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**SOEP**

Das Sozio-  
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Panel



# Ukrainian refugees in Germany

Fleeing, arriving and living

## ■ IMPRINT

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## Refugees from Ukraine in Germany: Fleeing the War and Starting over

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has triggered the largest movement of refugees in Europe in the post-World War II era. More than one million people have fled from Ukraine to Germany since the start of the war.

The study “Ukrainian Refugees in Germany (IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Survey)” provides first representative insights into these refugees’ living situations and their plans for the future. It is being conducted jointly by the Institute for Employment Research (IAB), the Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB), the Research Centre of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF-FZ), and the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) at the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin). To collect data for the study, 11,225 Ukrainian refugees were surveyed between August and October 2022.

### Key findings:

- The uncertain course of the war in Ukraine and the German legal framework have shaped Ukrainian refugees’ living conditions and affected their intentions to stay: 37% would like to stay in Germany permanently or for at least a few years, 34% plan to stay until the end of the war, 27% are still undecided, and 2% intend to leave Germany within a year.
- The vast majority of adult Ukrainian refugees are women (80%). Many of these (77%) fled to Germany without a partner, 48% with minor children, and 12% with a partner and minor children. Of the men, 71% came to Germany with their partner.
- Compared to the total population of Ukraine, the refugees have a higher level of education: 72% of Ukrainian refugees in Germany hold a university degree.
- Very few Ukrainian refugees had a good knowledge of German at the time of the survey (4%), but half of all respondents were already attending a German course.
- 74% of respondents were living in private accommodation and only 9% in publicly-provided, communal housing for refugees.
- Most Ukrainian refugees rate their health as good. However, they have significantly lower life satisfaction than the German population, and Ukrainian refugee children have lower well-being than other children in Germany as well.
- 17% of working-age Ukrainian refugees were employed at the time of the survey, and 71% of those employed had a job requiring a vocational or university degree.
- Ukrainian refugees expressed a need for more support, especially in learning German, seeking employment, obtaining medical care, and finding housing.





Triggered by the Russian invasion, many Ukrainians are seeking protection in Germany. By 8 November 2022, 1,025,000 Ukrainian refugees had been registered in the Central Register of Foreigners (Ausländerzentralregister, AZR). This makes Germany the most important destination country for refugee migration from Ukraine, after only Russia and Poland. The conditions for fleeing Ukraine differ from those for other countries of origin: Ukrainian citizens can enter EU member states without a visa. Men of compulsory military age were banned from leaving the country alongside general mobilisation. Finally, refugees from Ukraine have been granted temporary protection without an asylum procedure following the activation of the so-called "Temporary Protection Directive" (Directive 2001/55/EC), thereby quickly establishing legal as well as long-term planning security. Consequently, Ukrainian refugees differ from other refugees in terms of their demographic and social characteristics, as well as their integration prospects.

### The first representative findings on the flight and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Germany

Against this background, IAB, BiB, BAMF-FZ and SOEP are jointly conducting a longitudinal survey of Ukrainians living in Germany who have fled since the beginning of the war. In the first survey wave of the study "Ukrainian Refugees in Germany (IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey)", 11,225 Ukrainian nationals were interviewed (info box).

To our knowledge, this is the first nationwide study to provide representative conclusions about people who have fled from Ukraine to Germany. This report summarises the most important survey results, which represent the people who moved to Germany from Ukraine between 24 February 2022 and 8 June 2022. In total, these were around 697,000 people, i.e. around 71% of the total number of Ukrainians who moved to Germany between 24 February and 31 October 2022 and who were registered in the AZR by the cut-off date of 31 October 2022.

Info box

#### Database of the study "Ukrainian Refugees in Germany (IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey)"

In the first wave of the longitudinal survey, 11,225 Ukrainian nationals aged 18 to 70 who moved to Germany between 24 February 2022 and 8 June 2022 and were registered at the Einwohnermeldeämtern (residents' registration offices) were interviewed. For this purpose, 100 municipalities with a high proportion of Ukrainian refugees were asked to provide addresses of this target group. With the use of weighting, the sample is representative of the population.

The questions were translated into Ukrainian and Russian. Each interview lasted an average of 22 minutes. It was conducted by infas Institut für angewandte Sozialwissenschaft between August and October 2022. 82% of the respondents took part online, and 18% filled out a paper questionnaire. A second wave of the survey will be conducted from January 2023.



## Most people are fleeing because of the war

Almost all respondents (96%) cite the war as the reason for fleeing. Family context and personal networks play an additional role for 18%, because they were sent by family for example. 10% cite the poor economic situation as another reason for leaving.

These findings are also confirmed by the regions of origin. Two-thirds of the refugees in the sample come from regions that have been much more affected by the war than average: eastern Ukraine (32%), Kyiv (19%) and southern Ukraine (14%).

By far the most important motive given by refugees for choosing Germany as their destination country is having family members, friends and acquaintances already living here (60%). Other frequently cited motives are the human rights values (29%), the welfare system (22%), the education system (12%), the welcoming culture (12%) and the economic situation in Germany (10%). 18% say that they came to Germany by chance. A good 80% of Ukrainian refugees fled with family members, friends or acquaintances, including 61% with members of their nuclear family (partners and young children).

## Refugees are predominantly women, children and young people

The median age of the refugees (28 years) is significantly younger than that of the total Ukrainian population (41 years). The proportion of women is much higher than in the Ukrainian population as a whole, at 68% of all refugees in Germany and 80% of those aged between 18 and 70.

## Frequent separation of partners and families

Among refugees from Ukraine in Germany, 54% are married, 26% are single, 16% divorced and 4% are widowed. 77% of refugee women live in Germany without a partner, compared to only 29% of men. Among refugee women, 48% live with young children. The majority of refugee women with young children have a partner in Ukraine or a third country. Among refugee men, 44% live in Germany with young children. 6% of refugee men have a partner living abroad (Table 1).

The proportion of families with minors in Germany is particularly high in the 20 to 40 age group: around 62% for women. Around 12% of families with young children have at least one other child living abroad. 42% of mothers under the age of 50 whose child or children do not live in Germany would like to bring them home, compared to 38% of fathers in this age group<sup>1</sup>. Around three-quarters of women and 65% of men separated by the war have daily contact with their partners in Ukraine.



Table 1: Family and household structure of Ukrainian refugees  
Proportions of 18- to 70-year-olds in %

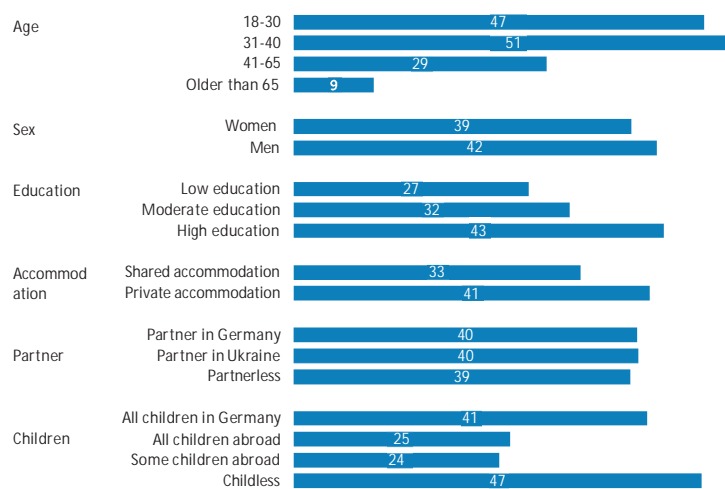
	Women	Men
With a spouse or partner in Germany (DE)	23	71
... with young children in DE	12	40
... without young children in DE	6	18
... without children	5	13
Spouse or partner abroad	34	6
... with young children in DE	23	2
... without young children in DE	6	3
... without children	5	1
Single parent / partnerless in DE	41	21
... with young children in DE	13	1
... without young children in DE	11	3
... without children	17	16
Total with young children in DE	48	44
No information on the residence of child and / or partner	2	2
Total	100	100

Note: N = 10,999.  
Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

### Good health among refugees from Ukraine

Overall, 39% of adult refugees rate their health as very good or good, and only 10% as poor or very poor. About half of those who rate their health as poor say they need medical help. Younger and male refugees, those with a high level of education and those living in private accommodation are more likely to rate their health as good or very good than older or female refugees, those with a low to medium level of education and those living in collective accommodation. Refugees whose children have remained in Ukraine are much more likely to report poor health than refugees who live with their children in Germany (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Health assessment of adult refugees  
Proportions of respondents who rate their state of health as very good or good in %



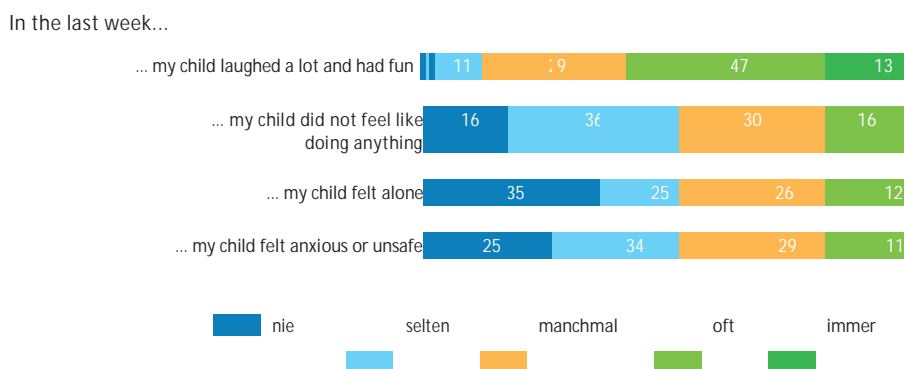
Note: N = 10,818.  
Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.



## Lower well-being among children from Ukraine compared to children in Germany

60% of Ukrainian parents say that their child<sup>2</sup> living in Germany had laughed a lot and had fun in the last week. An additional 12% say that this was 'never' or 'rarely' the case (Figure 2). However, a comparison shows that the psychological well-being of Ukrainian children and adolescents who have fled to Germany is significantly below the representative reference and normative values of other children and adolescents living in Germany in all age groups.

Figure 2: Psychological well-being of Ukrainian children and adolescents  
Data from parents in %



Notes: Parental data on the KINDLR<sup>R</sup> question items "psychological well-being". The population is all parents with at least one child aged 3 to 17 years in Germany; asked about the well-being of the oldest child. N = 4,631-4,669. Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

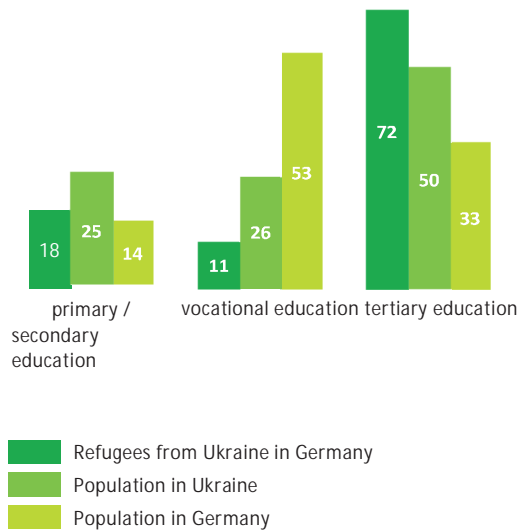
## Above-average number of highly educated among refugees:

The average educational level of Ukrainian refugees living in Germany is significantly higher than the average of the population in the country of origin but also higher than that of the population in Germany (Figure 3): 72% of refugees have tertiary, mostly academic, educational qualifications, compared to 50% of the total population of Ukraine. This group includes individuals with a bachelor's degree (13%), a master's degree (52%) or a doctorate (4%).

Conversely, refugees are less likely than the Ukrainian population to have completed vocational training (11% compared to 26%). The proportion of refugees who have completed primary or secondary education (Hauptschule, Realschule or Gymnasium) is also lower in Germany (18%) than in Ukraine (25). However, these comparisons should consider that the education and training systems in Ukraine and Germany differ considerably. Some of the qualifications acquired in the dual training system in Germany are instead taught at universities in Ukraine.



Figure 3: Educational and professional qualifications of refugees from Ukraine in Germany compared to the population of Ukraine and Germany. Proportions of 20- to 70-year-olds in %



Note: Harmonization of education and training qualifications is based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011). N = 234,595  
 Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022; Labour Force Survey Ukraine 2021; SOEPv37.

### The vast majority already have a residence permit

In the month of arrival, 59% of the refugees apply for a residence permit, two months after arrival 94% and at the time of the survey 99%. At the time of the survey, 76% had a residence permit in accordance with Section 24 of the Residence Act (AufenthG), and a further 18% had a probationary certificate, which is given to applicants until a residence permit is issued. Only a few have another residence title (2%) or are staying in Germany without a visa (3%). Most refugees from Ukraine therefore have a temporary residence permit until 4 March 2024, giving them legal and long-term planning security for this period.

### High heterogeneity and uncertainty regarding intentions to stay

With regard to the intentions of refugees from Ukraine to stay or return, the picture is heterogeneous: 34% would like to stay in Germany until the end of the war. Of these, 81% plan to return to Ukraine afterwards. 26% of Ukrainian refugees want to stay in Germany permanently, 11% for a few years and 2% for a maximum of one year. An additional 27% do not yet know whether and how long they want to stay in Germany.

### Most refugees feel welcome upon arrival

The clear majority of Ukrainian refugees feel welcome upon arrival in Germany (completely: 33% and mostly: 43%). Only a minority feels not at all or hardly welcome (7%). The feeling of being welcome is similarly strong among different groups.

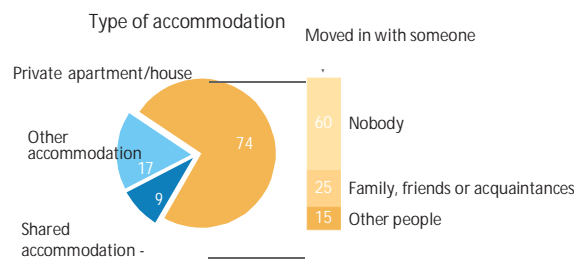




## The majority of refugees live in private accommodation

At the time of the survey, 74% were living in private apartments and houses, another 17% in hotels and guesthouses, and only 9% in shared accommodation. Of those living in private accommodation, 60% live alone or with family members who also fled. 25% live with family members, friends and acquaintances already living in Germany and 15% with other people (Figure 4). 16% of Ukrainian refugees state that they were assigned to their current place of residence.

Figure 4: Ukrainian refugees by type of accommodation  
Proportions in %

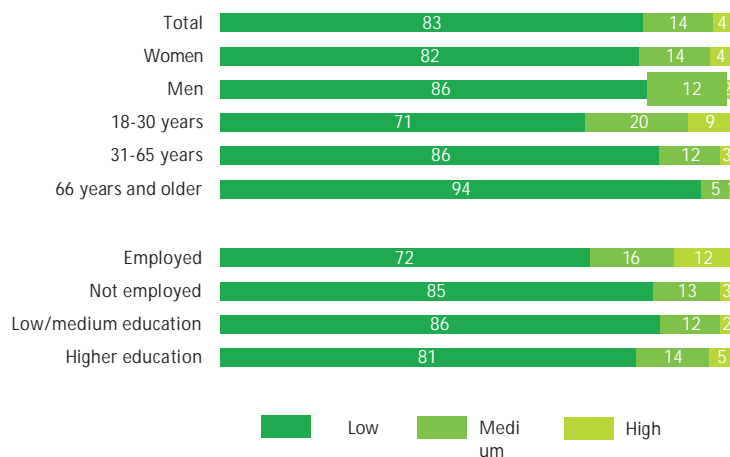


Note: Type of accommodation: N = 10,792, moving into an existing household: N = 7,821.  
Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

## Few refugees have good German language skills

Eight out of ten refugees said they had no or rather poor knowledge of German at the time of the survey, 14% said they had average knowledge and 4% said they had good or very good knowledge. Predominantly well-educated, employed, female and younger refugees rate their German language skills above average (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Self-assessment of German language skills  
Proportions in %

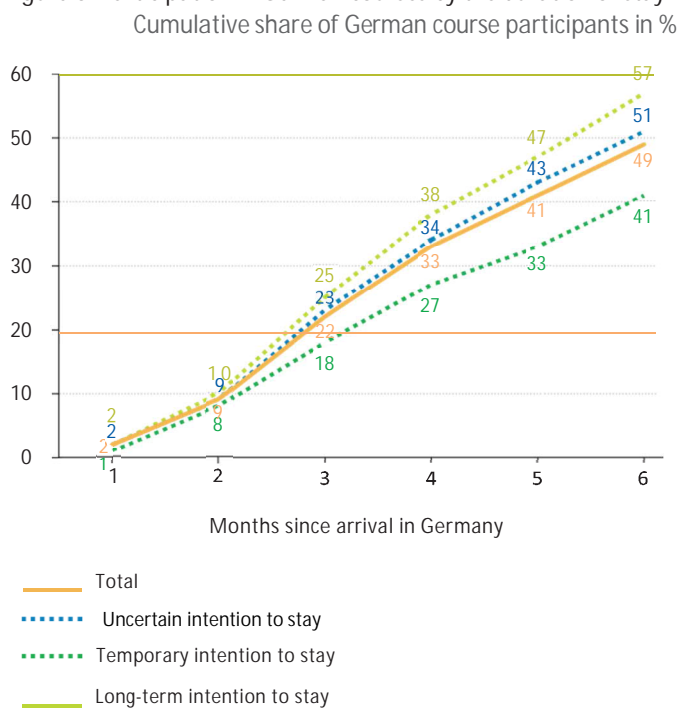


Notes: German proficiency is averaged across self-assessed competencies in the speaking, reading and writing dimensions. Categories were formed as follows: low: "not at all" and "rather poor"; medium: "it's okay"; high: "good" and "very good". Educational background was defined as follows: high: university degree (ISCED 5 and above), low / medium: no university degree (ISCED below 5). Totals may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding. N = 10,769-10,815.  
Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022



At the time of the survey, 51% of the Ukrainian refugees were attending or had already completed a German language course. 35% said they were attending an integration course or another BAMF language course, 15% were attending a different language course, and 1% had combined BAMF language courses with others. The number of course participants rises rapidly with the length of stay: two months after arrival, 9% of the interviewees attend a German course; after four months, the figure is already at 33%, and after six months, 49%. Participation in language courses varies according to the intention to stay (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Participation in German courses by the duration of stay in months



Note: Inverted Kaplan-Meier estimation. N = 10,128.

Legend: Six months after arrival, 49% of respondents had attended or completed a German course.

Among those with long-term intentions to stay, 57% were attending courses after six months.

Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

### Childcare and integration into the school system

Among refugees living with a child in Germany<sup>3</sup>, 22% of children under the age of three and 59% of children between the age of three and school entry age attend a daycare centre. In families in which the respondent parent is either employed in Germany or attending a language or integration course, the rates of daycare (Kita) use are significantly higher than in families in which the respondent parent is not. The rates of daycare use are also higher if there is no family support from partners or (great) grandparents of the children living in Germany.

In 91% of families with school-age children, at least one child was attending school in Germany at the time of the survey. In just under a third of cases, the children attend only special classes for refugee children, known as Willkommensklassen in some German states. In 23% of families with school-age children, at least one child uses online lessons from a Ukrainian school. The use of Ukrainian online lessons

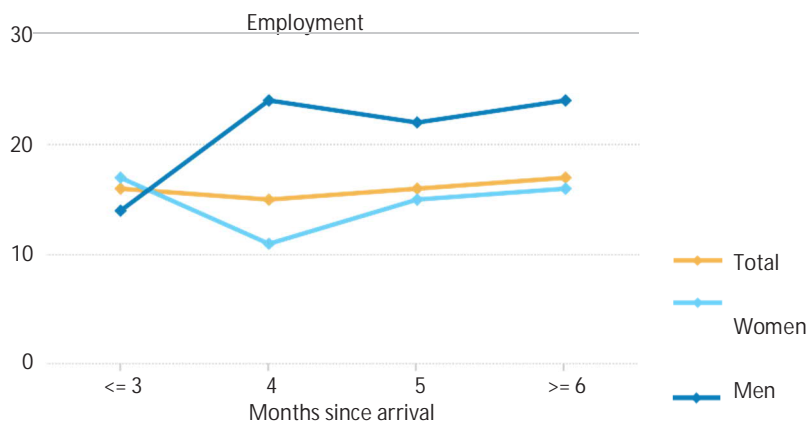
varies according to the intention to stay and the age of the children. The majority of children use these online services in addition to their schooling in Germany. In just under 3% of cases, children take Ukrainian online lessons exclusively.

### Almost a fifth are employed

At the time of the survey, 17% of the refugees in Germany were employed. A further 78% say they definitely (56%) or probably (22%) want to begin employment. 26% of those who want to start working say they want to start immediately, 57% within the next year and 16% after two to five years. At the time of the survey, 74% of unemployed Ukrainians were registered as unemployed and thus included in the support and placement infrastructure of the job centres. 21% of this group had been actively seeking work in the four weeks prior to the survey.

The employment rates of Ukrainian refugees increase rapidly shortly after arrival and then remain at similar levels: six months after arrival, 18% of the working-age population are employed compared to 16% of those who have been in Germany for three months. However, there is a gender gap: While 24% of men are employed six months after arrival, only 16% of women are (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Employment by gender and duration of stay  
Proportions of working age population (18-64 years) in %



Note: Gainful employment is defined as engaging in paid or self-employed activities. N = 10,076.

Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

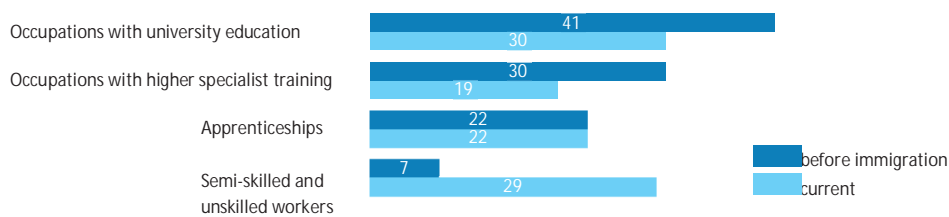


### High proportion in skilled occupations

83% of employed refugees from Ukraine in Germany are white-collar workers (mainly with intellectual activities), 8% are blue-collar workers (mainly with manual activities) and 8% are self-employed. 88% of employed refugees work in the service sector, and 85% worked in this sector before moving to Germany.

30% of employed Ukrainians in Germany currently work in a job requiring a university degree, 19% in a job requiring higher specialist training (e.g. a vocational academy) and 22% in a job requiring a vocational training qualification. 29% have an unskilled or semi-skilled job. This means that 71% of Ukrainian refugees working here have a skilled or highly skilled occupation. However, this proportion is significantly lower than before immigration (93%) (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Occupational requirements of Ukrainian refugees before and after immigration  
Proportions of occupations by level of requirement among employed persons in %



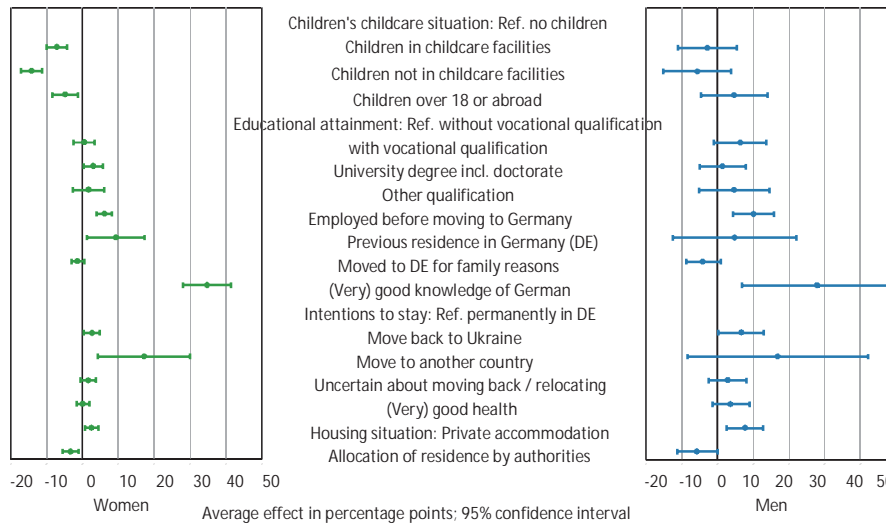
Note: Occupations have been classified in terms of the educational qualifications required for employment according to Oesch (2006).<sup>4</sup> Before immigration: N = 8,091; after immigration: N = 1,346.  
Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

### The probability of employment increases with the level of education and decreases with care responsibilities

For both female and male refugees, the level of education has a positive statistical correlation with the likelihood of employment: for women, it increases significantly if they have a university degree, and for men, if they have a vocational qualification. Women living in a household with their young children are less likely to be employed than women without children, especially if their children do not attend childcare facilities. For men, however, there is no significant correlation between the likelihood of being employed and having children in the household. For both genders, employment before moving to Germany, knowledge of the German language and living in private accommodation are positively associated with the likelihood of employment. In contrast, being allocated a place of residence by the authorities is negatively associated. Ukrainian refugees who want to leave Germany again are also more likely to be employed (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Factors influencing employment



Note: Linear regression model with Huber-White sandwich estimator of the standard errors for women and men. The dots indicate the point estimate, and the dashes the limits of the confidence interval at the 5% level. Other control variables are age, age squared, partner's place of residence, months since arrival, months since arrival squared, spatial planning region, federal state, interview mode, and indicator variables for missing values. N = 10,076.

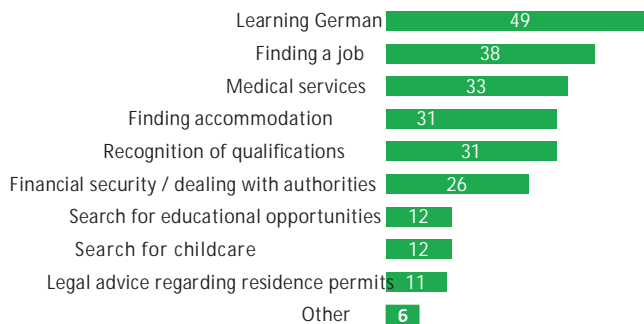
Legend: Women with children who attend childcare facilities are 8 percentage points less likely to be employed than women without children. The difference is statistically significant at the 1% level.

Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

### High demand for support and guidance

Most Ukrainian refugees report needing support and advice (88%) in at least one area. The most common need is for help with learning German (49%), followed by finding a job (38%), health care (33%), finding accommodation (31%) and having educational and professional qualifications recognised (31%). 26% need help with applying for financial benefits or dealing with public authorities (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Support needs of Ukrainian refugees requiring assistance  
Proportions in %, multiple answers possible



Note: N = 10,591.

Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.





At the time of the survey, 30% of the refugees had received consultation from the job centres or employment agencies, and a further 44% were aware of these institutions but had not yet used them. Less well known is the Migration Counselling for Adult Immigrants (Migrationsberatung für erwachsene Zuwanderer, MBE), a government-funded counselling service that supports new immigrants in linguistic, social and professional integration: Just under 5% have used this service and an additional 13% have heard of it.

### Social contact and integration

Half of the Ukrainian refugees spend time with other people from Ukraine, not belonging to their family, more than once a week. Almost one in ten never do. Middle-aged people (31-65 years) are slightly more likely to spend time with other people from Ukraine than younger people (18-30 years) and older people (over 65 years).

44% of Ukrainian refugees often spend time with Germans, while 15% never do. Contact with Germans is more frequent among refugees with a good knowledge of German, those who are employed or attend school, those living in private accommodation and those who spend more time with other people from Ukraine (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Frequency of spending time with Germans





Note: Totals may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding. N = 10,591. Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

## Low level of life satisfaction among adults

The average life satisfaction of refugees from Ukraine is lower than that of the German population: on a scale of 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied), the mean value for refugees is 5.8. For the population living in Germany in 2020, calculations based on the Socio-Economic Panel show a comparative value of 7.5. The healthier the refugees feel, the higher their level of satisfaction. Satisfaction also increases with better German language skills, more time spent with Germans and feeling more welcome upon arrival in Germany. Refugees who intend to stay in Germany permanently also report higher levels of satisfaction than those who do not.

## Summary

The course of the war in Ukraine and the legal conditions for accepting refugees largely determine the structure of refugee migration: Most refugees are fleeing war and violence, and most come from the areas worst affected by the war. They choose Germany as their destination country mainly because family members, friends and acquaintances already live here. Economic considerations play a certain role, albeit a minor one. Around 80% of adult refugees are women, 48% of whom live with young children. Very often, these women have been separated from their partners as a result of the war. The health status of adult refugees is good according to the self-reports. However, Ukrainian children have a lower level of psychological well-being than other children in Germany. Finally, in terms of education and the professions practised in Ukraine, the refugees are highly qualified.

With the activation of the "Temporary Protection Directive" and inclusion in the basic social security system of the Sozialgesetzbuch II, planning certainty has been provided initially until 4 March 2024. These are favourable conditions for integration and participation, which have already led to initial successes. The majority of Ukrainian refugees live in private accommodation, and half are attending or have already completed a language course. 18% of working-age refugees are employed six months after arrival. In almost all families with school-age children, the children attend a school in Germany, and a large proportion of kindergarten-age children attend a daycare centre. In addition, almost half of the refugees already have frequent contact with the German population.

Nevertheless, the need for support is great. According to the information provided by the refugees, there is a particular need for learning German, finding a job, health care and finding housing. The language and job placement services are already widely used and the survey results further show that these services are central to integration and participation. This indicates that at least some of the services should be developed further. An important question for the future is whether temporary protection will be extended for another year beyond 4 March 2024, as provided for in EU law, or whether additional longer-term prospects for remaining will be created by other means.

Life satisfaction among refugees is much lower than among the German population, especially among people who have been separated from their children or partners due to the war. Although economic and social opportunities in Germany are

favourable, the war is having a considerable impact on the well-being of refugees.

The intentions of Ukrainian refugees to stay are very heterogeneous: 34% want to leave Germany after the end of the war, and a further 2% plan to leave within a year. On the other hand, 37% want to stay in Germany either permanently (26%) or for several years (11%). 27% cannot predict their prospects of staying because of the uncertainty about the course of the war. However, as the duration of the war increases, the proportion of refugees who wish to remain in Germany permanently or long-term is likely to rise. Various policy areas in Germany are therefore faced with the challenge of creating favourable conditions for participation in the labour market, the education and health systems and in society, while at the same time accounting for the high degree of uncertainty and heterogeneity in intentions to stay.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>An age restriction is applied here, as this age group is presumably more likely to have young children than older groups.

<sup>2</sup>The psychological well-being of the eldest child in the household of a refugee parent in Germany was surveyed.

<sup>3</sup>Based on the survey, it is only possible to make a statement about the use of daycare for this group.

<sup>4</sup>Oesch, D. (2006). Redrawing the Class Map. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. DOI: 10.1057/9780230504592.



"Thank you very much" to all the refugees  
who participated in the survey

The study is based on the data infrastructure of:

