UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

REFUGEE VOICES ON INTEGRATION IN ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA

Results from the survey and profiling exercise

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 5

1.1 Acknowledgments 5

2. METHODOLOGICAL NOTE 6

2.1 Objective and research questions 6

2.2 Field work and sampling, target group and audience 6

2.3 Coverage of refugee population and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents 6

2.4 Limitations 9

2.5 Covid-19 and refugee communities 9

3. REFUGEE INTEGRATION EXPERIENCES: Results from the survey and profiling 11

3.1 Estonia 11

3.1.1 Views on integration experiences 11

3.1.2 Housing 12

3.1.3 Employment 15

3.1.4 Social support 18

3.1.5 Children's education and language training 20

3.1.6 Future plans 21

3.1.7 Integration priorities and outcomes 21

3.1.8 Experiences of negative attitudes 24

3.2 Latvia 26

3.2.1 Views on integration experiences 26

3.2.2 Housing 28

3.2.3 Employment 30

3.2.4 Social support 34

3.2.5 Children's education and language training 36

3.2.6 Future plans 37

3.2.7 Integration priorities and outcomes 37

3.2.8 Experiences of negative attitudes 40

3.3 Lithuania 42

3.3.1 Views on integration experiences 42

3.3.2 Housing 44

3.3.3 Employment 46

3.3.4 Social support 51

3.3.5 Children's education and language training 52

3.3.6 Future plans 54

3.3.7 Integration priorities and outcomes 55

3.3.8 Experiences of negative attitudes 57

4. ANNEX-1 59

5. REFERENCES 62

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1. INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2019, UNHCR Representation for the Nordic and Baltic Countries carried out a survey and profiling exercise to enhance understanding of the refugee[1] perspective and strengthen the refugees' involvement in integration, gain the views of refugees granted protection and residing in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on how they have integrated into their respective host countries, what challenges they have encountered and what opportunities they see to improve integration – and to compare these findings with the outcome of the earlier mapping exercise[2] and existing research.[3]

This refugee survey builds on and complements the findings of the earlier UNHCR mapping of integration efforts in the Baltic Countries in 2013–2016 which also used an age, gender and diversity based participatory approach. Over the past years, all three countries have adopted and implemented important targeted measures to strengthen refugee integration policies. In particular, the participation of the three countries in the European Emergency Relocation Schemes (ECERS) from 2015 to 2017 led to new institutional and legislative developments but also revealed new challenges.

1.1 Acknowledgments

The data collection was carried out within a wide partnership, including refugees. Country-based facilitators from UNHCR's partner organisations allocated social workers, mentors and other practitioners who assisted refugees to fill out the questionnaire. UNHCR offers the utmost appreciation to all refugees and partners in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, including the Estonian Refugee Council, International House Tartu, 'I want to Help Refugees', Latvian Red Cross, Society Integration Foundation, Lithuanian Red Cross, Vilnius Archdiocese Caritas and 'Artscape' for their participation and successful completion of the survey and profiling exercise.

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1 For simplicity, the term 'refugee' is used in this report to cover both Convention refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection.

2 UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Integration of refugees in Lithuania: Participation and Empowerment, October – November 2013, available at: https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/58a486e34.pdf

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Integration of refugees in Latvia: Participation and Empowerment, June 2015, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/58a4877c4.html

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Integration of refugees in Estonia - Participation and Empowerment, December 2016, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/586e251d4.html

3 NIEM project 'Measuring and improving integration of beneficiaries of international protection' in Latvia and Lithuania; available at: http://www.forintegration.eu/; Adaptation of newly-arrived migrants in Estonia; available at: https://bit.ly/3t7MVrm

2. METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

2.1 Objective and research questions

The two main objective of the refugee survey were:

- To gain a better understanding of how refugees feel they have progressed in their integration, what challenges they have encountered and what opportunities they see for improvements in the key integration areas: education and language, housing and employment, social support and long-term settlement, overall integration experiences and societal attitudes.
- To foster evidence-based development of integration policy and improve refugees' socioeconomic situation by providing country-specific suggestions.

The research methodology was designed to allow the integration situation to be assessed by taking into consideration refugee experiences and attitudes. In addition to quantitative data collection, in depth interviews with refugees were carried out to deepen the survey results and provide contextual information on integration challenges (quotes from the interviews are provided in each subsection). The report includes detailed and country-specific suggestions as well as the quotes from the interviews. The suggestions were prepared based on refugee voices, UNHCR integration mappings, existing integration research and recent consultations with partners, integration stakeholders and refugees. The suggestions are addressing key integration areas and are not ment to be exaustive.

It is hoped that the data collected on the views of refugees will help to identify those integration areas which Governments, NGOs and UNHCR will prioritise and address through targeted policies, initiatives and advocacy in 2021 and beyond to further improve refugees' integration in the Baltic Countries.

2.2 Field work and sampling, target group and audience

The data collection was carried out within a wide partnership. UNHCR's partner organisations[4] in the three countries facilitated data collection by allocating social workers, mentors and other practitioners, who assisted refugees to fill out the questionnaire. The sampling and data collection process involved participants in the following programmes: Immigrant and Refugee Information Centres[5] (further *one-stop-shops*) in Lithuania, the Support Person Service in Estonia and the Social Worker/Mentor programme in Latvia. This allowed those refugees to be reached, who are receiving various integration services through the integration programmes in the Baltic Countries. At the same time, sampling aimed to reach those who have already completed or dropped out of integration programmes or have not ever participated in such programme. Due to the lack of data, the sampling did not target those refugees who have already left the Baltic Countries and moved on to other, primarily European, countries.

2.3 Coverage of refugee population and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

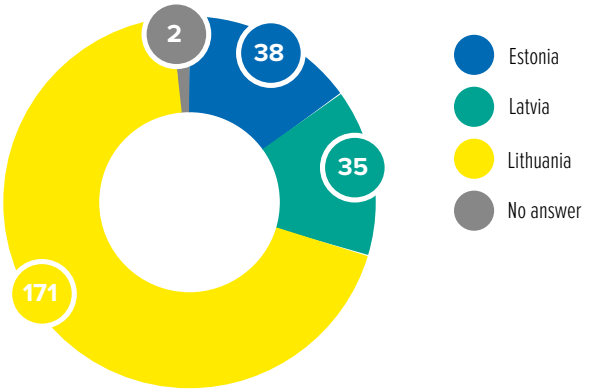
The survey has reached 272 refugees with due attention to ensure a proper reflection of diversity with regard to citizenship, age group, gender, type of protection, means of arrival, family status and education (see graphs below). As 26 refugees did not provide consent to participate in the survey (marked as 'blank'), data analysis covers 246 refugees (more detailed and country specific information on respondents' characteristics is available in the Annex 1)[6] (*see graph 1)*. Overall, this is the largest quantitative survey on refugee integration in the Baltic Countries since the establishment of asylum systems in the second half of the 1990s.

[4] Estonian Refugee Council, 'I Want to Help Refugees' in Latvia with the support of the Latvian Red Cross and Society Integration Foundation, the Lithuanian Red Cross and Vilnius Archdiocese Caritas.

[5] Funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

[6] Additionally, the survey has covered approximately 240 children of those adult refugees who participated in the survey. Refugee children were not the subject of the questionnaire, with the exception of 5 persons (16-18 years of age) who participated in the survey with the consent of their parents. The number of children is indicative as due to data collection challenges a statistical mistake is possible.

Graph 1: The number of respondents who completed the survey

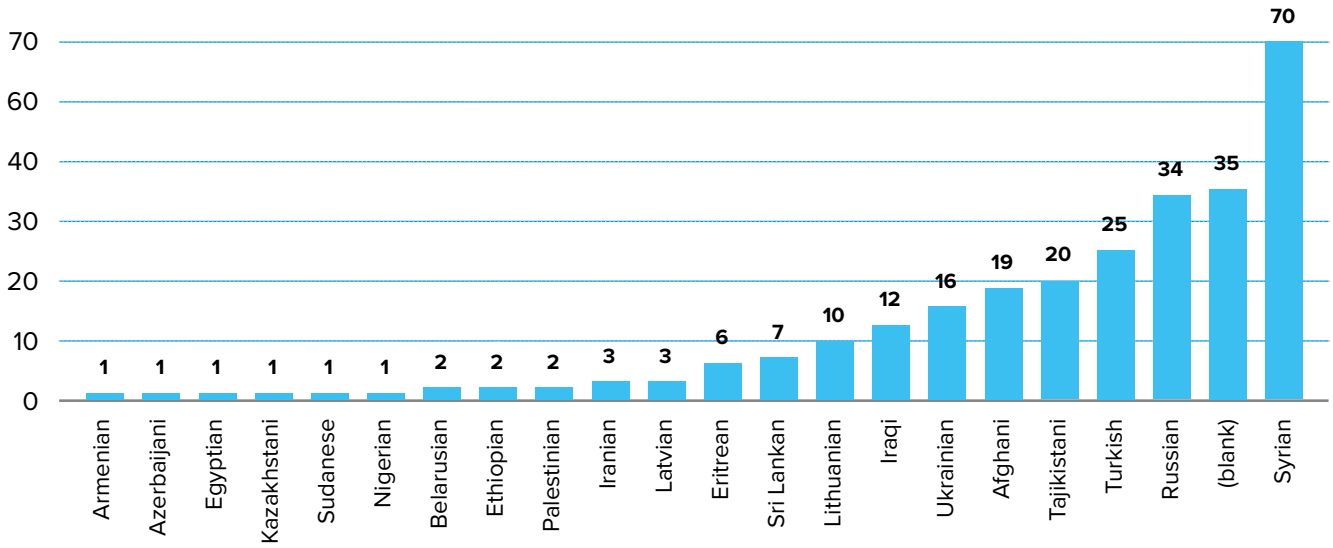


The survey aimed to reflect the diversity of the refugee population, considering citizenship, age group and gender. In the context of the European relocation schemes, the number of Syrian refugees has significantly increased in the Baltics, and this trend is also visible in the sampling as the largest proportions of respondents in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are Syrian refugees (*see graph 2*). The sampling covered a significant proportion of refugees from the Russian Federation, aiming to reflect what has been the prevailing trend for many years; while to reflect the most recent trends, refugees from Turkey were also covered. In Latvia and Lithuania, some refugees who had already obtained the citizenship of their host country were involved, which created a greater diversity of experiences and views.

The largest proportions of respondents were from age groups between 18-34 and 35-64 (*see graph 3*). In Lithuania and Latvia, very few respondents were under the age of 18. The survey aimed to create a balance between male and female respondents, including SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity). The latter dimension was reflected in Lithuania, engaging refugees with diverse SOGI.

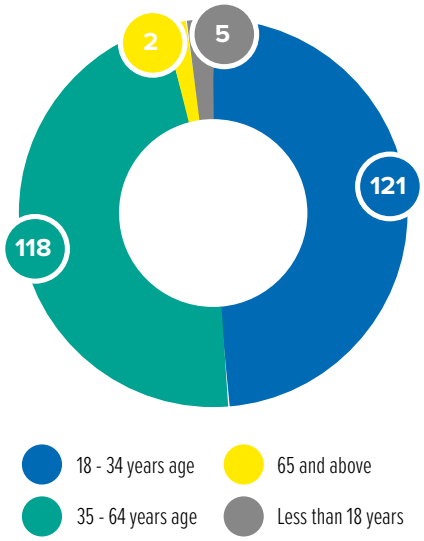
The largest proportions of respondents had completed higher (tertiary) education (*see graph 5*), which together with the data on age groups shows the potential for labour market inclusion and the fact that refugees are bringing socioeconomic resources to a new country. Data on completed education by gender show that male education indicators are better than female at all three levels – primary, secondary and higher education. This data is no surprise: various studies[7] show that education and employment indicators of immigrant and refugee women are lower than those of men. Therefore, one of the focuses of an integration system should be gender-sensitive and targeted labour market inclusion measures for refugee women.

Graph 2: The number of respondents by current citizenship

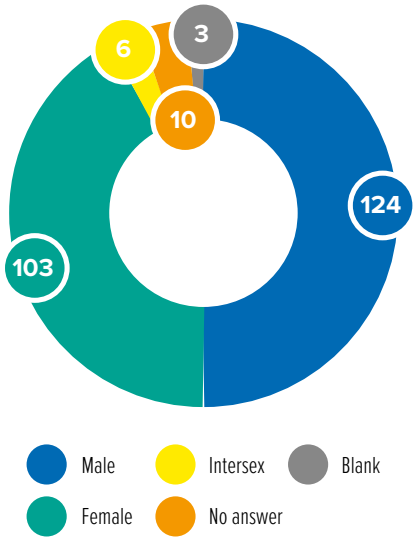


[7] For example, OECD/EU (2018), Settling In 2018: Indicators of Immigrant Integration, OECD Publishing, Paris/European Union, Brussels, available at: http://bit.ly/3IfSPmo

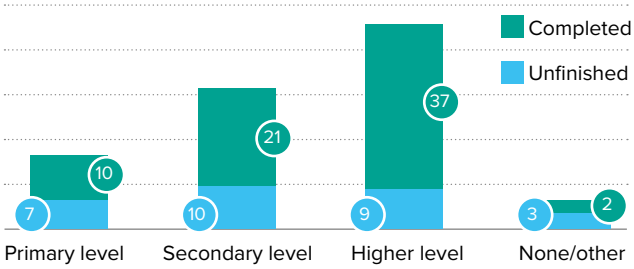
Graph 3: The number of respondents by age group



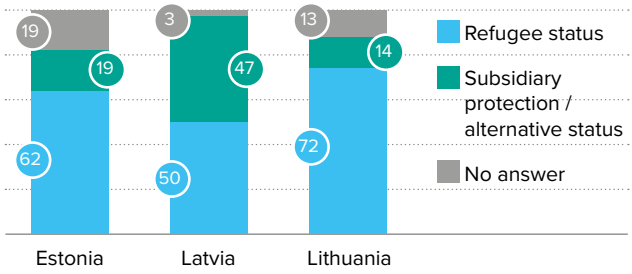
Graph 4: The number of respondents by gender



Graph 5: Respondents by level of education (%)

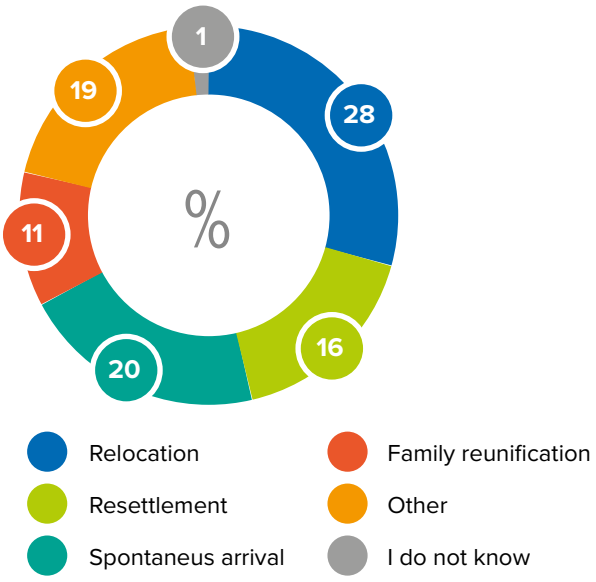


Graph 6: Respondents by protection status (%)



Respondents' means of arrival shows that intra-EU relocation is the commonest, followed by resettlement, spontaneous arrival and family reunification (*see graph 6*). Quite a significant proportion of respondents indicated 'other' (including 'study visa,[8] work visa, going on foot, crossing the border, visiting a family member'). Overall, the survey sampling managed to reflect the diversity of means of arrival in the Baltic Countries. The data on the survey respondents by the type of international protection granted reflects official asylum statistics in in the three countries. To reflect the variety of refugee views, the sampling targeted almost equal shares of survey respondents with refugee and alternative statuses.[9]

Graph 7: Respondents by means of arrival



[8] For example, a person from Syria came to Latvia as a foreign student and later, due to conflict in Syria, received international protection by changing legal status from student to refugee.

[9] The correlation revealing different integration experiences of refugees and alternative status beneficiaries would be relevant in particular; however, due to the low number of respondents in Latvia and Estonia, such correlation would not be statistically relevant and methodologically accurate.

The largest proportions of respondents are married, followed by singles and divorced. Gender breakdown of respondents shows that refugee men tend to be single more often than female refugees. On the other hand, looking at those who are widowed, only refugee women are identified. Considering the low education and employment indicators of refugee women, this status indicates vulnerability. It may require special integration services and capacities from hosting institutions and integration practitioners.

2.4 Limitations

Using the same methodology, research instruments and sampling procedures in the three Baltic Countries meant that quantitative data on various integration indicators could be analysed and compared. However, considering that the integration contexts varied and the number of refugees reached was low, the comparison should be treated with caution.

2.5 Covid-19 and refugee communities

The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted a range of country-specific challenges[10] for refugee integration: unemployment and loss of income have led to additional challenges to maintain current housing options; lack of relevant equipment to support children in distance learning as well as IT literacy created challenges to keep up with education indicators; isolation and lockdown had a negative impact on overall mental well-being, while lack of targeted information created uncertainty about what will happen in the near future by making the integration pathway more difficult and less predictable.

As responses from refugees were collected at the end of 2019, the survey and profiling exercise does not reflect the Covid-19 situation and its impact on refugee communities in the Baltic Countries. However, some of the challenges revealed by the survey and profiling exercise have become even more relevant in the context of the pandemic.

[10] Challenges have been revealed by UNHCR consultations with partners in the Baltic Countries.

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3. REFUGEE INTEGRATION EXPERIENCES: RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY AND PROFILING

3.1 Estonia

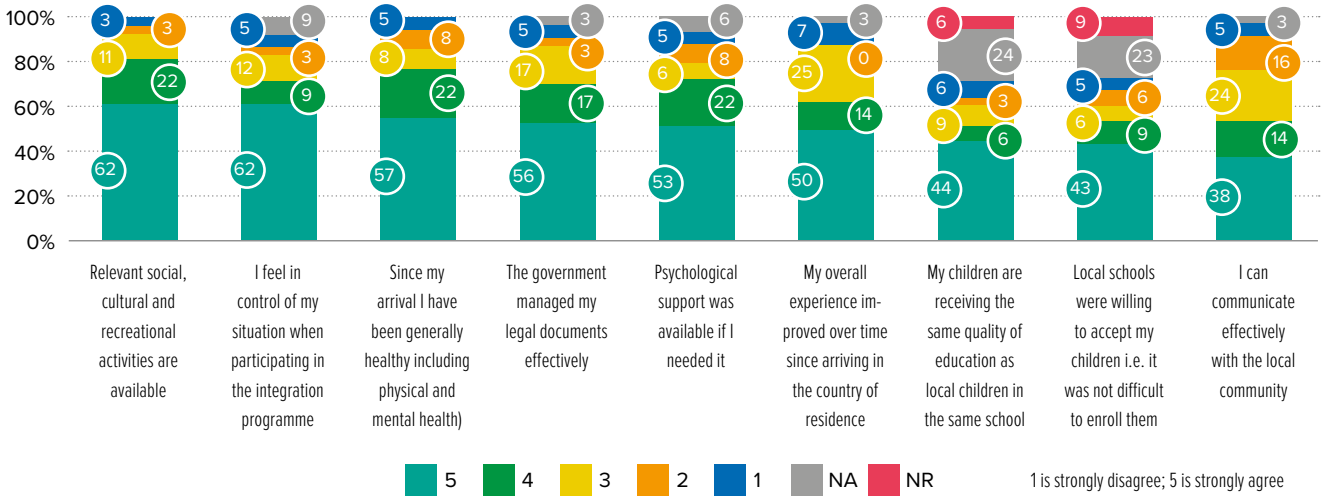
3.1.1 Views on integration experiences

> *I have many friends through Pagulasabi, there is also a cultural programme with Estonian volunteers. They are very helpful in every way, especially my wife goes to different activities with them and to different places. She attends a women's group. I used to attend cultural programmes, we went to different museums with them, to a water park, to different activities. We also organise football matches, all volunteers we have met through them, they are now my contacts and we are friends in WhatsApp group. So I am well-connected'*
>
> Pakistani refugee[11]

To identify integration challenges and opportunities from the refugees' perspective, respondents were asked to think about their overall experiences of various aspects of integration since their arrival in Estonia (*see graph 8*). Overall, refugee experiences were more positive than negative, especially looking at social, cultural and recreational activities,[13] self-reliance, health, management of legal documents, psychological support, children's education and local schools, contacts with the local community and overall adaptation in the country. The data below revealed that refugees' potential for self-reliance is quite high, as 71% of respondents (strongly) agreed that they feel in control of their own situation.

> *I do not have Estonian friends - they are very closed. They wait and assess you. They are afraid to talk to us. Last year I went to the youth camps and got many new friends. They told me that they were afraid to talk to us, even if they wanted to'*
>
> Syrian refugee

Graph 8: Survey question (part-1): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Estonia[12]



[11] Due to the potential identification of the individual, the report does not provide such social and demographic characteristics of respondents as age and gender.

[12] In this graph and further in other graphs: NA – not applicable; UN – I do not know; NR – No answer.

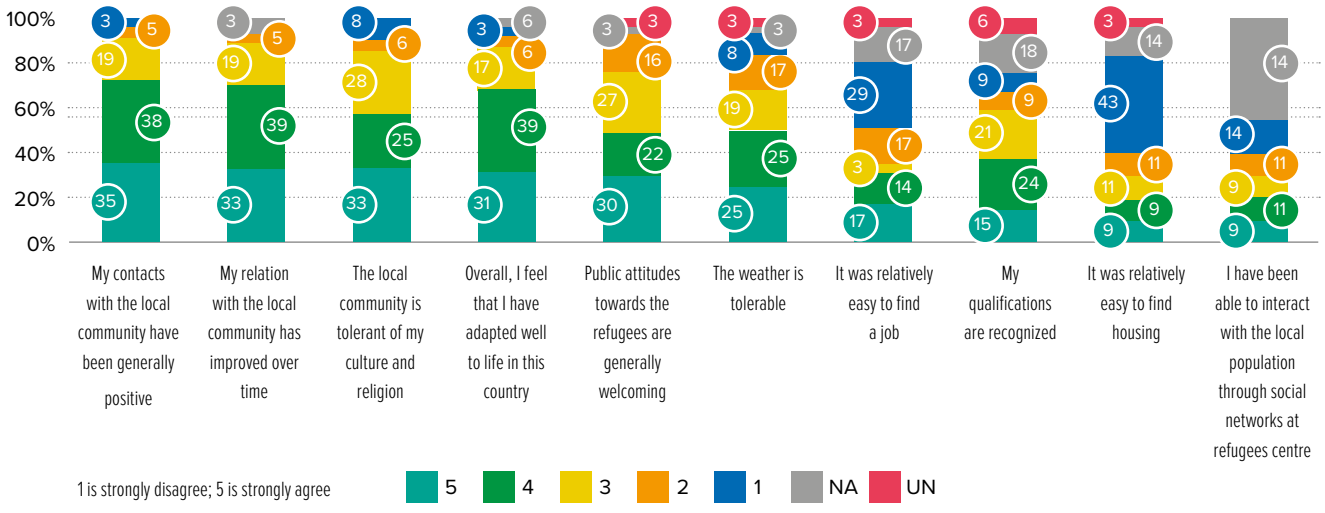
[13] During consultations with Estonian integration stakeholders, lack of socio-cultural activities was identified as a challenge. However, refugee views on socio-cultural activities might relate to the recent Culture and Sports programme coordinated by the Johannes Mihkelson Centre.

> *I struggle with managing my life - my food, my education, job. But I thank Estonia for the peace. It is so rich for peace and quiet. The calm has come to my soul. I am now in peace. I am disappointed in many things, especially in finding work, to have a community and activities'*
>
> Syrian refugee

However, there are some challenges, particularly with finding housing and the limited welcoming environment in terms of societal attitudes towards refugees; as well as room for improvement in the following areas: lack of contacts with the local community at accommodation centres, recognition of qualifications,[14] employment, other (*see graph 9*).

Overall, key integration dimensions – housing, employment and public perceptions – still need to be improved (*for specific suggestions, see respective subsections 3.1.2 Housing, 3.1.3 Employment, 3.1.4 Social support, 3.1.5 Children's education and language training, 3.1.8 Experiences of negative attitudes*).

Graph 9: Survey question (part-2): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Estonia



3.1.2 Housing

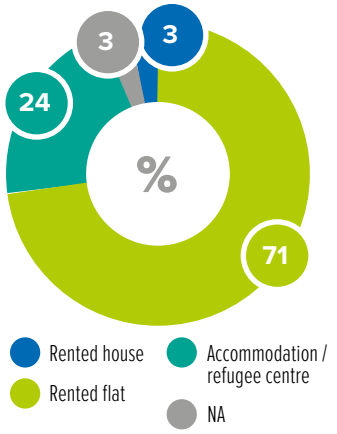
> *The reception conditions were not bad, but we expected our own apartment. They did not tell us that we would go to a forest. We felt very bad, because we couldn't go outside or see people, go even shopping. We brought food for 10 days. The centre was good, the employers were good and nice. We didn't have any problems. There were beds, blankets. But a person can't live there for more than a month. But we had questions about why this country brings us to this forest, where there is nothing? This is not a good idea'*
>
> Syrian refugee

Most respondents are living either in rented flats (71%), or accommodation centres (24%). Though respondents indicated that housing is one of the biggest challenges, almost 60% found a place to live in less than three months; for some of the refugees it took up to one year or even more. More than 60% of respondents indicated that they either have never changed accommodation or have done so once (*see graphs 10, 11, 12*).

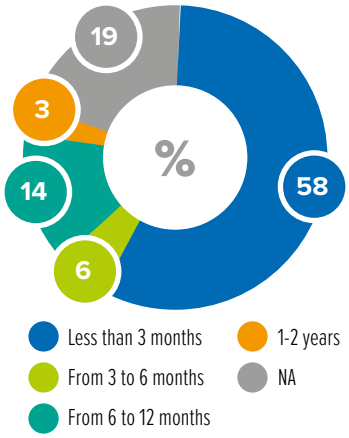
> *I searched for six months. Typically, they avoid giving housing to refugees. I strongly accept European life. I come from background that is open-minded - my mother is Christian. We have our restaurant, a bar. But when I meet people, I feel that we are not accepted here as Syrian refugees. This makes you feel down'*
>
> Syrian refugee

[14] According to the UNHCR mapping in Estonia (2016), concerns have been reported regarding recognition of refugees' academic qualifications in connection with seeking employment or studies.

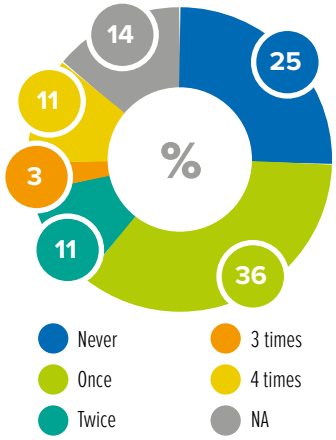
Graph 10: Type of housing[15]



Graph 11: How long did it take to find housing to live in when you first arrived, excluding accommodation centre?



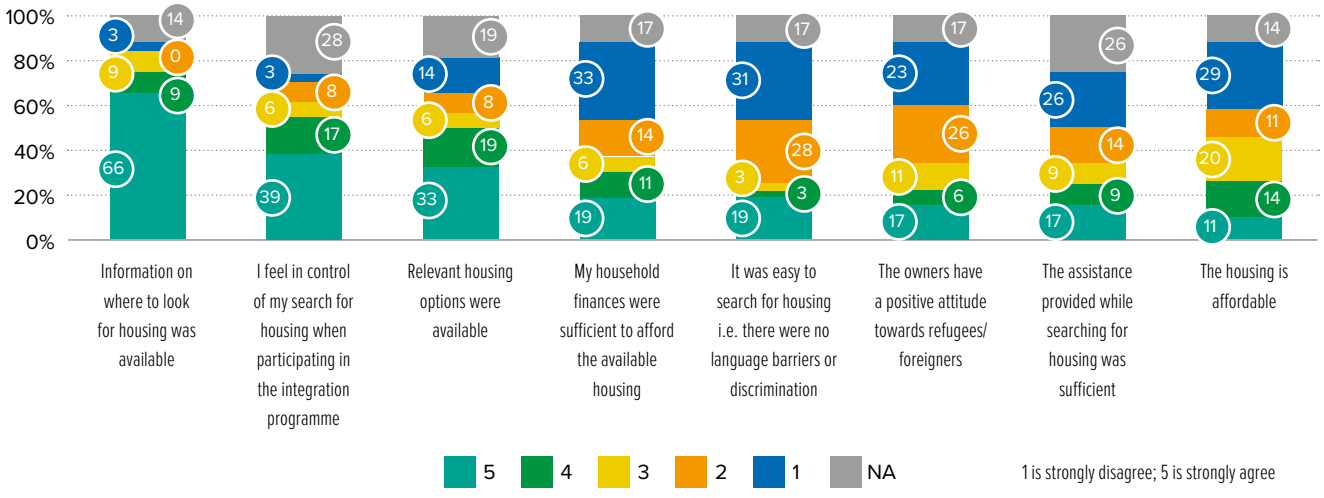
Graph 12: How many times have you changed your housing, excluding accommodation centre?



As refugee housing is one of the biggest obstacles to integration, the survey questionnaire focused on this issue in particular. In order to understand the reasons behind the housing challenge, refugees were asked to tell their experiences searching for housing since they arrived in Estonia (*see graph 13*). Mostly, respondents tend to (strongly) agree that information where to look for housing was available (75%), they felt in control of their own situation while searching for housing (56%) and that relevant housing options were available (52%). A smaller proportion (strongly) agreed that household finances were sufficient (30%), there were no language obstacles or discrimination (22%), landlords had a positive attitude towards refugees or foreigners (23%), the assistance was sufficient (26%) and the housing was affordable (25%). This shows that housing is a very complex challenge, combining different social, economic and even cultural dimensions as well as the integration system (social benefits) and awareness of the local population.

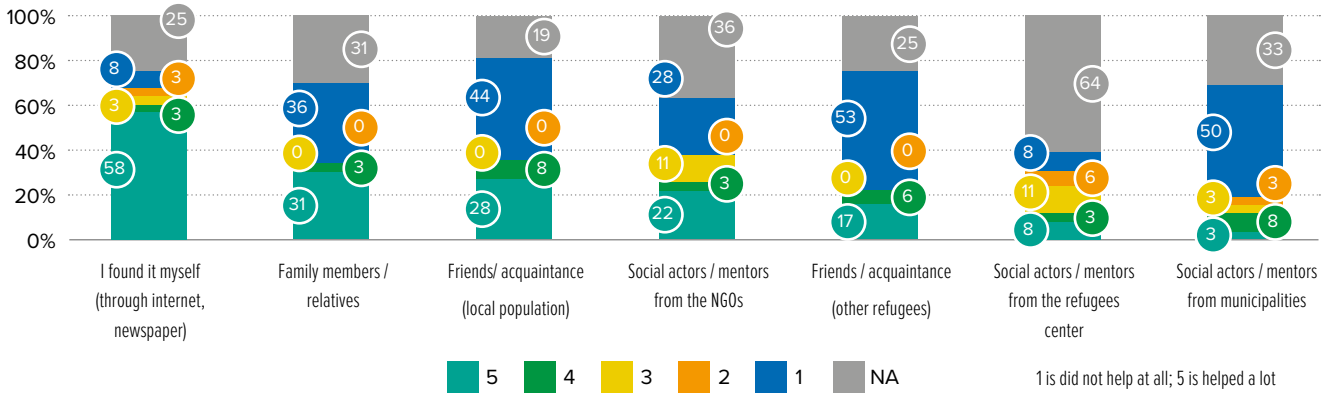
> *"We stayed in Vägeva accommodation centre for six months, then we came to Tallinn. There were some people, but we didn't have a common language and that's why we were so alone'*
>
> Syrian refugee

Graph 13: Survey question: Please think about your overall experience while searching for housing since your arrival in Estonia



[15] Due to automatic rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. Also, it can cause the total response percentages to exceed 100%, but note more than 101%.

Graph 14: Survey question: Who helped you the most while you were looking for the housing you live in at the moment?



To identify assistance in addressing housing challenges, respondents were asked to indicate who helped them the most to find a place to live (*see graph 14*). Overall, the majority (61%) indicated that they found housing by themselves, 36% received significant help from the local population, 34% - from family members, 25% - from social mentors (NGOs), 23% - from other refugees and 11% each from social mentors at accommodation centres and municipalities.

Such data shows quite positive indicators, when refugees are dealing with obstacles to integration either using internal individual resources, or networks within the local population. However, the latter argument contrasts with the survey data on negative attitudes (*see 3.2.8 Experiences of negative attitudes*): 30% of respondents indicated experiencing negative reactions/attitudes from landlords daily or weekly.

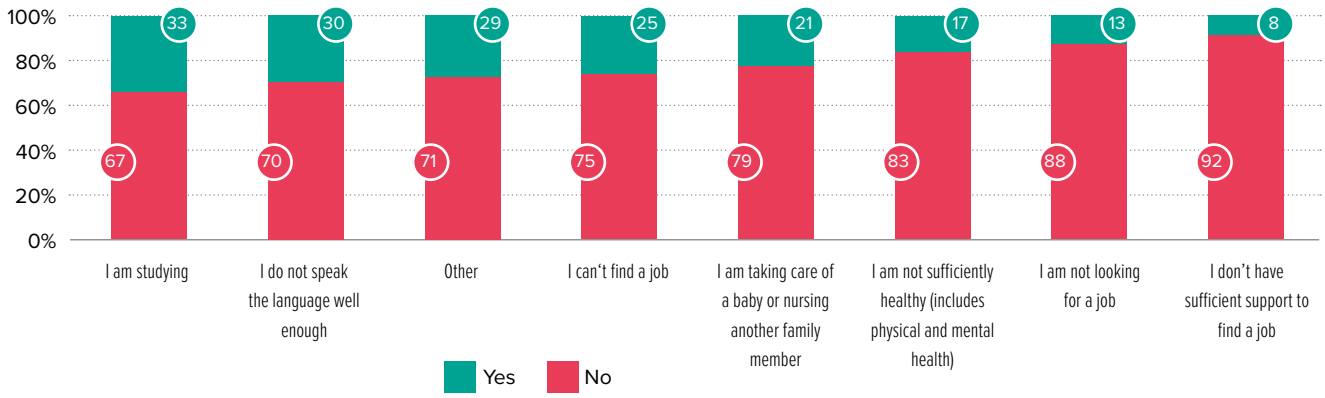
SUGGESTIONS[16] TO ADDRESS HOUSING CHALLENGES:

- Engaging municipalities in the implementation of refugee/immigrant specific integration measures and services with a focus on (social) housing;
- More effective facilitation by social workers (municipalities and NGOs) with a focus on matching landlords and refugees. This could help to reduce refugees' negative experiences and address landlords' prejudices, stereotypes and myths. NGOs' experience from Lithuania shows that social workers as intermediaries have a crucial role in finding housing and communicating with landlords;
- In addition to more active engagement of social workers and mentors, diversity and awareness raising trainings for letting agents and landlords in combination with professional services from letting agencies could be an effective 'package' to address the housing challenge.[17]

[16] The suggestions were prepared based on refugee voices, UNHCR integration mappings, existing integration research and recent consultations with partners, integration stakeholders and refugees. The suggestions are addressing key integration areas and are not ment to be exaustive.

[17] A pilot project delivered by UNHCR and Vilnius Archdiocese (VA) Caritas in Lithuania, 'Supporting refugee integration in Lithuania through outreach work and housing', confirmed that professional service – hiring an expert on accommodation with the necessary knowledge, internal/market-based networks and contacts – created additional value and provided significant housing support for refugees.

Graph 15: Survey question: what are the reasons of unemployment?



3.1.3 Employment

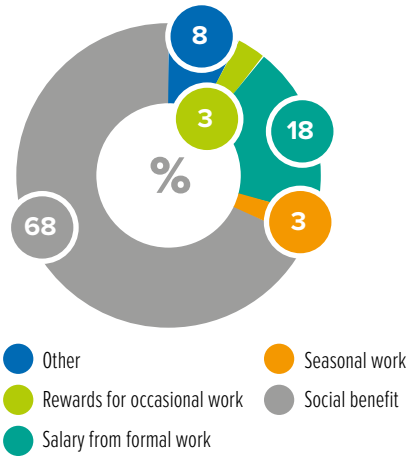
61% of respondents indicated they were not employed. Given the relatively high unemployment rate, the survey aimed to analyse the reasons behind it. It appears that the prevailing reasons for unemployment are studies (33%), language obstacle (30%), challenges with finding the job (25%), caring for children or other family members (21%), health (17%) and lack of support (8%) (*see graph 15*).

Additionally, refugees indicated other reasons of unemployment (*see table below*):

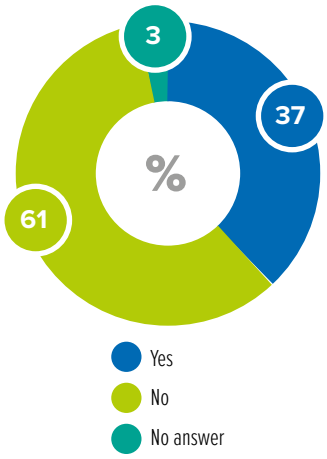
68% respondents stated that social benefits are their main source of income in Estonia, 18% - salary from formal work, 3% - from seasonal and the same proportion – from occasional or temporary work. 39% of employed respondents indicated that their job requires lower, 6% - higher qualifications and skills than they currently have; 50% considered that their qualifications and skills are in line with their current job (*see graph 18 and next quote*).

Reasons for unemployment	No. of respondents
2 or more reasons of unemployment (studies, childcare, physical and mental health, language, insufficient support)	5
Studies	3
I am taking care of a baby or nursing another family member	3
Language	3
I am not looking for a job	2
No answer	1
Other	5
Total	**22**
Other reasons of unemployment	**No. of respondents**
Diploma is not recognised yet and foreigners are not welcomed	1
Hijab	1
No permission to work	5
Pensioner	1
Total	**8**

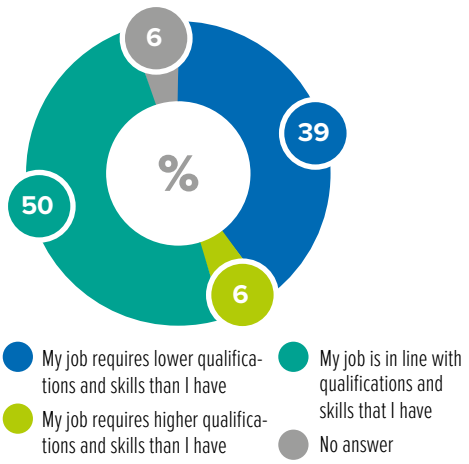
Graph 16: Main sources of income



Graph 17: Are you working at the moment (including seasonal work)?



Graph 18: Please indicate whether your job is in line with your qualifications and skills?



> *Töötukassa... Positive thing is that they are very helpful, they want to help in any perspective. I also went to training course. My degree is BA in trade commerce/business. I had many questions related to business environment in Estonia, so they suggested they can offer me a course, for start-up business people. If you want to go, they pay for it. I have completed this course, got a certificate. In this manner they have helped me a lot, paid money. One weakness is that they don't have any connections with employers'*
>
> Pakistani refugee

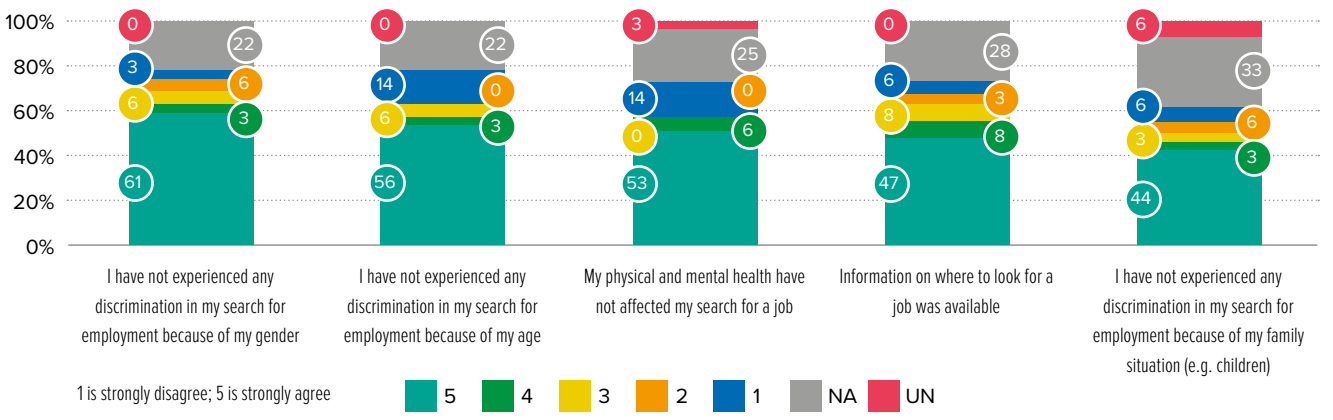
By evaluating their overall experiences while searching for a job since arriving in Estonia, the majority of respondents (strongly) agreed that they have not experienced discrimination on grounds of gender (64%) or age (59%). 59% agreed that their health has not affected their job search; 55% agreed that information where to look for a job was available. Slightly fewer (47%) agreed that their family status (children) was not an obstacle in finding employment (*see graph 19*).

At the same time, some challenges were identified: only 14% (strongly) agreed that salaries of the available jobs are sufficient, 25% - that businesses have a positive attitude towards refugees, 25% - that there were no language obstacles or discrimination while searching for employment, 30% - that the assistance provided was sufficient (*see graph 20*).

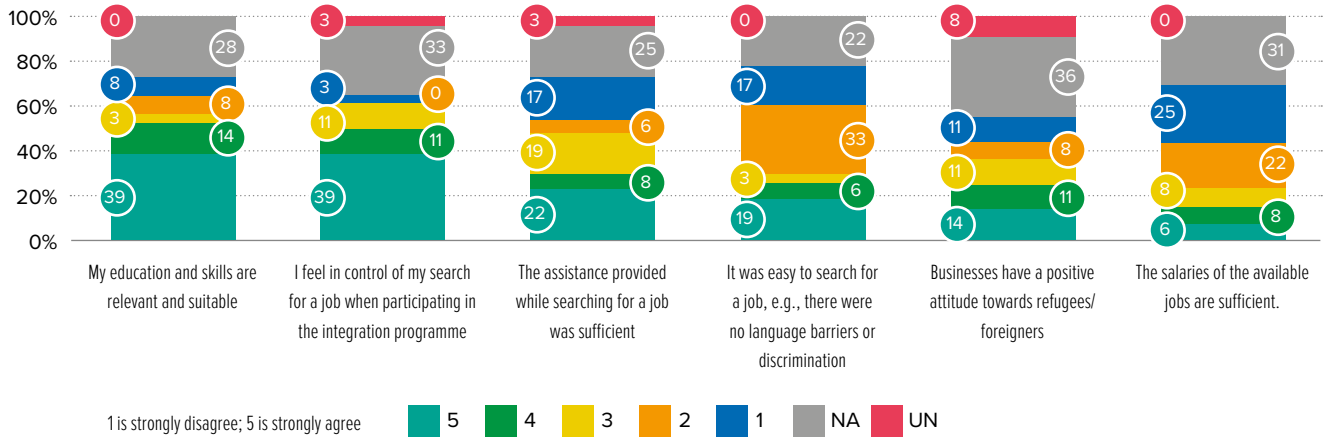
Respondents were also asked to evaluate their experiences in the workplace (*see graph 21*). Overall, there are no significant challenges in the workplace, except with regard to co-workers' and employers' attitudes, physical and mental health (and only to a very minor extent).

Respondents were asked to indicate who helped them the most to find their current job. Again, the same trends were seen as in the housing section. 50% agreed that they found a job by themselves, 39% received significant help from the local population, 28% from an employment agency, 23% from other refugees and 17% each from social workers / mentors (NGOs) and family members (*see graph 22*).

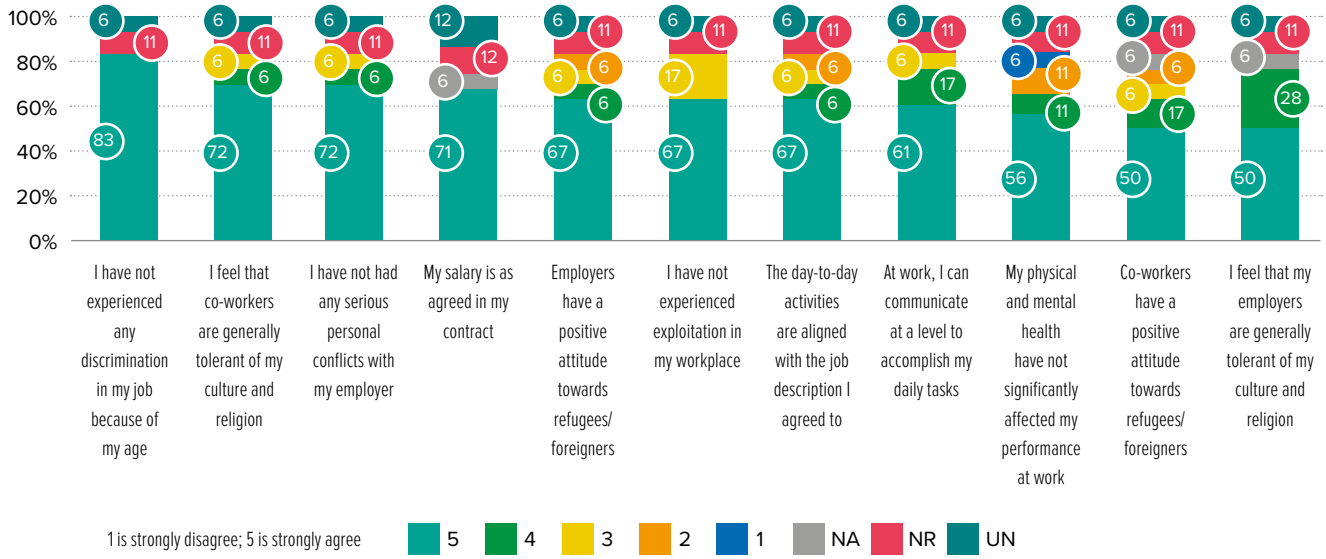
Graph 19: Survey question (part-1): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Estonia while searching for a job



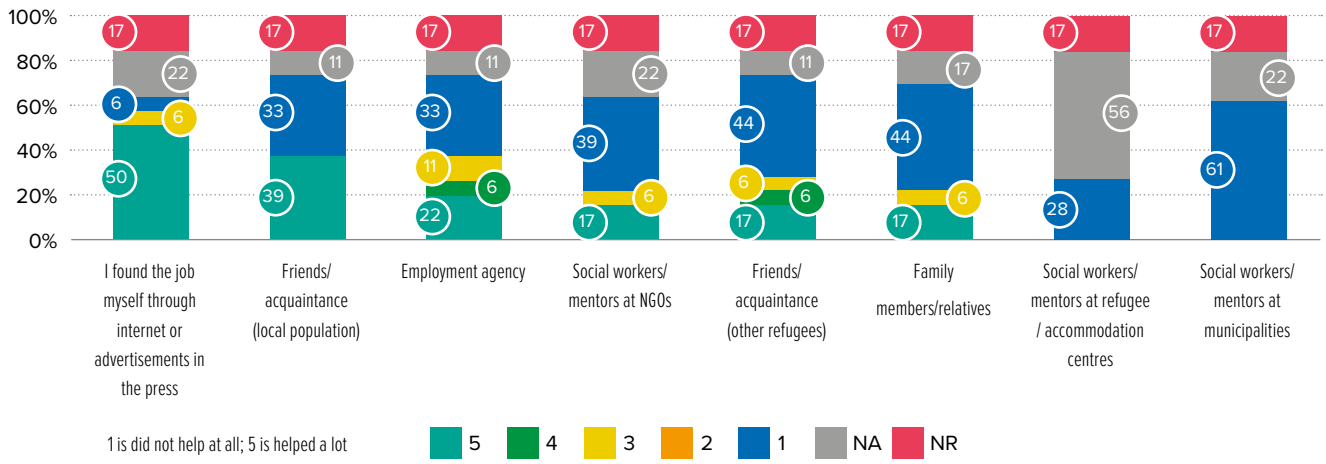
Graph 20: Survey question (part-2): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Estonia while searching for a job



Graph 21: Survey question: Please think about your experiences overall in your workplace



Graph 22: Survey question: Who helped you the most to find the job you are working at the moment?



SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS (UN)EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES:

Due to the low number of employed refugees who participated in the survey, the sample is too small to make generalisations. **However, to address labour market inclusion challenges, the following suggestions and initiatives could be piloted and implemented:**

- A minor trend of refugee deskilling[18] is emerging; therefore, a combination of a more effective matching process, faster and more effective recognition of qualifications, and vocational training and language courses at the workplace could help to use all the resources that refugees possess. This could benefit refugees, by creating social mobility within the company and employers, by attracting and retaining skilled employees;
- Partnerships with the private sector and, especially, companies with strong Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) policies in the workplace could help to implement holistic labour market inclusion initiatives, focusing not only on regular employment, but also on paid internships and apprenticeships with the possibility of permanent employment;[19]
- Recently, a few initiatives on labour market inclusion have been taken in Estonia (such as 'My First Job in Estonia' and others[20]), which have already given refugees better access to employment.[21] However, after consultations with integration stakeholders it became clear that interest from the private sector is still very limited. Therefore, communication about such programmes in particular and awareness raising about asylum issues in general among private companies could arouse more interest and active engagement, especially considering the growing role of the private sector in mobilising resources to support refugees worldwide[22]
- Considering worldwide experiences, there is a need to boost not only regular refugee employment, but also self-employment. Creating more self-employment opportunities would show that refugees are bringing not only social and cultural, but also economic resources and traditions of small-scale businesses.[23]

3.1.4 Social support

> *Yes, (the programme) is useful, and if we had even received this booklet before, no support person would have been needed. It lists all the websites… and a great program… liked it… > <… we were "shocked" that so much is being done for people who are new to the country. So we cannot think of what could be better. Even… they gave us food during the training… they asked if the child needed a care-taker'*
>
> Refugee from the Russian Federation.

92% of respondents indicated that since arriving in Estonia, they have received (or are still receiving) social support, while 5% stated that they have never received it. Respondents were asked to reflect on their overall experiences while receiving social support (*see graph 23*). 83% of respondents agreed that support was provided for a sufficient duration, 80% - health has not significantly affected ability to access support, 71% - service providers were competent enough, 65% - information was accessible and 68% - social mentors and workers had positive attitudes towards refugees and foreigners.

---

[18] 39% of employed respondents agreed that their job requires lower qualifications and skills than they currently have.

[19] Many examples could be provided, including the global initiative on labour market inclusion for refugees recently launched by the Ikea Foundation, which also covers the Nordic countries: Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (more available at: http://bit.ly/30GPjlo). In addition, useful tools have been prepared, which could be used as guidelines to engage employers, including the UNHCR and OECD action plan to boost refugee employment (more available at: https://bit.ly/3cqJCDW. Moreover, there are existing platforms in Estonia (such as the Estonian Diversity Charter: http://bit.ly/30GrUHi), which could be used as entry points for proactive engagement of (potential) employers, focusing not only on refugees, but on a non-selective approach to diversity (age, gender, disabilities, SOGI, ethnicity and race).

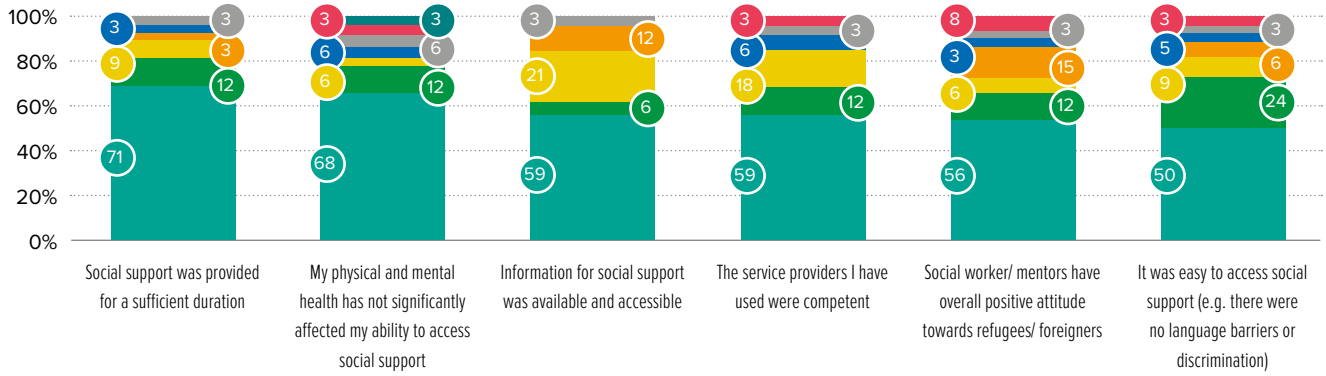
[20] For example, in October 2019, the Estonian Refugee Council launched a work training group for women refugees in Tartu, in cooperation with the Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Labour Inspectorate.

[21] According to UNHCR's consultations with partners, one of the key obstacles to access the 'My first job in Estonia' programme is the bureaucracy and paperwork that is expected from the employers.

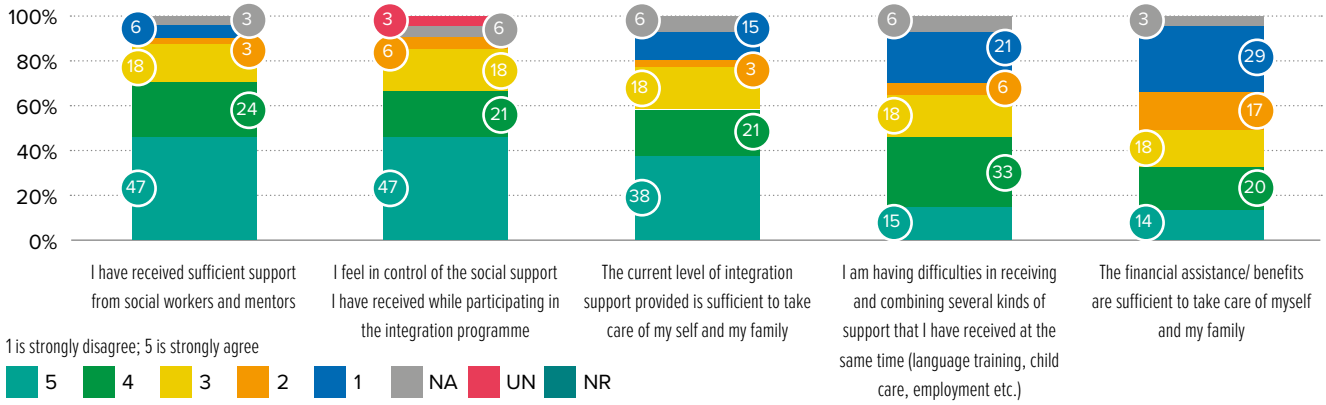
[22] For example, at the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva business leaders made US$250 million in pledges.

[23] A few projects in Estonia have been already initiate d by the Estonian Refugee Council (in a partnership with UNHCR) and International House Tartu.

Graph 23: Survey question (part-1): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Estonia while receiving social support



Graph 24: Survey question (part-2): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Estonia while receiving social support



At the same time 34% of respondents (strongly) agreed that the financial assistance and benefits were sufficient to take care of themselves and their families; almost 50% agreed they had difficulties in combining several kinds of support (for example, language training, employment and child care); 59% - that the current level of integration support is sufficient to take care of themselves and their families, 68% - that they feel in control of the social support they have received and 71% - that support received from social workers and mentors was sufficient (*see graph 24*).

> *Right now, there is only one main organisation dealing with all refugees, but it is better to have several organisations if things do not work out with one, for refugees to have alternatives. There should be several organisations and it could be divided by specialisation, with one organisation responsible for social activities, other one responsible for language, third one responsible for providing housing. Right now, if things do not work out with one organisation, we have nowhere else to turn to'*
>
> Syrian refugee

SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS SOCIAL SUPPORT:

Overall, social support was evaluated more positively than negatively, except for financial assistance and benefits.[24] However, there is room for improvement in the following areas:

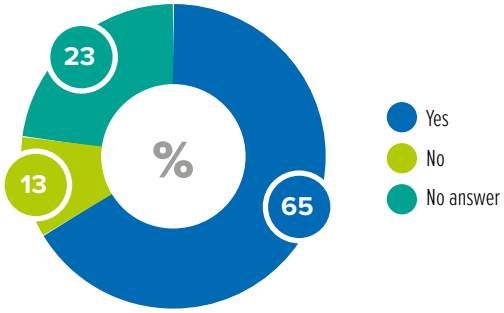
- Regular trainings for service providers, including municipal workers;
- Dissemination of information about social support and available integration measures and initiatives on a regular basis;
- Addressing difficulties in combining several kinds of support: language training, employment and child-care (for example child-care for refugee women during vocational training and language courses, flexible arrangement of language courses, language training at the workplace, other).

[24] The subsistence benefit in 2020 in Estonia is: for the first member of the family – EUR 150 per month and EUR 120 for each following family member, available at: http://bit.ly/2OwPCmB. The monthly child allowance is EUR 50 for the first and second child and EUR 100 starting from the third, available at: https://www.sm.ee/en/family-benefits

3.1.5 Children's education and language training

Of those respondents who have children, 65% indicated that their children attend school: nursery or kindergarten, primary or secondary school.

Graph 25: Children attending education institutions in Estonia.



Data on self-evaluation of language (*see graph 26*) shows that refugees in Estonia have developed Estonian reading and writing skills somewhat more than listening and speaking skills. Overall, more than half the respondents evaluated their language knowledge as poor or very poor on all four measures. Listening and speaking are those skills which are needed both in everyday interaction and in the workplace; however, in the refugees' view, these are the least developed language skills. This could be due to the content of the language courses (emphasis on writing and reading skills); moreover, course content could be further linked to examination requirements. If this is the case, examination requirements and course content are not directly linked to (or useful for) practical (or work-related) use of language. According to the UNHCR mapping in Estonia (2016), many integration stakeholders were critical of the current language learning system, while some refugees and experts expressed concern over the insufficient quality of the language courses and outdated teaching methods, which are not tailored to the needs of refugees.[25]

However, as the survey revealed, language courses (as a means or measure of integration) do not stand alone as language is directly linked to such services as employment and child-care, where refugees are experiencing difficulties in combining those (*see 3.1.4 Social support*).

> *I am trying to find a job in Tallinn, but always the issue is the language. I search for different jobs, but I do not know Estonian language yet well enough and my English is not that good either.'*
>
> Syrian refugee

SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS LANGUAGE TRAINING:

- Initiate programmes of language training in the workplace, with the proactive engagement of a wide range of actors: from employers with strong diversity and inclusion strategies to NGOs, which could help to link the individual labour market inclusion plan and language training by considering the capacities (and vulnerabilities) of every individual. Such programmes are available for refugees in the Nordic Countries[26] and for highly-skilled immigrants in Estonia;[27]
- By designing language courses (methodologies and programmes), continue to address not only cultural differences, but also age, gender roles and mental health, which might hamper training outcomes in the long term;
- Actively engage refugees and other immigrants in the design and implementation of language courses, which could help to increase motivation and enrolment,[28] create a sense of belonging and ownership.

---

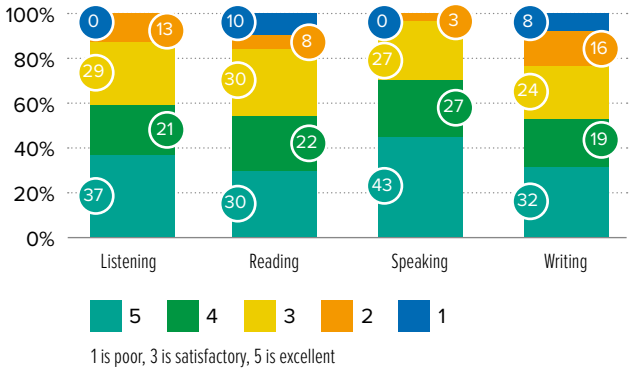
[25] Language challenges have recently been addressed by various initiatives. For example, (i) in 2018 the number of hours was tripled from 100 to 300; (ii) Estonian Language Houses have been established, where language studies are free of charge; (iii) in 2019 and 2020, International House Tartu piloted Estonian language courses for refugees in their workplaces.

[26] Such initiatives are widespread in the Nordic Countries and a pilot project is being implemented in Latvia. For example, in Sweden the Government has adopted a fast-track employment programme, where newcomers who already have relevant skills and experience are given jobs in industries that are facing a labour shortage. The programme offers specialised career paths to migrants based on the profession they have experience in. Most of the tracks include Swedish language coaching and on-the-job training, and all participants are given a mentor and guidance counsellor (more available at: http://bit.ly/3ldvB0k). In Norway, the Municipality of Fjell is implementing the project 'Right at Work', which has enabled refugees to combine work experience and language training. The result is better inclusion and better access to skilled labour for the municipality (more available at: http://bit.ly/3qL8yLq)

[27] Such programmes are implemented as part of internal relocation strategies in international companies; for example, 'Pipedrive': https://www.pipedrive.com.

[28] According to the UNHCR mapping in Estonia (2016), motivation and enrolment were identified as significant obstacles.

Graph 26: Profiency in Estonian language (%).



It (language course) was really weak and really simple level, again with no chance to actively practise in real-life situations - this makes you forget what you learn'

Syrian refugee

3.1.6 Future plans

I see my future in Estonia. I want to become a translator. I do not want to move to another country, where I would have to start a new life. I would like to become an Estonian citizen'

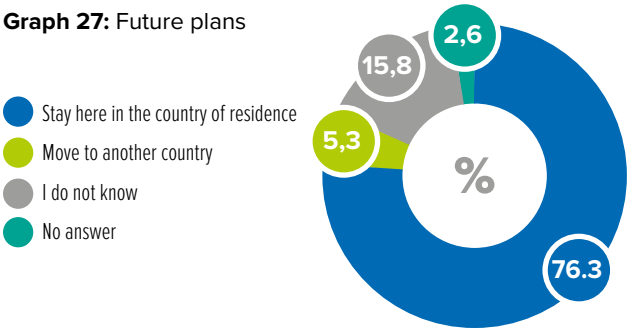
Syrian refugee

Estonia is experiencing the lowest rates of secondary movements among the Baltic Countries, with slightly less than 50% of relocated and resettled refugees leaving the country. In the survey, respondents were asked about their future plans – whether they are planning to stay in the country or leave. According to the results (*see graph 27*), the vast majority of respondents – 76% - are planning to stay in Estonia and only 5% - are considering possibilities to move to another country. In addition to the potential of long-term residence, 69% of respondents agreed that obtaining citizenship is an important priority to promote or improve integration (*see below: 3.1.7 Integration priorities and outcomes*).

Here in Tartu there are so few refugees as most of them leave to Germany. Most come here like to a transit country. But I prefer to live in a legal situation. They send me here, I have residency here I will not go to another country. I struggle here, everything is expensive, my future is not so bright, but there is peace to me. I value this thing'

Syrian refugee

Graph 27: Future plans



3.1.7 Integration priorities and outcomes

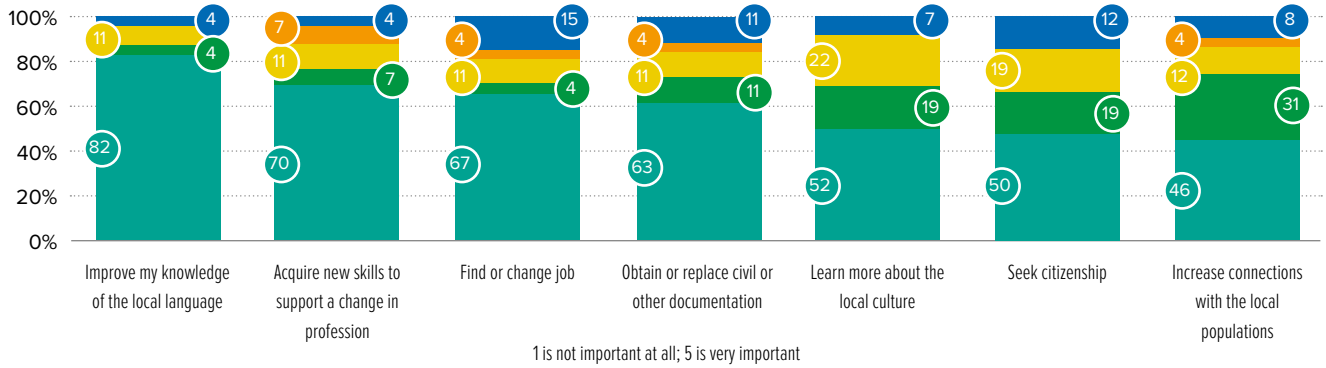
In order to foster a participatory approach, one of the intentions of the survey was to ask refugees about key integration priorities and achievements. This could help to develop and tailor integration services accordingly, considering refugee voices and experiences, and setting priorities not only by policy designers, but also by the target group. Respondents were asked (*see graphs 28*) to identify the most important priorities to promote or improve integration. Survey data revealed that key integration priorities are improvement in the local language (86% (strongly) agreed), new skills to change profession (77%), employment (71%), civil documentation (74%), socio-cultural courses (71%), citizenship (69%) and networks with the local population (77%).

On one hand, willingness to stay in Estonia is high; on the other hand, motivation to stay in the country might decrease due to reasons such as: insufficient financial assistance, housing and a limited welcoming environment; which further means that an overall positive experience in receiving social support might be outweighed by more structural integration challenges, which are crucial for the decision to stay or leave the country.

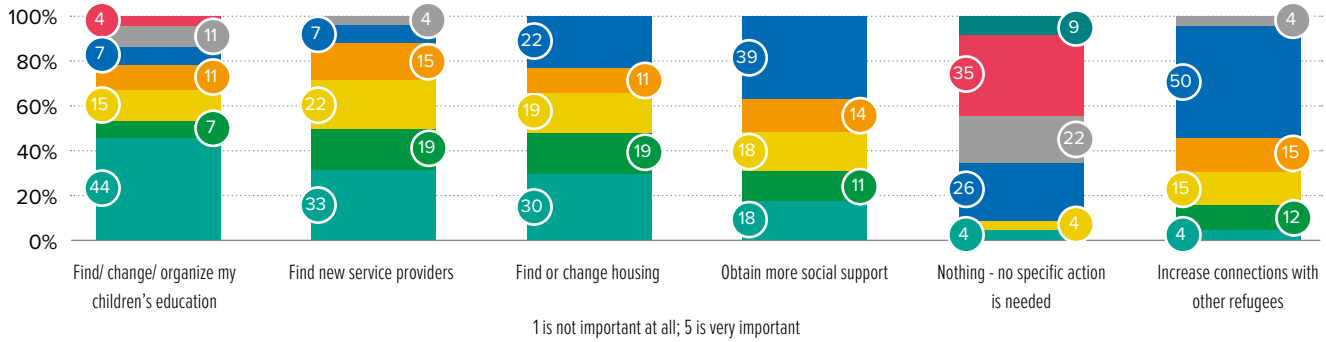
Gaining citizenship is connected to language learning and we are learning of course, but obviously we have a plan for it. We are going to live in Estonia anyway. We have all protection in Estonia which we needed for which we left Pakistan. Freedom. So, if we are free in this country, why would we need to go any other country.'

Pakistani refugee

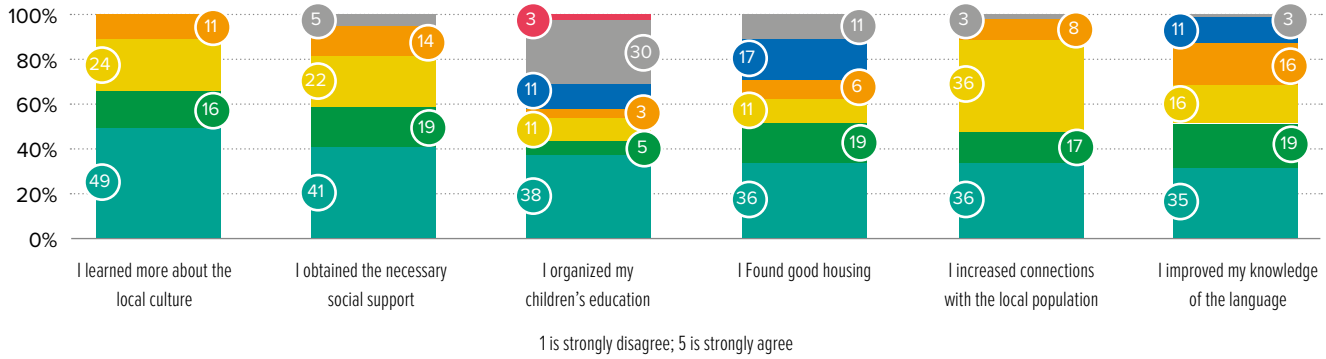
Graph 28: Survey question (part-1): What do you consider your most important priorities to promote or improve your integration?



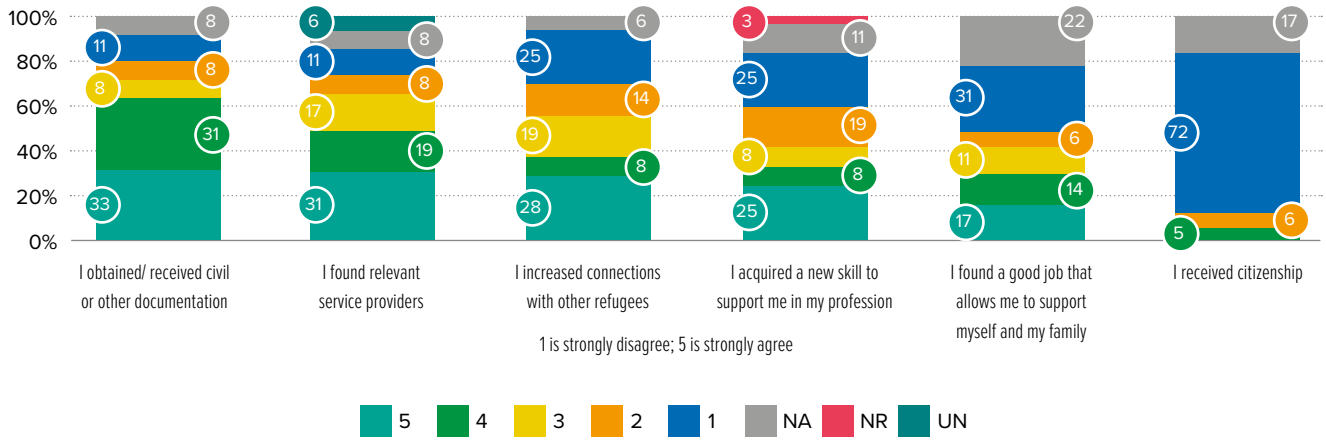
Graph 29: Survey question (part-2): What do you consider your most important priorities to promote or improve your integration?



Graph 30: Survey question (part-1): In your opinion, what have you achieved in Estonia so far?



Graph 31: Survey question (part-2): In your opinion, what have you achieved in Estonia so far?



Additionally, survey data analysis revealed (*see graph 29*) that 51% of respondents (strongly) agreed that they have to find or change their children's education, 52% agreed that they must find new service providers, 49% - find or change a living place, 29% - obtain more social support and 16% - increase connections with other refugees. The data shows refugees' willingness to be self-reliant and less dependent on integration benefits. Moreover, relatively good connections with the local population outweigh willingness to strengthen networks within the ethnic group, which further means that there is no significant potential for ethnic segregation; at least, if labour market indicators increase.[29] To identify integration outcomes or gaps between desired achievements and the actual situation, respondents were asked to indicate what they have achieved in Estonia so far (*see graph 30*). Many refugees achieved desired outcomes in various aspects of integration. Depending on the aspect concerned, from 53% to 65% of respondents (strongly) agreed that they have learnt the language, increased connections with the local population, found housing, organised their children's education, obtained the necessary social support and learned about the local culture. Such data could also be considered as 'self-evaluation' of the integration process, where room for improvement exists for both sides: refugees and hosting institutions. Though the majority of respondents understand the importance of various dimensions of integration (indicated above and below), in reality and for many refugees, some of their desires are to be achieved in the future, including new skills to support their profession, finding a job to support their family and obtaining citizenship (*see graph 31*).

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE THE OVERALL INTEGRATION SYSTEM:

- Refugee integration challenges could be addressed and policies further strengthened by applying a holistic approach to social inclusion and using a 'whole-of-society' approach, which would allow various actors to be engaged: grassroots movements (volunteers and community leaders), the private sector (not only as potential employers, but also as support providers) and representatives of target groups as both designers and users of integration initiatives and programmes;
- Institutionalisation of refugee and immigrant-specific integration programmes and measures from the field of project-based activities[30] across the board, where integration would become part of the municipal strategy with state budget assignations, would be crucial;
- Other actions to improve integration policies could be linking the integration system specific to refugees and immigrants (Support person service, International Protection module of the welcoming programme, language training and other activities implemented by NGOs and mainly funded by AMIF[31]) to those which are in place for everybody under the supervision of municipalities and governmental institutions, such as the Police and Border Guard Board (community police officers), the Estonian Social Insurance Board, Innove, and others. Such mainstreaming of refugee integration policies could create sustainability of services and improve integration outcomes;

The survey data shows that refugees are aware of various integration services and are motivated to be enrolled, while their attitudes to various aspects of integration and obtaining citizenship show that their perceptions on integration are not just about long- and short-term expectations or permanent versus temporary residence in the country; it involves becoming an integral part of the local population by learning the language, culture and social norms, building bridges with local institutions and grassroots societies.

- Therefore, this momentum should be used by engaging refugees in the design of integration programmes, in this way creating a sense of belonging and a higher level of enrolment in initiatives that they have co-designed. Additionally, engagement of the local population in informal socio-cultural integration activities (such as the recent Culture and Sports Programme) is crucial. However, socio-cultural activities should not be of a project-based nature, but rather be implemented within the framework of municipal strategies, including such initiatives as the Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC).[32]

---

[29] According to the survey results, 44% of respondents disagreed that they acquired new skills to support their profession, 37% - that they found a good job to support their family.

[30] Mostly funded by AMIF.

[31] Such as the Culture and Sport Programme.

[32] ICC supports cities in reviewing their policies through an intercultural lens and developing comprehensive intercultural strategies to help manage diversity positively and realise the diversity advantage. For more, see Council of Europe, The Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC), available at: https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities

3.1.8 Experiences of negative attitudes

Many questions in the survey targeted attitudes towards refugees and foreigners, focusing on the labour market and housing. This section also looks at societal attitudes, but from a broader perspective. Respondents were asked to specify how often (if ever) they had to deal with negative reactions/attitudes in various environments mentioned below and due to being a refugee, belonging to an ethnic or religious group, experiencing prejudices and stereotypes.

According to survey results, the police, children's educational institutions and the workplace are the safest (or more neutral) environments; while public transport, social work, supermarkets and, in particular, housing, are the environments where refugees face negative attitudes more often. Unfortunately, the problem exists in various environments: as far as daily or weekly experience is concerned, 19% of respondents experienced negative reactions from neighbours, on public transport and at the supermarket; 17% - from social mentors/workers and 30% - from landlords.

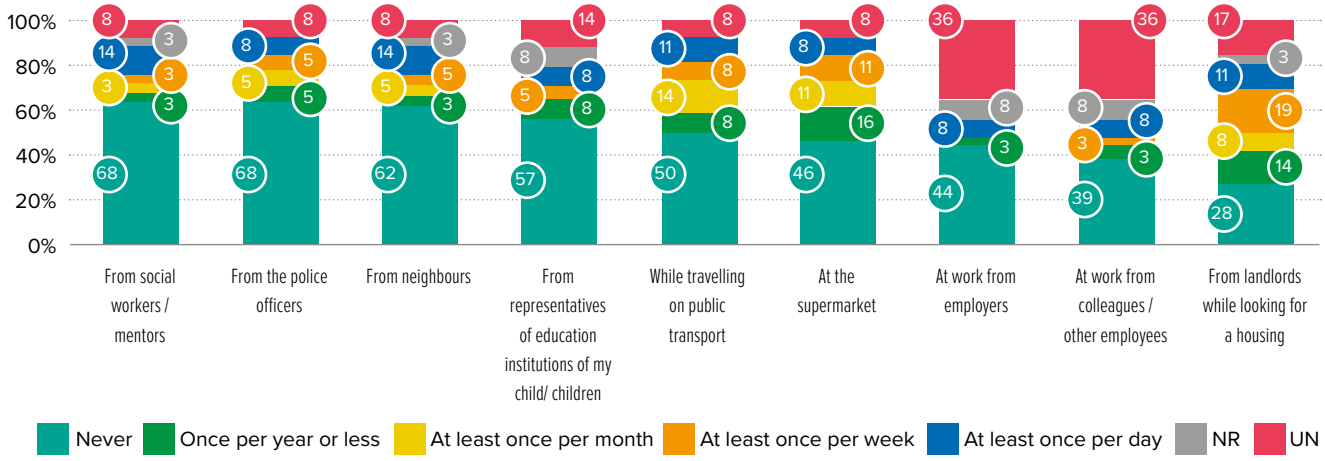
Such data shows the complexity of prevailing attitudes in public places and institutions as well as agreeing with the results from the recent special Eurobarometer survey on integration of immigrants in the European Union,[33] where only 38% of Estonian residents indicated that they would be comfortable to have a migrant as a friend (in a comparison to 87% in Sweden or 70% in Denmark).

> *I talked about the documents that I came with my family, that I have no job... He assured me that you could rent a residence without any problems... The next day when we came with our belongings, I call this broker, who says, "Oh you know, the apartment is already rented out and I can't help you in any way." It's 4pm, November, it's already dark, we stand next to a store with suitcases and... Our helpers took us in for 10 days, then others for 10 days... And no matter how hard we tried to find a new place to live in, it turned out that the people do not rent out to foreigners so easily. And I found apartment after about a month of searching'*
>
> Refugee from the Russian Federation

> *The Estonians that I have met were all extremely nice and friendly and helped me in every way they could*
>
> Iranian refugee

> *And every day we were looking for housing, every day we met a broker, talked, and only a month later one of the brokers explained that nobody is renting you a place because people are afraid you do not have a living permit, you have no job. And that is why, most likely, no one will do business with you'*
>
> Refugee from the Russian Federation

Graph 32: Survey question: Specify how often (if ever) you had to deal with negative reactions/attitudes?



[33] Special Eurobarometer 469. Integration of immigrants in the European Union, European Commission 2018, available at: http://bit.ly/3bKgcBO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SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS NEGATIVE ATTITUDES:

- To address negative reactions/attitudes in institutions (police, social work and children's education), diversity and inclusion trainings for personnel could be initiated with a focus on intercultural competences and religious dialogue, refugee integration, international migration and displacement. A recent initiative by the Ministry of Culture to create and implement a training programme on diversity and intercultural competences is a good example. Such initiatives should be sustainable; therefore, linked to an institutional framework (governmental or municipal programme), rather than being a one-off project;
- Continue to support and/or strengthen awareness raising campaigns (such as 'People between the Lines', 'I am European' and 'Saame Tuttavaks'[34]) to address the consequences of negative reactions/attitudes in public places;
- To address specific environments – negative attitudes of employers and landlords – (i) social workers and mentors must act as intermediaries to create better integration outcomes, while (ii) awareness raising campaigns among employers and landlords are needed to reduce myths, stereotypes and prejudices;
- To address negative reactions/attitudes of employees, already existing frameworks could be applied and combined: the Estonian Diversity Charter, and Diversity and Inclusion Strategies (D&I) in the workplace of many international companies operating in Estonia and elsewhere.
- Overall, strengthening the implementation of anti-discrimination policies[35] (including hate speech and hate crime) should be considered a priority at national and local levels.

[34] 'People between the Lines' and 'I am European' (available at: http://bit.ly/3cv5Kgj; https://bit.ly/38Dqmlx); 'Saame Tuttavaks' (available at: http://www.saametuttavaks.ee)

[35] According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX 2015), implementation of anti-discrimination policies is one of the integration areas which need to be significantly improved (more at: http://www.mipex.eu/estonia).

3.2 Latvia

3.2.1 Views on integration experiences

> *My life back at home was normal - I had everything I needed. When I arrived, everything was different. It takes a long time for me to get used to this community, I think my career has suddenly stopped. I feel like I have lost my aims. I live now without any aims… I just look at my kids - I want them to feel comfortable here'*
>
> Refugee from the Middle East

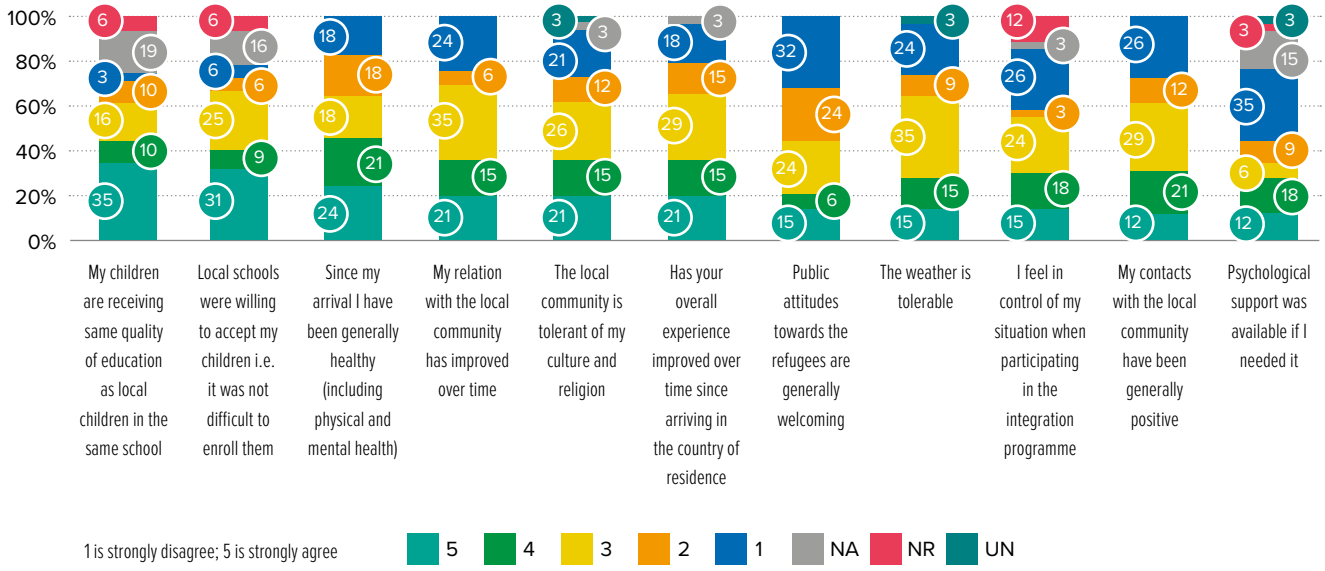
> *We went to Germany and came back here. We were taken care by NGO "I want to help refugees". I remember that after coming back from Germany we were staying in Mucenieki, because we did not have other option straight away. We always received a reply from NGO that "don't worry, we will always be on your side and we will never let you go to the street". They said this and delivered. This was very comforting that I will not have to worry about my family and made me give it a try. Now I can support my family and do not need anything from government. Now I can live, I have money.*
>
> Syrian refugee

To identify integration challenges and opportunities from the perspective of refugees, respondents were asked to think about their overall experiences on various integration issues since arriving in Latvia (*see graph 33*). Refugee experiences were more positive than negative (or more neutral), especially looking at children's education, schooling, mental/physical health, relation with the local community and overall integration experiences over time. Public attitudes, self-reliance, contacts with the local community and psychological support were among more negatively than positively evaluated areas.

However, there are some challenges, particularly with finding housing and employment, communication with the local population, availability of socio-cultural activities and overall adaptation to life in Latvia (*see graph 34*).

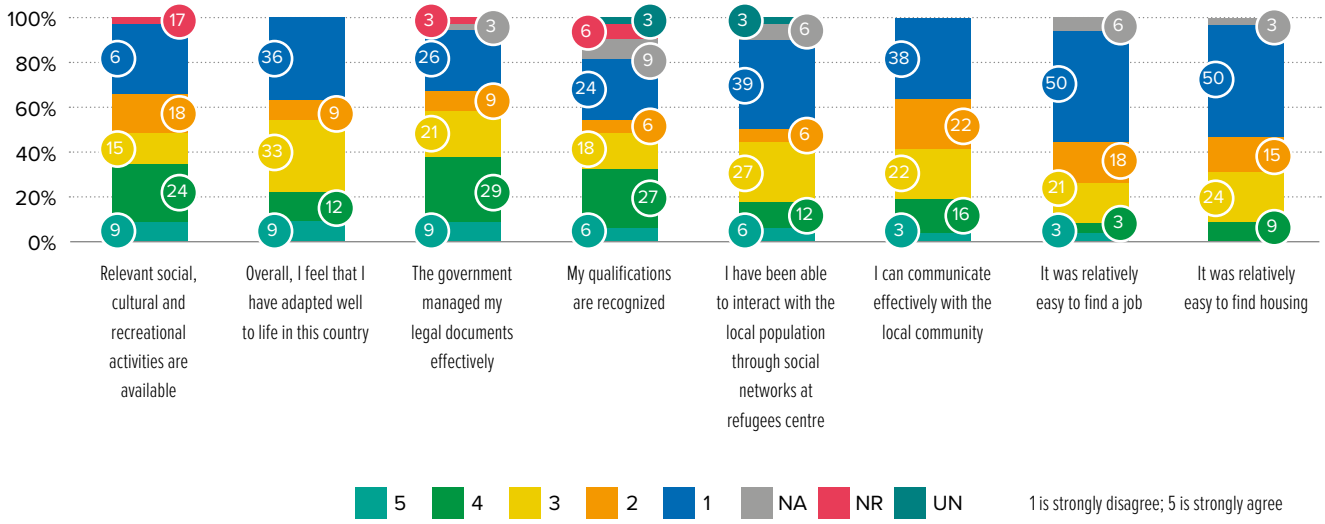
Overall, all key integration dimensions – housing, employment, socio-cultural activities, psychological support and public perceptions – need to be significantly improved (*for specific suggestions, see respective subsections 3.2.2 Housing, 3.2.3 Employment, 3.2.4 Social support, 3.2.5 Children's education and language training, 3.2.8 Experiences of negative attitudes*).

Graph 33: Survey question (part-1): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Latvia[36]



[36] In this graph and further in other graphs: NA – not applicable; UN – I do not know; NR – No answer.

Graph 34: Survey question (part-2): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Latvia



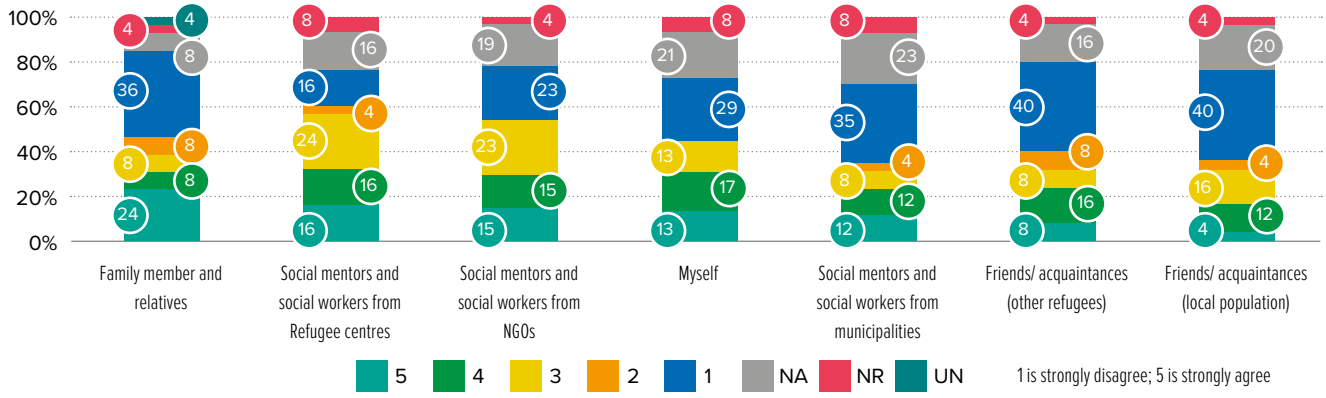
> *In the beginning when I received the status, I went and asked what support can I get, but they answered that me and my family have the same rights and support as Latvian citizen. The problem is that I am not the same as Latvian. I should get a support until I become as a Latvian and then they can say I am the same as Latvians (smiling). It is just not possible - come from the place under bombs and right away become Latvian. I am not a machine! For me it does not matter, but for my children it is important to have a stability, to have a place where to stay'*
>
> Syrian refugee

To measure self-reliance, refugees were asked whether they feel in control of their own situation when participating in the integration programme; and if not, to indicate who is making decisions instead of them (*see the list in the graph 35*). 30% of respondents (strongly) agreed that they are making decisions by themselves, the same proportion (30%) – that decisions are being made by social workers and mentors from NGOs. 32% (strongly) agreed that decisions are being made by social workers and mentors from Mucenieki; the same proportion (32%) – by family members and relatives. A smaller proportion agreed that decisions are being made by social workers and mentors from municipalities and friends (including the local population and other refugees). Since the social worker/mentor programme is the key refugee integration element in Latvia, such results should not come as a surprise.

Refugee views revealed low reliance on either (i) the local population or (ii) the ethnic group/other refugees. This could be explained by the small refugee community and lack of internal (community-based) networks (which are very well developed in traditional immigration countries) on one hand, and social distance between hosting communities and refugees (which could be illustrated by the societal attitudes towards refugees: *see 3.2.8 Experiences of negative attitudes*) on the other hand.

Less developed links within the ethnic group might prevent ethnic segregation, but, at the same time, exclude refugees from informal integration infrastructure and other resources, which are usually embedded in migrant and refugee communities and used by migrants and refugees to address various integration challenges without support from the state. Considering the results above, the focus should be placed not only on traditional integration areas (housing, employment, psychological support, other), but also on building bridges between refugees and local communities in Latvia. NIEM research revealed that interaction between the local population and refugees is one of the biggest challenges and least developed integration areas. According to NIEM researchers, 'no national or local level strategies referring to the interaction of the receiving society with refugees exists, and the approach of emphasising language and social learning puts all the burden of societal involvement on the shoulders of refugees.' Additionally, activities to foster civic participation of refugees are project-based, voluntary or self-funded.

Graph 35: Survey question: Please indicate who is making decisions for you? 1 is strongly disagree; 5 is strongly agree



> *NGOs here work with foreigners more than any other institution. If there were no NGOs, it would be much more difficult'*
>
> Syrian refugee

3.2.2 Housing

> *Other owners did not give my deposit back because of me being a foreigner. They assaulted me about problems in the flat. I proposed them to fix anything if they wished...I have noticed that Latvians do not want to give their apartments to foreigners'*
>
> Turkish refugee

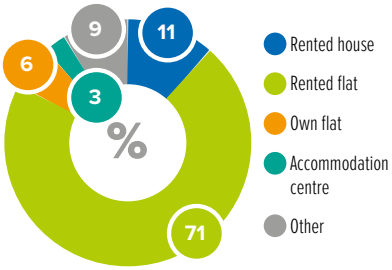
Most respondents live in rented flats (71%) and houses (11%), while 6% indicated that they had their own flat and a few (3%) that they lived in Mucenieki. Though respondents indicated that housing is the biggest challenge, almost 54% found a place to live in less than three months; for 20% it took up to six months. A quarter of respondents indicated that they have never changed accommodation, while others have changed it once (11%), twice (29%) and more times since arriving in Latvia (*see the graph 38*).

> *Once I helped my friends to rent a house outside of Riga. I arranged everything, we arrived, but the owner was surprised to see us, he said that he will not give his house to foreigners and closed the door. I know that this was a discrimination, but I did not want to make trouble'*
>
> Turkish refugee

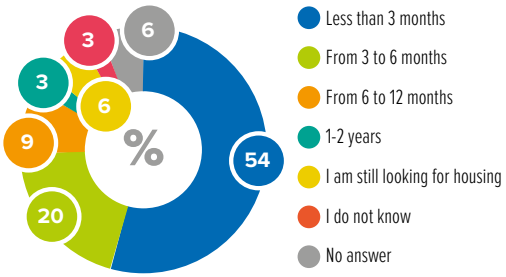
> *I was living in Riga, near Akropolis. My landlord was educated man with diploma from Riga Technical University, but his behaviour was disgusting to me. He was telling me: 'You, Turks, are not this kind of civilisation', I answered that his words hurt me. He also said other insults towards me like whether I am riding a camel, this kind of things'*
>
> Turkish refugee

The survey revealed that housing is the biggest refugee integration challenge. Therefore, the survey questionnaire focused on this issue in particular to understand what is behind the housing problem. Refugees were asked to describe their own experience while searching for housing in Latvia (*see graph 38*). 74% of respondents (strongly) disagreed that it was easy to find housing and there were no language obstacles or discrimination; 61% that relevant housing options were in place; 56% that assistance and household-related finances were sufficient; 44% that landlords have positive attitudes towards refugees. Moreover, 47% disagreed that they felt in control of their own situation while searching for housing. This shows that housing is a very complex challenge, combining different social, economic and even cultural dimensions as well as the integration system (housing benefits) and the local population's awareness.

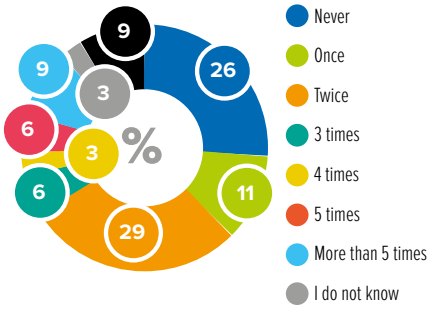
Graph 36: Type of housing



Graph 37: How long did it take to find housing when you first arrived, excluding accommodation centre?



Graph 38: How many times have you changed your housing, excluding accommodation centre?



To identify assistance with housing, respondents were asked who helped them the most to find a place to live. 34% of respondents stated that they found housing by themselves, 37% (strongly) agreed that they received significant help from family members and relatives, 30% - from social mentors at Mucenieki, 23% from the local population, 22% - from their ethnic group (other refugees), 16% - from social workers/mentors from NGOs, and 10% - from social workers from municipalities. The survey data on housing revealed a two-fold challenge. On one hand, it illustrates the low refugee reliance on the local population, when the local population's participation in helping to find housing is limited. On the other hand, it confirms the prevailing challenges identified by UNHCR's mapping in Latvia in 2015; in particular, insufficient subsistence allowances and prevailing discrimination against refugees. In addition to the housing market, which is characterised by discrimination and a negative attitude towards refugees, NIEM research revealed a range of challenges: from lack of targeted support by professionals (IT companies and experts), to ineligibility for mainstream housing benefits as refugees are not identified as a vulnerable group.

SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS HOUSING CHALLENGES:

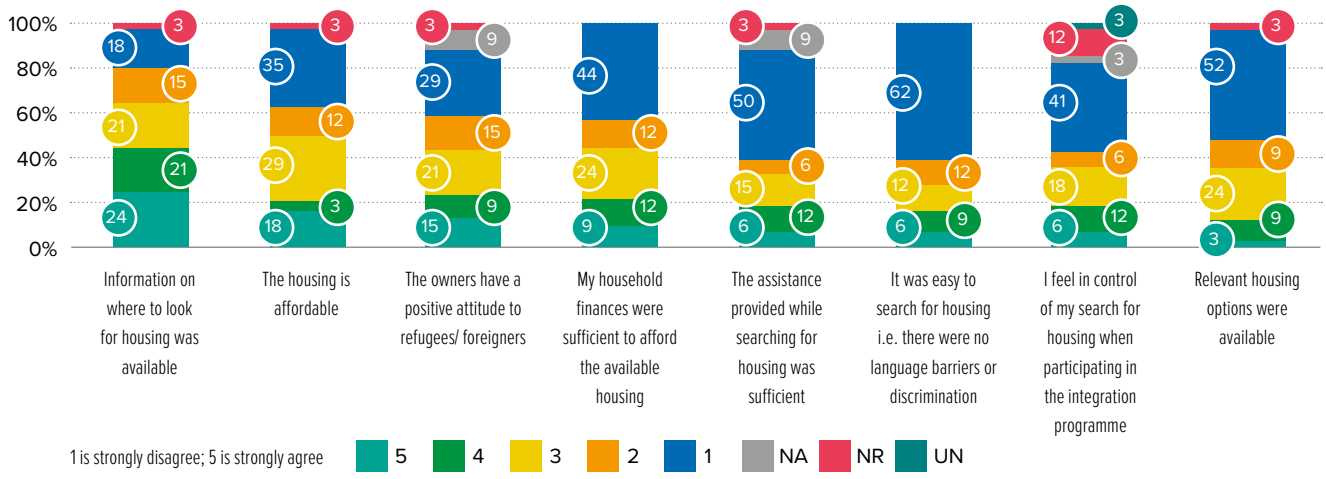
- In consultation with refugees and various actors, design a housing strategy and a system of subsidised housing support for an initial determined period;
- Engage municipalities in implementing refugee specific integration measures and services with a focus on (social) housing. This could be done by evaluating and strengthening/institutionalising the pilot project initiated by the Society Integration Foundation in 2017 to test possible housing solutions by introducing reimbursement of rental costs. Institutionalisation of this pilot project could take place within the framework of a structural approach – a separate action plan/strategy to address refugee housing;
- Facilitation (mediation) by social workers (municipalities and NGOs) to match landlords and refugees. This could help to reduce refugees' negative experiences and address landlords' prejudices, stereotypes or myths. NGOs' experience from Lithuania shows that social workers as intermediaries are playing a crucial role in finding housing and communicating with landlords;
- In addition to more active engagement of social workers and mentors, diversity/awareness raising trainings for letting agents and landlords in combination with professional services from letting agencies could be an effective 'package' to address the housing challenge. A pilot project by UNHCR and the Vilnius Archdiocese (VA) Caritas in Lithuania, 'Supporting refugee integration in Lithuania through outreach work and housing', confirmed that professional services – hiring letting agents with the necessary expertise (knowledge, internal/market-based networks and contacts) – created additional value and provided significant housing support for refugees.

3.2.3 Employment

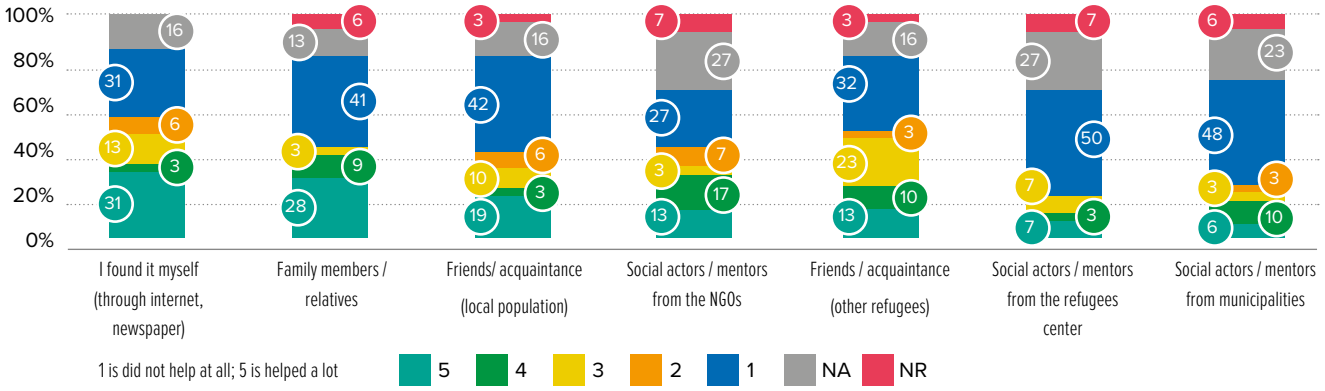
49% of respondents indicated they were not employed. Given the relatively high unemployment rate, the survey aimed to analyse the reasons behind it. It appears that the prevailing reasons for unemployment are language (56%), challenges in finding a job (32%), lack of support (32%), studies (21%), health (21%), lack of information (21%) and caring for children or other family members (16%) (*see graph 41*).

24% stated that social benefits are the main source of income in Latvia; while for 12% of respondents the main source of income comes from financial remittances from abroad. 41% were in formal employment (*see graph 42*). 43% of employed respondents indicated that their job requires lower, 14% - higher qualifications and skills than they currently have; 43% considered that their qualifications and skills are in line with their current job (*see graph 44*).

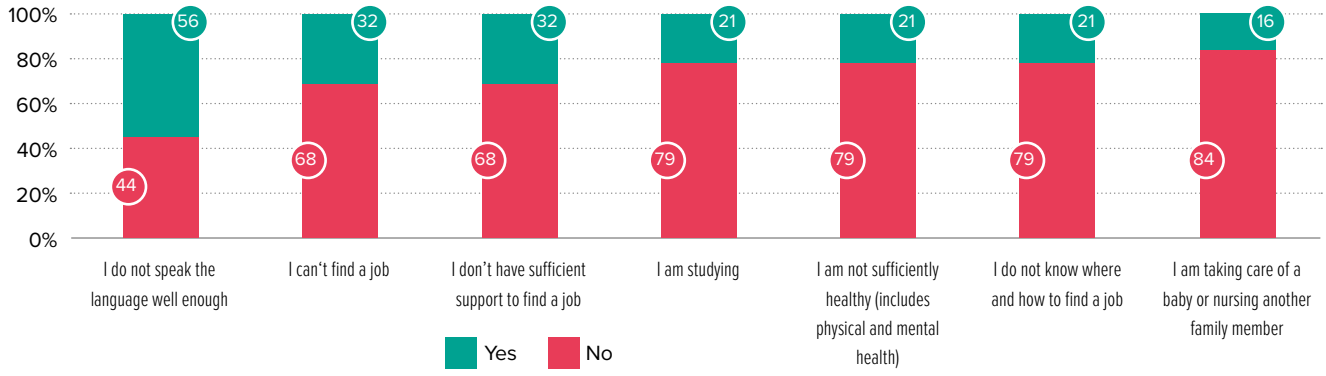
Graph 39: Survey question: Please think about your overall experience while searching for housing since your arrival in Latvia



Graph 40: Survey question: Who helped you the most while you were looking for the housing you live in at the moment?



Graph 41: Survey question: what are the reasons of unemployment?



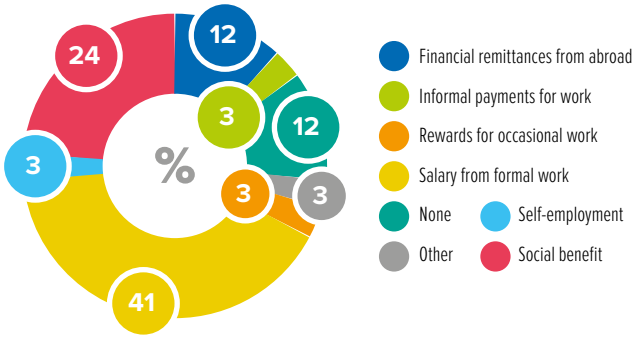
> *After visit to Employment agency I was informed that in Latvia I could also find a work, thus I started to study the language until the level A2. Further I was advised by Employment agency officer to continue studying the language at workplace and I started to work in one international company with construction materials.'*
>
> Syrian refugee

Evaluating their overall experiences while searching for a job since arriving in Latvia, 39% of respondents agreed that their education and skills are relevant and suitable. 33% indicated that their health situation has not affected their job search and 30% agreed that information where to look for a job was available. A smaller proportion of respondents have not experienced discrimination on grounds of age (26%) and family situation (23%). Overall, 22% feel they are in control while looking for a job within the framework of the integration programme. At the same time, significant obstacles have been identified: only 6% (strongly) agreed that salaries are sufficient, 12% that business has positive attitudes towards refugees, 16% that assistance was sufficient, 19% that it was easy to search for a job and there were no language obstacles or discrimination, 16% have not experienced discrimination on grounds of gender.

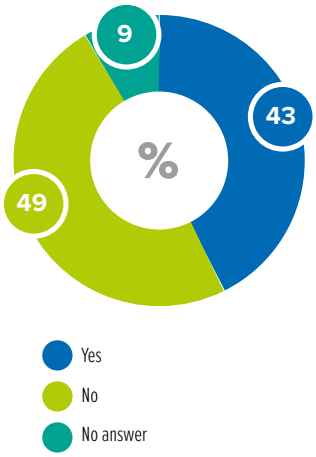
Respondents were also asked to evaluate their experiences in the workplace. 40% of respondents (strongly) agreed that they have not experienced age-related discrimination in the workplace; 47% that they have not had any personal conflict with their employer; 28% that employers have a positive attitude towards refugees; 36% that employers are tolerant towards religion and culture; 21% that co-workers are tolerant towards culture and religion in general and 29% - towards refugees in particular. The biggest employment-related challenge was identified in the area of exploitation: only 28% (strongly) agreed while 36% (strongly) disagreed that they have not experienced exploitation in the workplace.

Respondents were asked to indicate who helped them the most to find their current job. 46% agreed that they found the job by themselves, 28% received help from other refugees, 21% each - from family members/relatives and employment agency, 20% - from social workers/mentors from NGOs and 14% - from social workers/mentors from Mucenieki and municipalities; only 8% - from the local population.

Graph 42: Main sources of income



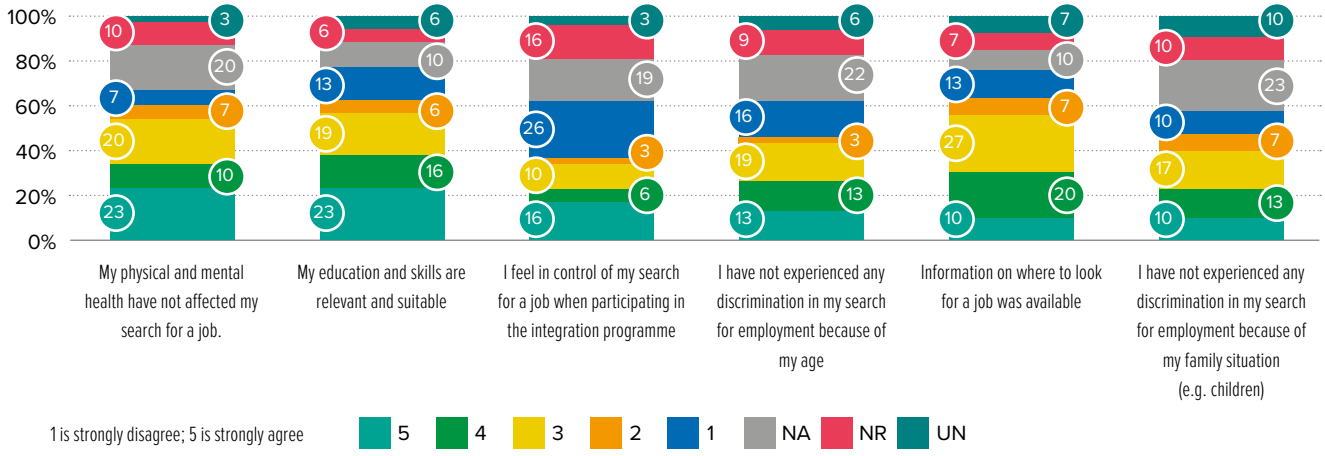
Graph 43: Are you working at the moment (including seasonal work)?



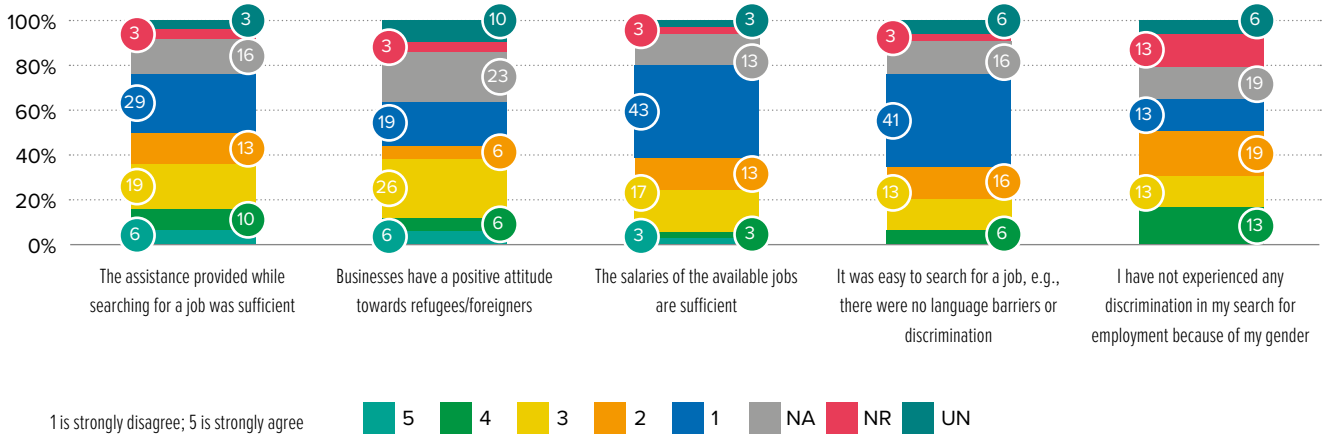
Graph 44: Please indicate whether your job is in line with your qualifications and skills?

Due to the low number of employed refugees who participated in the survey, the sample is too small to make generalisations. However, the survey results complement NIEM research and recent UNHCR mapping in Latvia (2015). According to NIEM research, the legal framework does not consider refugees a vulnerable group and, therefore, does not target specific employment support. In addition, language requirements are too high as refugees are not able to learn Latvian to the required level during the asylum process. Moreover, the insufficient monthly allowance 'forces' refugees to seek immediate employment, which further creates obstacles for language learning and vocational training. The recent UNHCR mapping in Latvia (2015) emphasised the absence of structured and predictable support in understanding the Latvian labour market and finding employment. At the same time, there have been a few promising initiatives. For example, a project implemented by the State Employment Agency, 'Integration of refugees and persons with alternative status in the Latvian labour market', as well as a pilot project to provide language training in the workplace.

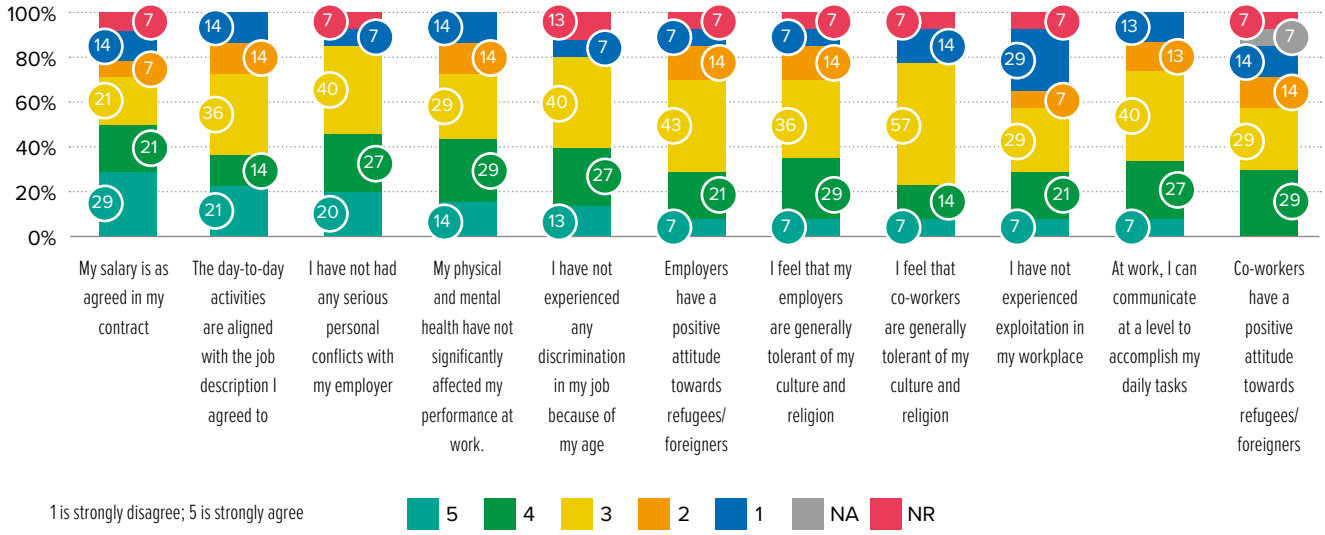
Graph 45: Survey question (part-1): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Latvia while searching for a job



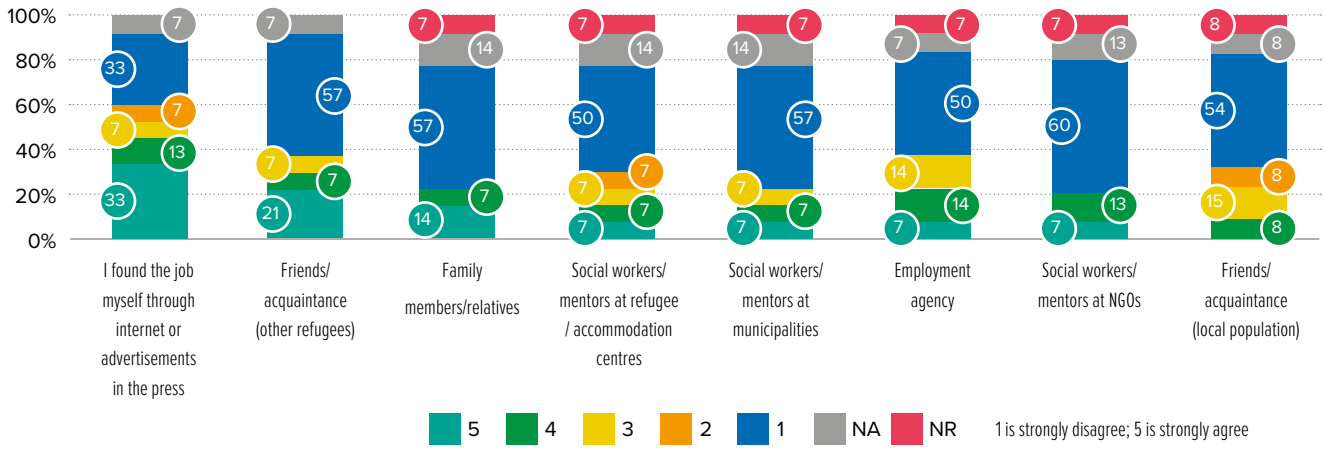
Graph 46: Survey question (part-2): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Latvia while searching for a job



Graph 47: Survey question: Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Latvia at the workplace



Graph 48: Survey question: Who helped you the most to find the job you are working at the moment?



SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS (UN)EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES:

- To prevent refugee labour exploitation, (i) design and implement monitoring tools for refugee working conditions; (ii) engage trade unions to protect refugee labour rights; (iii) inform refugees about the possible risks of exploitation and other violations of labour rights in Latvia;
- A quite visible trend of refugee deskilling[37] is emerging; therefore, a combination of a more effective matching process, faster and more effective recognition of qualifications, vocational training and language courses in the workplace could help to use all the resources that refugees possess. This could benefit refugees (social mobility within the company) and employers (highly skilled employees). In this regard, institutionalisation of the pilot project of learning/teaching Latvian in the workplace would be an essential element to address refugee labour market inclusion in a structural manner; especially considering the key reason for unemployment;[38]
- Following the logic of other reasons for unemployment – lack of support and information – initiate more active engagement of social workers and mentors, volunteers and grassroots movements;
- Partnerships with the private sector and, especially, companies with strong Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) policies in the workplace could help to implement holistic labour market inclusion initiatives, focusing not only on regular employment, but also on paid internships and apprenticeships with the possibility of permanent employment and language training in the workplace. Many examples could be provided, including the recently launched IKEA Foundation initiative on labour market inclusion for refugees.[39] In addition, useful tools have been prepared, which could be used as guidelines to engage employers, including the UNHCR and OECD action plan to boost refugee employment.[40] Moreover, there are existing platforms[41] in Latvia, which could be used as entry points for proactive engagement of (potential) employers, focusing not only on refugees, but on a non-selective approach towards diversity (age, gender, disabilities, SOGI, ethnicity and race);
- Considering worldwide experiences, there is a need to boost not only regular refugee employment, but also self-employment and entrepreneurship. Creating more self-employment opportunities would show that refugees are bringing not only social and cultural, but also economic resources and traditions of small-scale businesses.[42]

[37] 43% of employed respondents agreed that their job requires lower qualifications and skills than they currently have.

[38] 56% of respondents indicated that language is the key reason for unemployment.

[39] Read more at: http://bit.ly/3qHT4YQ

[40] Read more at: https://bit.ly/3cqJCDW

[41] Such as the Latvian Diversity Charter: http://www.thinkdiversity.eu/home/

[42] As an example, one initiative has been designed in Latvia (Humusa komanda: https://bit.ly/3csdYG3), while a few initiatives are emerging in Estonia: Siin & Sääl, run by the Estonian Refugee Council in partnership with UNHCR, and International House social enterprise KÖÖMEN: https://www.internationalhouse.ee/en/services/

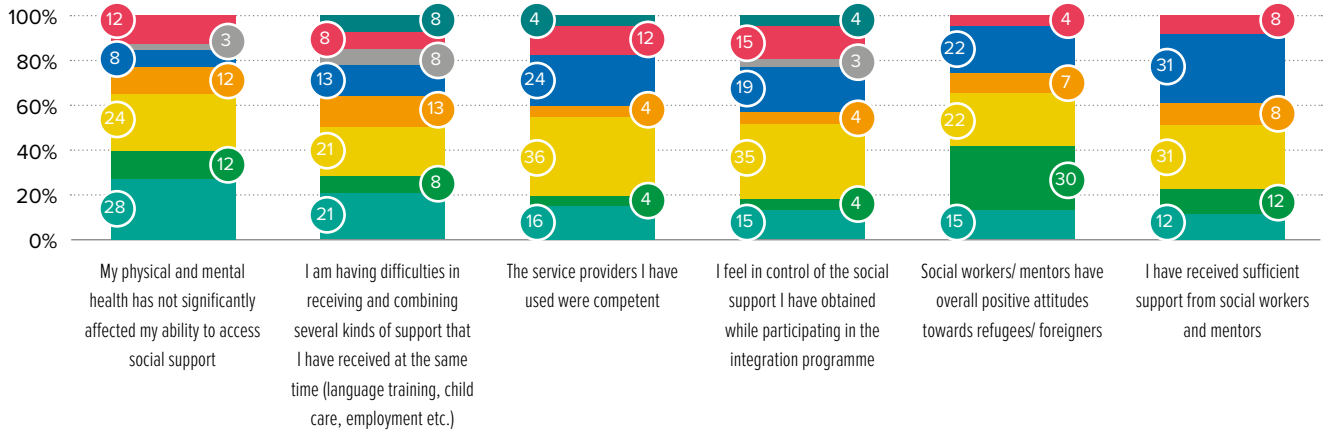
3.2.4 Social support

> *Sometime I know, sometime I do not know where to search for needed services. It takes a long time to find a place where I should go and find what I need. Sometime I go and find out that there is no communication between us. Then I have to find someone who could help me. It is a little bit difficult'*
>
> Refugee from the Middle East

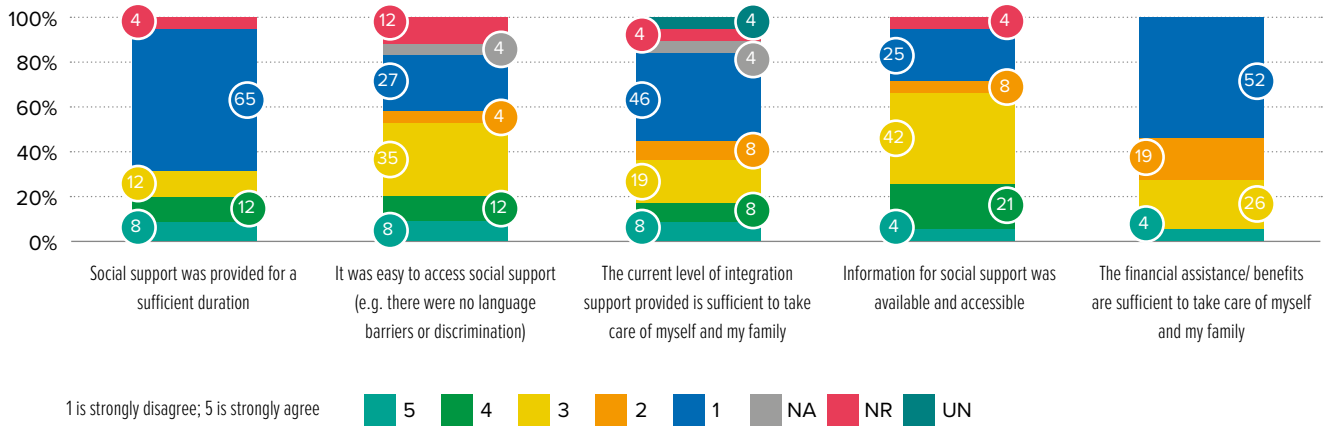
66% of respondents indicated that since arriving in Latvia they have received (or are still receiving) social support, 17% stated that they have tried but could not get it. 6% have not received social support, but would like to; another 6% indicated that they do not need any social support. Respondents were asked to reflect on their overall experiences while receiving social support. 45% of respondents (strongly) agreed that social workers/mentors have a positive attitude towards refugees, 40% that their physical and mental health has not affected their ability to access social support, 29% that they have difficulties in combining several kinds of support, 24% that they received sufficient support from social workers/mentors, 20% that service providers were competent, 19% that they feel in control of their own situation while participating in the programme and receiving social support (*see graph 49*).

At the same time, only 4% of respondents (strongly) agreed that the financial assistance and benefits were sufficient to take care of themselves and families; 20% that support was provided for long enough, 16% that the current level of integration support is sufficient to take care of themselves and families, 20% that it was easy to access social support and there were no language obstacles or discrimination, 25% that information about social support was available and accessible.

Graph 49: Survey question (part-1): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Latvia while receiving social support



Graph 50: Survey question (part-2): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Latvia while receiving social support



> *Nobody tells you - if you want this, you have to go and do this or that. If you need something, you do not know where to go. When I was ill, I did not know where to go! Ok, I know that I have to go to hospital, but which one? How to get there? It was very, very difficult... If you do not have good contacts with people, you do not know anything'*
>
> Syrian refugee

SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS SOCIAL SUPPORT

Overall, social support was evaluated more negatively than positively. Therefore, the following suggestions to improve social support for refugees should be considered:

- Remove the differences in rights between refugees and alternative status beneficiaries, as the latter are not entitled to various resources and services;
- Strengthen the role of municipalities by describing their responsibilities and allocating financial support for implementing integration services and building up capacities needed. This action could help to address refugees' greatest concerns – (un)sustainability of the integration system: lack of financial assistance and the duration of the support;
- Additionally, (un)sustainability of the integration system could be addressed by (i) streamlining support services into the general integration programmes and reducing the reliance on EU funded integration activities; (ii) involving and funding NGOs and civil society to complement the state efforts for integration. Streamlining of integration services could be implemented by creating synergies between various services: the social mentorship programme run by the Latvian Red Cross on one hand, and local (municipal) level social services on the other. Such mainstreaming of refugee integration policies could create sustainability of services and improve integration outcomes;
- Regular trainings for service providers by supporting practitioners in different areas of integration work: identification of vulnerabilities, intercultural competences, language competences, empathy; as only 20% of respondents (strongly) agreed that service providers were competent and 45% agreed (29% disagreed) that social workers/mentors have positive attitudes towards refugees. Such trainings should be provided for social mentors and workers from NGOs, municipalities and Mucenieki;
- Disseminate information about social support and all available integration measures/initiatives regularly, as only 21% of respondents (strongly) agreed that information was available and accessible. In addition, strengthen the coordination of integration efforts by assigning responsibility to the designated authority, as this could help to create a coordinated information exchange between various integration stakeholders;
- Focus on a combination of different integration services to ensure that every individual has access to the respective service and opportunity to combine employment, vocational and language training as well as child-care at the same time (as 29% (strongly) agreed they had difficulties in combining several kinds of support). For example, child-care for refugee women during vocational training and language courses, flexible arrangement of language courses, language training in the workplace, other;
- Foster conventional and unconventional forms of refugee civic participation and civic engagement by promoting integration as a two-way process. This could be achieved by supporting refugee/migrant communities to be involved in the design and implementation of integration policies, social support as well as engagement in various consultative platforms, not necessarily linked to (only) integration, but to a broader agenda of human rights: equal opportunities, gender equality, sustainable development, other;
- Envisage funding for local-level grassroots initiatives and NGOs that could build bridges between refugees and local communities as well as social support by initiating various cultural, social and economic activities. Such initiatives should entail both national and municipal funding to ensure sustainability and long-term outcomes.

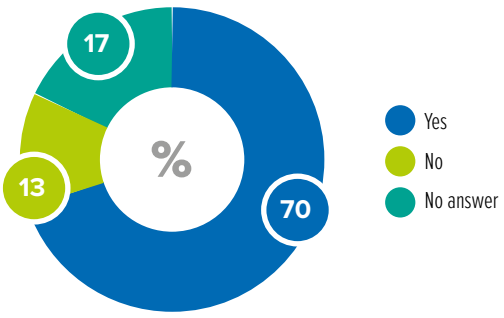
I was working at many places and as Latvians say: "divus zaķus reizē ķerdams, nevienu nenoķersi!" which means - I was trying to shoot many birds with one bullet. For me it was not about the money, rather about experience and improvement of language. Translation for me was to start speaking, at the private clinic I was also getting the experience. I have to say that this was the best experience in my life!'

Syrian refugee

3.2.5 Children's education and language training

Of those respondents who have children, 70% reported (*graph 51*) that their children are in education (nursery or kindergarten, primary or secondary school). Of those few (13%) who indicated that their children are not in education, all said that neither the children's age, nor limited access to education was the reason for this.

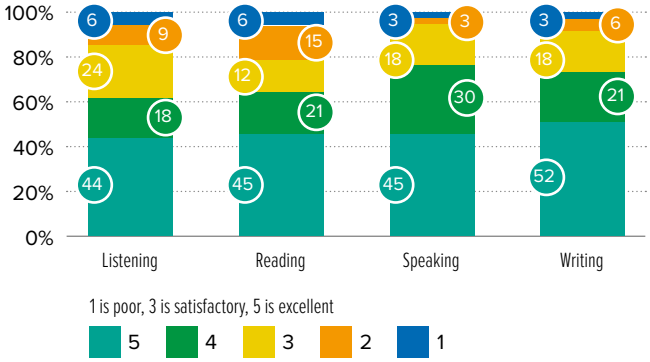
Graph 51: Children attending education institutions in Latvia



Children had to make a project in natural science; therefore, they have to split in pairs. My daughter had a partner in the project, but suddenly this girl says that she will not continue the project together. I think she (my daughter) is the only student in the class who feels confused and cannot find a partner. I usually encourage her that she should turn firstly to her teacher and let her know and that she would find somebody. Also, when the class travels somewhere and children must divide in pairs, my daughter stays alone, and nobody wants to walk with her or sit beside her in the bus. Especially the girls'

Refugee from the Middle East[43]

Graph 52: Proficiency in Latvian language



Data on self-evaluation of Latvian language competence shows that refugees in Latvia have not developed reading, writing, listening or speaking skills (*graph 52*). Overall, the great majority of respondents (from 64% to 75% respectively) evaluated their language knowledge as poor or quite poor on all four aspects. This could be explained by one of the challenges, indicated in section 2 of the report, when insufficient financial support in the initial integration period leads to immediate employment without engagement in language training.[44] According to the NIEM report, the accessibility of language courses is especially limited in municipalities outside the capital, when the waiting time for accessing language learning might be up to 45 working days. Additionally, inflexible arrangements limit courses' accessibility for employed refugees, while their project-based (usually – AMIF funded) nature does not ensure sustainability over time and space. NIEM researchers indicate that as a result, the process of targeted language learning often stops as soon as refugees start working, which is likely to hamper integration processes in the long run. The UNHCR mapping in Latvia (2015) illustrates these challenges by emphasising the absence of centralised language training, when refugees must independently identify suitable courses and enrol in them.

Only 2 years ago I could hardly say few sentences in Latvian. When I had to speak with someone, I was sitting outside for 15-20 minutes to prepare my statement - translate, edit, this and that. I started to study the language 2-3 years ago seriously because I was thrown into the field without any integration program, anything. It was not about being a refugee, but more relevant to all foreigners. I was thrown into the system as any other resident from Latvia. Except I had to work twice as hard to learn not only the medicine, but also the language and terminology'

Syrian refugee

[43] Agreement not to disclose the country of origin.

[44] According to the NIEM report, the pressure to join the labour market as soon as possible due to the low level of financial support from the state delays and impairs language acquisition in a focused manner.

SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS LANGUAGE TRAINING:

- Considering current integration challenges (lack of financial support in the initial phase of integration that leads to immediate employment), to initiate a programme of language training in the workplace by institutionalising the current pilot project, implemented by the State Employment Agency;
- Design centralised language courses with flexible arrangements for easier access and enrolment, addressing not only cultural differences, but also age, gender roles and mental health, which might hamper training outcomes in the long term;
- Capacitate language training institutions to provide trainings in different languages, various environments and interactive methodologies, which reflect different cultures, capacities and vulnerabilities. Allocated hours should not be fixed, but flexible;
- Actively engage refugees (and other immigrants) in the design and implementation of language courses to increase motivation and enrolment, create a sense of belonging and ownership.

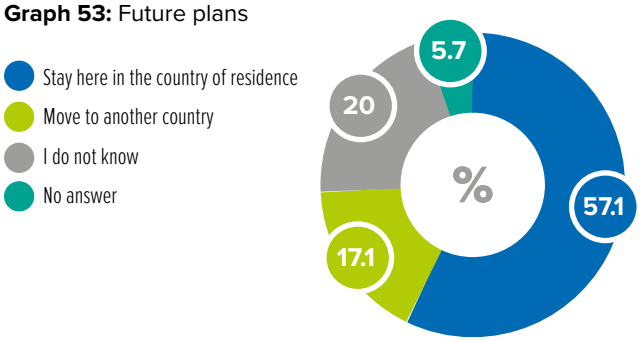
> *In 2013 I thought I could continue my studies in economy, but then I would need Latvian language. So, I went together with my friend to "Drošā māja" to inquire about the opportunities to study language. I was refused because they said I do not have rights, while my friend with permanent residency status was allowed. Maybe next year "Drošā māja" would have a project. (..) I went to Employment agency and they informed me that I could also find a work, so I started to study the language until the level A2. Then I was advised by my Employment agency officer to continue studying the language at workplace, so I did. I worked at the same place until recently in 2019 I quit the job'*
>
> Syrian refugee

3.2.6 Future plans

> *I try to convince myself that the life in Finland and Latvia is the same, after all both are European countries. I feel gratitude towards Latvia which gave me safety when I could not receive it in my home country.'*
>
> Refugee from the Middle East

In the survey, respondents were asked about their future plans – whether they are planning to stay in or leave the country. According to the results and, contrary to the existing secondary movement trends, a majority of respondents – 57% - are planning to stay in Latvia and only 17% - to move to another country; one-fifth of respondents still do not know about their future plans (*see graph 53*). In addition to potential long-term settlement, 83% of respondents agreed that obtaining citizenship is an important priority to promote or improve integration (*see below: 3.2.7 Integration priorities and outcomes*).

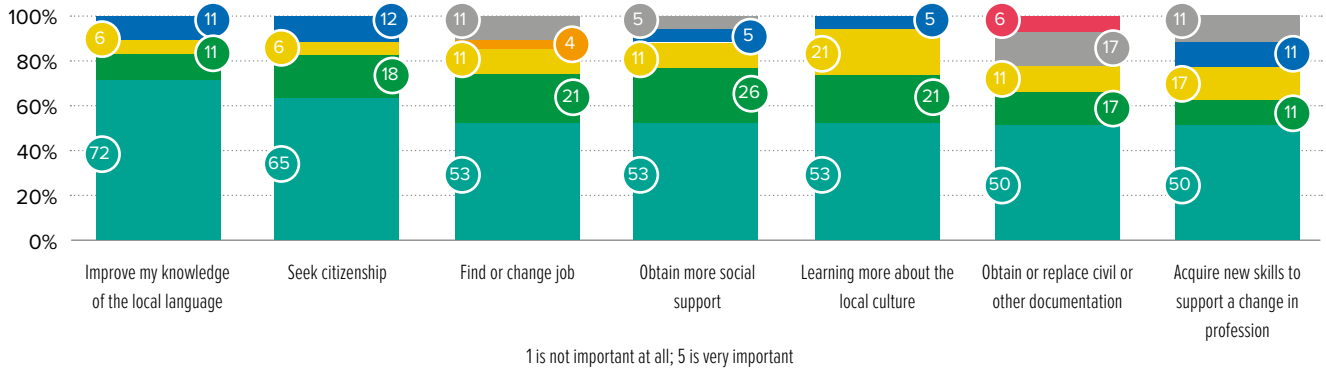
Graph 53: Future plans



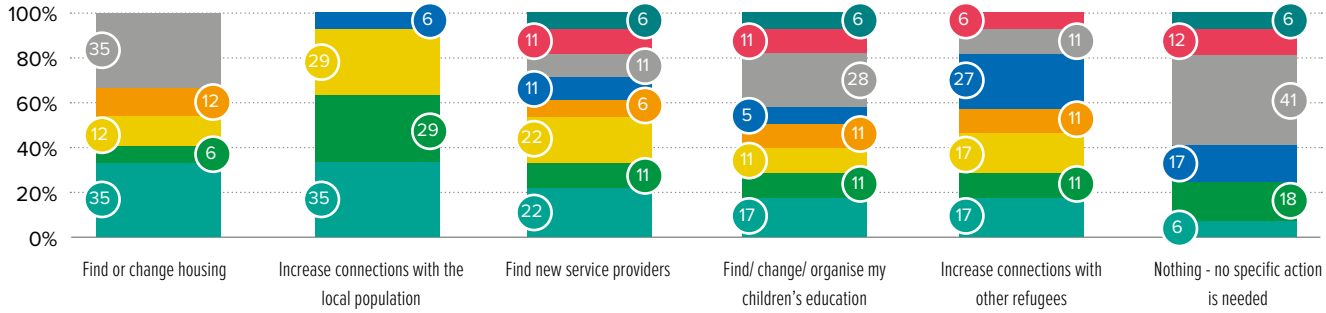
3.2.7 Integration priorities and outcomes

In order to foster a participatory approach, one of the intentions of the survey was to ask refugees about key integration priorities and achievements. This could help to develop and tailor integration services accordingly, considering refugee voice and experiences and setting priorities not only by policy designers, but also by the target group. Respondents were asked to identify the most important priorities to promote or improve integration. Survey data revealed that improvement in the local language (83% agreed), civil documentation (67%), citizenship (83%), employment (74%), new skills to change profession (61%), more support (79%) and socio-cultural courses (74%) are key integration priorities.

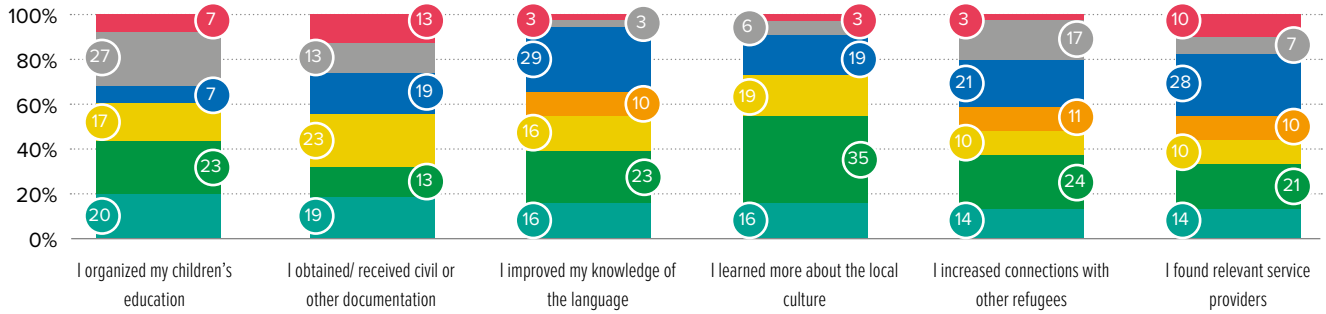
Graph 54: Survey question (part-1): What do you consider your most important priorities to promote or improve your integration?



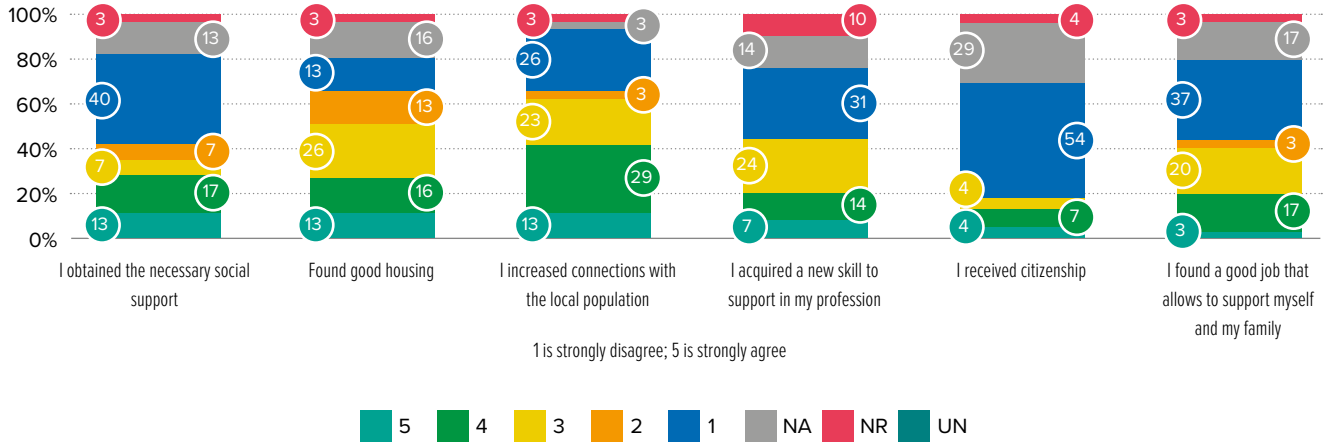
Graph 55: Survey question (part-2): What do you consider your most important priorities to promote or improve your integration?



Graph 56: Survey question (part-1): In your opinion, what have you achieved in Latvia so far?



Graph 57: Survey question (part-2): In your opinion, what have you achieved in Latvia so far?



On one hand, willingness to stay in Latvia is higher than the number of people who actually stay; on the other hand, motivation to stay in the country might decrease due to reasons indicated in this survey report: employment, housing, insufficient financial support, short duration of the mentorship programme, limited welcoming environment, language, other; which further means that the potential for long-term settlement and attitudes towards obtaining Latvian citizenship could be outweighed by more structural integration challenges, which might further foster secondary movements.

> *Nobody in Mucenieki or any other organisation told us about the health care system in Latvia. I learned about it from my local friend, who also advised the family doctor and helped with formal side.'*
>
> Refugee from the Middle East

Additionally, the survey revealed that only 28% of respondents (strongly) agreed that they need to increase connections with other refugees (in comparison to 64% who agreed on the need to increase connection with the local population); 41% (strongly) agreed that they need to change housing, 33% that they need to find new service providers, 28% to address children's education, 24% - that they need do nothing.

The data above shows that refugees' willingness to create connections with the local population significantly outweighs willingness to strengthen internal networks within their own ethnic group, which further means that there is a big potential for inclusion and no risk of ethnic segregation. In order to fully realise this potential, grassroots communities and volunteers must be involved in the implementation of refugee integration services and initiatives; at the same time engaging refugees in such initiatives not only as beneficiaries, but also as service providers. As the survey revealed, external networks with the local population are not very well developed as refugees are lacking housing and employment support coming from the local population. Therefore, engaging the local population in informal socio-cultural integration activities could be one of the solutions. However, socio-cultural activities should not be one-off projects, but should rather be implemented within the framework of municipal strategies, including such initiatives as the Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC).[45]

To identify integration outcomes or gaps between desired achievements and the actual situation, respondents were asked to indicate what they have achieved in Latvia so far. Only a small proportion of respondents have already achieved their desired outcomes in various aspects of integration (*see below*). 51% (strongly) agreed that they had learned more about Latvian culture, 43% - organised children's education, 39% - improved language skills, 38% - increased connections with other refugees, 35% - found relevant service providers, 32% - obtained necessary documentation. Such data could also be considered 'self-evaluation' of the integration process, where room for improvement exists for both sides: refugees and hosting institutions.

Though the majority of respondents understand the importance of integration, in reality and for many refugees, many desires in all key integration areas are still to be achieved in the future (*see graph 57*), including social support, housing, connections with the local population, new skills, employment and citizenship.

[45] ICC supports cities in reviewing their policies through an intercultural lens and developing comprehensive intercultural strategies to help manage diversity positively and realise the diversity advantage. For more, see Council of Europe, The Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC), available at: https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE THE OVERALL INTEGRATION SYSTEM:

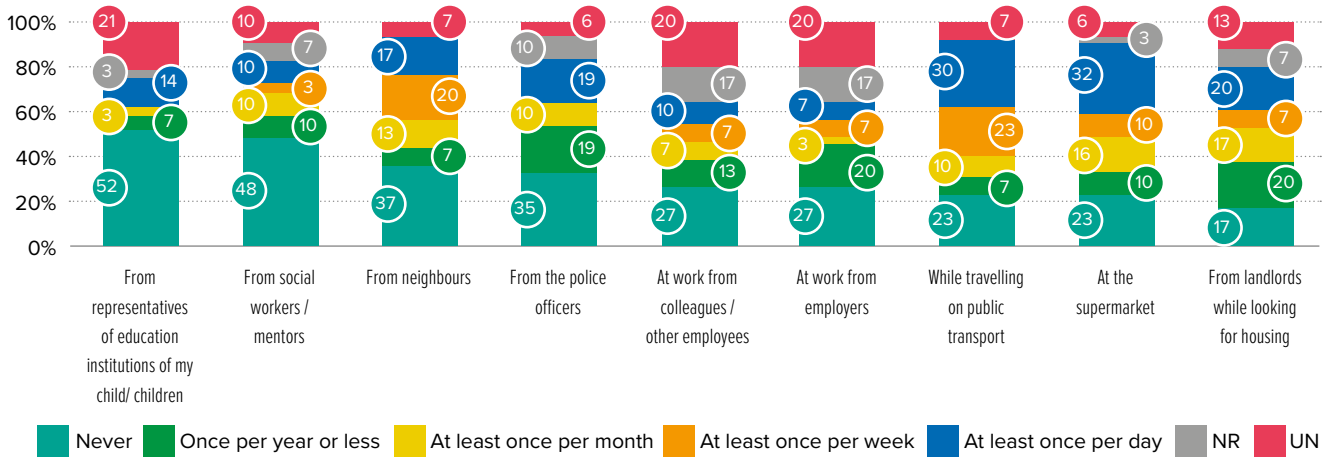
- Drafting a national state-funded, sustainable and holistic integration programme or strategy in consultation with refugees and various actors is essential to reduce secondary movements and maintain the potential for long-term settlement of refugees in Latvia. The strategy should entail all the essential elements indicated in subsection 3.2.5 (*see 3.2.5. Social support*);
- The survey data shows that refugees are aware of various integration services and want to be enrolled in them. Therefore, a tailor-made approach is needed not just to combine various services at the same time, but also to engage refugees in the design of integration programmes, thus creating a sense of belonging and higher level of enrolment in initiatives that they have co-designed;
- Attitudes towards various aspects of integration and obtaining citizenship show that refugees' perceptions of integration are not just about long- and short-term expectations or permanent versus temporary residence in the country; it involves becoming an integral part of the local population by learning the language, culture and social norms, building bridges with local institutions and grassroots societies. This momentum should be used as soon as possible, by creating and implementing holistic socioeconomic inclusion policies.

3.2.8 Experiences of negative attitudes

> *The society was not very welcoming, but also if you had a lot of children it was very difficult to find housing. The owners even did not ask if one is a refugee or not, they just hear one has 5 children and they hang up. Social support service advised us to stay in social housing queue if we want their help' <...> 'The place we stay now, the owner until now has not agreed to make a contract with us. Maybe he thinks my children will eat the concrete, the flat, if we will make a contract. It is a proverb in my home'*
>
> Syrian refugee

Many questions in the survey targeted attitudes towards refugees and foreigners, focusing on the labour market and housing. This section also looks at societal attitudes, but from a broader perspective. Respondents were asked to specify how often (if ever) they had to deal with negative reactions/attitudes in various environments (mentioned below) and experienced prejudices and stereotypes due to being a refugee, or belonging to an ethnic/religious group. According to the survey results, social mentorship and education are the safest (or more neutral) environments; while the neighbourhood, the police, the housing market, public transport and supermarkets are environments where refugees face negative attitudes more often (*see graph 58*). Unfortunately, the problem prevails in various environments: as far as daily/weekly experience is concerned, a significant proportion of respondents experienced negative reactions/attitudes in all the environments indicated below.

Graph 58: Survey question: Specify how often (if ever) you had to deal with negative reactions/attitudes?



> *I went shopping to local supermarket where a security guard called us "terrorists" and was following us through the market and staring at me if I was about to steal something or do something bad'*
>
> Refugee from the Middle East

> *I was using public transportation with my son and we were sitting in front of old woman. My son has an allergic reaction and he coughed. The woman in front of us demonstratively left her place and gave me an arrogant look. I cannot do there anything about it, it depends on the person if he is polite or not'*
>
> Refugee from the Middle East

SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

Such data shows the complexity of prevailing attitudes in public places and institutions, as well as agreeing with the results of the recent special Eurobarometer survey on integration of immigrants in the European Union,[46] where only 40% of Latvian residents indicated that they would be comfortable to have a migrant as a friend (in comparison to 87% in Sweden or 70% in Denmark). The complexity of this issue could be addressed by combining various initiatives:

- To address negative reactions/attitudes in institutions (police, social work and children's education), diversity and inclusion trainings for personnel could be initiated with a focus on intercultural competences and religious dialogue, refugee integration, international migration and displacement. Such trainings should be sustainable; therefore, linked to an institutional framework (governmental or municipal programme), rather than being project-based;
- To address the consequences of negative reactions/attitudes in public places (supermarket, neighbourhood, other), awareness raising campaigns around asylum and international migration issues should be initiated, including trainings for journalists to create professional media coverage on the most sensitive societal issues in Latvia, including asylum seekers and refugees. To initiate preventative actions, the Concept of Global Education and Global Learning could be used to create an integrated curriculum, where issues of diversity and inclusion, international migration and human rights would become horizontal topics in kindergartens, schools and universities;
- To address specific environments – negative reactions/attitudes of employers and landlords – intermediation by social workers/mentors is crucial to create better integration outcomes and reduce myths, stereotypes and prejudices among these groups;
- To address negative reactions/attitudes of employees, already existing frameworks could be applied and combined: the Latvian Diversity Charter, Diversity and Inclusion Strategies (D&I) in the workplace of many international companies operating in Latvia and elsewhere.

[46] Special Eurobarometer 469. Integration of immigrants in the European Union, European Commission 2018, available at: http://bit.ly/3bKgcBO

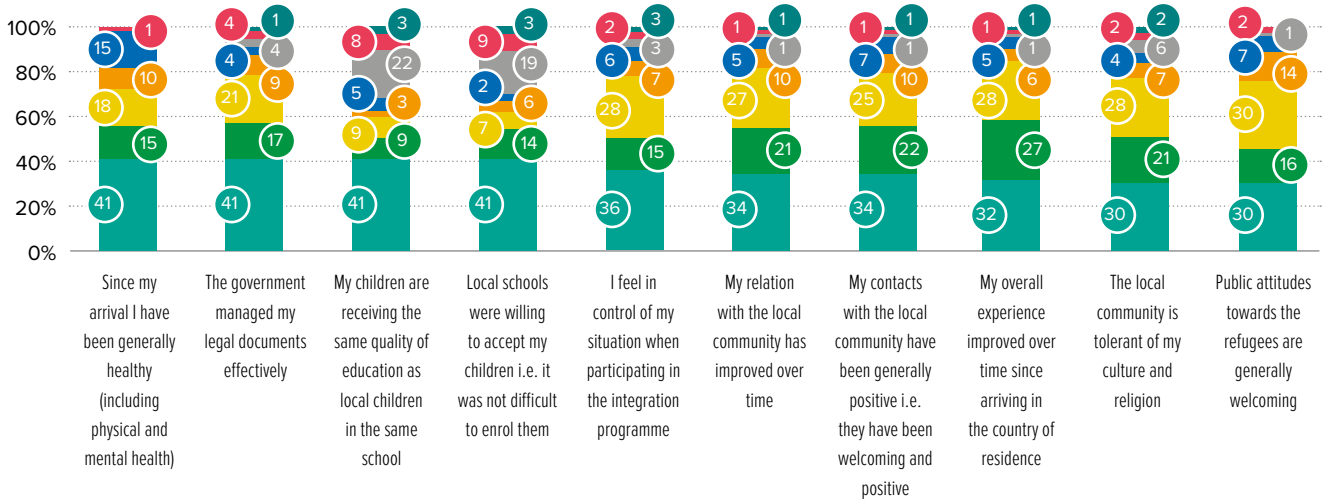
3.3 Lithuania

3.3.1 Views on integration experiences

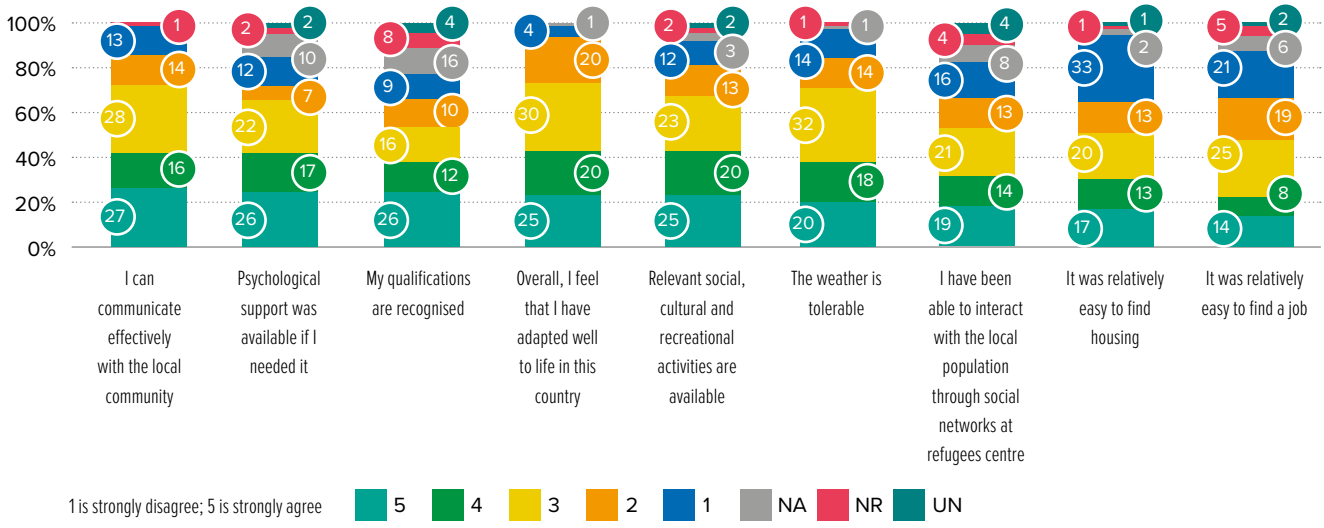
> *First impressions after arrival were very positive. First of all, it was safe here, we were not persecuted anymore, but later we realised that we don't know the language and that we are a bit isolated and communicating just with our family and just with school of my daughter as well as one refugee family, which was also living in Kaunas. We discovered that we need to adapt, we need to learn the language… but six first months we did not speak the language, we had very limited contacts. Then we started to participate in refugee programme… then our circle of contacts became wider'*
>
> Tadjik refugee

To identify integration challenges and opportunities from the refugees' perspective, respondents were asked to think about their overall experiences of various aspects of integration since arriving in Lithuania. Refugees reported more positive than negative experiences in the areas of managing legal documents, health, quality education for children and local school environment, contacts with the local community and public attitudes, self-reliance and overall experience over time since arriving in Lithuania (*see graph 59*).

Graph 59: Survey question (part-1): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Lithuania[47]

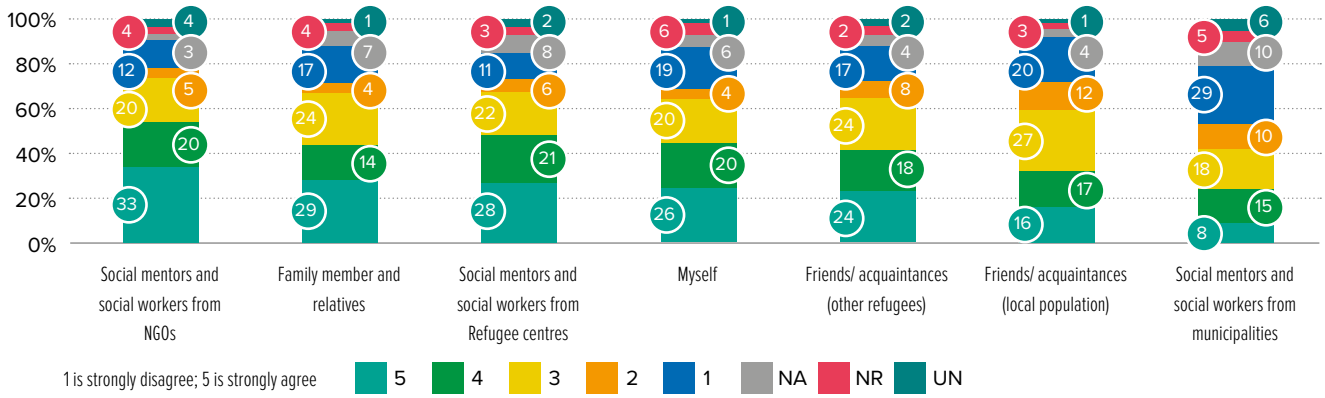


Graph 60: Survey question (part-2): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Lithuania



[47] In this graph and further in other graphs: NA – not applicable; UN – I do not know; NR – No answer.

Graph 61: Survey question: Please indicate who is making decisions for you?



> *We built some friendships, my wife is looking for job, we communicate with some representatives of our community, I communicate with NGO representatives as I am participating in one refugee related NGO. Also, I participated in the meeting of initiative group, which was supported by another NGO, and they try to set the refugee council. So, the circle of contacts is becoming wider. I am also contacting universities and research centres to find an appropriate job for me. I am becoming more involved with local people…*
>
> Tadjik refugee

> *And then I noticed in Lithuania that people were a bit cold and then there were little foreigners in Lithuania, but now it is changing. But all in all, there were positive impressions about the country… In our cultures, we were raised that we should not disturb people, so we are not making contacts easily. But when we started to communicate, a nice friendship developed. I thought that Lithuanians are cold and reserved, but then I thought that, probably, they were raised like that… there should be reasons for that'*
>
> Refugee from the Russian Federation

However, some challenges were revealed, particularly, employment, housing, socio-cultural activities, recognition of qualifications, psychological support, other (*see graph 60*). Therefore, refugees' situation in selected integration areas still need to be improved (*for specific suggestions, see respective subsections 3.3.2 Housing, 3.3.3 Employment, 3.3.4 Social support, 3.3.5 Children's education and language training, 3.3.8 Experiences of negative attitudes*).

To measure refugees' self-reliance, respondents were asked whether they feel in control of their own situation when participating in the integration programme; and if not, to indicate who is making decisions instead of them. 51% of respondents (strongly) agreed (*see graph 59*) that they feel in control of their own situation when participating in the integration programme and 46% (strongly) agreed (*see graph 60*) that they are making decisions by themselves. At the same time, reliance on social workers and mentors is also high: 49% (strongly) agreed that decisions are being made by social workers at the Rukla Refugee Reception Centre, 53% - by social workers from NGOs, 23% - by social workers from municipalities. Family members (43%) and friends – other refugees (42%) and local population (33%) – are influencing decision making as well (*see graph 61*).

The above data show that municipalities have extremely limited involvement in refugee integration processes. At the same time, reliance on NGOs is higher than on other available resources: local population, friends, and family members. However, the difference is not significant as refugees have developed balanced ties between various (available) resources and do not rely on only one resource. But municipalities' engagement in refugee integration processes should increase, even considering the fact that NGOs are key integration stakeholders in Lithuania by providing refugee-specific integration services in so called *one-stop-shops* (migrant/refugee day centres).

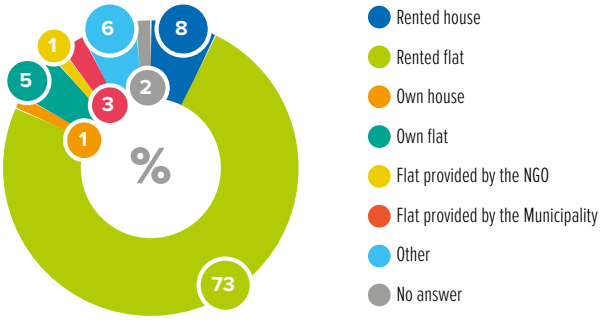
> *Institutions like Caritas, Red Cross… they are cool, they are very friendly and good people work there. They do their best to help, but of course we are humans, sometimes there are gaps, but we are not counting on that. Although there are some gaps from our end, but in general we are happy with the work they are doing for us. If there are any problems, we can tell them and they try to help us'*
>
> Afghani refugee

3.3.2 Housing

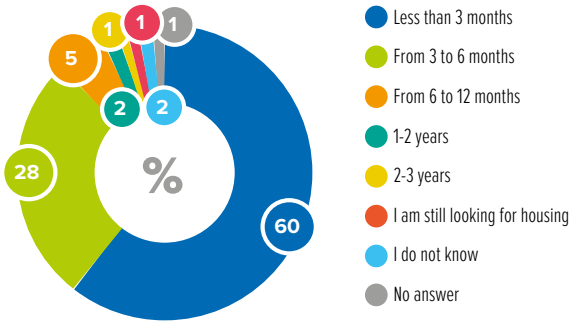
> *We have been looking for apartment in Vilnius, we would have been happy with any apartment in any place in Vilnius, just to have a roof… to have shelter. It was also difficult for us to find apartment both in Kaunas and in Vilnius. A lot of owners do not prefer to allow foreigners to live in their houses. We could not find, so, we sent applications. When we contacted the owners and they found out that we are refugees – they refused. It was very difficult for us and we felt bad because… really, if we were Lithuanians, they would give us easier, and they would believe us more and as we are refugees… they are not…. and particularly when they got information that we are Muslims, they refused categorically. They were not explaining why they were refusing'*
>
> Tadjik refugee

> *We have an apartment which does not have all normal conditions. Probably the owner agreed to give this apartment because it does not have good condition… and probably very few people would agree to rent this apartment. We understood that of course, but we tried… windows would not move… its cold inside, but still we are trying… to change the situation, for example, to put plastic to cover the balcony, the windows. This could save us from the cold. Of course, it is a bit painful, but still I mean it is better than not having for example a roof or spending time in refugee camp'*
>
> Tadjik refugee

Graph 62: Type of housing

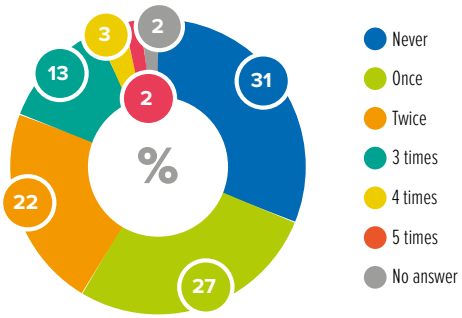


Graph 63: How long did it take to find a place to live when you first arrived, excluding the accommodation centre?



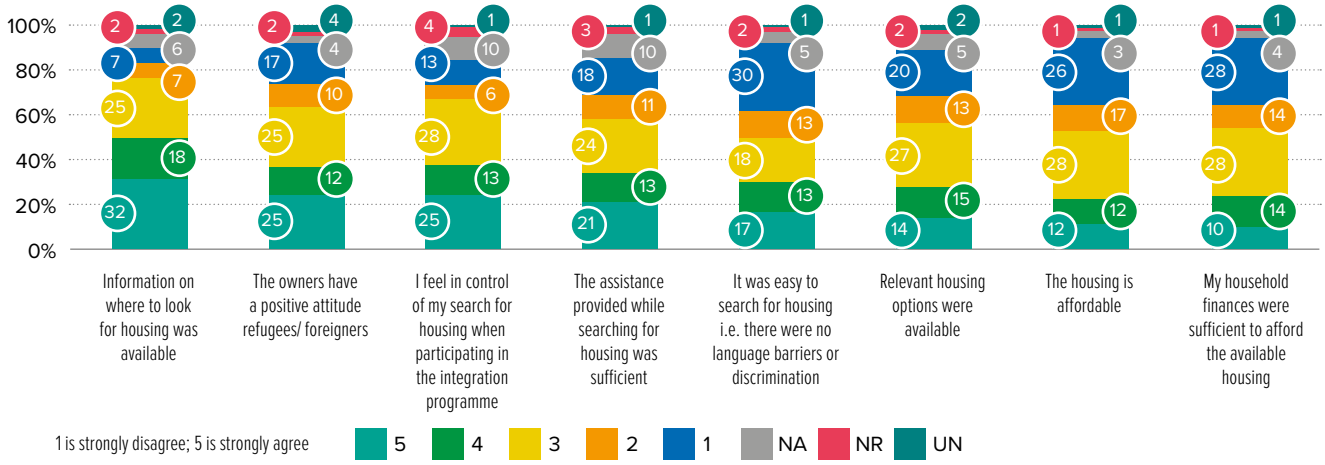
Most respondents are living either in rented flats (73%) or rented houses (8%) (*the graph 64*). Respondents indicated that housing is one of the biggest challenges; 60% found a place to live in less than 3 months; for 28% of the refugees it took up to six months (*the graph 63*). 31% have never changed their accommodation, while 27% changed it once, 22% - twice, and 13% - three times (*the graph 62*)

Graph 64: How many times have you changed your housing, excluding the accommodation centre?



As refugee housing is one of the biggest obstacles to integration, the survey questionnaire focused on this issue. To understand what is behind the housing problem, refugees were asked to provide their experience of searching for housing since arriving in Lithuania (*see graph 65*). 30% of respondents (strongly) agreed and 43% disagreed that searching for housing was easy and there were no language obstacles or discrimination, 24% agreed and 42% disagreed that household finances are sufficient, 24% agreed and 43% disagreed that housing is affordable, 29% agreed and 33% disagreed that relevant housing options are available, 34% agreed and 29% disagreed that assistance provided while searching for housing is sufficient, 37% agreed and 27% disagreed that landlords have positive attitudes towards refugees, 50% agreed and only 14% disagreed that information on where to look for housing is available. 38% agreed and 19% disagreed that they feel in control of their search for housing during the integration programme.

Graph 65: Survey question: Please think about your overall experience while searching for housing since your arrival in Lithuania

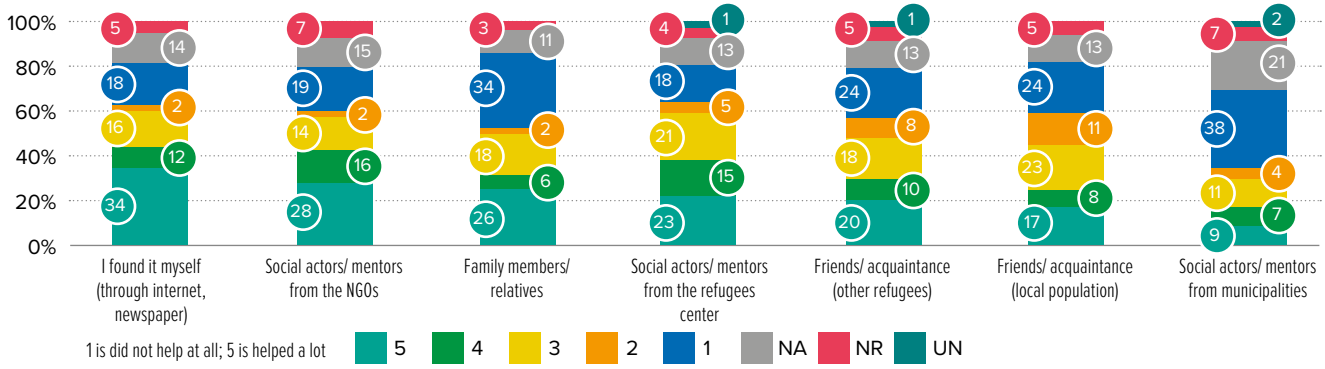


> *It was very challenging. In the beginning, when I came from Rukla to Vilnius, Caritas helped me to find a place. It was really too small for me and it was really old. So, after some time I decided to change the place, as I have a big family... two small rooms for 6 people – it is really too small. I was looking for apartment for around 5 or 6 months... for a refugee or foreigner it is really difficult... to find a place to live. When I was searching for a flat, they asked, where are you from... I am from Afghanistan. So, it is one negative point. Second point – I say I have kids. When they ask how many kids and I say 4 kids, they say no... They never rent houses for foreigners that have kids. They think that kids will destroy the house...'*
>
> Afghani refugee

To identify assistance to deal with the housing challenges, respondents were asked to indicate who helped them the most to find a place to live. 46% (strongly) agreed that they found housing by themselves, 38% received assistance from social workers from the Refugee Reception Centre, 44% - from social workers from NGOs, 32% - from family members/relatives, 30% - from friends/other refugees, 25% - from friends/local population and 16% - from social workers from municipalities. Neither social workers/mentors from municipalities, nor the local population provided significant help to find housing.

According to NIEM research findings (2018), Lithuania has not adopted an action plan that specifically targets refugee housing issues[48]; additionally, there is no monitoring of available services. The Government does not provide additional (state-funded) measures for NGOs to address the housing challenge; funding is available only from AMIF programmes. In the UNHCR mapping (2013), refugees reported that they need more assistance in finding suitable and affordable housing as their search for housing is hampered by lack of information and contacts and limited language skills. In addition, it is linked to other integration areas as refugees have difficulties affording the rent offered as many of them are unemployed. Furthermore, many of the refugees are experiencing xenophobia and intolerance from landlords (*see more details in subsection 3.3.8 Experiences of negative attitudes*).

Graph 66: Survey question: Who helped you the most while you were looking for the housing you live in at the moment?



[48] More information on refugee housing policies and practices (including Sweden) is available at: https://bit.ly/3vl3xg5

SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS HOUSING CHALLENGES:

- Municipalities have limited engagement as well as capacities to deal with housing challenges, and indeed with other refugee-specific integration issues. Therefore, it is recommended to foster municipalities' engagement in implementing refugee/immigrant specific integration measures and services with a focus on (social) housing;
- An action plan to address housing challenges should be adopted by engaging all relevant stakeholders, including letting agencies. If a separate action plan is not feasible in the context of the existing integration framework, housing issues must be addressed in the upcoming integration action plan and supported by a monitoring and evaluation process;
- 23% of respondents indicated experiencing negative reactions/attitudes from landlords daily or weekly. Considering that 46% of respondents managed to find housing themselves, the lack of proactive support (mediation and facilitation) is quite a significant integration gap, which could be addressed by (i) diversity/ awareness raising trainings for letting agents and landlords in combination with (ii) professional assistance from letting agencies. The pilot project of UNHCR and Vilnius Archdiocese (VA) Caritas. 'Supporting refugee integration in Lithuania through outreach work and housing', confirmed that professional services – hiring a property expert with the necessary capacities (knowledge, internal/market-based networks and contacts) – created additional value and provided significant housing support for refugees.
- Combination and synergies between employment and housing are crucial to foster long-term integration outcomes. Municipalities where housing costs are lower do not always have employment opportunities which match refugees' competences and skills; while regions with better employment opportunities do not have housing which refugees can afford. Therefore, a tailor-made approach is necessary to combine employment, housing and community engagement elements.

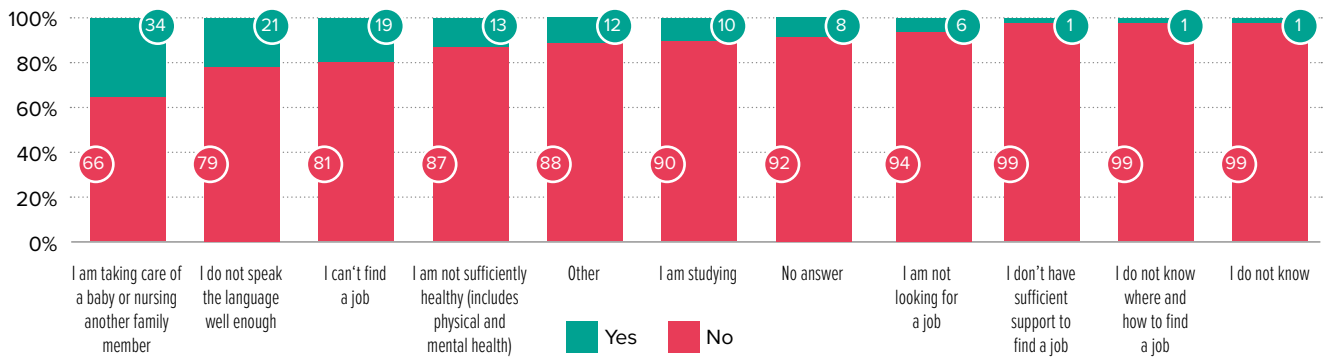
3.3.3 Employment

> *From very beginning I found work in Kaunas, it was for 3 months and the company had a flat... they gave me one room... but that company cheated me. I have tried to stay and work... I worked minimum 6 days a week and 14 hours per day from 9 to 11. But at the end they said we will not pay for these hours...> <... they threw me out.'*
>
> Iraqi refugee

44% of respondents stated they were not employed. Given the relatively high unemployment rate, the survey aimed to analyse the reasons behind it. It appears that the prevailing reasons for unemployment are child-care or care of another member of family (34%), language (21%), limited possibility to find employment (19%), physical/mental health (13%) and studies (10%) (*see graph 67*).

Additionally, refugees indicated other reasons of unemployment (*see table on page 45*).

Graph 67: Survey question: what are the reasons of unemployment?



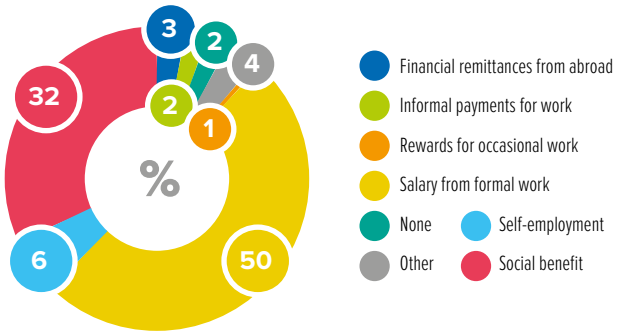
Reasons for unemployment	No. of respondents
It is not possible to find employment with the proper salary	1
I just got my residence permit, so I just started looking for job; and there are not many companies which hire foreigners	1
Diploma has not been recognised yet and foreigners are not welcomed	1
Family does not give a permission to work	1
Found a job, but had to leave after two weeks	1
Pensioner	2
I cannot find an apartment	1
Total	**8**

50% stated that salary from formal work is the main source of income, while for 32% the main income comes from social benefits (*the graph 68*). 44% of employed respondents indicated that their job requires lower, 9% - higher qualifications and skills than they currently have; 24% considered that their qualifications and skills are in line with their current job (*the graph 70*).

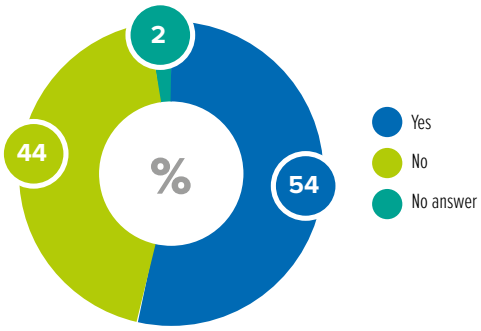
> *I did not have any cooking experience. I did not cook eggs for myself as I ate outside. But when I came here, I was calling to my mother to ask how I should cook this, how I should cook rice, how I should cook chicken... Then I got some idea. As now I cook tasty food, I decide to work in kitchen. For me it is easy to learn... I tried to work in different restaurants until I got some skills and learnt something...><... I have worked in different place, but so many owners cheat, they use you, they don't give you enough time, holidays, they don't pay your salary, I got so tired from beginning... Then I came up with the plan to open the restaurant'*
>
> Iraqi refugee

When evaluating their overall experiences while searching for a job since arriving in Lithuania, 44% of respondents (strongly) agreed that their physical and mental health have not affected their job search; 37% that they have not experienced discrimination because of age, 41% - because of gender and 35% - because of family situation/marital status. 38% agreed that information where to look for a job was available, while 33% agreed that assistance provided while searching for a job was sufficient (*see the graph 71*).

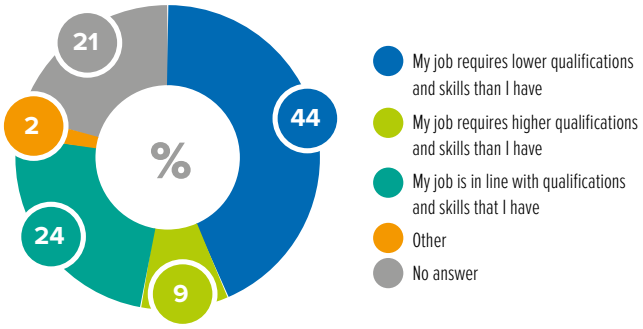
Graph 68: Main sources of income in the country of residence



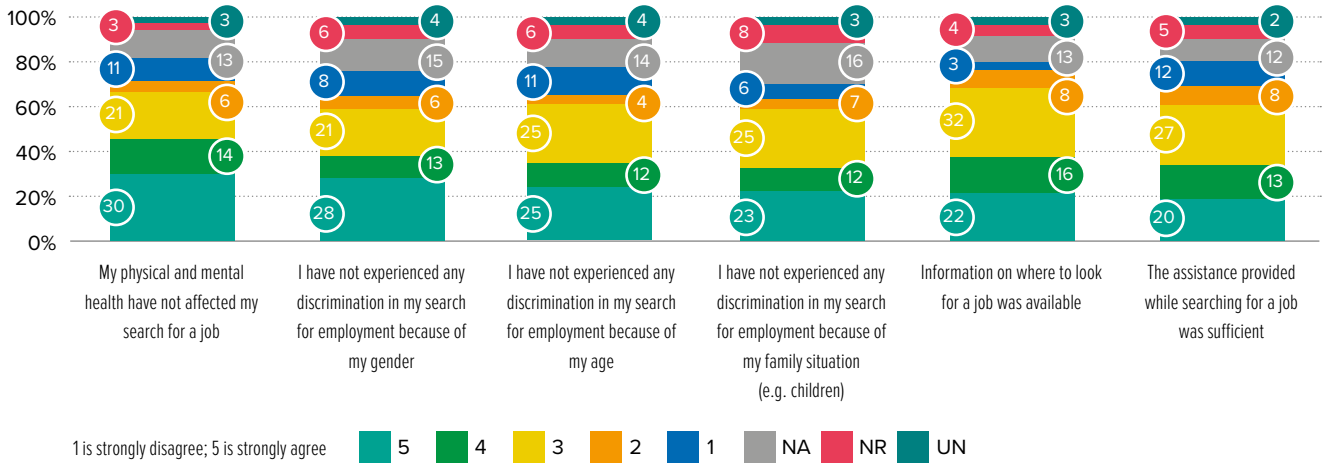
Graph 69: Are you working at the moment (including seasonal work)?



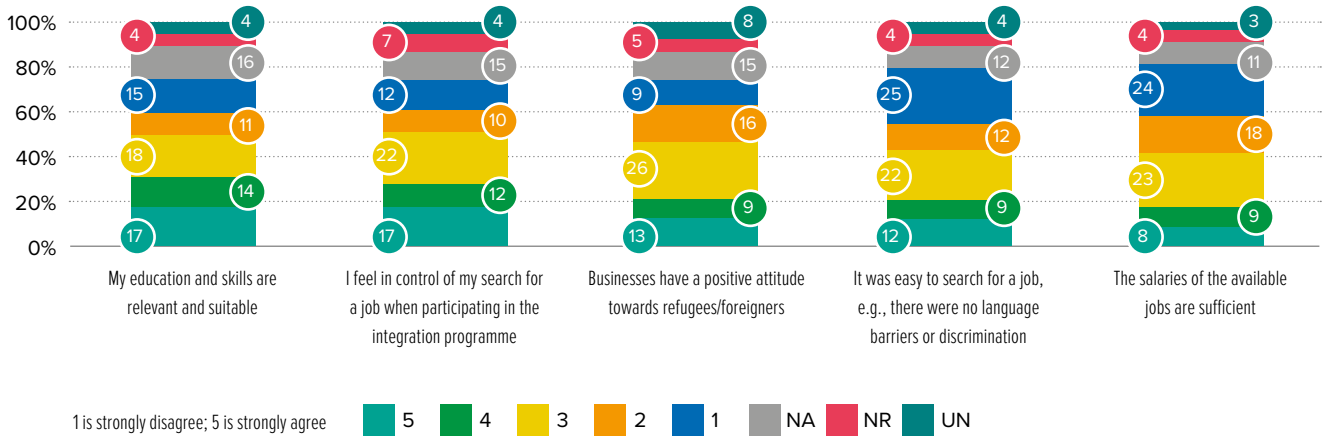
Graph 70: Please indicate whether your job is in line with your qualifications and skills



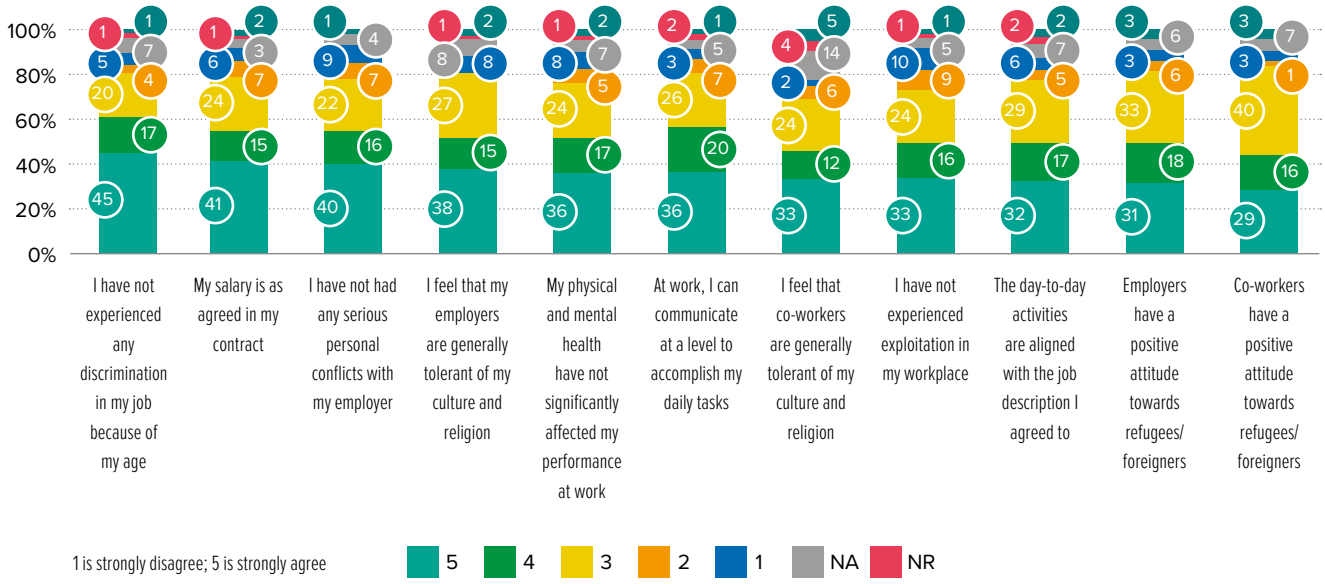
Graph 71: Survey question (part-1): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Lithuania while searching for a job



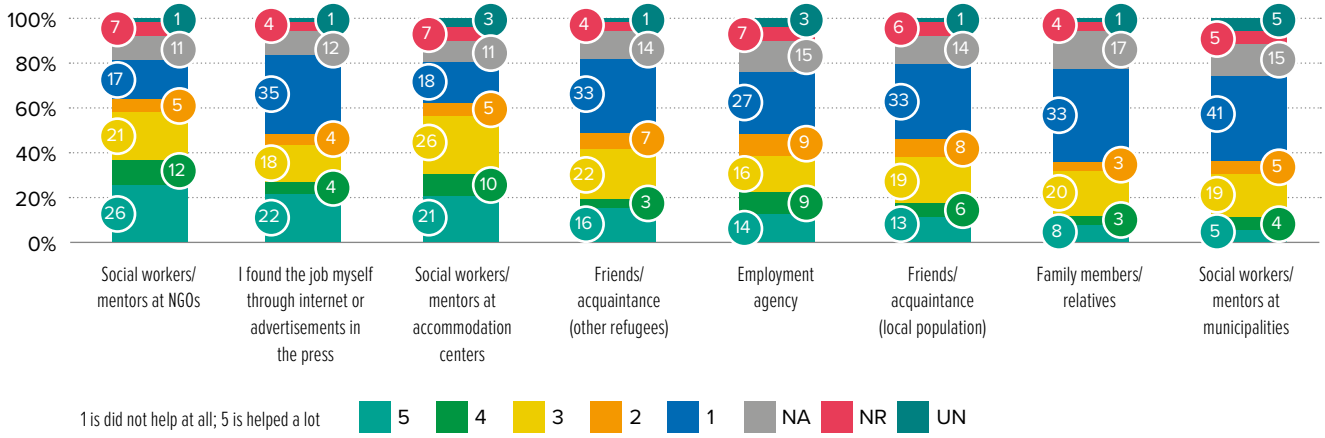
Graph 72: Survey question (part-2): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Lithuania while searching for a job



Graph 73: Survey question: Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Lithuania at the workplace



Graph 74: Survey question: Who helped you the most to find the job you are working in at the moment?



At the same time, some challenges have been identified. 21% (strongly) agreed and 37% disagreed that it was easy to search for a job and there were no language obstacles or discrimination, 17% agreed and 42% disagreed that salaries of the available jobs are sufficient, 31% agreed and 26% disagreed that their education and skills are relevant/suitable. 29% agreed and 22% disagreed that they feel in control of their job search when participating in the integration programme (*see graph 72*).

Respondents were also asked to evaluate their experiences in the workplace. Overall, there are no significant challenges in the workplace, except that some refugees reported personal conflicts with employers and the feeling of being exploited. These challenges are not very prevalent (*see the graph 73*).

> *For the moment we do not expect very much. My wife has difficulties finding a job because of language barrier, and they offer very simple jobs with very low salaries, and I don't think that we will improve our life, and we will become independent soon. It is painful to depend on the government, living in the country and also, when you are working and learning... the language, at the same time, is very difficult to learn'*
>
> Tadjik refugee

As 22% of respondents (strongly) disagreed that they feel in control of their job search when participating in the integration programme (*see the graph 73),* the survey aimed to show who has helped refugees the most to find their current job. 26% (strongly) agreed that they found it by themselves, 38% received assistance from social workers from NGOs, 31% - from social workers from the Refuge Reception Centre, 23% - from an employment agency, 19% - from friends/other refugees and the same proportion (19%) from friends/ local population. Only 9% (strongly) agreed that they were helped by social workers from municipalities and 11% - by family members/relatives (*see the graph 74*). Again, municipalities are not actively participating in labour market inclusion processes; assistance from the local population, other refugees and family members is also limited.

According to NIEM research findings (2018), Lithuania has not adopted an action plan that specifically targets refugee employment issues[49] and there is no monitoring or evaluation of available labour market inclusion services. Additionally, the most vulnerable groups of refugees (women, single parents, the elderly, the disabled and victims of violence, abuse and torture) are not individually targeted with flexible and holistic labour market inclusion packages. As far as qualifications are concerned, only formal qualifications are recognised, rather than individual (informal) skills and capacities; no targeted assistance for refugee entrepreneurship is provided. In the latest UNHCR mapping (2013), the refugees expressed concerns that it takes too long to find employment and they need more support in finding a job. A number of refugees reported that the salary was very low, which means that incomes are not sufficient to sustain the family. Some of the refugees have not been able to use their qualifications in the labour market due to the language obstacles and inflexible process for recognising qualifications.

[49] Such as the Basic Integration Education (IGU) programme in Denmark to boost labour market integration – a two-year vocational programme aimed at providing refugees with practical language training while creating a channel for inclusion in the labour market. More available at: https://bit.ly/2Ok6WLL

SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS (UN)EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES:

- A visible trend of refugee deskilling is emerging as 44% of employed respondents agreed that their job requires lower qualifications and skills than they currently have. Therefore, a combination of a more effective matching process, faster and more effective qualification recognition, vocational training and language courses in the workplace by using digital/innovative solutions[50] could help to use all resources that refugees possess. This could benefit refugees (social mobility within the company) and employers (highly skilled employees);
- In line with the key reasons for unemployment (child-care or care of another family member, language, limited possibility to find employment, physical/mental health and studies), initiate more active engagement by social workers and mentors (again, not from NGOs only, but also from municipalities), volunteers and grassroots movements to assist with employment. Additionally, professional assistance from employment agencies would facilitate the matching process between the labour market and refugees;
- Partnerships with the private sector and, especially, companies with strong Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) policies in the workplace could help to implement holistic labour market inclusion initiatives, focusing not only on regular employment, but also on paid internships and apprenticeships with the possibility of permanent employment. Many examples could be provided, including the recently launched IKEA Foundation initiative on labour market inclusion for refugees.[51] In addition, useful tools have been prepared, which could be used as guidelines to engage employers, including the UNHCR and OECD action plan to boost refugee employment.[52] Moreover, there are existing platforms[53] in Lithuania, which could be used as entry points for proactive engagement of (potential) employers, focusing not only on refugees, but on a non-selective approach towards diversity (age, gender, disabilities, SOGI, ethnicity and race). As a good example, the joint expert meeting 'Ethnic and Religious Diversity: Best Practices of Diversity and Inclusion Measures at the Workplace'[54] could be mentioned, showing the importance of cooperation between various relevant actors: the private sector, NGOs, employers' platforms and think tanks;
- Considering worldwide experiences, there is a need to boost not only regular refugee employment, but also self-employment. Creating more self-employment opportunities would show that refugees are bringing not only social and cultural, but also economic resources and traditions of small-scale businesses.
- Evaluation of existing initiatives related to employment support measures introduced in 2017 (including professional training, support for mobility, support for job creation, support for gaining skills and subsidised employment) is essential to focus on long-term labour market inclusion outcomes, working conditions and retention rates;
- To prevent refugee labour exploitation,[55] (i) design and implement tools for monitoring refugee working conditions; (ii) engage trade unions to protect refugee labour rights; (iii) inform refugees about possible risks of exploitation and other violations of labour rights in Lithuania.

> *"With all education, for me and my wife, I don't know the quality of life did not change to better for us…Of course we are happy that we are safe, but we are not secure in terms earning money, having some money for urgent heath care or urgent travel… because we are very limited and isolated. If you don't have money… if you don't have secure job, it is difficult… but we are seeking… it will be very difficult, but we don't have another choice because we may not as refugees move to other countries as Lithuanians to earn for life. We try to find jobs here and they offer just very simple jobs with minimal salary, I don't know, very unpleasant situation'*
>
> Tadjik refugee

[50] For example, 'Just Arrived' in Sweden: http://www.justarrived.se/?lang=en; Start Up Refugees in Finland: https://startuprefugees.com/

[51] Commitments to support refugees on the path to self-reliance, IKEA Foundation, available at: http://bit.ly/3qHT4YQ

[52] Read more at: https://bit.ly/3cqJCDW

[53] Such as the Lithuanian Diversity Charter: http://www.ivairove.lt

[54] For more information see: https://bit.ly/30Hhp6k

[55] 19% (strongly) disagreed that they have never experienced exploitation in the workplace.

3.3.4 Social support

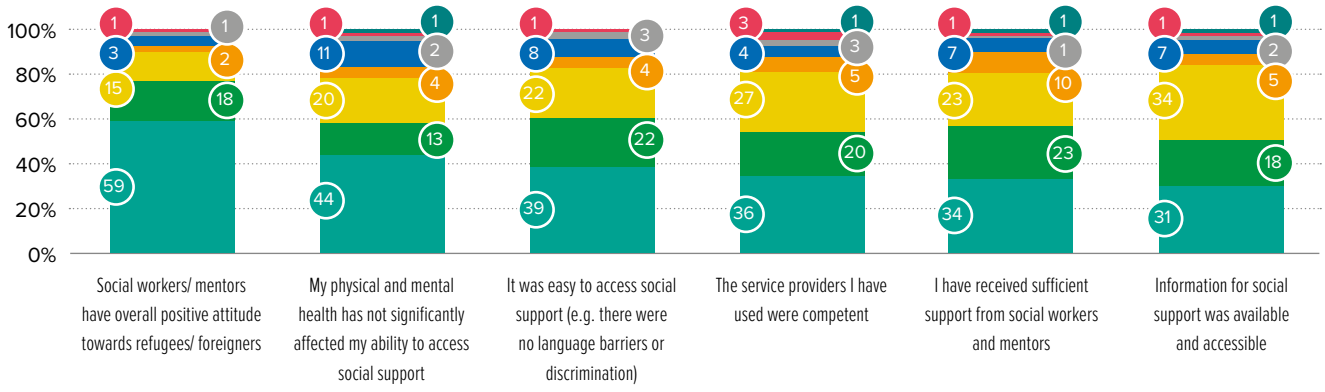
> *At the beginning it was not nice welcome, I had to come from the airport by myself and had to find where to live. For three months I was paying all the expenses by myself: accommodation, food, transport. It was very expensive. I was new here and I did not know a lot of things, how to get cheaper things. I had some savings when I came to Lithuania, but I lost all these saving in three months. I was really unhappy during these months and nobody paid any attention to me.'*
>
> Afghani refugee

87% of respondents indicated that since arriving in Lithuania they have received (or are still receiving) social support. Respondents were asked to reflect on their overall experiences while receiving social support. 77% of respondents (strongly) agreed that social mentors and workers have a positive attitude towards refugees and foreigners, 56% that service providers were competent, 57% that they received sufficient support from social workers/mentors, 57% that their physical and mental health has not significantly affected their ability to access social support, 49% that information for social support was available and accessible, 61% that it was easy to access social support and there were no language obstacles or discrimination.

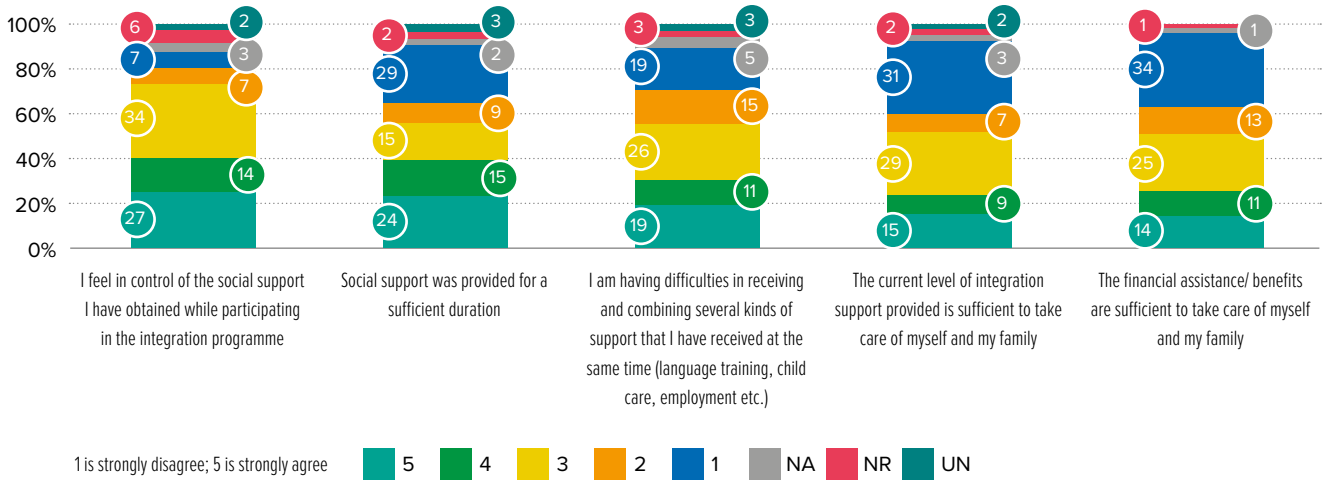
At the same time, a smaller share of respondents (strongly) agreed (41%) that they feel in control of their social support when participating in the integration programme, 25% that the financial assistance and benefits were sufficient to take care of themselves and families; only 24% agreed that the current level of integration support is sufficient to take care of themselves and families, 39% that social support was provided for a sufficient duration. 30% stated they had difficulty in combining several kinds of support (*see the graph 76*).

Overall, refugee experiences in accessing social support are more positive than negative, but there is also room for improvements and solutions in various areas.

Graph 75: Survey question: Who helped you the most to find the job you are working in at the moment?



Graph 76: Survey question (part-2): Please think about your experiences overall since arriving in Lithuania while receiving social support



SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS SOCIAL SUPPORT:

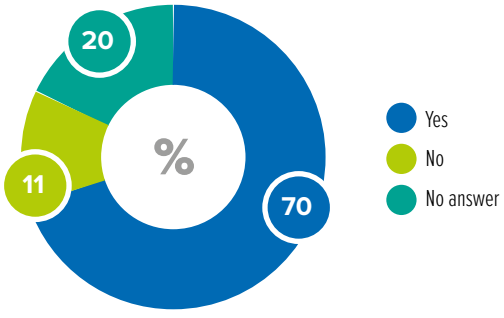
- There is a need to address difficulties in combining several kinds of support: language training, employment and child-care, as 34% agreed that they have difficulties in combining social support. For example, child-care for refugee women during vocational training and language courses, flexible arrangement of language courses, language training at the workplace, other;
- Refugees expressed concerns that social support is not provided for long enough and the current level of integration support and financial assistance is not sufficient to take care of themselves and their families. Therefore, coordinated synergies between mainstream social services (available for everybody at the local level, including refugees) and the refugee-specific integration system (Refugee Reception Centre and NGOs' *one-stop-shops*) are essential to create sustainable service provision for refugees and other vulnerable population groups. Such synergies could be created by (i) streamlining of refugee-specific support services into the general social support programmes, and possibly (ii) reducing the reliance on EU-funded integration activities.
- Increased engagement of municipalities in refugee integration work. It is expected that the Ministry of Social Security and Labour's current initiative to engage six municipalities in an AMIF-funded project to create local level tailored integration strategies for various immigrant groups, including refugees, will be a first step to increased engagement by municipalities in directing refugee integration work locally.
- To review the social support for unemployed locals to make sure that it covers food and housing would significantly address the gap in missing support levels and will prevent onward movements from Lithuania.

> *They offer us very little paid jobs, and also at the same time we have to learn language… we live in the district, which is very far from Caritas office… it is about one hour driving with public transport, and they do not organise lessons on weekends and we need to go during the evenings. Yesterday it was at 18.30 in the evening, after full working day… and if you are very tired, it is not effective to learn in the evening, and of course I do not think our lessons will be very effective, because we are trying hard to find a job and if we find any job, we agree because we want to earn our living'*
>
> Tadjik refugee

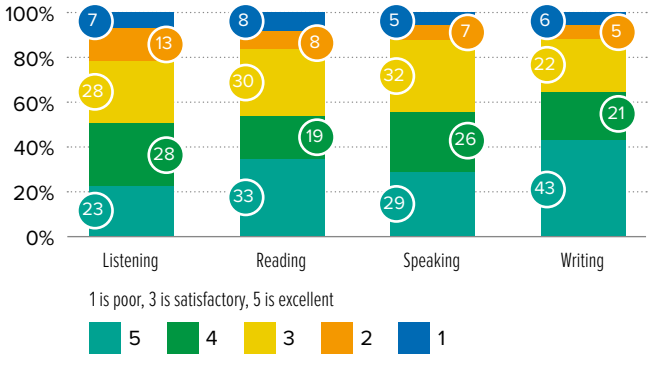
3.3.5 Children's education and language training

Of those respondents who have children, 70% indicated (*graph 77*) that their children are in education (nursery or kindergarten, primary or secondary school). Of those who indicated that their children are not in education, 50% stated that their children were too young, while 8% - that they had limited access to education.[56] Having young children might also be related to such integration areas as the labour market and language learning, as, for example, 30% of respondents agreed they had difficulties in combining several kinds of support: language training, employment and child-care (*see 3.3.5 Social support*).

Graph 77: Children attending education institutions in Lithuania



Graph 78: Proficiency in Lithuanian language



[56] As school education in Lithuania is compulsory for everybody, this could only be related to pre-school education.

> *For my daughter it was easier because she was accepted at school after one month, we reached Lithuania. In November she started her studies as the system already had all legal documents. But the difficulty is that she was in the tenth grade and soon, in 2 years she will have to have another level of Lithuanian language. It is difficult as she has never spoke Lithuanian before. She started to learn Lithuanian but the lessons she received… it is not enough… two hours of traditional lessons of Lithuanian. Sometimes the teacher is ill, busy, cannot come. So she did not improve her Lithuanian and there is a danger for her that she will not receive the certificate of high school, just because of Lithuanian language. She wants to study medicine in university or college… But if she will not receive the certificate of high school, she will not be able to go to the university and she will have to say goodbye to her dream… this of course is hard, very hard'*
>
> Tadjik refugee

Data on self-evaluation of language shows that refugees in Lithuania have developed listening skills a little more than speaking, reading, and writing skills. Overall, more than half the respondents evaluated their language knowledge as poor or extremely poor in all aspects. According to the latest UNHCR mapping in Lithuania (2013), most of the refugees expressed frustration over limited opportunities to learn the Lithuanian language. Additionally, refugees with lower education levels, less developed Russian and English language skills and/or affected by traumatic experiences, could not benefit from the language courses in the same way as others. This challenge has been also confirmed by NIEM research in Lithuania (2018), as language training programmes are not holistic and flexible enough to target refugees' specific characteristics and special needs related to communication. In addition, language courses are not regularly evaluated by the state or research institutions.

SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS LANGUAGE TRAINING:

- To consider launching programmes[57] for language training in the workplace with the proactive engagement of a wide range of actors: from employers with strong diversity and inclusion strategies (including language buddy programmes in the workplace) to NGOs, which could help to link up the individual labour market inclusion plan and language training by considering each individual's capacities and vulnerabilities;
- To design a flexible language course arrangement for easier access and enrolment; especially for the self-employed and refugee women who are taking care of children at home (for example, online training, face2face training, courses during the weekends and after work);
- To design language courses (methodologies and programmes) to address not only cultural differences, but also age and gender roles. It is expected that these challenges will be addressed by the Lithuanian authorities' current initiative to create a national language training programme targeting various immigrant groups, including refugees;
- To actively engage refugees (and other immigrants) in the design and implementation of language courses to increase motivation and enrolment, create a sense of belonging and ownership.

> *I didn't speak Lithuanian good enough and it was a big problem because they ask: do you speak Lithuanian or Russian? No, sorry, we don't need English language'*
>
> Iraqi refugee

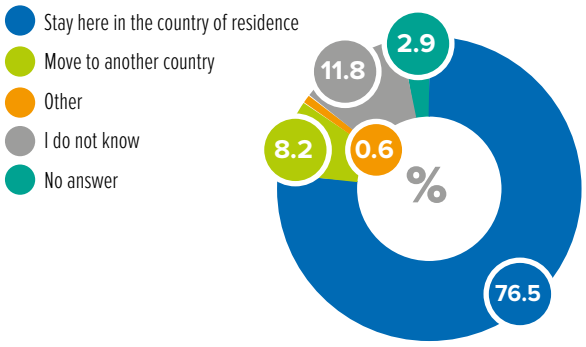
> *I have missed few lessons and when I came to lessons to catch myself up, teacher said that sorry, but I cannot repeat last lectures for you. So in such case it was not good that they do not have systematic approach. They say in the programme that they have, but in practice it's not the same as they have in the plan'*
>
> Iraqi refugee

[57] Such initiatives are widespread in the Nordic Countries and a pilot project is being implemented in Latvia. For example, in Sweden the Government has adopted a fast-track employment programme, where newcomers who already have relevant skills and experience are given jobs in industries that are facing a shortage of workers. The programme offers specialised career paths to migrants based on their professional experience. Most of the tracks include Swedish language coaching and on-the-job training, and all participants are given a mentor and guidance counsellor (more available at: http://bit.ly/3ldvB0k). In Norway, the Municipality of Fjell is implementing the project 'Right at Work', which has enabled refugees to combine work experience and language training. The result is better inclusion and better access to skilled labour for the municipality (more available at: http://bit.ly/3qL8yLq).

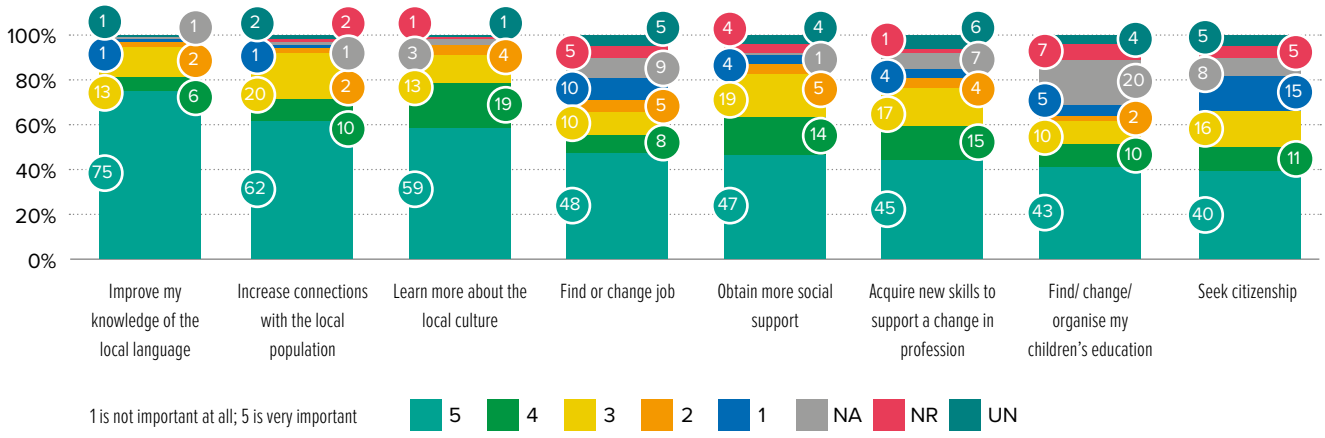
3.3.6 Future plans

As was indicated in subsection 2.3, Lithuania lies between between Estonia and Latvia with approximately 70% of relocated and resettled refugees leaving the country. In the survey respondents were asked about their future plans – whether they are planning to stay in or leave the country. According to the results, the great majority of respondents – 77% - are planning to stay in Lithuania and only 8.2% - to move to another country. In addition to the potential for long-term residence, more than half (51%) of respondents (strongly) agreed that obtaining citizenship is an important priority to promote or improve integration (*see below: 3.3.7 Integration priorities and outcomes*).

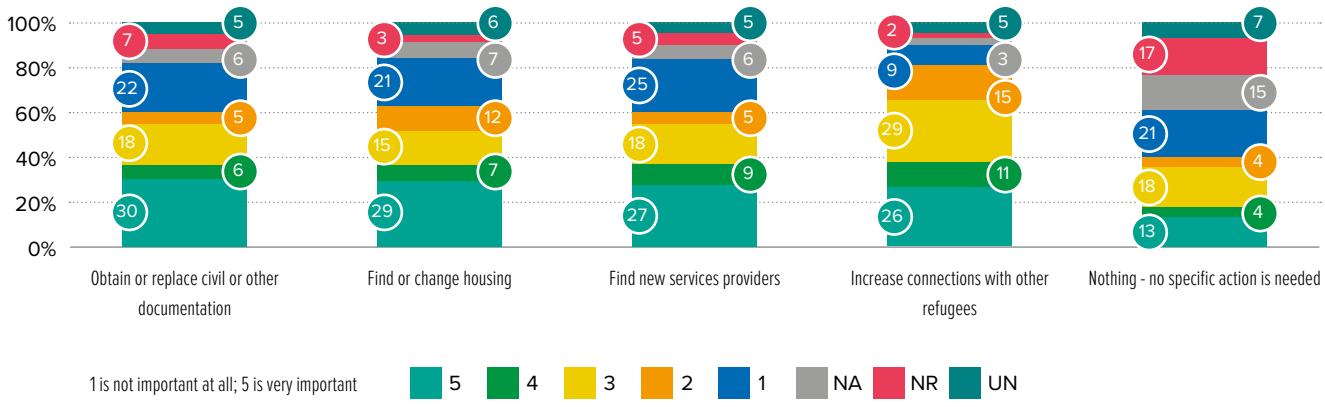
Graph 79: Future plans



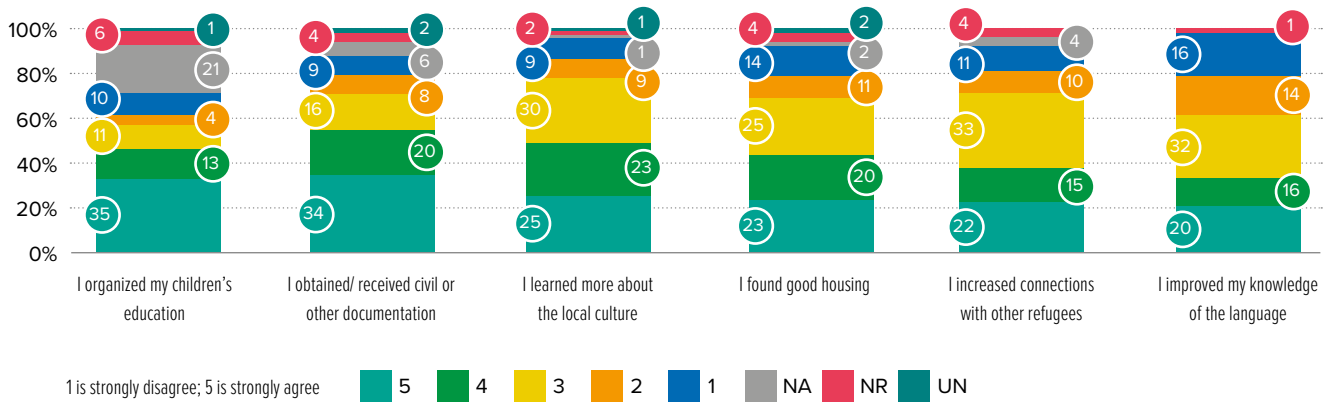
Graph 80: Survey question (part-1): What do you consider your most important priorities to promote or improve your integration?



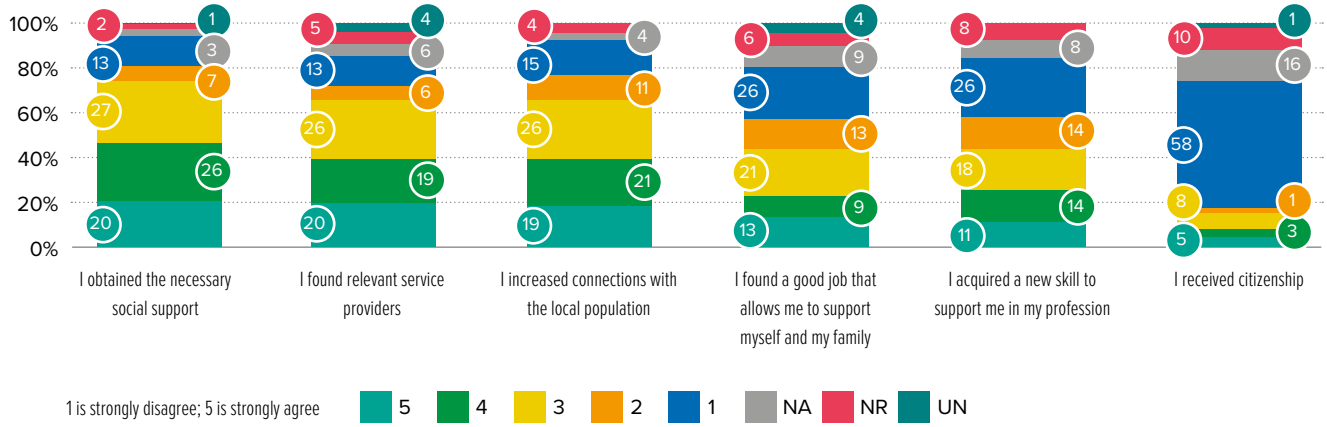
Graph 81: Survey question (part-2): What do you consider your most important priorities to promote or improve your integration?



Graph 82: Survey question (part-1): In your opinion, what have you achieved in Lithuania so far?



Graph 83: Survey question (part-2): In your opinion, what have you achieved in Lithuania so far?



3.3.7 Integration priorities and outcomes

To foster a participatory approach, one of the intentions of the survey was to ask refugees about key integration priorities and achievements. This could help to develop and tailor integration services accordingly, considering refugee voices and experiences and setting priorities not only by policy designers, but also by the target group. Respondents were asked to identify the most important priorities to promote or improve integration. The survey data revealed that improvement in the local language (81% (strongly) agreed), connections with the local population (72%), learning about local culture (78%), employment (56%), obtaining more social support (61%), acquiring new skills to support/ change employment (60%), organising children's education (53%) and obtaining citizenship (51%) are key priorities to improve integration (*see the graph 80*).

On one hand, willingness to stay in Lithuania contrasts with existing secondary movement rates; on the other hand, motivation to stay in the country might decrease due to reasons indicated in this survey report: employment, housing and limited welcoming environment; which further means that an overall positive attitude towards long-term settlement might be outweighed by more structural integration challenges, which are crucial for the decision to stay or leave the country.

> *I have some contacts with local people, mostly with the neighbours. But they work and are often busy, so we don't meet often. But we and neighbours want to see each other more often. I think if there is such practice to meet more often that might work out, it only needs a bit of initiative'*
>
> Refugee from the Russian Federation

Additionally, survey data revealed that 36% of respondents (strongly) agreed that they need to obtain/ replace civil documentation, find/change housing and service providers, 37% - to increase connections with other refugees. Only 17% (strongly) agreed that no specific actions are needed (*see the graph 81*).

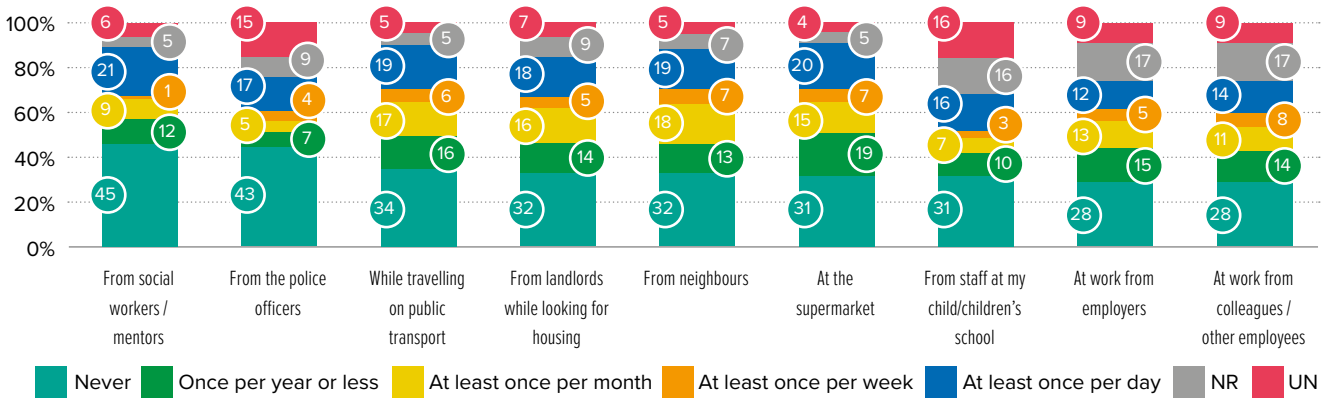
To identify integration outcomes or gaps between desired achievements and the actual situation, respondents were asked to indicate what they have achieved in Lithuania so far. Only some of the refugees have already achieved desired outcomes in various integration areas: 48% (strongly) agreed that they had learned more about the local culture, 54% - obtained civil/other documentation, 48% - organised children's education, 37% - increased connections with other refugees, 36% - improved language skills, 43% - found good housing (*see graph 82*). Such data could also be considered as 'self-evaluation' of the integration process, where room for improvement exists on both sides: refugees and hosting institutions.

Though the majority of respondents understand the importance of integration, in reality and for many refugees, some of their desires are still to be achieved in the future, including social support, connections with the local population, employment, new skills to support their profession and citizenship (*see the graph 83*).

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE THE OVERALL INTEGRATION SYSTEM:

- To focus on holistic social inclusion policies, using a 'whole-of-society' approach and engaging various actors: grassroots movements (volunteers and community leaders), the private sector (not only as potential employers, but also as support providers) and representatives of target groups as both designers and users of integration initiatives and programmes. In order to achieve this aim, institutionalisation of refugee and immigrant-specific integration programmes and measures from the field of project-based activities[58] across the board, where integration would become part of municipal strategy with state budget allocations, would be crucial;
- Survey data shows that refugees are aware of integration services and wish to be enrolled in them. Therefore, a tailor-made approach is needed not just to combine various services at the same time, but also to engage refugees in the design of integration programmes, thus creating a sense of belonging and a higher level of enrolment in initiatives that they have co-designed;
- Attitudes to various aspects of integration and obtaining citizenship show that refugees' perceptions of integration are not just about long- and short-term expectations or permanent versus temporary residence in the country; it involves becoming an integral part of the local population by learning the language, culture and social norms, building bridges with local institutions and grassroots societies. As soon as possible to create and implement a holistic socioeconomic inclusion policy for everybody;
- To increase local authorities' engagement in refugee integration by promoting intercultural competences of various stakeholders and local level integration planning (for example, engagement of municipalities in the Intercultural Cities programme[59]) to serve as an example to other municipalities on how to manage and contribute to refugee integration locally.

Graph 84: Survey question: Specify how often (if ever) you had to deal with negative reactions/attitudes?



[58] Mostly funded by AMIF.

[59] More available at: https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities

3.3.8 Experiences of negative attitudes

> *We had 6 incidents… just because of being a foreigner in Kaunas. We decided to move to Vilnius, we thought, that it is more international city, and a lot of foreigners are there. I mean, more foreigners than in Kaunas, so we moved one month ago to Vilnius… we still do not have any contacts with neighbours, we try to greet them, but they are a bit avoiding us'*
>
> Tadjik refugee

Many questions in the survey targeted attitudes towards refugees and foreigners, focusing on the labour market and housing. This section also looks at societal attitudes, but from a broader perspective. Respondents were asked to specify how often (if ever) they had to deal with negative reactions/attitudes in various environments mentioned below and due to being a refugee, belonging to an ethnic/religious group, experiencing prejudices and stereotypes. According to the survey results, more than 20% of respondents have experienced negative reactions/attitudes on a daily or weekly basis in almost all areas (except employers), including the police, workplace, public transport, social work, supermarket and housing (*see the graph 84*).

> *There are different people as everywhere and you meet a lot of good people. I would say that 90 percent of Lithuanians are really respectful, they never touch you and they never care from which culture you are and how you live. But yes, there are other people, who, for example… when I go with my wife and then we go into the bus, there are some people who are looking at us, that we are really different for them. And she has a scarf, and I remember one day I was not with my wife and she was planning to go to Caritas. In the bus… there were two guys, they started to shout on her, and they were talking about her scarf, and they were telling her something. Of course she didn't understand'*
>
> Afghani refugee

Such data shows the complexity of prevailing attitudes in public places and institutions as well as agreeing with the results from the recent special Eurobarometer survey on integration of immigrants in the European Union,[60] where only 35% of Lithuanian residents indicated that they would be comfortable to have a migrant as a friend (in comparison to 38% in Estonia, 40% in Latvia, 87% in Sweden or 70% in Denmark). Additionally, national level research carried out by the Institute for Ethnic Studies and Diversity Development Group[61] on public attitudes towards refugees shows that Lithuanian society sees immigration more as a threat than an opportunity; moreover, it shows that stereotypes and prejudices towards refugees remain negative. Therefore, the complexity of this issue could be addressed by combining various initiatives.

> *Another thing is appearance and clothes of my daughter and my wife… they did not speak English, they spoke just Russian… some people were yelling at them, like calling terrorists, for example. Once, one evening an old man, grown up man… I mean about 40 years old or more, first he took photos of my wife and my daughter, which was very unpleasant. I wanted to stop him… it was in bus station… and people around… local people, they did not care… nobody tried to stop him, so it was a bit strange for us, because nobody cares… it was strange to be a refugee in Kaunas'*
>
> Tadjik refugee

[60] Special Eurobarometer 469. Integration of immigrants in the European Union, European Commission 2018, available at: http://bit.ly/3bKgcBO

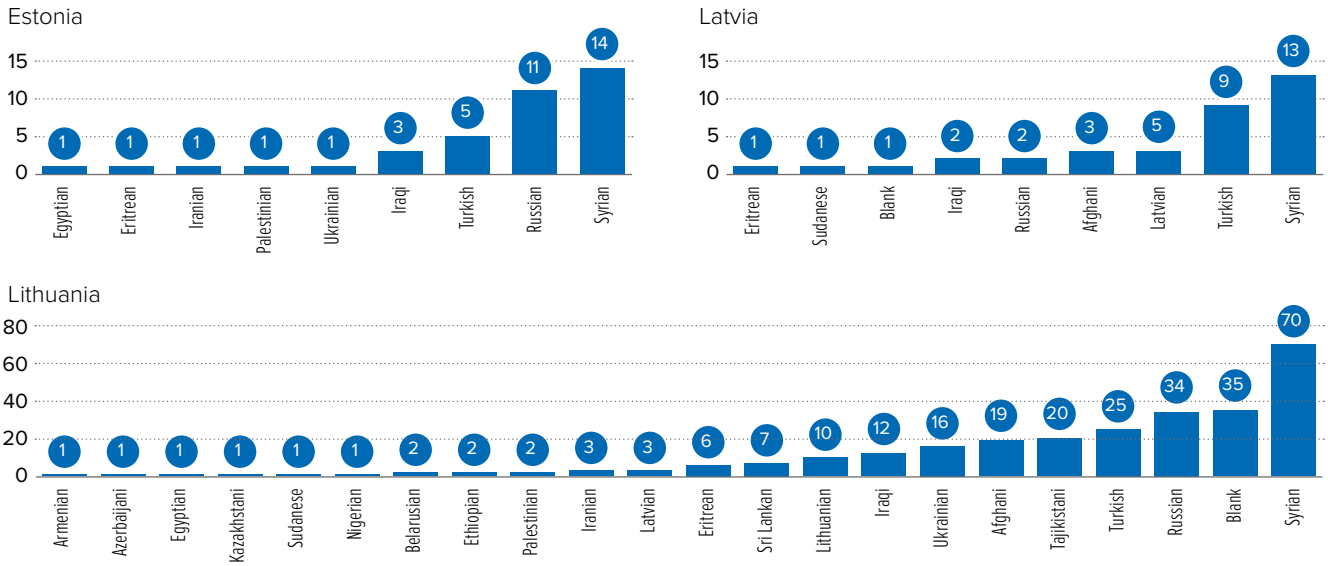
[61] More information is available at: https://bit.ly/3thTdny

SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS NEGATIVE ATTITUDES:

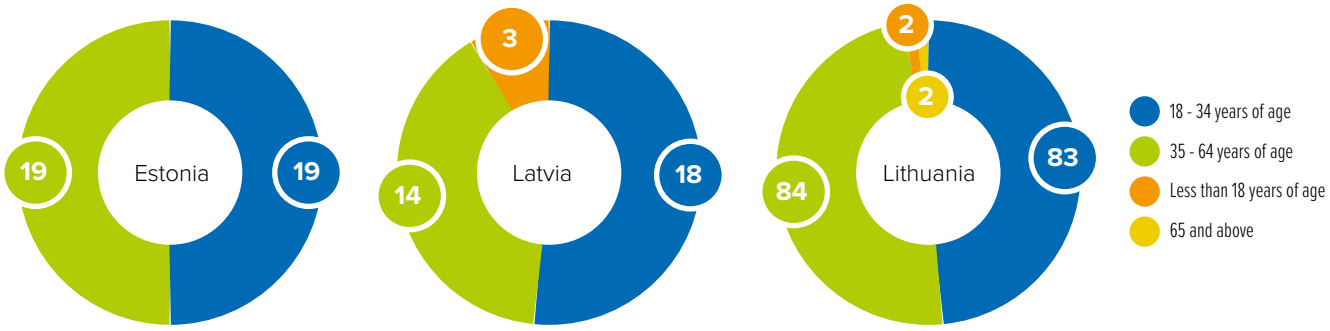
- To address negative reactions/attitudes in institutions (police, social work and children's education), diversity and inclusion trainings for personnel could be initiated with a focus on intercultural competences and religious dialogue, refugee integration, international migration and displacement. Current AMIF projects (run by the Diversity Development Group, Lithuanian Red Cross and Vilnius Archdiocese (VA) Caritas) are targeting these issues. However, such initiatives should be sustainable; therefore, linked to an institutional framework (governmental or municipal programme), rather than being project-based;
- To address the consequences of negative reactions/attitudes in public places (supermarket, neighbourhood, other), awareness raising campaigns around asylum and displacement issues should be initiated;
- Trainings for journalists aimed at creating professional media coverage on the most sensitive societal issues in Lithuania to cover asylum-seekers and refugees.
- To initiate preventative actions, the Concept of Global Education and Global Learning could be used to create an integrated curriculum, where issues of diversity and inclusion, international migration and human rights would become horizontal topics for teaching and learning in kindergartens, schools and universities;
- To address specific environments – negative reactions/attitudes of employers and landlords – intermediation by social workers/mentors is crucial to create better integration outcomes and reduce myths, stereotypes and prejudices of employers and landlords;
- To address negative reactions/attitudes of employees, already existing frameworks could be applied and combined: the Lithuanian Diversity Charter, Diversity and Inclusion Strategies (D&I) in the workplace of many international companies, operating in Lithuania and elsewhere.

4. ANNEX-1

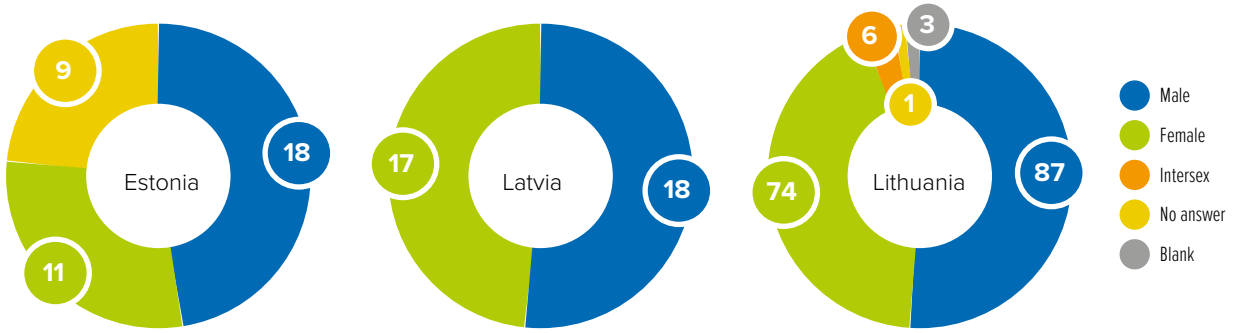
Respondents by citizenship (in numbers)



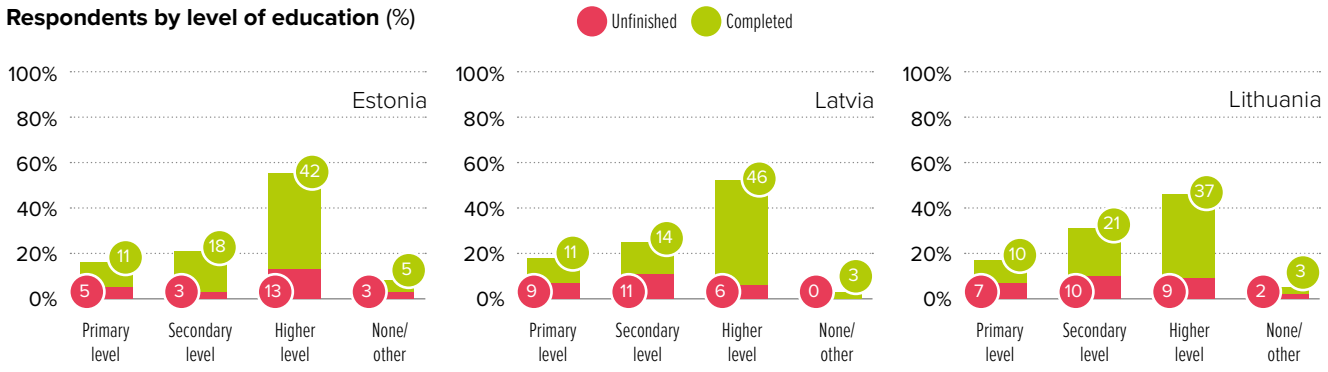
Respondents by age group (in numbers)



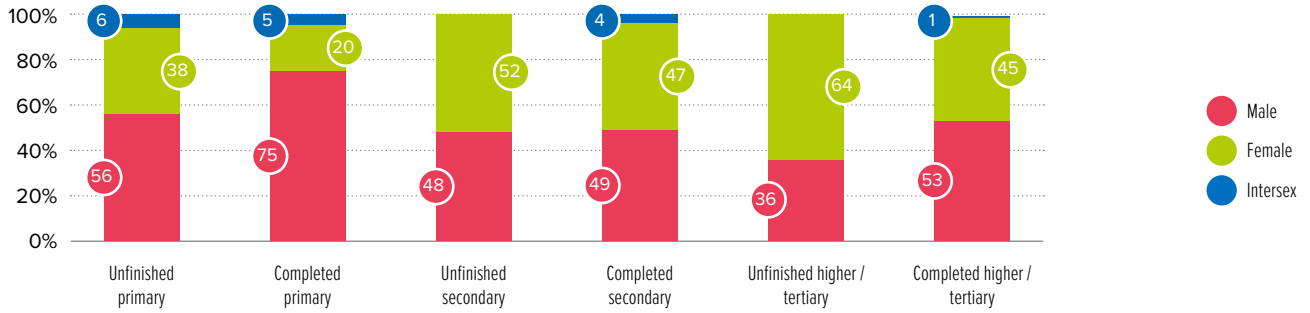
Respondents by gender (in numbers)



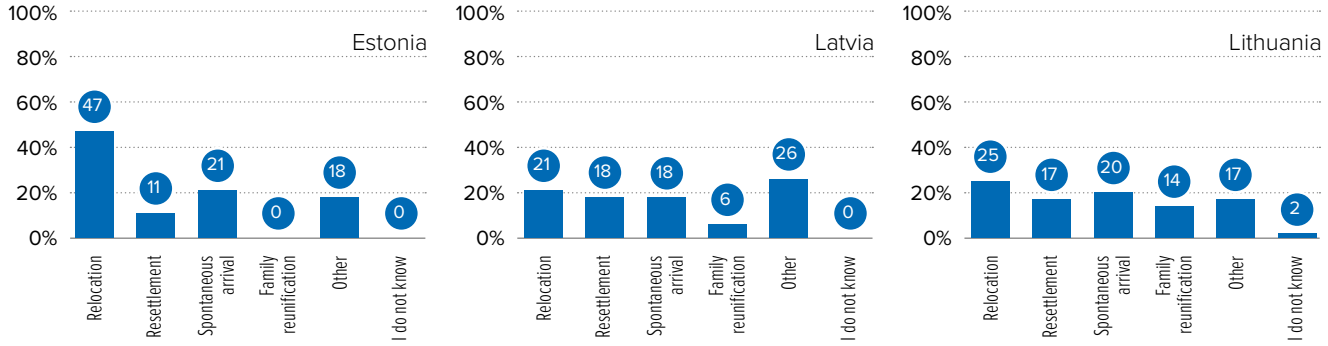
Respondents by level of education (%)



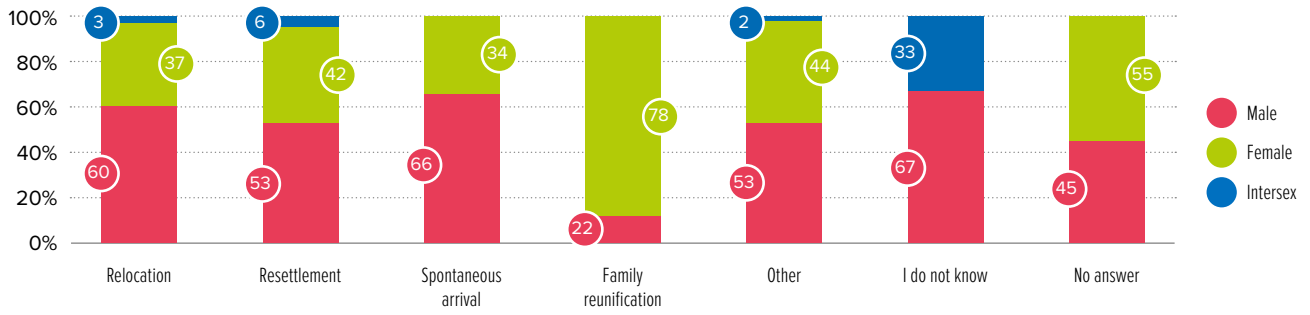
Respondents by level of education in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania by gender (%)



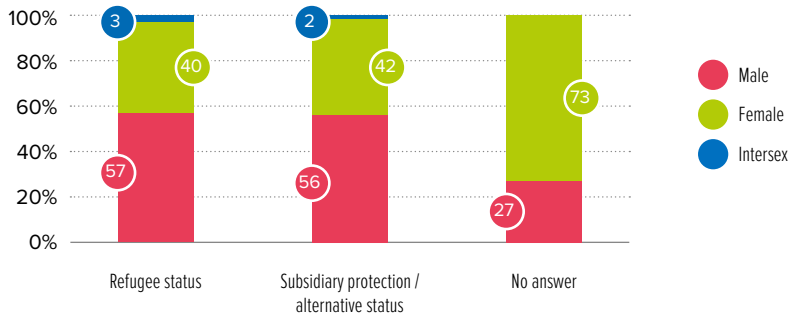
Respondents by means of arrival (%)



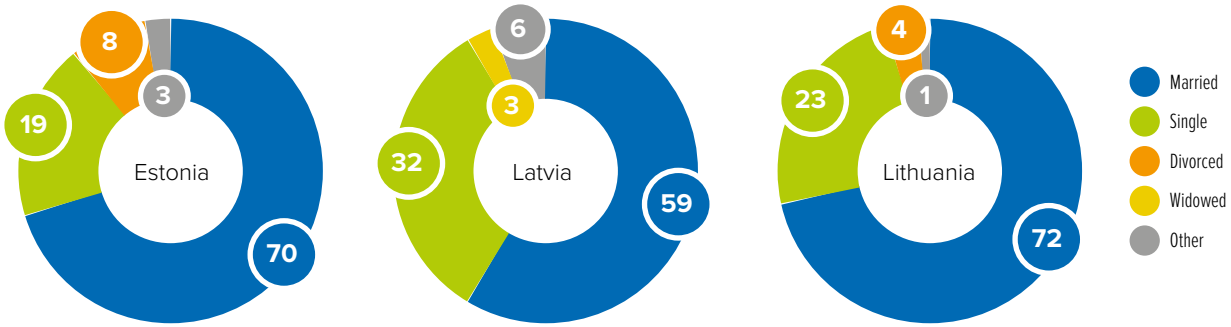
Respondents by means of arrival in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania by gender (%)



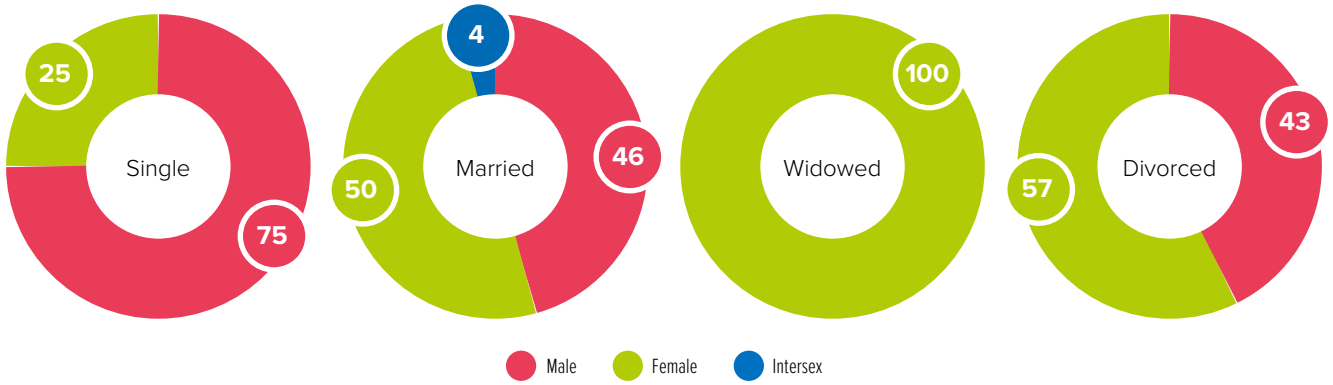
Respondents by international protection received (%)



Respondents by marital status (%)



Respondents by marital status in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania by gender (%)



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