

## Ukrainian Refugees in Germany: Evidence From a Large Representative Survey

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

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### Abstract

This study describes the first wave of the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Survey on Ukrainian Refugees in Germany, a unique panel dataset based on over 11,000 interviews conducted between August and October 2022. The aim of the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Survey is to provide a data-infrastructure for theory-driven and evidence-based research on various aspects of integration among Ukrainian refugees in Germany, the second most important destination country in the EU after Poland, hosting over a million people who arrived in Germany shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Based on the survey, this study also provides first insights into demographic, educational, linguistic, occupational, and social characteristics of this population. The analyses revealed that the refugee population comprised mostly young and educated individuals, with a significant proportion of females without partners and female-headed separated families. While German language skills were limited, about half of Ukrainian refugees had attended or were attending language courses. However, the integration process faced significant challenges, as the participation of children in day-care was relatively low, and the self-reported life satisfaction was markedly below the average of the German population. The study highlights the need for targeted policy measures to address such issues. Additionally, policies may aim at harnessing the high potential of the Ukrainian refugees for the German labor market. Given that a substantial proportion would like to stay in Germany permanently, policymakers should take note of these findings and aim to facilitate their long-term integration process to ensure that these refugees may thrive in Germany.

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**Keywords:** Refugees · Self-selection · Family · Education · Labor market · Integration · Ukraine

## 1 Background

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused the largest displacement of people in Europe since the end of World War II. As of December 2022, 5.9 million Ukrainians have been displaced internally. An additional 7.9 million sought refuge abroad (UNHCR 2023). With approximately one million refugees Germany became the second most important destination country for Ukrainian citizens, after Poland with about 1.6 million (UNHCR 2023). The population of Ukrainian citizens residing in Germany increased sevenfold since the onset of the conflict. It made up to 9.0 percent of the foreign population by the end of 2022 and 1.4 percent of the total resident population in the country.

With the growing influx of refugees from Middle Eastern and North African countries (e.g., Syria, Afghanistan) in the last decade, research on flight and displacement has developed rapidly, particularly in Germany (e.g., *FitzGerald/Arar* 2018; *Kogan/Kalter* 2020). It is now widely recognized that, for various reasons, refugees have poorer integration and participation opportunities than other immigrants. Due to war and persecution, refugees often have limited time to prepare for migration, which is compounded by the host countries' lack of (time for) preparation for sudden increases in refugee influx. Refugees are more likely to be mentally or physically impaired due to traumatic events related to war, persecution, and fleeing; and they face limited access to social networks and other important resources in the destination countries (e.g., *Brell et al.* 2020; *Dustmann et al.* 2017; *Kosyakova/Kogan* 2022). Relatively restrictive housing, learning, work and mobility conditions during the asylum procedure and individual experiences of rejection and discrimination in the destination countries also reduce refugees' chances for participation and integration (*Di Saint Pierre et al.* 2015; *Hainmueller et al.* 2016; *Kosyakova/Brenzel* 2020). Family structure, including those left behind, and opportunities for family reunification are important factors shaping integration processes and educational opportunities of children, adolescents, and adults (*Kraus et al.* 2019; *Löbel/Jacobsen* 2021). This also stresses the importance of institutional daycare for children below school age and school access for school aged children (e.g., *Bujard et al.* 2020; *Gambaro et al.* 2020, 2021).

The current influx of Ukrainian refugees to Germany differs from previous waves of refugees, compared, for example, to those from Poland and Iran in the late 1970s, Romania and Turkey in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as well as those from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria since 2013 (e.g., *Brücker* 2022; *Brücker et al.* 2022). Due to the general mobilization in Ukraine and the travel ban for men of military age, the current refugee influx is mainly composed of women, children, and older people (*BMI* 2023). In contrast, the refugees arriving between 2013 and 2016 were mostly young men (*Brücker et al.* 2020). Moreover, the relatively new war situation and the uncertainty regarding the further course of the war and its outcome contributes to particularly high levels of uncertainty among refugees regarding their stay in Germany and the possibility and intentions of returning.

The institutional framework for the reception of Ukrainian refugees in Germany also differs fundamentally from that of previous refugees. Firstly, Ukrainians have had

the possibility of visa-free entry to Germany and all other Schengen countries since 2017. Secondly, the activation of the “Temporary Protection Directive” (2001/55/EC) by the European Union (EU) has provided immediate legal and planning security. By waiving the asylum procedure and issuing a temporary residence permit until March 2024, this directive has expedited access to employment and integration opportunities. Thirdly, unlike other refugees, Ukrainians in Germany were not required to stay in reception facilities designated for refugees and were not generally subject to distribution policies. These policies were, however, implemented for Ukrainian refugees who relied on social benefits and public housing. Fourthly, beginning June 2022, Ukrainian refugees were eligible for basic social benefits under the Code of Social Law II (*Sozialgesetzbuch II*) instead of the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (*Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz*), resulting in higher benefit rates and integration into the support structure of German job centers including access to language classes. These accompanying factors in the Ukraine and Germany have triggered not only demographic differences between Ukrainian and other refugees, but also have an impact on their prospects for integration, highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of Ukrainian refugees.

Despite the urgent need for empirical research on Ukrainian refugees, who fled their country following the Russian invasion in February 2022, available data are scarce and often non-representative. Existing studies have mostly relied on convenience samples collected at registration or support centers in the host countries (*FRA 2023; Kohlenberger et al. 2022; Pędziwiatr et al., 2022*), on online surveys conducted via social media or other channels (e.g., *Panchenko 2022; Pötzschke et al. 2022*), or on qualitative interviews (*Kjæøy/Tyldum 2022*). For instance, a recent convenience sample conducted in Poland and Austria by *Kohlenberger et al. (2022)* indicated that refugees from Ukraine were predominantly highly educated women aged over 25, with a higher proportion in Austria than in Poland. Following *Pędziwiatr et al. (2022)*, the overwhelming majority of partnered female refugees from Ukraine lived in Poland without their partners but with their children, implicating pronounced family separation within this refugee population. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights conducted an online survey in ten European countries, reporting that almost one third of respondents intended to return to Ukraine after the war, while a similar proportion wanted to remain in the host country (*FRA 2023*). While these studies have provided valuable insights into some aspects of self-selection of Ukrainian refugees and family separation, their limitations lie in the lack of representativeness and the small sample size. Thus, further research based on representative data is urgently needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the situation of Ukrainian refugees.

Given the deficits described above, this study reports first results from the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Survey on Ukrainian Refugees in Germany, a panel survey conducted 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). The survey aimed to examine how the conditions of the war in Ukraine and the institutional and legal frameworks

governing refugee resettlement in Germany shape the demographic and integration patterns of Ukrainian refugees and their impact on society as a whole. The study's results based on the first wave of data collection provide valuable insights that can inform effective policies and programs aimed at facilitating the participation and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Germany, making it a solid basis for evidence-based decision-making in the context of refugee reception and integration.

## 2 Data: IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Survey on Ukrainian Refugees in Germany

The IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Survey on Ukrainian Refugees in Germany is based on a random sample of 811,000 Ukrainian nationals who have sought protection in Germany between the beginning of the Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, and the beginning of June 2022. The sample was based on two available administrative registers in Germany – the population register (*Einwohnermelderegister* – EMR) and the Central Register of Foreigners (*Ausländerzentralregister* – AZR) – which have been used in similar studies in the past (e.g., *Babka von Gostomski/Pupeter* 2008; *Brücker et al.* 2017; *Duszczuk et al.* 2023; *Ette et al.* 2021). The combination of both registers allowed to rapidly construct a high-quality sampling base.

For the sampling of Ukrainian refugees in Germany, a two-stage procedure was implemented. On the first stage, 100 cities and counties across the 16 federal states in Germany have been randomly drawn, considering daily updated information on the regional distribution of Ukrainian refugees registered in the AZR. The EMR was utilized in the second stage. A gross sample of 48,000 Ukrainian nationals aged between 18 and 70 years who first registered in Germany on or after February 24, 2022, was drawn.<sup>1</sup> Note that the majority of refugees who fled to Germany between March and November 2022 were already registered in the AZR at the time of sampling (81 percent). The registration was carried out by both immigration (of the municipalities and free cities – *Ausländerbehörde*) and registration offices (*Einwohnermeldeämtern*). Due to the high number of individuals wanting to register, there were very likely delays on the part of the authorities. However, there is no reason to assume that this process resulted in systematic missing data. Moreover, the AZR figures were only used to form the clusters for the random sample and not for sampling the refugees themselves. This was done using a sample from the registration offices, which had a response rate of almost 100 percent at the gross level.

<sup>1</sup> Considering that a potential Russian invasion was already becoming evident in early 2022, we made sure to include individuals who had departed from Ukraine as early as January 2022 in our analyses. The restriction to individuals who entered Germany starting from February 24, 2022, was based on the definition of our population, which we determined for the purpose of sampling. Nonetheless, we replicated our analyses restricting our sample to those who departed after February, 24, 2022 (281 observations were dropped). Our results were robust to this adjustment and are available upon request.

The IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Survey on Ukrainian Refugees in Germany was conducted based on a push-to-web mixed-mode design that combined the advantages of postal recruitment with those of an online survey. This design has previously been used for other spatially mobile populations in Germany (*Dillman 2017; Ette et al. 2021; Sakshaug et al. 2019*). For this purpose, all 48,000 individuals in the gross sample were invited to participate in the survey online through a letter sent by postal mail. Two weeks after the initial invitation, a postal reminder was sent to all non-respondents and provided the option of completing a paper questionnaire instead of the online questionnaire and returning it free of charge.

The questionnaire was intentionally kept brief, with a median survey duration of 19.7 minutes among those participating online. The questionnaire covered a variety of topics, including education, employment, individual financial situation in Ukraine and Germany, participation in integration measures, family situation and social contacts, intentions to stay in Germany, accommodation, individual demands for help and assistance as well as the health situation of respondents and their children. The content of the questionnaire was based on the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany (*Brücker et al. 2016, 2017*) and the German Family Demography Panel Study (FReDA) (*Bujard et al. 2022; Schneider et al. 2021*).

A total of 11,763 persons took part in the survey, of whom 9,525 persons (81 percent of the net sample) participated online and 2,238 persons (19 percent of the net sample) by mail. The overall response rate was about 25 percent (AAPOR Response Rate 1), which is comparable to studies with similar research designs or target groups (*Cornesse et al. 2022; Kroh et al. 2017; Lynn 2020*). The comparison of the distribution of key demographic characteristics of respondents with the distribution of all Ukrainian refugees registered between February 24, 2022, and September 30, 2022, as known from the AZR, revealed little evidence of systematic bias in the sample, indicating a high quality of the data. A special weighting compensated for the different participation behaviors in the various groups.

The results of the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Survey on Ukrainian Refugees in Germany can be generalized to Ukrainian nationals who fled to Germany during the initial months of the invasion. The data thus provides reliable evidence for this group.<sup>2</sup> For the following analyses, we excluded respondents who reported to having left Ukraine before 2022 or having entered Germany before February 24, 2022. As a result, the original data was reduced to 10,818 observations.

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<sup>2</sup> The survey exclusively involved the participation of randomly selected individuals, excluding members of their households. However, it is crucial to emphasize that the data represent the entire population of displaced Ukrainians in Germany aged 18 to 70 years, which includes both the surveyed individuals and their household members who also had the chance to be drawn into the sample.

### 3 Results

#### 3.1 Reasons for fleeing and the route to Germany

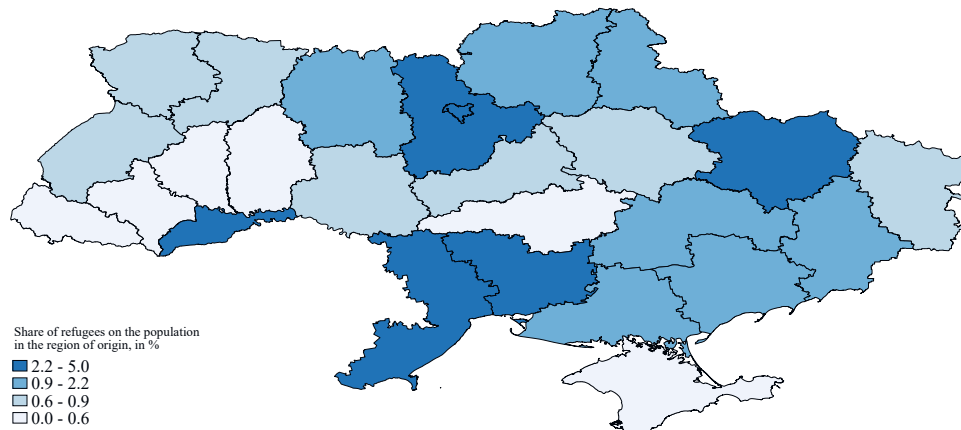
Since the beginning of Russian invasion of Ukraine, a significant number of Ukrainian nationals has fled the country. As of November 2022, over one million Ukrainian refugees have been registered in Germany (UNHCR 2023). The results of the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Survey on Ukrainian Refugees in Germany show that almost all Ukrainians who fled to Germany reported that they left Ukraine because of the war (96 percent). Among further reasons for fleeing Ukraine, family context and personal networks were important triggers for 18 percent (e.g., they were sent by family), poor economic conditions were named by 10 percent.

The fact that war and, thus, humanitarian reasons were among the main motives for fleeing Ukraine was also reflected in the refugees' last regions of residence within Ukraine. Numerous studies have demonstrated that violence in a region is a central driver of increased refugee movements from that region (e.g., Aksoy/Poutvaara 2019; Schon 2019). It is assumed that people living in regions where armed conflicts prevail are more likely to migrate than those living in more peaceful regions. In Ukraine, as in other conflict areas, the population is affected differently by the Russian invasion, with armed conflicts primarily concentrated in larger cities and their surrounding areas (Raleigh et al. 2010). Particularly, after Putin declared war or a "special military operation" in the early morning on February 24, 2022, the Ukrainian government confirmed airstrikes targeting military sites in Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Dnipro, along with artillery fire at the border. In the first days, the Ukrainian forces intensively held back Russian advances on the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, while warning that the city might succumb in a matter of days (Chance et al. 2022). In early April 2022, Ukrainian resistance successfully compelled Russian forces to retreat from northern parts of Ukraine following intense fights (Reuters 2022). Subsequently, the focus of the warfare shifted primarily to the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine. By mid-summer 2022, Russian forces had gained control over significant portions of Ukraine's southern coastline and a larger area of the Donbas region compared to the time before the invasion.

Accordingly, the proportion of Ukrainian refugees in Germany is higher from areas affected by armed conflict. In absolute numbers, the majority of refugees arrived from eastern Ukraine (32 percent), Kyiv (19 percent) and southern Ukraine (14 percent). Relative to the population size in the 27 Ukrainian regions, the majority of refugees arrived from the city of Kyiv (5 percent) and the Oblast (county) of Kharkiv (4 percent), as well as the more western Oblast (county) of Chernivtsi (Fig. 1). Further analyses also show that people from more urban regions are more likely to seek protection abroad than those living in rural areas.

Same as the reasons for fleeing, family factors and networks also played a major role for choosing Germany as a destination country: Overall, 60 percent of Ukrainian refugees came to Germany because their family members, friends and acquaintances already lived here. In addition to these family and network-related factors, specific characteristics attributed to Germany also played a role. For

**Fig. 1:** Percentage of refugees compared to the population of the region of origin



Note: Results are weighted by the total number of Ukrainian refugees registered in Germany by 31 May 2022.

Source: Own calculation based on the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022; State Statistics Service of Ukraine 2022.

instance, 29 percent of the respondents cited respect for human rights as one of the reasons for choosing Germany, another 12 percent cited the welcoming culture. State and structural features such as the German welfare system (22 percent), the German education system (12 percent) and the economic situation (10 percent) were further reasons mentioned by Ukrainian refugees. About 18 percent reported having arrived in Germany by chance. The vast majority of the sampled Ukrainian refugees arrived with family members, friends, or acquaintances (80 percent), including 61 percent who arrived with members of their nuclear family (partners and in particular minor children).

### 3.2 (Self-)selection among the refugee population

Focusing on demographic and human capital characteristics, Ukrainian refugees in Germany are highly selective compared to the average Ukrainian population. Following the information provided by the *State Statistics Service of Ukraine* (2022), the median age of the refugees (28 years) was significantly lower than that of the total Ukrainian population (41 years as of January 1, 2021). The share of women was much higher than in the Ukrainian population as a whole: Women made up 68 percent of all refugees (54 percent of the whole population in Ukraine) and 80 percent were between the ages of 18 and 70 (compared to 53 percent of the population in Ukraine).

The war also had and has comprehensive effects on partnerships and families in Ukraine and on Germany's refugee population from Ukraine. 54 percent of the adult refugees in Germany were married, 26 percent were single, 16 percent were

divorced, and 5 percent were widowed. However, there are significant differences in partnership status of male and female refugees. Three thirds of female refugees lived in Germany without a partner (34 percent of the female respondents reported that their partner lived abroad, 41 percent reported having no partner, Table 1). Almost half of the women (48 percent) lived with minor children in Germany, but the majority of them had a partner living in Ukraine or in a third country. Among men, 6 percent had a partner living abroad, and 21 percent were single. Only few of the male refugees lived in Germany with minor children and no partner.

Ukrainian families with minors in Germany were most prevalent in the age group 20 to 49 years. Approximately 62 percent among the women in this age group had minor children in Germany (Table 1). Around 11 percent of mothers with children under 18 years had at least one other child living abroad.

The average educational level of Ukrainian refugees in Germany was significantly higher than the average among the population in the country of origin but also higher than that of the German population (Fig. 2): 72 percent of the refugees aged 20-70 years reported having tertiary, mostly academic, educational qualifications, compared to 50 percent of the total population of Ukraine. Among Ukrainian refugees with tertiary education, 5 percent had a doctorate, 72 percent a master's degree and 23 percent held a bachelor's or other tertiary degree. These findings

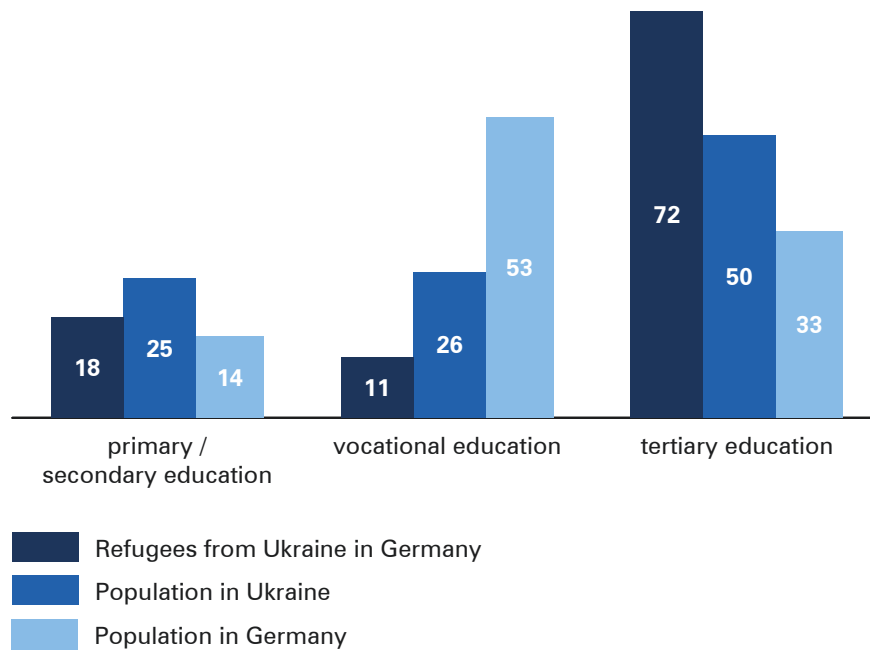
**Tab. 1:** Family and household structure of female Ukrainian refugees in Germany, in percent

	Women (aged 18-70)	Women (aged 20-49)
With a spouse or partner in Germany (DE)	22	22
... with minor children in DE	12	16
... without minor children in DE	6	1
... no children	5	5
Spouse or partner abroad	34	39
... with minor children in DE	23	30
... without minor children in DE	6	2
... no children	5	6
Partnerless	41	38
... with minor children in DE	13	16
... without minor children in DE	11	3
... no children	17	19
Total with minor children in DE	48	62
No information on the residence of child and / or partner	2	
Total	100	100

Note: N = 10,999.

Source: Own calculation based on the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

**Fig. 2:** Education and qualification of Ukrainian refugees in Germany compared to the Ukrainian and German population, in percent



Note: Harmonization of education and training qualifications is based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011). The analysis of education and qualification levels is restricted to the population in the range 20-70 years because of post-harmonization issues with the Ukrainian Labor Force Survey. N = 234,595.

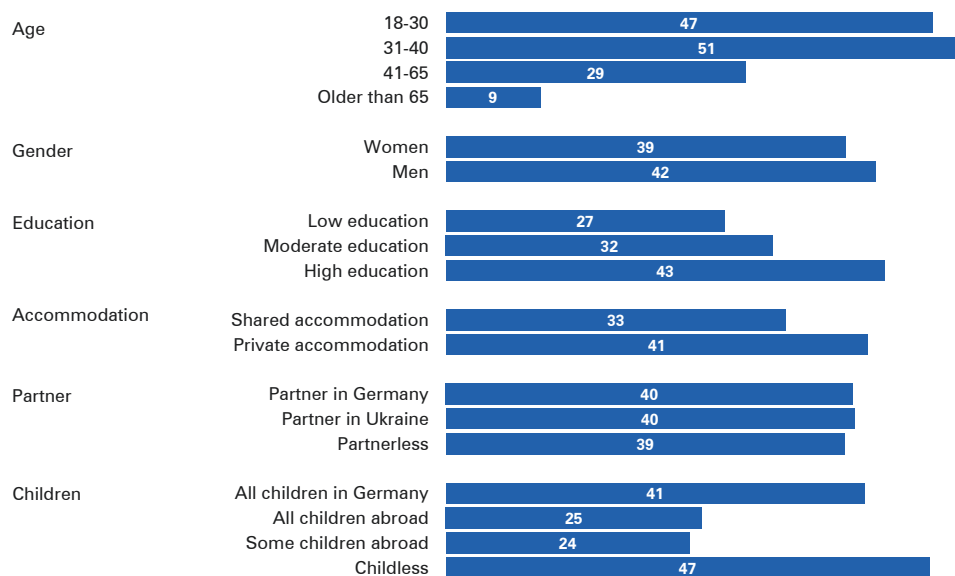
Source: Own calculation based on the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022, the Labor Force Survey Ukraine 2021, and SOEPv37.

thus confirmed earlier studies on refugees in Germany, which also demonstrated positive selection on education (*Birgier et al. 2018; Kosyakova/Kogan 2022*).

### 3.3 Health status

People who flee because of violence or armed conflict are usually exposed to high levels of psychological stress. In addition, flight is also often associated with physical stress, which can have a negative impact on the physical well-being and health of refugees (*Erim/Brähler 2016; Metzinger et al. 2020*). However, it is mainly the healthier people who leave their home country, while the sicker ones stay behind (e.g., *Markides/Rote 2019*).

Overall, 39 percent of adult Ukrainian refugees rated their health as very good or good, only 10 percent as poor or very poor. Among those who reported poor health, approximately half indicated a need for medical assistance. Age, gender, educational level, and type of accommodation are significantly correlated with

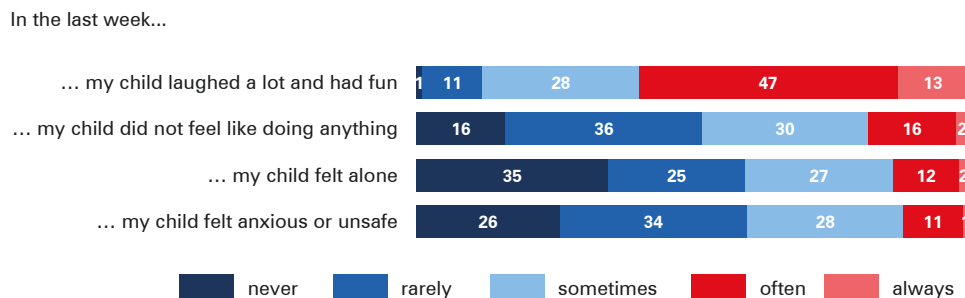
**Fig. 3:** Subjective health of adult Ukrainian refugees, percentage with very good or good health

Note: N = 10,818.

Source: Own calculation based on the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

refugees' self-rated health, with those younger, male, those with higher education, and those living in private accommodation being more likely to rate their health as good or very good (Fig. 3). In contrast, older refugees, female refugees, those with a low to medium level of education, and those living in shared accommodation were more likely to rate their health as poor. Additionally, refugees whose children (all or some) have remained in Ukraine were much more likely to report poor health than those who lived with their children in Germany. These findings are robust, even after accounting for gender and age (not shown here), albeit with smaller yet still statistically significant differences between the groups. There is no evidence suggesting that refugees were selected based on subjective health status with respect to their partner's place of residence. Nevertheless, mental well-being of refugees who had a partner residing in Ukraine at the time of the survey was notably inferior compared to those refugees whose partners were present in Germany (5.7 versus 6.0 on an 11-point Likert scale, see also the section on life satisfaction below).

**Fig. 4:** Psychological well-being of Ukrainian children and adolescents, in percent



Note: Parental data on the KINDLR 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: Own calculation based on the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

The majority of Ukrainian parents (60 percent) reported that their oldest child<sup>3</sup> living in Germany had been happy in the past week (i.e., laughed a lot and had fun). Nevertheless, 12 percent stated that their children “rarely” or “never” experienced such emotions (Fig. 4). Despite this, a comparison revealed that the psychological well-being of Ukrainian children and adolescents who have fled to Germany were significantly below the representative reference and normative values of other children and adolescents living in Germany across all age groups (e.g., *Ravens-Sieberer et al.* 2007, 2008).

### 3.4 Arrival in Germany, housing, and intentions to stay

Ensuring swift legal certainty regarding residence status is crucial for both the process of arrival and refugees’ further integration (*Brücker et al.* 2016). The results from the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Survey on Ukrainian Refugees in Germany indicated that the application and granting of residence titles was relatively fast. Within the first month after arrival, 59 percent of refugees had applied for a residence permit. This share increased to 94 percent in the first two months and reached almost 99 percent after six months of stay. At the time of the interview, 76 percent of Ukrainian refugees had obtained a residence permit under Section 24 of the Residence Act (*AufenthG*), i.e., the specific provision which implements

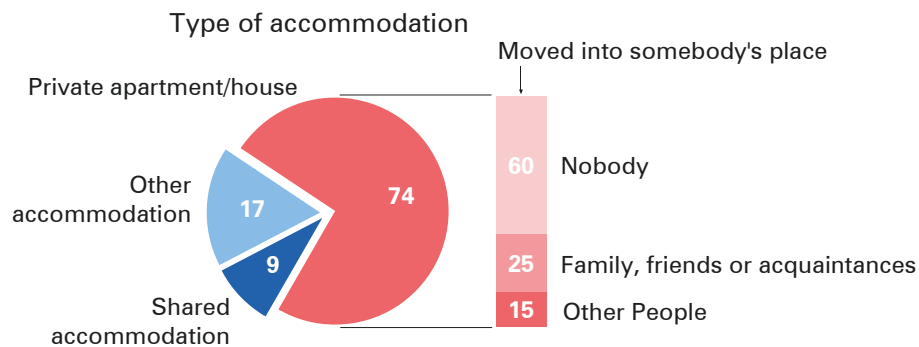
<sup>3</sup> The psychological well-being of the eldest child in the household of a refugee parent in Germany was surveyed. Assessments were based on the four items of the KINDL subscale (e.g., *Ravens-Sieberer et al.* 2007) of psychological well-being (Fig. 3). By adding up the single items, we constructed a single value ranging from 0-100 by child age groups that are comparable to the existing literature. Further analysis shows that the separation of family members, usually fathers, appears to be a particular stress factor which is reflected in significant lower values of psychological well-being for all age groups, while type of accommodation is not significantly correlated with the well-being of children.

the “Temporary Protection Directive” (2001/55/EC) of the EU into national law in Germany and issues a temporary residence permit until March 4, 2024. Among other things, this residence permit gives Ukrainian refugees the opportunity to work in Germany and to use various counselling and integration services. A further 18 percent obtained a provisional residence permit (*Fiktionsbescheinigung*), which is issued to applicants pending the granting of a residence permit. Only a few (2 percent) had another type of residence title or were staying in Germany without a visa (3 percent). The majority of Ukrainian refugees, thus, have legal security and certainty until March 4, 2024, which provides them with some time-horizon for planning.

A large majority of Ukrainian refugees felt welcome upon arrival in Germany (33 percent “completely welcome”, and 43 percent “mostly welcome”). Only a minority felt not at all or hardly welcome (7 percent). The feeling of being welcome was similarly strong among different groups.

The housing situation is a key determinant for the social integration of all population groups (e.g., *Ager/Strang* 2008; *Baier/Siegert* 2018). At the same time, it may pose social and financial challenges for the municipalities concerned: the high influx of refugees and their spatial concentration has caused great concern within the municipalities, states, and the federal government about settlement patterns and housing supply (*Mediendienst Integration* 2023). By the time of the survey, 74 percent were living in private apartments and houses, another 17 percent were in other accommodations, such as hotels and guesthouses, and only 9 percent lived in shared accommodation. Of those in private accommodation, 60 percent were living alone or with family members who had also fled. One fourth lived with friends, acquaintances, or family members, who had already been living in Germany before the Russian invasion, and 15 percent lived with other persons (Fig. 5). Only 16 percent of Ukrainian refugees reported to having been subject to distribution policies by German authorities.

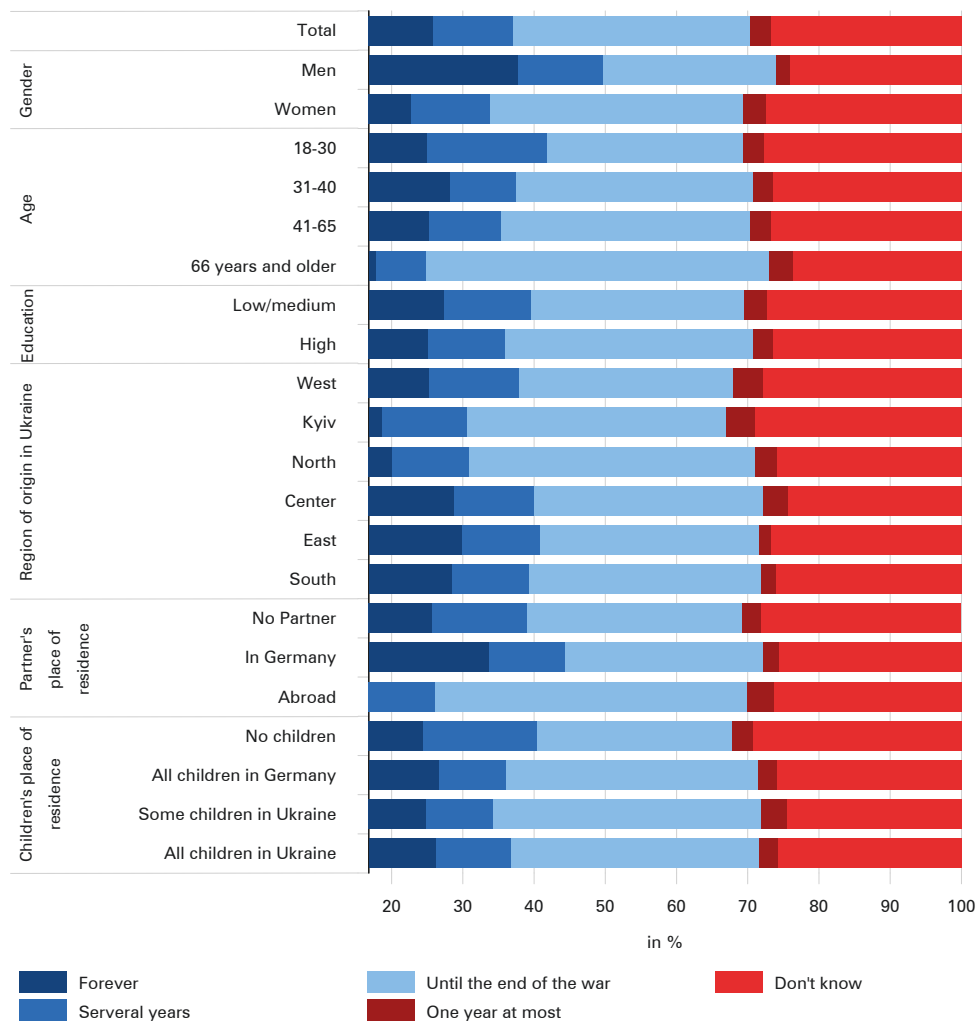
**Fig. 5:** Ukrainian refugees by type of accommodation, in percent



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

Settlement intentions and intended duration of stay are of central importance for both refugees’ own plans as well as the government’s planning and implementation of medium- and long-term support and integration measures. The survey results revealed a pronounced heterogeneity of the settlement intentions of Ukrainian refugees, with 34 percent planning to stay in Germany until the end of the war, of whom 81 percent intended to return to Ukraine. Permanent stay in Germany was planned by 26 percent of Ukrainian refugees, while 11 percent planned to stay for a

**Fig. 6:** Ukrainian refugees’ intentions to stay in Germany, in percent



Note: 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 percent due to rounding. N = 10,690-10,818.

Source: Own calculation based on the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

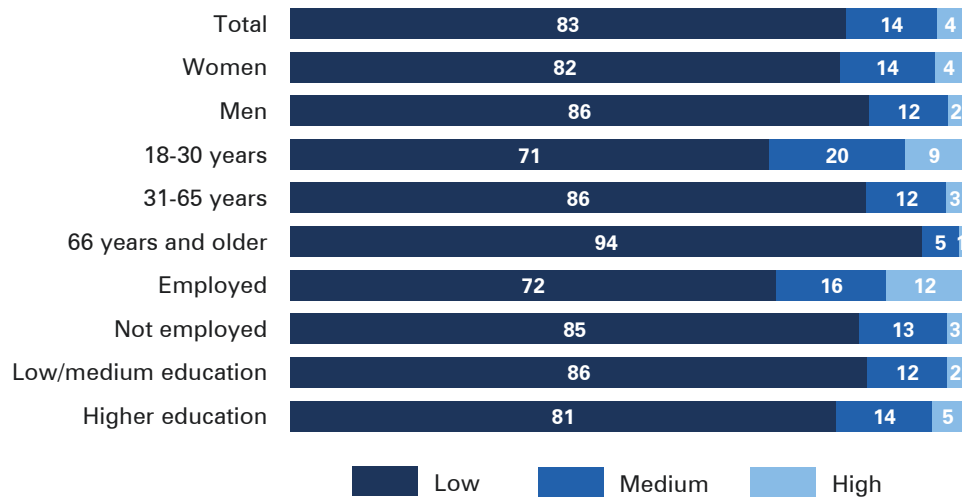
few years and 2 percent for a maximum of one year. Around 27 percent remained uncertain and did not know yet how long they would like to stay in Germany.

Women, older (66 years or older) and higher educated persons less frequently wanted to stay forever in Germany than men, people younger than 66 years, and persons with lower or intermediate educational attainments (Fig. 6). Refugees who lived in Kyiv or Northern Ukraine before fleeing to Germany, less often wanted to stay forever than Ukrainians from other parts of the country. Moreover, the shares of persons intending to stay permanently in Germany was lowest among refugees whose partner lived abroad and highest among those whose partner also resided in Germany. Single adults took an intermediate position. Among those groups with lower shares of individuals wanting to stay in Germany forever, refugees more frequently wanted to stay until the end of the war. The other options (several years, one year at most, don't know) were more evenly distributed across groups.

### 3.5 Language proficiency and participation in language courses

German language skills are a key prerequisite for establishing contacts, gaining access to the labor market and education as well as for participation in the destination country at large (Kosyakova et al. 2022; Niehues et al. 2021). However, refugees have little to no time to build up destination-specific resources, such as language

**Fig. 7:** Self-assessment of German proficiency, in percent



Note: 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 percent due to rounding. N = 10,769-10,815.

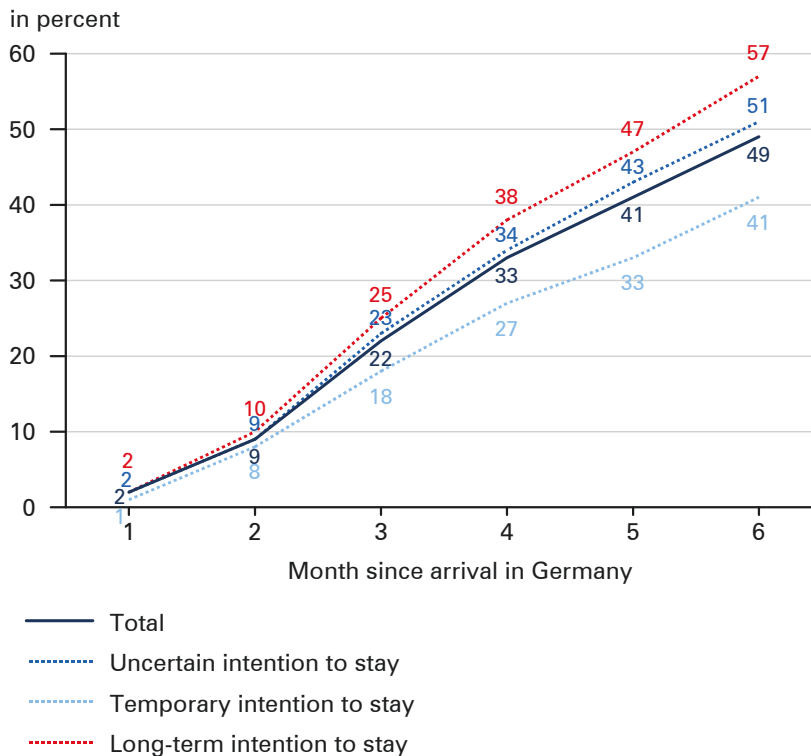
Source: Own calculation based on the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

skills, in advance of the flight (*Kosyakova/Kogan 2022*). It is not surprising, therefore, that the majority of Ukrainian refugees – 83 percent – reported no or rather poor knowledge of the German language, 14 percent had average and 4 percent had good or very good German skills. Predominantly well-educated, employed, and younger refugees rated their German language skills above average (Fig. 7).

Slightly more than half of Ukrainian refugees had attended or already completed a German language course at the time of the survey (51 percent). Of these, 35 percent had attended or completed an integration or other state-funded language course, 15 percent had attended or completed a different language course and 1 percent had combined integration or other government-provisioned language courses with other courses.

The participation in German language courses increased significantly with the length of stay. While only 9 percent of Ukrainian refugees were attending German language courses two months after arrival, this share increased to 33 percent after four months and to 49 percent after six months of stay (Fig. 8). Participation in language courses varied by settlement intentions, with those having intentions to

**Fig. 8:** Inverted Kaplan-Meier estimation of language course participation by months since arrival in Germany, in percent



Note: N = 10,128.

Source: Own calculation based on the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

stay in Germany for longer periods showing higher participation/completion rates of German language courses than refugees rather intending a short stay.

### 3.6 Daycare and school participation

Children and adolescents make up a significant proportion of those seeking protection in Germany (see Section 3.2): Almost every second Ukrainian woman who fled to Germany came with at least one minor child – among men, the figure was 44 percent. Attending a daycare center or school is a fundamentally important component of integration and participation in German society for children and young people with a refugee background (e.g., *Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen* 2016). It can also facilitate the social and labor market integration of parents, e.g., parents can attend language courses or pursue gainful employment during this time (e.g., *Gambaro et al.* 2021).

Among Ukrainian refugees living with one child in Germany,<sup>4</sup> 22 percent of children under the age of three and 59 percent of children between the age of three and school-entry age attended a daycare center. Children whose parents were either employed in Germany or were attending a language or integration course significantly more often attend daycare compared to children whose parents were neither employed nor participating in any language courses. Moreover, a lack of support from partners or grandparents residing in Germany also correlated with higher rates of daycare attendance.

Turning to school-aged children, the survey results revealed that 91 percent of refugee families had at least one child attending school in Germany, with a high proportion of primary school children (41 percent). Around a quarter of families had children in grammar and secondary schools and just under 10 percent in comprehensive schools. In just under a third of these families, the children attended special classes for refugee children, known as *Willkommensklassen* in some German states. Additionally, in 23 percent of the families, at least one child took online lessons from a Ukrainian school. The use of Ukrainian online lessons varied by the intentions to stay and the age of the child. Most children used these online services in conjunction with their schooling in Germany, with less than 3 percent exclusively relying on Ukrainian online lessons. Given that schooling is compulsory for children from the age of 6 up to the completion of eight or nine school years (depending on state regulations), the high enrollment rate of Ukrainian refugee children in German schools is not surprising.

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<sup>4</sup> Due to the survey specificities, statements on usage of daycare centers are only possible for refugees with one child in Germany (53 percent of refugee families with underage children). This should be considered when interpreting the daycare rates.

### 3.7 Labor market integration

Compared to other migrant groups, refugees often face greater challenges in integrating into the destination countries' labor markets due to their poor starting conditions in terms of language skills and lack of professional networks. Therefore, labor market integration generally takes longer for refugees than for other migrant groups, particularly compared to migrants who arrived for job reasons (*Brell et al. 2020; Kosyakova/Kogan 2022*). Additionally, legal restrictions such as employment bans and uncertainty about the outcome of asylum procedures often delay their integration (*Hainmueller et al. 2016; Kosyakova/Brenzel 2020*). However, in the case of Ukrainian refugees, legal conditions were more favorable as they were not subject to employment bans and had a residence permit for at least the first two years. Nevertheless, the uncertainty surrounding the war in Ukraine created significant uncertainty regarding their intentions to stay and, consequently, their labor market integration.

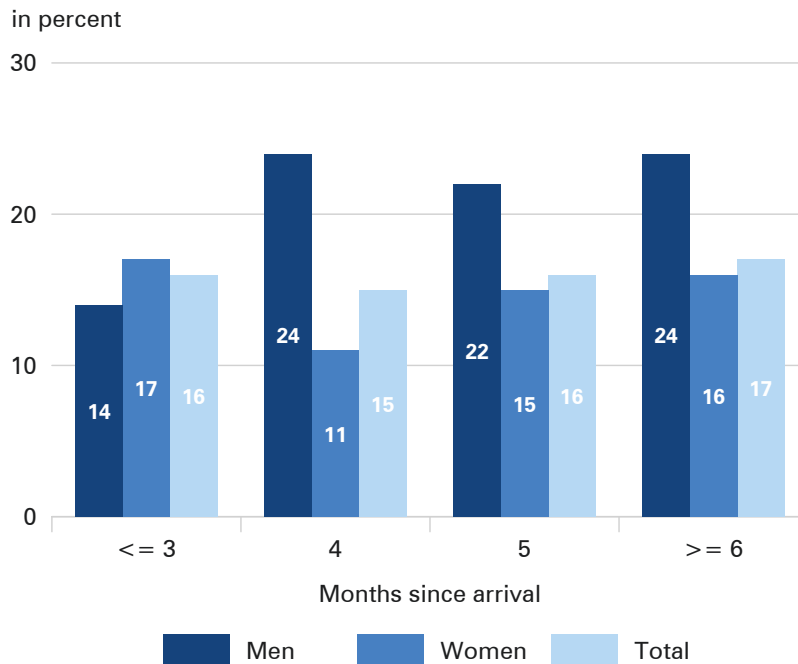
By the time of the survey, 17 percent of Ukrainian refugees were employed in Germany. Further 78 percent expressed working aspirations, with 56 percent reporting that they definitely (56 percent) or probably (22 percent) would like to start working. Of refugees with working aspiration, 26 percent wanted to start immediately, 57 percent in the next year and 16 percent in two to five years. According to the survey results, 74 percent of non-employed Ukrainian refugees were registered as unemployed and thus included in the support and placement infrastructure of the job centers. Of this group, 21 percent had been actively seeking work in the four weeks prior to the survey.

There were initially hardly any differences in employment rates between refugee men and women who had just arrived. However, an employment gender gap emerged over the duration of stay in Germany: Only 16 percent of women were employed six months after arrival, compared to 24 percent of men (Fig. 9). The pattern of an increasing gender gap in the labor market participation of refugees has already been evident in recent years for previous refugee groups (*Kosyakova et al. 2022*).

Among employed Ukrainian refugees in Germany, 83 percent were engaged in white-collar work (mainly with intellectual activities), 8 percent in blue-collar work (mainly with manual activities) and 8 percent were self-employed. The service sector accounted for 88 percent of employed refugees; 85 percent worked in this sector before coming to Germany. Moreover, of those employed, 30 percent had a job requiring a university degree, 19 percent had a job requiring higher specialist training (e.g., a vocational academy) and 22 percent held a job requiring a vocational training qualification (Fig. 10). Just 29 percent worked in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. Accordingly, 71 percent of Ukrainian refugees worked in skilled or highly skilled occupations, which was, however, significantly lower than the proportion who did so before arriving in Germany (93 percent).

Figure 11 illustrates multivariate results for impact of socio-demographic factors on refugees' employment probability based on the linear probability model with robust standard errors. The interaction effects between gender and children's

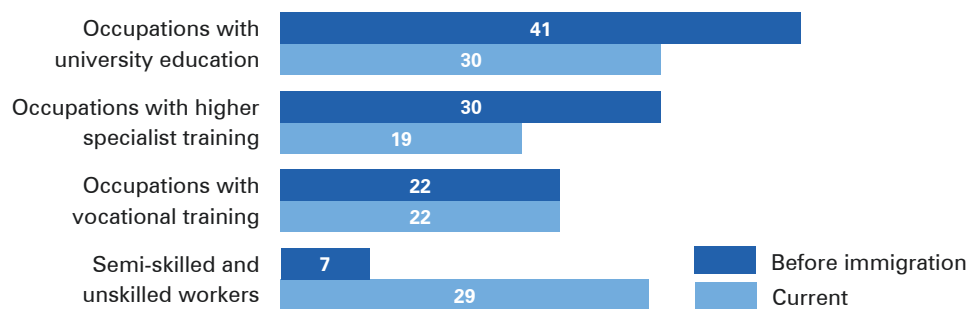
**Fig. 9:** Employment rates by sex and time since arrival, in percent of population in working age (18-64 years)



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

Source: Own calculation based on the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

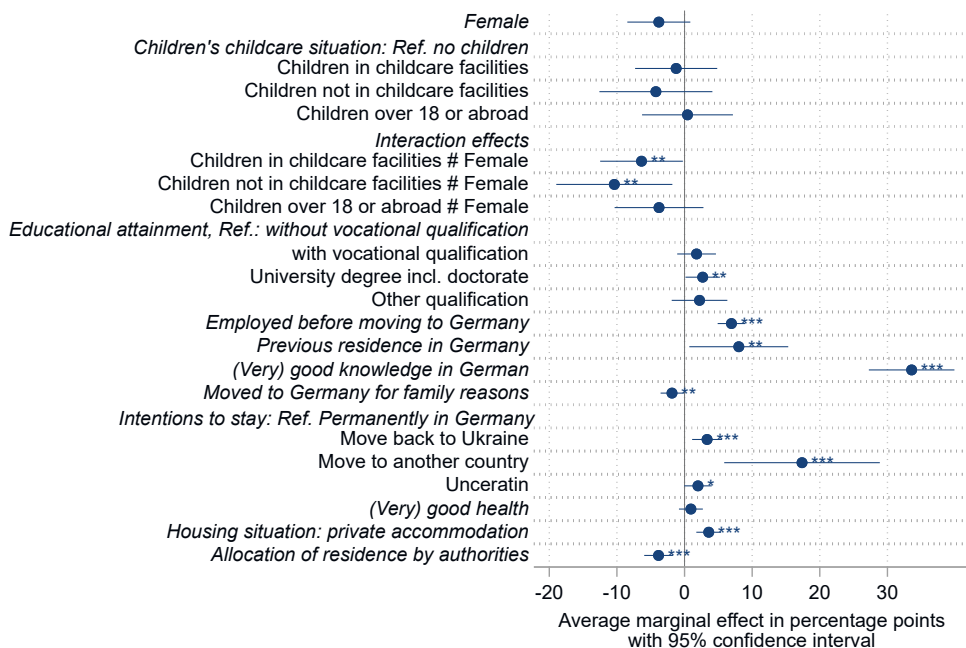
**Fig. 10:** Job skill level of Ukrainian refugees before and after immigration, in percent of the working population



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.

Source: Own calculation based on the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

**Fig. 11:** Association of different characteristics of refugees and their employment status, average marginal effect in percentage points



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.

Source: Own calculation based on the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

daycare or school attendance imply that female refugees from Ukraine are less likely to be employed than their male counterparts only if they are constrained by childcare responsibilities. In particular, the results from the interaction effects between gender and children's childcare situation reveal that women living with their minor children were less likely to be employed than women without children, especially if their children did not attend daycare centers. Conversely, for men there was no significant correlation between the presence of children in the household and the likelihood of being employed (Fig. 11).

Factors such as the educational level (university degree), previous work experience, previous residence in Germany, knowledge of the German language, and living in private accommodation were all positively associated with employment probability. At the same time, being subject to distribution policies was negatively associated with employment chances for both sexes. Further analyses suggest some gender-specific returns to education: For women, employment chances

increased significantly if they had a university degree, and for men if they had a vocational qualification. It is worth noting that Ukrainian refugees aiming to return to Ukraine or to move to another country were more likely to be employed than those with permanent settlement intentions in Germany. This could be attributed to a desire to accumulate savings before returning to Ukraine or to pursue employment opportunities in other countries.

### 3.8 Needs for support and advice

Particularly in the initial phases after their arrival, newcomers often need support to find their way around and to organize their lives in the new environment. This also became evident among Ukrainian refugees, the clear majority of whom reported needs for support and guidance in at least one area (88 percent). The most frequently identified areas of need were German language learning (49 percent) followed by job search (38 percent), healthcare access (33 percent), housing search (31 percent), recognition of educational and professional qualifications (31 percent), and ensuring financial security or navigating government bureaucracy (26 percent) (Fig. 12).

**Fig. 12:** Needs for support and guidance of Ukrainian refugees, in percent of all Ukrainian refugees with at least one need reported



Note: N = 10.591.

Source: Own calculation based on the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

At the time of the survey, 30 percent of Ukrainian refugees had received consultation from the job centers or employment agencies. Further 44 percent were aware of these resources but had not yet utilized them. Refugees were less familiar with the Migration Counselling for Adult Immigrants (*Migrationsberatung für erwachsene Zuwanderer, MBE*), a government-funded counselling service aimed at aiding recently arrived immigrants in their linguistic, social, and professional

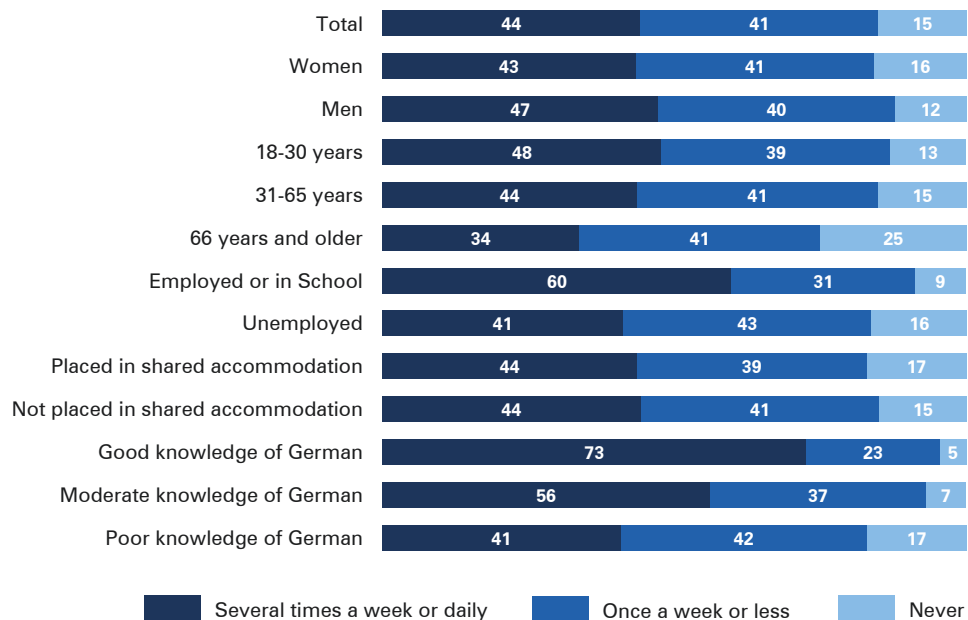
integration. Less than 5 percent had utilized this service and an additional 13 percent had heard of it.

### 3.9 Social contacts

Settling in a new country and navigating a new society can be a daunting task. Receiving support and assistance from family members, friends, and acquaintances is crucial for adapting and settling in (*Schacht* 2018). Establishing social relationships with members of the host society can be highly valuable as well, as they can provide information about the customs and structures specific to that country. Previous research has highlighted the importance of meeting people from the host society for refugees to engage in social exchange and develop social relationships (*Schacht* 2018; *Siegert* 2021).

By the time of the first survey wave, half of the Ukrainian refugees had spent time with non-family members from Ukraine more than once a week, while almost one in ten had never done so. The frequency of spending time with other Ukrainians who did not belong to the own family was slightly higher among middle-aged Ukrainians (31-65 years) compared to younger (18-30 years) or older people (over 65 years). Around 44 percent of Ukrainian refugees had frequently spent time with Germans, while 15 percent had never done so. Factors such as a good knowledge of German, being employed or attending school, living in private accommodation,

**Fig. 13:** Frequency of spending time with Germans, in percent



Note: Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding. N = 10,591.

Source: Own calculation based on the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey, 2022.

and spending more time with other people from Ukraine were positively associated with an increased contact frequency with Germans (Fig. 13).

### 3.10 Life satisfaction

The well-being of Ukrainian refugees can be measured by their level of satisfaction with life in general (e.g., *Böhnke/Kohler* 2010). The average self-reported life satisfaction of Ukrainian refugees was lower than that of the German resident population: using an 11-point Likert scale, with 0 indicating complete dissatisfaction and 10 complete satisfaction, the mean value for refugees was 5.8. The comparative value for the population living in Germany in 2020 was 7.5, based on the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP). The refugees' level of life satisfaction was found to be higher when they felt healthier, had better German language skills, spent more time with Germans and felt more welcome upon their arrival in Germany. Refugees who intended to stay in Germany permanently also reported higher levels of satisfaction compared to those who did not.

## 4 Discussion and conclusions

The course of the war in Ukraine and the legal situation for refugees largely determined the structure of the refugee migration from Ukraine. Most refugees fled war and violence, with many arriving from the most affected areas. Germany was a preferred destination particularly due to the presence of family, friends, and acquaintances. Economic considerations played a certain role, but they were not the primary motivation for migration. The majority of adult refugees were women, many with young children and separated from their partners due to the war. Adult refugees reported good health, but Ukrainian children had lower levels of psychological well-being compared to other children in Germany. Additionally, Ukrainian refugees were highly educated and predominantly worked in skilled occupations before fleeing to Germany.

The activation of the "Temporary Protection Directive" and the inclusion in the basic social security system under the Code of Social Law II (*Sozialgesetzbuch II*) provided certainty for future planning until March 4, 2024. These were favorable conditions for integration and participation, which have led to first successes. The majority of Ukrainian refugees resided in private accommodation, and half were attending or had already completed a language course. Six months after arrival, 18 percent of working-age refugees were employed. In almost all families with school-age children, the children actually attended a German school. Many preschool-age children attended daycare centers, however, infants and toddlers much less – overall the attendance rates were much lower compared to German children. Additionally, almost half of the refugees reported having frequently spent time with Germans. The language programs and job placement services were widely used. The survey results implied that these services were central for Ukrainian refugees' integration and participation, suggesting that a more extensive development of these services

may be necessary. Despite these positive developments, refugees exhibited a great need for support, particularly with learning German, finding a job, healthcare services, and the search for housing.

Against the overall favorable economic and social opportunities in Germany, the results further highlighted a considerable negative impact of the war situation on refugees' integration prospects. For instance, the life satisfaction among refugees was much lower than among the German resident population, especially among people who had been separated from their children or partners due to the war. The intentions of Ukrainian refugees to stay in Germany varied, with a quarter of them intending to stay permanently and another tenth planning to remain for several years and a substantial share being unsure. With the duration of the war, the proportion of refugees who plan to remain in Germany permanently or for a longer period could increase. The uncertainty surrounding the war's duration means that policy areas in Germany must create favorable conditions for refugees' participation in education, health systems, labor market, and society, while accounting for the high degree of uncertainty and heterogeneity in the intentions to stay. An important question for the future is whether temporary protection will be extended beyond March 4, 2024, as provided by EU law, or whether opportunities to stay in Germany will be provided by other means.

Compared to the existing body of knowledge on other refugees, a first appraisal of specific characteristics of Ukraine refugees can be drawn. In contrast to refugees from Syria and Iraq, who arrived during the 2015/16 wave (*Brücker et al. 2016; Puschmann et al. 2019*), the 2022 arriving cohort of Ukrainian refugees exhibited a significantly higher proportion of females and, on average, possessed a higher level of education. Our initial findings suggest that Ukrainian refugees tended to engage in language courses, school, and labor market integration at an earlier stage compared to Syrian refugees in 2015/16. It is essential to emphasize that Ukrainian refugees benefitted from more favorable legal conditions, as they were exempt from the asylum procedure, employment bans, and were granted immediate residence permits for at least the initial two years. Despite these differences, there are shared experiences between Ukrainian refugees and those from the Middle East in 2015/16. Both groups commonly faced challenges such as family separation, numerous children being separated from one or both parents, the adverse impacts of the war situation, and low levels of life satisfaction. The extent to which policies, cultural factors, and socio-structural conditions influenced the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in Germany exceeds the scope of these initial cross-sectional findings. Moreover, it is important to consider that refugees who arrived in 2015/16 faced different circumstances at a distinct historical period in Germany. Consequently, a comprehensive and thorough analysis is inevitable to provide profound explanations for observed patterns. This area of research remains open for future investigations.

Overall, our study presented a differentiated picture of Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Germany in the first half of 2022. Favorable conditions such as broad access to support and language services were reflected in initial positive developments, including participation in language courses, labor market integration, the accommodation of children in daycare and educational facilities, and finding

housing. These initial developments offered an opportunity for further progress towards successful integration and participation in society. However, significant challenges remain, particularly for those with long-term intentions to stay, such as improving language skills, transferring educational qualifications and work experiences, and addressing housing and issues for separated families through support services.

The IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Survey on Ukrainian Refugees in Germany is designed as a panel study, which enables researchers to monitor the refugees' progress in terms of their living situations and integration over time, and to document the challenges they face along the way. This data may also help in the future to identify the numerous social, economic, and political tasks that need to be accomplished to improve participation and integration of those affected, and to develop practical solutions. In addition, the CAWI mode allows to observe Ukrainian refugees even after they might have moved back to Ukraine or onwards to a third country.

As the number of Ukrainian refugees in Europe is historically significant, our prompt and representative assessment of their situation provided a substantial starting point for research on their integration and future migration decisions. For future research, it would be beneficial to compare the situation of Ukrainian refugees in Germany to that of refugees in other countries that have also received large numbers of Ukrainian refugees. Such comparisons, accompanied by the examination of various policies and initiatives implemented in different countries to support the integration of Ukrainian refugees, could provide valuable insights for other countries facing similar situations.

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