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Article

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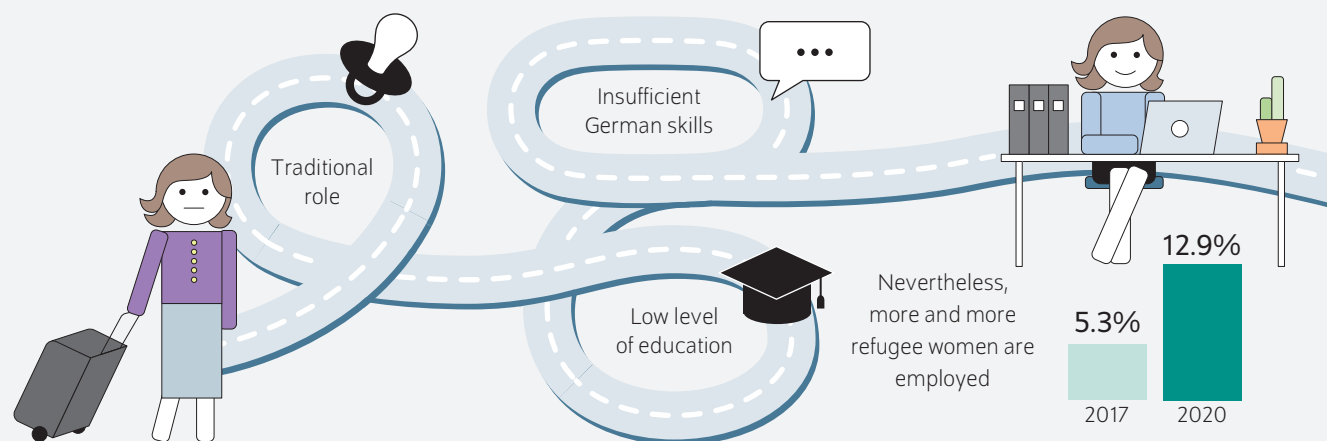
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Employment opportunities of refugee women in Germany are improving despite starting at a disadvantage

By **Adriana Cardozo**

- Study investigates employment opportunities of refugee women in Germany using IAB-BAMF-SOEP data from 2016 to 2020
- A low level of education, limited work experience prior to migration, and poor language skills are barriers to entering the German labor market
- As a result of traditional gender roles, refugee women invest an above-average amount of time in childcare and housework
- Refugee women's labor market participation is still relatively low, but opportunities on the labor market are increasingly improving
- Refugee women's potential should be supported and training programs and language courses tailored to them should be expanded to facilitate integration

Refugee women's labor market participation is increasing despite starting at a disadvantage



Sources: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2020; weighted data.

Note: The study refers to women who came to Germany between 2013 and 2019.

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FROM THE AUTHORS

“The majority of refugee women who came to Germany during the peak of the refugee crisis is not engaged in paid work. However, their labor market participation is increasing. Existing integration courses, especially for women with children, should be expanded in order to promote their integration into the labor market.”

— *Adriana Cardozo* —

MEDIA



Audio Interview with Adriana Cardozo (in German)
www.diw.de/mediathek

Employment opportunities of refugee women in Germany are improving despite starting at a disadvantage

By Adriana Cardozo

ABSTRACT

The majority of refugee women who arrived in Germany during the peak of the refugee crisis between 2013 and 2019 are unemployed. Using data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, this study investigates the contributing factors for refugee women's limited labor market participation. Results show that a combination of low levels of education compared to the German population, slow progress in language acquisition, and traditional roles in the division of paid and unpaid work within the family are barriers to women's labor market integration. Nevertheless, the share of employed refugee women has doubled. Moreover, the share of women with poor German skills has decreased by half, while the share of women with moderate or good German skills has increased. Additionally, the share of young refugee women participating in an educational program has tripled. These developments show that refugee women have made progress in integrating into the labor market. Therefore, it is urgently recommended to expand existing integration measures that are tailored to women.

It is difficult for refugee women to break into the German labor market. Many studies have focused on the integration of women who came to Germany during the peak of the refugee crisis in 2015 as well as the years shortly before and after. The studies came to the following key results: At the time of their immigration, their level of education was below the average level of the German population.¹ In addition, refugee women have less work experience.² Their employment opportunities are worse than those of refugee men, in part because they are limited in their career opportunities due to childcare duties.³ Furthermore, refugee women participate in language classes and integration programs less frequently than refugee men.⁴

This Weekly Report investigates how labor market opportunities for women who came to Germany between 2013 and 2019 have changed over time. Aspects that influence the likelihood of engaging in paid work are examined, including level of education, progress in German language learning, and time allocation between paid work and unpaid care work. The analysis uses data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees (Box), which was conducted between 2016 and 2020, and thus after the 2015 peak.

Refugee women are mostly rather young and comprise a third of all refugees

Around one third of the refugees surveyed in the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in 2020 are women; this share has increased slightly over time. Refugee women are mostly rather young: About 39 percent are below 30 years old and a further 35 percent are between 30 and 39 years old (Figure 1).

¹ Cornelia Kristen et al., "Mehrheit der Geflüchteten hat höhere Bildung im Vergleich zur Herkunftsgesellschaft," *DIW Wochenbericht*, no. 34 (2020): 563-570 (in German; available online. Accessed on April 16, 2023. This applies to all other online sources in this report unless stated otherwise).

² Zerrin Salikutluk and Katrin Menge, "Gendered integration? How recently arrived male and female refugees fare on the German labour market," *Journal of Family Research* 33, no. 2 (2021): 284-321 (available online).

³ Yuliya Kosyakova et al., "Arbeitsmarktintegration in Deutschland: Geflüchtete Frauen müssen viele Hindernisse überwinden," *IAB-Kurzbericht*, no. 8. (2021) (in German; available online).

⁴ Susanne Worbs and Tatjana Baraulina, "Geflüchtete Frauen in Deutschland: Sprache, Bildung und Arbeitsmarkt," *BAMF-Kurzanalyse*, no. 1. (2017) (in German; available online).

The majority of the women surveyed are from Syria (42 percent), Afghanistan (11 percent), Iraq (10 percent), Iran (six percent), and Eritrea (four percent). These are predominantly countries in which traditional gender roles are more embedded than in Germany, both at a familial as well as at an institutional level.⁵

Women flee with their families more frequently than men

The majority of refugee women surveyed responded that they are married, live together with their partner, and came to Germany with their family (Figure 2). In the 2020 survey, the share of married women was 59 percent. Three fourths of the women reported in 2020 that they had at least one child, with almost one third having a child under three years old. As a result of family reunions and births in Germany, the average number of children per woman increased from 1.4 to 1.7 between 2016 and 2020. While younger men (20 to 29) had almost no preschool or school-age children, women of the same age had 1.2 children on average.

Refugees have a lower level of education on average

Although refugees' absolute level of education is lower than the average level in Germany, they tend to be more highly educated than the average population in their country of origin.⁶ Considering the total years of education before migrating—including vocational training and university degrees—the difference between women and men is not particularly large. On average, men have had 12 years of education, while women have had 11.5. However, there is a larger gap when it comes to higher education: The share of men with a higher level of education is 17 percent, while it is 14 percent for women. When looking at the level of education by country of origin, individuals from Syria have a higher level of education on average compared to refugees from other countries.

Nearly half of refugee women only have a primary school diploma, while a further 20 percent have a lower secondary diploma (equivalent to middle school). Another 18 percent completed their upper secondary education (high school diploma or vocational school diploma). Only about three percent have a degree that is equivalent to a vocational education. The share of women who report having work experience before migrating is low (33 percent of women compared to 80 percent of men in the 2020 survey),⁷ and refugee

⁵ According to a recent index by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that tracks variables related to discrimination in social institutions, discrimination against women within the family is high in the main countries of origin of refugees. Based on an index between 0 and 100, with 100 indicating the most discrimination possible, Iran has a score of 93, Iraq 87, Syria 82, and Eritrea 55. In comparison, countries such as Venezuela and Ukraine have low scores of 9.7 and 14.9, respectively. Germany has a score of 7.8. Cf. OECD, *Social Institutions and Gender Index (Edition 2023)* (2023: OECD International Development Statistics) (available online).

⁶ Christoph Spörlein et al., "Selectivity profiles of recently arrived refugees and labour migrants in Germany," *Soziale Welt* 71, no. 1-2 (2020): 54-89.

⁷ This ratio remains essentially unchanged from year to year, which is why only data from 2020 is provided.

Box

Data set

The IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees consists of several subsamples drawn from the Central Register of Foreigners. This study uses the subsamples M3 to M6. The respondents in the M3 and M4 subsamples are asylum seekers who came to Germany between January 2013 and January 2016 and applied for asylum by the end of June 2016.¹ The M5 subsample is a refreshment sample of the M3/M4 respondents as well as an additional sample of asylum seekers who came to Germany between February 2016 and December 2016 and applied for asylum by January 2017.² Two main groups comprise the respondents in subsample M6: One, people who came to Germany between January 2013 and December 2016, applied for asylum, and whose last change of asylum status was between the beginning of 2013 and the end of 2016. Two, people who came to Germany between January 2013 and the end of June 2019, applied for asylum, and whose last change of asylum status was between the beginning of 2017 and the end of June 2019.³ The longitudinal data is from 9,559 refugees who participated in the survey at least once. Of these respondents, 3,842 are women.

¹ Herbert Brücker, Nina Rother und Jürgen Schupp, "IAB-BAMF-SOEP-Befragung von Geflüchteten 2016: Studiendesign, Feldergebnisse sowie Analysen zu schulischer wie beruflicher Qualifikation, Sprachkenntnissen sowie kognitiven Potenzialen," *Forschungsbericht*, no. 30 (2018) (in German; available online).

² Simon Kühne, Jannes Jacobson, and Martin Kroh, "Sampling in Times of High Immigration: The Survey Process of the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees," *Survey Methods: Insights from the Field* (2019) (available online).

³ Hans Walter Steinhauer et al., "Sampling, Nonresponse, and Weighting of the 2020 Refreshment Sample (M6) of the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Panel," *SOEP Survey Papers*, no. 1104 (2022) (available online).

women often have experience in professions that are highly regulated in Germany (e.g., teacher).⁸

More and more refugee women are taking advantage of educational opportunities

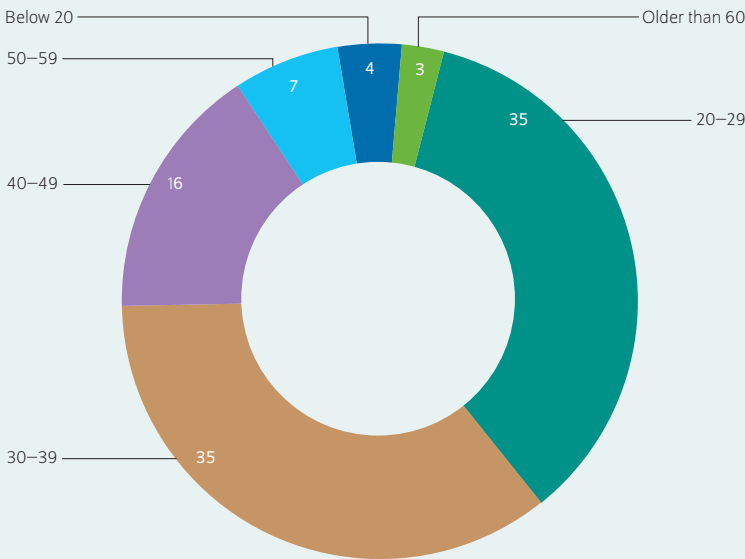
The IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees has revealed that refugee women are participating in educational programs in Germany more often over time, especially women under 30. Around five percent of women under 30 indicated in 2016 that they have participated in a training program; in 2020, the percentage share increased to 17 percent. Participation in language courses has also markedly increased (Table 1).

Of the refugee women participating in educational programs, surveys show a significant increase in the share pursuing vocational training or attending university between 2016 and 2020. The majority of women in educational programs are pursuing vocational training (64 percent). Fourteen percent report attending school and 12 percent are attending

⁸ Kosyakova et al., "Arbeitsmarktintegration in Deutschland."

Figure 1

Age structure of refugee women in 2020



Sources: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2020; weighted data.

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The majority of refugee women is relatively young.

university. The rest are participating in continuing education or occupational re-training (Table 2).

Progress in learning German

Refugee men and women continue to have very different levels of German skills. At first glance, it seems that men are learning German more quickly; however, this may be due to the fact that men began participating in language and integration classes earlier than women.⁹ It is clear that refugee women with young children are at a disadvantage in terms of attending integration courses. One reason for this is that the fathers of families with young children tend to attend integration courses first, while the mothers are responsible for childcare.¹⁰

In addition to inadequate alternative childcare options, there are further barriers to integration courses for women: limited mobility, a lack of basic information, and restrictions due to traditional gender roles. All of these factors make the process of learning German slower, although there is a specific but limited offer of integration courses for women with small children, some of which include childcare.¹¹

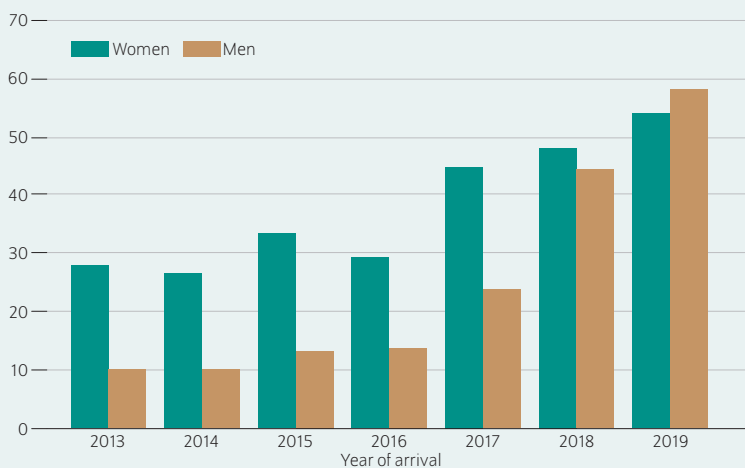
Data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees confirm the gender-specific differences in learning German. For example, in 2020, around 53 percent of men, but only 26 percent of women, reported having advanced German skills. In 2020, 36 percent of women had no language certificate, 30 percent a basic skills certificate, and 34 percent an advanced level (B1) certificate. In comparison, 54 percent of men had advanced-level certificates. However, the number of women with low German language skills has decreased markedly since 2016, although not as much as the number of men. (Figure 3).

Refugee women have limited contact with Germans in daily life

Language skills are improved by interacting with native speakers on a regular basis. Daily contact with people outside the family is limited for refugee women, however, which restricts both speaking practice as well as access to info networks for job searches.¹² From 2016 to 2019, refugee men's daily contact with locals increased by 48 percent, while it only increased by three percent for refugee women. This result is not very surprising, as men engage in paid work to a greater

Figure 2

Refugees who came to Germany with family members



Sources: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2020; weighted data.

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Women migrate more frequently with family members than men.

⁹ Wenke Niehues, Nina Rother, and Manuel Siebert, "Spracherwerb und soziale Kontakte schreiten bei Geflüchteten voran: vierte Welle der IAB-BAMF-SOEP-Befragung von Geflüchteten," *BAMF-Kurzanalyse*, no. 4. (Nuremberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2021) (in German; available online).

¹⁰ Anna Tissot et al., "Zwischenbericht I zum Forschungsprojekt 'Evaluation der Integrationskurse (Evik)'. Erste Analysen und Erkenntnisse," *Forschungsbericht 33* (Nuremberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2019) (in German; available online).

¹¹ Anna Tissot et al., "Hürden beim Zugang zum Integrationskurs Alltagserfahrungen geflüchteter Frauen mit Kleinkindern," *BAMF-Kurzanalyse*, no. 03 (Nuremberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2021) (in German; available online).

¹² Aslihan Yurdakul, Adriana Cardozo, and Yuliya Kosyakova, "Wohnsitzauflage: An opportunity for integration? The Impact of Residency Obligation Act on Refugee Women's Access to Paid Work," (2023, forthcoming).

Table 1

Refugee women in vocational training
In percent

Age	Survey year				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<30	5.3	8.7	16.6	15.8	17.0
30–39	1.6	3.1	4.7	2.2	4.1
40–49	3.9	3.1	2.9	4.9	3.0
50+	1.4	2.3	2.7	1.3	0
Total	3.2	5.1	8.9	8.1	9.1

Question: Are you currently in an educational program? That is, are you attending school or college (including doctoral studies), are you completing vocational training, or are you participating in a continuing education course?

Sources: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2020; weighted data.

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Table 2

Women in educational programs
In percent

	2016	2020
Secondary school	22	14
College/university	7	12
Vocational training	47	64
Continuing education/occupational re-training	24	10
Total	100	100

Sources: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2020; weighted data.

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extent. Thus, the likelihood is much higher that they interact with Germans at the workplace. In 2020, contact with people outside the family decreased strongly overall due to the coronavirus pandemic.

It is also notable that the share of refugees who reported daily contact with people from the same country of origin between 2016 and 2019 decreased by half for both men and women. Daily contact with people from other countries, in contrast, has remained at a similar rate over time.

Refugee women spend the majority of their time performing care work

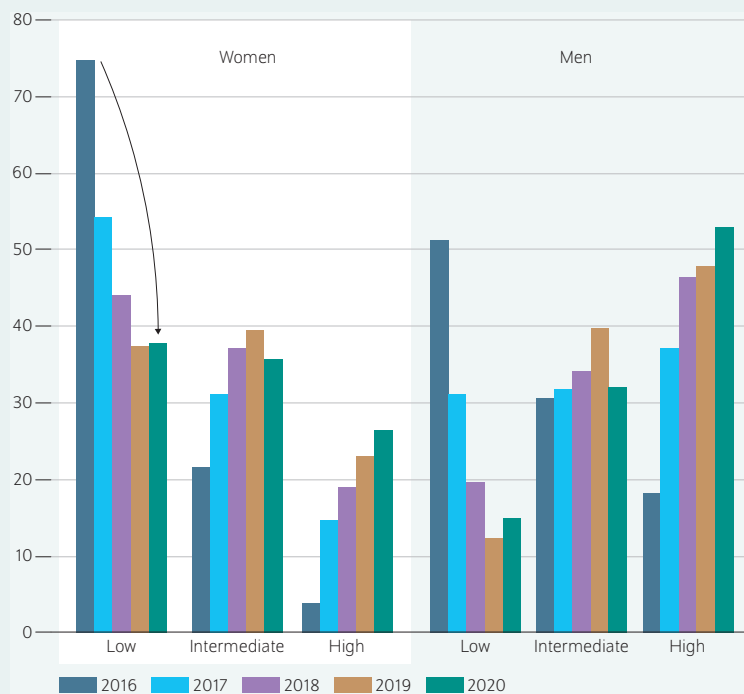
Legal and institutional limits influence when refugees are able to start an integration course and begin seeking formal employment.¹³ When childcare for children under six also becomes an issue due to cultural reasons or a lack of available daycare spots, many refugee mothers must forego learning German for a longer period of time, thereby worsening their chances of integrating into the labor market.¹⁴

¹³ Jana Kuhlemann, "Refugees' time investments—Differences in the time use of refugees, other immigrants, and natives in Germany," *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*, vol. 4 (2022) (available online).

¹⁴ Yuliya Kosyakova and Nevena Kubic, "Kinship, Inter- and Intraethnic Social Networks and Refugees' Division of Housework," *Journal of Family Research* 34, no. 2 (2022): 802–822.

Figure 3

Refugees' language skills by gender and survey year
In percent



Sources: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2020; weighted data.

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Refugee women have improved their German skills substantially, but still lag behind men.

As the data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees confirms, refugee women spend a majority of their time performing unpaid care work such as childcare or household duties instead of learning German or pursuing paid employment.¹⁵ This has barely changed over the years (Table 3).¹⁶ In 2019, refugee women reported spending twice as much time on childcare and housework as men every day. They spent 20 percent less time pursuing gainful employment than men.

Moreover, the difference in childcare hours doubled due to the coronavirus pandemic, with women taking on more hours.¹⁷ Both refugee women and other women in Germany were affected.¹⁸ When comparing only employed men and

¹⁵ The results of the time allocation question are not necessarily cumulative, as several of these tasks can be performed simultaneously. Furthermore, the number of people answering the individual questions varies, as some questions are not applicable in some cases. Moreover, a direct comparison of the use of time with people without a migration background is only possible to a limited extent in the initial years after migration, as people without a migration background have not had their lives upended and interrupted.

¹⁶ Cristina de Paiva Lareiro, "Geflüchtete Frauen in Deutschland – Freizeitverhalten und soziale Kontakte," *BAMF-Kurzanalyse*, no. 02 (2021) (in German; available online).

¹⁷ Maria Grasso et al., "The impact of the coronavirus crisis on European societies. What have we learnt and where do we go from here? – Introduction to the COVID volume," *European Societies*, no. 23 (2021): S2-S32 (available online).

¹⁸ Jonas Jessen, C. Katharina Spieß and Katharina Wrohlich, "Sorgearbeit während der Corona-Pandemie: Mütter übernehmen größeren Anteil – Vor allem bei schon zuvor ungleicher Aufteilung," *DIW Wochenbericht*, no. 9 (2021) (in German; available online).

Table 3

Daily time allocation (weekdays from Monday to Friday)
In hours

Activity	2019 ratio	2020 ratio
	Women/men	Women/men
Job, second job, or internship incl. commute	0.8	0.8
Childcare	2.2	4.8
Care for other dependents	1.3	2.9
Household chores such as washing, cooking, cleaning	2.0	2.4
Shopping and errands	1.2	1.2
Repair work: house, apartment, car, yard	1.2	0.2

Notes: (1) Question: "Now we are talking about what your normal day-to-day life looks like at the moment. Please indicate how many hours you spend on an average work day on each of the following activities (please round to whole hours)." (2) Differences in averages between men and women tested based on a t-test with a five-percent error level. (3) Further insignificant categories are training, continuing education, studying; school, academic studies, or doctoral studies; learning German; dealing with authorities; physical activities such as sports, working out, calisthenics; other free time activities and hobbies; frustrating idle periods without useful employment.

Sources: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2020; weighted data.

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Labor market participation of refugee women gradually increasing

Although the labor market participation of refugee women is still low compared to men, it doubled between 2017 and 2020. In 2020, 12.8 percent of refugee women between 18 and 64 in Germany reported that they were employed (2017: 5.3 percent). A further 5.6 percent (2017: 4.51 percent) were in vocational training. Not only has the share of employed women and women in training increased, but the share of registered unemployed women has as well (2020: 16.5 percent, 2017: 12.3 percent). At the same time, the share of women on parental leave has also increased from 7.2 to 11.8 percent. In addition, more women completed vocational training or were registered as job seekers (Figure 4).

Refugee women are still very limited in their opportunities to take up employment on short notice, in particular due to childcare duties. For example, nearly 70 percent of the non-employed women said they would not be able to accept a job within two weeks if they were offered a position. In contrast, only 28 percent of men said they would not be able to accept a job at such short notice.

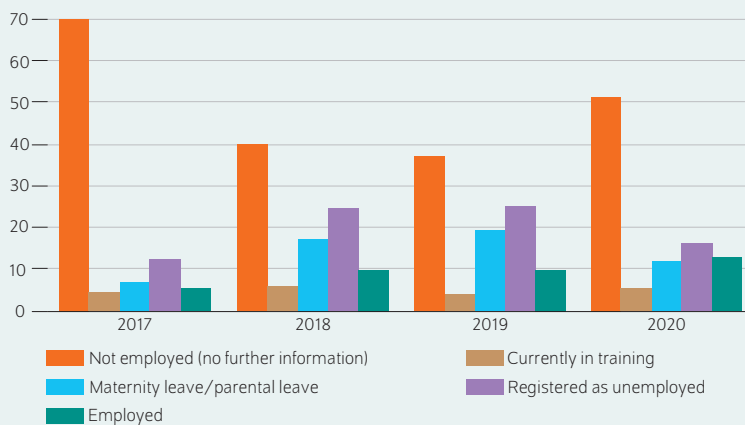
A logistical regression is conducted to statistically investigate which factors influence the probability of being in paid work (Table 4, Figure 5).²¹ People working full-time or part-time, those in vocational training or company internships, or those who are marginally employed are considered employed. The analysis only shows correlations and does not present causal relationships.²² The model is calculated for the total respondents and for women and men separately. The explanatory variables included are education, number of children below six, language skills, contact to Germans (at least once a week or more frequently), and if there is a *residence obligation (Residenzpflicht)*, which requires the person in question to live in a specific area, or not.²³ This variable is of key importance because it limits mobility and access to the labor market. Further control variables are age, country of origin, work experience before migration, marital status, type of residence, location (western or eastern Germany), health status, and survey year.

The regression results confirm the gender-specific difference in the opportunities of pursuing paid employment. Holding all other variables constant, women are about 15 percentage points less likely to be in paid work than men.

Having children younger than six years has a negative impact on employment opportunities for both men and women,

Figure 4

Labor market participation of women
In percent



Notes: Other categories not shown: Employed but inactive in the past seven days and not employed but participating in paid work in the past seven days (total less than 1.7 percent in 2020).

Sources: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2020; weighted data.

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Labor market participation of refugee women is increasing slowly but steadily.

women, it can be seen that refugee women spend almost twice as much time on average on care and household work as men.¹⁹ These results are above the average of the German population, where the same ratio is around 1.5.²⁰

¹⁹ Care and household work include time spent caring for children; caring for other dependents; housework (such as washing, cooking, cleaning); errands and shopping; and house, apartment, and car repairs.

²⁰ Clara Schäper, Annkatrin Schrenker, and Katharina Wrohlich, "Gender Care Gap and Gender Pay Gap Increase Substantially until Middle Age," *DIW Weekly Report*, no. 9 (2023): 83-88 (available online).

²¹ The binary logistical regression can be used in this cause because the variable (dependent variable) can take on two possible values: if the person is employed or not.

²² A person is employed according to the International Labor Organization (ILO) if they are of working age and worked for pay for at least one hour in a one-week reporting period or in a self-employed or assisting capacity. Globally, the labor force participation rate for women in 2021 was about 43 percent, compared with 67 percent for men. Cf. International Labor Organization, *ILO modelled estimates database, ILOSTAT* (available online).

²³ Herbert Brücker, Andreas Hauptmann, and Philipp Jäschke, "Wohnsitzauflagen reduzieren die Chancen auf Arbeitsmarktintegration," *IAB-Kurzbericht*, no. 3 (2020) (in German; available online).

Table 4

Average effects of different factors on pursuing paid employment by refugees

Average marginal effects in percentage points

	Men	Women	Total
Women			-14.9*
Age in years	3.0*	0.2	1.8*
Level of education (reference: low)			
Intermediate	4.2*	0.3	2.0*
High	1.4	0.4	0.5
German skills	2.0*	0.4*	1.4*
Number of children from 0 to <3	-2.8*	-3.2*	-3.4*
Number of children from 3 to <6	-2.5*	-1.5*	-2.6*
Prior work experience	10.9*	1.1*	6.8*
Residency obligation (Residenzpflicht)	-2.5*	0.3	-0.9
Married	-7.4*	-0.2	-4.1*
Contact with Germans (weekly or more frequently)	16.4*	3.3*	10.7*
Years since coming to Germany	8.2*	0.4*	4.3*
Region (reference: western Germany)			
Eastern Germany	-5.0*	0.0	-2.3*
Subjective health status (reference: low to medium)			
Good to very good subjective health status	11.5*	1.0*	6.2*
Living situation (reference: communal accommodation or other)			
Private accommodation	4.2*	0.8*	2.7*
Sample size	11,243	6,817	18,060

Notes: Multivariate binary logistic regression results. *: Significant at the five percent level or less. Dependent variable: employment. Average marginal effects in percentage points. Confidence intervals at the 95 percent level were calculated using cluster-robust standard errors.

"Total" model examines the entire population aged 18 to 64 (N = 18060); "women" model: 6,817 observations; "men" model: 11,243 observations. Other control variables not shown: Age squared, country of origin, and survey year.

Legend: Compared to men, women have a 14.9-percentage-point lower probability of being gainfully employed.

Sources: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2020; weighted data.

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with women with children under three having a 3.2-percentage-point lower probability of being in paid work than women with older children.

The probability of being employed is positively related to an intermediate level of education for men (compared to men with a low level of education, who are the reference group).²⁴ This difference is not statistically significant for women, but it is for men. Thus, according to the regression results, there is no correlation between education and better labor market opportunities for women.

Work experience plays an important role in employment, but its influence on employment opportunities is greater for men than for women. For men with work experience prior to migration, the probability of being employed is 11 percent higher than for men without work experience. Women with prior work experience, in contrast, have a 1.1 percentage point higher probability of being gainfully employed than women without work experience. In contrast, the requirement to live in a certain area (*Residenzpflicht*) is negatively and significantly related to the probability of employment for men but not for women.

For men with good German skills, the probability of being in paid work is significantly higher than for women. The situation is similar when it comes to social interactions: Weekly (or more frequent) interactions with Germans correlates more strongly with the chances of employment for men than for women (16.4 versus 3.3 percent).

Other control variables included in the model show the expected results. For example, the probability of employment is higher the longer someone has lived in Germany. In almost all cases, the correlation between the variables analyzed and the chances of employment are higher for men.

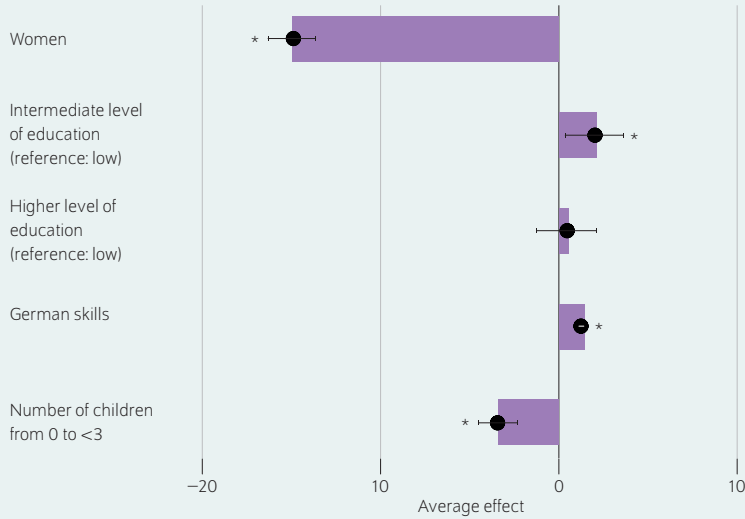
Conclusion: Continue promoting refugee women's integration into the labor market

Refugee women who came to Germany between 2013 and 2019 are facing significant challenges integrating into the German labor market. Barriers to entry include a low level of education, little work experience, slow progress in learning German, and traditional gender roles in paid employment and unpaid care work. However, labor market participation of refugee women doubled between 2017 and 2020. At the same time, the share of women with good German skills in the 2020 survey was almost seven times higher than the share in 2016. Furthermore, the rate of young women's participation in education has tripled. However, refugee

²⁴ Low education level comprises the ISCED categories of no education, primary education, or lower secondary education. An intermediate level of education corresponds to the categories of upper secondary education and short-cycle tertiary education. A high level of education includes a bachelor's, master's, doctorate, or equivalent.

Figure 5

Probability of employment of refugees by selected characteristics



Notes: Multivariate binary logistic regression results. *: Significant at the five percent level or less. Dependent variable: employment. Average marginal effects in percentage points. Confidence intervals at the 95 percent level were calculated using cluster-robust standard errors.

"Total" model examines the entire population aged 18 to 64 (N = 18060); "women" model: 6,817 observations; "men" model: 11,243 observations.

Sources: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2020; weighted data.

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Women are 15 percentage points less likely to be employed than men.

women’s language skills and skills necessary for the labor market remain limited, partially due to the fact that participation in educational and language programs is hindered by unpaid care duties. Furthermore, limited social contact outside of the family prevents access to relevant social networks that could provide women with information on employment and educational opportunities.

The results of the statistical analyses show that the expected positive impact of work experience, education, and language on the probability of being employed is much greater for men than for women. This suggests a need to include additional variables that explain the different probabilities of employment.

Therefore, it is important to expand the existing educational measures for refugee women and, if necessary, to come up with new language and integration programs. Particular attention should be paid to the potential of women with school-age children who no longer require uninterrupted care.

In view of the labor shortage in Germany—not only for skilled, but also for unskilled jobs—special integration measures and training programs for refugees should be tested in order to attract more women in particular to the labor market. Expanding special programs for women with children also makes sense given the large number of Ukrainian refugee women who have been arriving in Germany since 2022.

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