio-economic characteristics of the families.

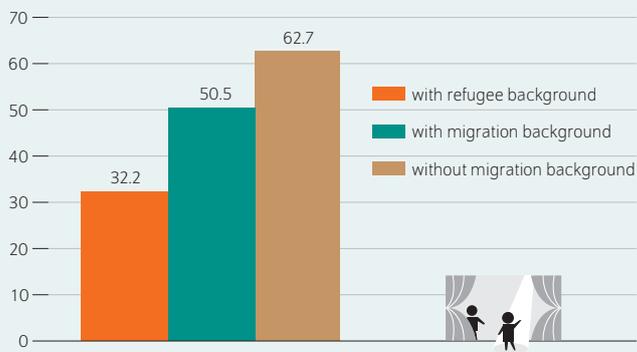
<sup>17</sup> Natalie Fischer, Hans Peter Kuhn, and Ivo Züchne, "Entwicklung von Sozialverhalten in der Ganztagschule," in *Ganztagschule: Entwicklung, Qualität, Wirkungen. Längsschnittliche Befunde der Studie zur Entwicklung von Ganztagschulen (StEG)*, eds. Natalie Fischer et al. (Weinheim: 2011), 246–266 (in German; available online).

<sup>18</sup> For example, less than half of all primary schools, one-third of secondary schools (excluding academic-track schools), and only 11 percent of academic-track secondary schools (*Gymnasium*) have educational concepts that explicitly refer to promoting inclusion and integration through targeted all-day schooling programs. See StEG-Konsortium, ed., *Ganztagschule 2017/2018. Deskriptive Befunde einer bundesweiten Befragung* (Frankfurt am Main, Dortmund, Gießen, München: 2019) (in German; available online).

<sup>19</sup> Marta Kindler, Vesselina Ratcheva, and Maria Piechowska, "Social networks, social capital and migration integration at local level. European literature review," *IRIS Working Paper Series 6* (2015) (available online).

Figure 4

**Participation rate of adolescents (14- and 17-year-olds) in school-based extracurricular activities**  
In percent



Note: N = 2,163.

Sources: SOEP v35, years 2017–2018, weighted; authors' own calculations.

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Adolescent refugees are less likely to take part in school-based extracurricular activities.

share of the difference that can be explained by the adolescents' family background, then the differences also become statistically insignificant (Figure 5, Model 2). This therefore shows that the differences can be entirely explained by the socio-economic characteristics of the young refugees rather than by the refugee background *per se*.<sup>20</sup> This finding should be taken into account when planning integration policy measures.

Participation in sport can be particularly beneficial for refugees, as stated in the German government's National Integration Action Plan.<sup>21</sup> Bearing this in mind, we examined participation in school-based sports clubs separately. While just nine percent of young refugees take part in school-based sports clubs, the corresponding figure for young people with a migration background is 17 percent and, for those without a migration background, it is 18 percent (Figure 6). This shows that more still needs to be done to promote the integration of young refugees through participation in school sport activities. This is illustrated even more clearly when we look at the share of girls in the group of refugees taking part in school sport clubs.<sup>22</sup> Girls account for only a very small share of those participating in this type of extracurricular activity. This shows that the stated aim of the German government's National Integration Action Plan to increase the

<sup>20</sup> This differs from the group of adolescent refugees in: C. Katharina Spieß, Franz Westermaier, and Jan Marcus, "Children and adolescents with refugee background less likely to participate in voluntary educational programs—with exception of extracurricular school activities," *DIW Economic Bulletin*, no. 35 (2016): 422–430 (online available).

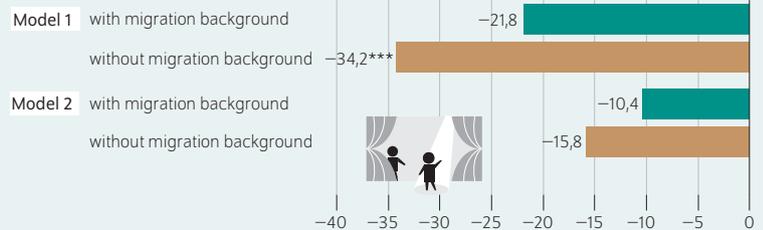
<sup>21</sup> See Bundesregierung: *Nationaler Aktionsplan*.

<sup>22</sup> The share of girls in the group of refugees participating in an after-school sports club is just under 17 percent. This means that, in total, a mere four percent of girls with a refugee background participate a club of this kind, while overall participation among boys is still 12 percent.

Figure 5

**Participation in school-based extracurricular activities by adolescent refugees in comparison to peers**  
In percentage points

Comparison of 14- and 17-year-olds with refugee backgrounds to their peers ...



Notes: N = 2,163. Model 1 determines the statistically significant differences between children and adolescents with a migration background and those without a migration background compared to children and adolescents with a refugee background. Model 2 additionally controls for a number of socio-economic characteristics (Box 2). Statistical significance levels of differences compared to the refugee group: \*\*\* 1 percent, \*\* 5 percent, \* 10 percent. Significance tests are based on standard errors clustered at the household level.

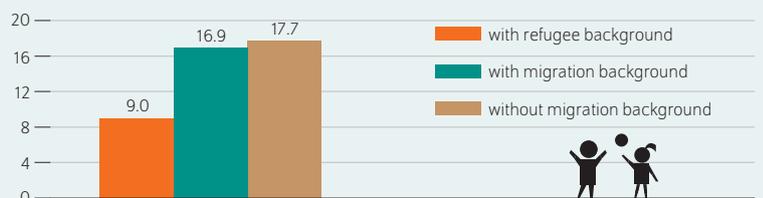
Sources: SOEP v35, years 2017–2018, weighted; authors' own calculations.

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Differences in participation in school-based extracurricular activities can largely be explained by socio-economic background of families.

Figure 6

**Participation rate of young people (14- and 17-year-olds) in school-based sports**  
In percent



Note: N = 2,163.

Sources: SOEP v35, years 2017–2018, weighted; authors' own calculations.

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Adolescents with a refugee background use sports clubs less frequently.

participation of girls and women in sport activities has not yet been adequately achieved.<sup>23</sup>

**Refugee children less frequently members of sports clubs than children with no migration background**

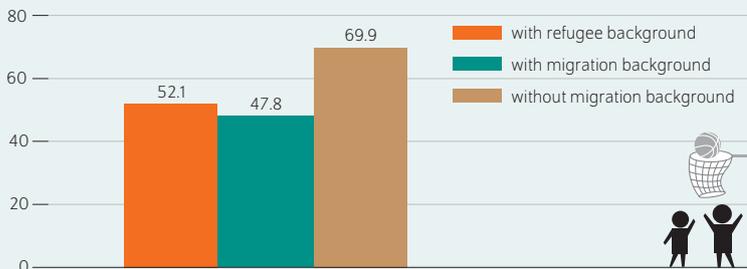
As well as school-based activities, there are also a variety of out-of-school activities and programs that have the potential of contributing to the integration refugee children and

<sup>23</sup> See Bundesregierung: *Nationaler Aktionsplan*.

Figure 7

**Membership of children (12-year-olds) in out-of-school sports clubs**

In percent



Note: N = 1,049.

Sources: SOEP v35, years 2017–2018, weighted; authors' own calculations.

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Regarding memberships in sports clubs, there is no noticeable difference between children with refugee and migration backgrounds.

However, when it comes to membership of a sports club among 12-year-olds, the picture is more nuanced (Figure 7). The share of refugee children who are members of such organizations is 52 percent, with the corresponding figure for children with a migration background just marginally lower at 48 percent. For children with no migration background, however, this figure is considerably higher. In fact, it is statistically significantly higher at almost 70 percent (Figure 8, Model 1).<sup>25</sup>

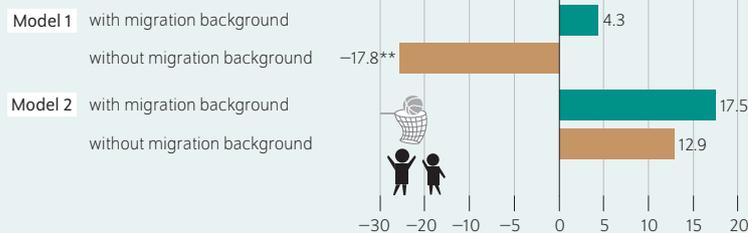
The more detailed analyses show that around two-thirds of this difference can be explained by family characteristics: when accounting for these, the difference in participation rates between the two groups is no longer statistically significantly different (Figure 8, Model 2). There is also evidence of a gender gap in the detailed analyses, which could be linked to different cultures in refugees' country of origin. Nevertheless, the share of refugee girls who belong to a sports club outside school is still higher than the share who take part in school-based sports clubs.<sup>26</sup> This might suggest that, recent policy initiatives aimed at promoting sport participation among migrants such as "migration mainstreaming"<sup>27</sup> is at least moving in the right direction and has been more successful than school-based sports clubs. That said, it should be noted that the data basis does not allow us to analyze adolescents, for whom a different picture might emerge.

Figure 8

**Membership in out-of-school sports clubs of children with refugee background compared to peers**

In percentage points

Comparison of 12-year-olds with refugee background to their peers ...



Notes: N = 1,049. Model 1 determines the statistically significant differences between children and adolescents with a migration background and those without a migration background compared to children and adolescents with a refugee background. Model 2 additionally controls for a number of socio-economic characteristics (Box 2). Statistical significance levels of differences compared to the refugee group: \*\*\* 1 percent, \*\* 5 percent, \* 10 percent. Significance tests are based on standard errors clustered at the household level.

Sources: SOEP v35, years 2017–2018, weighted; authors' own calculations.

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Family background explains the difference in sports club membership for children with and without refugee background.

**Refugee children and adolescents more frequently attend youth groups**

Apart from sport activities there are also other programs and services that give young people the opportunity to meet and interact with peers in the afternoons—youth groups, for example. Other young people reported doing voluntary work in the afternoons.

Refugee children and adolescents show above average participation in youth groups (Figure 9). A total of 41 percent of refugee adolescents attended a youth club, while only 14 percent of young people with a migration background, and 28 percent of those without a migration background reported doing so.<sup>28</sup> These differences are statistically significant and cannot be explained by other family characteristics (Figure 10,

adolescents.<sup>24</sup> Here too, sport deserves particular attention. Sport, and team sports in particular, offers an opportunity for social interaction which is less reliant on language and can thus promote integration.

**24** Participation in after-school clubs is shown to have educational effects for all children and adolescents, see, for example Charlotte Cabane, Adrian Hille, and Michael Lechner, "Mozart or Pelé? The effects of adolescents' participation in music and sports," *Labour Economics* 41(C) (2016): 90–103 (available online).

**25** Other studies (see Lochner et al., *DJI-Kinder- und Jugendmigrationsreport*) show that 39 percent of young people with a migration background and 57 percent of those with no migration background mainly play their preferred sport in clubs outside the school setting. However, these figures relate to 17-year-olds and not 12-year-olds as in the present study. The corresponding information for refugee adolescents is not available. Moreover, the analyses also differ in how they define "migration background". In the Lochner study people are referred to as having a migration background when either they themselves or at least one of their parents has not been a German citizen since birth.

**26** The share of girls in the group of 12-year-old refugees is just over one-third. This means that 43 percent of girls and 60 percent of boys with a refugee background regularly attend a sports club.

**27** By "migration mainstreaming" we mean the promotion of equal opportunities to participate in the structures of organized sports, see Bundesregierung, *Nationaler Aktionsplan*, 249.

**28** Another recent study (Lochner et al., *DJI-Kinder- und Jugendmigrationsreport*) found no differences between children with and without a migration background with regard to participation in youth groups. Refugee children were not included in these analyses. The discrepancy between these analyses and the findings of the present study might be due to the different definitions of migration background (Box 1).

Model 2). This suggests a direct correlation between participation in youth groups and refugee status. This could be because some youth groups specifically target refugee children and adolescents.

The share of refugee children or adolescents who reported doing voluntary work was 25 percent, while the corresponding share for their peers with a migration background was 22 percent, and for those without a migration background it was 32 percent (Figure 9). This is not a statistically significant difference (Figure 10).

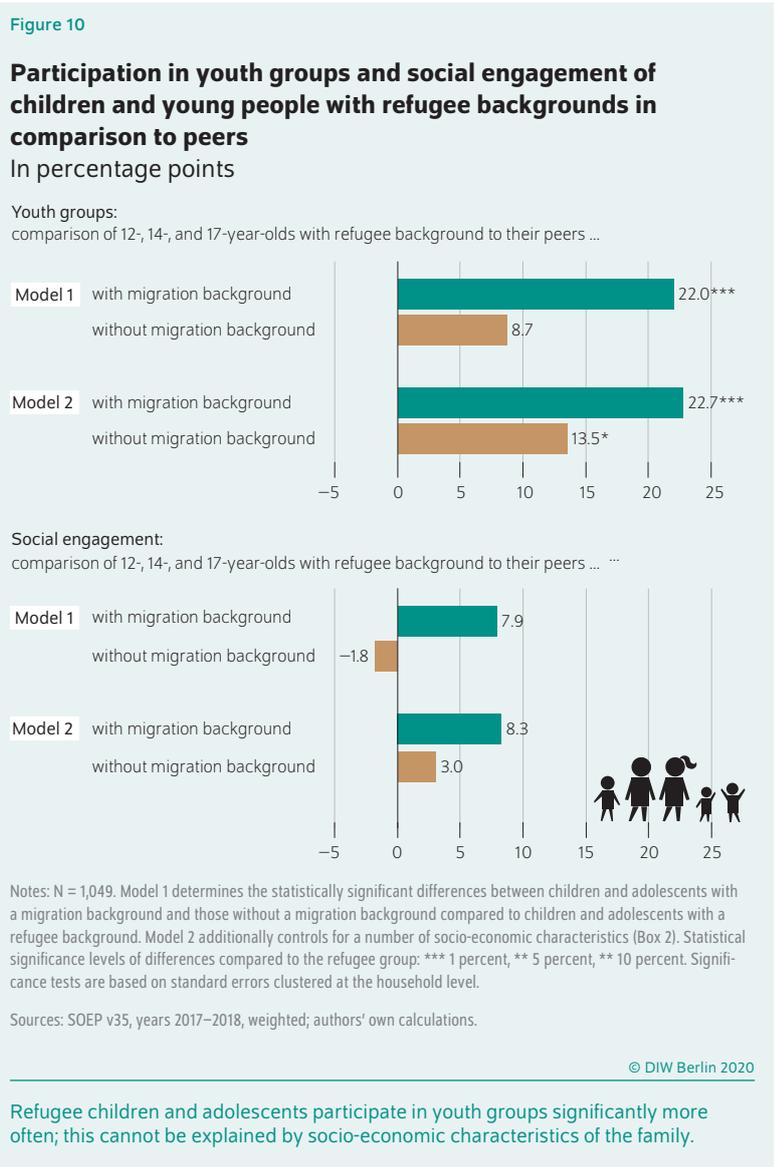
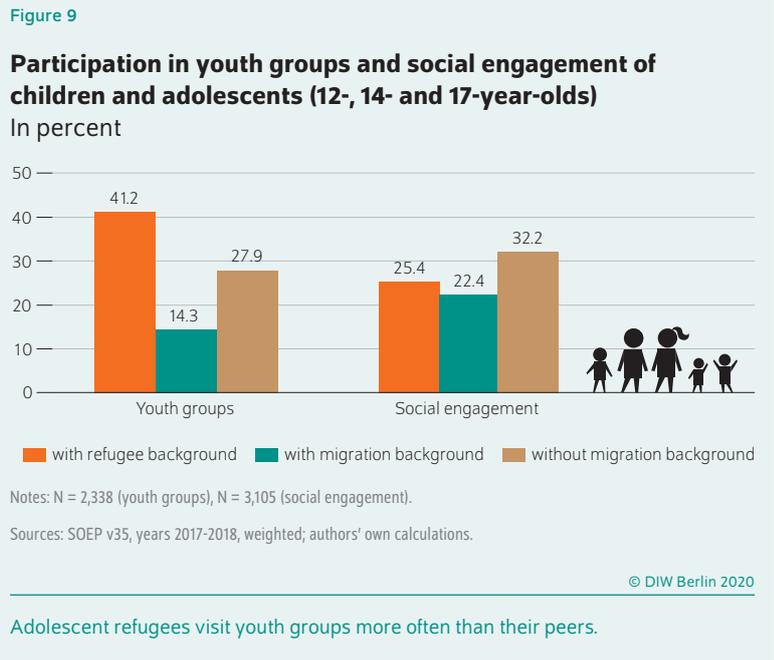
**Refugee adolescents in particular often communicate with friends in German**

Apart from participation in extracurricular leisure and sport activities, regular contact with German-speaking peers also plays an important role in integrating refugee adolescents. Thus, friendships with adolescent members of Germany’s majority population can enhance the social capital of adolescents with experience of migration.<sup>29</sup> In this context, the 12-, 14-, and 17-year-olds were asked about their social contact. With a share of around eight percent, refugee children and adolescents reported not having met any friends at all over the course of a month much more frequently than their peers without a migration background (Figure 11). That said, the share of refugees who met with friends on a daily basis was 81 percent, putting them on a par with the other groups. It therefore appears that there is a small sub-group of refugees who are in danger of being socially isolated from their peers.

Communicating with friends in German can be very important for the acquisition or consolidation of German language skills. If refugee children and adolescents meet with their friends they mainly speak German (Figure 12). The figure for the 17-year-olds is 70 percent, and 66 percent of the 14-year-olds speak German, as well as other languages, with their friends. In comparison, 90 percent of 12-year-olds also talk to their friends in German.

**Conclusion: Although a lot of progress has been made, particularly for younger refugees, there is still a long way to go**

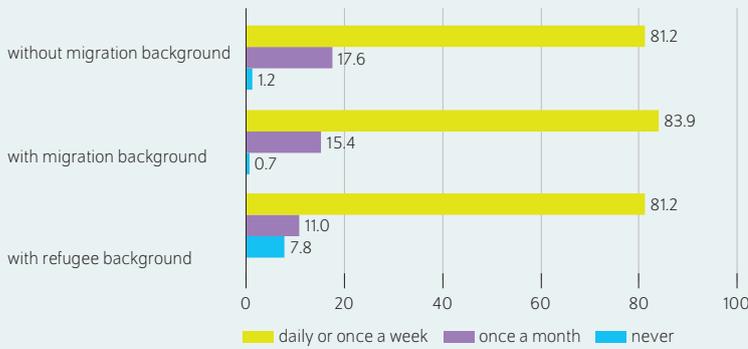
The integration of children and adolescents who came to Germany with their families as refugees is a key component of German integration policy. As measured by participation in a range of school-based and out-of-school activities this integration has, in many respects, been a success. This is shown when we compare the participation of young refugees with that of their peers in the host country. For example, refugee children and adolescents express a stronger than average sense of belonging to their school. This is an important finding that can be used to promote further integration. However, the share of refugee children and adolescents who do not feel as though they belong should not be overlooked. Moreover, we must continue to monitor developments over



29 See Lochner et al., *DJI-Kinder- und Jugendmigrationsreport*.

Figure 11

**Frequency with which children and adolescents (12-, 14- and 17-year-olds) meet their friends per month**  
In percent



Note: N = 2 341.

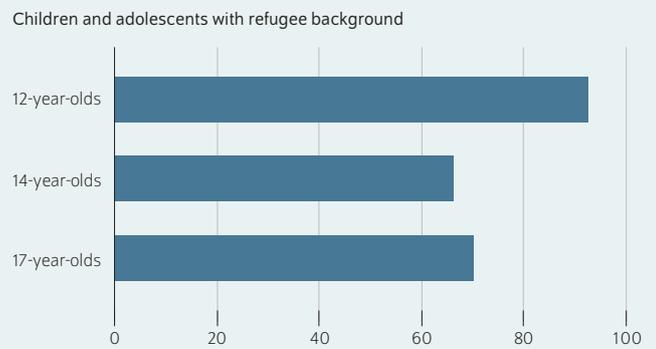
Sources: SOEP v35, years 2017–2018, weighted; authors' own calculations.

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Refugee children and adolescents are more likely to meet no friends at all compared to their peers with and without a migration background.

Figure 12

**Approval to statement “spoken language with friends is mostly German”**  
In percent



Note: N = 436.

Sources: SOEP v35, years 2017–2018, weighted; authors' own calculations.

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90 percent of the 12-year-old refugees talk to their friends mainly in German.

the next few years to ascertain whether this strong feeling of belonging also facilitates integration in other areas, or whether it reflects an initial sense of optimism triggered by having a new, secure, and settled daily life.

Further efforts are needed, particularly with a view to increasing the participation of children and adolescents with a refugee background in school-based extracurricular activities. In this context, schools could do more to raise awareness about the activities that are available and other students could encourage their refugee classmates to take part.

Refugees are increasingly taking part in after-school programs. This also offers an opportunity for social interaction and helps refugees familiarize themselves with the language and everyday life of children and adolescents living in Germany. Sport is another important vehicle for promoting integration. Although more than half of all children with a refugee background are already members of sports clubs, more could still be done here. Sports clubs could be

made more attractive to refugees. This could be achieved by organizing more targeted activities or reducing membership fees, if these measures are not already being implemented.

A remarkably high share of refugees attend youth groups. Similarly, they also reported being just as frequently involved in voluntary work as their peers. With regard to social contact with peers, it is evident that, in many cases, the 12-year-olds choose to talk to their friends in German. They appear to be more integrated than the older adolescents—at least if this is judged on use of the German language. In any event, it is clear that the efforts made by the municipalities, federal states, and national government to integrate refugees, also by means of non-formal extracurricular activities, both inside and outside school, have, in many cases, been successful. The most important thing now is to ensure that these efforts are sustained and that the requisite public funding is made available to allow this to happen. In the end, the individual and social costs of unsuccessful integration are considerably higher than the costs of a proactive integration policy.

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JEL: I24, I28, J15, Z18

Keywords: refugees, children, youth, social integration, non-formal activities

AT A GLANCE

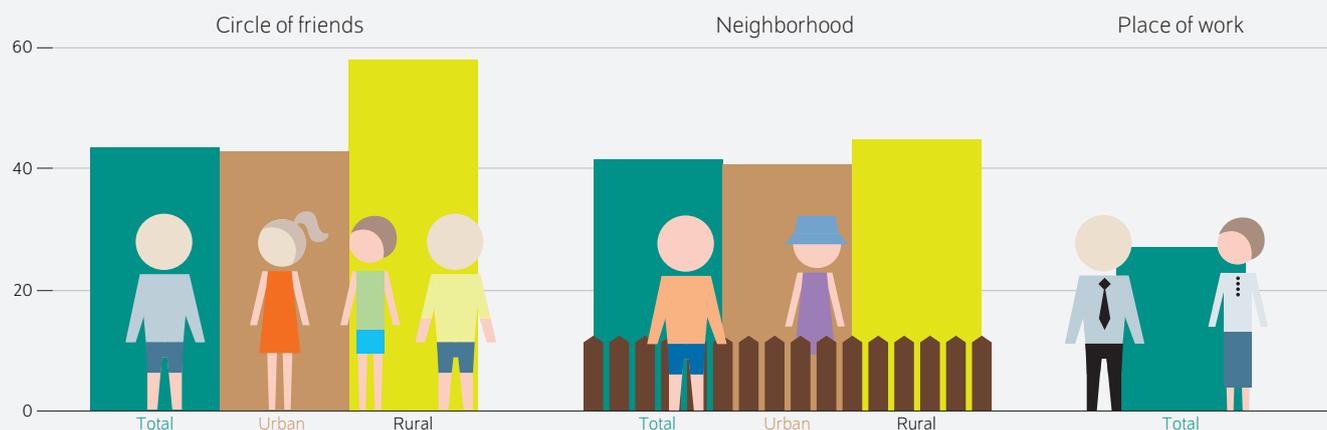
## Social Integration of Refugees Is Improving

By Katja Schmidt, Jannes Jacobsen, and Magdalena Krieger

- Evaluation of data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) indicates that concerns about immigration among the population are declining, while refugees' concerns about xenophobia are growing
- Effects of refugee immigration are viewed with more skepticism in rural regions than in urban areas
- Refugees have less trust in public administration than they do in the police and the courts
- Around half of refugees have regular contact with the local population; these contacts are less common among female refugees
- Particularly for female refugees integrational efforts should be intensified—interethnic networks could be widened

### Most contact between refugees and the local population comes via their circles of friends

Refugees in percent



Sources: SOEP v.35 (weighted), wave 2018, N = 4,391; authors' own calculations.

Notes: In relation to contact at work only; rural and urban areas cannot be compared due to the low number of cases.

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### FROM THE AUTHORS

*“The findings of the report show that refugees and the host society are growing closer together. Yet, further efforts are needed to address current concerns and skepticism on both sides.”*

— Katja Schmidt —

### MEDIA



Audio Interview with C. Katharina Spieß  
[www.diw.de/mediathek](http://www.diw.de/mediathek)

# Social Integration of Refugees Is Improving

By Katja Schmidt, Jannes Jacobsen, and Magdalena Krieger

## ABSTRACT

Five years ago, almost a million people came to Germany seeking refuge. Chancellor Angela Merkel responded to public concern over such a large influx of refugees with her well-known saying, “Wir schaffen das” (We can do this!). Much has happened since then. As this report shows, the German population’s concerns over immigration have been decreasing since 2016. Nevertheless, refugees are increasingly concerned about xenophobia. At the same time, although their trust in key state institutions is high, they are less trusting of Germany’s public administration system. One way of building mutual reliance might be to foster personal contact between refugees and local populations. However, the present study indicates that, so far, only around half of refugees have regular contact with Germans. Female refugees, in particular, have less contact with Germans. Government initiatives to create diverse social networks could be an important step toward greater integration.

There are two important aspects to note in the public debate on refugee immigration since 2015. The first aspect is the response from the population living in Germany to the increased influx of refugees and the second is refugee integration into the labor market and into the educational system. While the reaction of the resident population has so far been mixed—marked on the one hand by voluntary engagement for refugees, on the other hand by great concerns about immigration<sup>1</sup>—refugees were found to have integrated relatively quickly and successfully.<sup>2,3</sup> However, there are other, subjective, aspects that play an important role in integration. These include, for example, the extent of refugees’ concerns about xenophobia, whether they feel discriminated against, their trust in institutions, and opportunities for them to interact with members of the host society. These aspects need to be considered in relation to the attitudes, expectations, and feelings of the members of the host society.

Based on data collected by the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP)<sup>4</sup> in collaboration with Kantar, this report sheds light on the communal life of refugees and members of the host society in 2018. The present report examines the subjective and social factors influencing refugee integration. These are then compared with the attitudes of the members of the host society; our understanding is deepened by examining urban and rural areas as two distinct areas (Box 1).

The variety of and access to social opportunities in urban areas differs from that of rural areas. These differences allow conclusions to be drawn about possible access barriers that the local population are faced with. For example, urban and

<sup>1</sup> Jannes Jacobsen, Philipp Eisnecker, and Jürgen Schupp, “In 2016, around One-Third of People in Germany Donated for Refugees and Ten Percent Helped out on Site – yet Concerns Are Mounting” *DIW Weekly Report*, no. 17 (2017): 347–358 (in German; available online; accessed July 20, 2020. This applies to all other online sources in this report unless stated otherwise).

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Brücker, Johannes Croisier, Yuliya Kosyakova, Hannes Kröger, Giuseppe Pietrantuono, Nina Rother, and Jürgen Schupp, “Language skills and employment rate of refugees in Germany improving with time,” *DIW Weekly Report*, no. 4. (2019): 50–61 (available online).

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Brücker, Yuliya Kosyakova, and Eric Schuß, “Integration in Arbeitsmarkt und Bildungssystem macht weiter Fortschritte,” *IAB-Kurzbericht*, no. 4. (2020): 1–16 (in German; available online).

<sup>4</sup> The Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) is a representative annual survey of private households that has been conducted since 1984, beginning in former West Germany only. Since 1990, it has also included former East Germany. See Jan Goebel et al., “The German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP),” *Journal of Economics and Statistics* 239, no. 29 (2019): 345–360 (available online).

Box 1

### Differentiating between urban and rural areas

Our distinction between urban and rural area is based on the definition of rural areas taken from the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (*Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt und Raumforschung*, BBSR).<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, municipalities are classified based on their size, population density, and central-local function as either agglomeration areas, urbanized areas or rural areas. We consider agglomerations and urbanized areas to be urban areas and contrast them with rural areas.

<sup>1</sup> See Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (in German; available online).

rural areas currently have not only different integration concepts, but differing availability of language and integration courses. Furthermore, refugees use mainly public transport, which significantly restricts their mobility in rural areas. Personal relationship structures also differ between rural and urban areas; while in rural areas you know your neighbors, there is more anonymity in urban areas. These and other differences may affect opportunities for refugee integration.<sup>5</sup> Since refugees have little autonomy in choosing their place of residence due to residency requirements and because they are allocated accommodation in accordance with the Königstein Key (*Königsteiner Schlüssel*),<sup>6</sup> this report expects there to be differences in the integration process between urban and rural areas (Box 2).

### Concerns about immigration have been receding since 2016

Successfully integrating immigrants depends, among other things, on prevailing attitudes within the host society.<sup>7</sup> When immigrants experience rejection, for example in the form of social separation or discrimination, it becomes more difficult for them to participate in society. For this reason, the first step is to examine sentiments in the host society. The annual SOEP survey asks respondents how concerned they are about immigration. Response categories are “not concerned at all,” “somewhat concerned,” and “very concerned.”

<sup>5</sup> Tabea Rösch, Hanne Schneider, Johannes Weber, and Susanne Worbs, “Integration von Geflüchteten in ländlichen Räumen,” *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge Research Report*, no. 36 (2020) (available online).

<sup>6</sup> The distribution of asylum seekers throughout the federal states is based on the Königstein Key (*Königsteiner Schlüssel*). The Königstein Key determines the distribution quota and is based on tax revenues and the population of the federal states (available online). Refugees who receive social benefits are also subject to a residence requirement, meaning their place of residence is specified (available online).

<sup>7</sup> See also Christian S. Czymara and Alexander W. Schmidt-Catran, “Wer ist in Deutschland willkommen? Eine Vignettenanalyse zur Akzeptanz von Einwanderern,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, no. 68 (2016): 193–227; M. Verkuyten, “Emotional reactions to and support for immigrant policies: Attributed responsibilities to categories of asylum seekers,” *Social Justice Research* 17, no. 3 (2004): 293–314.

Box 2

### Questions from the SOEP survey questionnaire

#### Population

This was a survey of members of the host society rather than refugees.

#### Concerns

Are you concerned about immigration to Germany?

1. Yes, very concerned
2. Yes, somewhat concerned
3. No, not concerned at all

#### Attitudes to refugees

The questions evaluated here focus on personal, subjective assessments of five areas, each with eleven possible ratings, where one was the most negative and eleven the most positive: The issue of refugees is controversial in Germany. What would you personally say to the following questions?

1. In general, is it bad or good for the German economy that refugees are coming here?
  - Bad for the economy (1)
  - Good for the economy (11)
2. In general, will refugees erode or enrich cultural life in Germany?
  - Erode (1)
  - Enrich (11)
3. Will refugees make Germany a worse or better place to live?
  - A worse place (1)
  - A better place (11)
4. Does a high influx of refugees mean more risks or more opportunities in the short term?
  - More risks short term (1)
  - More opportunities short term (11)
5. Does a high influx of refugees mean more risks or more opportunities in the long term?
  - More risks long term (1)
  - More opportunities long term (11)

In order to simplify interpretation, the responses are divided into three categories: 1–4 “rather negative”, 5–7 “ambivalent”, and 8–11 “rather positive.”

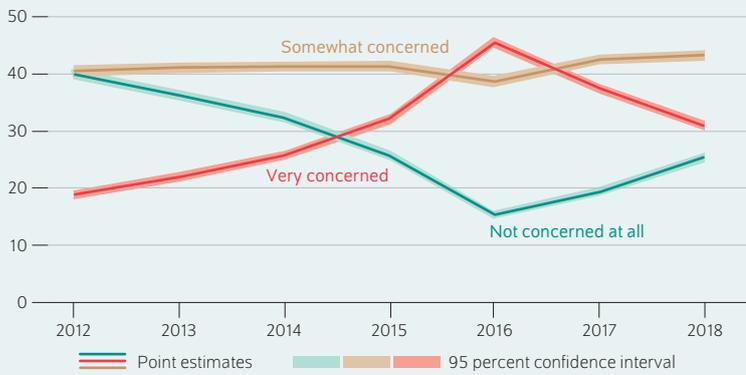
#### Engagement

The following question is aimed at the respondents' engagement with the refugee issue. Respondents were asked “Which of the following activities have you done in connection with the refugee issue since last year and which do you intend to do (again) in the future?” The present report only examines work already carried out locally with refugees, such as visits to authorities or language training:

- Since last year (yes/no)

Figure 1

**Concerns about immigration between 2012 and 2018**  
Members of the host society in percent



Sources: SOEP v.35 (weighted), waves 2012 to 2018; authors' own calculations.

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Percent of host society who are very concerned about immigration has decreased significantly since 2016.

The share of respondents who were “very concerned” about immigration increased significantly between 2013 and 2016 (Figure 1). After the peak of refugee immigration to Germany in 2015/16, this share then fell over the next two years. While almost half of those surveyed (46 percent) were very concerned about immigration in 2016, this figure fell to just under one-third (32 percent) in 2018. However, if we include those respondents who were at least “somewhat concerned” about immigration, it becomes apparent that, in 2018, the issue of immigration still concerned the majority of respondents in Germany. Taken together, around three-quarters of the population (74 percent) were somewhat or very concerned about immigration. By comparison, this figure was around ten percentage points lower (63 percent) in 2013. The

share of respondents who were “not concerned at all” about immigration developed accordingly. While this figure fell to 16 percent in 2016, the lowest value in the surveyed categories, it rose again by ten percentage points over the course of two years, with around one-quarter of those surveyed saying they were not concerned about immigration at all in 2018.

In summary, concerns have decreased overall since 2016, but are still above 2013 levels.

**Effects of refugee immigration are viewed with more skepticism in rural regions than in urban areas**

In sociological research, among other things, the increased rejection of immigrants is believed to be attributable to the host society’s perceived cultural and economic threats.<sup>8</sup> For example, it has been shown that people who perceive refugees as a threat to German society are more likely to identify with the right-wing populist AfD party, which rejects refugee immigration.<sup>9</sup>

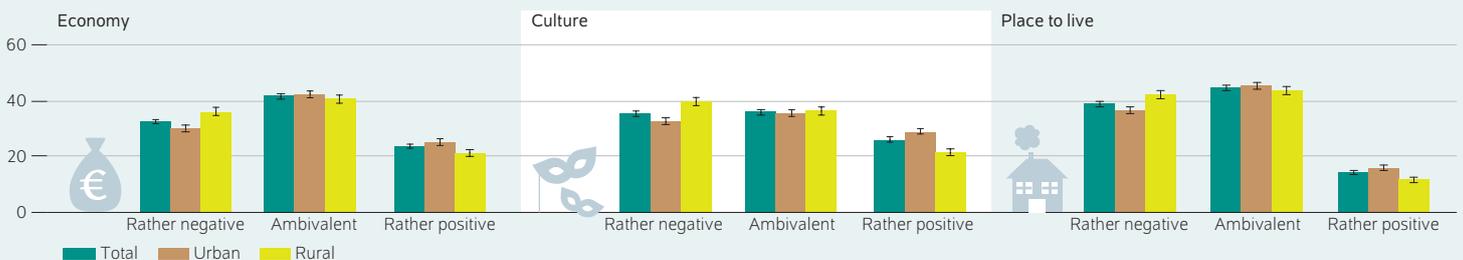
The SOEP data indicates how pronounced such perceived threats were among respondents in the resident population in 2018. SOEP respondents were asked to rate the influence of refugees on the “economy,” “culture,” and “Germany as a place to live,” as well as the short- and long-term effects of refugee immigration, using an 11-point scale where one is most negative and eleven is most positive. In order to simplify interpretation, the responses are grouped into three categories: 1–4 “rather negative,” 5–7 “ambivalent,” and 8–11 “rather positive.”

<sup>8</sup> Christian S. Czymara and Alexander W. Schmidt-Catran, “Wer ist in Deutschland willkommen? Eine Vignettenanalyse zur Akzeptanz von Einwanderern,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, no. 68 (2016): 193–227.

<sup>9</sup> Holger Lengfeld and Clara Dilger, “Kulturelle und ökonomische Bedrohung. Eine Analyse der Ursachen der Parteiidentifikation mit der „Alternative für Deutschland“ mit dem Sozio-ökonomischen Panel 2016,” *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 47, no. 3 (2018): 181–199.

Figure 2

**Assessment of the effects of refugee immigration on various areas**  
Members of the host society in percent



Note: the vertical lines indicate the 95-percent confidence interval.

Sources: SOEP v.35 (weighted), wave 2018, N = 25,682; authors' own calculations. The share of individuals who provided no information was less than two percent and is included in N.

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In rural areas, the impact of refugees on the economy, culture, and living space is generally viewed with significantly more skepticism.

In 2018, most respondents (40 percent) expressed ambivalent attitudes toward the effect of refugees on the German economy, while around one-quarter thought it was rather good and one-third thought it was rather bad (Figure 2). Over one-third of respondents thought that refugee immigration had an ambivalent effect on cultural life in Germany, while over one-third thought it would erode German culture and more than one-quarter thought it would enrich German culture. At the same time, as little as 14 percent of respondents thought that refugees would make Germany a better place to live, while almost 40 percent expected a rather negative impact. Most respondents (45 percent) expressed ambivalent attitudes. When asked whether a large influx of refugees would mean more risks or more opportunities in the short and long term (Figure 3), only around eight percent of respondents said they saw short-term opportunities, while almost two-thirds thought there would be risks in the short term. In the long-term assessment, these figures were significantly lower, at 40 percent. At the same time, however, around one-quarter of respondents thought that the opportunities from refugee immigration would outweigh the risks in the long term.

Refugee immigration was consistently viewed with significantly more skepticism in rural regions than in urban areas. The most obvious difference relates to cultural impact. In rural areas, 22 percent perceived the influence of refugees as culturally enriching, while in urban areas this figure was seven percentage points higher (29 percent). When it comes to how respondents see the risks and opportunities related to refugee immigration, in contrast, there are only slight differences between urban and rural areas: In the short term, eight percent of urban dwellers and seven percent of rural dwellers said there were clear opportunities from refugee immigration. However, looking long term, their views of the future diverge somewhat: for 29 percent of those living in urban areas, the opportunities are greater, while this figure is only 24 percent among respondents living in rural areas.

Overall, opinions in the host society have become more positive. This trend is compared with the refugee perspective below.

**Refugees are increasingly concerned about xenophobia, yet experiences of direct discrimination are less common**

The refugee perspective was examined using the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany (Box 3). The data generally show that refugees’ concerns about xenophobia increased slightly between 2016 and 2018. In 2018, more than one in three adult refugees reported that they were somewhat (26 percent) or very concerned (12 percent) about xenophobia. This implies a statistically significant increase of around five percentage points for those refugees who were somewhat or very concerned in the two years since 2016.

With regard to specific experiences of xenophobia, however, the survey data show that concerns might stem from more

Figure 3

**Assessment of the short- and long-term effects of refugee immigration**

Members of the host society in percent



Note: the vertical lines indicate the 95-percent confidence interval.

Sources: SOEP v.35 (weighted), wave 2018, N = 25,682; authors' own calculations. The share of individuals who provided no information was less than two percent and is included in N.

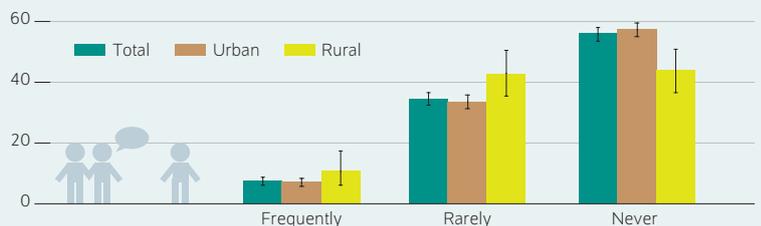
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The local population believes that immigration brings more risks than opportunities.

Figure 4

**Perceived discrimination based on origin**

Refugees in percent



Note: the vertical lines indicate the 95-percent confidence interval.

Sources: SOEP v.35 (weighted), wave 2018, N = 4,256; authors' own calculations. The share of individuals who provided no information is around three percent and is included in N.

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The majority of refugees do not feel discriminated against.

than the direct experiences of the refugees themselves. For example, fewer than one in ten adult refugees reported that they often feel discriminated against because of their origin (Figure 4). Around one in three feels they have rarely been discriminated against and more than half feel they have not been discriminated against at all. The differences between urban and rural areas are not significant.

Similarly, in-depth analyses by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees show that refugees have continued to feel welcome in Germany in recent years.<sup>10</sup> A look at the

<sup>10</sup> Christina de Paiva Lareiro, Nina Rother, and Manuel Siebert, "Geflüchtete verbessern ihre Deutschkenntnisse und fühlen sich in Deutschland weiterhin willkommen," BAMF-Kurzanalyse, no. 1 (2020): 1–19. (in German; available online)

Box 3

**Questions from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany 2018**

**Concerns**

Are you concerned about xenophobia and hatred towards foreigners in Germany?

1. Yes, very concerned
2. Yes, somewhat concerned
3. No, not concerned at all

**Perceived discrimination**

How often have you personally had the experience of being disadvantaged here in Germany because of your origin?

1. Often
2. Rarely
3. Never

**Trust in institutions**

How much trust do you personally have in the following German institutions?

1. Public administration
2. Legal system
3. Police

In order to simplify interpretation, the responses are divided into three categories: 0–2 "low level of trust", 5–7 "medium level of trust", and 8–11 "high level of trust."

**Contact with Germans**

How often do you spend time with Germans?

1. Daily
2. Several times a week
3. Every week
4. Every month
5. Rarely
6. Never

We have summarized the responses "daily" to "every week" as "regular contact" and placed the remaining responses in the category of "rarely in contact."

**How often do you have contact with Germans in your circle of friends / in your neighborhood / at your place of work?**

1. Daily
2. Several times a week
3. Every week
4. Every month
5. Rarely
6. Never

We have summarized the responses "daily" to "every week" as "regular contact" and placed the remaining responses in the category of "rarely in contact."

concerns and the perceived discrimination reveals a dichotomous landscape. Although refugees are increasingly voicing their concerns about xenophobia, the data suggest that these concerns might not stem solely from their own experiences. It is believed that media reports may also be influencing their concerns about xenophobia. Against the background of anti-migration and racist protests, following the incidents in Kandel, Rhineland-Palatinate in summer 2015, for example, this interpretation seems probable. As a result of the attacks in Hanau and Halle, which occurred after the survey, this report can still assume that refugees' concerns might continue to grow.

In addressing these concerns, one important step could be to listen to those affected by such attacks. Following the attack in Hanau, for example, there was frequent criticism that minorities were not adequately protected from attacks.<sup>11</sup> On the political side, the development of concepts for more proactive protection of minorities could be an important step.

**Refugees' trust in key state institutions is high**

Another indicator of how immigrants are settling in and acclimatizing to their new surroundings is the level of trust they have in key state institutions, such as public administration, the police, and the courts. This is highly relevant from two perspectives. First, due to their immigration history and asylum applications, refugees will regularly come into contact with the government's administration apparatus and possibly the police and the courts as well. A high level of trust in these institutions is therefore also an indicator of the acceptance shown for the way these institutions operate. Second, having trust in these institutions also means having trust in the just functioning of the rule of law. Ideally, this should be high.

When asked about public administration, the legal system, and the police, refugees generally said they had a high level of trust in them. On a scale of 0 to 10 (10 being a high level of trust), around 60 percent of refugees said their trust in the police was high. Around half of all respondents had a high level of trust in the legal system. However, a less homogenous picture emerges in the case of public administration, with only one in three indicating a high level of trust in this institution.

If the respective gradations of the 11-point scale up to a value of 8 are also included as indicators of a high level of trust, the level of trust in the three institutions each rises substantially to over 60 percent (Figure 5 shows examples of aggregate values for trust in public administration). With regard to differences between urban and rural areas, the data show that levels of trust tend to be lower in rural areas, although this disparity cannot be statistically confirmed.

In summary, it can be seen that trust in key state institutions is generally high, but there is still room for improvement,

<sup>11</sup> See also a press release from the Central Council of Muslims in Germany dated February 20, 2020: available online.

especially in public administration. Trust in public administration could be strengthened by making its decision-making processes more transparent so that the work of this institution is more comprehensible for refugees.

From a sociological perspective, another important factor for increasing trust and reducing concerns is access to social networks. Social networks can act as bridges between otherwise separate groups, facilitating refugee access to societal institutions and information.<sup>12</sup>

The next section examines two questions relating to this aspect. First, to what extent are refugees already integrated into social networks and, second, what determines refugee access to interethnic networks?

### Around half of refugees have regular contact with Germans, particularly among their circles of friends

In the IAB-SOEP-BAMF survey conducted in 2018, refugees were asked how often they spent time with Germans. Possible answers were “daily”, “several times a week”, “every week”, “every month”, “rarely”, and “never” (Box 3). The survey data show that 57 percent of refugees surveyed regularly spent time with Germans, i.e., daily to weekly. For refugees who live in rural areas of Germany, this figure was even higher at two-thirds. This difference of around ten percentage points compared to refugees living in urban areas is not statistically significant.

The survey data further suggest that refugees mainly spent time with Germans who were in their circles of friends. 43 percent of respondents stated that they regularly maintain friendly contact with Germans (Figure 6). This is particularly true of refugees in rural areas. In addition, neighborhood contact plays an important role in both urban and rural areas. A total of 40 percent of those surveyed reported that they had regular contact with their German neighbors. In contrast, comparatively few refugees were in contact with Germans at their places of work. Looking at the group of refugees who were employed in 2018, only one in four stated that he or she regularly interacted with Germans at work. This shows that refugees and members of the host society do not necessarily encounter each other at their places of work.

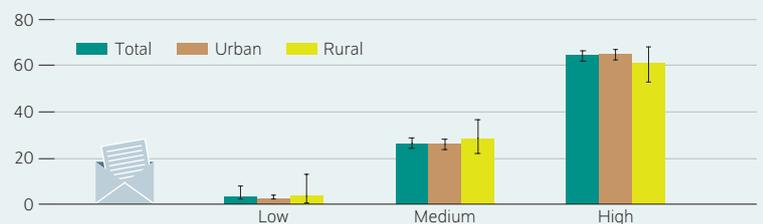
Another important point of contact between refugees and locals is voluntary work, which many people did after the migration influx in summer 2015. The resident population was also asked about voluntary work in the SOEP study. The results showed that in 2016, around one-third of the German population made donations in cash or in kind to refugees, and six percent volunteered locally to help refugees.<sup>13</sup> In 2018,

<sup>12</sup> Mark S. Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 6 (1973): 1360–1380.

<sup>13</sup> Jannes Jacobsen, Philipp Eisnecker, and Jürgen Schupp, “In 2016, around One-Third of People in Germany Donated for Refugees and Ten Percent Helped out on Site – yet Concerns Are Mounting” *DIW Weekly Report*, no. 17 (2017): 347–358 (in German; available online).

Figure 5

### Trust in public administration in Germany Refugees in percent



Note: the vertical lines indicate the 95-percent confidence interval.

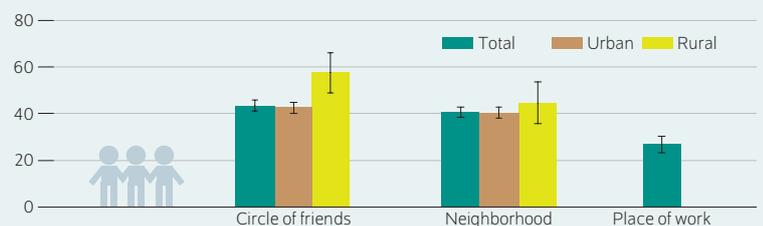
Sources: SOEP v.35 (weighted), wave 2018, N = 3,834; authors' own calculations. The share of individuals who provided no information is between six and seven percent and is included in N.

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Refugees' trust in public administration is mostly high.

Figure 6

### Regular contact between refugees and Germans by sphere of life Refugees in percent



Notes: Contact at work refers to N = 1,170 refugees who were gainfully employed in 2018. In relation to contact at work only; rural and urban areas cannot be compared due to the low number of cases.

The vertical lines indicate the 95-percent confidence interval.

Sources: SOEP v.35 (weighted), wave 2018, N = 4,391; authors' own calculations. The share of individuals who provided no information was between six and nine percent and is included in N.

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Most regular contact between refugees and the local population comes via their circles of friends

seven percent of SOEP respondents stated that they were involved in helping refugees in their local area, for example by helping them with visits to the authorities. Consequently, volunteer work also offers a platform for refugees and locals to experience direct contact with one another. There were no differences between voluntary work in the urban and rural regions of the host society.

Overall, this indicates a mixed picture of contact between refugees and Germans. While more than half of refugees were already in regular contact with Germans, 43 percent of refugees surveyed had no regular access to such social networks. This raises the question as to which factors promote contact between refugees and the host society.

Table 1  
**Determinants of time refugees and Germans regularly spent together (multivariate linear regression analysis).**

	Time with Germans
Gender (reference: male)	-0.16*** (0.02)
Age	-0.01*** (0.00)
Years since arrival	0.04*** (0.02)
Region of origin (reference: Syria)	
Afghanistan	0.01 (0.03)
Iraq	0.02 (0.04)
Rest of the world	0.03 (0.03)
Integration course (reference: no)	-0.04 (0.02)
Shared accommodation (reference: no)	-0.10*** (0.03)
Children (reference: no)	0.02 (0.02)
City (reference: no)	-0.04 (0.04)
N	4,178

Notes: \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001. Controlled for federal states. Reduced number of cases due to missing values for the dependent variable as well as for information about living in a shared accommodation, about children and about federal state. Dependent variable: time with Germans (1 = regular contact, 0 = irregular contact). Regression method: linear regression, unstandardized coefficients, robust standard errors.

Source: SOEP v.35 (weighted), wave 2018, N = 4,178; authors' own calculations.

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### Female refugees have less contact with Germans

The findings of a multivariate regression analysis<sup>14</sup> show that female refugees are significantly less likely (16 percent) than male refugees to have regular, i.e., daily or weekly, contact with Germans (Table 1). Living in shared accommodation is also associated with a significantly lower probability of regular interaction with Germans. In contrast, regular contact between Germans and refugees is more likely the longer refugees have been resident in Germany.

Over time, refugees and Germans will probably meet more regularly in their social networks. However, that female refugees had less regular contact with Germans suggests they face particular obstacles that require political attention.

<sup>14</sup> In the multivariate regression analyses, we do not consider the gainful employment of refugees and their language skills as explanatory factors for the frequency of interethnic contact, since interactions may exist: if a refugee is gainfully employed, it can be assumed that he or she also has more regular contact with Germans. At the same time, regular contact with Germans can also be a stepping stone to gainful employment (Verena Seibel and Frank von Tubergen, "Job-search methods among non-western immigrants in the Netherlands," *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 11, no. 3 (2013): 241–258). A similar logic can be applied to language skills. The causal direction of the effects cannot, therefore, be determined and could lead to misinterpretations.

### Conclusions: Interaction between refugees and members of the host society should be further encouraged

The present report shows that the process of integrating refugees into their host society is still ongoing. Although the concerns of the local population are receding and are slowly approaching 2013 levels, the host society's skepticism surrounding the short- and long-term effects of refugee immigration to Germany persisted in 2018, as well. In contrast, refugees' concerns about xenophobia are growing, there partly is a lack of trust in some key German state institutions, and access to interethnic networks remains limited.

The social and subjective integration of refugees, therefore, seems to be an ongoing long-term social project that continues to require public attention. This applies in particular to rural areas. The local populations here are especially skeptical of refugees, even though regular contact with Germans in their circles of friends is more common than in urban areas. One key priority of state intervention should be to allay concerns about immigration and xenophobia. To achieve this, the government should look to strengthen interethnic social networks in order to initiate positive narratives between newcomers and longer-term residents. In addition to creating new, positive narratives, which could alleviate concerns on both sides, such networks also have an important bridging function between otherwise separate social groups. Going forward, it will therefore be important to offer more than integration courses. The civil society tandem projects that have developed since 2015 could be further consolidated and brought to rural areas, for instance, thus making them sustainable.<sup>15</sup> Special focus should be placed on female refugees here. In line with earlier analyses of structural integration, it can be shown that women are also disadvantaged in terms of access to interethnic networks. In order to build bridges for women to access local society, too, special attention must be paid to their needs, for example with regard to childcare.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, the analyses indicate that the work of public administration, in particular, should be made more transparent. As a general rule, refugees have a high level of trust in the police and in the rule of law, but less so in public administration. However, something that could be problematic is the fact that around one-third to one-quarter of refugees do not have the same trust in key democratic institutions. Their trust must be further strengthened by means of transparent procedures so as not to jeopardize the existing legitimacy of this institution for refugees.

<sup>15</sup> Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, *Flüchtlingspolitik und Integration – Menschen stärken Menschen* (2020) (in German; available online).

<sup>16</sup> Ludovica Gambaro, Guido Neidhöfer, and C. Katharina Spieß, "Kita-Besuch von nach Deutschland geflüchteten Familien verbessert die Integration ihrer Mütter," *DIW Wochenbericht*, no. 44 (2019): 805–812. (in German; available online)

## SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES

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