

Migration and Integration 2020-2021

Report for Norway to the OECD



Norwegian Ministries

With contributions from the following Norwegian ministries:

Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion
Ministry of Justice and Public Security
Ministry of Education and Research
Ministry of Children and Families
Ministry of Culture and Equality
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Health and Care Services
Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

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1 Overview

Increase in net immigration

In 2020, the number of registered new immigrants¹ who entered Norway was 38 100, 27 per cent lower than the previous year. Some 81 per cent of the immigrants were foreigners, and of those 57 per cent from EU/EFTA member countries.² The largest number of foreign immigrants came from Poland (3 700), followed by Sweden (1 800) and Lithuania (1 800). In 2020, 19 800 foreigners were registered as having emigrated from Norway. This was a little more than in 2019. Overall, the net immigration of foreigners was only 10 900, 16 000 fewer than in 2019, due primarily to the sharp drop in immigration. The highest net immigration was registered for citizens of Syria (1 100) Poland (750) and Eritrea (600).

At the beginning of 2021, 800 100 immigrants and 197 850 persons born in Norway to two immigrant parents resided in Norway, in all representing 18.5 per cent of the resident population. This was 0.3 percentage points more than the previous year. Poland was the country of origin for the largest group of resident immigrants (102 150). The largest number of Norwegian-born with two immigrant parents had parents originating from Pakistan (17 900).

Decline in family immigration

In 2020, family related immigration represented 34 per cent of the non-Nordic immigration to Norway, two percentage point lower than in 2019. The total number of new family related permits decreased from 11 800 granted in 2019 to 9 000 in 2020. The major third countries of origin in 2020 were Syria, Eritrea and India. In addition, 4 000 non-Nordic citizens of EU/EFTA-member countries declared that family-ties were the basis for immigration when they registered their first move to Norway. This was 1 500 fewer than in 2019. Poland and Lithuania were the major non-Nordic EU/EFTA-member countries of origin for those registering family as the reason for immigration.

Decline in labour migration

After a slight increase in 2018 and 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a sharp fall in labour migration to Norway in 2020. The number of registered (non-Nordic) labour immigrants represented nearly 46 per cent of the new non-Nordic immigrants in 2020, and most of them were citizens of EU/EFTA member countries. Even though there has been a decline in labour immigration over the years, net migration of labour to Norway was still positive at the end of 2020. The number of new permits for work granted to citizens of countries outside EU/EFTA also decreased in 2020. During the last five years, new permits for skilled workers have varied between 2 500 and 4 500 per year. New permits for seasonal workers have varied between 2 400 and 3 500 per year.

¹ According to Statistics Norway, immigrants are defined as persons born abroad of two foreign-born parents and four foreign-born grandparents. Cf. <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/innvandrerestatistikk/innvandrerestatistikk-og-norskfodte-med-innvandrerforeldre> for more definitions.

² Switzerland is a member country of EFTA but not part of the EEA. Therefore, the designation EU/EFTA is used.

Low number of applications for asylum

In 2020, 10 per cent of the non-Nordic immigration consisted of persons who had some form of refugee background. The previous year, the share was 16 per cent. In 2020, about 1 400 applications for asylum were filed, 900 fewer than in 2019. The proportion of positive decisions by the *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)* on asylum applications was 62 per cent in 2020, about the same as in 2019. Approximately 1 300 applicants were granted refugee or humanitarian status in 2020, by UDI or through the appeals process, while almost 2 400 refugees were resettled in Norway. In 2021, the number of asylum applications continued to be low, also compared with 2019 and earlier years.

Fewer returns, both forced and assisted

In 2020, the decrease in all types of ordered returns continued, compared to the previous years. This was primarily a reflection of the reduced immigration during the pandemic, but also of continued low numbers of asylum seekers previous years, combined with high acceptance rates of applications for asylum. Nevertheless, 127 persons without a legal residence returned to their country of origin with government assistance in 2020. In addition, 2 000 foreigners were returned by force. Persons who had been convicted of a crime, and other foreigners without a permit for legal residence, were among the remaining 1 750 returnees. In addition, 6 850 persons were dismissed at the border due to COVID-19 entry restrictions.

Immigration and refugee policy

In 2021, most of the policy changes of significance concerning immigration and protection were in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Due to the pandemic, Norway introduced strict entry restrictions from mid-March 2020 for foreign nationals who did not reside in Norway with a residence permit or right of residency under the *Immigration Act*. Certain exemptions were made. The borders were re-opened gradually in 2020. However, to limit the spread of more contagious variants of the virus, the entry restrictions were tightened again from January 29, 2021 and remained strict during the first half of 2021.
- During fall 2021, these entry restrictions were removed and travellers from all countries could enter Norway again. There were, however, strict requirements and rules upon entry. Travellers who did not comply with these rules could be refused entry.
- From December 2020, the required period of residence to achieve a permanent residence permit was extended from three to five years for refugees, those who have permits on humanitarian grounds, or are granted family reunification with these.
- From January 2021, British citizens and their family members, who have exercised the right to free movement under the *EEA Agreement* before December 31, 2020, maintain their rights to reside, work or study in Norway. The right to continue to reside in Norway is protected under the *EEA-EFTA Separation Agreement* and is implemented in the Norwegian Immigration Regulations.
- From October 2021, the *Immigration Regulations* have been amended to exclude the *introduction benefit* from counting towards the income requirement in family migration cases.

Integration policy

The aim of the integration policy is to provide opportunities for refugees and other immigrants to participate in the Norwegian labour market and community life. This is important for the immigrants themselves and in order to maintain a robust and sustainable welfare system. Some important new measures are:

- The *Integration Act* on integration through training, education and work was implemented on January 1, 2021. This Act replaces the *Introduction Act* from 2004. One of the objectives of the Act is that more refugees will receive formal education as part of the *Introduction Program*, through more individually tailored elements.
- The *Interpretation Act* is the first act of its kind in Norway on interpretation services in the public sector. The Act implies a duty for public agencies to use qualified interpreters when this is necessary to ensure the rule of law or to provide proper assistance and services. The Act was implemented from January 1, 2022.
- Efforts are made to strengthen the cooperation between the *Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration* and the *County Municipalities* on establishing more tailored vocational education for persons who are unemployed and have impaired work capacity.
- An amendment to the *Social Services Act* entered into force on January 1, 2021. The aim of the amendment is to help immigrants achieve a higher level of Norwegian language skills by setting language training as a condition for receiving financial assistance.
- In order to enhance the skills and qualifications among the unemployed and the temporarily laid-off due to the pandemic, there is a temporary scheme to make it easier to combine studies or training with unemployment benefits. From October 2021, the temporary scheme was replaced by new permanent regulations.
- Due to the pandemic, an interim act on adaptations to the *Introduction Act* was introduced during the spring of 2020 to counteract the consequences of the pandemic. The interim act was further amended in 2021, linked to the *Integration Act*. Substantial funding was allocated to strengthen the basic qualification measures for newly arrived immigrants. Additional funding was allocated to a grant scheme to increase the use of online Norwegian language training and to strengthen the Job Opportunity Program.
- A White Paper on *The Completion of Education Reform – opening the door to the world and the future*, presented measures to increase the rate of adult students who complete upper secondary education. These are highly relevant to immigrants as one third of the adults in need of upper secondary education are immigrants.
- A new *National Strategy for Children growing up in Low-income Families (2020-2023)* was launched towards the end of 2020. Six out of ten of these children have an immigrant background. The strategy covers 65 different measures within areas such as the family, housing, health, education, leisure activities and employment.
- The most recent *Action Plan Freedom from Negative Social Control and Honour Based Violence (2021–2024)* advances and strengthens efforts through the implementation of 33 specific measures. These efforts involve safe-guarding

fundamental rights, ensuring freedom and equality for all, combating violence and abuse, preventing social exclusion and health problems and ensuring equal public services for the entire population.

- A new *Strategy to strengthen the role of civil society in developing and implementing the integration policy* for the period of 2021–2024 was accompanied by a promise of increased economic support to NGOs working to improve integration.
- A new *Action Plan against Antisemitism 2021–2023 – a continuation* contains measures and provides a systematic effort against antisemitism. It is a continuation of the former *Action Plan against Antisemitism 2016– 2020*.
- Because of the severe and disproportional effects of the pandemic on some immigrant groups, a series of specific information initiatives and measures have been implemented by national authorities responsible for health, integration and other matters, both in 2020 and 2021.
- Amendments to the *Nationality Act*, which took effect from January 2022, raise the general requirement for length of residence from seven of the last ten years to eight of the last eleven years. This does not apply to those applicants who have already been granted asylum in Norway. Applicants with a specified minimum income level according to the most recent tax-assessment are required to have resided in Norway six out of the last ten years.
- Another set of amendments to the *Nationality Act* will raise the requirement of necessary Norwegian oral skills from level A2 to B1 in order to be granted Norwegian citizenship. These amendments have not yet taken effect.

2 Migration – general characteristics

2.1 Legislation and policy

The *Immigration Act* of 15 May 2008 regulates the right of foreigners to enter, reside and work in Norway. The *Immigration Act* and the corresponding *Immigration Regulation* entered into force on 1 January 2010. According to the regulations, following an individual assessment, citizens of third countries³ may qualify for one of the following main residence permit categories:

- Labour immigrants, i.e. persons who have a concrete job offer
- Persons with close family ties to somebody residing in Norway
- Students, trainees, *au pairs* and participants in an exchange program
- Refugees and persons who qualify for a residence permit on humanitarian grounds

As a rule, students etc. (including *au pairs*) are only granted a temporary residence permit. Students may work part time and may change their status upon having received a job offer following graduation. Depending on the circumstances, persons with a permit that does not qualify the holder for a permanent residence permit may be granted a temporary residence permit that does qualify. The main immigration categories are discussed further in Chapters three to six below.

For third-country citizens a residence permit includes the right to work if not otherwise stated. Generally, a first-time residence permit must be granted prior to entry. As a main rule, it will be granted for at least one year, and may be granted for a period of up to three years. The duration of a permit based on a job offer or to provide services, e.g. consistent with GATS mode 4, shall not exceed the length of the employment contract offered or the duration of the services contract.

A permanent residence permit is normally granted after three or five years of continuous residence, provided the third country national has:

- completed compulsory Norwegian language training and has achieved a minimum level of spoken Norwegian in the final Norwegian language examination
- completed compulsory training in social studies and has passed the final examination in a language he or she understands
- been self-supporting for the past 12 months.

For these foreign nationals the complete immigration process involves several government agencies. Usually, an application for a residence permit must be presented to a diplomatic mission representing Norway, and the case has to be considered in Norway by the *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)*. For asylum applications where the applicant is present in Norway, the *local Police* receives and makes a preliminary registration of the application. The applicant is then referred to the *Police Immigration Service (PU)* where s/he is registered in the *Register of foreigners (DUF)*, which is used by all the involved agencies in Norway. The registration of an application for protection involves questioning and guiding the applicant, and registration of her/his identity and travel history. The local police will issue a granted residence permit.

³ Countries not covered by the EEA Agreement or the EFTA Convention.

UDI considers, as first instance, applications for asylum, a residence permit and a permanent residence status, as well as a question of expulsion or the recall of a permit or citizenship granted. Decisions made by UDI may be appealed to the *Immigration Appeals Board (UNE)*.

New policies and measures – travel and immigration

Due to the pandemic, Norway introduced strict entry restrictions from mid-March 2020 for foreign nationals who did not reside in Norway with a residence permit or a right of residency under the *Immigration Act*. Certain exemptions were made. The borders were re-opened gradually in 2020. However, to limit the spread of more contagious variants of the virus, the entry restrictions were tightened again from January 29, 2021.

During the fall of 2021, these entry restrictions were removed, and travellers from all countries could enter Norway again. There are, however, strict requirements and rules that apply upon entry (documentation of a negative COVID-19 test, entry registration, duty to get tested, travel quarantine etc.). Travellers who do not comply with these rules may be refused entry. The legislation is subject to frequent amendments and adjustments. Updated legislation and information can be found on the UDI's [website](#).

In December 2020, the required period of residence to achieve a permanent residence permit was extended from three to five years for refugees, those who have permits on humanitarian grounds, or are granted family reunification with these.

From January 2021, British citizens and their family members, who have exercised the right to free movement under the *EEA Agreement* before December 31, 2020, maintain their rights to reside, work or study in Norway. The right to continue to reside in Norway is protected under the *EEA-EFTA Separation Agreement* and is implemented in the Norwegian Immigration Regulations.

From October 2021, the Immigration Regulations have been amended to exclude the introduction benefit from counting towards the income requirement in family migration cases. The objective of the amendment is to ensure a higher level of self-sufficiency among individuals who wish to bring their family members to Norway. This entails a postponement of family re(union) for a period, varying between one, two or three years.

2.2 Migration

Apart from in 1989, Norway has registered a positive *net immigration*⁴ each year since the late 1960s, cf. Table A10. The annual average net immigration increased considerably after the EU enlargement in 2004 and reached a top in 2012, with an average of 40 500 for the period 2011–2015, cf. Table A6. In 2020, net immigration

⁴ 'Immigration' is defined to include persons who have legally moved to Norway with the intention of staying 6 months or more, and who have been registered as such in the *Central Population Register*. Former asylum seekers are registered as immigrants only upon settlement in a Norwegian municipality with a residence permit. Normally, an asylum seeker whose application has been rejected will not be registered as an 'immigrant', even if the application process has taken a long time and the return to the home country is delayed for a significant period. His/her presence in Norway is registered in the *Foreigner Data Base (UDB)* administered by the *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)*, as are asylum seekers who have not yet received a decision on their application.

dropped considerably, and was around 11 300, the lowest level since 2003. This was all due to lower registered immigration, cf. Table A10.

As a percentage of the total population, the 2020 *immigration* rate of 0.71 was 0.29 percentage points lower than in 2019 and the lowest since the first half of the 1990s. Meanwhile, the *emigration* rate of 0.50 was the same as in 2019, cf. Table A2, resulting in a *net immigration* rate for 2020 of only 0.21, the lowest since the early 1990s.

In 2020, the *total immigration* to Norway was 38 100 persons – composed of 30 800 *foreigners* (81 per cent) and 7 300 *Norwegians*. Total immigration was considerably lower than in 2019, cf. Table A10 and Table 2.1 below.

The *total immigration of foreigners* to Norway, declined by almost 14 000 persons in 2020 compared to 2019. Of the 30 800 foreign immigrants, 47 per cent were women, cf. Tables A7 and A7f.

In 2020, 62 per cent of the *foreign immigrants* came from European countries, cf. Table A7. The share of immigrants from the EU-member countries in Central and Eastern Europe was a little higher than the previous year, 27.5 per cent of the total foreign immigration. The largest registered inflow was again from Poland with almost 3 700 immigrants, which was 1 300 fewer than in 2019. After Poland, the highest inflows of foreigners were from Sweden (1 800), Lithuania (1 800), Syria (1 500), Germany (1 100) and India (1 000), cf. Table A7.

Emigration has mostly been determined by the economic cycles in Norway, as seen in the relatively high numbers during the economic downturn in 1989–1990, or by exceptional events such as the return migration of many Kosovars during 2000–2001, cf. Table A10. The higher registered emigration rates since 2010 mainly reflect a considerable degree of mobility and circular migration among labour migrants from EU-member countries. The lower rate the last two years is close to the normal level from the mid-1980s until 2010, cf. Table A2.

In 2020, there was a registered *total emigration* of 26 800 persons, 19 900 *foreigners* and 6 900 *Norwegians*, cf. Table A10 and Table 2.1 below. This was 2 300 more foreigners and almost 2 100 fewer Norwegians than in 2019. Women represented 47 per cent of the registered emigrants, cf. Table A5f. In 2020, the largest registered destination countries for emigration⁵ were Sweden (2 900), Denmark (2 800), Poland (1 600) and the UK (1 300), cf. Table A5. Norwegians were the largest group of registered emigrants (6 900), followed by Poles (2 900), Swedes (1 500) and Lithuanians (1 200) cf. Table A8.

The registered *return-immigration of Norwegian citizens* has been quite stable for the last twenty years, hovering between eight and eleven thousand each year. In 2020, the number was as low as 7 250, 300 fewer than in 2019, cf. Table A10. There was a reg-

⁵ If the country of destination is unknown, the country of citizenship for the emigrant is registered as destination. For movements between Nordic countries, the populations registers exchange information on movements.

istered *net immigration* of almost 400 Norwegian citizens. Except for a small net inflow in 2014, this is the first year with net immigration of Norwegians since 1993, probably due to few moving abroad during the pandemic.

In 2020, the registered *net immigration of foreigners* was 11 000, a significant decrease of 16 000 from 2019, cf. Table A10 and Table 2.1 below. The net registered immigration surplus was most significant for citizens of Syria (1 100), Poland (750), Eritrea (600), Lithuania (500) and Rumania (500), cf. Table A9. The share of the net immigration of citizens from countries outside Europe was 42 per cent in 2020, a reduction from 54 per cent the previous year. Furthermore, the share of net immigration of citizens from all OECD member countries increased to 49 per cent in 2020, from 38 per cent in 2019. Cf. Table A9.

Table 2.1 Registered migration by citizenship. 2011–2020

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Immigration	79 500	78 600	75 800	70 000	67 300	66 800	58 200	52 500	52 200	38 100
- foreign	70 800	70 000	66 900	61 400	59 100	58 500	49 800	44 400	44 600	30 800
- Norwegian	8 700	8 600	8 900	8 600	8 200	8 300	8 400	8 100	7 600	7 300
Emigration:	32 500	31 200	35 700	31 900	37 500	40 700	36 800	34 400	26 800	26 700
- foreign	22 900	21 300	25 000	23 300	27 400	30 700	26 600	24 500	17 550	19 900
- Norwegian	9 600	9 900	10 700	8 600	10 100	10 000	10 200	9 900	9 250	6 900
Net migration	47 000	47 350	40 100	38 150	29 800	26 100	21 350	18 100	25 300	11 400
- foreign	47 900	48 700	41 900	38 100	31 700	27 800	23 150	19 900	27 000	11 000
- Norwegian	- 900	-1 350	- 1 800	50	-1 900	-1 700	- 1 800	- 1 800	- 1 700	400

Source: Statistics Norway

During the first half of 2021, the registered net immigration of only 2 350 foreign citizens still very low due to the extraordinary situation, but 1 000 more than during the same period in 2020. Almost all the net immigration was from countries in Asia, Africa, South and Central America. There was a registered net emigration of almost 300 Norwegians.

There are significant differences between various immigrant groups as to whether their stay in Norway is *long-term* or *temporary*, cf. Table A11. In 2020, 72 per cent of those who immigrated between 2005 and 2015 were still residing in Norway. The highest *retention rate* after five years was 96 per cent for immigrants from Syria, 95 per cent for Somalia, and 90 per cent for Iraq. It is also worth noticing that the retention rate in 2020 for immigrants from Poland arriving between 2005 and 2015 was 81 per cent, despite significant return migration. Immigrants from USA (38), Canada (39) and Finland (41) had the lowest retention rates among immigrants from the main countries of origin.

During 2020, 18 000 persons were granted a *permanent residence permit* in Norway, down 2 600 from 2019. Around 44 per cent of those granted permanent residence, had received their first permit based on family links and 40 per cent based on a need for protection/asylum.

In 2021, 13 100 foreigners had been granted a permanent residence permit by the end of November. This was 3 500 fewer than during the same period in 2020.

2.3 Immigration according to entry categories

The statistics on immigration distinguish between four main categories of entry: *family*, *labour*, *protection* and *education/training/exchange*.⁶ The categories are constructed based on information from the *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)* regarding:

- (i) the type of first-time *residence permit* granted to citizens of third countries who are registered as immigrants in the Norwegian population register; and
- (ii) the *self-declared reason for immigration* to Norway registered by non-Nordic citizens of EU/EFTA-member countries who intend to stay in Norway for three months or more.⁷

Immigrants from the other *Nordic countries* are not covered by these sources, as they do not need any type of residence permit to live and work in Norway and are not subject to the EU/EFTA-registration requirement, and because they are not asked for the reason for moving to Norway when they register with the *Central Population Register*. However, their very high labour market participation rates indicate that immigration of citizens from Nordic countries is mainly for work.

During the period 1990-2020, 932 000 non-Nordic foreign citizens immigrated to Norway, cf. Table A23. As many as 334 000 persons or 36 per cent were admitted as *family members* of residents. 320 000 or 34 per cent, came as *labour immigrants*. 176 000 or 19 per cent, had been granted *protection or residence on humanitarian grounds*, while 95 700 or 10 per cent, arrived for *education*, including as *au pairs*. For ten years, from 2006 until 2015, labour immigration was the main immigration category, and then again since 2018, cf. Chart 2.1.⁸ The share of registered immigration based on a need for international protection increased sharply in 2016, but has since declined, cf. Chart 2.1.

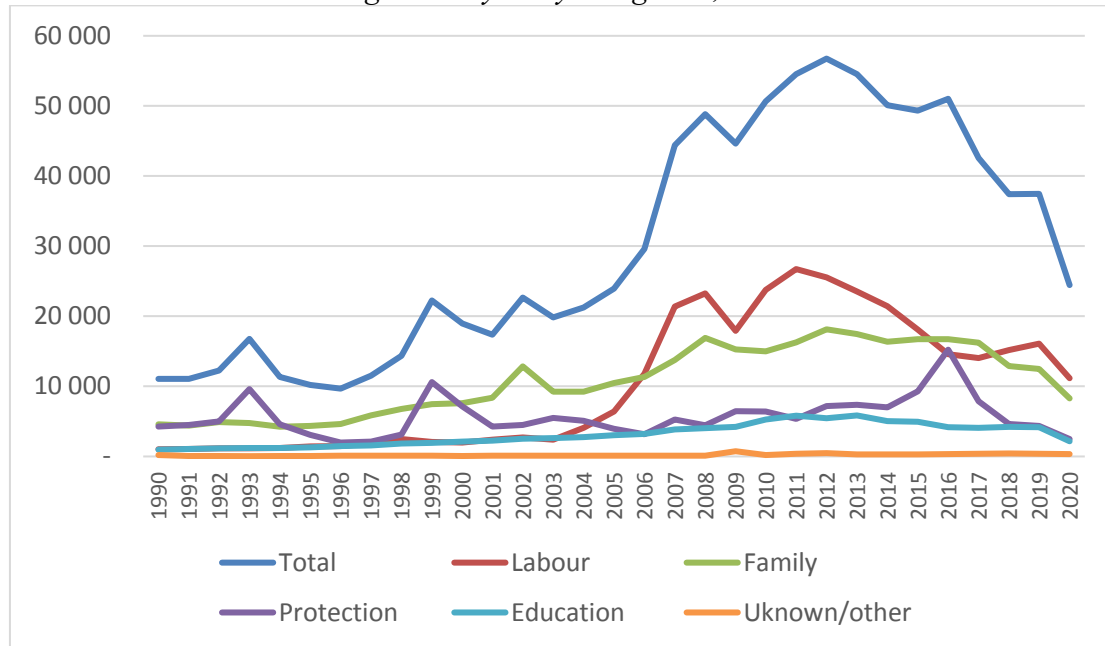
For the period 1990-2020, the largest number of non-Nordic immigrations were citizens from Poland (137 500), Lithuania (56 500), Germany (40 200), Somalia (34 000), the Philippines (33 000) and Syria (32 900), cf. Table A23-1.

⁶ Cf. <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvgrunn> for details.

⁷ Switzerland is a member country of EFTA but not part of the EEA. Therefore, the designation EU/EFTA is used.

⁸ The rise in the category “unknown” in 2009 was a consequence of the removal of the requirement for a work or residence permit for citizens from non-Nordic EU/EFTA-member countries, effective from September that year, while the EU/EFTA registration requirement was established from 2010 only, and carries no sanctions for non-compliance.

Chart 2.1 Non-Nordic immigration by entry categories, and total. 1990–2020



Source: Statistics Norway

In 2020, 24 400 new non-Nordic immigrations were registered, 14 000 fewer than in 2019 and the lowest since 2005. This was a reduction of 36.4 per cent. Labour immigration was the largest entry category, cf. Table A23 and Chart 2.2 below.

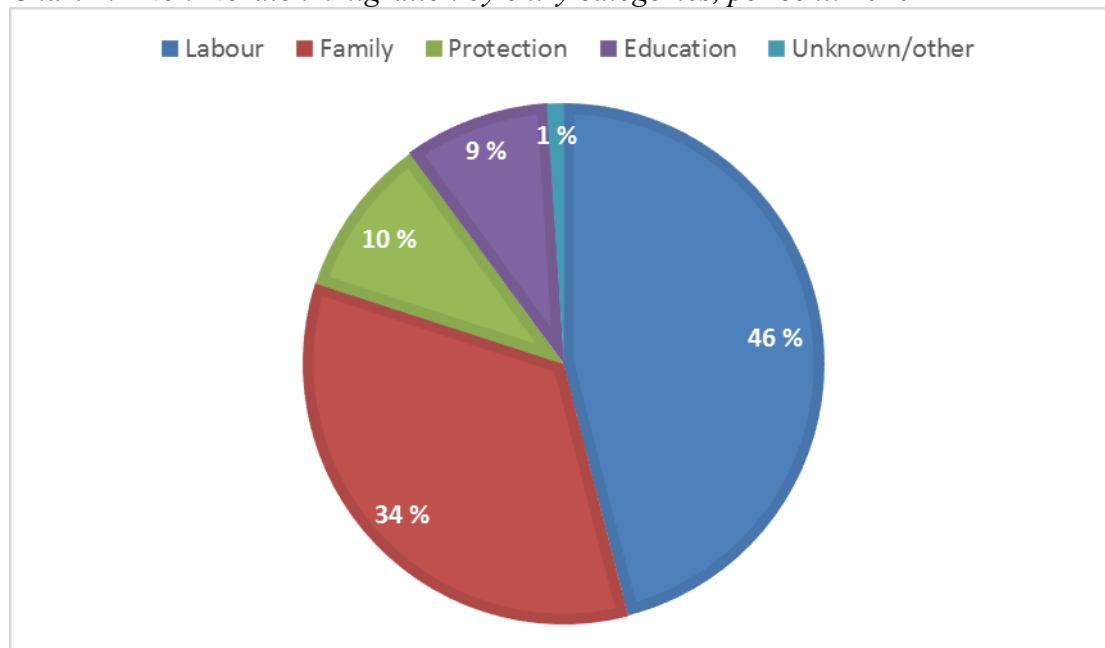
In 2020, 55 per cent came from Europe, three percentage points higher than the previous year. Twenty-eight per cent of all the non-Nordic immigrants who arrived this year came from countries in Asia, including Turkey. This share was one percentage point lower than in 2019. In addition, 8.5 per cent came from Africa, 7.5 per cent from North and South America or Oceania and half a per cent were stateless. Cf. Table A23-2.

Approximately 10 per cent of those who immigrated in 2020, had been granted a permit following an asylum application, or they arrived on the annual quota for resettlement of refugees. This share was slightly lower than in 2019. In 2020, half of the immigrants in this *protection category* were citizens of Syria, cf. Table A23-2.

Labour immigration accounted for almost 46 per cent of the total non-Nordic immigration in 2020, three percentage points higher than in 2019. Eighty-four per cent were from European countries and 28 per cent came from Poland, almost the same share as in 2019. The second and third largest groups were from Lithuania and Romania, cf. Table A23-2.

The share of immigrants arriving for *education, training and cultural exchange*, including *au pairs*, fell from 11 to 9 per cent in 2020, cf. Table A23-2.

Chart 2.2 Non-Nordic immigration by entry categories, per cent. 2020



Source: Statistics Norway

From 2019 to 2020, the number immigrating from non-Nordic countries for family reasons decreased by 4 500 persons. However, there was a small increase of one percentage point, to 34 per cent, in their share of total immigration, cf. Table A23. The main countries of origin of family immigrants were Poland, Thailand and Eritrea, cf. Table A23.2.

Among the 8 300 non-Nordic family migrants who arrived in 2020, 71 per cent, came through *family reunification*. The largest numbers were from and Poland, Eritrea and India. Of the total family immigration in 2020, only 12 per cent were reunited with refugees living in Norway, cf. Table A23.2.

The remaining 29 per cent came to *establish a family*, mostly through marriage, cf. Table A23.2. Of these almost 50 per cent came to live with a person in Norway who did not have an immigrant background. The largest numbers were from Thailand, the Philippines and the USA. Only 125 immigrants came to establish a family with a Norwegian-born person with two immigrant parents. Forty-eight per cent of these came from Pakistan or Turkey.

For the whole period 1990–2020, 223 600 persons – or 67 per cent of all non-Nordic family immigrants – came for family reunification, while 110 500 came to establish a new family, mostly through marriage, cf. Table A23. Of the latter, 63 per cent involved a reference person without an immigrant background, while less than four per cent involved a Norwegian-born person with two immigrant parents.⁹

⁹ For information on patterns of family migration to Norway during the period 1990–2018, cf. Molstad, Christian Sørlien & Steinkellner, Alice (2020) *Family immigration and marriage patterns 1990–2018* Statistics Norway Reports 2020/05 (English summary) <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/family-immigration-and-marriage-patterns-1990-2018>

By the end of 2020, 71 per cent (almost 655 600) of the non-Nordic immigrants who had immigrated since 1990, still lived in Norway. The remaining 276 400 had either emigrated or died during this period.¹⁰ Among refugees and persons granted residence on humanitarian grounds, 85 per cent remained, while this was the situation for 37 per cent of the international students, au pairs and trainees. Since a large share of the recent arrivals in the latter category was still studying, for this group the total or average figure for the whole period may be somewhat misleading as an indicator of the long-term retention rate. For non-Nordic family immigrants, the average retention rate was 77 per cent while it was 65 per cent for labour-related immigrants. Cf. also Table A23.1.

¹⁰ Cf. Statbank of Statistics Norway, Table 06318 <https://www.ssb.no/statistikkbanken/select-Table/hovedtabellHjem.asp?KortNavnWeb=innvgrunn&CMSSubjectArea=befolkning&PLanguage=1&checked=true>

3 Family immigration

3.1 Legislation and policy

The *Immigration Act* stipulates that close family members of Norwegian and Nordic citizens and of foreigners who have a residence permit without restrictions, also have the right to residence. The most important categories of close family members defined in the *Immigration Act* are:

- Spouse – both parties must be over the age of 18, and they will have to live together in Norway
- Cohabitant – both parties must be over the age of 18, have lived together for at least two years and intend to continue their cohabitation. If the parties have joint children, the requirement of two years cohabitation does not apply
- Unmarried child under the age of 18
- Parents of an unmarried child below 18, if they satisfy certain conditions.

In general, the family member living in Norway (the reference person) must satisfy a subsistence (income) requirement. As of May 2021, the annual income should be at least NOK 287 277.

The subsistence requirement includes three elements:

- i. The reference person must render it probable that s/he will meet the income requirement for the period for which the application applies (usually for one year)
- ii. The reference person must provide documentation from the latest tax assessment showing that s/he satisfied the income requirement during the previous year
- iii. The reference person cannot have received financial support or qualification benefits from the social services during the last 12 months.

The requirement is general and applies to all reference persons, with some exemptions, for example when the reference person is a child, or when the applicant is a child below the age of 15 without care persons in his/her country of origin. In addition, when certain conditions are met, exemptions are made when the reference person has refugee status.

In addition to the subsistence requirement, the *Immigration Act* stipulates that the reference person in certain cases must satisfy the requirement of having had four years of education or work in Norway. The four-year requirement applies when the reference person has a residence permit based on 1) international protection, 2) humanitarian grounds, or 3) family ties. Furthermore, it only applies in cases of family *establishment* (family formation/intended family life), and not in cases of family *reunification*.¹¹

¹¹ A recent Frisch Centre report (Bratberg and Raaum), commissioned by the Directorate of Immigration, studies the (long-term) effects of changes in the regulations concerning family immigration, particularly the substance requirement, on integration. <https://www.frisch.uio.no/english/publications/?pubid=1570>

With the purpose of combating forced marriages, in cases of family *establishment* both spouses/parties must be at least 24 years of age. Exemptions are possible if the relationship obviously is voluntary for both parties.

Applications for a family immigration permit may be rejected in cases where the sponsor has been granted protection in Norway, but not a permanent residence permit, and the family may exercise their family life in a safe country to which their overall ties are stronger than to Norway.

New policies and measures – family migration

From October 2021, the *Immigration Regulations* have been amended to exclude social integration benefits from counting towards the income requirement in family migration cases. The objective of the amendment is to ensure a higher level of self-sufficiency among individuals who wish to bring their family members to Norway. This entails a postponement of family reunion for a period.

3.2 Permits and registrations – family migrants

The total number of new family related permits decreased from 11 800 granted in 2019 to 9 000 in 2020. In addition, there were 4 000 EU/EFTA-registrations for first-time immigration based on family-ties, 1 500 fewer than in 2019. For the combined category of permits and registrations, there was a decrease of 4 400, cf. Table 3.1. Thirty-four per cent of the permits to citizens of third countries were granted to persons with family ties to residents in Norway with a refugee background.

In 2020, the major third countries of origin for family related permits were Syria Eritrea and India. The main EU-countries of origin were Poland and Lithuania, cf. Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Non-Nordic family immigration – major countries of origin. New permits granted and EU/EFTA-registrations. 2011–2020

Countries of origin	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total, of which:	25 750	24 333	24 136	22 238	21 962	22 761	21 227	17 021	17 327	12 956
Poland	4 376	4 556	4 687	4 291	3 655	2 775	2 387	2 040	1 757	1 180
Syria	51	33	109	209	647	2 059	2 810	902	945	872
Eritrea	874	728	880	664	916	1 534	1 506	874	913	855
India	632	641	766	909	875	937	974	975	1436	643
Lithuania	2 356	2 411	2 228	1 780	1 294	1 118	1 267	1 205	990	530
Thailand	1 256	1 227	1 027	517	973	1 342	931	874	652	514
Philippines	1203	1 007	972	992	1 157	1 171	867	923	884	505
USA	471	584	494	379	470	417	424	467	518	428
Somalia	1 331	1 210	1 305	1 847	1 386	956	618	471	427	289
Serbia	191	247	303	339	384	401	422	378	467	284
Other countries	13 009	11 689	11 365	10 311	10 205	10 051	9 021	7 912	8 338	6 856

Source: UDI

By November 2021, 9 300 new family permits had been granted. This was around 1 200 more than during the same period in 2020. By November 2021, there had been about 4 300 new registrations of family members from EU/EFTA-countries. This was 700 more such registrations than during the same period in 2020.

4 Labour migration

4.1 Legislation and policy

Labour immigration from EU/EFTA-countries

The common Nordic labour market, established in 1954, allows free mobility between the member countries and thereby exempts citizens of the Nordic countries from the general rules on residence permits and registration. Citizens from other EU/EFTA member countries do not need a permit to stay or work in Norway, but they should register with the police when their stay in Norway exceeds three months. There are no sanctions for non-registration. Non-Nordic EU/EFTA-citizens acquire the right to permanent residence after five years of registered legal residence.

Labour immigration from countries outside EU/EFTA

Third country nationals who want to work or operate their own business in Norway must hold a valid residence permit, cf. Chapter 2.1. A general requirement for all work-related residence permits is that wage and working conditions for the job in question should correspond to those for Norwegian workers in similar jobs.

The main categories of work-related permits for immigrants from outside the EU/EFTA member countries are:

- i. *Skilled worker*: Persons who document that they have completed higher education or have education or qualifications corresponding to vocational training at the level of Norwegian upper secondary education. The skills that form the basis for the residence permit must be relevant for the job in question. Up to an annual quota, new permits of this type may be granted without a test of labour market needs. The annual quota for new permits for skilled third country workers has been fixed at 5 000 since 2002. The number of such permits has yet to reach this ceiling. If the quota is reached, further applications from third-country skilled workers will be subject to a labour market test. Skilled workers may sponsor applications for family reunification and can qualify for permanent residence after three years. The worker can change employer without applying for a new permit if the tasks and duties in the new job correspond with the qualifications that served as basis for the permit.
- ii. *Skilled service supplier, seconded employee or independent contractor*: A *service supplier* is an employee in a foreign enterprise who has entered a contract with a Norwegian establishment to provide services of a limited duration. An *independent contractor* is a person who has established a business abroad and has entered a contract with a Norwegian establishment to provide services of a limited duration. Under certain circumstances, they are entitled to sponsor applications for family reunification, but do not qualify for permanent residence. When formally employed and paid by an employer registered in Norway, such workers are treated as skilled workers, cf. category i.
- iii. *Skilled self-employed person*: Self-employed skilled persons who intend to engage in a permanent business activity are entitled to a residence permit if the presence of the self-employed person in Norway and active participation in running the business is necessary for the establishment or continued operation of the business. Such workers are entitled to sponsor applications for family reunification and can qualify for permanent residence.

- iv. *Seasonal worker*: A residence permit can be granted for up to six months for seasonal work, with no right to sponsor applications for family reunification or to obtain a permanent residence permit. This type of residence permit is linked to a specific job and employer in Norway.
- v. *Job-search permit for researchers and recent graduates from a Norwegian university or college*: A work permit may be granted for a limited period (12 months) to search for a relevant job. The immigrant can work in any type of employment during the period of the job-search permit. The immigrant must satisfy a subsistence (income) requirement before a permit is granted.
- vi. *Students with study permit* may have a part-time job for up to 20 hours a week during the study period. S/he may work full time during study breaks.
- vii. *Worker from the Barents region of Russia*: A worker from the Barents region of Russia can be granted a residence permit for work in the northern part of Norway independent of skill level. Workers who live in the Barents region and are to commute across the border for part-time work in northern Norway can also be granted a work permit.

There is neither a labour market test nor quota restrictions for skilled workers coming from a *World Trade Organisation (WTO)* member state and who are working in Norway as an *employee of an international company*, for *skilled intra-corporate transferees* or *skilled workers posted as service providers*.¹²

New policies and measures – labour migration

Travel restrictions and other infection control measures due to the pandemic led to limited access for seasonal workers. However, the following temporary regulatory changes were adopted to reduce negative impacts on agriculture and food production and the labour markets:

- *Seasonal workers in agriculture from countries outside EU/EFTA*, who resided in Norway, could apply for a renewal of their temporary residence permit, and continue their stay for more than six months. These changes entered into force on March 24, 2020 and were repealed on January 1, 2021. On April 19, 2021 the changes were re-introduced due to the strict entry restrictions implemented on January 29, 2021 and were repealed again from October 1, 2021.
- *Seasonal workers in agriculture from outside EU/EFTA*, who cannot return home due to entry restrictions in their country of origin, may apply for a renewal of their temporary residence permit and continue their stay for more than six months. These changes entered into force on February 16, 2021 and were repealed from January 1, 2022.

Skilled workers with temporary residence permits, who were temporary laid off work between March 12 and October 31 in 2020, could continue to stay in Norway until their permits expired. They could also apply for unemployment benefits and a renewal of their temporary residence permit. These changes entered into force on June 23, 2020 and were repealed from November 1, 2020.

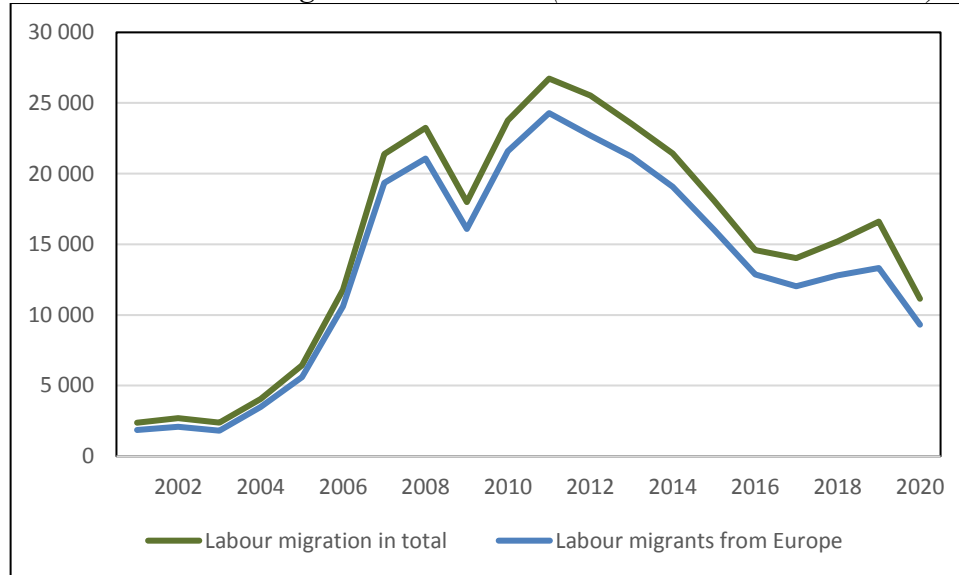
The Government continuously assesses the need for prolonging such measures or implementing new ones.

¹² Consistent with Norway's GATS mode 4 commitments.

4.2 Permits and registrations – labour immigrants

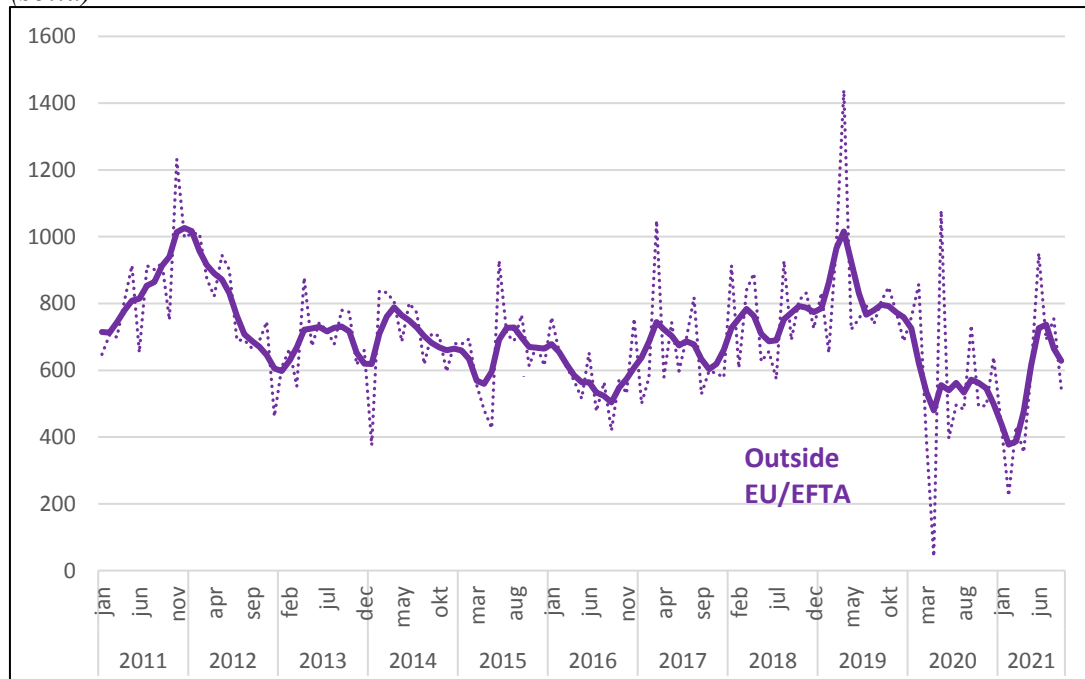
As Chart 4.1 indicates, the total number of non-Nordic labour immigrants reached a top in 2011. In the following years the labour immigration to Norway declined, primarily due to lower immigration from EU/EFTA member countries in that period, followed by a slight increase again during the economic upswing from 2017. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a sharp fall in labour migration to Norway in 2020.

Chart 4.1 Labour immigrants 2001–2020. (Nordic Citizens not included)



Source: Statistics Norway

Chart 4.2 New work-related permits granted to persons from outside the EU/EFTA per month. January 2011–September 2021. Monthly numbers (dashed) and trend (solid)



Source: UDI and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

As Chart 4.2 indicates, the number of new work-related residence permits for persons from outside EU/EFTA member countries fluctuated between 600 and 800 per month in the period 2013-2017. From 2018 to the first half of 2019 there was a small increase in such labour immigration, followed by a large drop in 2020 and the first half of 2021, mostly due to the pandemic. Since then, there has been an increase. The number of granted permits does not fully reflect the number of labour immigrants that come to Norway. For example, during the pandemic, many workers, who had been a granted residence permit, were not allowed to enter due to the closed borders.

Table 4.1 shows both work-related residence permits and EU/EFTA-registrations with work as the stated reason for immigration, per year since 2011. The number of permits for seasonal work and permits for skilled work, given to third country citizens¹³, decreased from 2019 to 2020.

The two largest countries of origin among the EU/EFTA-registrations for work continued to be Poland (37 per cent of registrations in 2021, as of September) and Lithuania (15 per cent of registrations). Altogether, EU member countries in Central and Eastern Europe accounted for roughly 60 per cent of labour-related EU/EFTA-registrations in 2021 (through September).

In 2021 (through September), India was the largest country of origin for new skilled workers from outside of the EU/EFTA area, and they accounted for roughly 18 per cent of the permits given to skilled workers. Ukraine and the Philippines were the two largest source countries for seasonal workers in 2021 (as of September) and accounted for 32 and 11 per cent of seasonal work permits, respectively.

Table 4.1 Work related residence permits granted and EU/EFTA-registrations, by type. 2012–2021

	New permits				Renewals of permits	Total permits issued	EU/EFTA-registrations
	Skilled work	Seasonal work	EU/EFTA-residents	Other			
2012	4 082	2 319	1 341	1 840	5 274	14 856	39 756
2013	3 845	2 495	na	1 990	4 859	13 189	39 021
2014	3 737	2 531	na	2 245	4 982	13 495	34 244
2015	2 875	2 290	na	2 553	5 117	12 835	26 593
2016	2 488	2 401	na	2 187	5 246	12 322	23 496
2017	2 815	2 647	na	2 584	5 010	13 056	22 995
2018	3 771	2 905	na	2 428	5 331	14 435	21 195
2019	4 398	3 414	na	2 416	5 190	15 418	19 285
2020	2 967	2 363	na	1 475	5 303	12 108	12 951
2021 (September)	2 902	1 269	na	1 095	3 764	9 030	10 301

Source: UDI

Through September 2021, the number of EU/EFTA-registrations for work was 13 per cent higher than during the same period in 2020. Similarly, the number of first permits to skilled workers from outside EU/EFTA as of September 2021 was 29 per cent higher than during the same period in 2020. On the other hand, first permits to seasonal workers were roughly 43 per cent lower than during the same period in 2020. Many workers were prevented from coming to Norway due to the measures designed to limit the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹³ As measured by number of new work-related permits granted.

Immigration from Nordic countries

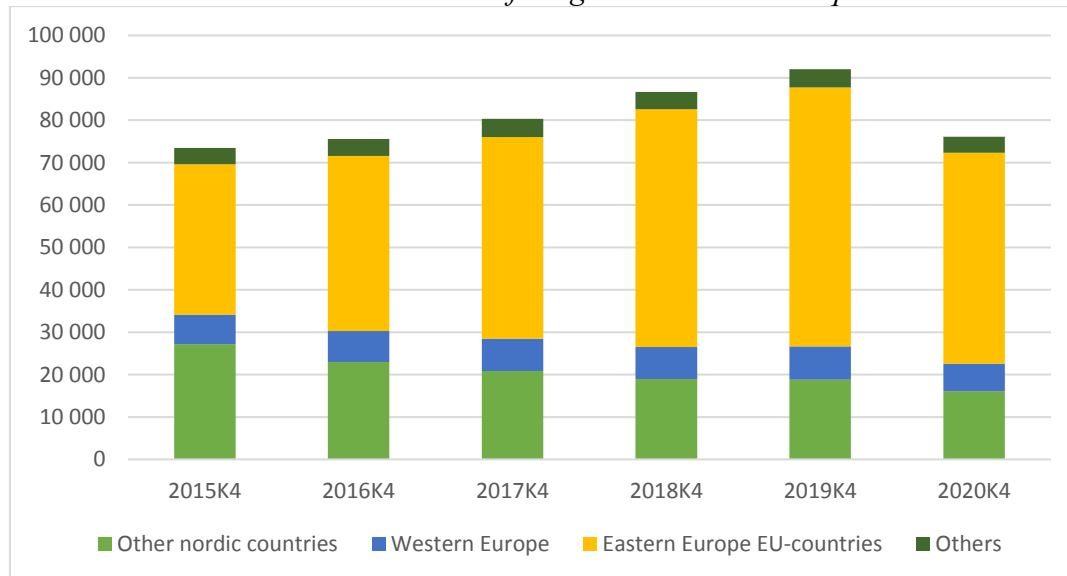
Because citizens from the Nordic countries are exempt from the rules on residence permits and registration, no statistics exist on the number of labour immigrants from these countries. However, like immigrants from other EU/EFTA-countries, the vast majority come to work. Net immigration of Nordic citizens averaged over 3 000 persons per year in the period 2006–2014, but then declined dramatically and became negative in 2016. In 2018, the net migration from the Nordic countries changed from negative to barely positive. The net immigration was still slightly positive in 2020.

4.3 Labour migrants and service providers on short-term stay

Persons staying in Norway for a period of less than six months as well as persons commuting across the border for work on a regular (daily or weekly) basis are registered as "non-residents" and are not included in the regular register-based statistics on employment. However, *Statistics Norway* constructs statistics on employment for persons on short-term assignments in Norway from several different sources, including registrations with Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration and the tax authorities.

As Chart 4.3 indicates, the number of foreigners in short-term or non-resident employment in Norway increased every year from 2015 to 2019. This trend reversed in 2020, when the number of non-resident workers fell sharply. This is in large part due to the measures taken in Norway and other countries to limit the pandemic.

Chart 4.3 Short term and non-resident foreign workers. Fourth quarter 2015–2020



Source: Statistics Norway

5 Immigration for education and training

5.1 Legislation and policy

A student from an EU/EFTA member state has a right of residence in Norway for more than three months provided the person in question has been admitted to an accredited educational institution or an upper secondary school. This condition applies when the primary purpose of the stay is education, and the person can support him/herself and any accompanying family members. The student must hold a private medical insurance or a *European Health Insurance Card*. As indicated, the student may bring spouse, cohabitant or children to Norway.

The student should register with the police in Norway. The registration is only needed when s/he first arrives in Norway regardless of how long s/he plans to live in Norway and whether her/his stay here is interrupted.

A third country citizen who has been admitted to an approved educational institution, for example a university, may be granted a residence permit to study in Norway. To obtain this, the applicant must document that s/he is able to finance the stay in Norway and that s/he will have suitable housing arrangements. A third country international student who has been granted a residence permit for education, has the right to work part-time in Norway.¹⁴ A concrete offer of employment is not required for this right.

After completing the studies, a third country international graduate may apply for a residence permit based on an offer of employment to do skilled work in Norway. S/he may be granted a temporary residence permit for up to one year to seek such employment. Cf. Chapter 4.1.

A third country national, between 18 and 30 years old, may be granted a residence permit as an *au pair* for up to two years provided that the purpose of the stay is cultural exchange and that the contract with the host family satisfies certain requirements. Some researchers have compared the regulations and realities of the *au pair* scheme.¹⁵

Third country citizens who are qualified skilled workers, but who need additional education or practical training to obtain the necessary recognition of their qualifications in Norway, may be granted a residence permit for a total period of two years in order to fulfil the Norwegian requirements needed for an authorisation to work in a regulated profession.

¹⁴ Work is permitted for a maximum of 20 hours a week during study periods, whilst full-time work is allowed during the academic breaks.

¹⁵ For example, in the PhD-dissertation *The Egalitarian Heart. Global Care Chains in the Filipino Au Pair Migration to Norway*. Bikova, M. 2017 <https://bora.uib.no/bora-xmlui/handle/1956/15616>

New policies and measures – international students

White Paper no. 7 (2020–2021) *A world of opportunities – International student mobility in higher education*¹⁶, was adopted by the Storting in February 2021. The overarching goal of the White Paper was to contribute to a cultural change in the higher education sector in Norway such that international mobility becomes an integral part of all programs of study, making it possible to achieve a target that half of all graduates from Norwegian higher education will have had a period of study abroad.

The international students who come to Norway can contribute directly to a more international study environment at Norwegian institutions. From a knowledge-policy point of view, inbound degree students constitute a valuable resource for increased internationalisation of study environments in Norway. They can help Norway reach the goal that all Norwegian students shall be part of a learning environment that also includes international students.

The White Paper announced a clearer, more strategic national policy indicating which international degree students Norway should target. There are plans to establish a working group with a mandate to consider a more deliberate policy towards international degree students at Norwegian institutions. This policy should be built on overarching policies and frameworks regarding education and research, trade and industry, immigration, development cooperation and national security. National needs for skills and competencies must be taken into consideration and non-academic players, such as several ministries and the social partners, should be involved.

5.2 Permits and registrations – education

In 2020, 3 100 first time permits for students from outside the EU/EFTA area were granted for education and training purposes. This was 2 500 fewer than in 2019. Two thousand of the new permits were granted to students, and an additional 530 permits concerned *au pairs*. In addition, 50 permits were granted to *trainees*, and 110 to *post doctorates*. There were 2 400 new EU/EFTA-registrations for education purposes.¹⁷ Altogether, this indicates that 5 500 new permits were granted to non-Nordic foreign students, *au pairs* etc. in 2020.

The major source countries for non-Nordic international students in 2020 were Germany and France. Almost 90 per cent of the new *au pair* permits were granted to citizens of the Philippines.

¹⁶ See <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-7-20202021/id2779627/> for details.

¹⁷ Some of the new EU/EFTA-registrations could be by persons who had an expired permit granted before the registration system was in place at the start of 2010.

Table 5.1 Permits granted and registrations for education and training – Major student categories. 2011–2020

Migration category ¹⁸	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total, of which:	10 813	11 556	11 144	11 804	11 381	11 164	11 664	11 880	11 905	5 491
Student (EU/EFTA)	4 149	4 210	4 401	4 694	5 062	5 662	5 765	6 235	6 277	2 389
Student (not EU/EFTA)	3 452	3 377	3 399	3 691	3 706	3 218	3 758	3 613	3 835	2 007
Post doctorate	169	194	159	162	202	218	240	262	279	107
Folk high school or denominational school ¹⁹	121	78	103	86	664	549	546	500	431	238
Norwegian language studies ²⁰	633	1 572	854	927	126	2	-	-	-	-
Au pair	1 829	1 585	1 667	1 481	1 336	1 182	963	888	691	538
Trainee	345	164	180	264	250	275	303	271	221	48
Other	115	376	381	499	35	58	89	111	171	164

Source: UDI

By November 2021, the total number granted of new permits for education and training was 8 800, an increase of 76 per cent compared 2020. The low number of permits in 2020 was related to the outbreak of COVID-19.

Change of status

In 2020, 785 international students etc. (including au pairs) from third countries changed their status.²¹ This was 100 fewer than in 2019, cf. Table 5.2 below. Of these, 43 per cent received a permanent or temporary permit as skilled worker, while 18 per cent were granted a permit based on new family ties. The rest, 39 per cent, were granted a 12-month permit to search for and start in an appropriate, skilled job.

Table 5.2 Status change for non-EU/EFTA international students. 2011–2020

New status	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Work	298	458	475	410	357	245	301	338	404	341
Family	134	185	190	162	229	198	187	175	167	129
Job search	71	127	161	271	255	308	319	385	312	305
Total	503	770	826	843	841	751	807	898	883	785

Source: UDI

The main third countries of origin for international students etc., who changed their residence status, were Nepal, Pakistan, China, the Philippines and Iran.

¹⁸ Citizens of the other Nordic countries are excluded from these statistics, as they do not need any form of permit to study or work in Norway.

¹⁹ This combined category has been used since 2015. For earlier years, students in denominational schools are included in “Other”.

²⁰ A permit to study the Norwegian language, if the purpose of the stay was to obtain skilled work in Norway, could be granted until May 2014.

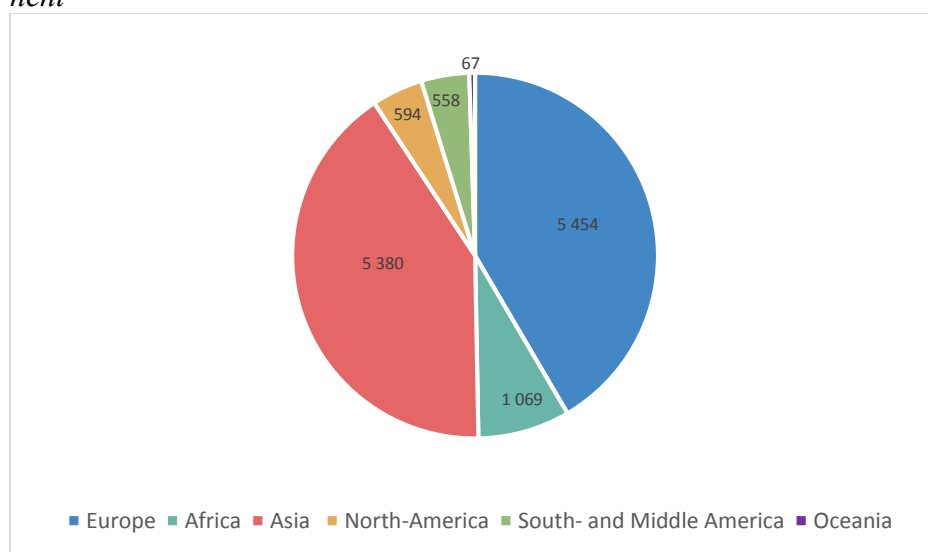
²¹ The general rule for a permit to be classified as ‘status change’ is that the period between the expiry of the old permit and the validation of the new permit should be less than six months. Both the new and the old permit must be valid for at least three months. Changes to or from the reason stated in an EU/EFTA-registration are not included.

5.3 International students in the education system

In this sub Chapter, international students are those who have crossed borders for the purpose of study, including both international students seeking a degree²² and exchange students²³.

In 2020, more than 13 000 *international degree seeking students* were enrolled in higher education in Norway²⁴. This is about 500 more than in 2019. As Chart 5.1 illustrates, a large majority of the students came from Asia or Europe. If we look at individual countries, we find that the highest numbers of students arrived from China and Sweden, followed by Iran, Germany, Syria²⁵ and Denmark.

Chart 5.1 Share of international degree seeking students in Norway 2020, by continent



Source: The Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education and Statistics Norway

As Chart 5.2 illustrates, natural science is by far the most popular field among the international degree seeking students. About one third of the students are enrolled in such programs, making them overrepresented within this field. Among all students in Norway, about 18 per cent are enrolled in natural sciences.

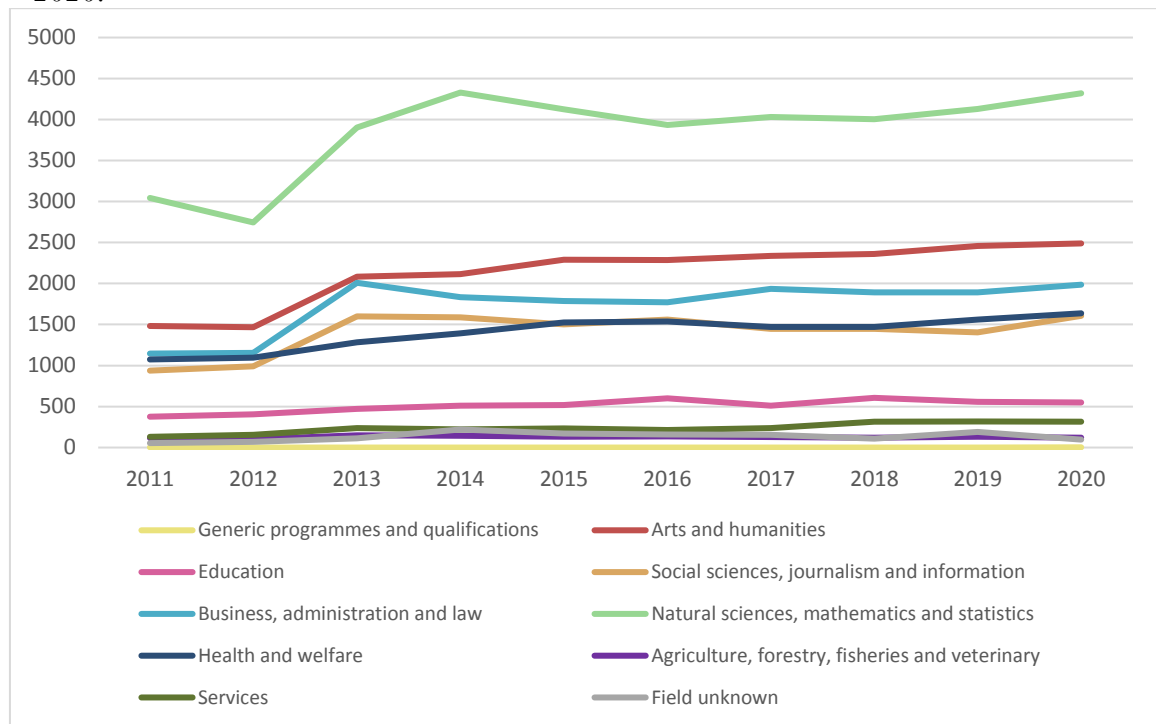
²² International degree students are operationalised as "students who have their upper secondary education from abroad and who have moved to Norway less than five years ago" (Statistics Norway). In practice, this definition results in far more international degree students than those who cross the border with the intention of studying in Norway. This will, for example, apply to people who come to Norway to work and their family members, or refugees and asylum seekers with a residence permit.

²³ Exchange students are "credit-mobile students" that are enrolled in a program in one country and take a limited number of credits in a different country.

[Dikus rapportserie 07/2021 Tilstandsrapport for høyere utdanning 2021](#) (only in Norwegian).

²⁵ Cf. note 19 above.

Chart 5.2 Number of international degree-seeking students in Norway by field. 2011 – 2020.

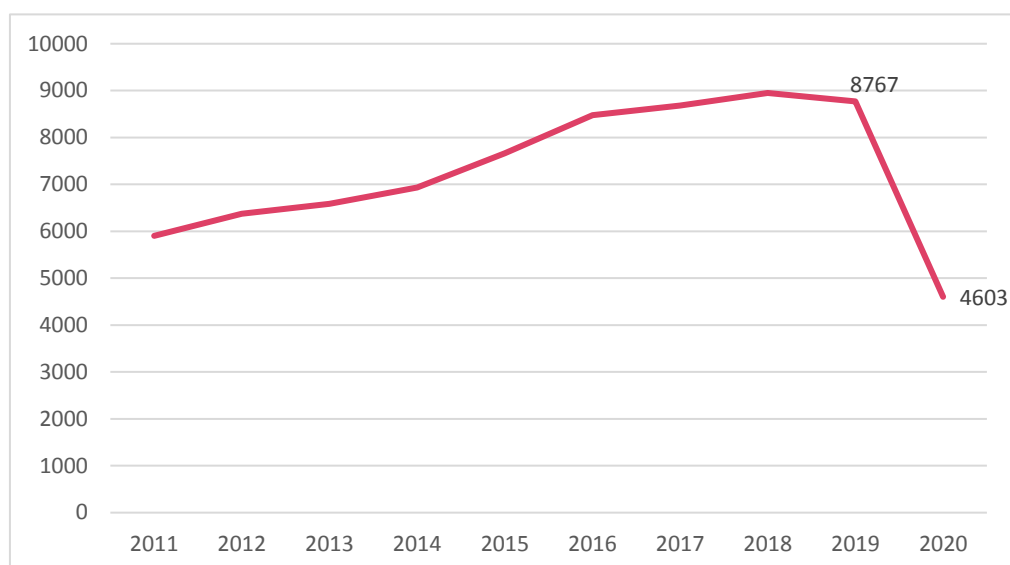


Source: Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education and Statistics Norway

As expected, there was a dramatic drop in the number of incoming *exchange students* in 2020. As shown in Chart 5.3, the number of incoming students was almost 8 800 in 2019, but only 4 600 in 2020. This huge decline was due to the travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A large majority of the incoming exchange students come from Europe. If we look at individual countries, we find that the highest number of exchange students come from Germany and France, followed by Spain, Italy, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Denmark and the Czech Republic.²⁶

²⁶ DIKU (2021) *Tilstandsrapport for høyere utdanning, vedlegg 2021 (07/2021)*. (Available in Norwegian only)

Chart 5.3 Number of exchange students in Norway, 2011 – 2020



Source: Norwegian Centre for Research Data

The availability of courses taught in English is an important enabler for both international degree-seeking students and exchange students from outside Scandinavia. Norwegian is still the dominant language of instruction in higher education, but there has been a significant increase in the number of courses taught in English. The share of courses taught in English was 15.3 per cent in 2011 and 25.1 per cent in 2020²⁷. In 2020, about half of the courses in natural sciences were conducted in English, compared to about 30 per cent in 2011²⁸. There are significant variations between the levels of education regarding the language of instruction: Almost 90 per cent of the students for a lower degree are registered for courses where the planned language of instruction is Norwegian. For a higher degree, the corresponding figure is 44 per cent.

Most of the Norwegian higher education institutions (HEIs) offer flexible programs. In 2020, 2.4 per cent of all obtained credits came from online courses²⁹. The scope of online courses offered has increased significantly throughout the last decade. However, most of these programs are aimed at a Norwegian audience. There are examples of online courses and programs being offered in English, but there are currently no statistics that measure the scope of these. In addition to online courses, Norwegian HEIs also offer joint degrees together with foreign institutions, which are conducted, completely or partly, at a distance. In 2020, 40 such programs were offered³⁰.

Most Norwegian universities and university colleges are publicly funded. The public institutions do not charge tuition fees, regardless of the student's country of origin. About 90 per cent of the international students are enrolled in public institutions³¹, and do therefore not pay tuition. One can thus assume that the direct economic impact of international students in Norway is low. However, there are no socio-economic calculations regarding the impact of international students.

²⁷ Norwegian Centre for Research Data. Statistics available in Norwegian [here](#).

²⁸ DIKU (2021) *Tilstandsrapport for høyere utdanning 2021* (07/2021). (Only in Norwegian)

²⁹ DIKU (2021) *Tilstandsrapport for høyere utdanning, vedlegg 2021* (07/2021).

³⁰ DIKU (2021) *Tilstandsrapport for høyere utdanning, vedlegg 2021* (07/2021).

³¹ DIKU (2021) *Tilstandsrapport for høyere utdanning, vedlegg 2021* (07/2021).

5.4 COVID-19 and international students

Most of the international students found themselves in a difficult situation when the pandemic hit Norway in mid-March 2020. Some, especially among the exchange students, decided to return home and continue their studies online at their Norwegian institution. Most of the full-degree students decided to stay, but many experienced a difficult economic situation due to the temporary loss of their part-time job in Norway. The former Government therefore decided to include international students in a scheme to expand financial compensation for all those who were temporarily laid off from a job. The *Student Welfare Organisations*, in charge of student housing, were instructed by the *Ministry of Education and Research*, to be as flexible as possible for international students regarding payment of rent during the pandemic.

During this period, efforts have continuously been made to secure opportunities for international students to come to Norway for studies. Students who were admitted to a Norwegian institution were amongst the priority groups exempted from the entry restrictions into Norway, cf. Chapter 2.1.

6 Asylum seekers and refugees

6.1 Legislation and policy

Protection

The *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)* processes asylum applications in accordance with the *Immigration Act* and the *Immigration Regulations*. A refugee within the definition of the act is a foreigner who falls under Article 1A of the *1951 UN Refugee Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, or who is entitled to protection pursuant to Norway's other international obligations, such as the *European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR)*. An asylum seeker who is deemed not to meet the criteria for being granted asylum, is to be considered for a residence permit on humanitarian grounds.

UNHCR gives recommendations on protection issues. The Norwegian authorities take these into account when making an independent assessment of the situation in the country of origin. If an administrative decision is inconsistent with UNHCR's guidelines or recommendations, the case will normally be referred to a seven-member "Grand Board" at the *Immigration Appeals Board (UNE)*, unless the decision has been made in accordance with general instructions given by the *Ministry of Justice and Public Security*. Norwegian authorities have regular bilateral meetings on protection issues with representatives of the UNHCR.

Reception facilities

Temporary accommodation in a reception centre is offered to all asylum seekers arriving in Norway. UDI finances and supervises these centres. Municipalities, NGOs, and private companies operate them. Some of the centres are given extra resources to provide suitable living conditions for asylum seekers with special needs. Unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, 15 to 18 years old, are accommodated either in special sections of a regular reception centre or in a separate reception centre for such minors. The child welfare authorities are responsible for accommodating unaccompanied minors younger than 15 years in centres financed by and run under the supervision of the *Ministry of Children and Families*. By the end of November 2021, there were more than 2 300 residents in reception centres, a little more than a year earlier.

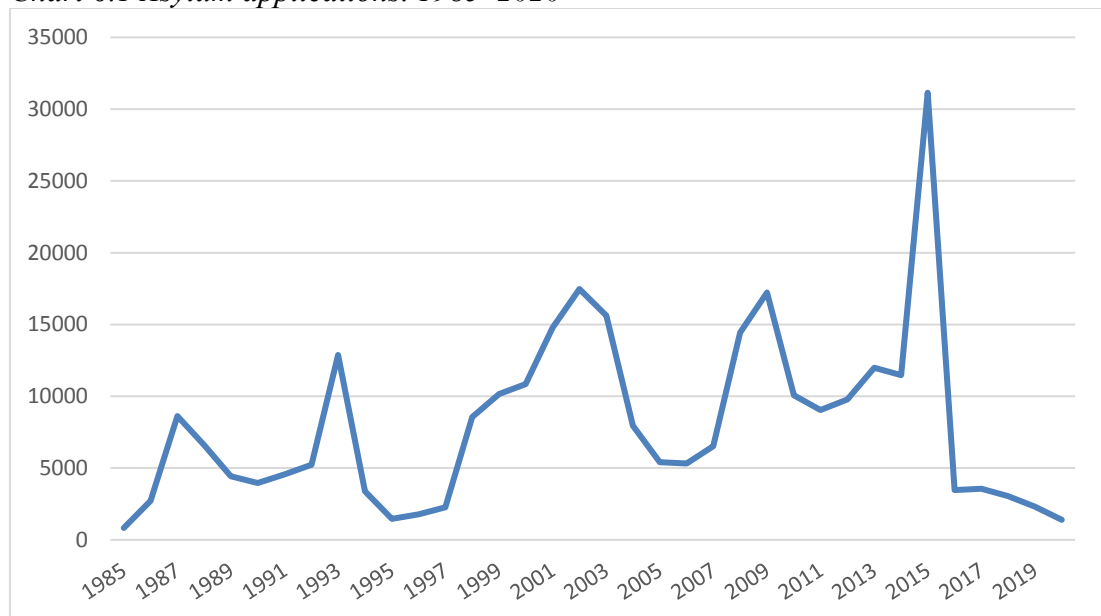
Residing in a reception centre is voluntary, but it is a requirement for receiving subsistence support and 'pocket money'. Persons with a positive decision on their application can stay in a reception centre until they are settled in a municipality. Persons with a final, negative decision are offered accommodation in an ordinary reception centre until they leave Norway. There is a strong emphasis on motivating them to apply for assisted return.

The *Arrival Centre for asylum seekers* has been established permanently to provide faster case processing during the initial phase. The aim is to accommodate all asylum seekers (possibly except unaccompanied minors) in the same centre after arrival in Norway. The ambition is to decide 70 per cent of the applications there within three weeks of arrival. In 2020, only 27 per cent of applications were processed within three weeks. Processing of asylum cases was slower than expected due to challenges regarding COVID-19.

6.2 Asylum applications

Since 1985, there have been several peaks in the number of applications for asylum in Norway, followed by sharp decreases. The major peaks were in 1987 (8 600), 1993 (12 900), 2002 (17 500), 2009 (17 200) and in 2015 (more than 31 100, an all-time high). There was a drop to 3 500 in 2016. For the last couple of years, the number of applications has been very low and decreasing, cf. Chart 6.1.

Chart 6.1 Asylum applications. 1985–2020



Source: UDI

In 2020, the number of new asylum seekers was as only 1 387. This was a reduction by 40 per cent compared to 2019 and the lowest number of asylum-seekers since 1985.

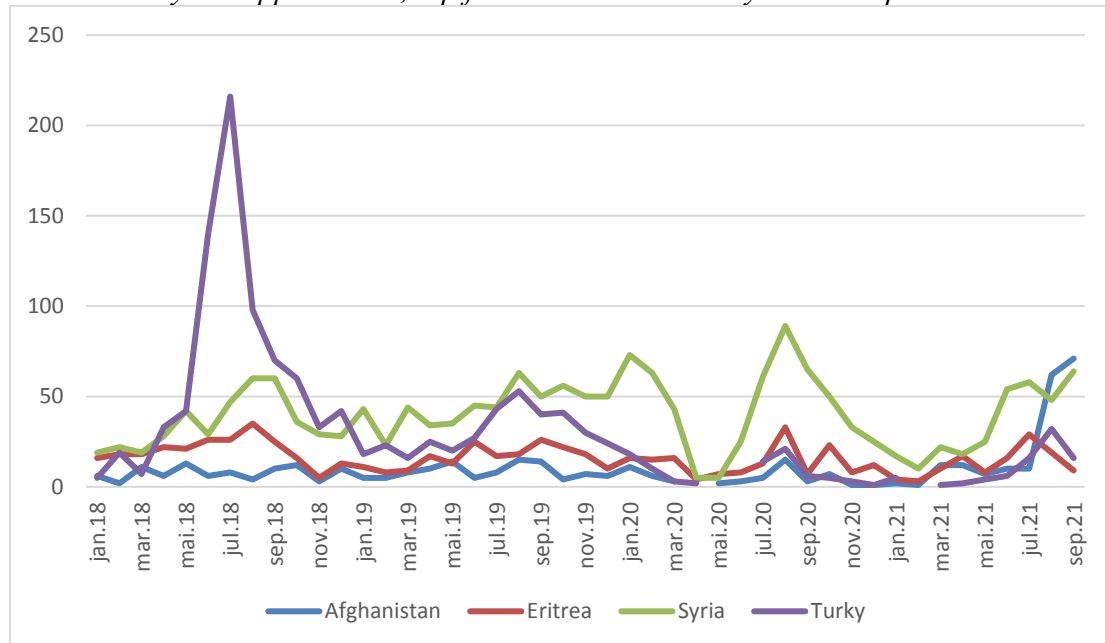
Table 6.1 Asylum applications, by major countries of origin. 2011–2020

Country of origin	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total, of which:	9 053	9 785	11 983	11 480	31 145	3 460	3 560	2 655	2 305	1 386
Syria	198	327	856	1999	10448	529	1017	419	537	537
Eritrea	1256	1183	3258	2882	2942	586	869	241	194	162
Turkey	42	42	66	52	96	89	164	765	360	83
Stateless	262	263	550	800	1204	158	139	80	129	70
Afghanistan	979	986	726	579	7 000	373	133	91	101	57
Iran	355	441	266	100	1346	132	89	119	78	47
Iraq	357	221	191	186	3001	215	148	104	65	38
Russia	365	370	376	227	126	76	58	60	40	29
Ethiopia	293	185	291	375	686	158	91	44	96	21
Somalia	2216	2 181	1 694	837	563	154	51	48	35	21
Albania	43	169	185	204	431	130	87	65	63	14
Other countries	2 687	3 417	3 524	3 239	3 307	860	714	619	607	307

Source: UDI

The most notable change in asylum applications from 2019 to 2020 was the reduction in the number of asylum seekers from Turkey. C

Chart 6.2 Asylum applications, top five countries. January 2018 –September 2021



Source: UDI

The number of asylum applications continued to be low in 2021. There was a significant drop in the number of asylum seekers after travel restrictions were imposed as a reaction to the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020. By the end of September, there had been only about 1 500 asylum applications, 200 more than in 2020.

The number of asylum seekers claiming to be unaccompanied minors has varied in recent years, cf. Table 6.2. In 2020, 89 (claimed) unaccompanied minors applied for asylum in Norway. This was a decrease by 34 per cent from 2019. Most such applicants were from Syria and Afghanistan. 12 per cent of the (claimed) unaccompanied minor asylum seekers were girls in 2020.

Table 6.2 Asylum applications, first time – by (claimed) unaccompanied minors. 2011–2020

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Applications	858	964	1 070	1 204	5 480	320	191	159	135	89

Source: UDI

During the first eleven months of 2021, 145 (claimed) unaccompanied minors applied for asylum in Norway. During the same period in 2020, the number was 80.

6.3 Asylum decisions

During 2020, 81 per cent of the decisions made by the immigration authorities in the first instance were made on the merits of the case. The majority of these cases concerned citizens of Syria, Turkey and Eritrea. Ten per cent of the applications were transferred to another country in accordance with the Dublin procedure, while five

per cent were closed without a decision on the merits because the applicant disappeared before the basis for judging his/her application had been fully established. During the first nine months of 2021, the share of Dublin decisions was around eight per cent. In the same period, Norway sent 153 Dublin-requests abroad and received almost 365 such requests.

In addition to the 1 011 applicants who were granted convention refugee status in 2020, 50 applicants were granted refugee status on other protection grounds, and 79 were granted a permit on humanitarian grounds. Furthermore, following an appeal the *Immigration Appeals Board* granted 127 permits, more than half of them on humanitarian grounds. Cf. Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3 Permits to persons granted refugee or humanitarian status by the UDI or UNE. 2011-2020

In-stance	Status	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
UDI	Conven-tion	2 811	3 667	4 523	3 588	5 411	11 560	3 833	1 333	1 647	1011
	Other refugee	766	1 184	1 003	1 140	673	399	149	52	47	50
	Humanitarian	444	328	292	180	168	492	404	68	95	81
UNE (ap-peals)	Conven-tion	287	281	347	240	199	132	145	113	83	49
	Other refugee	91	293	175	110	90	61	79	27	25	4
	Humanitarian concerns	336	369	485	620	594	227	275	158	122	131
Total	All categories	4 735	6 122	6 825	5 878	7 135	12 871	4 885	1 751	2 019	1 326

Source: UDI

From 2003 until the present *Immigration Act* was implemented in 2010, there was a distinction between two categories of humanitarian status, “subsidiary protection status” and “humanitarian concerns” (health problems etc.). Under the present act, however, persons who are eligible for subsidiary protection status under the *EU Qualification Directive* are granted (other) refugee status as well. Therefore, as of 2010, the share of applicants granted a permit on humanitarian grounds does not include the category "subsidiary protection", cf. Table 6.4 below.

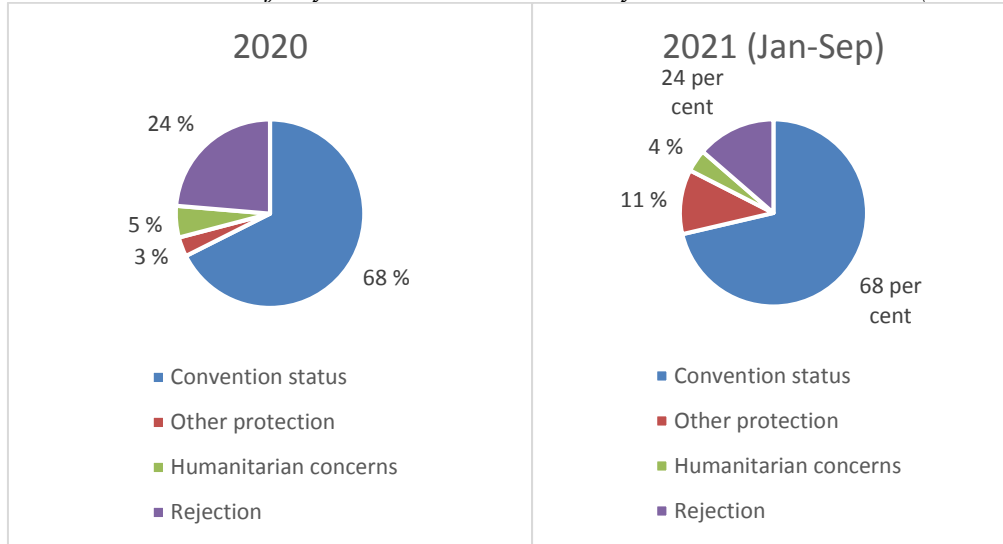
Table 6.4 Outcome of asylum claims considered by UDI. 2011–2020. Per cent

Result	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Con-vention status	36	41	51	49	65	62	58	66	69	68
Other refugee status	10	13	11	16	8	2	2	3	2	3
Humanitarian concerns	6	4	3	2	2	3	6	3	4	5
Rejec-tions	48	42	35	32	25	34	33	28	25	24

Source: UDI

In 2020, the proportion of first instance decisions by UDI resulting in refugee status was 55 per cent, an decrease from 69 per cent the previous year; cf. Table 6.4 and Chart 6.3. During the first nine months of 2021, the proportion of decisions by UDI resulting in refugee status was 60 per cent. In 2020, 24 per cent of the applications that were examined on their merits were rejected in the first instance. By September 2021, this proportion was 14 per cent. These numbers mainly reflect that the applications considered represented different nationalities, and not policy changes.

Chart 6.3 Outcome of asylum claims examined by UDI. 2020 and 2021 (Jan–Sep).



Source: UDI

6.4 Resettlement of refugees

In addition to asylum seekers who are granted residence permits, Norway admits a pre-determined number of refugees as part of an annual resettlement quota. Within a three-year period, unused quota places may be carried over to following years and advance use of places for the following year may be made. In addition, Norway provides funding to UNHCR for staff and activities to enhance the capacity to identify and refer resettlement cases.

Table 6.5 Offers of resettlement and arrivals of resettled refugees. 2011–2020

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Offers of resettlement	1 289	1 231	1 148	1 662	2 544	3 191	3 165	2 124	3 100	2401
Arrivals	1 378	1 076	992	1 286	2 383	3 292	2 814	2 481	2 803	1527

Source: UDI

For 2020, the resettlement quota was 3 015 places, including 15 cases transferred from 2019. Of these, 2 400 individuals were offered resettlement, i.e. had their cases accepted by the Norwegian authorities, and 1 527 refugees arrived in Norway in 2020. Syrian refugees made up the largest group with nearly 1 000 individuals. Included in the overall quota, were also 60 medical cases.

Table 6.6 Resettlement of refugees – major nationalities. 2020

Countries of origin	Accepted	Arrived
Democratic Republic of Congo	675	277
Syria	1 132	993
South Sudan	193	33
Eritrea	197	112

Source: UDI

The difference between the number of acceptances and arrivals in a particular year, cf. Table 6.5 and 6.6, is mainly explained by a waiting period of, normally four to six months between the dates of a decision and the actual departure to Norway. The time gap is first of all due to the process of identifying receiving municipalities and time to plan the departure for UNHCR and IOM. In case of delays, these would normally be a result of temporary security problems or administrative problems related to the departure. In 2020, delays were to a great extent caused by the pandemic.

The quota for 2021 is 3 608 places, including 608 places transferred from 2020. In 2021, several of the resettlement places were allocated to Afghan nationals. This included former locally employed staff at the Norwegian embassy in Kabul, by the Norwegian defence forces as well as other groups. Furthermore, 51 of the places were allocated to relocated asylum seekers from Greece.

The reason for the high number of places that were transferred from 2020 to 2021, was the impact of the pandemic on processing and transport during 2020. Due to this, all physical selection missions after the first quarter of 2020 were cancelled. Arrivals of refugees had to be suspended temporarily at the same date and resumed in August that year. Those arriving in Norway were required to observe quarantine regulations.

6.5 Settlement of refugees in municipalities

A foreigner, who has been granted a residence permit as a refugee or with humanitarian status, enjoys full freedom of movement in Norway. In principle, s/he may choose to settle wherever s/he wants. However, initially the majority will depend on public assistance. To gain rights to participation in the *Introduction Program* for refugees and receive financial support, refugees must settle in a municipality assigned by the *Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)*.

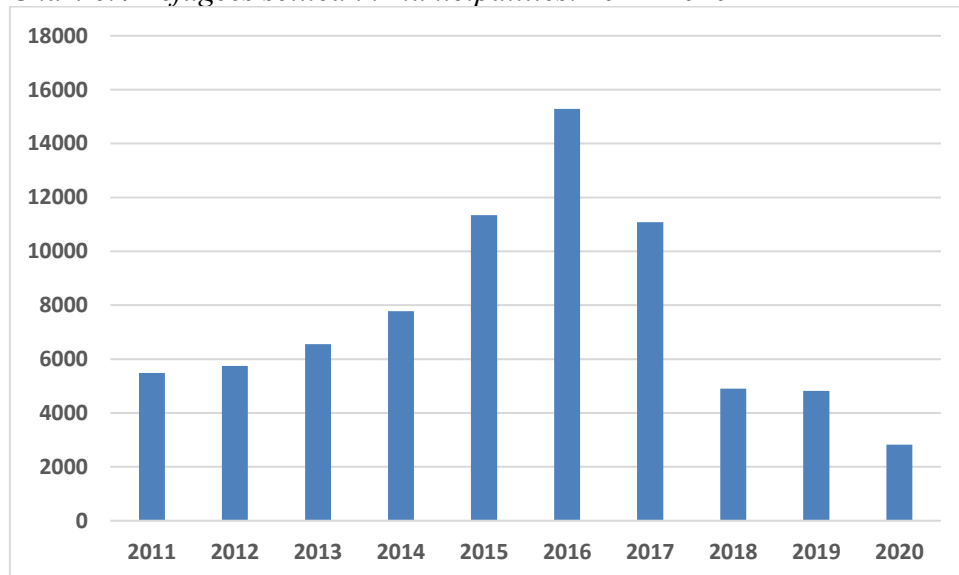
Settling refugees in Norwegian municipalities is the joint responsibility of central and local governments. There is a formal cooperation agreement between *IMDi* and the *Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS)*, outlining roles and responsibilities. Based on prognosis on how many refugees there will be to settle and a set of selection criteria, *IMDi* asks a given number of municipalities to settle refugees the coming year. According to the *Integration Act*, the county authorities give recommendations to *IMDi* on which municipalities should be asked to settle refugees, and how many. After receiving a request, it is up to each municipality to decide whether, and how many refugees, the municipality wish to settle. The number of refugees to settle has decreased considerably since the peak in 2016.

In 2020, 211 municipalities were originally requested to settle 5 120 refugees, including resettlement refugees accepted on the annual quota, cf. Chapter 6.4. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the reduction in the number of asylum seekers granted a permit and in the arrival of resettlement refugees, the request was later reduced to 3

600 persons. In the end, 2 819 refugees were settled and provided with initial housing and integration support by the municipalities in 2020, fewer than in both 2018 and 2019, cf. Chart 6.4. Of those settled in 2020, 80 were unaccompanied minors, compared to almost 140 in 2019. Family members, who have been reunited with refugees, are not included in these numbers.

In 2020, 205 municipalities settled refugees, compared to 232 municipalities in 2019. Through a government grant of a fixed sum per refugee over a five-year period, the municipalities are compensated for the extra expenses. In 2020, the grant for the five-year period is NOK 819 000 for single adults, NOK 772 300 for other adults and for children under 18 years. The grant for unaccompanied minors for the five-year period was NOK 765 000. There are additional grants for unaccompanied minors, elderly and disabled persons. Furthermore, there are grants to municipalities for housing costs for refugees, as there is for other residents in need of such support.

Chart 6.4 Refugees settled in municipalities. 2011–2020



Source: Directorate of Integration and Diversity

In 2021, 211 municipalities were originally requested to settle just above 5 000 refugees. 209 of them offered to settle more than 4 900 refugees. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the expected number of resettled refugees in 2021 is expected to be lower.

By mid-October 2021, about 2 500 refugees had been settled since the beginning of the year. Resettlement refugees accounted for 1 940 of them. 53 were unaccompanied minors. 315 persons were waiting in the reception centres and ready to be settled, 27 of them were unaccompanied minors. In addition, about 640 Afghan refugees evacuated from Kabul and included in the resettlement quota, were waiting in reception centres in Norway. In addition, about 1 900 resettlement refugees were awaiting travel to Norway.

The average waiting period in reception centres – from a permit was granted until settlement in a municipality took place – was four months for all refugees. For unaccompanied minors, the average waiting period was three months.

7 Irregular migration and return

7.1 Legislation and policy

A key priority for Norway is to limit arrivals of asylum seekers who are not in need of protection, and to effectively return rejected asylum seekers and other foreigners without legal residence.

A person found guilty of helping a foreigner to illegal entry or stay in Norway may be sentenced to up to three years of imprisonment. A person found guilty of, for the purpose of profit, organising assistance to foreigners to enter the country illegally, faces a maximum penalty of six years of imprisonment. Furthermore, it is considered a felony to provide another person with a passport or travel document when s/he knows or ought to understand that a foreigner may use it to enter Norway or another State illegally. The maximum penalty for this offence is two years imprisonment.

In a further bid to prevent irregular migration, Norway support *Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration* (AVRR) programs in transit and destination countries both bilaterally and multilaterally. As one tool to achieve this, Norway established the *Partnership for migration*, a training and capacity-building program where Norwegian immigration authorities participate in training colleagues in partner countries outside of Schengen. So far, training programs have been implemented with the Somali and Iraqi immigration authorities.

By November 2021, Norway had re-admission agreements or similar agreements on return with 31 countries. In addition, Norwegian authorities have raised the issue of re-admission agreements with several other governments.

Norway's foreign missions currently have 14 positions as *Immigration Liaison Officers (ILOs)* with a mandate focused on return. They are stationed at embassies in relevant countries. This investment in diplomatic and interpersonal relations has high priority for Norwegian authorities. Relationships and networking built through the presence of long-term ILO-positions are particularly important in countries with inadequate administrative traditions and systems.

The *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* and the *Ministry of Justice and Public Security* have established common and country specific action plans for return to particularly challenging countries of origin. Return issues are integrated in bilateral relations with some important countries of origin.

There are three main categories of government grants for promoting the return to their countries of origin of individuals found to be illegally present in Norway:

- Return benefits (cash) to individuals, both for persons without a residence permit opting for assisted return, and for persons holding a residence permit choosing repatriation to their country of origin. In addition, there are special assisted return programs for a few countries. Such programs include both in-cash and in-kind benefits.
- Grants for schemes informing and motivating the target group in Norway for return.

- Grants for projects in important countries of transit or origin. Such projects could be linked to readmission agreements, co-operation on return issues, improvement of the capacity for migration management, participation in migration partnerships etc.

The identification of new methods and incentives to increase the number of persons applying for assisted return is an on-going process.

Return of unaccompanied minors is facilitated through a joint procedure between the *Directorate of Immigration* and the *National Police Immigration Service*³².

Procedure for assisted return

The priority policy objective is that a foreigner without a legal basis for residence in Norway should leave the country within a set deadline, either on his/her own initiative or through a program for assisted return and reintegration in the country of origin. Measures to motivate for assisted return are therefore important elements in a comprehensive asylum and migration policy. The majority of those who return with assistance are former asylum seekers whose application for protection has been rejected. Another group is vulnerable foreigners without a legal stay (victims of trafficking).

During recent years, the total share of former asylum seekers living in reception centres with an obligation to leave Norway has increased, even though the actual number has decreased. This is mainly due to record low numbers of persons living in reception centres nationwide. The numbers are decreasing steadily, but slowly. This group is considered difficult to motivate for assisted return, often because of years living in Norway after a negative decision. Norwegian authorities continue its efforts to reach irregular immigrants living outside reception centres to motivate them for assisted return, with information and counselling. Digital application for assisted voluntary return programs via an electronic application form at the udi.no website is possible.

The *International Organization for Migration (IOM)* is the main partner for the Norwegian authorities in implementing assisted return. On behalf of the *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)*, IOM provides support with information and counselling to potential returnees, assistance to obtain valid travel documents, travel arrangements, post-arrival reception, onward travel to the final destination and limited follow-up after arrival.

Foreigners, who are without a permit for legal residence, may benefit from reintegration support in the country of origin if they opt for assisted return. The amount of reintegration support offered depends on the timing of the application relative to the deadline set for the obligation to leave Norway. In 2020, the amount was reduced to a level comparable to other EU-countries.

The most comprehensive reintegration packages are available for Afghan, Iraqi, Moroccan and Somali citizens. These packages include financial support, temporary

³² Cf. Chapter 7.1 in the report for 2017-2018 for details: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/immigration-and-integration-20172018/id2624233/>

shelter following the return, counselling, vocational training and assistance to set up a business.

New policies and measures – irregular migration and return

On June 1, 2021, a temporary regulation for regularisation of stay was issued. The application deadline was December 1, 2021. In order to obtain regularisation of stay in Norway, several conditions had to be met cumulatively:

- the person had applied for protection (asylum) in Norway and had not returned after the asylum refusal
- the person concerned had lived in Norway at least 16 years by October 1, 2021
- the age of the person and his/her length of residence in Norway totals to 65 years or more
- the person was already in Norway on January 1, 2019
- the person must be present in Norway at the time of assessment of the regularisation case
- the person must not have a criminal record.

A limited number of persons are likely to benefit from this regularisation.

7.2 Facts and figures

No precise estimates of the extent of irregular immigration or the number of irregular immigrants present in Norway are available. However, the challenges that they represent exist, particularly in the main cities with a relatively large population of immigrants and less social transparency than in towns and smaller communities.

Foreigners in Norway without an identity from the country of origin that is convincingly documented or otherwise made credible, pose a challenge that affects all the stages of migration management. When applying for asylum before 2020, around 20 per cent of the applicants had been granted a visa to Norway (either by Norway or other Schengen-countries). This means that they at some point presented a travel document supporting a claimed identity to Norwegian authorities. In 2020, the share fell to 12 per cent of the applicants, but it is important to bear in mind that very few visas were issued in 2020 due to travel restrictions globally.

Those subject to forced return can be divided into three categories. The category *Asylum - rejected* consists of persons whose application for asylum in Norway has been rejected on its merits following an appeal. *Dublin procedure* consists of foreigners who are to be escorted to another country party to the Dublin-III regulation. *Expulsions and rejections* consist of persons without legal residence and with a duty to leave Norway for other reasons (e.g., over-stayers, convicted criminals).

Table 7.1 Return – persons by main categories. 2011–2020

Year	Asylum application refused	Dublin procedure	Expulsion/rejection	Total – forced	Assisted return (IOM)	Total
2011	1 482	1 503	1 759	4 744	1 813	6 557
2012	1 397	1 114	2 390	4 901	1 753	6 654
2013	1 275	1 408	3 283	5 966	1 889	7 855
2014	1 804	1 680	3 775	7 259	1 622	8 881
2015	1 559	1 144	5 122	7 825	1 167	8 992
2016	1 385	1 346	5 347	8 078	1 456	9 534
2017	918	461	4 055	5 434	569	6 003
2018	552	471	4 054	5 077	240	5 317
2019	358	343	3 456	4 157	213	4 370
2020	112	150	1 747	2 009	127	2 136 ³³

Source: UDI, the Police Immigration Service (PU)

The police returned about 2 000 foreigners without legal residence in 2020, this is a sharp decline compared to 2019, cf. Table 7.1. The main reason for this is fewer asylum seekers than earlier years and increasing difficulties in implementing return. Of the total number of forced returns, which also includes persons rejected at the border, 1 214 were convicted offenders. Of those persons that the police returned, including those rejected at the border, 205 were minors. Thirteen per cent of those returned were asylum seekers in the Dublin-procedure or former asylum seekers whose applications had been rejected. There has been a steady decline in this proportion since 2014, when 48 per cent of the total number the police returned were either in the Asylum or Dublin-procedure categories.

In 2020, the number who returned with assistance was 127 persons. This was much fewer than in 2019. Most returned to Russia, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq and Somalia. The reduction was due both to fewer potential beneficiaries, and significantly fewer asylum seekers the last couple of years.

During the first ten months of 2021, 108 persons had returned with assistance, compared with 98 persons in the same period in 2020. The number of persons with a duty to return among those living in reception centres, has decreased significantly; from 853 in October 2019, to 799 in October 2020 and 572 in October 2021.

During the first ten months of 2021, the police returned 18 146 foreigners without a legal residence in Norway. Included in this number were 16 585 persons rejected entry at the border because of the regulations restricting entry into Norway to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Seventy-two persons were returned after rejection of an asylum application, while 132 were returned due to the Dublin-regulations, and 1 355 were returned for illegal stay for other reasons. The number of both assisted and forced returns in 2021 seem to end up on the same level as in 2020, the numbers are

³³ In addition, 6 845 persons rejected entry at the border because of regulations restricting entry into Norway to prevent the spread of COVID-19,

however significantly lower than in previous years. This is mainly due to the pandemic and the related travel restrictions. Only one per cent of those the police returned, were in the categories 'Asylum' and 'Dublin', cf. Table 7.1.

8 Foreigners, immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents

8.1 Population growth

During 2020, the total population of Norway increased by only 23 800 persons, with a birth surplus of 12 400 and net immigration of 11 300.³⁴ This represented a growth rate of 0.44 per cent, 0.26 percentage points lower than in 2019. By the start of 2021, the total registered resident population in Norway was 5.391 million, cf. Table A1 and A3.

In 2020, the total fertility rate in Norway was 1.48. This was 0.05 points lower than in 2019 and 0.5 points lower than the peak in 2009, cf. Table A19. The difference in the fertility rates of immigrant women and the rest of the female population was 0.2 points in 2020, 0.04 points lower than in 2019. At its peak in 2000, the difference was 0.76 points. It was 1.68 for immigrant women, 1.42 for Norwegian-born women with immigrant parents and 1.44 for other women. In 2020, the highest rate of 2.20, was estimated for women from African countries, the second highest, 1.75, for women from countries in Europe outside EU/EFTA, and the third highest, 1.66, for women from Asia. The lowest rate for immigrant women was 1.39 for women from South and Central America. Since 2000, the fertility rate for immigrant women with a background from Asian countries has declined by 1.25 points and for women from African countries by 1.18 points.

In 2020, almost 11 150 children born in Norway had two foreign-born parents, while 7 700 had one foreign-born parent, cf. Table A20. The main groups of children born in Norway with two foreign-born parents had parents from Poland, Somalia, Iraq, Pakistan or Sweden. Among those with only one parent born abroad, Sweden, the Philippines, United Kingdom, Denmark, Pakistan and Germany were the main countries of origin for the foreign-born parent.

The 2020 national population projections from *Statistics Norway* show lower expected population growth and stronger ageing than in the previous projection from 2018.³⁵ Nevertheless, the main alternative suggests that Norway will experience population growth throughout this century, from around 5.4 million in 2021 to 6.1 million in 2060, and around 6.3 million in 2100. Immigration is expected to decline somewhat.

In 2020, there were just over 38 000 immigrations to Norway. Due to travel restrictions and other circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic, immigration will be low also in 2021, but higher than the previous year, cf. Chapter 2.2. From 2022 onwards, *Statistics Norway* projects that the annual immigration will decline from around 45 000 (between 39 000 and 52 000) to around 37 000 (between 18 000 and 84 000) in 2100. The projected emigration numbers depend partly on the immigration numbers. In the main alternative, annual net migration is expected to remain stable at around 10 000–12 000 up to the year 2100.

³⁴ The difference in population growth during the year will as a rule deviate from the total of birth surplus and net migration. The difference in the population accounts is due to late reporting, annulments, corrections etc.

³⁵ The following description of the most recent population projection and immigration is found in a report from *Statistics Norway*: <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/norways-2020-population-projections>

8.2 Foreign citizens

By January 1, 2021, the total number of foreign citizens registered as residents in Norway was 601 600, a reduction of almost 3 000 from January 1, 2020. They constituted 11.2 per cent of the total registered resident population. For the first time since 1998, there was a reduction in the number and share of foreigners in Norway from one year to another. Approximately 382 900 or 64 per cent were citizens of an OECD member country. This is an increase of 5 100 from 2020. Cf. Table A15.

Europeans still constituted a majority of the foreign citizens; 418 650 or almost 70 per cent of all, cf. Table A15. During the last fifteen years or so, there has been an increase in this share, mainly due to labour immigration from EU-member countries. By January 2021, the major countries of citizenship were Poland (110 300), Lithuania (47 900) and Sweden (43 600).

The share of registered resident foreign citizens from *Asian* countries was stable at almost 19 per cent (112 200 persons) of the total foreign population by the end of 2020, but there was a small reduction in numbers (1 400). This was a lower share than the average of 22 per cent for the peak years 2006-2010. The largest groups of foreign citizens from Asian countries were from Syria (32 800), the Philippines (12 100) and Thailand (11 900). The number of citizens from Syria increased by only 800 persons. This increase was much lower than during the previous five years, when many asylum seekers and resettlement refugees were granted residence permits.

During 2020, the number of resident citizens of countries in *Africa* decreased by 5 100 persons to 44 600, or 7.5 per cent of all foreign citizens in Norway. The average share during the peak period (2011-2015) was 8.7 per cent. By January 2021, the major countries of citizenship were Eritrea (17 100) and Somalia (9 100). For both countries there was a reduction, reflecting a high number of Somalis and Eritreans becoming Norwegian citizens, cf. Chapter 16.2.

The total number of resident foreign citizens from countries in *North, Central and South America* decreased slightly in 2020, to 22 300 persons. Their share of all foreign citizens remained at 3.7 per cent, down from an average share during the period 2006-2010 of 6 per cent. The largest group were citizens of the United States (9 800), followed by citizens of Chile (1 850).

In 2019, there were only 2 100 citizens from countries in *Oceania*, a little more than the number of *stateless* persons or those with *unknown* citizenship (1 750 in total).

The patterns and changes described above only partly reflect shifts in migration, cf. Chapter 2. The naturalisation rate and significant differences in the inclination to apply for Norwegian citizenship is also important, cf. Chapter 16.2. Until 2020, when the principle of dual citizenship was included in the *Nationality Act*, immigrants from EU/EFTA member countries and from North America showed little interest in changing citizenship, compared to most other resident foreigners. This is changing, cf. Table 16.2, and a large increase in naturalisations will probably have even larger impact from 2021.

Table 8.1 Resident foreign citizens - major countries. 2012–2021 (January 1)

Citi-zen-ship	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total, of which	407 262	448 765	483 177	512 154	538 223	559 227	567 783	584 243	604 525	601 574
Poland	66 639	77 095	85 591	93 615	99 626	102 017	103 799	105 192	108 565	110 301
Lithuania	24 074	30 738	35 770	39 506	41 727	42 538	43 680	45 067	46 868	47 906
Sweden	41 984	43 075	44 233	45 100	45 104	44 393	43 964	43 965	44 239	43 560
Syria	431	728	1 526	3 632	7 583	18 860	25 988	30 222	31 957	32 778
Germany	23 687	24 401	24 630	25 030	25 186	24 922	24 659	24 835	25 287	25 628
Denmark	21 354	21 937	22 570	23 499	23 257	23 020	22 806	22 838	22 851	22 327
UK	14 744	15 459	15 787	16 250	16 341	16 260	16 189	16 453	17 208	17 513
Romania	5 687	7 485	9 950	12 007	13 794	14 503	14 997	15 564	16 604	17 248
Eritrea	7 598	9 997	12 666	15 201	17 734	18 983	18 586	19 107	18 868	17 099
Philippines	8 901	10 067	11 387	11 653	11 799	12 100	11 709	12 327	12 841	12 055

Source: Statistics Norway

8.3 Immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents

In 2020, only 40 per cent of the total population growth was due to the net increase of immigrants. This was a much lower share than in 2019, because of lower net immigration, cf. Table A3. The net increase of Norwegian-born children with two immigrant parents represented 38 per cent of the total population growth that year, while 30 per cent of the population growth consisted of persons with one foreign-born parent. At the same time, 12 per cent of the total population change was due to a reduction in the number of persons born in Norway with two Norwegian-born parents.

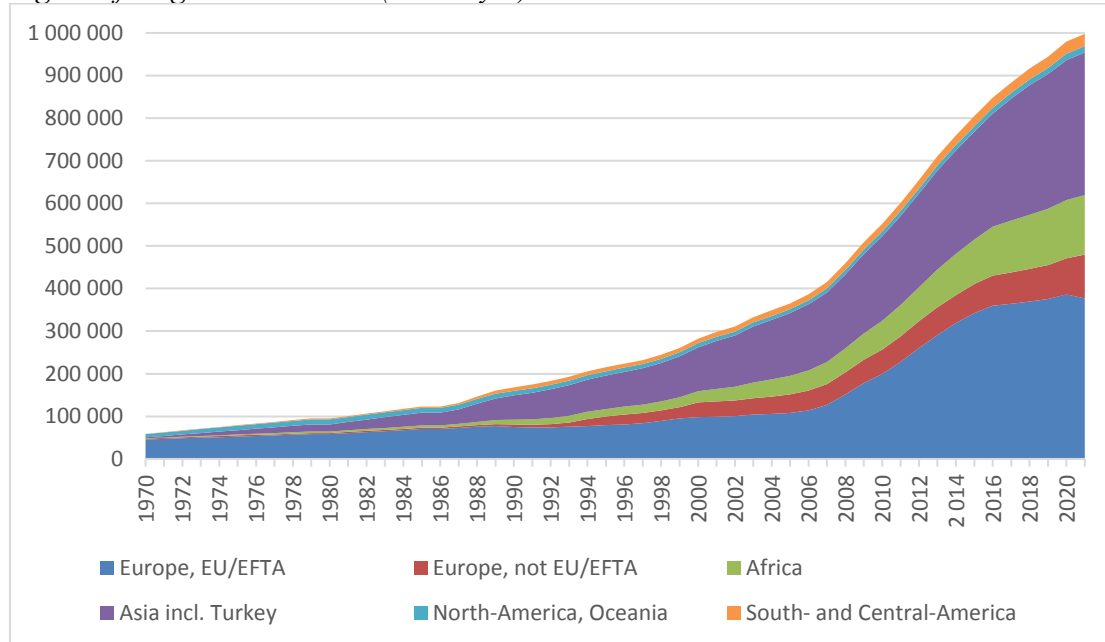
By January 1, 2021, the total number of registered resident immigrants had reached 800 100. They represented 14.8 per cent of the total population, a small increase from 14.7 per cent at the start of 2020, cf. Table A17.1. Norwegian-born to immigrant parents represent 3.7 per cent of the total population by the end of 2020, while those born in Norway with two Norwegian-born parents constitute 75 per cent.

At the beginning of 2021, 183 500, or 23 per cent of all immigrants, had resided in Norway for less than five years, cf. tab. A24. This share has been decreasing for several years, reflecting that the high immigration from the new EU member states peaked in 2011–2012, cf. Chapter 2.2. For example, the share of Lithuanian immigrants with less than five years of residence was reduced from 63 per cent by January 2016, to 16 per cent by January 2021. The share of Lithuanians with less than ten years of residence is as high as 70 per cent. Among immigrants from Poland, the numbers with less than five and ten years of residence were 21 and 56 per cent respectively in 2021. This difference between the two immigrant groups reflects that the strong increase in immigration from Poland following the EU enlargement in 2004 started earlier than the increase in immigration from Lithuania.

The number of Norwegian-born residents with two immigrant parents was 197 850 at the start of 2021. Their share of the total population was 3.7 per cent, a small increase

from 3.5 per cent one year earlier. At the start of 2021, 27 per cent in this group had parents from other OECD-countries. Cf. Table A17.2.

Chart 8.1 Resident immigrants and Norwegian-born with two immigrant parents by region of origin. 1970–2021 (January 1)



Source: Statistics Norway

The country background of immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents³⁶ has changed considerably over the years.

In 1970, the share of immigrants originating from countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America was six per cent. In 1980, the share increased to 23.5 per cent of all resident immigrants, 45.6 per cent in 1990, 49.7 per cent in 2000 and 55.5 in the peak year of 2006. By the beginning of 2021, the share was approximately 50 percent. Cf. Table A17.

For many years, Pakistan was on the top of the list of countries of origin for the combined category of immigrants and Norwegian-born with two immigrant parents. However, since 2007 Poland has been the main country of origin in this category, reaching 117 300 registered residents at the start of 2021. Lithuania (48 600) and Somalia (43 600) have also passed Pakistan (39 300) as country of origin for residents with an immigrant background³⁷, cf. Table A17.

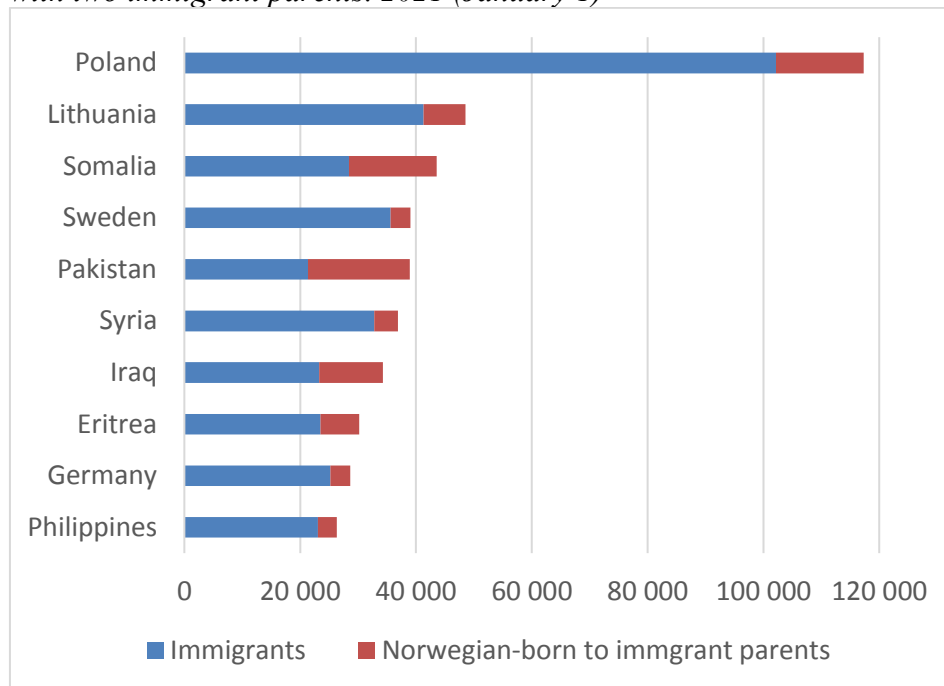
If we consider immigrants residing in Norway on January 1, 2021, the major groups came from Poland (102 150), Lithuania (41 300), Sweden (35 600), Syria (32 800) and Somalia (28 400), cf. Table A17.1.

³⁶ The combination of these two groups is usually designated “persons with an immigrant background”

³⁷ Immigrants and Norwegian-born with two immigrant parents and four immigrants grand-parents, cf. definition by Statistics Norway.

As many as 46 per cent of those with a Pakistani background were born in Norway (17 900). This was the case for only 15 per cent of those with a Lithuanian background. For those with background from Syria, 13 per cent were born in Norway. After Pakistan, the largest groups of Norwegian-born with two immigrant parents, had parents from Somalia (15 200) and from Poland (15 200). Cf. Chart 8.2 and Tables A17 and A17.2.

Chart 8.2 Main background countries for resident immigrants and Norwegian-born with two immigrant parents. 2021 (January 1)



Source: Statistics Norway

8.4 Marriage and divorce

In 2020, most existing *transnational marriages* in Norway consist of couples where both spouses originate from a country in Europe or Asia, or a Norwegian-born married to a person born in another European country, cf. Table A12.1.

Among the 15 900 *marriages* contracted in Norway during 2020, 2 300 involved a Norwegian and a foreigner. During 2020, there were almost 1 000 marriages between a Norwegian man and a woman from an Asian country and close to 900 marriages involved a Norwegian man marrying a woman from another European country. Cf. Table A13.1.

Almost nine out ten of the 9 500 *divorces* that took place in Norway in 2020 involved two Norwegian citizens, cf. Table A14.1. Among the transnational marriages ending in a divorce, most happened with:

- Norwegian husband and the wife from another European country
- Both wife and husband from a European country
- Norwegian husband and wife from a country in Asia.

8.5 Regional distribution of immigrants in Norway

Since 1990, there have been 1 170 000 registered migrations to Norway, and the municipality with the most immigrants is Oslo. The proportion of immigrants has grown significantly in many municipalities since 2012, especially in small outlying municipalities. Gamvik and Båtsfjord have surpassed Oslo in terms of the proportion of immigrants, and now have 28.3 and 26.7 per cent, compared to 25.6 per cent in Oslo. The number of immigrants in Oslo has had the highest numerical growth, but the proportion has only increased by 2.9 percentage points since 2012.³⁸ In addition to almost 177 000 immigrants living in Oslo at the start of 2021, more than 58 000 persons born in Norway with two immigrant parents were living there.

Immigrants reside in more central municipalities than the population as a whole, but this varies between country groups. Immigrants from Syria reside in the least central municipalities, while immigrants from Pakistan reside in the most central municipalities. Immigrants from Somalia and Poland reside somewhere between these two groups. Length of residence and reason for immigration contribute to these differences. Immigrants with education as the reason for immigration show the strongest regional centrality, while newly arrived refugees are settled more decentralised (cf. Chapter 6.5). The largest proportion of labour migrants are found in smaller, coastal municipalities.

To a large degree, the distribution of immigrants within Oslo follows the traditional east-west divide in the city. In particular, the districts in the north-east and south-east of Oslo have the largest share of immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents. While the Pakistani and Somali groups live more concentrated in some districts, the Polish and Swedish immigrants are relatively evenly distributed across the city. Nevertheless, all parts of the city have large immigrant groups.

Since 2010, immigration has had a major impact on population trends in Norwegian municipalities. Net immigration has led to a population increase in 99 out of 356 municipalities. 143 municipalities have had a population decline despite net migration.³⁹

Immigrants and internal migration in Norway

The high level of immigration over the past 15 years has meant that immigrants are also influencing internal migration. This is related both to the fact that the proportion of immigrants in the population has increased and that the immigrants are relatively young and thus more mobile. In the period 2015–2019, persons with an immigrant background (immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents) had largely the same internal migration pattern as the rest of the population. This means that immigrants mostly migrated from rural areas to the cities. At the county level, immigrant migration was dominant in the counties with the largest internal migration in 2015–2019, *Troms and Finnmark*, *Nordland* and *Møre og Romsdal*, and the county with the largest migration, *Viken*. Compared with the period 2010–2014, the immigrant population has increasingly affected the net migration for these counties. The internal migration of immigrants seems to be more concentrated in Eastern Norway

³⁸ Gulbrandsen, Fredrik et al (2021) *Innvandrere og norskfødte med innvandrerforeldres fordeling på kommunenivå*. SSB. Rapport 2021/8. <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/innvandrer-og-norskfodte-med-innvandrerforeldres-fordeling-pa-kommuneniva>

³⁹ Gulbrandsen et al (2021)

than in the rest of the population. Only the counties *Viken* and *Vestfold and Telemark* have a net internal migration of immigrants.⁴⁰ In the age group 18–24, persons with a refugee background move the most, but not as much as persons in the same age group in the total population⁴¹.

At the same time, the internal migration rates of immigrants have been reduced over time. Immigrants are in principle less connected to a municipality or a region and thus more mobile than those who were born and raised in the area. Previous studies have shown that refugees often move from rural areas to cities. Initially, many have been settled in rural municipalities but often move to larger cities or towns.⁴² However, this secondary migration has declined over time. The Introduction Scheme for newly arrived immigrants seems to give people with a refugee background a stronger connection to the municipality where they are initially settled.

Immigrants who came as labour migrants in the early 1970s, and their descendants, still live mostly in and around the capital. Labour migrants from EU-countries such as Poland and Lithuania are more scattered throughout the country due to a demand for labour also in rural and coastal areas.⁴³ Until now, labour migrants from Central and Eastern Europe and Nordic immigrants have been less inclined to move to more central areas after first settling in rural areas. On the contrary, they more often move to rural municipalities.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ See Chapter 6.2: [Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet \(2021\) Regionale utviklingstrekk 2021. Rapport](#).

⁴¹ Strøm, F., Kirkeberg, M. I. & Epland, J. (2020). Monitor for sekundærflytting. Sekundærflytting blant personer med flyktningbakgrunn bosatt i Norge 2007–2016. (Rapporter 2020/36). Statistisk sentralbyrå. <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/monitor-for-sekundaerflytting--432696>

⁴² Stambøl, Lasse Sigbjørn (2013). Bosettings- og flyttemønster blant innvandrere og deres norskfødte barn. (Rapporter 46/2013) Statistisk sentralbyrå.

⁴³ Østby, L. (2017). Arbeidsinnvandrere – fra hovedstadsfenomen til vanlig syn i hele landet. I Samfunnsspeilet: 3/2017. Statistisk sentralbyrå. <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/arbeidsinnvandrere-fra-hovedstadsfenomen-til-vanlig-syn-i-hele-landet>

⁴⁴ Stambøl, Lasse Sigbjørn (2013). Bosettings- og flyttemønster blant innvandrere og deres norskfødte barn. (Rapporter 46/2013) Statistisk sentralbyrå. <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/bosettings-og-flyttemonster-blant-innvandrere-og-deres-norskfodte-barn>

9 Integration policy

9.1 Legislation and general policy principles

The integration policy aims to provide incentives and opportunities for immigrants' participation in the labour market and in community life. The goal is that everyone who is living in Norway finds work or undertakes studies and participates in society in general.

Integration calls for efforts to be made by many parties. Considerable efforts are expected from each immigrant to contribute and participate in society. At the same time, the Government must take steps to ensure possibilities for the individual immigrant to study and participate in the labour force. Public services shall provide equal opportunities for all. The principle of mainstreaming in the public sector requires that national, regional and local authorities take responsibility for adapting their services to the diverse needs of the qualified users.

Civil society, immigrant organisations and other NGOs, as well as local and regional authorities are all essential actors in developing and implementing the integration policy. There is support for various integration initiatives through government grants.

The *Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion* is responsible for coordinating the integration policies for immigrants and their children. The *Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)* has a central role in coordinating the efforts to ensure that persons with an immigrant background obtain equitable public services.

The *Introduction Act* was implemented in 2003 to strengthen the possibilities for specific groups of newly arrived immigrants to participate in the labour market and in community life and gain economic independence. The act has regulated the *Introduction Program* (from 2003), the *Norwegian Language Training and Social Studies* (from 2005), and training for asylum seekers in reception centers in *Norwegian language and in Norwegian culture and values* (from 2018). Even though the *Integration Act* has replaced the *Introduction Act*, the *Introduction Act* still applies to persons granted residence before January 2021.

The target group for the *Introduction Program* is refugees and their family members, in addition to persons granted residence on humanitarian grounds and their family. The rights and obligations of individuals under the *Introduction or Integration Acts* only apply to those between the ages 18 and 55 who are settled by an agreement between *IMDi* and the municipality.

The target group for *Norwegian language training and social studies* is newly arrived adult immigrants between the ages of 18 and 67 with a residence permit that constitutes the basis for permanent residence. This also applies to foreign family members of immigrants in Norway and of Norwegian and Nordic nationals. However, those residing in Norway based on the EEA/EFTA-agreements are not covered by the *Introduction or Integration Acts*, and they are not entitled to free tuition in Norwegian language and social studies, nor are they obliged to participate in such training.

The Integration Act

In January 2021, the *Integration Act* replaced the *Introduction Act*. One of the objectives of the *Integration Act* is that more refugees gain formal education through the *Introduction Program*.

Studies show that the employment rate for refugees increases during the first few years after arriving in Norway, and then decreases five to ten years after arrival.⁴⁵ One important reason for low employment rates is that there is a gap between the competence and skills demanded by the employers and the documented skills of many newly arrived refugees. To enhance employment rates, it is important that the measures to qualify refugees and immigrants for the Norwegian labour market become more targeted. Documented formal competence is increasingly important.

The *Integration Act* contains provisions concerning responsibilities of the municipality and the counties, early qualification, the *Introduction Program* and *Norwegian Language Training and Social Studies*.

The aim of the *Introduction Program* is to provide each participant with fundamental skills in the Norwegian language and to prepare him/her for employment or further education as well as participation in Norwegian society. The target group for this program under the new act is the same as under the previous *Introduction Act*.

The scope and contents of the *Introduction Program* shall be more differentiated, so that the participants are offered a program that is adapted to their background and individual *Program Goals*. The participants must undergo competence mapping and career guidance before starting the program. The *Introduction Program* may last from three months to four years, and the duration of the program will vary depending on the participants' educational background and competence, and the participants' individual *Program Goal*. For participants who have a *Program Goal* of completing upper secondary education, the program can be extended up to four years. The primary *Program Goal* for young people under the age of 25, who have not completed upper secondary education, is completion of upper secondary education. Participants who have already completed upper secondary education will be given a shorter program period. For these, the program may last between three and six months and may be extended up to a year. The minimum requirements for the program are the same as in the *Introduction Act: Norwegian Language Training, Social Studies and work- or education-oriented measures*. In addition, every participant must participate in an *empowerment course*, and parents must participate in a *parental guidance course*.

Participants in the program are entitled to an *Introduction Benefit*. The benefit is taxable. The benefit is the same as it was in the *Introduction Act*, except for participants under the age of 25 who are living with one or both parents. They will now receive one third of the benefit. Participants under the age of 25, who are not living with parents, will get two thirds of the benefit. The full benefit is twice the basic amount (G) in the *National Insurance Scheme*. In 2021, 2 G is almost NOK 18 000 per month or NOK 213 000 per year.

⁴⁵ This situation has been documented in several studies, especially by researchers attached to the Frisch Centre for Economic Research. For example, as discussed by Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed in Immigrant Labor Market Integration Across Admission Classes (2017), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2911451

For *Norwegian language training and social studies*, the requirement of having completed a fixed number of hours of training is in the new *Integration Act* replaced with the requirement of a minimum level of Norwegian language proficiency. This level is the participant's *Norwegian Goal*. The indicative minimum level is B1 (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*⁴⁶) in all language skills (oral, listening, writing and reading).

The target group is the same as in the *Introduction Act*, but the age has been raised to 18 years. The same has been done for the target group for *Norwegian language and social studies for asylum seekers in reception centres*.

Persons teaching Norwegian under the *Integration Act* must have relevant academic and pedagogical competence. Relevant academic competence means 30 credits in Norwegian as a second language.

The Interpretation Act

The *Interpretation Act* is the first act of its kind in Norway on interpretation services in the public sector. The Act implies a duty for public agencies to use qualified interpreters when this is necessary to ensure the rule of law or to provide proper assistance and services. The Act was implemented from January 1, 2022.

The *Interpretation Act* applies to all public agencies and to interpreters. It concerns interpreting to and from Norwegian, including interpreting for the hearing impaired. The act also implies other duties for public sector institutions and interpreters, including a requirement for interpreters to present a police certificate of conduct when interpreting for the police, for the immigration services and in courts; a requirement for public sector institutions to have guidelines on the use of interpreters; and rules of processing of personal data. For interpreters, the act also implies a duty of confidentiality and rules of disqualification. Interpreters can be excluded from the national registry of interpreters if they do not act in accordance with the duties and regulations of the law.

9.2 Strategies and action plans

Strategy documents and action plans have become increasingly important as tools for formulating and implementing public policies in many fields, including integration and diversity. Often, several ministries are involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of such plans.

Strategy on the Role of Civil Society in Integration

In June 2021, the former Government launched a new strategy to strengthen the role of civil society in developing and implementing the integration policy for the period of 2021–2024⁴⁷. The strategy was accompanied by a promise of increased economic support to NGOs working to improve integration. The strategy has 26 defined measures with three main goals: 1. More persons with an immigrant background participating in civil society, 2. Raise and support civil society's effort on integration and

⁴⁶ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>

⁴⁷ [Regjeringen vil satse mer på frivillige organisasjoner i hverdagsintegreringen - regjeringen.no](#) (Only in Norwegian)

3. Better cooperation and regulatory conditions. The strategy is in the process of being implemented by the new Government.

National Strategy for Children Growing up in Low-income Families

A *National Strategy for Children growing up in Low-income Families (2020-2023)* was launched towards the end of 2020.⁴⁸ Six out of ten of children in low-income families have an immigrant background. The strategy covers 65 different measures within areas such as the family, housing, health, education, leisure activities and employment. The short-term objective of the strategy is to improve living conditions of children growing up in low-income households. The long-term objective is to increase the children's opportunities when growing up and to prevent poverty from being passed on from one generation to the next.

Action Plan on Freedom from Negative Social Control and Honour Based Violence

There is a need for an active policy to combat attitudes and actions that impede an individual's opportunities to both succeed and live a free and safe life. Combating negative social control, honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation has long been a high priority for Norway and long-term efforts have yielded results and put important questions on the agenda. An increased number of victims and people at risk are being identified and given help.

Negative social control and honour-based violence are, however, persistent challenges. The most recent *Action Plan Freedom from Negative Social Control and Honour Based Violence (2021–2024)*⁴⁹, advances and strengthens efforts through the implementation of 33 specific measures. These efforts involve safe-guarding fundamental rights, ensuring freedom and equality for all, combating violence and abuse, preventing social exclusion and health problems and ensuring equal public services for the entire population. The action plan is part of Norway's implementation of the *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention)*. Seven ministries and their subordinate agencies are collaborating on the action plan.

Action Plan against Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

Norway's *Action Plan against Radicalisation and Violent Extremism* highlights comprehensive and preventive early measures. The plan covers all kinds of extremism. It originally contained 30 measures, but the plan is dynamic, in the sense that existing measures and the need for new measures continuously are assessed according to developments and changes in the perceived threats. The plan was revised in 2020 and new measures were added, including measures addressing right-wing extremism.⁵⁰ The *Ministry of Justice and Public Security* coordinates this work.

⁴⁸ [Regjeringens samarbeidsstrategi](#) (only available in Norwegian)

⁴⁹ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/frihet-fra-negativ-sosial-kontroll-og-aresrelatert-vold/id2861094/> (only available in Norwegian)

⁵⁰ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/handlingsplan-mot-radikalisering-og-voldelig-ekstremisme/id2711314/> (The revised plan is only available in Norwegian)

9.3 Housing

The impact of housing conditions on integration

Housing plays a fundamental role in a person's wellbeing. Research shows that housing conditions affect many areas of importance for integration. Safe and stable housing contributes to better health, higher levels of education and work participation. Being disadvantaged in the housing market can have a negative impact on a person's health and socioeconomic status. Cramped living conditions, rental housing and exposure to noise have a negative effect on school results, especially for older children and there are correlations between cramped living conditions and employment.⁵¹ The physical qualities of housing may impact a person's health.⁵² Growing up in vulnerable neighbourhoods often has a negative effect on education and social mobility.⁵³ A high proportion of people with low socioeconomic status in a neighbourhood can have a negative effect on a child's life chances.⁵⁴ Still, controlling for socioeconomic factors, one study found that a high proportion of persons with an immigrant background from Asia, Africa etc. in a neighbourhood can have a positive effect on the school results.⁵⁵

Although many immigrants in Norway do well in the housing market, immigrants are overrepresented among people who are disadvantaged in this market. While more than 80 percent of Norwegians owned their home in 2020, just over 40 per cent of immigrants from countries in Asia, Africa etc. were homeowners.⁵⁶ Homeownership is often considered the best way to ensure good housing, as it is likely to involve better physical housing qualities, economic advantages, and more predictable housing conditions. Around a third of immigrants from countries in Asia, Africa etc. lived in cramped living conditions. The situation has remained relatively stable for several years, although there has been a slight improvement. It is important to note that time spent in Norway has an impact on housing conditions. For many immigrants the conditions improve over time. After 25 years of residence, many immigrant groups have the same level of home ownership as the rest of the population.

Among other things, lower average income levels and larger households are important factors explaining why a higher share of immigrants are disadvantaged in the housing market. It is also more common for immigrants to live in cities, where housing prices are higher and housing conditions are more cramped.

Discrimination of immigrants in the housing market

Research has found discrimination of immigrants in the rental market. A study from 2021, shows that 45 percent of immigrants from non-European countries have experienced discrimination that they consider to be a result of their ethnicity. Forty-four

⁵¹ Umblis, Janis, Kristine von Simson & Ferdinand Mohn. *The significance of housing on other welfare. A knowledge review on national and international research*. Institute for Social Research. Report 2019:1 (summary in English) [Rapport 2:19 \(unit.no\)](#)

⁵² Von Simson, Kristine & Janis Umblis. *Housing conditions and welfare*. Institute for Social Research. Report 2019:2 (English summary) [Rapport 1:19 \(regjeringen.no\)](#)

⁵³ [Oppvekststedets betydning for barn og unge.pdf \(bufdir.no\)](#) (only in Norwegian)

⁵⁴ Cf. note 49

⁵⁵ Cf. note 50

⁵⁶ [Boforhold, registerbasert. Statistikkbanken \(ssb.no\)](#)

percent have experienced numerous refusals when looking for rental housing⁵⁷. Immigrants often pay higher rent than others⁵⁸, and they more often experience arbitrary evictions⁵⁹. Still, few complaints on discrimination are registered at *The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud*, and it is considered difficult to measure the actual level and form of discrimination in the housing market.

National strategy for social housing policies (2021-2024)

A national strategy for social housing policies: *We all need a safe place to call home (2021-2024)*⁶⁰, was launched in 2020. The strategy has three focus areas: 1) no one should be homeless; 2) access to good housing for children and young people; and 3) equal opportunities in the housing market for persons with disabilities. The strategy will both directly and indirectly impact immigrants' housing conditions. There are measures taken to enable more immigrants to buy a home, and to improve the conditions for immigrants, among others, in the rental market. *The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation* will also ensure more research into discrimination in the housing market.

The new Government intends to enforce the social housing policies to better assist people who are disadvantaged in the housing market. The goal is to reduce social inequality in the housing market and to enable more people to buy a home, secure safe conditions in the rental market and contribute to good neighbourhoods. The aim is also to facilitate the production of new dwellings and ensure social sustainability in housing policies.

Integrated area-based urban regeneration program

The program is an instrument to contribute to better living conditions in urban areas with major challenges in living conditions. The Government currently has an agreement with Oslo, Drammen, Stavanger and Bergen municipality for cooperation on *area initiatives* in selected areas.

The area initiatives are adapted to the challenges in the different urban areas, and the municipalities have chosen different ways of cooperation. Common to the initiatives is that they should contribute to a lasting improvement of services and local environment qualities where the needs are the greatest.

The area initiatives include working for:

- better quality of the physical environment, meeting places and cultural activities
- better integration of immigrants
- better results in primary and lower-secondary school
- reducing dropout rates in upper-secondary school
- increased employment
- reduced crime
- strengthened public health

⁵⁷ [Forbrukerrådet, 2021: Å leie bolig - Norske leietakeres erfaringer og ønsker for boligmarkedet](#)

⁵⁸ <https://docplayer.me/6191465-Prisdannelsen-i-det-norske-leiemarkedet-en-teoretisk-og-empirisk-analyse-av-hovedmekanismer-generelt-og-utsatte-grupper-spesielt.html> (only in Norwegian)

⁵⁹ https://evalueringsportalen.no/evaluating/etniske-minoriteter-og-forskjellsbehandling-i-leiemarkedet/etniske_minoriteter.pdf/@@inline (English summary)

⁶⁰ We all need a safe place to call home (2021-2024) (only available in Norwegian)

In cooperation with relevant partners from the central government, the municipalities are developing a program document for the entire *area initiative* and *annual action programs*. This document clarifies long-term objectives and strategies; organisational structure; the plan for evaluation; and the roles of the ministries, directorates and municipalities. *Annual action programs* with proposals for specific measures are used as a basis for sub-funding from participating directorates and ministries.

The area initiatives are a shared responsibility between up to seven different ministries and the municipalities. The ministries earmark funds for the area initiatives in the annual allocations through the central government budget. Cooperation is required where the ministries set aside funds in the ordinary budget processes for the area initiatives. In 2021, around NOK 210 million was allocated altogether. *The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development* coordinates the governmental initiatives.

Report on living conditions in urban areas

A *Commission of experts* has investigated living conditions and integration challenges in areas in and around the major cities in Norway and reviewed the extent of urban segregation and deprivation, and the causes, consequences, and policy implications.⁶¹ In its report from December 2020, the Commission proposes strategies and measures to ensure that everyone can live and grow up in safe and inclusive communities with good living conditions, especially considering housing, integration and the situation for children and youth.⁶² The report has been submitted to stakeholders for public consultations. It is up to the new Government to decide how to follow up the proposals and the results from the consultations.

9.4 Voluntary activities

Voluntary organisations and volunteer work are important in Norway. Traditionally, people have come together to pursue common interests and deal with common problems. Immigrants in Norway also participate in such voluntary activities to a relatively high degree, but often in other areas of civil society than do members of the majority population. Generally, immigrants and their children, especially women and girls, are underrepresented as members of the traditional Norwegian organisations for voluntary work and other non-governmental organisations. Young or middle-aged minority men with a high level of education who know the language well are those who have the highest network participation.⁶³

Several immigrant organisations are an integral part of the organised voluntary sector in Norway. The *Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion* provides grants to immigrant organisations and other NGOs, both to local and nation-wide organisations. The aim of such grants is to strengthen the participation of immigrants and their children in local activities, and to facilitate access to social networks. These grants are also available for NGOs that provide information and guidance to new immigrants, especially to labour immigrants and other immigrants not covered by the *Introduction/Integration Act*. There are grants also for national resource centres focusing on integration issues,

⁶¹ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2020-16/id2798280/> (only in Norwegian)

⁶² <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2020-16/id2798280/> (only in Norwegian)

⁶³ <https://samfunnsforskning.brage.unit.no/samfunnsforskning-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2557785/Organisasjonsengasjementpercent2bbllantpercent2binnvandrarar.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (only in Norwegian)

as well as for Norwegian sport's clubs and leagues that have activities dedicated to increase the participation and integration of ethnic minorities in sports.

Dialogue and contact between the Government and civil society are important elements of the processes of making and implementing policy. Among the measures to promote such dialogue is an annual *Integration Conference*. The eighth such conference took place in June 2021, this time only digitally.

9.5 The role of cultural policy

A vision for the cultural policy is that everyone has the right to culture and all citizens must have the opportunity to participate in cultural activities and have easy access to cultural heritage. Culture must be available to all, regardless of their social, cultural and financial background, age, gender and functional ability.

*The Power of Culture – Meld. St. 8 (2018–2019) Report to the Storting (white paper)*⁶⁴ has been followed up by reports and strategies within the different cultural and artistic sectors and fields. Among them is cultural diversity.

In this sense, cultural policy makes an important contribution to guaranteeing equality, combat discrimination and strengthen unity and inclusion in society. Diversity is an important priority for the *Ministry of Culture*, which also is reflected in the annual *National Budget*.

Goals for the cultural policy is an inclusive and diverse art and cultural life of high quality, which reflects our time and reflects who we are today; and a cultural life that builds identity, education and competence, and which opens up for a variety of expressions of opinion and reflection. Cultural institutions play an important role when it comes to diversity and to obtain access, relevance and inclusion for diverse groups in society. The entire sector should contribute to long-term and systematic work to achieve a greater diversity of users and participants, of practitioners and of expressions and offers. It is important that the sector itself contributes to the changes that are necessary to achieve a more equal, diverse and representative cultural life.

Gender equality and diversity requires long-term and systematic work. Therefore, the main governmental agency for the implementation of Norwegian cultural policy, the *Norwegian Arts Council*, continues its task as a national coordinator for diversity in art and cultural life also in 2022.

⁶⁴ <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/meld.-st.-8-20182019/id2620206/> (Summary in English)

10 Training and skills

10.1 Basic qualifications

The educational and work-related qualifications that immigrants bring with them to Norway differ in many respects. Some have completed higher education, have substantial relevant work experience and are fluent in many languages. Others have little or no formal education, little or no relevant work experience and some are illiterate in their mother tongue. Some start working from day one after arrival, for others it is difficult to find employment. Programs that may help immigrants acquire basic and relevant qualifications are designed to strengthen their chances of finding a job and participate in society. The main schemes are *Norwegian Language Training and Social Studies*, the *Introduction Program* and the *Job Opportunity Program*. The *Introduction Act* has regulated the first two schemes. From 2021, the scheme has been regulated by the *Integration Act*, cf. Chapter 9.1.

Norwegian Language Training and Social Studies

The goal of the scheme for Norwegian language training and social studies is that an adult immigrant, after the first years in Norway, should sufficiently master Norwegian to be able to find employment and participate in greater society. As soon as possible after settling in a municipality, eligible immigrants are expected to enrol in language training. They should complete the training within three years or 18 months depending on the participant's former level of education. The former requirement of having completed a fixed number of hours of training is in the new *Integration Act* replaced with the requirement of a minimum level of Norwegian language proficiency. This level is the participant's *Norwegian Goal*. The indicative minimum level is B1 (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*⁶⁵) in all language skills (oral, listening, writing and reading). See Chapter 9.1 for further details about the *Integration Act*.

Third country labour immigrants, if eligible for permanent residence, are obliged to participate in language training and social studies, but only for 300 hours. They must pay a fee to the provider of the course. Citizens from *EEA/EFTA-countries*, using their right to free mobility, have neither the right nor a duty to participate in such training.

Having completed language training or demonstrated corresponding language skills is a requirement for a permanent residence permit and for Norwegian citizenship, irrespective of country of origin.

Statistics Norway produces statistics on the participation in *Norwegian Language Training and Social Studies*. During 2020, 26 123 persons participated in the training, compared to 33 846 in 2019. Almost 65 per cent of the participants were women, an increase from 60 per cent in 2019.

Annual reviews of the effects of the language training are partly based on the number of candidates sitting for examinations and on the proportion that passed or failed. A digital test measures the Norwegian skills at four different levels, level A1, A2, B1 and B 2. Level A1 is the lowest level and B2 is the highest. Since the testing was

⁶⁵ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions>

changed in 2014, it is not possible to directly compare the results from before and after this year.

The policy target for 2019 was that 90 per cent should achieve A2 or higher on the oral test and 70 per cent should achieve A2 or higher on the written test (consisting of a listening test, writing test and reading test). This policy aim was reached on the written test in 2019, when 84.2 per cent of all candidates got A2 or higher on the test in listening, 73.3 per cent in reading and 82,4 per cent in writing. In 2019, 87.7 per cent of all the candidates achieved A2 or higher on the oral test.

From 2020, the policy target for the Norwegian language training is increased to an expectation of 90 per cent achieving B1 or higher on the oral test and 70 per cent achieving B1 or higher on the written test. This new policy target was not reached in 2020. At the writing test, only 40 per cent achieved B1 or B2, at the test in listening 46 per cent achieved B1 or B2, and 37 per cent achieved B1 or B2 in reading. In 2020, only 41 per cent achieved B1 or B2 on the oral test. There is an expectation that changes implemented through the *Integration Act* will contribute to improved results for the years to come.

From 2014, it has been mandatory for the participants to take a *test in Social Studies* after completing 50 hours of training in a language they understand. The test is available in 27 languages, in addition to two of the official Norwegian written languages. In 2020, almost 14 000 candidates took the test, compared to 16 000 in 2019. The policy target for 2020 was that 90 per cent should pass the test in social studies. Eighty-one per cent of all the candidates passed that year, compared to 84 per cent in 2019.

Asylum seekers residing in a reception centre are offered 175 hours of Norwegian language training by the municipality, free of charge. In 2020, 51 per cent of the asylum seekers residing in reception centres received such training, compared to 49 per cent in 2019.

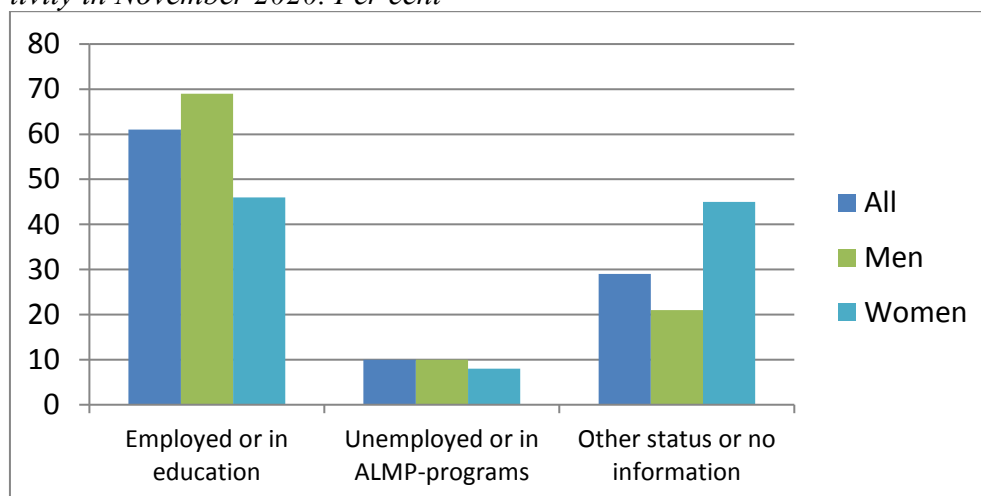
The Introduction Program

The *Introduction Program* is an individually adapted full-time program to acquire basic qualifications. The effects of the program are monitored. During 2020, 13 900 persons participated in the program, compared to 20 900 in 2019. Forty-seven per cent of the participants were women.⁶⁶

Of the participants who finished the program in 2019, 61 per cent were employed or participated in education in November 2020. This was five percentage point lower than for the cohort of the previous year. A larger proportion of men (69 per cent) compared to women (46 per cent) had found work or were attending education, cf. Chart 10.1.

⁶⁶ <http://www.ssb.no/en/utdanning/statistikker/introinnv/aar-deltakere>

Chart 10.1 Persons completing the Introduction Program in 2019 by gender and activity in November 2020. Per cent



Source: Statistics Norway

As in previous years, the proportion with other status or no information was much higher among women (45 per cent) than among men (21 per cent). Among women in this category, recipients of social assistance, as well as those with so-called "unknown status", dominated by 9 and 23 per cent respectively.⁶⁷

Many of those with unknown status were probably at home with children. Those who participate in primary and lower secondary education are included in this category, unless they have a part-time job, receive cash support or otherwise are included in any of the above categories. Currently, there are no individual register data on persons participating in primary and lower secondary education after completing the *Introduction program*.

The Job Opportunity Program

The aim of the *Job Opportunity Program* is to increase the employment rate among immigrants who need to acquire basic skills and who are not covered by other schemes or who need individualised training. The *Directorate of Integration and Diversity* administers the scheme. The target group of the scheme is:

- Women outside the labour market who are not receiving supplementary public benefits, nor attending any form of language or labour market training.

Seventy-four per cent of the participants who completed the scheme in 2020, were employed or participated in education after completing the program, compared to 76 per cent in 2019. The *Job Opportunity Program* has a wide range of tools to address the different needs of immigrant women in several sectors. In 2020, 63 percent of the women attended language training classes, 42 percent of them participated in on-the-job training, and 63 percent received career guidance.

⁶⁷ <https://www.ssb.no/utdanning/voksenopplaering/statistikk/introduksjonsordningen-for-nyankomne-innvandrere/artikler/faerre-i-arbeid-etter-endt-introduksjonsprogram>

It is difficult to identify specific causes for the positive results for this program, but more work-oriented activities, on-the-job training, and individual coaching may be some of the factors.

New policies and measures – Basic qualifications

The COVID-19 pandemic and the many measures to reduce infection rates have had negative consequences for participants in the *Introduction Program* and in *Norwegian Language Training and Social Studies*. This implied reduced opportunities to attend courses and carry out tests in Norwegian. Participants who were approaching completion of the Introduction program and Norwegian language training could get lower learning outcomes than in a normal situation. The pandemic also led to high rates of unemployment among some immigrants,⁶⁸ and it has become more challenging for immigrants with low formal skills and little professional experience to enter the labour market.

To counteract the consequences of the pandemic, an interim act on adaptations to the Introduction Act was introduced in the spring of 2020. The interim act was further amended in 2021. In total (2020 and 2021), *the Storting* allocated about NOK 800 million to strengthen the basic qualification measures for newly arrived immigrants. Measures to remedy some of the negative consequences of the pandemic have primarily been offered to persons already participating in the schemes under the *Introduction Act*; persons who had their training affected and are facing a more difficult labour market than before. The measures have consisted of an expanded and reinforced Introduction Program and extended Norwegian language training.

Both in 2020 and 2021, NOK 10 million were allocated to a grant scheme to increase the use of online Norwegian language training, and NOK 25 million were allocated to strengthen the *Job Opportunity Program*.

10.2 Recognition of the skills of immigrants

The socio-economic gains from immigration depend largely on the degree to which immigrants can use their previously and newly acquired skills. Many immigrants who settle in Norway have skills from education and work experience in their previous countries of residence. Many of them obtain additional education and work experience in Norway. Efforts to recognise and mobilise these skills in the labour market are important, both for the supply of labour needed in Norway and for the integration of the immigrants into the Norwegian society.

The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) is a national agency responsible for recognition of foreign education and training, and for providing information and advice relating to the recognition of foreign education, training and vocational qualifications. NOKUT has the authority to make decisions on general recognition of foreign qualifications obtained from higher education and from post-secondary vocational education, as well as on recognition of upper secondary vocational qualifications from abroad.

The scheme for general recognition of foreign higher education is system-based. It includes verification and is primarily aimed at occupations for which there are no legal

⁶⁸ Cf. [article](#) by Bjørn Olsen, published by Statistics Norway in May 2021.

qualification requirements.⁶⁹ NOKUT's decisions on general recognition helps employers understand and trust the value of foreign higher education qualifications. NOKUT also offers a fast-track assessment service to help employers and recruitment agencies understand foreign higher education qualifications when they are in the process of recruiting new staff. NOKUT makes such assessments free-of-charge and within five working days.

Immigrants with higher education from abroad can also apply for academic recognition of their qualifications from higher education institutions with relevant study programs. Such recognition concerns both parts of, and full, study programs and degrees. Academic recognition is most relevant for immigrants interested in further studies in Norway.

For both general and academic recognition of higher education from abroad, the relevant provisions of the Norwegian *Act on Higher Education* are based on the *Council of Europe and UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention*⁷⁰. Norway has also ratified the *UNESCO Global Convention*⁷¹, meaning it will apply as soon as it enters into force.

Regarding the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons, or persons in a refugee-like situation, NOKUT is responsible for an interview-based recognition procedure for people with insufficient or unverifiable documentation of their higher education (the *UVD-procedure*). This implements Article VII of the *Lisbon Recognition Convention*.

Since 2016, the *European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR)* is part of NOKUT's recognition schemes. The aim is to facilitate the integration of newly arrived refugees and displaced persons in Norwegian society, by giving them the right to have their qualifications assessed, including in cases where documentary evidence is insufficient or missing. The method has proven easily adaptable to non-EU/EFTA countries as well and has been tested on a European scale in projects financed by the EU and the *Council of Europe*. Building on the initiative by Council of Europe, UNESCO has initiated a similar project called the *UNESCO Qualification Passport for Refugees and Vulnerable Migrants*. The initiative is supported by Norway.

Currently, the recognition scheme for upper secondary vocational education and training comprises 19 Norwegian craft and journeyman's certificates. NOKUT processes applications with equivalent qualifications from Poland, Germany, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The scheme for recognition of vocational education and training gradually expands to new qualifications and countries. Since 2019, NOKUT has also been responsible for general recognition of tertiary vocational education at post-secondary level.

For most professions and occupations, no specific official recognition is required before a person can take up work in Norway. However, for around 160 professions, the qualifications required are regulated by law and regulations. This means that the

⁶⁹ See <https://www.nokut.no/en/application-services--foreign-education/> for more information.

⁷⁰ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165>

⁷¹ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/higher-education/recognition-qualifications/global-convention>

recognition of professional qualifications is required for individuals who want to be able to practice these professions in Norway. Examples of such professions are nurses, teachers and electricians. For such professions, recognition or authorisation must be given by the competent recognition authority. In Norway, there are 15 different recognition authorities for professional qualifications. NOKUT is the assistance centre for the *EU Professional Qualifications Directive* in Norway, and provides information to professionals about the directive, Norwegian legislation and regulated professions.

For some professions requiring authorisation, it may be difficult to find appropriate bridging courses. Since 2016, therefore, the Government has financed the development and establishment of bridging courses for nurses and teachers. They started in 2017, at *Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet)*. Later, courses for engineers have also been established at *OsloMet* and the *Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)*. The intention is to enable and certify these professionals to work as teachers, nurses, and engineers in Norway. Persons with a refugee background are prioritised for admission to the bridging courses. The courses were originally one-year courses. Due to the need to improve the teacher candidates' proficiency in Norwegian language, the teacher courses are now expanded to two years. The public's interest in the courses, and the number of applications, have increased over the years, as the courses have become better known.

New policies and measures – Recognition of higher education

From August 2021, *OsloMet* also offers a bridging course for nurses based in *Nordland County*, the first course of this kind outside of Oslo. Assessments are made as to whether bridging courses should be developed for other health professionals.

From August 2021, amendments to the provisions of the *Act on Higher Education* concerning the recognition of higher education from abroad were implemented.⁷² The aim of the amendments is partly to clarify the provisions and make them more easily understood by people with a non-legal background, and partly to make the links to the *Lisbon Recognition Convention* more explicit.

⁷² <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-111-l-20202021/id2840742/> (only in Norwegian)

11 Education

11.1 Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Following a period with strong increase in the number of kindergarten places, introduction of a maximum fee for parents and a legal entitlement for all children to a place in a kindergarten, the focus is on developing the quality and the content of kindergartens. The *Kindergarten Act* and regulations to that act apply to this sector.

Children who reach the age of one by the end of August in the year of the application for a place in a kindergarten, are entitled to a place from that August. Children who reach the age of one in September, October or November in the year of the application, are entitled to a place by the end of the month they reach the age of one. Participation in a kindergarten is voluntary, but 92.8 per cent of children aged 1–5 and 97.7 per cent of all 5-year-olds attended in 2020. The age of compulsory schooling is six years.

Regulations limiting the kindergarten fee to be paid by parents entered into force in 2004. In 2021, the maximum fee is NOK 3 230 per month and NOK 35 530 per year. Municipalities are to provide discounts for siblings, regardless of the family's income, and free core hours (20 hours per week) for children aged 2–5 from families with the lowest incomes. This is regardless of their mother tongue. There is also a national subsidy scheme for low-income families so that these families will pay a maximum of six per cent of their income for a full-time place in kindergarten, limited upwards by the maximum price.

Locally there are different schemes/programs for free core hours in a kindergarten. Some municipalities have programs in designated geographic areas with many residents with immigrant backgrounds.

Children from asylum seeking families do not have a right to a kindergarten place until their asylum application has been accepted and the family has a permanent address in a municipality. However, children staying in an asylum centre may enter a kindergarten if places are available in the municipality where the centre is located. A government grant finances full time places for all children in asylum centres aged one to five regardless of the status of their asylum application.

The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens is a regulation to the *Kindergarten Act*.⁷³ The plan provides guidelines on the values, contents and tasks of kindergartens and describes their societal role. Kindergarten programs shall build on a holistic educational philosophy, with care, play and learning being at the core of activities. Social and language skills, as well as seven learning areas, are identified as being important to the learning environment provided by the kindergartens. The current *Framework plan* came into force from August 2017.

From 1 January 2021, a new Chapter was introduced in the *Kindergarten Act* with requirements for how the kindergarten should ensure that the children have a safe and good psychosocial kindergarten environment.

⁷³ <https://www.udir.no/globalassets/filer/barnehage/rammeplan/framework-plan-for-kindergartens2-2017.pdf>

Early childhood is the fundamental period for the development of language skills. Several Norwegian studies show that measures to increase the participation of minority language children in ECEC have positive effects on the children's later competencies in the Norwegian language.

Open kindergartens, where a parent accompanies the child to pedagogical sessions one or several times per week, provide a good opportunity to show immigrant parents what a Norwegian kindergarten is like.

The subsidy scheme consisting of free core hours in a kindergarten for children in deprived neighbourhoods and/or children from low-income families seems to have a positive effect on the children's school tests results later. *Statistics Norway* is doing a longitudinal study for the *Directorate for Education and Training* on the effects of free core hours in kindergarten on four cohorts of children in Oslo. The latest report, from October 2018, shows that a positive effect of kindergarten is still present in the fifth grade in elementary school.⁷⁴

Many immigrant children do not have Norwegian as their mother tongue and learn Norwegian as a second language in a kindergarten. Statistics from the *Directorate for Education and Training* show that 19.3 per cent of children in a kindergarten in 2020 were defined as minority language children. It is important that their situation is well understood and that they get an opportunity to express themselves in Norwegian or Sami. According to the new *Framework Plan*, the kindergarten must help to ensure that linguistic diversity becomes an enrichment for the entire group of children and encourage multilingual children to use their mother tongue while also actively promoting and developing the children's language skills in Norwegian or Sami.

The municipalities receive an earmarked government grant aimed at enhancing the minority language children's development in a Norwegian language in kindergarten. The *Ministry of Education and Research* as well as the *Directorate for Education and Training* and the *National Centre for Multicultural Education* have prepared and disseminated support material for kindergarten staff about language and cultural diversity.

The child health clinics in each municipality are to assess the child's language skills at the age of two and four. The assessment is to be based on national guidelines that include the checking of eyesight and hearing capacity in addition to language skills.

The main policy goal regarding children with an immigrant background and kindergartens has been to increase the attendance, especially among the younger children. In 2016, the general public grant for the municipal sector was increased by NOK 10 million (not earmarked) in order to enable the municipalities to give ECEC information and recruit minority children to kindergarten. There is an earmarked grant for active information and recruitment of minority language children in municipalities with low participation in kindergarten.

⁷⁴ Drange, Nina (2018): Statistics Norway Reports 2018/34, https://www.ssb.no/utdanning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/attachment/365791?_ts=16ac030c1f0

The Directorate for Education and Training have translated information material about kindergartens into several minority languages, and the municipalities may use the material free of charge. The difference in the use of kindergartens by minority and majority children aged 1-2 and 3-5 has been reduced yearly, cf. Table 11.1.

The White Paper *Meld. St. 6 (2019–2020) Early intervention and inclusive education in kindergartens, schools and out-of-school-hours care*, highlights the importance of the mastery of Norwegian by children and proposes measures to ensure that children can speak and understand Norwegian when they start primary school.⁷⁵

Goals for integration – Kindergarten

The former reporting system *Goals for integration* has for some years been a tool to help ensure that all immigrants receive the services to which they are entitled. The educational attainment indicators should reflect how immigrants and their Norwegian-born children perform in the education system.

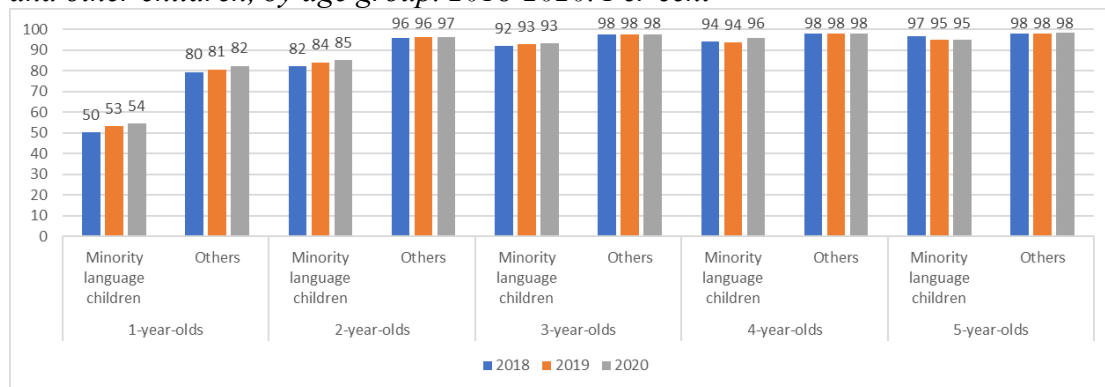
Indicator:

The share of language minority children who attended a kindergarten, compared to the share of other children attending a kindergarten.⁷⁶

Status:

Over the last years, an increasing share of all entitled language minority children attended kindergarten. Eighty-five per cent of minority language children aged 1-5 years attended kindergarten in 2020. For other children in the same age group, the share was 95 per cent. The share of children attending kindergarten increases with age, as can be seen in Chart 11.1. For minority language children the difference in attendance between ages are greater than among the other children. For 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds, the share attending kindergarten is close to the share among other children, while the minority language 1 and 2-year-olds have a significantly lower attendance than the other children.

Chart 11.1 Participation rates in kindergarten among language minority children and other children, by age group. 2018-2020. Per cent



Source: Statistics Norway

⁷⁵ <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/meld.-st.-6-20192020/id2677025/> (Summary in English)

⁷⁶ 'Language minority children' is defined as children whose both parents have another mother tongue than Norwegian, Sami, Swedish, Danish or English.

New policies and measures – Early Childhood Education and Care

In June 2021, the former Government presented a new strategy for quality in ECEC: *ECEC towards 2030. Strategy for Quality in Kindergartens 2021-2030*.

From 1 January 2021, a new Chapter was introduced in the *Kindergarten Act* with requirements for how the kindergarten should ensure that the children have a safe and good psychosocial environment in kindergarten. Kindergartens now have a duty to make sure that children have a good and safe environment and must, among other things, intervene if there is a suspicion that a child is not safe and well in the kindergarten.

COVID-19 – Special measures

Due to the pandemic, national authorities have prepared regulations and guidance to ensure that as many kindergartens as possible remain open. This is particularly important for vulnerable children and young people, including children of some immigrant groups. During periods of closure or reduced opening hours in 2020 and 2021, the kindergartens have been open for vulnerable children.

11.2 Primary and secondary education

Policy and legislation

In 2020, about 19 per cent of the students in Norwegian primary and lower secondary schools, and 20.5 per cent of the students in upper secondary schools, were immigrants themselves or children of immigrants. They had links to many countries, cultures and languages. Immigrant students, especially those who arrived in Norway as teenagers, face tougher challenges than other students in achieving good results from their education.

In Norway, a comprehensive school system that benefits all students is a central aim for the education policy. The objective is to provide good learning opportunities for all students, with special consideration of the needs of specific groups of children, such as those from language minorities or children who need special educational support.

The main legislation for this area is the *Education Act*, the *Act Relating to Universities and University Colleges* and the *Introduction Act*. The *Education Act* covers education for adults in need of primary and secondary education. The statutes have supplementary regulations on many issues that are important for language minorities and migrants' education.

According to the *Education Act* section 2-1, children and young persons are *obliged* to attend primary and lower secondary education and have the *right* to a public primary and lower secondary education. The right to primary and lower secondary education applies when it is probable that the child will reside in Norway for a period of more than three months. The child is entitled to such education as soon as possible after arrival in Norway and no later than within one month. The obligation to attend primary and lower secondary education commences as soon as the presence has lasted for three months. These rules apply to every child, including children of asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors seeking asylum and irregular immigrants.

According to the *Education Act* section 2-8, a pupil attending the primary and lower secondary education and who has a mother tongue other than Norwegian or Sami, has the right to adapted education in Norwegian until they are sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to attend the regular instruction offered. If necessary, such pupils are also entitled to mother tongue instruction, bilingual subject teaching, or both. In 2020–2021, 34 per cent of the pupils in primary and lower secondary schools who were immigrants or born in Norway with immigrant parents, received adapted education in Norwegian.

According to the *Education Act* section 3-1, young persons who have completed primary and lower secondary education or the equivalent, have, on application, the right to three years' full-time upper secondary education and training. Persons who are above the age of compulsory schooling – but under 18 – and apply for a residence permit, also have the right to primary, lower secondary or upper secondary education while they are in Norway.

According to the *Education Act* section 4A-1, students that have the right to upper secondary education can be given more primary/ lower secondary education before or in combination with upper secondary education. This will help students that need more preparatory education to benefit from upper secondary education. This is especially relevant for students arriving in Norway late in their school age and have a short time before they enter upper secondary school. From 2020, the funds for the government scheme (The Job Opportunity Program Part B) to support school owners who organise such education were transferred to the county municipality, cf. Chapter 10.1.

According to the *Education Act* section 3-12, students attending upper secondary education and training, who have a mother tongue other than Norwegian or Sami, have the right to adapted education in Norwegian until they are sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to attend the normal instruction offered. If necessary, such students are also entitled to mother tongue instruction, bilingual subject teaching, or both. A student, who has this right, has the right to a maximum of two years' additional upper secondary education and training if this is necessary for reaching the pupil's individual educational objectives. Before the county authority makes the decision to provide such additional education, an assessment shall be made of the needs of the pupil.

The municipality or the county authority⁷⁷ should map the skills that the pupils have in Norwegian before deciding to provide adapted language education. Such mapping shall also be conducted during the education period for pupils who receive adapted language education, to assess whether the pupil has become sufficiently skilled in Norwegian to follow the normal education offered.

For pupils who have recently arrived in Norway, the local authority may organise their education in separate groups, classes or schools. This applies to both primary, lower and upper secondary schools. If some or all the education is to take place in such an introductory group, class or school, this must be stipulated in the decision to provide adapted language education for the pupil. This decision may only be made if

⁷⁷ The municipalities are responsible for primary and lower secondary education, the county authorities for upper secondary education.

it is considered in the pupil's best interest. Education in a specially organised facility may last for up to two years. A decision may only be made for one year at a time. For this period, the teaching may deviate from the curriculum defined for the pupil in question to the extent it is required to provide for the needs of the pupil. Decisions pursuant to this section require the consent of the pupil or his/her parents or guardians.

The *Directorate of Education and Training* has prepared a guide to the regulations of introductory classes and schools, and a guide with advice on good practices regarding content and organisation of such schools and classes.

Learners with the right to adapted education in Norwegian are eligible for training based on the *Basic Norwegian for language minorities' subject curriculum*. This curriculum should be used until the learner has the necessary Norwegian skills to attend regular classes. Students in upper secondary school with the right to adapted language education, and with a shorter period of residence than six years by the expected time of graduation, can under certain conditions follow the *Subject curriculum in Norwegian for language minorities with short time of residence in Norway – upper secondary school*, and have their Norwegian exams from this curriculum. It is mandatory for all upper secondary schools to provide this curriculum for their students. Adults and external candidates can also follow this curriculum.

The Ministry of Education and Research is implementing a project of recruiting *Specialist Teachers* in different subjects and areas of specialisation in schools. Specialists in teaching minority languages is part of this project. These teachers are also to be responsible for contributing to improving the competence of colleagues.

Newly arrived students and the competence of teachers

In recent years, two policy areas concerning language-minority children have been given priority: (i) enhancing multicultural and second language competences among teachers and other staff, and (ii) improving education for newly arrived students.

Multicultural competence and multilingualism are topics included in the national regulations for teacher education. For several years, teaching Norwegian as a second language has been a part of the strategy for further education for teachers. Four teacher-training institutions provide relevant courses.

Schools are important arenas for social and cultural inclusion. Teaching resources to counter group-focused enmity are developed for use in the various teacher education programs

To support schools and newly arrived children, the website *Skolekassa.no* ("The School Box"), with teaching aids in seven languages, provides relevant bilingual tools for learning Norwegian, English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies at the primary and secondary level. Also available online are bilingual resources like *LEXIN* (a dictionary) and *Bildetema* (dictionary with pictures). The project *Flexible education* is organized by the *National Centre of Multicultural Education* (NAFO). *Flexible education* offers bilingual teaching online within mathematics and science for these languages: Arabic, Somali and Tigrinya.

There is a *Nordic network on newly arrived students in compulsory and upper secondary education*. The network consists of experts on a national, administrative level from relevant ministries and other relevant authorities in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland.

New policies and measures – Primary and secondary education

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has developed a new, digital tool for mapping Norwegian skills. In addition, they have developed a version that can be used to demonstrate how the mapping is done. This can be useful in teacher training, for municipalities and others.

From the autumn term of 2020, the project *Flexible education* became permanent. It will also be expanded with beginner training in the subject English. NAFO is also developing mapping tools in Mathematics, Science and English, in three languages. In addition, they are also developing a national guidance for bilingual teaching in primary, lower and upper secondary school.

According to the White Paper on *Early intervention and inclusive education in kindergartens, schools and out-of-school-hours care*,⁷⁸ there is a stated goal of increasing competence in Norwegian as a second language and to ensure the care of children and pupils with special language education. The *Ministry of Education and Research* asked the *Directorate of Education and Training* to consider various alternatives of how all kindergartens and schools can have sufficient access to competence in Norwegian as a second language. To follow up on their recommendation, the directorate will develop a set of resources to support the efforts in the ECEC to strengthen the skills of multilingual children in Norwegian and Sami.

The *Ministry of Education and Research* has explored the possibility of funding research on systematic testing of educational models for newly arrived students. A recent report from a feasibility study describes educational programs and interventions for newly arrived students and discusses the challenges and opportunities of investigating the effects of such programs.⁷⁹ To follow up on this study, the *Directorate of Education and Training* is looking into how the data on newly arrived students can be improved. The directorate has also called for proposals for in-depth studies of educational models for newly arrived students.

Another White Paper from the former Government on *The Completion of Education Reform – opening the door to the world and the future*, presents measures to increase the rate of students who complete upper secondary education.⁸⁰ One key measure is to remove the time limit on the right to upper secondary education and give all who start in upper secondary education the right to be educated until they achieve a vocational qualification or the *Higher Education Entrance Qualification*. Other measures include imposing an obligation on county authorities to offer intensive tuition to students who are in danger of failing a subject and to impose an obligation on county authorities to offer transitional arrangements for immigrant students with weak language skills and/or academic challenges.

⁷⁸ Cf. <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/meld.-st.-6-20192020/id2677025/> (English summary)

⁷⁹ <https://nifu.brage.unit.no/nifu-xmlui/handle/11250/2681661> (Only in Norwegian)

⁸⁰ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-21-20202021/id2840771/> (Only in Norwegian)

COVID-19 – Special measures

Due to the pandemic, national authorities have prepared regulations and guidance to ensure as many schools as possible remain open. This is particularly important for vulnerable children and young people, including children of some immigrant groups. During periods of closure or reduced opening in 2020 and 2021, the schools have been open for vulnerable children.

For 2021, NOK 4 mill. were granted for measures to ensure that students could catch up with lost schooling, for example, intensive training/acceleration education, more teachers, homework assistance. Immigrant children qualify for these measures. In addition, NOK 5 mill. were granted for extra summer school classes.

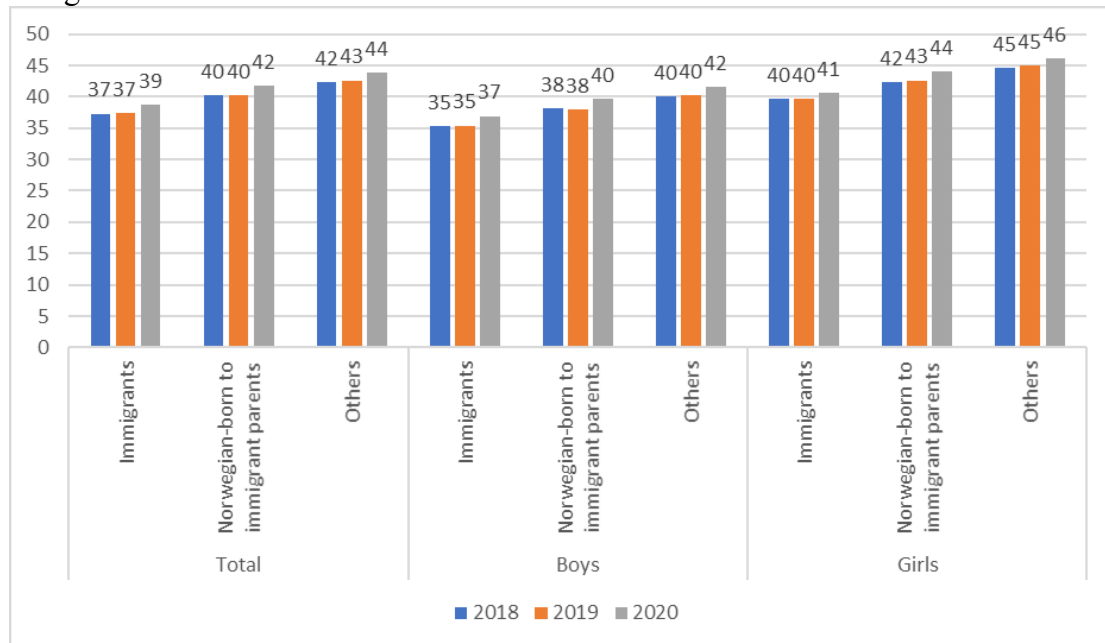
Goals for integration – Primary and secondary education

The pupil's grade points from lower secondary school are used to determine admission to upper secondary education. The highest possible score is 60 points. In 2020, only two average grade points separated descendants of immigrants born in Norway from non-immigrant students (other students). The average difference between immigrants and other students was larger, and there was a five points difference in the averages for these groups that year.

Fifteen per cent of immigrant pupils had not obtained lower secondary school grade points in 2020, as these are not determined for pupils who have achieved final marks in less than half of the subjects. For these students, admittance to upper secondary education may be based on an individual assessment. Among those who immigrated 0–2 years prior to completing lower secondary education, 40 per cent did not obtain school grade points. The share was 15 per cent for all immigrants, for descendants 7 per cent and 5 per cent for other lower secondary school graduates.

Girls, on average, achieved 4.4 more school grade points than boys did, cf. Chart 11.2. Norwegian-born girls with immigrant parents achieve more points from compulsory education than did boys without an immigrant background.

Chart 11.2 Average lower secondary school grade points, by immigration background and gender. 2018–2020



Source: Statistics Norway

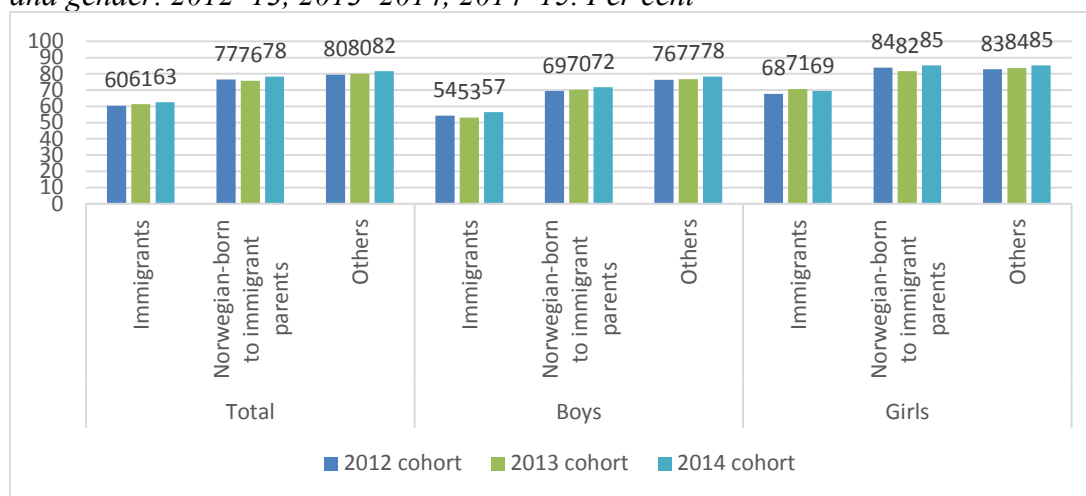
Indicator: The share of immigrants and descendants attaining general or vocational qualifications within five years after enrolling in an upper secondary school:

Of immigrants, who had completed lower secondary education in 2020, 96.2 per cent started in upper secondary education the same year. The proportion for descendants and others was 99.8 per cent.

Descendants have results somewhat closer than immigrants to students without an immigrant background in terms of completing secondary education within five (general programs) or six (vocational programs) years.

Only 63 per cent of immigrant students who started upper secondary education in 2014–2015 attained full general or vocational qualifications within five/six years, cf. Chart 11.3. This is a small increase of two percentage points from the previous school year. The corresponding numbers for descendants and other students were significantly higher. The proportion that attained full qualifications after five/six years was positively correlated with the length of time since immigration.

Chart 11.3 Share of students attaining general or vocational qualifications within five/six years after starting upper secondary education, by immigration background and gender. 2012–13, 2013–2014, 2014–15. Per cent

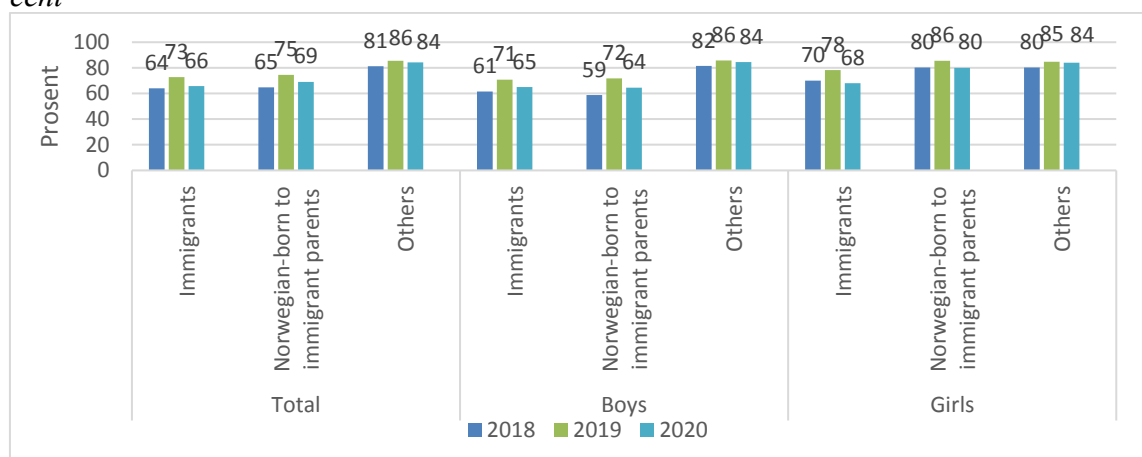


Source: Statistics Norway

Indicator: The share of immigrants and descendants with apprenticeship as their first choice who have received an apprenticeship contract.

In 2020, 19 700 applicants had apprenticeship as their first choice for upper secondary education. Of them 15 300 had received an approved apprenticeship or trainee contract before December 31st that year. This year, the share of immigrants and descendants who had an apprenticeship contract was lower than for other pupils, cf. Chart 11.4. The differences were small between descendants and for immigrants. There are large differences between boys with an immigrant background and other boys. The difference between immigrants and others was smaller among girls.

Chart 11.4 Share of immigrants and descendants with apprenticeship as their first choice, who had attained an approved apprenticeship contract. 2018–2020. Per cent⁸¹



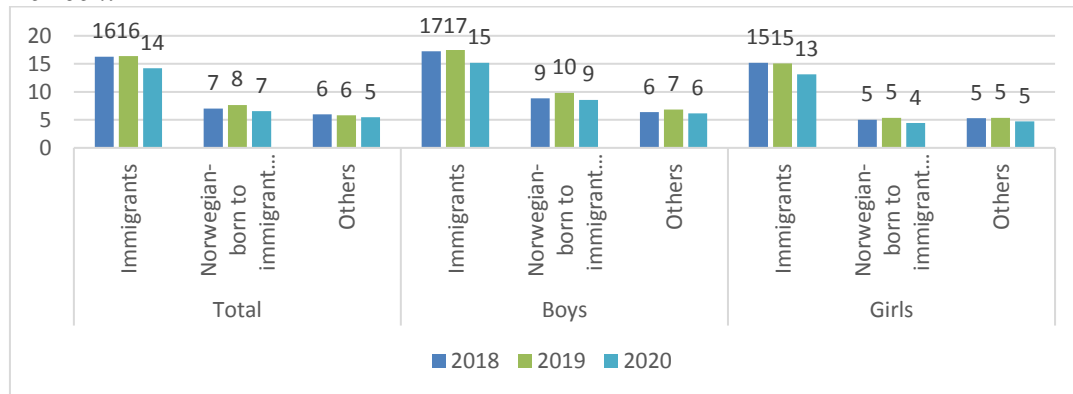
Source: Statistics Norway

⁸¹ Figures from 2019 are not comparable to those for earlier years. This is because of changes in the calculation of both applicant figures and contract figures. Applicants who have withdrawn their application or who did not respond to repeated requests from the counties are not included in the applicant figure. Previously all applicants with an apprenticeship place as their first priority were included.

Indicator: The share of immigrants and descendants aged 16 to 25, who neither are employed, nor in education or having successfully completed upper secondary education.

In 2020, 14 per cent of immigrants, aged 16 to 25, were not employed, in education, or had successfully completed upper secondary education, cf. Chart 11.5. Seven per cent of descendants and five per cent of others 16 to 25 years old were in this situation. Males with immigrant backgrounds had the highest proportion. The share of male immigrants aged 16 to 25 who were not employed, in education and had not successfully completed upper secondary education, has declined two percentage point since 2018.

Chart 11.5 Share of immigrants and descendants, aged 16 to 25, not employed, in education nor having successfully completed upper secondary education. 2018–2020. Per cent

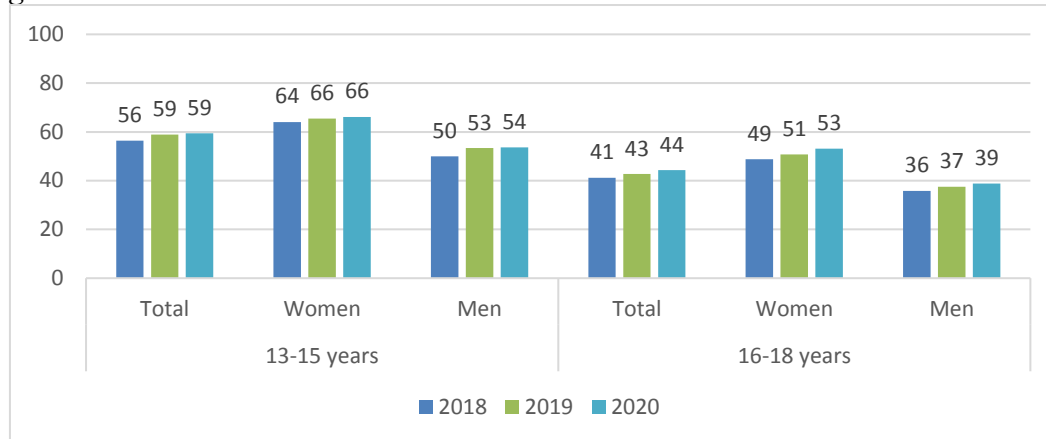


Source: Statistics Norway

Indicator: The share of immigrants aged 13 to 18 when arriving in Norway who have completed and passed upper secondary school at the age of 25-30.

Gender and age on arrival had a significant effect on the likelihood of successfully completing upper secondary education. Being female increased the chance of having completed such education successfully, while the chance declined with the age on arrival.

Chart 11.6 Share of immigrants aged 13 to 18 when arriving in Norway who had completed and passed upper secondary school at the age of 25–30, by age group and gender. 2018–2020. Per cent

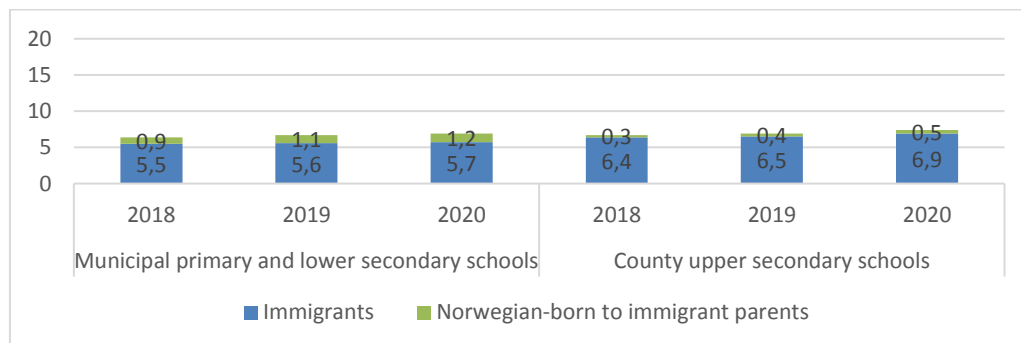


Source: Statistics Norway

Indicator: The share of immigrants and descendants among teaching staff in primary and secondary school.

In 2018 to 2020, the proportion of teaching staff with an immigrant background was slightly higher in upper secondary schools than in primary and lower secondary schools, cf. Chart 11.7. The proportion of teaching staff with an immigrant background in primary or lower and upper secondary schools has increased only marginally over the last three years.

Chart 11.7 Share of immigrants and descendants among teaching staff in primary and secondary school. 2018–2020. Per cent



Source: Statistics Norway

11.3 Adult education

Pursuant to Section 4A-1 of the *Education Act*, persons above compulsory schooling age who require primary and lower secondary education have the right to such education unless they have the right to upper secondary education and training pursuant to section 3-1. Students with a right to upper secondary school can be given more primary / lower secondary education if needed, see Chapter 11.2. Legal residence in Norway is a prerequisite for the right for adults to primary, lower and upper secondary education and training in Norway.

The right to education normally includes the subjects required for the certificate of completed primary and lower secondary education for adults. The teaching shall be adapted to individual needs.

Ongoing pilot schemes are testing flexible primary and secondary education possibilities for adults. By splitting the education into modules, the students may more easily combine primary and secondary education, and secondary vocational training, with work or other activities.

Pursuant to Section 4A-3 of the *Education Act*, adults above 24 years of age, who have completed primary and lower secondary school, but not upper secondary education and training or the equivalent, have the right to free upper secondary education and training. Persons with completed upper secondary education from abroad which is not recognised in Norway, have the right to a free upper secondary education, adapted to individual needs. Adults who have the right to upper secondary education and training have the right to an assessment of their formal, informal and non-formal competences and to a certificate showing the level of competence.

New policies and measures – Adult education

A White Paper from the former Government on *The Completion of Education Reform – opening the door to the world and the future*, presents measures to increase the rate of adult students who complete upper secondary education.⁸² One key measure is to arrange for adult education to be better adapted to the needs of mature students. The focus from the start should be on the desired final qualification and training must be designed and organised to achieve this. The intention is

- to ensure that modular training is the main model for all adult education
- to develop modular curricula with suitable competence aims for adults at the level below upper secondary school
- to introduce modular curricula in upper secondary school for training organised specifically for adults
- to consider changes to the *Education Act* to enable modules from upper secondary school to be taken concurrently with completing education at the level below
- to attempt to introduce rolling admission during the school year, so that adults do not need to wait until the next school year to start their education
- to propose amendments to the regulations governing financial support for education (through the *Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund*) so that the support is better adapted to modular training and changes in student rights.

COVID-19 – Special measures

In 2020 – 2021, several measures have been launched to counteract the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have been targeted towards adults who need to complete upper secondary education. There has also been a substantial increase in the number of study places in higher vocational education and in higher education. In addition, efforts have been made to increase the participation in training and education among unemployed and temporarily laid off workers, such as funding for digital training and programs in the most affected sectors of the labour market.

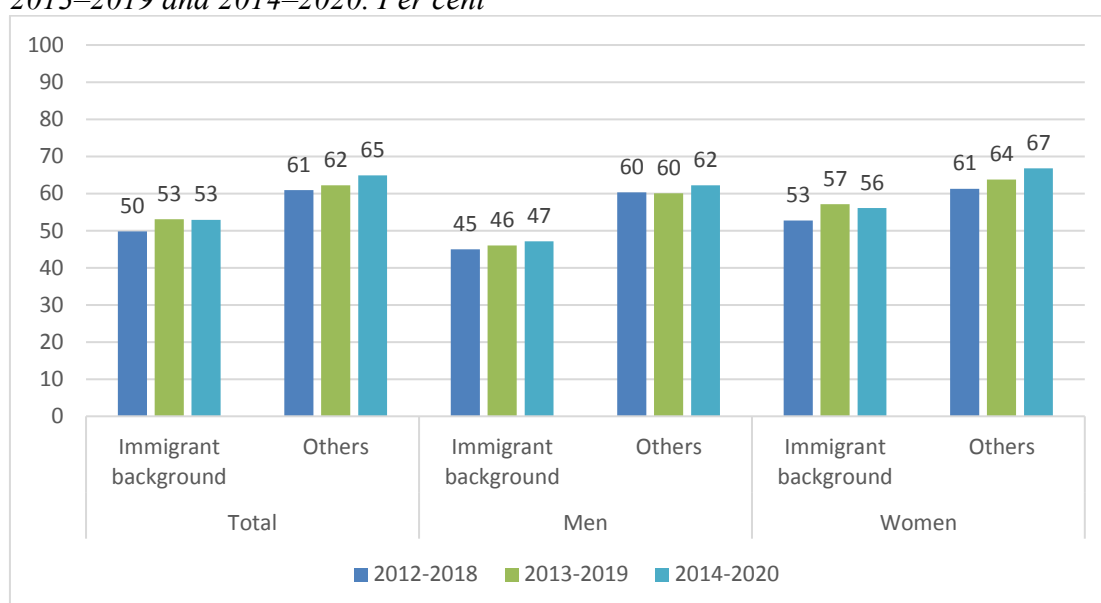
⁸² <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-21-20202021/id2840771/> (Only in Norwegian)

Goals for integration – Adult education

Indicator: The share of adults with an immigrant background, aged 25 and older, who have successfully completed upper secondary education within five/six years of enrolling.

In 2014-2015, 8 225 adults aged 25 and older, enrolled in upper secondary education. Of these, only 61 per cent had graduated successfully within five/six years. Compared to other adults, a significantly lower proportion of the adults with an immigrant background successfully graduated from upper secondary education, cf. Chart 11.8. The share of women, who complete upper secondary education within five years, was higher than that of men.

Chart 11.8 Share of adults with an immigrant background, aged 25 and older who completed upper secondary education within five/six years of enrolling. 2012–2018, 2013–2019 and 2014–2020. Per cent



Source: Statistics Norway

11.4 Higher education

The participation of immigrants and their descendants in higher education is generally seen as a quite reliable indicator for integration in society⁸³.

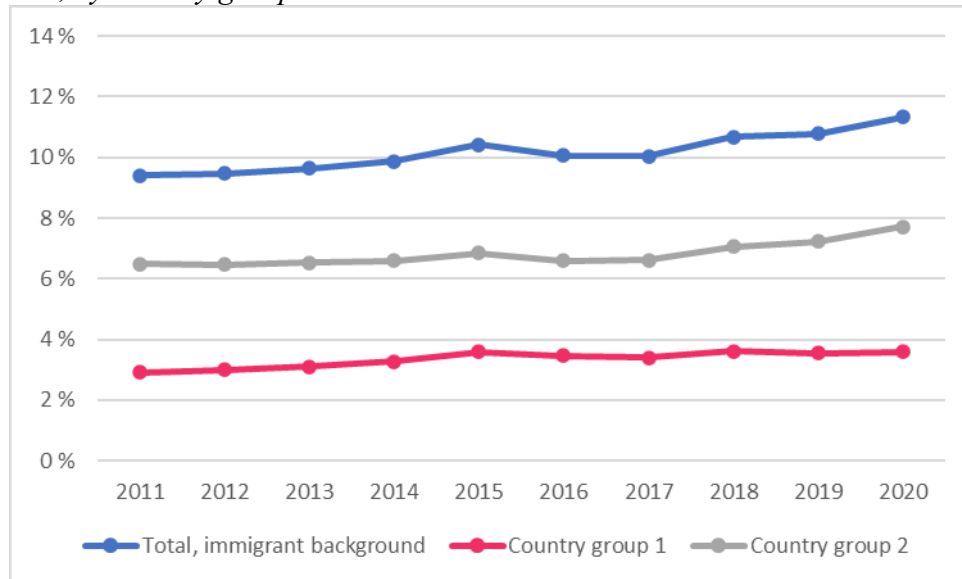
In 2020, 33 152 students with an immigrant background were enrolled in Norwegian higher education. This is nearly 3 000 more than in 2019 – an increase of more than nine per cent.⁸⁴ The percentage increase from 2019 to 2020 regarding the number of students with an immigrant background, has thus been more than twice as large as the increase in the student population in total. However, the increase is not large enough for the proportion of immigrants in the student population to increase significantly.

⁸³ See OECD (2016): *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015. Settling in*. OECD Publishing.

⁸⁴ [DIKU \(2021\) *Tilstandsrapport for høyere utdanning 2021 \(07/2021\) \(In Norwegian only\)*](#)

As Chart 11.8 illustrates, students with an immigrant background⁸⁵ accounted for 11 per cent of the students enrolled in higher education in 2020. This number has been relatively stable over the last few years. In a longer perspective, however, there has been a significant growth in the proportion of students with an immigrant background; from a total of six per cent in 2003 to 11 per cent in 2020⁸⁶. During the last three years, there has been a small increase in the proportion of immigrants with a background from Asia, Africa, Latin America etc. (country group 2) enrolled in higher education.

Chart 11.9 Share of students with immigrant background enrolled in higher education, by country group⁸⁷. 2011–2020. Per cent.



Sources: Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (DIKU), Statistics Norway

Participation in higher education varies considerably among different groups in the population. Table 11.1 shows that among persons aged 19 to 34, those who have immigrated to Norway are enrolled in higher education to a by far lesser extent than those with no immigrant background. However, the opposite is the case for descendants of immigrants: their share in higher education is significantly higher compared to the population with no immigrant background.

Table 11.1 Number and share of students, age 19–34 enrolled in higher education, by immigrant background and gender. 2020. Per cent

	Total		Immigrants		Descendants of immigrants		No immigrant background	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Number	100 612	140 129	10 330	14 048	5 586	6 923	84 696	119 158
Share	17.1	25.1	9.5	13.4	27.9	37.1	18.4	27.4

Source: Statistics Norway

⁸⁵ Immigrants are here defined as persons born outside Norway by two foreign-born parents and four foreign-born grandparents.

⁸⁶ [DIKU \(2021\) Tilstandsrapport for høyere utdanning 2021 \(07/2021\) \(In Norwegian only\)](#)

⁸⁷ Country group 1: EU/EFTA, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand. Country group 2: Asia, Africa, Latin-America, Oceania without Australia and New Zealand and Europe without EU/EFTA.

The high proportion of descendants entering and completing higher education indicate a significant degree of integration. The lower rate of immigrants taking higher education, may be attributed to limited mastering of the language skills that are required for studying, mature age at the time of arrival, as well as to the fact that some in this category have already completed higher education in their country of origin.

The majority of immigrants and descendants enrolled in higher education are women, as is the case for the rest of the population. Descendants of immigrants tend to enter higher education earlier than the general student population, resulting in a lower age average for students with an immigrant background⁸⁸.

As Table 11.2 illustrates, immigrants and descendants of immigrants are unevenly represented among disciplines and fields of study in higher education, though a general trend is that both groups are inclined to choose programmes which lead to prestigious professions. Students with an immigrant background are highly represented in pharmacy, medicine and dentistry, both for male and female students.

Students with an immigrant background are underrepresented in all types of teacher education. It is a goal that the teaching profession should mirror the general population with respect to the proportion with immigrant background, and the teacher education institutions have targeted efforts to recruit persons with an immigrant background. An interesting feature is that immigrants constitute a larger share of teacher students than descendants of immigrants do, as opposed to what is the case for higher education in general. As outlined above, descendants of immigrants that are academically successful, are more inclined to choose education programs in pharmacy, odontology and medicine than teacher education.

Table 11.2 Students enrolled in higher education, by immigrant background, discipline and gender. 2020. Percentage of all students

	In total	Immigrants	Descendants of immigrants	No immigrant background
	Number	Per cent		
Men				
3-year bachelor programs:	56 140	11.7	5.7	82.7
Kindergarten teacher education	1 545	13.5	5	81.6
Vocational teacher education	774	6.7	3	90.3
Engineering	9 073	14.1	5.9	80
Nurse education	2 233	23.8	2.8	73.4
Business and administration	15 066	10.2	6.9	82.9
4-year bachelor programs:	495	4.2	1.6	94.1
Primary and secondary teacher education	128	3.9	1.6	94.5
5-year master programs:	32 632	11.2	3.9	84.9
Master's in law	1 865	2.7	5.1	92.1
Master's in pharmacy	136	41.9	19.1	39
Master in dentistry	188	26.6	14.4	59
Master's in technology/engineering	1 664	8.4	6.4	85.2
Master's in primary and lower secondary school teacher education	7 118	11.9	5.1	83

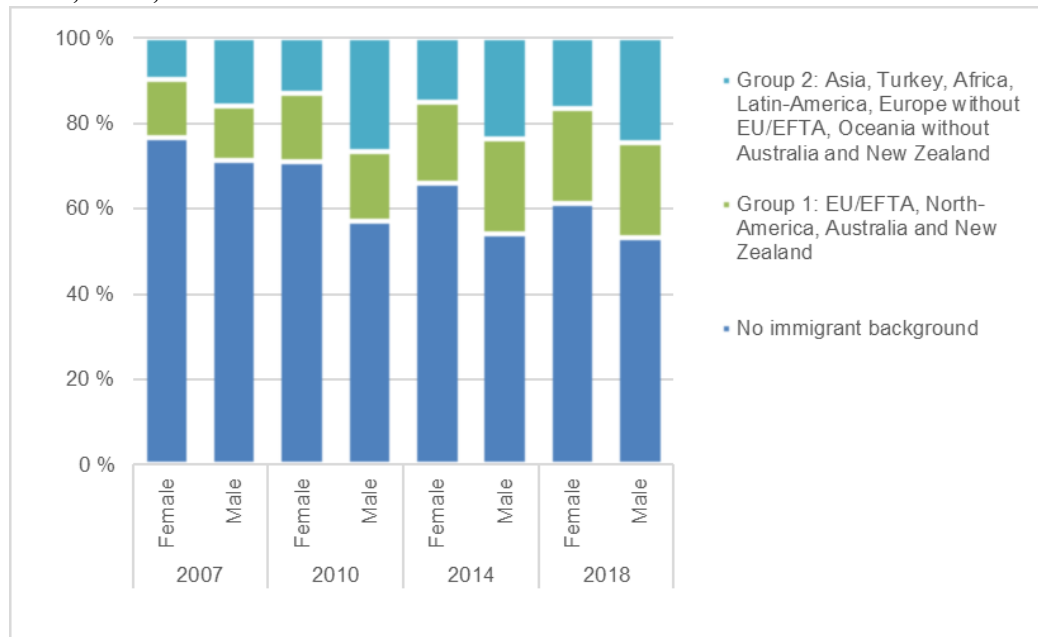
⁸⁸ Salvanes, K.V., J.B. Grøgaard, P.O. Aamodt, B. Lødding, E. Hovdhaugen (2015): *Overganger og gjennomføring i de studieforbereende programmene*, NIFU report 13/2015. Oslo: NIFU <https://nifu.brage.unit.no/nifu-xmliui/handle/11250/284658> (In Norwegian only)

Master's in secondary school teacher education	2 135	4.6	3.8	91.6
6-year programs of professional studies:	1 878	8.9	6	85
Medicine	1 221	10.6	7.9	81.5
Theology	110	8.2	0.9	90.9
Psychology	484	5.2	3.1	91.7
Veterinary Science	63	7.9	0	92.1
Women				
3-year bachelor programs:	75 594	12.2	4.9	82.9
Kindergarten teacher education	7 107	12.8	4.1	83.1
Vocational teacher education	740	10.9	3.4	85.7
Engineering	2 271	18.1	7	74.9
Nurse education	13 242	11.7	3	85.3
Business and administration	14 155	11.9	5.4	82.7
4-year programs:	638	7.4	2.8	89.8
Primary and secondary teacher education	357	5.3	3.9	90.8
5-year master programs:	44 747	10.8	3.5	85.7
Master's in law	3 556	5.1	4.9	90
Master's in pharmacy	433	33.7	21.9	44.3
Master's in dentistry	569	20.4	15.3	64.3
Master's in technology/engineering	1 050	10.1	5.7	84.2
Master's in primary and lower secondary school teacher education	3 392	10.9	4.9	84.2
Master's in secondary school teacher education	7 220	3.7	2.9	93.4
6-year programs of professional studies:	5 057	6.9	5.6	87.5
Medicine	2 969	7.5	7.6	84.9
Theology	98	11.2	1	87.8
Psychology	1 623	5.2	3.3	91.4
Veterinary	367	7.9	0.5	91.6

Source: Statistics Norway

As outlined above, immigrants are underrepresented in higher education. However, when it comes to PhD positions, immigrants are overrepresented. As Chart 11.9 shows, over 40 per cent of the PhD positions in 2018 were held by immigrants. The share of PhD fellows with an immigrant background has increased throughout the last decade, from 26 per cent in 2007 to 42 per cent in 2018. The high proportion of immigrants in PhD positions is quite natural as these recruitment positions are part of an international labour market.

Chart 11.10 Percentage distribution of PhD fellows by region and gender 2007, 2010, 2014, 2018



Source: Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education, Statistics Norway

It is important to note that these numbers include both immigrants and descendants of immigrants, as there are no exact numbers available on descendants of immigrants holding a PhD position. This is mainly because the number of descendants is too low to be presented as a separate group. However, we know that the total number of descendants of immigrants holding a tenure-track position (PhD, postdoctoral fellow and researcher) was as low as 150 in the same year⁸⁹. The total number of PhD positions was 6 453 in 2018, demonstrating that descendants of immigrants held less than two per cent of the PhD positions. It is thus clear that while immigrants are underrepresented in higher education and overrepresented in PhD positions, the opposite is the case for descendants of immigrants.

⁸⁹ Gunnes, H., Steine, F. S. (2020) *Mangfoldstatistikk: Stor vekst i antall forskere med innvandrerbakgrunn i norsk akademia*. NIFU Innsikt (17/2020). [NIFU Open Access Archive: Mangfoldstatistikk: Stor vekst i antall forskere med innvandrerbakgrunn i norsk akademia \(unit.no\)](https://nifu.unit.no/nifu-oppsett/2020/17/mangfoldstatistikk-stor-vekst-i-antall-forskere-med-innvandrerbakgrunn-i-norsk-akademia) (Only in Norwegian)

12 The labour market

12.1 Labour Market and Social Policies

The viability of the Norwegian welfare state depends on high rates of employment for both men and women. Participating in the labour market is important for the individual immigrant as well as for the Norwegian economy and society as a whole. This is reflected in Norwegian labour market and social policies.

The responsibility for labour market and social policies rests with the *Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion*. The *Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration* (NAV) is the agency mainly responsible for the implementation of these policies. The NAV-office in each municipality provides most of the main social security benefits and services available to residents in Norway, including not only unemployment-related benefits and job-search services, but also social assistance, disability insurance, various forms of health-related benefits, as well as public old-age pensions and benefits for families. The ambition of NAV is to strengthen employment-oriented activities and follow-up tailored to individual needs.

NAV-offices provide social services, but each municipality is responsible for assessing the need for social assistance, which usually is provided in the form of financial assistance. Such assistance is intended to secure a person's income to cover his or her basic subsistence costs temporarily. The aim is to help persons to become financially independent as soon as possible. Many non-labour immigrants, who have poor Norwegian language skills, face great difficulties finding a job. Compared to the rest of the population, there is a higher proportion of immigrants who receive some form of social assistance, especially among those with a refugee background.

NAV offers services for immigrants as part of the services offered to all registered job seekers and the vocationally disabled. Immigrants from non-EU/EFTA member countries are given priority for access to *active labour market programs* (ALMP), like those given to members of other potentially disadvantaged groups.

New policies and measures – Labour market and social policy

In 2020, the opportunity for adults to complete upper secondary school was strengthened and the *County Municipalities* were given extra resources to adjust and expand the support for attending upper secondary education. In addition, the possibility to combine training and education with unemployment benefits has been eased. This combination had earlier been strictly regulated. At first, a temporary scheme was introduced in April 2020. As of October 2021, the temporary scheme was replaced by a permanent set of rules.

An amendment to the *Social Services Act* entered into force from January 2021. The aim of the amendment is to help immigrants achieve a higher level of Norwegian language skills, by setting language training as a condition for receiving financial assistance. Language skills are essential to become a part of the Norwegian society and working life, and municipalities should therefore have an obligation to address this need.

The new *Integration Act* from 2021, cf. Chapter 9.1, is expected to have a significant impact on NAV and the cooperation between NAV and other actors in the field of integration.

12.2 Working-life and wages

There is no statutory minimum wage in Norway, but collective wage agreements normally include a minimum pay rate. Collective agreements cover approximately 70 per cent of all employees, with around 50 per cent coverage in the private sector and 100 per cent in the public sector. Many companies that are not party to an agreement will to a certain extent follow the negotiated wages for their sector. In addition, general application of parts of the wage agreements in certain sectors, primarily the minimum wage levels, affects all employees who work within the scope of the relevant agreement. It has been estimated that about ten per cent of employees in the private sector work in companies without a collective agreement that are covered by the decision on general application of collective agreements.⁹⁰

Regulations that require the general application of a collective agreement for an entire occupation or industry is one instrument used to combat social dumping in Norway. This entails that at least some minimum wages, benefits or working conditions in the relevant collective agreement are made legally binding for all employers and their employees in the industry and/or for the occupations covered, without regard to whether they are members of an employers' organisation or a trade union. The regulations may be applied in the entire country or in defined regions. The regulations also apply to foreign workers sent to work in Norway by a foreign employer.

The legislation on the general application of collective agreements is meant to guarantee that foreign workers receive wages and working conditions equivalent to those of Norwegian workers and to prevent competition based on foreign workers being given wages or working conditions that are unacceptable in the Norwegian labour market.

The decision to invoke these regulations requires documentation that foreign workers are, or can be, subjected to wages or working conditions that are inferior to those stipulated in relevant national wage agreements or which otherwise prevail in a given region for the relevant occupations or industry.

General application of the relevant parts of collective agreements has been introduced in the following industries: construction, shipbuilding, agriculture, cleaning, hotel and restaurant, seafood processing industries, electrical work, trucking and passenger transport by tour bus.⁹¹

New policies and measures – Working life and wages

The *Strategy to combat work-related crime* was launched in 2015 and most recently revised and updated in February 2021. The measures will be worked out through dialogue with the social partners.

⁹⁰ Alsos, K., Nergaard, K. & Svarstad, E. (2021). Arbeidsgiverorganisering og tariffavtaler. Fafo-rapport 2021: 7. [English summary \(faf.no\)](https://www.faf.no/rapporter/2021/7-english-summary)

⁹¹ About the *General application of collective agreements* see more from the website of *The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority*: <https://www.arbeidstilsynet.no/en/working-conditions/pay-and-minimum-rates-of-pay/minimum-wage/>

The new Government will strengthen efforts to counter social dumping and low-wage competition. A new action plan to combat social dumping, work-related crime and undeclared work will be worked out.

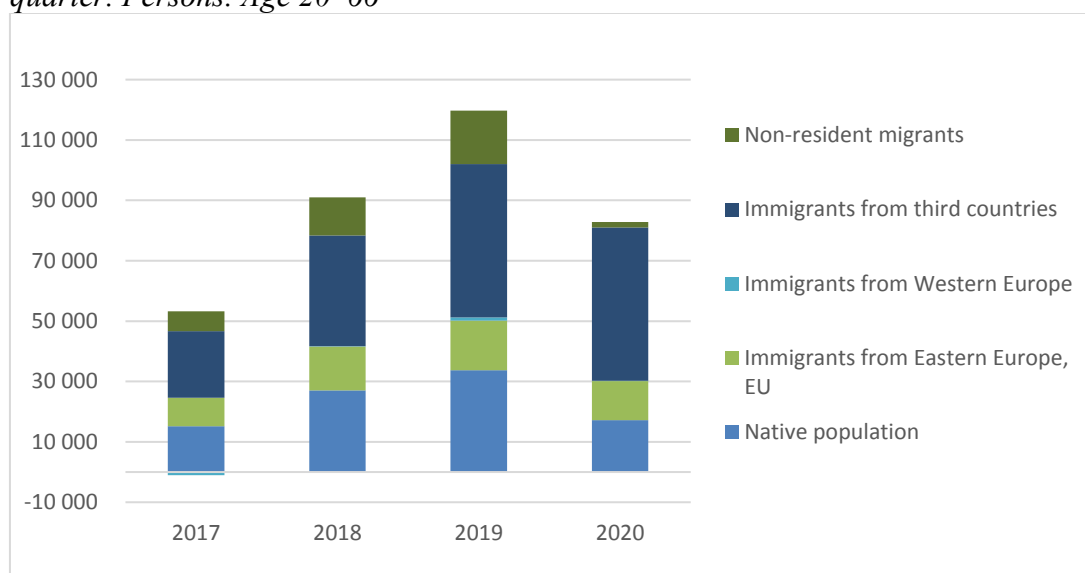
The *Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority* has relaunched the campaign *Know your rights*, targeting migrant workers. The information campaign was originally launched in September 2020 but was paused in the first half of 2021 due to the pandemic. The campaign has been implemented in cooperation with labour inspection authorities in Estonia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Romania, and supported by grants from EEA and Norway.⁹² Norway will follow up efforts to strengthen cross-border cooperation on labour related issues through participation in the new *European Labour Authority*.⁹³

12.3 Employment

Labour migration has had a significant impact on the Norwegian labour market during the past 15–20 years, mainly due to the enlargement of the EU followed by a long period of strong demand for labour in Norway. The economic slowdowns in 2008/2009 and in 2014 did lead to lower labour migration to Norway and to lower employment among immigrants than in the years before and after. Similarly, labour immigration and employment have fallen during the pandemic.

Chart 12.1 shows the importance of immigrants for employment growth during the economic upturn from late 2016 until 2019. The number of native workers increased during the economic upturn, especially in 2018 and 2019. Nevertheless, immigrants, particularly from third countries and non-resident workers, accounted for much of the employment growth in Norway during that period. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the employment declined both among natives and among immigrants, especially non-resident workers.

Chart 12.1 Accumulated employment growth 2017-2020 by population group, fourth quarter. Persons. Age 20–66



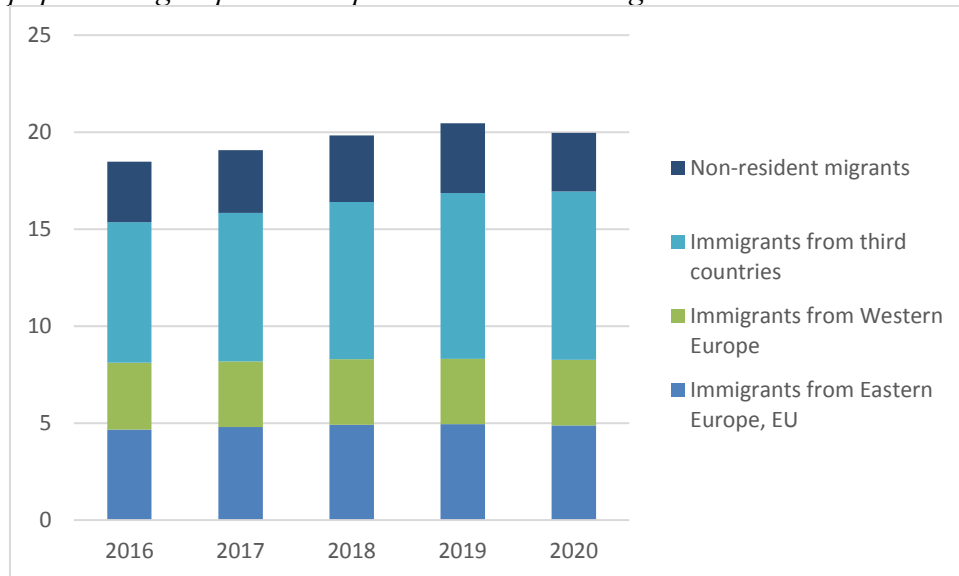
Source: Statistics Norway

⁹² <https://www.arbeidstilsynet.no/en/knowyourrights/>

⁹³ [Strategi mot arbeidslivskriminalitet \(2021–\) - regjeringen.no](https://www.regjeringen.no) (Only in Norwegian)

The share of immigrants and persons on short-term stay in the total employment did increase from roughly 13 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2009 to 20 per cent in 2020. The growth in immigrants' share of the total employment in this period has been mainly due to immigration from EU-member countries in Central and Eastern Europe. There has also been a noticeable rise in the share of persons from outside the EU in the Norwegian labour force.

Chart 12.2 Share of immigrants and non-resident migrants employed in Norway, by population group. Fourth quarter 2016–2020. Age 20–66



Source: Statistics Norway

Table 12.1 shows that the employment rate in 2020 for immigrants (65.4 per cent) was much lower than for the non-immigrant population (78.1 per cent), with important differences between immigrants from different parts of the world. Except immigrants from the Nordic countries, all the categories of immigrants listed in Table 12.1 by region had a lower employment rate in 2020 than the native population. Especially immigrants from Africa and Asia had a lower employment rate, partly because there are few labour migrants among them. The difference between immigrants and the native population, measured in percentage points, is also larger for women than men, especially for women from Africa. Table 12.1 shows only the employment rates for some broad population groups and the numbers have not been adjusted for important factors such as different rates by country of birth, educational attainment, age and language skills in Norwegian.

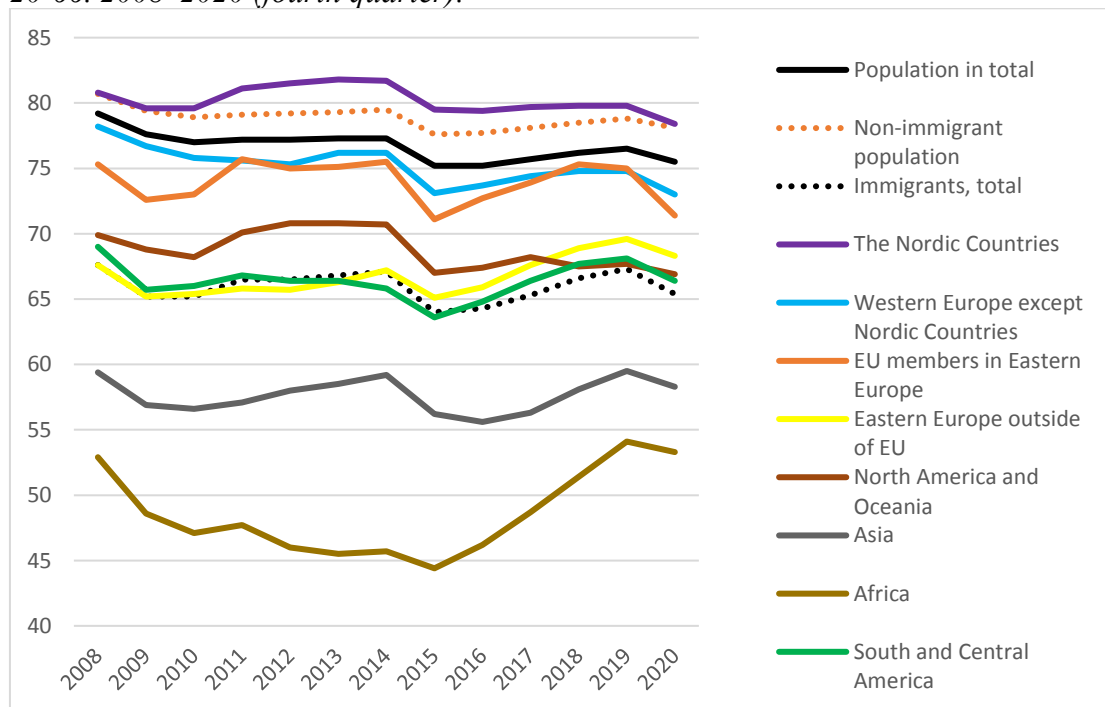
Table 12.1 Rates of registered employment, in groups defined by gender and region of birth, age 20–66. 2020 (fourth quarter)

Region of origin	Total	Men	Women
Total population	75.5	77.6	73.4
Population excluding immigrants	78.1	79.9	76.3
Immigrants, total	65.4	68.7	61.8
Immigrants by region:			
Nordic countries	78.4	79.3	77.4
Rest of Western Europe	73.0	75.2	70.0
EU member states in Eastern Europe	71.4	72.2	70.2
Eastern Europe outside the EU	68.3	70.8	66.4
North America, Oceania	66.9	70.4	63.0
Asia	58.3	62.7	54.5
Africa	53.3	59.0	46.6
South and Central America	66.4	71.5	63.0

Source: Statistics Norway

The employment rate was relatively high for all groups in 2008. In the following years the employment rate dropped, mostly due to business cycle developments in the Norwegian economy. The economic upswing from late 2016 led to a growth in the employment rate, both among immigrants and among natives. The employment rate among immigrants from Africa showed a particularly strong increase. As in other countries, the pandemic has had a major impact on the Norwegian economy and labour market. This led to a considerable fall in employment. Some occupations and industries have been strongly affected. Immigrants are overrepresented in these industries and was therefore particularly exposed to loss of work in 2020.

Chart 12.3 Rates of registered employment, in groups defined by region of birth, age 20-66. 2008–2020 (fourth quarter).



Source: Statistics Norway

Immigrants from countries in Europe and America are largely labour migrants, some with families, while immigrants and their families from countries in Africa and Asia mainly have a refugee background and participate in the *Introduction Program* during their first years in the country, cf. Chapter 10.1. Educational attainment, relevant language skills and age composition also differ between groups defined by region of origin. These differences, which are not adjusted for in Table 12.1 and Chart 12.3, explain some of the differences in employment rates among the groups.

Norwegian-born to immigrant parents

The population of persons born in Norway with two immigrant parents is still relatively small and young. Most of them have not yet completed post-secondary or higher education.

In total, and divided in different age groups, the employment rate for persons born in Norway with immigrant parents is higher than for the immigrants, but still lower than for the native population in the same age group. The employment rate for Norwegian born children of immigrant parents was 70 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2020.

Studies show that Norwegian born children of immigrants use more time to complete post-secondary education and that the share who participate in education is higher than among natives, cf. Chapter 11. Both factors reduce their employment rate level.⁹⁴

Table 12.2 Employment rates for all adults 20–66 years, for natives, for Norwegian-born persons with immigrant parents and for immigrants. By age group and region of origin (for immigrants). Fourth quarter 2020. Per cent

	20-66 years	20-24 years	25-39 years	40-54 years	55-66 years
Population in total	75.5	63.5	79.0	81.6	67.2
No immigrant background	78.2	65.5	83.5	84.8	68.9
Norwegian-born to immigrant parents	70.0	61.1	74.8	76.5	68.9
Immigrants, total	65.4	51.6	66.9	70.1	55.0
Immigrants by region or origin					
The Nordic countries	78.4	53.9	79.0	84.2	71.6
Western Europe else	73.0	36.5	73.4	81.2	70.0
EU member countries in Central and Eastern Europe	71.4	57.7	70.8	76.0	63.5
Eastern Europe else	68.3	59.5	73.6	71.7	50.0
North America and Oceania	66.9	31.6	66.3	74.0	63.9
Asia	58.3	52.4	61.7	61.7	42.9
Africa	53.3	50.2	54.7	56.5	40.0
South- and Central America	66.4	49.5	68.8	70.1	57.4

Source: Statistics Norway

12.4 Unemployment

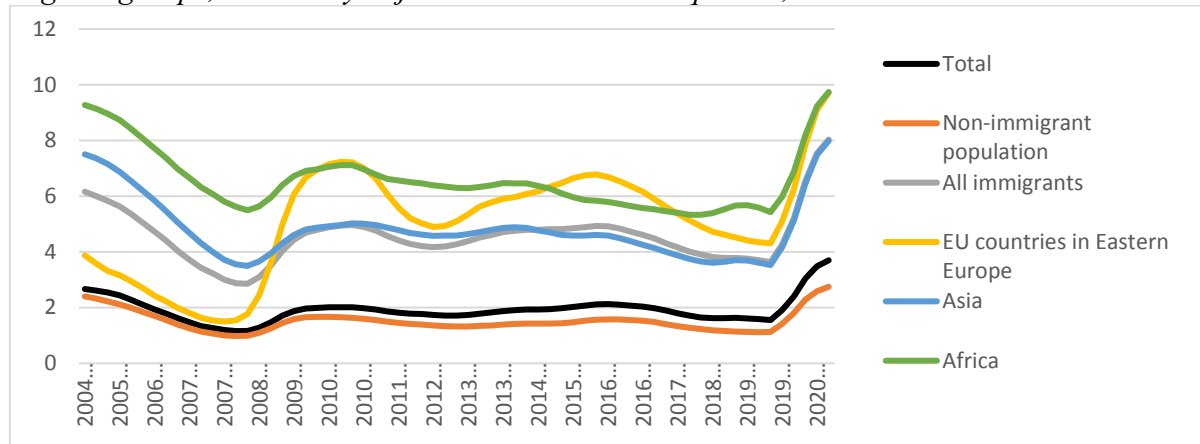
The COVID-19 pandemic, and the following restrictions, led to a dramatic increase in the registered unemployment rate of the population, both among resident immigrants and among the native population. Much of the increased unemployment was caused by temporary layoffs. The increase in percentage points from 2019 to 2020, was larger among immigrants, but the relative change was somewhat larger among natives. The unemployment rate (in per cent of the population) was still approximately

⁹⁴ Statistics Norway. <https://www.ssb.no/en/statbank/list/vgogjen/> and Olsen (2018), *Young people with immigrant background in employment and education 2016*, cf. Chapter 19.

three times higher for immigrants than for the native population at the end of 2020, cf. Table 12.3 and Chart 12.4.

During the economic upswing from 2016, immigrants experienced a larger drop in the unemployment rate than natives. As Chart 12.4 indicates, immigrants from EU-member states in Central and Eastern Europe were particularly affected by the economic slowdown in 2008/2009 and the oil price shock in 2014, as many were employed in sectors particularly affected by economic slowdowns.

Chart 12.4 Registered unemployment rates (in per cent of population) for selected immigrant groups, seasonally adjusted trend.⁹⁵ Fourth quarter, 2004 – 2020.



Source: Statistics Norway, register-based statistics and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

In 2020 (fourth quarter), immigrants participated in labour market programs at a higher rate than the rest of the population, see Table 12.3. More than 10 000 persons participated in active labour market programs (ALMP) in the fourth quarter of 2020 in Norway, 48 per cent of whom were immigrants. Immigrants in active labour market programs represented 0.7 per cent of the resident population in the fourth quarter of 2020. This share was the 0.2 per cent for the population of non-immigrants.

⁹⁵ The pandemic has led to a major effect for 2020 on the time series. This results in a greater uncertainty when determining the seasonal pattern.

Table 12.3 Registered unemployment and participation in ALMP-programs, by region of origin. Fourth quarter 2020 and change from fourth quarter 2019

	Number of persons fourth quarter 2020		Per cent of resident population		Change (per cent) 2019-2020	
	Unem- ployment	ALMP	Unemploy- ment rate	ALMP	Unem- ployment	ALMP
Total	122 224	10 605	3.0	0.3	87.9	-5.8
Non-immigrant population	75 329	5 804	2.3	0.2	93.4	-6.7
All immigrants	46 895	4 801	6.5	0.7	79.6	-4.7
The Nordic countries	2 236	118	3.7	0.2	112.3	5.4
Western Europe else	3 004	182	4.4	0.3	120.7	-2.2
EU member countries in Central and Eastern Europe	13 920	618	7.6	0.3	86.5	-1.4
Eastern Europe else	3 504	415	5.8	0.7	64.3	2.7
North America and Oceania	402	27	3.3	0.2	111.6	22.7
Asia	14 574	2 099	6.6	0.9	79.3	-3.8
Africa	7 728	1 143	8.6	1.3	55.6	-15.1
South- and Central America	1 527	199	6.6	0.9	86.7	27.6

Source: Statistics Norway

13 Political participation in elections

13.1 Legislation and policy

Norwegian citizenship is a precondition for voting in *national* elections. To be eligible to vote in *local* elections a foreign citizen must have lived in Norway continuously for at least three years. This right for foreigners was introduced in 1983. Citizens from the Nordic countries need only to have been registered as a resident in Norway since June 30 in the year of the election, which always takes place in September every fourth year.

High electoral turnout is important in a representative democracy. Traditionally, the turnout among persons with an immigrant background has been significantly lower than for others, particularly in local elections among immigrant voters without Norwegian citizenship. The electoral turnout has been somewhat higher for naturalised Norwegians with an immigrant background. Over the years, there have been several publicly funded campaigns to increase the turnout.

13.2 Local elections

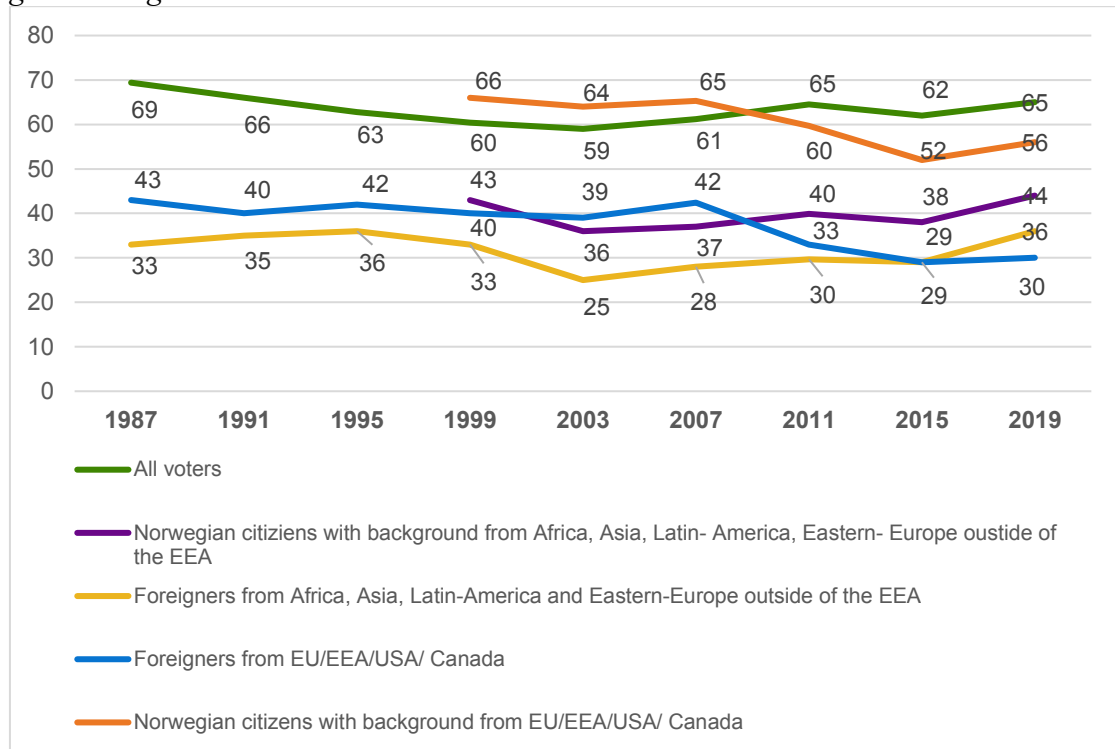
As Chart 13.1 shows, the participation rates among different immigrant groups have changed over time. For immigrants from Africa, Asia, and Latin America and from countries in Eastern Europe outside the EU, there have been an increase in the participation rates since 2003. For naturalised citizens and for foreigners from EU/EFTA-member countries and North America, the participation rates declined sharply from 2007. The main reason is probably the very low participation rates among labour immigrants from the new EU member states. Only around seven per cent of male citizens of EU member countries in Central and Eastern Europe with voting rights used this right in 2019, which was two percentage points higher than four years earlier.⁹⁶

Nine percent of those who were entitled to vote in the last election were foreign citizens, while one percent of the municipal council representatives are foreigners.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ <https://www.ssb.no/valg/artikler-og-publikasjoner/langt-flere-unge-stemte-i-arets-lokalvalg> (Only in Norwegian)

⁹⁷ <https://www.ssb.no/valg/artikler-og-publikasjoner/ny-kvinnerekord-blant-ordforeme>

Chart 13.1 Participation in local elections – all voters and voters with different immigrant backgrounds. 1987–2019. Per cent



Source: Statistics Norway

During the local elections in 2019, 65 per cent of all electors voted, which was three percentage points higher than in the previous local elections.⁹⁸ The participation rate for naturalised immigrants was 45 per cent and it was only 31 per cent for all foreigners with the right to vote. As Chart 13.1 shows, there was a significant increase for all categories of Norwegian citizens with an immigrant background and for foreigners with voting rights, except for foreigners from EU-countries or from North America.

In connection with the local elections in 2019, the *Directorate of Integration and Diversity* was commissioned to promote increased voter turnout among persons with an immigrant background. This task was undertaken in cooperation with the *Norwegian Directorate of Elections*, which has the operational responsibility for the election operations and information about elections to the public.

In the 2019 elections, there were almost 390 000 foreign nationals and 293 500 Norwegian citizens with an immigrant background who had the right to vote in the local elections. The increase in the number of voters with an immigrant background was almost 26 per cent from the election in 2015, while the increase in the number of foreign eligible voters was 25 per cent.

The largest group of *eligible voters* came from EU-countries in Central and Eastern Europe, followed by voters from the Nordic countries, the rest of Western Europe, Asia including Turkey, and voters from African countries.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ <http://ssb.no/en/valg/statistikker/kommvalg/hvert-4-aar-hovedtall/2015-11-09>

⁹⁹ See <https://www.ssb.no/en/valg/statistikker/stemmerettkomm> for details on eligible voters with an immigrant background in the 2019-elections

Five per cent of the *candidates* for the local elections were immigrants. Compared to the local elections in 2015, there is an increase of less than one percentage point. The number of Norwegian-born with immigrant parents among the candidates increased from 133 candidates in 2015 to 203 in 2019, an increase of 53 per cent. The candidates with an immigrant background come from many different countries, mostly in Europe, Africa or Asia. The largest number came from Sweden.¹⁰⁰

Altogether, 9 344 persons were elected to the municipal and county councils nationwide. Of this group, only 281 (three per cent) had an immigrant background. This includes the municipal council representatives who are either immigrants or Norwegian born with immigrant parents. Forty per cent had their background from EU-countries or North America.¹⁰¹ This share is only slightly higher than after the election in 2015. In addition, nearly three per cent of the representatives were born in Norway and had either a foreign-born mother or father. In municipalities where there is a relatively high share of the population with an immigrant background, the proportion with an immigrant background in the municipal council is also higher.¹⁰²

13.3 National elections

One of the requirements for voting in the national elections in Norway is Norwegian citizenship. This means that foreign citizens do not have the right to vote in national elections even if they reside in Norway. However, from January 2020, dual citizenship is allowed upon application in Norway. This means that foreign residents can apply for Norwegian citizenship without having to waive their first citizenship, cf. Chapter 16.

This has already had an impact on the number of eligible voters in Norway, as more immigrants have become Norwegian citizens with national voting rights.¹⁰³ The most recent national election was held in September 2021. In this election, 345 000 of the eligible voters had an immigrant background, 70 000 more than in the previous national election.¹⁰⁴

In 2021, the participation among naturalised immigrants was only 50 per cent, five percentage points lower than in 2017. In comparison, the participation rate was approximately 80 per cent among Norwegians without an immigrant background both in 2017 and in 2021.

Among naturalised immigrants from Europe, participation decreased from 56 percent in 2017 to 54 percent in 2021. Among those from African countries of origin, participation decreased from 56 in 2017 to 47 percent in 2021, and among those from Asia, it decreased from 54 to 49 percent. Cf. Chart 13.2.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.ssb.no/valg/artikler-og-publikasjoner/4-av-10-kandidater-til-kommunevalget-er-kvinner>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.ssb.no/statbank/Table/12873/>

¹⁰² <https://www.ssb.no/valg/artikler-og-publikasjoner/ny-kvinnerekord-blant-ordforerne>

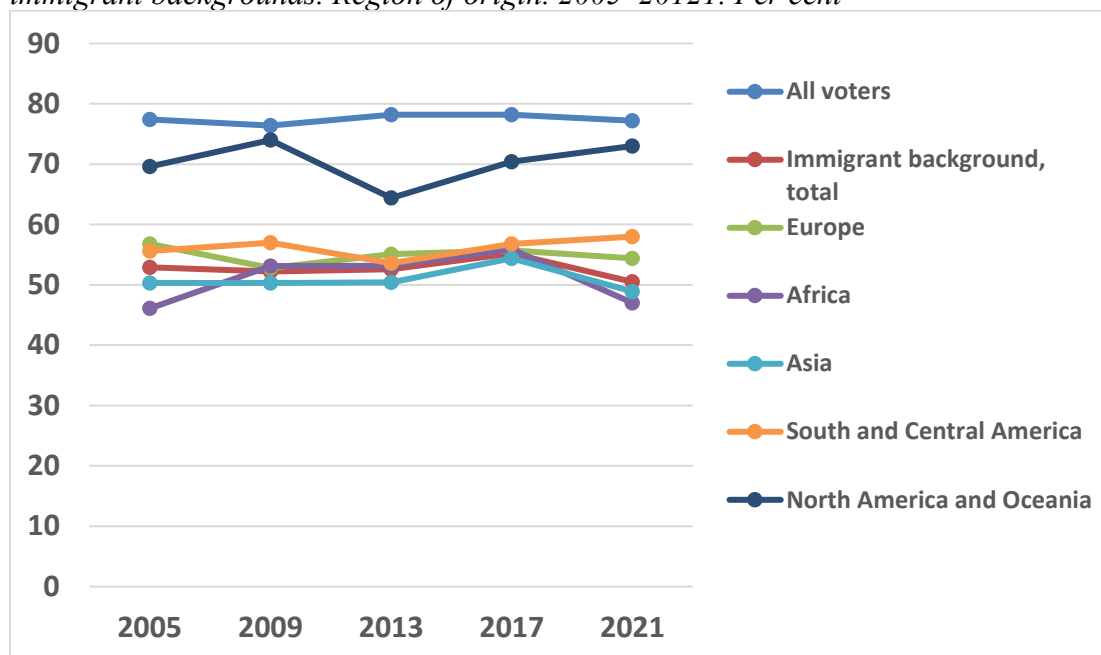
¹⁰³ <https://www.ssb.no/valg/artikler-og-publikasjoner/111-000-flere-med-stemmerett-enn-ved-forrige-stortingsvalg>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.ssb.no/valg/stortingsvalg/statistikk/personer-med-stemmerett>

Among naturalised immigrants from South and Central America, and from North America and Oceania, participation increased from 57 to 58 per cent, and from 70 to 73 per cent, respectively.

Among major individual countries of origin, participation decreased by ten percentage points for voters from Pakistan and by 15 and 11 percentage points for those from Afghanistan and Iraq.

Chart 13.2 Participation in national elections – all voters and voters with different immigrant backgrounds. Region of origin. 2005–2021. Per cent



Source: Statistics Norway

After the election in 2021, there are ten permanent members of *the Storting* with an immigrant background¹⁰⁵. Nine of them have their background from a country in Asia (Pakistan, Iran, Syria, Sri Lanka, India, Turkey), while for one of them the country of origin is Somalia. The latter is the first permanent member with her background from an African country. Recently, the Storting for the first time elected as its *President* a representative with an immigrant background. He came to Norway from Iran as a young child with his parents.

The *Labour party* has four members with an immigrant background while the *Conservative Party* has two. The *Red Party*, the *Progress Party*, the *Socialist Left Party* and the *Liberal Party* have one member each. In the current as in earlier periods, there are also some deputy members with an immigrant background, mainly from Asia or Africa.

New policies and measures – Political participation in elections

In connection with the national elections in 2021, the *Directorate of Integration and Diversity* was commissioned to promote increased voter turnout among persons with

¹⁰⁵ Persons who themselves are immigrants or Norwegian-born with two foreign-born parents.

an immigrant background. This task was undertaken in cooperation with the *Norwegian Directorate of Elections*, which has the responsibility for the execution of elections and for information about elections.

14 Child welfare services

14.1 Legislation and policy

The primary purpose of the *Norwegian Child Welfare Act* is to ensure help, care and protection to children that are living in conditions that may be harmful to their health and development, and that they are raised in a safe and secure environment.

Norway ratified the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1991. In 2003, the convention was incorporated into Norwegian law. The convention underlines that the State has a duty to protect all children within its jurisdiction, without discrimination. The best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.

All children in Norway, regardless of their background, resident status or citizenship, are entitled to the necessary help and protection in accordance with the *Child Welfare Act*. The best interest of the child is the primary concern when considering and applying child welfare measures.

The child welfare system emphasises family ties and continuity in the child's upbringing. The underlying assumption is that children should grow up with their parents. Most measures offered by the child welfare services are voluntary assistive measures within the home. Often assistance is provided in the form of advice and guidance to parents on parental practices, counselling, economic aid, kindergarten etc.

Placing a child in alternative care without the consent of the parents is always a measure of last resort. However, in cases when adequate care for a child cannot be guaranteed at the child's home, it may be necessary to place a child in foster care or in an institution. It is only a *County Social Welfare Board* or a court that can issue a care order, not the local child welfare service. These boards are impartial and independent decision-making authorities. Decisions by a *County Social Welfare Board* can be appealed to the courts.

The legal threshold for issuing a care order is that a child must suffer serious neglect, maltreatment, abuse, or other serious deficiencies in the everyday care. Before issuing a care order, the child welfare services must conduct a comprehensive assessment of all the relevant aspects of a case, and voluntary steps by the parents or other responsible adults must be deemed insufficient. Furthermore, a care order must be necessary and in the best interest of the child.

Most children who cannot live with their parents are placed in a foster home. The child welfare services will choose a foster home based on the child's distinctive characteristics and individual needs. Due account shall be taken to ensure continuity in the child's upbringing and of the child's religious, cultural and linguistic background. The Norwegian child welfare services recognise the importance of family ties and are obliged to consider whether someone in the child's family or close network can be a foster parent.

Since 2016, Norway is part of the *Hague Convention 1996 on Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children*. The *Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs* is designated as Norway's central authority and assists the municipal child welfare services in their dialogue with foreign authorities. A *Competence Strategy for the Municipal Child Welfare Services (2018–2024)* is in the process of being implemented. A key purpose is to strengthen the employees' knowledge of how to safeguard and facilitate the participation of children and parents. The strategy includes educational programs that aim to promote greater understanding and sensitivity in the follow-up of children and families with immigrant and other minority backgrounds.

The *European Court of Human Rights* has taken 43 Norwegian child welfare cases into consideration, assessing the right to family life in Article 8 of the *European Convention of Human Rights*. So far, the Court has found violation in eleven cases and non-violation in three. The Court has also dismissed three cases as manifestly ill-founded. The violations emphasised by the Court do not indicate a conflict between the Convention and the *Norwegian Child Welfare Act* as such. In the Government's view, the violations found by the Court indicate that adjustments are called for in Norwegian child welfare practice. Following the Court's judgments, the Government has drawn up and initiated several general measures that have been or will be implemented to strengthen the Norwegian child welfare service.

New policies and measures – Child welfare

The Storting adopted a new *Child Welfare Act* in June 2021. The Act increases the emphasis on prevention and early intervention, and to strengthen the legal safeguards for both children and parents. The Act reflects the development in the European Court of Human Rights' case law. The Act contains some more clarifications, and the Bill provides comprehensive reviews of our human rights obligations. The Act is better adapted to the situation today. The child welfare service is primarily an auxiliary service, but the *Child Welfare Act* also regulates very invasive enforcement measures. This places great demands on the child welfare service's work and for ensuring that the rule of law for children and parents is safeguarded in a good way.

The goal of the new Act is to put children's needs at the centre and contribute to increased prevention and early intervention. The child welfare service shall build on the resources that exist around the child and facilitate the involvement of the child's family and networks. Child welfare measures shall not be more invasive than necessary.

The child's best interests are the basic consideration for child welfare service, and the new Act highlights this consideration in a new overarching provision. At the same time, other basic rights and principles such as children's right to care and protection, the right to family life, and the principle of least intervention, are explicitly regulated at the beginning of the Act.

Moreover, competence requirements are essential to improve the quality of the child welfare service's work. Thus, requirements for a master's degrees in child welfare or other relevant education have been introduced in the Act. This applies to employees in the child welfare service who will carry out core tasks, the manager and the deputy leader.

14.2 Facts and figures

During 2020, almost 53 000 children received some support from the child welfare services in Norway. Eighty-two per cent of these children received assistance measures, while 18 per cent received care measures.¹⁰⁶

By the end of 2020, children and young adults (aged 0-22 years) with an immigrant background (immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents) constituted 19 per cent of the total population in this age group.¹⁰⁷ Twenty-eight per cent of the children and young adults (aged 0-22 years), who received help from the child welfare services at this time, had an immigrant background.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.ssb.no/en/sosiale-forhold-og-kriminalitet/statistikker/barneverng>

¹⁰⁷ [13055: Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents, by sex, age and country background \(world region\) 1970 - 2021. Statbank Norway \(ssb.no\)](#)

¹⁰⁸ [11298: Children with measures from the Child Welfare Services, during the year and per 31 December, by unit variable, immigration category, contents and year. Statbank Norway \(ssb.no\)](#)

15 Equality and discrimination

Discrimination violates human rights, harming not only individuals but also the whole society. Everyone should be treated equally, regardless of e.g., gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity or religion. Moreover, everyone should be given the same opportunity to participate in important decisions concerning their own lives. Legal and political measures should contribute to an equal society and the absence of discrimination.

Studies show that persons with a minority background can be victims of discrimination. In Norway. Different forms of discrimination occur in different segments of society, most often in relation to employment, access to goods and services, and to services from public administrations. In a survey from 2020, 39 per cent of immigrants and 47 per cent of Norwegian-born with immigrant background reported having experienced discrimination in the last 12 months. Generally, younger people report higher numbers of discrimination than the older generations.¹⁰⁹

The *Norwegian Constitution* article 98 states that "All people are equal under the law. No human being must be subject to unfair or disproportionate differential treatment."

The *Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act* prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion and belief. National origin, descent, skin colour and language are all aspects of ethnicity, according to the Act. Furthermore, participation in discrimination based on ethnicity is prohibited by law. This covers harassment. It is prohibited to instruct any person to discriminate, harass or retaliate. Retaliating against a person who files or intends to file a complaint about discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, is prohibited. The Act explicitly prohibits discrimination by association. This applies if a person is discriminated against based on his/her connection with another person, and this discrimination is based on the other person's ethnicity or other personal characteristics.

Furthermore, the *Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act* states that *all employers* have a duty to make active efforts to promote equality and to prevent discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion and belief. This includes a duty to seek to prevent harassment, sexual harassment and gender-based violence. The equality efforts shall encompass the areas of recruitment, pay and working conditions, promotion, development opportunities, accommodation and the opportunity to combine work with family life. All employers, regardless of size and sector, are obliged to document their equality and anti-discrimination work. Public enterprises regardless of size, and private enterprises with more than 50 employees, shall apply a specified and systematic work method with four steps, when working proactive for equal opportunities in the enterprise. This duty also covers private enterprises with 20 to 50 employees, if requested by the employees or employee representatives. Thus, medium-sized private enterprises shall, to a greater extent than before, systematically investigate and analyse risks and causes of discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity. Enterprises with obligations to follow the four-step method, are obliged to report on their equality work. This report shall be given in the annual report or another document available to the general public.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. https://bufdir.no/Statistikk_og_analyse/Etnisitet/Diskriminering/#heading74327 (only in Norwegian)

Labour unions and employer associations are also obliged to promote equality and prevent discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion and belief.

Public authorities have a special responsibility to promote equality and prevent discrimination. According to the *Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act*, public authorities shall make active, targeted and systematic efforts to promote equality and prevent discrimination on (among others) the grounds of ethnicity in all their activities. The duty also includes an obligation for to preclude harassment, sexual harassment and gender-based violence, and to counter stereotyping. Public authorities also have an obligation to issue a statement on what they are doing to integrate considerations relating to gender and non-discrimination into their work. Public authorities shall describe what they are doing to convert equality and non-discrimination principles, procedures and standards into action. Public authorities shall provide an assessment as to what has been achieved as a result of these efforts, and outline expectations with regards to future efforts in this area. The statement shall be provided in the annual report, another report issued annually or another document available to the public.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (LDO) acts as a proactive agent for equal opportunities. LDO has a consultative and advisory service for individuals as well as private and public employers. This service is free of charge. Disseminating good examples and methods, and improving the understanding of the issues in question, are important aspects of LDOs work. LDO also monitors that Norwegian law and administrative practice are in accordance with Norway`s obligations under the conventions *UNCERD*, *UNCEDAW* and *UNCRPD*. LDO has the mandate to supervise the activity duty of public authorities and employers, as well as their new duties to issue a statement on their equality work according to the *Equality and Anti-discrimination Act*. LDO is entitled to make follow-up visits to enterprises and may require access to the enterprises` documentation relating to the employers` equality and anti-discrimination work.

The Anti-Discrimination Tribunal handles individual complaints about discrimination, and complaints about incomplete/lack of statement of equality work by employers. The enforcement system consists of only one body. Appeals for the Tribunal`s decisions shall be referred to the court system. The Tribunal can award compensation in discrimination cases.

Ethnicity is the fourth largest category of cases addressed to LDO. In 2020, the Ombud received a little over 250 inquiries concerning ethnic discrimination. Most of these cases concern discrimination in work life.

Racism and discrimination based on ethnicity and religion affect many different groups in Norwegian society. While the challenges they face differ, they also have some common features. In recent years, measures against racism and discrimination have been strengthened through two action plans:

The *Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion for 2020 – 2023*¹¹⁰ is a comprehensive action plan and contains a total of 50 measures in many different areas, including work life, housing and health, research and knowledge, education, public debate, and public service.

*The Action Plan to combat Discrimination and Hatred towards Muslims (2020 – 2023)*¹¹¹. The aim is to prevent and deter racism and discrimination against Muslims and persons believed to be Muslims. The action plan contains 18 measures within the following four priority areas: Dialogue and meeting places; Safety and security; Knowledge of and competence on discrimination and hatred towards Muslims; Efforts against discrimination and hatred outside Norway.

New policies and measures – Equality and discrimination

In January 2021, a new *Action Plan against Antisemitism 2021–2023 – a continuation*¹¹² was launched. This plan contains measures and provides a systematic effort against antisemitism. It is a continuation of the former *Action Plan against Antisemitism 2016– 2020*¹¹³.

The efforts against hate speech continues and the measures in the *Strategy against Hate Speech 2016–2020*¹¹⁴ are followed up. The *Freedom of Speech Commission*¹¹⁵ examines the extent and conditions for freedom of speech on a broad basis.¹¹⁶ The report from the Commission will be presented by August 15, 2022. A *national competence centre against hate crime* was established in October 2021.

The new Government has indicated in its political platform that it will:

- develop further measures against racism, extremism, and radicalisation.
- look into how to increase the efforts against online harassment and continue to put these issues high on the political agenda.

¹¹⁰ <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/the-norwegian-governments-action-plan-against-racism-and-discrimination-on-the-grounds-of-ethnicity-and-religion-2020-2023-extracted-version/id2681929/>

¹¹¹ [Action plan to combat discrimination and hatred towards Muslims \(2020-2023\) - regjeringen.no](#)

¹¹² [Action plan against antisemitism 2021–2023 – a continuation \(regjeringen.no\)](#)

¹¹³ <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/dd258c081e6048e2ad0cac9617abf778/action-plan-against-antisemitism.pdf>

¹¹⁴ https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/72293ca5195642249029bf6905ff08be/hatefulley-tringer_uu.pdf (Only in Norwegian)

¹¹⁵ [Ytringsfrihetskommisjonen \(vkom.no\)](#)

¹¹⁶ The mandate is available in English [here](#).

16 Citizenship and naturalisation

16.1 Policy and legislation

Nationality (citizenship) provides legal and social bonds between the state and the individual. A person's acquisition of citizenship provides her/him with equal rights and duties to those who already are citizens and is a prerequisite for full participation in society.

One legal consequence of being a Norwegian citizen is the unconditional right to legal residence in Norway. Citizens also have the right to vote in all political elections, as well as the right to hold a position in our three branches of government as, respectively, a member of the Norwegian *Storting*, a cabinet minister or a *Supreme Court* judge. Being a citizen also is a requirement for holding some other positions. Compulsory military service is the most prominent of the legal obligations for Norwegian citizens.

The current *Nationality Act* entered into force in 2006. The Act is based on the principle of *Ius sanguinis*, which means that citizenship is not determined by place of birth, but by having at least one parent who is a citizen of Norway.

Other ways of becoming a Norwegian citizen are by application or notification. According to the Act, an applicant has the right to acquire Norwegian citizenship if all the conditions listed in the *Nationality Act* are satisfied. The main requirements imply that the applicant must:

- provide documentary evidence of his/her identity or otherwise clearly establish it.
- have reached the age of 12, if s/he is to be granted Norwegian citizenship irrespective of the citizenship of the parents.
- reside in the realm and intend to remain so.
- fulfil the conditions for a permanent residence permit laid down in the *Immigration Act*.
- have lived in Norway for a total of seven years during the last ten years.
- have completed the required *Norwegian language training and social studies* course, documented a basic command of spoken Norwegian, and have passed a test in social studies.
- not have been sentenced to prison or special criminal sanctions. A sentenced applicant must wait for a deferred period, depending on the length of the sentence, before citizenship can be granted.

Since January 1, 2020 Norway allows dual citizenship.

According to the current legislation, Norwegian nationality may be repealed in the event of prolonged absence from the realm, upon application, and by revocation in case of it having been obtained by fraud. Dual citizens who have been convicted of an offence seriously prejudicial to the vital interests of the Norwegian state, can be deprived of their Norwegian citizenship. This decision is made by the court as part of the criminal case.

New policies and measures – Citizenship

In March 2021, amendments to the *Nationality Act* on the loss of citizenship took effect. In the case of fundamental national interests, dual citizen who have shown conduct that may indicate that he or she will severely damage such interest, can be deprived of their Norwegian citizenship. The decision is made by the Ministry responsible for the *Nationality Act*. If legal action is taken concerning the validity of the decision, the state will carry all costs of the case.

Amendments to the *Nationality Act*, which took effect from January 2022, raise the general requirement for length of residence from seven of the last ten years to eight of the last eleven years. This does not apply to those applicants who have already been granted asylum in Norway. Applicants with a specified minimum income level according to the most recent tax-assessment are required to have resided in Norway six out of the last ten years.

Another set of amendments to the *Nationality Act* will raise the requirement of necessary Norwegian oral skills from level A2 to B1 in order to be granted Norwegian citizenship. These amendments have not yet taken effect.

16.2 Naturalisations

In 2020, 19 700 persons were naturalised. This was an increase of almost 6 500 naturalisations the previous year. Among the naturalisations in 2020, the largest groups had Somalia, Eritrea, and Sweden as countries of origin, cf. Table 16.1 below.

The gender difference was small among those who were granted Norwegian citizenship in 2020. Fifty-two per cent were women. However, the gender distribution varies greatly between countries of origin.

Table 16.1 Naturalisations – Total. Annually. 2011–2020

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total	14 286	12 384	13 223	15 336	12 432	13 712	21 648	10 241	13 201	19 698

Source: Statistics Norway

By the end of November 2021, almost 36 500 persons had been granted Norwegian citizenship by UDI. During the same period in 2020, the number was 17 700.

Table 16.2 Naturalisation by former citizenship. Major countries of origin. 2020

Country of origin	2020
Total, of which:	19 698
Somalia	3051
Eritrea	2790
Sweden	1172
Syria	817
Philippines	718
Russia	638
Iran	621
Thailand	586
Stateless	545
Denmark	487

Source: Statistics Norway

The share of naturalised Norwegian citizens among immigrants in Norway varies considerably with country of origin. Since Norway allows dual citizenship from 2020, the composition of the persons who obtain citizenship has changed. In previous years, citizens of Nordic countries have made up a modest proportion of people who have been granted Norwegian citizenship. About one in three of all citizenships were granted to people from countries in and around the Horn of Africa. However, in 2020, 11 per cent of those who were granted citizenship were from Nordic countries.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to keep in line with measures to prevent the spread of the virus, the waiting time has increased for several types of cases. Therefore, it may take some time before applicants receive an answer to their application.

16.3 Naturalisation ceremonies

Since 2006, every person granted Norwegian citizenship has been invited to take part in a ceremony that includes giving an oath of loyalty to Norway. The *County Governor* has the responsibility to invite all new citizens over the age of 12 to take part in a citizenship ceremony.

The aim of these ceremonies is to ensure a solemn and dignified transition to Norwegian citizenship. Participation in the ceremony also marks that the new citizen endorses the fundamental values on which the Norwegian society is based, including the principle of equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all Norwegians. Participation in this ceremony is voluntary. Participants over the age of 18 take an oath of loyalty to Norway and receive the book *Welcome as a new citizen*.

Due to the pandemic, the *County Governors* cancelled naturalisation ceremonies that required attendance. One held a digital ceremony. The other Governors choose different solutions, such as sending by surface mail the gift book *Welcome as a new citizen* and a greeting to the new citizens.

17 Public debate and opinion

17.1 Public debate

There are no regular statistics or analyses available on the extent and nature of the current public debate on issues concerning immigration and integration. Therefore, considerations on the public debate are primarily based on selective observations and recent reports and studies, if any.

The low number of asylum seekers since the peak in 2015, cf. Chapter 6.2, has resulted in less public debate regarding refugee and immigration policy during the last couple years. Compared to the national election in 2017, these issues did not play a significant role during the campaign ahead of the national election in September 2021, cf. Chapter 13.2.

During the pandemic, immigrants and COVID-19 have been the topic for some public debate. The background has partly been the fear of some visitors and migrants bringing more of the virus and its contagious mutations to Norway. Some have raised the issue of whether travel restrictions should have been more, or less, strictly enforced, for example for migrant workers from EU-countries.

Another aspect of the debate has concerned why COVID-19 has hit some immigrant groups disproportionately and more severely, as well as the lower vaccination rate among some immigrant groups, cf. Chapter 19.1. For example, there has been discussions on whether immigrants should have been more cautious and done more to prevent the spread of the infection. Others have questioned whether the information measures from public health authorities have been adequate. Cf. Chapter 19.2 and 19.3 for description of such measures specifically targeting immigrants.

The evacuation of approximately one thousand Afghans from Kabul after the abrupt withdrawal of NATO from Afghanistan, including forces from Norway, caused some debate concerning the selection of evacuees under chaotic circumstances, highlighted by dramatic broadcasts from the airport in Kabul. However, this debate did not last long and was not polarised in the same way as some debates on asylum and refugee policy often are.

Crime among persons with an immigrant background continue to be a matter of public concern. An important issue is how to prevent that criminal acts are committed by a disproportionate number of very young males. These youngsters are mostly living in parts of Oslo where a high share of the population has an immigrant background, and where living conditions in general are more difficult than in other parts. The fear of a deteriorating situation like what has been seen in Sweden, is often mentioned.

The research project on *Immigration as an Issue in Scandinavian Public Spheres 1970 – 2015*¹¹⁷ is continuing. New reports are published on the [website](https://scanpub.w.uib.no/), for example a

¹¹⁷ <https://scanpub.w.uib.no/>

comparative analysis of Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish (social) media discourse on Islam¹¹⁸, and a study of rhetorical strategies in social media immigration debate¹¹⁹.

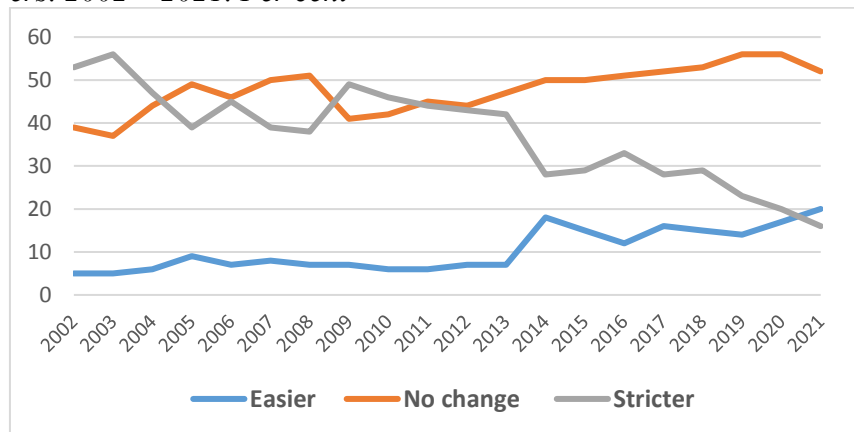
17.2 Public opinion

The annual survey by Statistics Norway

For many years, Statistics Norway has published an annual survey on attitudes to different issues concerning immigration and immigrants. During the last years, attitudes to immigration and immigrants have become increasingly positive/liberal. The results from the recent survey, conducted in the summer of 2021.¹²⁰, show that this trend continues. Fewer see immigrants as a source of insecurity in society and more think that immigrants contribute to make the cultural life in Norway richer. At the same time, there are fewer who think that immigrants in Norway should strive toward becoming as Norwegian as possible. The answers in the survey also show that the respondents have become less sceptical toward immigrants in close and less close relations, as for example as domestic help or close family, as a new neighbour or as a son- or daughter-in-law.

Since 2002, more respondents have expressed the opinion that it should be harder rather than easier for refugees and asylum seekers to obtain residence in Norway. However, the share that thinks it should be easier has increased, while the share that thinks it should be harder has decreased. In the latest survey and for the first time, there are more respondents expressing that it should be easier than harder. Most respondents, about half, think the possibility to obtain residence should remain as it is today.

Chart 17.1 Attitudes to access to residence in Norway for refugees and asylum seekers. 2002 – 2021. Per cent



Source: Statistics Norway

Attitudes to immigrants and immigration vary according to the characteristics of the respondents, and certain patterns are consistent over time. Women often tend to be more positive than men, and young people are more positive than older. The respondents with higher education are more liberal than those with elementary or high school

¹¹⁸ [Anders Liens doctoral thesis finds little difference in Islam-criticism in Norway, Sweden and Denmark – SCANPUB \(uib.no\)](#)

¹¹⁹ [Doctoral thesis from SCANPUB: Ida Andersen’s “Instead of the deliberative debate” – SCANPUB \(uib.no\)](#)

¹²⁰ The following summary of the main findings is based on the English abstract of [Report 2021/36](#) from Statistics Norway.

as their highest completed education. Students and pupils are more positive than respondents receiving welfare benefits and pensions, while employed persons are in a position between these two groups. There are also differences between urban and rural areas. Respondents in densely populated areas are often more positively disposed toward immigrants, while respondents in less densely populated areas tend to be more sceptical. This partly reflects that the urban population often have more contact with immigrants, and that the population in these areas generally have higher education. There is a clear correlation between attitudes and degree of contact and level of education.

18 Migration and development

Global poverty had been declining before COVID-19, but in 2020 and due to the pandemic, the absolute number of people living in extreme poverty rose for the first time since 1997. The face of global poverty is also changing. Poverty is becoming increasingly concentrated in countries that are middle-income, fragile and conflict affected, and located in sub-Saharan Africa. War and conflict, climate change, degradation of the environment and pandemics have consequences that extend far beyond national and regional borders and influence global migration patterns.

The world has become “smaller” through technological developments such as new means of communication and digitalization. There is, however, no clear long-term trend of accelerating global migration. About three quarters of international migrants come from developing countries, but migration from developing to developed countries accounts for a minor fraction of human movement. Migration from one developing economy to another is more common, but most migrants do not cross international borders. Instead, they move within their own country. People in the poorest countries are the least mobile.

Most migrants, internal and international, reap gains in the form of higher incomes, better access to education and health, and improved prospects for their children. Remittances from migrant workers remain a critical lifeline for many poor households and a significant financial contribution to developing countries. Despite predictions and travel restrictions, remittance flow remained resilient during the first year of COVID-19, with only a small decline, according to the *World Bank*.

Conflict and fragility are on the rise, causing internal and external tension, which in turn can trigger irregular migration or force people to flee their homes. Decades of positive development can be reversed or destroyed quickly, and violent extremism and organized crime together may undermine peaceful solutions. The root causes of conflict and fragility must be addressed. Stabilisation and peace building however, are long-term processes.

New policies and measures – Migration and development

Norwegian migration policy shall be consistent and responsible. According to the policy platform of the new Government, Norway will also continue to contribute substantial humanitarian aid and to strengthen the nexus between humanitarian and long-term development aid.¹²¹

In line with humanitarian principles, Norway will support actions aimed at reducing the vulnerability of individuals and local communities. Norway will also seek to increase the flexibility and tolerance for risks in long term development efforts in states and regions affected by conflict and fragility and give priority to supporting relevant development assistance in such areas.

The new Government intends to establish a so called “Solidarity fund” as part of the development budget, with the aim of strengthening the capacity of host and transit countries to deal with mass migration, as called for in the *Global Compact for Migration* and the *Global Compact for Refugees*. This is in line with the 2030 Agenda, in

¹²¹ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/hurdalsplattformen/id2877252/> (only in Norwegian)

particular the *Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10*, which includes a target on facilitating orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration.

19 COVID-19, immigrants and information

19.1 Health effects

Immigrants (foreign-born) have been overrepresented in confirmed cases and COVID-19 related hospitalisations. Furthermore, also those born in Norway to foreign-born parents have been overrepresented, compared to Norwegian-born with Norwegian-born parents.¹²² In this section, the focus is therefore on people with immigrant background, rather than only foreign-born. Persons with immigrant background include those born abroad, and Norwegian-born, with two foreign-born parents and four foreign-born grandparents.¹²³

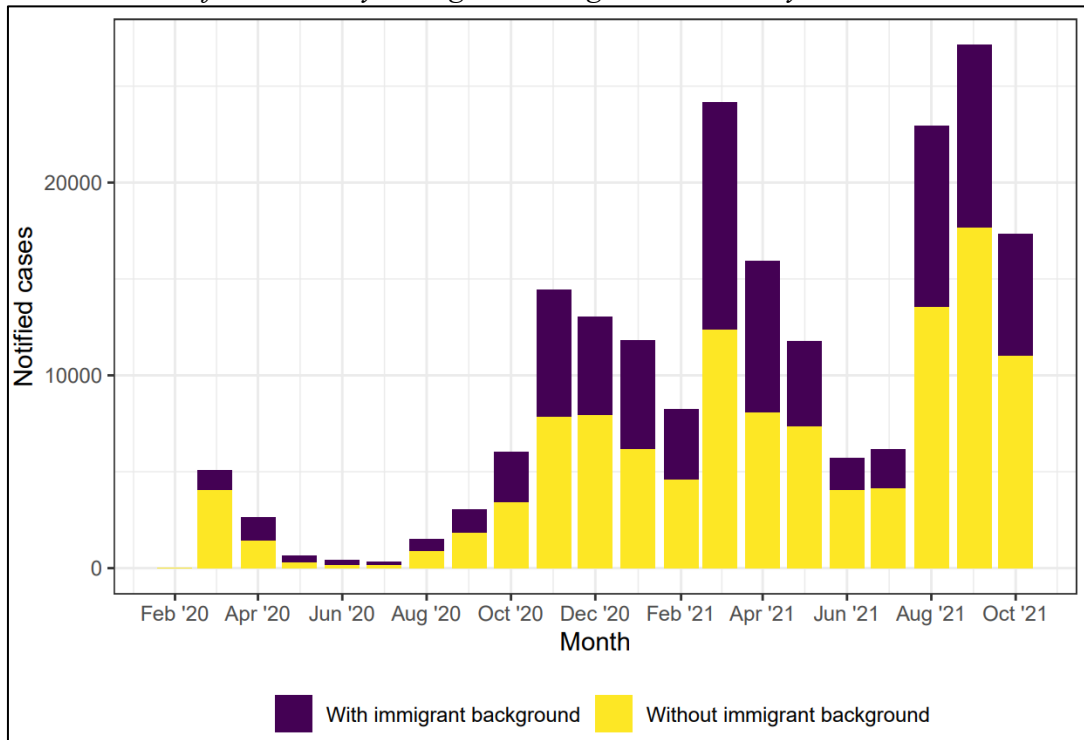
Until October 31, 2021, among persons who have had confirmed COVID-19 infection, 41 per cent have immigrant background. People with immigrant background account for 18.5 per cent of Norway's population, indicating a substantial overrepresentation among persons with immigrant background. Among those with immigrant background, most confirmed cases have been reported among people with background from Somalia (7 242), Pakistan (6 898), Poland (6 450), former Yugoslavia¹²⁴ (5 574), Iraq (5 399), Syria (4 458) and Eritrea (4 332). Except for the first four weeks of the pandemic, the relative numbers of confirmed cases have been higher among people with immigrant background than their proportion of the population should indicate, cf. Chart 19.1. In relative numbers, especially persons with background from Africa and Asia have had high case numbers per 100 000, ref. Chart 19.2. People with background from Pakistan, Iraq and Somalia, have had the highest case numbers per 100 000.

¹²² Indseth T, Elgersma IH, Strand BH, Telle K, Labberton AS, Arnesen T, ... & Godøy A. 2021 COVID-19 blant personer født utenfor Norge, justert for yrke, trangboddhet, medisinsk risikogruppe, utdanning og inntekt. FHI-rapport 2021 [[Covid-19 among persons born outside Norway, adjusted for occupation, Household crowding, medical risk group, education and income. Report 2021](#)]

¹²³ Statistic Norway's definition of immigrant background: <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/innvandrere/statistikk/innvandrere-og-norskfodte-med-innvandrerforeldre>

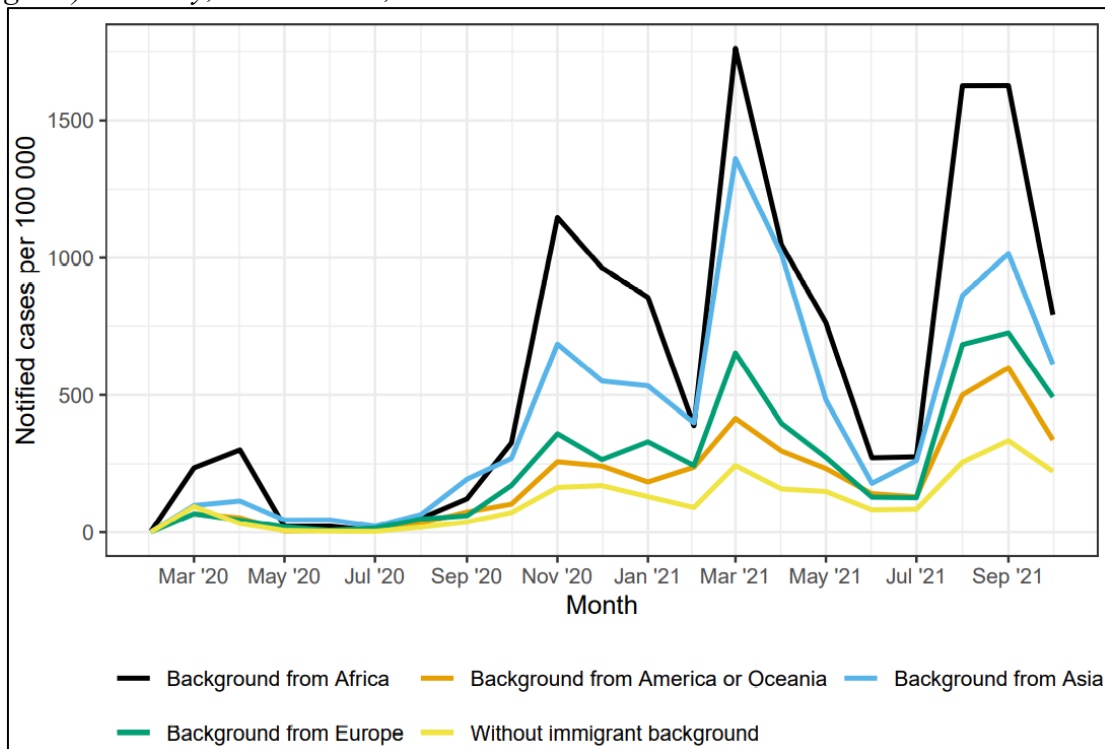
¹²⁴ Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.

Chart 19.1 Notified cases, by immigrant background. Monthly, until Oct. 31, 2021



Source: National Institute of Public Health, Beredt C19

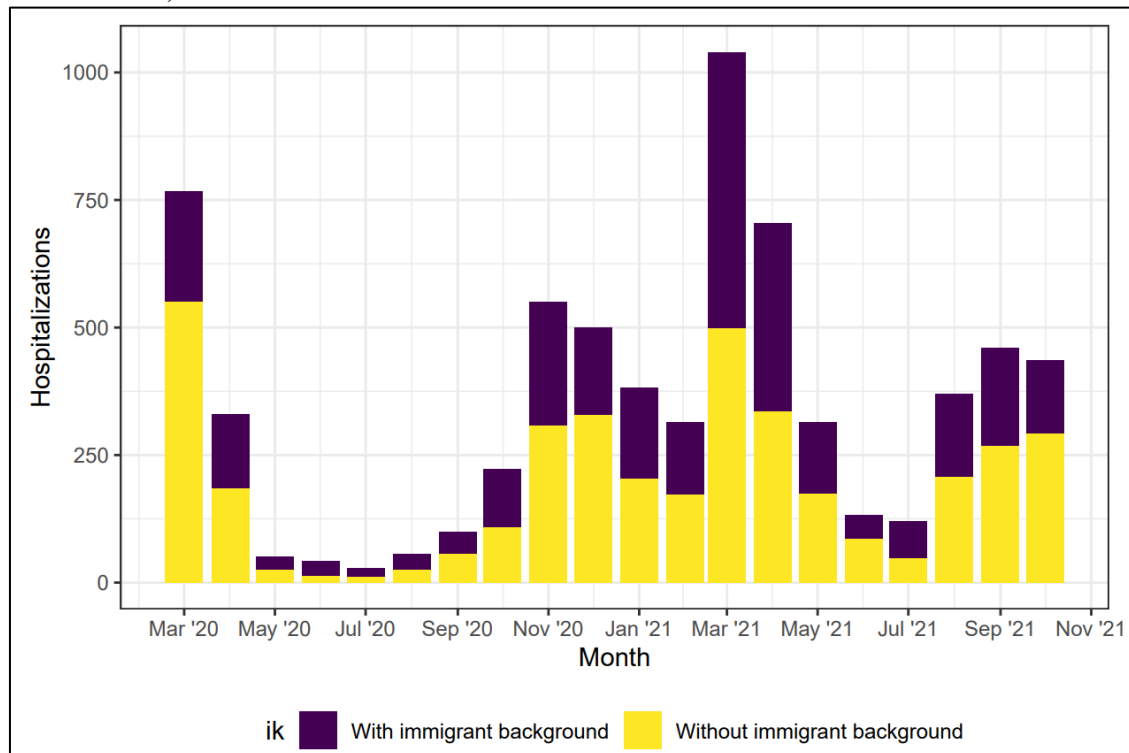
Chart 19.2 Notified cases per 100 000, by immigrant background (geographical regions). Monthly, until Oct. 31, 2021



Source: National Institute of Public Health, Beredt C19

We observe the same overrepresentation for COVID-19 related hospitalisations, cf. Chart 19.3. Until the end of October 2021, 43.6 per cent of those hospitalised have had immigrant background. Most of these have background from Pakistan (404), Somalia (269), Iraq (246), former Yugoslavia¹²⁵ (179), and Syria (179). People with background from countries in Africa and Asia have also had an increased risk of requiring mechanical ventilation and of death. For mechanical ventilation, this also applies after adjustment for age, which is the most important risk factor for serious illness and death from COVID-19.^{126, 127} All in all, this indicates that people with immigrant background have been harder hit by the COVID-19 pandemic than those without immigrant background.

Chart 19.3 COVID-19-related hospitalisations, by immigrant background. Monthly, until Oct. 31, 2021



Source: National Institute of Public Health, Beredt C19

There are many possible explanations as to why some groups in the immigrant population have had higher rates of infections and more serious illness from COVID-19, compared to people without immigrant background. The *Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH)* has undertaken multiple studies on this topic the past two years. They find that multiple factors work in combination, and no single explanation stands out. The following factors seem to be important partial explanations:

¹²⁵ Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.

¹²⁶ Indseth T, Elgersma I, Strand BH, Telle K, Hernæs K, Arnesen T. COVID-19: Påvist smitte, testing, innleggelse, død, etterlevelse av råd og reiseaktivitet blant innvandrere i Norge, perioden fra februar 2020 til mai 2021. I: Indseth T, red. [Covid-19 blant innvandrere i Norge, vurdering av tiltak og erfaringer fra felt, delrapport 1](#). Rapport 2021. Oslo: Folkehelseinstituttet; 2021. s. 9-23.

¹²⁷ Telle KE, Grosland M, Helgeland J, Haberg SE. [Factors associated with hospitalization, invasive mechanical ventilation treatment and death among all confirmed COVID-19 cases in Norway: Prospective cohort study](#). Scand J Public Health 2021;49(1):41-7.

- socioeconomic conditions including occupation, housing, income and education
- living in urban vs. rural environments
- language skills, translations and use of interpreters
- health literacy and digital competency
- media use
- patterns of international travel
- family structure, social environments and interactions
- age and medical comorbidity
- delays or reduced effectiveness of contact tracing work
- barriers to testing
- health behaviour, understanding and compliance with constantly changing rules and regulations.

Probably, there are also several other possible drivers that NIPH so far knows too little about.

Vaccination rates

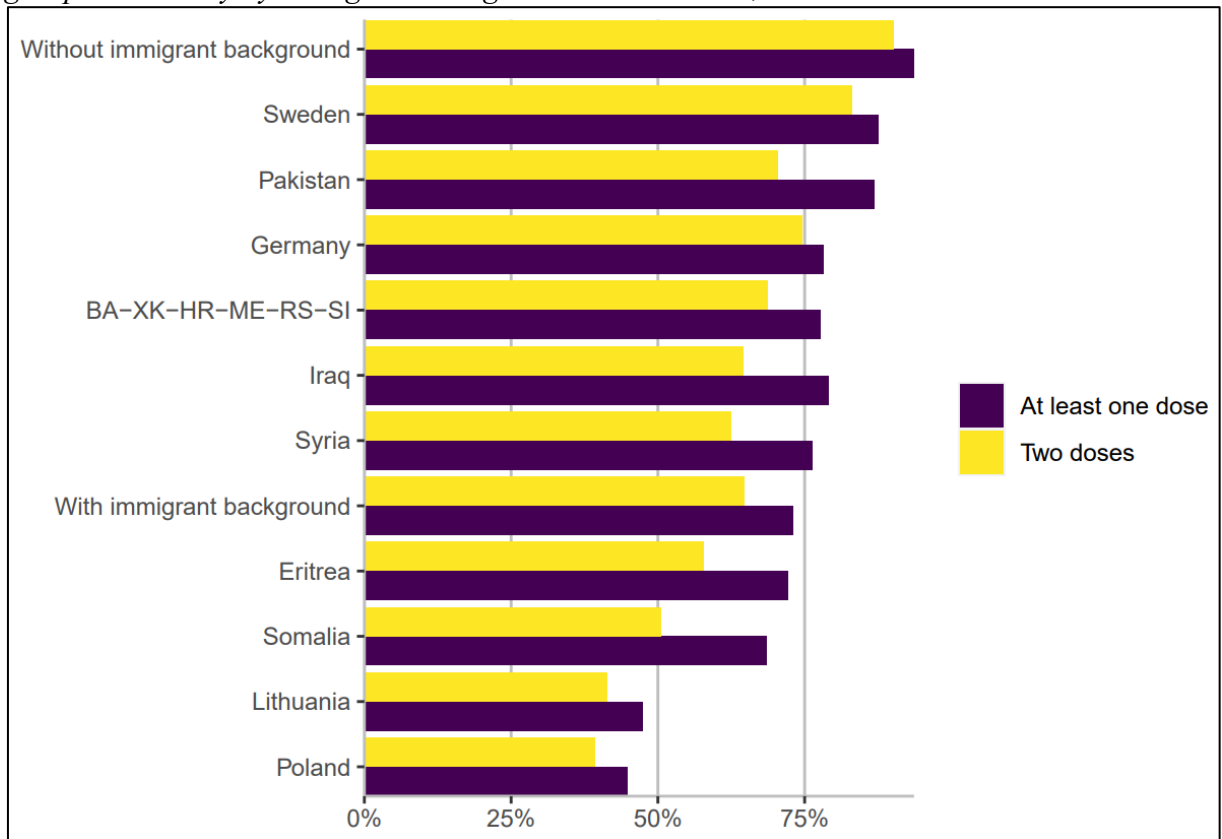
Vaccination against COVID-19 began in Norway in December 2020. Most of the distributed doses have been the vaccines *Comirnaty* (BioNTech/Pfizer) and *Spikevax* (Moderna). The *AstraZeneca* vaccine was used in Norway for a period until March 11, 2021. The *Janssen* vaccine has been administered to relatively few persons, and outside of the COVID-19 immunization program.

By the end of September 2021, all persons over 12 years old should have received an offer of vaccination. Per October 31, 2021, 91 per cent of all persons aged 18 years or older in Norway have been vaccinated with at least one dose, and 87 per cent with two doses. Among persons with immigrant background, the corresponding shares are 73 per cent (at least one dose), and 64.8 per cent (two doses), ref. Chart 19.4. Among the ten groups with the largest populations in Norway according to immigrant background, the lowest vaccination rates (with at least one dose) are among adults with background from Poland (46.7 per cent), Lithuania (48.4 per cent) and Somalia (68.6 per cent).

The reasons for the differences in vaccination coverage in Norway is so far uncertain. The NIPH assumes that both practical and communicative barriers, as well as differences in vaccination hesitancy, are of importance. An early, survey-based study showed a difference in vaccination hesitancy among immigrants in Norway.¹²⁸ More knowledge and research are needed on this topic. More advanced analyses of register data are in progress, and the NIPH works closely with the municipalities to identify success factors and barriers to vaccination.

¹²⁸ Nilsen TS, Johansen R, Aarø LE, Kjøllesdal MKR, & Indseth T. (2021). [Holdninger til vaksine, og etterlevelse av råd om sosial distansering og hygiene blant innvandrere i forbindelse med koronapandemien](#). FHI-rapport 2021.

Chart 19.4 COVID-19 vaccination rates among persons 18 years or older, ten largest groups in Norway by immigrant background. Until Oct 31, 2021



* BA-XK-HR-ME-RS-SI: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.

Source: National Institute of Public Health, Beredt C19

19.2 Information initiatives – Health authorities

Norway has taken measures to lower practical and communicative barriers to reduce vaccination coverage disparities. The NIPH has translated and disseminated information in several languages to support municipalities who deliver the program locally. This information has also been tailored for people with low health literacy and made available as text, graphics, soundbites, and in video format. The NIPH has worked actively to support volunteer, and non-governmental organizations to disseminate information about COVID-19 vaccines and the COVID-19 immunisation program to immigrant groups, including dialogue meetings, newsletters, and tailored webinars. A tailored information resource about the immunisation program, aimed at participants in Norwegian-language training and the social studies program for immigrants, has also been developed. This in collaborations with the *Directorate of Integration and Diversity*, the *Directorate for Higher Education and Skills*, the *Directorate of Health*, and the *City of Oslo*.

Norwegian health authorities were early on concerned that important health information in general, and particularly during the pandemic, is tailored for, and best understood by, the majority population.

Since mid-March/early April 2020, The *Directorate of Health* in cooperation with NIPH has translated, distributed and made campaigns on several topics, including advice and rules on quarantine, isolation, testing, symptoms, travel advice, mask use, mental health and more. Information is available in between 28 to 45 languages, promoted in different channels and targeted at different age segments. In the communication work, films, posters, radio spots, messages in social media and other information material have been prepared. To reach people with low literacy skills, information was also made as video and soundbites. Several municipalities also translated and distributed information as posters or in social media.

All COVID-19 related information on the main landing page for health information in Norway, helsenorge.no, is available in English. Films with general infection control messages (hand washing, distance, at home if ill and testing for symptoms) have been promoted systematically and segmented on Facebook in up to 15 languages throughout the pandemic. Geographical targeted messages have also been used in several situations with local outbreaks in Norway.

Some of the more important Government press conferences on new rules and restrictions have been, and are planned to be translated, texted and interpreted to a greater extent than before.

Information alone is not enough to prevent groups of immigrants and others from becoming infected. The information must also be understood, and lead to a change in behaviour. To communicate information effectively, dialogue with immigrant communities and cooperation with selected influencers have been important in this work. NIPH, the Norwegian Directorate of Health and several municipalities, most prominently Oslo and Bergen, have been in dialogue with organizations and community leaders to mobilise a local and community based COVID-19 response. Through government grants, but also NGOs have played a crucial role in reaching out to parts of the immigrant population that are particularly vulnerable.

Health authorities have advised municipalities to use interpreters when necessary for proper contact tracing and to lower barriers to testing with use of drop-in test stations.

To reach religious minorities, Norwegian health authorities have cooperated with the *Islamic Council of Norway*, the *Muslim Dialogue Network*, *Caritas Norway* and the *Cooperation Council for Religious and Philosophical Societies*, especially concerning religious holidays, celebrations and related events. These organisations have also been consulted and collaborated with in the development of information addressing relevant concerns around COVID-19 vaccines.

19.3 Information initiatives – Integration authorities

Immigrants have been particularly vulnerable and in need of tailored information during the pandemic. Several measures have been initiated to reach out to the immigrant population, such as:

- funding of NGOs to reach out with information, advice and guidance
- digital dialogue meetings with NGOs, religious communities, resource persons and municipalities
- targeted information campaigns in social media and in the largest newspapers
- expert groups

- coordination among relevant public authorities
- research

For immigrants to stay up to date on current legislation and advice, there has been a need for funding of NGOs to reach out with information, both in the short and long term. In 2020 and 2021, a total of NOK 66.6 million has been provided as grants to NGOs for information work on COVID-19, targeting the immigrant population. The grants are given both to national NGOs and to smaller, local organisations working closely with immigrant groups.

Two expert groups have been established to consider existing measures targeting the immigrant population and to propose new measures on the pandemic and its effects on immigrants. Reports were delivered to the *Ministry of Education and Research* in December 2020¹²⁹ and in June 2021¹³⁰. Most of the recommendations have been, or will be, followed up.

The *Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)* has had a coordinating role in securing information and other events targeting the immigrant population. From February until October 2021, IMDi had a key role with temporary responsibility for language interpretation and translations of the Government's press conferences and press releases in connection with the pandemic. IMDi also coordinates and distribute information directly to the municipalities and voluntary organisations. From October 2021, The *Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development* has taken over the responsibility for this service.

By the end of 2021, the *Directorate for Civil Protection (DSB)* and IMDi will deliver a report regarding communication with the immigrant population in connection with national crisis. The report will describe challenges and propose measures. IMDi has gathered up-to-date and quality-assured web resources from public authorities and national knowledge centres in various languages, made available [online](#).

Several research projects have been initiated to study the pandemic, how it affects immigrants, integration and crisis management. So far, the most comprehensive review of public information to immigrants in Norway during the pandemic is a project conducted by *NIBR-OsloMet* and financed by IMDi.¹³¹

The *Corona Commission* published its first report in April 2021.¹³² The core conclusion related to immigrants is that although the authorities have succeeded in communicating about the pandemic, the authorities have failed to reach some immigrants. According to the Commission, the authorities must, to a greater extent consider that some persons have weak Norwegian skills, weak digital skills, less knowledge of Norwegian information channels or they use alternative channels. The Commission suggested that the authorities should have a plan to reach specific groups in a crisis.¹³³

¹²⁹ <https://www.imdi.no/globalassets/dokumenter/ekspertgruppe-rapport---forslag-til-tiltak-for-a-redusere-COVID-19-smitte-blant-innvandrere.pdf> (only in Norwegian)

¹³⁰ [innvandrerbefolkningen under koronapandemien.pdf \(imdi.no\)](#) (only in Norwegian)

¹³¹ The three project-reports are found [here](#).

¹³² [Rapport – Koronakommisjonen](#)

¹³³ [Summary in English](#)

References regarding possible explanations for the overrepresentation in COVID-19 cases and serious disease, cf. Chapter 19.1:

Elgersma IH, Telle K, Eide H, Fevåg J, Indseth T, Kristoffersen AB. Innreisetiltak og innreise etter landbakgrunn. In: Indseth T, red. [Covid-19 blant innvandrere i Norge, vurdering av tiltak og erfaringer fra felt, delrapport 1](#). Rapport 2021. Oslo: Folkehelseinstituttet; 2021. s. 99-114.

Indseth T, Elgersma IH, Strand BH, Telle K, Labberton AS, Arnesen T, Nygård KM, Godøy A. Covid-19 blant personer født utenfor Norge, justert for yrke, trangboddhet, medisinsk risikogruppe, utdanning og inntekt [[Covid-19 among persons born outside Norway, adjusted for occupation, Household crowding, medical risk group, education and income, Report 2021](#)], Rapport 2021. Oslo: Folkehelseinstituttet, 2021.

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Indseth T (red.) [Koronapandemien og innvandrerbefolkningene, vurderinger og erfaringer](#). Rapport Folkehelseinstituttet 2021.

Kjøllesdal M, Skyrud K, Gele A, Arnesen T, Kløvstad H, Diaz E, Indseth T. [The correlation between socioeconomic factors and COVID-19 among immigrants in Norway: a register-based study](#). Scand J Public Health. 2021 May 13:14034948211015860. [Epub ahead of print].

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Methi F, Hart R, Godøy A, Jørgensen S, Kacelnik O, Telle K. [Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 into and within immigrant households. Nation-wide registry-study from Norway](#). medRxiv 2021:2021.07.09.21260253 [Preprint].

Nilsen TS, Johansen R, Aarø LE, Kjøllesdal MKR, Indseth T. [Holdninger til vaksine og etterlevelse råd om sosial distansering og hygiene blant innvandrere i forbindelse med koronapandemien](#). Oslo: Folkehelseinstituttet; 2021. Rapport 2021.

20 Information and publications

20.1 Background information

Recent statistics and publications by *Statistics Norway* on migration related issues with many sub-topics:

<http://ssb.no/en/innvandring-og-innvandrere>

The reports usually have a summary in English, and there is an English version of most statistics.

Statistics and information on applications, permits, rules and regulations from the *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)* are available in English:

<http://www.udi.no/Norwegian-Directorate-of-Immigration/>

Recent studies commissioned by UDI and the *Ministry of Justice and Public Security*:

<http://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/research-and-development-reports/>

Some of the reports contain a summary or abstract in English.

Facts concerning integration policy in English published by the *Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)*:

<http://www.imdi.no/en/>

Recent studies commissioned by IMDi:

<https://www.imdi.no/om-imdi/rapporter/>

Some of the reports contain a summary or abstract in English.

Overview of studies, ad-hoc queries and occasional papers on issues concerning migration from the *European Migration Network (EMN) Norway*:

<http://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/european-migration-network---norway/>

20.2 Websites for relevant publications

Annually, there are many relevant reports, scientific articles, chapters in books and papers published in Norway or internationally by researchers based here. Much of this material can be found by checking the websites of the institutions listed below. However, this is not an exhaustive list of sites for finding relevant publications.

<https://www.prio.org/research/topics/migration>

<https://www.samfunnsforskning.no/english/our-research/migration-and-integration/>

<https://www.oslomet.no/en/research/research-groups/international-studies-migration>

<https://www.fafo.no/en/research-areas/migration-and-integration>

<https://samforsk.no/Sider/Avdelinger/Mangfold-og-inkludering.aspx>

<https://www.uib.no/en/imer>

<https://www.frisch.uio.no/english/research-themes/education-sosial-security-labour/index.html>