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Ukrainian refugees in Germany: Escape, arrival and everyday life

by Herbert Brücker, Andreas Ette, Markus M. Grabka, Yuliya Kosyakova, Wenke Niehues, Nina Rother, C. Katharina Spieß, Sabine Zinn, Martin Bujard, Adriana Cardozo, Jean Philippe Décieux, Amrei Maddox, Nadja Milewski, Robert Naderi, Lenore Sauer, Sophia Schmitz, Silvia Schwanhäuser, Manuel Siegert, Kerstin Tanis

SUMMARY

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) surveyed 11,225 Ukrainian refugees between August and October 2022. The survey can be projected to the population of Ukrainian refugees who moved to Germany between the outbreak of war on 24 February 2022 and 8 June 2022. The results show that most refugees fled Ukraine because of the war and moved to Germany because of existing personal networks and respect for human rights in Germany. Around 80% of the adult refugees are female. Just under half live in Germany with minor children and

four-fifths without a partner. A good 70% have university or comparable higher education qualifications, but only 4% have good or very good language skills and another 14 percent have intermediate language skills. Around half are attending or have completed a language course. 17 per cent were employed at the time of the survey. Among the employed, about 70% had a qualified job. Although the health of refugees is good on average, their life satisfaction is much lower than the German population average. A good third of the refugees want to stay in Germany permanently or for several years, likewise a third want to leave Germany again after the end of the war, and 27% cannot yet make any statements about their intentions to stay.

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

AT A GLANCE

The Russian invasion of Ukraine 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 “Refugees from Ukraine in Germany (IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey)” provides 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% of Ukrainian refugees 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 within a year.
- The vast majority of adult Ukrainian refugees are women (80%). Many of these women (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 a partner.
- Ukrainian refugees have a higher level of education than the Ukrainian population as a whole: 72% of Ukrainian refugees in Germany hold a university degree.
- Very few Ukrainian refugees knew German well at the time of the survey (4%), but half of all respondents were already attending German courses.
- 74% of respondents were living in private accommodations and only 9% in publicly provided group 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 also have lower well-being than other children in Germany.
- 17% of working-age Ukrainian refugees were employed at the time of the survey, and 71% of the employed refugees 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 third most important destination country for refugee migration from Ukraine, after 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 following 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 security as well as certainty for future planning. 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 wave of the study “Ukrainian Refugees in Germany (IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey)”, 11,225 Ukrainian nationals were interviewed (info box).

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first nationwide study to provide reliable information on people who have fled from Ukraine to Germany. This report

summarises the main findings of the survey, which are representative of people who moved from Ukraine to Germany between 24 February and 8 June 2022. In total, around 697,000 people were surveyed, 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.

The majority are fleeing because of the war

Almost all respondents (96%) cite the war as the major reason for fleeing. Additionally, family context and personal networks play a role for 18%, for example if they were sent by family. Poor economic conditions are cited by 10% as another reason for leaving.

These findings are also confirmed when looking at the refugees’ regions of origin. Two-thirds of the refugees 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 reason given by refugees (60%) for choosing Germany as their destination country is that family members, friends and acquaintances already live here. 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%). Meanwhile, 18% indicated to having arrived in Germany by chance. As many as 80% of Ukrainian refugees fled with family members, friends or acquaintances, including 61% with members of their nuclear family (partners and young children).

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 22 minutes on average. It was conducted by infas Institut für angewandte Sozialwissenschaft between August and October 2022. 82% of the respondents participated online and 18% filled out a paper questionnaire. A second wave of the survey will be conducted from January 2023.

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: women make up 68% of all refugees in Germany and 80% of those between the ages of 18 and 70.

Frequent separation of partners and families

Among refugees from Ukraine in Germany, 54% are married, 26% are single, 16% are 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. The share of refugee men who have a partner living abroad is 6% (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. Of mothers under the age of 50 whose child or children do not live in Germany, 42% would like to bring them home, compared to 38% of fathers in this age group¹. Of the women and men separated by war, 75% and 65% respectively have daily contact with their partners in Ukraine.

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).

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

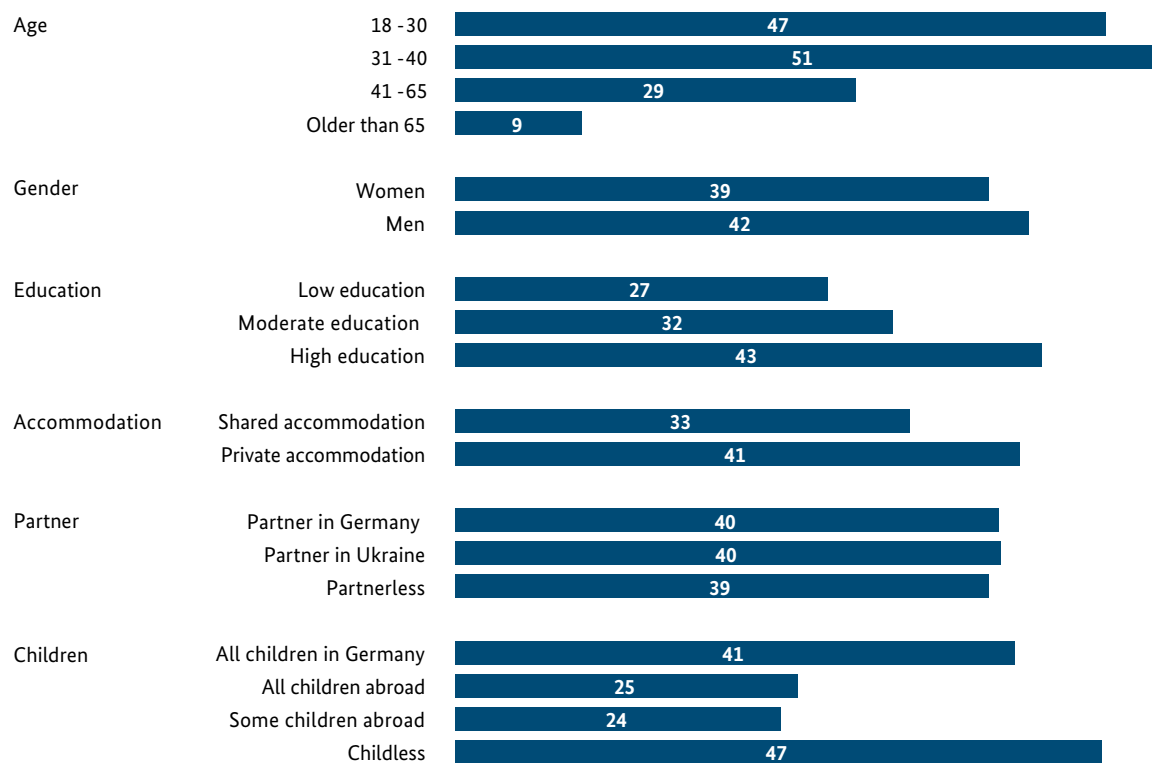
Table 1: Family and household structure of Ukrainian refugees
Proportions of 18- to 70-year-olds in %

	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..

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.

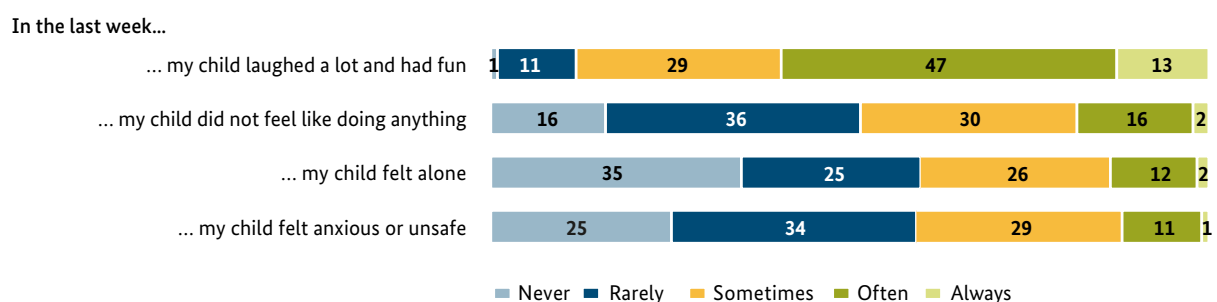
Lower well-being among children from Ukraine compared to children in Germany

60% of Ukrainian parents report that their child² 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.

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

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



Notes: Parental data on the KINDL[®] 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.

The vast majority already have a residence permit

In the first month after arrival, 59% of refugees applied for a residence permit, in the first two months 94% and by the time of the survey 99%. By the time

of the survey, 76% have obtained a residence permit under Section 24 of the Residence Act (AufenthG), and a further 18% have a provisional residence permit (Fiktionsbescheinigung), which is issued to applicants pending the granting of a residence permit. Only a few (2%) have another type of residence title or are staying in Germany without a visa (3%). Most refugees from Ukraine therefore have a temporary residence permit until 4 March 2024, which provides legal security and certainty for making plans.

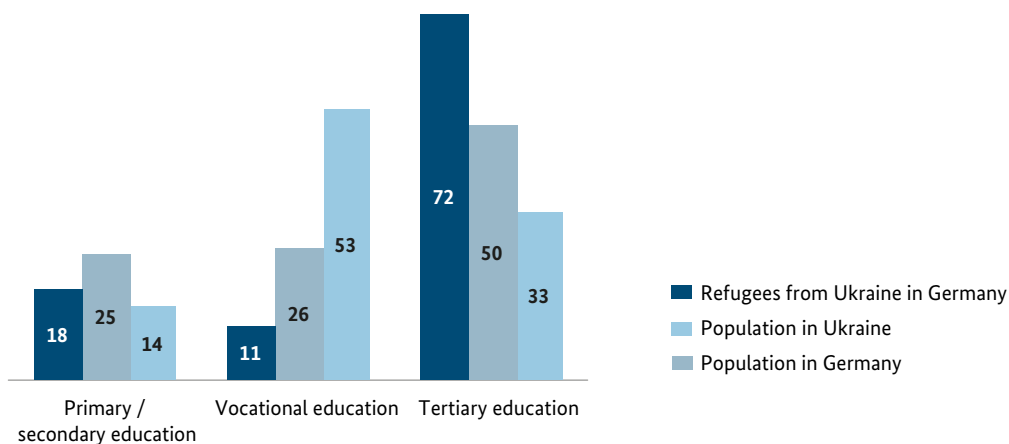
High heterogeneity and uncertainty regarding intentions to stay

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

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 feel not at all or hardly welcome (7%). The feeling of being welcome is similarly strong among different groups.

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.

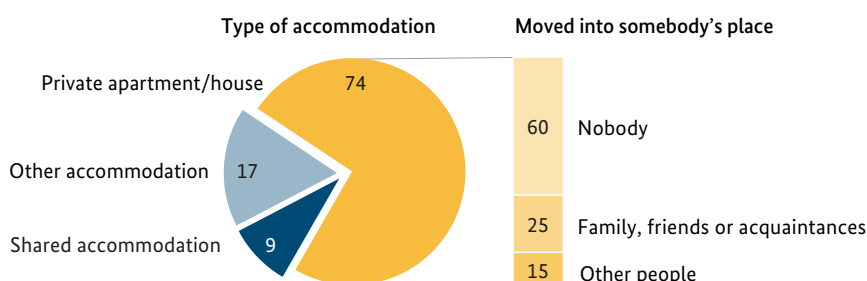
The majority of refugees live in private accommodation

By the time of the survey, 74% are living in private apartments and houses, another 17% in hotels and guesthouses, and only 9% in shared accommodation. Of those in private accommodation, 60% are living alone or with family members who have also fled. Staying with family members, friends and acquaintances already living in Germany is the case for 25% and staying with other people for 15% (Figure 4). Being assigned to their current place of residence accounts for 16% of Ukrainian refugees.

Few refugees have good German language skills

According to the survey, 80% of refugees have no or rather poor knowledge of German, 14% have average knowledge and 4% have good or very good knowledge. Predominantly well-educated, employed, female and younger refugees rate their German language skills above average (Figure 5).

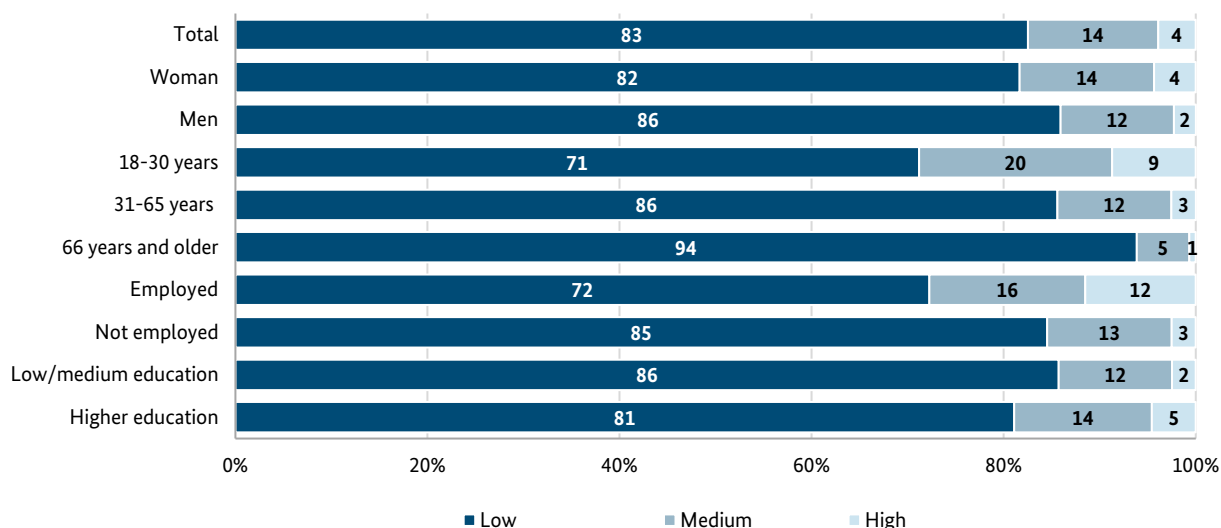
Figure 4: Ukrainian refugees by type of accommodation
Proportions in %



Note: Type of accommodation: N = 10,792, moving into an existing household: N = 7,821.

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

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



Notes: German proficiency is averaged across self-assessed competencies in the dimensions of speaking, reading and writing. Categories were created as follows: low: 'not at all' and 'rather bad'; medium: 'okay'; and 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

The survey shows that 51% of Ukrainian refugees are attending or have already completed a German language course. 35% attend an integration or other BAMF language course, 15% attend a different language course and 1% combine BAMF language courses with other courses. The number of participants increases rapidly with the length of stay. Two months after arrival, 9% of respondents are attending a German course; this figure rises to 33% after only four months and to 49% after six months. The intention to stay also affects participation in language courses (Figure 6).

Childcare and integration into the school system

Among refugees living with a child in Germany³, 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 employed. 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.

Among families with school-age children, 91% have at least one child attending school in Germany according

to 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. At least one child takes online lessons from a Ukrainian school in 23% of families. 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.

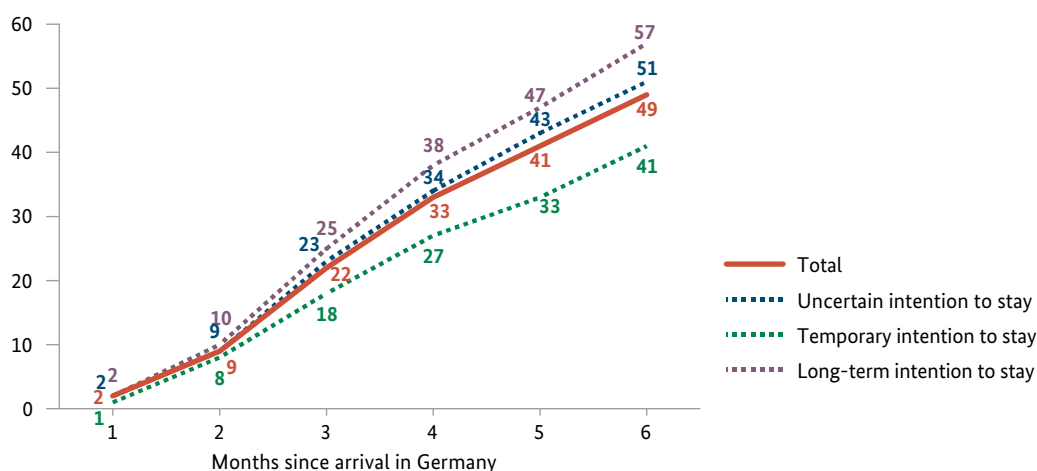
Almost a fifth are employed

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

Employment rates of male Ukrainian refugees increase rapidly shortly after arrival and then remain at similar levels. However, while 24% of men are employed six months after arrival, only 16% of women are (Figure 7).

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

Figure 6: Participation in German courses by the duration of stay in months
Cumulative share of German course participants in %

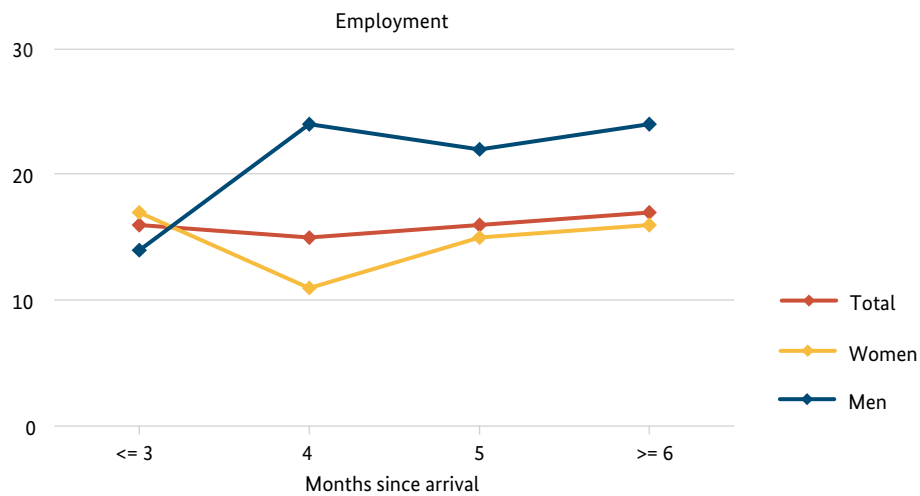


Note: Inverted Kaplan-Meier estimation. N = 10,128.

Legend: Six months after arrival, 49% of respondents are attending or have completed a German course and among those with long-term intentions to stay, the figure is 57%.

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

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.

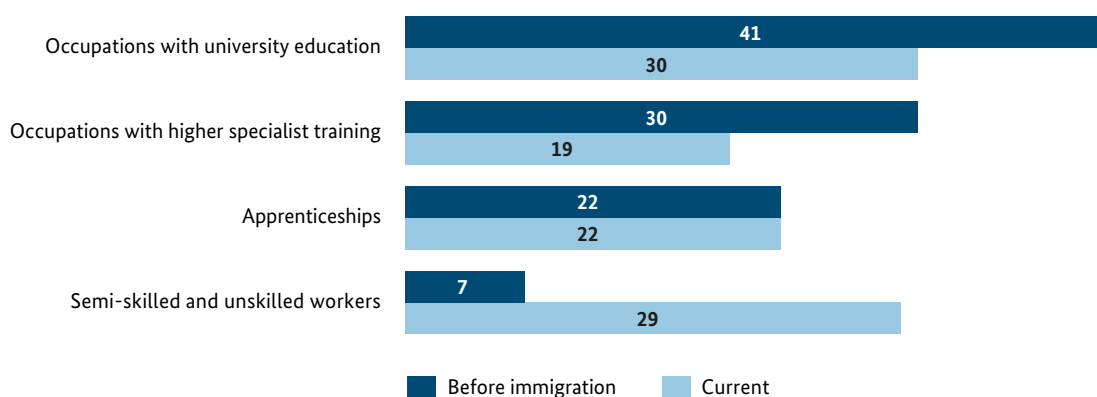
Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

High proportion in skilled occupations

Of the employed Ukrainian refugees in Germany, 83% are white-collar workers (mainly with intellectual activities), 8% are blue-collar workers (mainly with manual activities) and 8% are self-employed. The service sector accounts for 88% of employed refugees; 85% worked in this sector before coming to Germany.

Of those employed, 30% have a job requiring a university degree, 19% have a job requiring higher specialist training (e.g. a vocational academy) and 22% have a job requiring a vocational training qualification. Just 29% have an unskilled or semi-skilled job. This means that 71% work in a skilled or highly skilled occupation, although this is significantly lower than the proportion who did so before arriving in Germany (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). * Before immigration: N = 8,091; after immigration: N = 1,346.

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

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

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

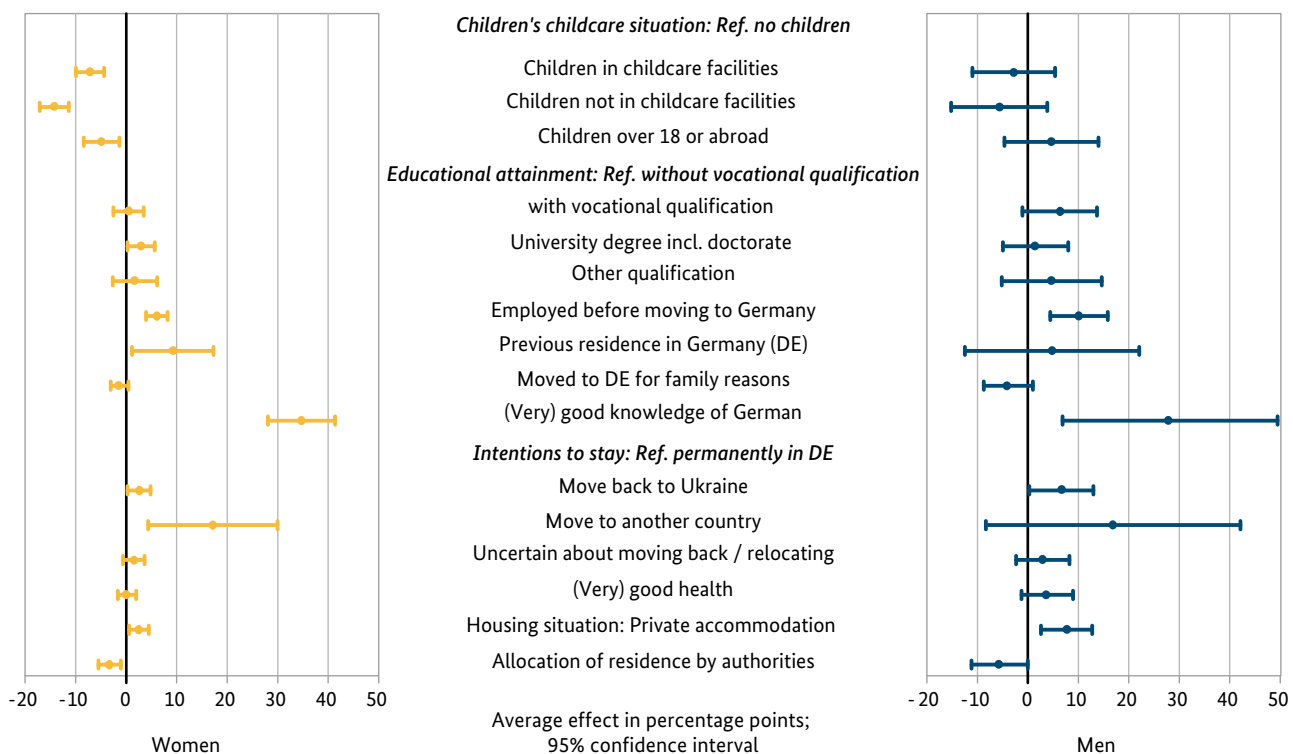
For both female and male refugees, the level of education has a positive statistical correlation with the likelihood of employment: for women, it increases significantly if they have a university degree, and for men, if they have a vocational qualification. Women living in a household with their young 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 employment. On the other hand, being allocated a place of residence by the authorities is negatively associated with employment. Ukrainian refugees who later want to leave Germany are also more likely to be employed (Figure 9).

High demand for support and guidance

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

According to the survey, 30% of the refugees have received consultation from the job centres or employment agencies, and a further 44% have not yet used these institutions but are aware of 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.

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.

Figure 10: Needs for support of Ukrainian refugees who require assistance in at least one area
Proportions in %, multiple answers possible



Note: N = 10,591.

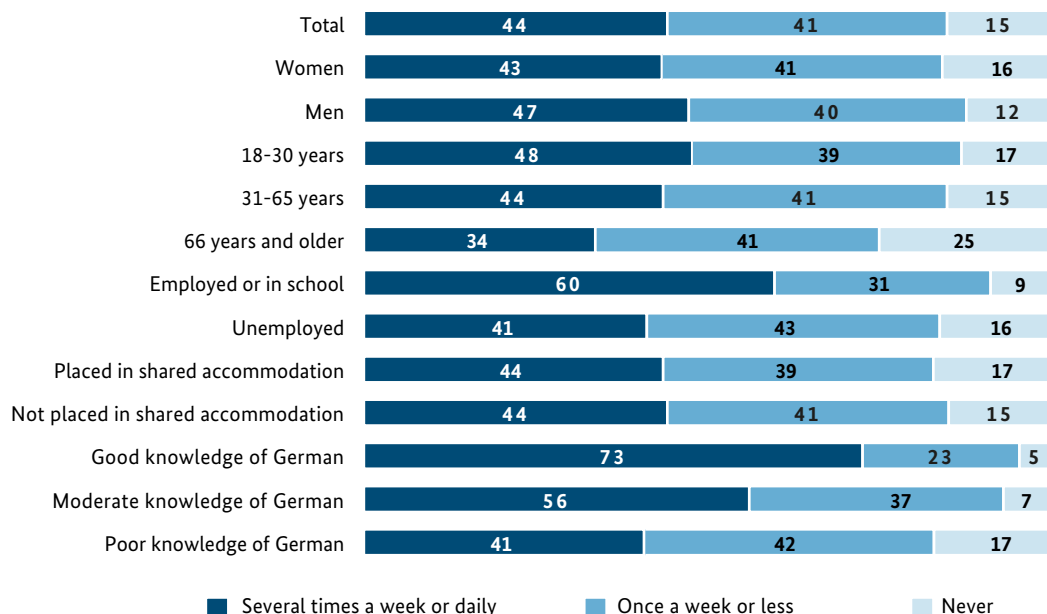
Source: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

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 Ukrainians (31-65 years) are slightly more likely to spend time with others from Ukraine than younger people (18-30 years) or older people (over 65 years) are.

Ukrainian refugees who often spend time with Germans account for 44%, 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 who live in private accommodation and those who spend more time with other people from Ukraine (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Frequency of spending time with Germans
Proportions in %



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 receiving refugees largely determine the structure of refugee migration: most refugees are fleeing war and violence, and the majority 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 security system under the Code of Social Law II (Sozialgesetzbuch II), certainty for future plans is provided initially until 4 March 2024. These are favourable conditions for integration and participation, which have already led to preliminary success. The majority of Ukrainian refugees live in private accommodation, and half are attending or have already completed a language

course. Six months after arrival, 18% of working-age refugees are employed. 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.

However, the refugees indicate that there is a great need for support, especially with learning German, finding a job, health care and housing. The language programs and job placement services are already widely used and the survey results show further that these services are central to integration and participation. This suggests that some services should be more widely developed. 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.

Ukrainian refugees’ intentions to stay in Germany 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%). Due to uncertainty about the course of the war, 27% are unsure about their intentions to stay. 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.

AUTHORS:**Prof. Dr. Herbert Brücker**

Institute for Employment Research (IAB) and Berlin Institute for Empirical Migration and Integration Research (BIM) at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU)

Dr. Andreas Ette

Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB)

Dr. Markus M. Grabka

Research Infrastructure “Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP)” at the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin)

Dr. Yuliya Kosyakova

Institute for Employment Research (IAB) and University of Bamberg

Wenke Niehues

Research Centre of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF-FZ)

Dr. Nina Rother

Research Centre of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF-FZ)

Prof. Dr. C. Katharina Spieß

Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB) and Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

Prof. Dr. Sabine Zinn

Research Infrastructure “Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP)” at the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin) and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU)

PD Dr. Martin Bujard

Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB)

Dr. Adriana Cardozo

Research Infrastructure “Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP)” at the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin)

Jean Philippe Décieux, PhD

Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB)

Dr. Amrei Maddox

Research Centre of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF-FZ)

Dr. Nadja Milewski

Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB)

Dr. Robert Naderi

Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB)

Dr. Lenore Sauer

Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB)

Dr. Sophia Schmitz

Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB)

Silvia Schwanhäuser

Institute for Employment Research (IAB)

Dr. Manuel Siegert

Research Centre of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF-FZ)

Dr. Kerstin Tanis

Research Centre of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF-FZ)



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