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## The Housing Situation of Refugees in Germany

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Where and how people live can influence their social participation and individual quality of life (cf. Häußermann and Siebel 2000; BBSR 2017). Examples in this regard are the accessibility of (good) educational facilities, shopping and leisure facilities as well as jobs, the safety of the residential area or whether there are any health burdens from environmental influences. The extent of ethnic segregation or social contact within the neighbourhoods can also play a role in this context (for an overview see: Galster 2012).

### AT A GLANCE

- The housing situation can influence the social participation and individual quality of life of refugees. For this reason, data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey is used to analyse how refugees who entered Germany in between January 2013 up to and including January 2016, lived and have been living in Germany in the second half of 2016.
- The housing situation of refugees is initially strongly regulated by law and determined by institutional allocation processes and therefore does not reflect the situation on the free housing market.
- Nevertheless, the probability of living in single rather than shared accommodation among the refugees examined here was in part already influenced by individually available resources such as German language skills, income and social networks.
- Overall, more than half (52 %) of the refugees surveyed lived in single accommodation and the other half in shared accommodation, although there were some significant differences between federal states.
- Compared to shared accommodation, single accommodation occupied by refugees were located in urban areas more frequently than in rural areas, and less frequently in commercial and especially industrial areas. They also offered more living space per person.
- Residents in single accommodation were somewhat more satisfied with their living conditions than residents in shared accommodation, with the greatest differences being in respect of privacy and noise levels.
- The latter should also be seen against the background that 51 % of residents in shared accommodation did not have permanent access to separate, self-contained housing units.

So far, little information is available on the housing situation of people who have fled to Germany since 2013 (Scheible et al. 2016; BBSR 2017).<sup>1</sup> The initial conditions were difficult during the peak of the migration wave in the second half of 2015: the accommodation capacities were often not designed to cope with the rapidly increasing numbers of people seeking protection and further options for initial accommodation had to be created quickly at first. As living space was only available at such short notice and at limited cost, gymnasiums, former barracks, empty hotels, former business premises and, as emergency solutions, tent cities or container villages were also used (von Einem 2017: 14; Robert Bosch Stiftung 2016: 9 et seq.). Although the situation has increasingly eased, also as a result of declining immigration figures, refugees are now facing a strained housing market that may make integration into this market more difficult (Robert Bosch Stiftung 2016: 5; BBSR 2017: 6, 32).

Data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey (see Box 1), which was conducted in 2016 as part of a representative survey of around 4,500 people who fled to Germany (Brücker et al. 2016), is used to broaden our knowledge of the housing situation of refugees in Germany. It will be demonstrated in which type of accommodation – shared or single accommodation – people who came to Germany, mainly between the beginning of 2013 and the beginning of 2016, live and how the various types of accommodation differ in terms of living space, available space and location. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated how refugees assess security in their accommodation or residential area and how satisfied they are with their housing situation. However, it should be noted that the results shown here do not reflect the current situation, but the situation during the survey period in the second half of 2016. It can be assumed that there have been and will be changes, especially in the distribution between the different forms of accommodation, which will have a corresponding effect on the associated indicators of housing quality.

## Accommodating refugees

Where and how refugees live in Germany is, at least initially, less determined by the situation on

### Box 1: The IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey

The IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey is a representative longitudinal study, which was first conducted in 2016. The survey was conducted among persons who came to Germany between 1 January 2013 and 31 January 2016, filed an asylum application and were therefore registered in the Central Register of Foreigners. Additionally, also the members of their households were interviewed.

The current residence status did not play a role for the selection of the sample. The survey was conducted among persons undergoing an asylum procedure (asylum applicants) as well as those who already were granted protection, in particular persons entitled to asylum pursuant to Art. 16a of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, recognised refugees under the Geneva Refugee Convention, and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. It also included persons whose asylum applications had been rejected, but whose return or deportation had been suspended for different reasons (Kroh et al. 2017).

The following analyses are based on the data of the first survey wave, which included roughly 4,500 individuals aged at least 18 at the time of the survey and took place between June and December 2016 (Kroh et al. 2017). Disproportionalities in the sample, esp. due to the sampling procedure, are offset by weights so that the results can be interpreted as representative.

the free housing market, but rather shaped by law. Asylum seekers and asylum applicants are initially obliged to live in shared accommodation. This obligation only ends with the granting of protection status, at the latest after 24 months (Box 2). Even before the asylum procedure has been completed, however, it is possible that asylum applicants may already be accommodated in a single flat after being assigned to a municipality instead of in shared accommodation. However, the relevant regulations and practices vary between the federal states, which in some cases leads to significant differences in the type of accommodation (shared or single accommodation) (Müller 2013: 15 et seq.; Aumüller et al. 2015: 38 et seq.; Robert Bosch Stiftung 2016: 10; BBSR 2017: 21 et seq.).

<sup>1</sup> The IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey in 2016 was also used for this publication on the accommodation of refugees. However, this involved an advance data supply of almost 2,000 cases. These results may therefore differ from those previously published.

## Box 2: Legal Framework

Depending on their country of origin, asylum seekers and asylum applicants are legally obliged to live in a reception facility which is shared accommodation (Section 47 (1) AsylG [German Asylum Procedure Act] and Section 53 (2) AsylG) for an initial period of up to six weeks, but no longer than six months or until protection status has been granted. However, the federal states (Länder) have the option of obliging foreigners to live in the reception facility responsible for their reception until the decision on the asylum application has been made or until departure (including deportation), but for a maximum of 24 months (Section 47 (1b) AsylG). This applies basically to persons from a so-called safe country of origin (Section 47 (1a) AsylG).

However, the high entry numbers led to some deviations from previously applied practices of redistribution of refugees (Aumüller et al. 2015: 40). For example, the maximum time limit according to which follow-on accommodation has to be allocated is legally stipulated but, due to bottlenecks in absorption capacities, these have very often not been fully utilised. Rather, newly arrived asylum applicants were often redistributed “immediately after applying for asylum to the follow-on or provisional accommodation in order to have capacities available for the initial admission as quickly as possible” (Müller 2013: 30).

After accommodation in a reception facility, refugees are allocated to municipalities. At this point, too, the law initially provides for accommodation in shared accommodation; there is no longer a mandatory obligation here, however, the law provides for recommended regulation (Section 53 (1) AsylG). From here on, regulations specific to the federal state apply, some of which

differ significantly from one another.<sup>2</sup> This leads, among other things, to refugees in some federal states being accommodated predominantly or quickly in single accommodation (e.g. Rhineland-Palatinate and Lower Saxony), while they live predominantly or as long as possible in shared accommodation in other federal states (e.g. Saxony and Baden-Wuerttemberg (Wendel 2014: 70)). However, in view of the high number of arrivals, there were also some deviations from previously established practices with regard to follow-on accommodation (Aumüller et al. 2015: 40).

The Integration Act, which came into force on 6 August 2016, established a residence regulation for persons entitled to asylum (Art. 16a GG [German Basic Law]), recognised refugees (Section 3 AsylG), beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (Section 4 AsylG) and individual status groups with a residence permit for humanitarian reasons (Section 23 to Section 25 AufenthG [German Residence Act]) in order to “counteract segregation tendencies that hinder integration” (Deutscher Bundestag 2016: 4). Accordingly, refugees must remain in the federal state that was responsible for their asylum or reception procedure for three years (Section 12a AufenthG). In addition, the competent authorities may assign a specific place of residence to the persons concerned within six months of recognition or issue of the residence permit (Section 12a (2) and (3) AufenthG). Refugees who are employed or undergoing vocational training, subject to social security contributions or who are in a study or training program are exempt from the residence requirements.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the applicable regional state laws and regulations on the admission and distribution of refugees, see Müller 2013: 15 et seqq. and BBSR 2017: 21 et seq.

During the survey period, i.e. in the second half of 2016, almost half (48 %) of the refugees surveyed lived in shared accommodation<sup>3</sup>, the other half (52 %) in single accommodation. Against this background, the following shows in which type of shared or single accommodation the refugees lived.

### Type of shared accommodation

<sup>3</sup> This includes initial reception facilities and emergency shelters.

21 % of refugees surveyed, who lived in shared accommodation were sheltered in accommodation that can be considered as temporary (including 1 % in a tent or tent city, 4 % in a hall, 16 % in a container or in a fast assembly housing). The proportion of those who lived in such rather temporary accommodation increases with the year of arrival – from 2013 to 2016. The majority of those concerned (37 %) lived in a repurposed building (e.g. in a former office building or school). In each case, about one fifth (19 %) lived in a (former) hotel or

hotel-like building (e.g. guesthouse, youth hostel, holiday flat) or in another unspecified shared accommodation (23 %).

### Type of single accommodation

19 % of people living in single accommodation lived in detached or semi-detached houses. Just under a third (31 %) lived in a house with five to eight dwellings and around 23 % lived in a house with either three to four or with nine or more dwellings (22 %). Only 3 % lived in high-rise buildings and 2 % in agricultural residential buildings. Nearly half (47 %) of the people living in single accommodation had no other refugees living in the building, 21 % had another dwelling in the building occupied by refugees, and for almost a third (32 %) several dwellings were occupied by refugees.

### Single accommodation vs. shared accommodation

As regards the type of accommodation, the legal framework mentioned is relatively clear: while 67 % of refugees who were granted protection status and less than half (45 %) of those who were granted tolerated stay (*Duldung*) lived in single accommodation, the majority (62 %), who were still in the asylum procedure, were in shared accommodation.

In addition, the proportion of people living in shared accommodation increases with the year of arrival and the length of stay: while 38 % of those who fled to Germany in 2013 lived in shared accommodation at the time of the survey, this applies to only half (51 %) of those who arrived in 2015 and 60 % of those who arrived in 2016. On the one hand, this is likely because of the proportion of those whose asylum procedures have been completed, and who are therefore no longer obliged to live in shared accommodation, increases with the length of stay.

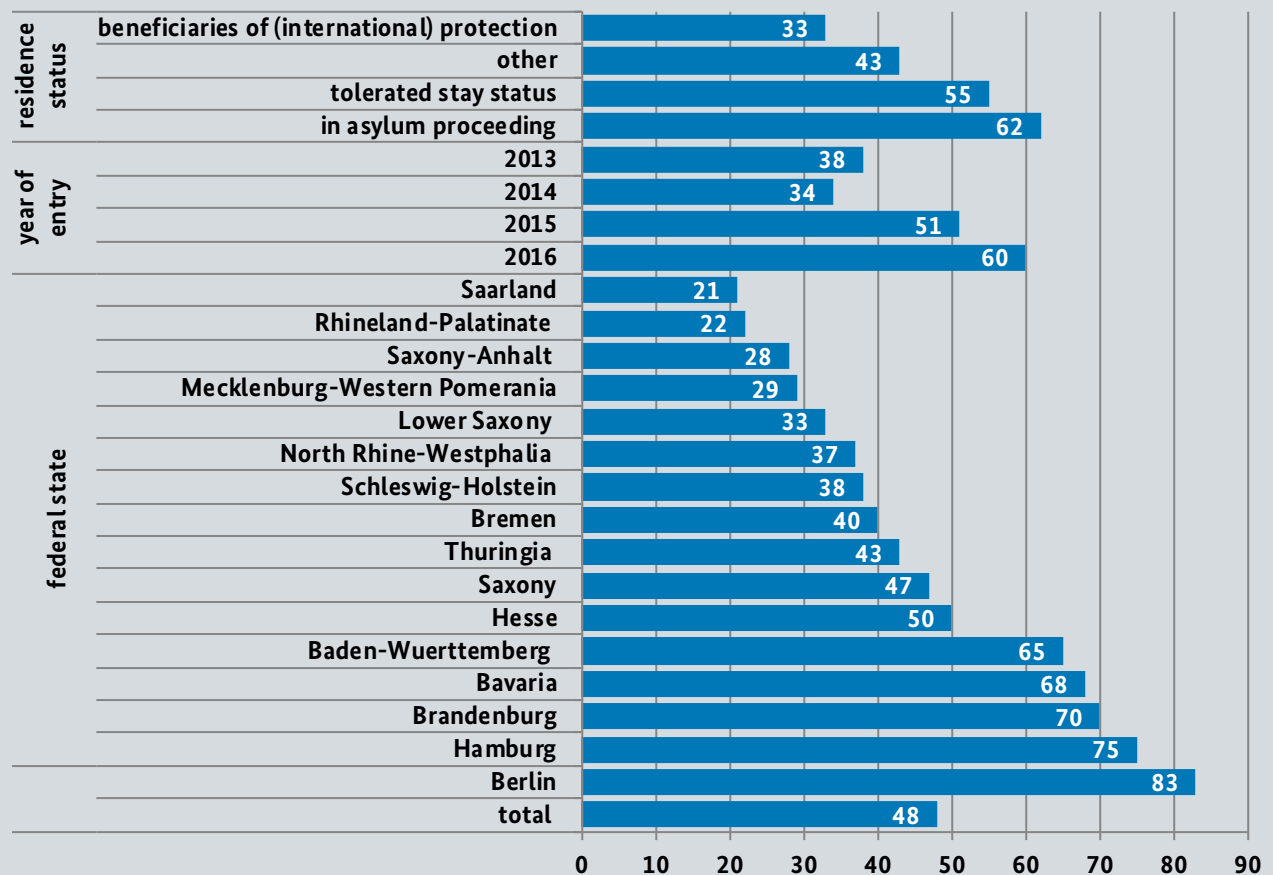
On the other hand, refugees must first familiarise themselves with the structures of the German housing market (Baraulina/Bitterwolf 2016: 30). For example, only 8 % of those who live in single accommodation found them through an advertisement. The majority (57 %) had their accommodation arranged through aid organisations or government agencies and about a third (29 %) had relied on the support of friends, acquaintances

or family members.<sup>4</sup> Relevant might also be that in 2015 and 2016 the supply of dwellings became scarcer (Robert Bosch Stiftung 2016: 11). This assumption is supported by the fact that the likelihood of living in single rather than shared accommodation decreases, particularly from the 2015 year of arrival.

Furthermore, it can be seen that the proportion of refugees interviewed, who lived in shared accommodation, varied between the federal states, in some but not all cases significantly. The proportion varied between 21 % in Saarland and 83 % in Berlin (Figure 1). These differences are likely to be due to the above-mentioned federal state-specific regulations on the accommodation of refugees, especially as some of them also follow a pattern that had already been demonstrated in earlier studies. Already in 2013, the housing rates<sup>5</sup> in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Brandenburg and Bavaria were comparatively low and in Rhineland-Palatinate, Bremen and Schleswig-Holstein relatively high (Wendel 2014: 69 et seq.). At the same time, however, there are also deviations from previously observed patterns. For example, the housing rates in Saarland and Saxony-Anhalt increased significantly, while it decreased significantly in Hamburg and Berlin. These developments may also be due to the above-mentioned deviations from previously accepted practices in the accommodation of asylum applicants (Aumüller et al. 2015: 40), which became necessary given the high number of arrivals and the accommodation available in each case. The significant decline in the housing rate in the city states of Berlin and Hamburg continues to indicate that the strained situation on the housing market may have played a role in these deviations (BBSR 2017: 75).

<sup>4</sup> Similar results can be seen in a study on resettlement refugees by Baraulina and Bitterwolf (2016: 30). The study shows that those who fled were successful in finding accommodation and were supported by people who were familiar with the conditions and functioning of the housing market.

<sup>5</sup> "Housing rate" means the percentage of refugees living in individual dwellings (Wendel 2014: 68).

Figure 1: Percentage of refugees living in shared accommodation by residence status<sup>6</sup>, year of entry and federal state (as a percentage)

Note: Data weighted. Based on 4,399 respondents.

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey 2016.

6 The "beneficiaries of (international) protection" status category includes persons entitled to asylum (residence permit pursuant to Section 25 (1) AufenthG), persons who have been granted refugee status (residence permit pursuant to Section 25 (2) AufenthG), who have been granted a settlement permit (pursuant to Section 26 (3) AufenthG) or who have been admitted as part of reception programs (residence permit pursuant to Section 22 or Section 23 AufenthG).

It can be assumed that the likelihood of living in single rather than shared accommodation depends not only on the factors already mentioned, but also on other factors that can be mutually dependent. In order to take these mutual influences into account and to present the interrelationships as clearly as possible, multivariate analysis is recommended (Box 3).

The multivariate model largely confirm the previous bivariate results on the probability of living in a single accommodation depending on residence status and duration as well as the federal state (as presented/discussed above).

Contrary to the results presented in Figure 1, only persons who were granted protection status were significantly more likely to live in single accommodation than in shared accommodation in contrast to persons who were still in the asylum

application process. However, this did not apply to persons with a tolerated stay and persons with other residence statuses. Furthermore, it becomes clear that the likelihood of living in individual dwellings increases with the length of stay, even if the residence status is taken into account. Thus, the influence of length of stay was not primarily mediated via the residence status.

Men tend to be less likely than women to live in single accommodation. When minor children lived in the household, the likelihood of living in single rather than shared accommodation was eight percentage points higher than for households without children (Table 1). This is probably due to the fact that in most federal states there are recommendations that families with minor children should be allocated more quickly to single accommodation (Müller 2013: 22; Wendel 2014: 55 et seq.; BBSR 2017: 41, 74).



### Box 3: MULTIVARIATE ANALYSES

The probability of living in single rather than in shared accommodation is examined using a linear regression or a so-called linear probability model (as an introduction see Best/Wolf 2010: 828; Wolf/Best 2010) (Table 1). The regression coefficients can be interpreted as conditional probabilities:

- Positive regression coefficients mean that the conditional probability increases or is higher for the listed group than it is for the comparison group (reference). Example: The value of 0.082 for “minor children in the household” is read as persons with minor children being 8 percentage points more likely than persons without minor children to live in single rather than shared accommodation, while persons without minor children are the reference category.
- Negative regression coefficients mean that the conditional probability decreases or is lower for the listed group than it is for the comparison group (reference). Example: The value -0.046 for “Male” can be read as men being about 5 percentage points less likely than women to live in single rather than shared accommodation. In this case, women are the reference category.

The asterisks in the tables indicate the level of significance. The higher the level, or the more asterisks, the more likely it is that the relationship actually exists in the population as a whole and is not only shown by chance in the available data (on the concept of significance, see also, for example Kühnel/Krebs 2010: 174 et seq.).

Compared to bivariate analyses, multivariate models have the advantage that a variety of factors potentially influencing a situation can be considered simultaneously.

It has already been pointed out that the majority of those who lived in single accommodation had been placed through aid organisations or government agencies. The multivariate analysis confirms that institutional support played an important role in the search for housing: For example, the likelihood of living in single rather than shared accommodation is around 29 percentage points higher for those who received help in finding accommodation than for those who required help in finding

**Table 1: Probability of living in single (1) rather than shared accommodation (0) - Linear Probability Model**

Influencing factors	Coefficient	Sig.
<b>Sociodemographic</b>		
Male	-0.048	*
Minor children in the household	0.082	**
<b>Institutional support</b>		
Help in finding accommodation required, but not (yet) received (reference)		
Help in finding accommodation received	0.294	***
No help in finding accommodation	0.090	**
<b>required</b>		
Resources		
Household income/1000	0.105	***
German language skills (scale 1 “not at all” to 5 “very good”)	0.043	***
Family in Germany	0.051	
Friends in Germany	0.014	
Constant	0.397	***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.37	
n	3,946	

Note: Unstandardised regression coefficients, data weighted; significances: \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001. Not shown control variables: Country of origin, age, federal state, residence status, year of entering the country, number of relocations so far. The complete results can be obtained from the authors.

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey 2016.

accommodation but had not (yet) received it. But even those who do not or did not need help in finding an accommodation were 9 percentage points more likely to live in single rather than shared accommodation than those who needed help but had not (yet) received it.

Ultimately, it can be assumed that also available individual resources (social, economic, cultural capital - Bourdieu 1983) play a role for refugees in accessing single accommodation. Thus, the chance of getting single accommodation should increase with higher available household income (economic capital), as it enables paying higher rents. Furthermore, knowledge of the German language (cultural capital) should have a positive effect, as advertisements can be read and written and discussions with potential landlords are possible. Finally, social networks (social capital) should be helpful, as friends, acquaintances or relatives can, for example, pass on information about available housing or act as intermediaries.

In fact, the likelihood of living in single rather than shared accommodation increased with rising

income and increasing self-assessed German language skills. As far as social capital is concerned, those who indicated that they had chosen Germany as their destination country because family members or friends have already lived here, were more likely to live in single accommodation than those who did not indicate this. Although this effect cannot be statistically confirmed, it may be due to the fact that some of the persons concerned moved in with family members already living in single accommodation.

## Indicators of housing quality

The type of accommodation (single or shared accommodation) is not exclusively the result of legal framework conditions and institutional allocation processes. Housing standards, especially in shared accommodation, additionally result in part from legal requirements and regulations (Müller 2013: 26; Wendel 2014: 37 et seqq.). For example, some relevant state reception laws only stipulate general provisions in this regard for municipalities (for example in Hesse or Saxony-Anhalt), but in six federal states<sup>7</sup> there are binding requirements for a minimum standard. As a result, the legally defined housing standards differ between the federal states and between municipalities. For example, the minimum living/sleeping space requirements for shared accommodation vary between 4.5 m<sup>2</sup> and 6 m<sup>2</sup> per person (Müller 2013: 26; Wendel 2014: 37 et seqq.).

Housing in shared accommodation is sometimes viewed critically (Aumüller et al. 2015: 35 et seq.). Criticisms include, for example, the psychosocial burden on residents due to confinement and lack of privacy, a problematic security situation in the institutions, especially for women, or the partly isolated location of the buildings, which makes contact with people from the host society more difficult. Furthermore, it is criticised that shared accommodation is more likely to be rejected by the local population due to the high reception capacities, because “the integration of residents into the neighbourhood is blocked [thereby] and facilities of this size more easily encourage racist and right-wing extremist mobilisation” (Aumüller et al. 2015: 61). However, there are also indications that single accommodation is not always better or more

comfortable than shared accommodation (BBSR 2017: 6).

Against this background, the following shows where the accommodations were located, how much living space was available, how security in the accommodation and in the residential area was perceived in each case and how satisfied refugees were with their housing situation.

### Location

29 % of refugees surveyed lived in rural areas and 71 % in urban areas.<sup>8</sup> At 74 %, residents in single accommodation lived in urban areas slightly more frequently than residents in shared accommodation (69 %).

There were more marked differences between single and shared accommodation in respect of the neighbourhood: while the majority (75 %) of single accommodation was located in purely residential areas, this only applied to 45 % of shared accommodation (Figure 2). These were more frequently (32 % to 24 %) in areas with both residential and commercial use and much more frequently in industrial areas (23 %) where single accommodation was almost never located (1 %).

### Available living space

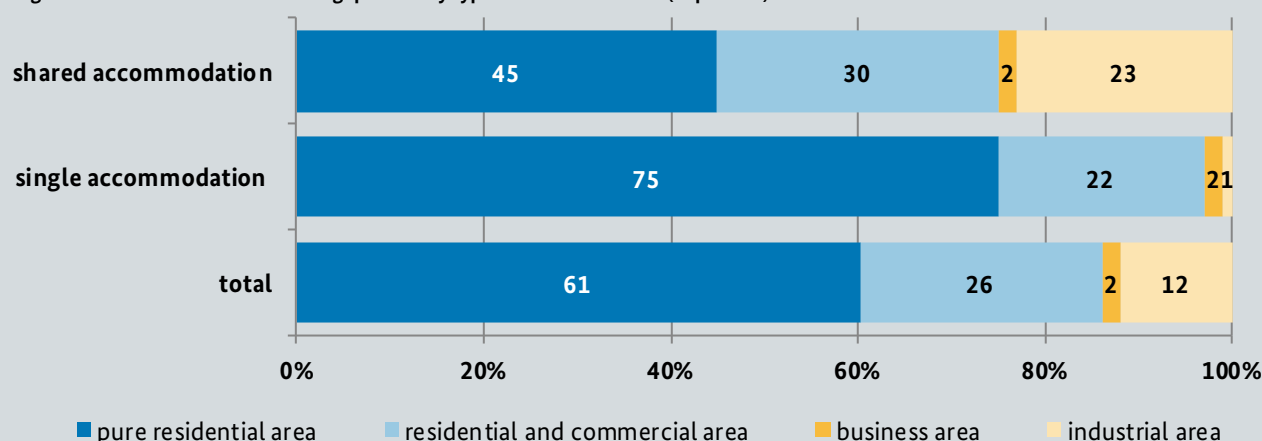
As mentioned above, the minimum area of living space (between 4.5 m<sup>2</sup> and 6 m<sup>2</sup> living space per person) is specified in some cases as binding, at least in shared accommodation. All in all, the refugees surveyed had an average of 19 m<sup>2</sup> of living space per person at their disposal, with residents in shared accommodation having to make do with considerably less living space, with almost 11 m<sup>2</sup>, than residents of single accommodation (29 m<sup>2</sup>). The latter were also asked to evaluate the size of their home. 60 % of those surveyed rated the size of the dwelling as just right, 21 % found it somewhat small and 16 % even much too small.

In addition to the size of the dwelling, the number of rooms or, in general, the presence of a self-contained housing unit is also important for an adequate level of privacy. While refugees' dwellings

<sup>7</sup> Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony and Thuringia (Müller 2013: 26).

<sup>8</sup> The allocation was made on the basis of the spatial boundaries of the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR), whereby independent large cities and urban districts form the urban area and rural districts with concentrations of populations as well as sparsely populated rural districts form the rural area. ([http://www.bbsr.bund.de/cln\\_032/nn\\_1067638/BBSR/DE/Raumbeobachtung/Raumabgrenzungen/Kreistypen4/kreistypen.html](http://www.bbsr.bund.de/cln_032/nn_1067638/BBSR/DE/Raumbeobachtung/Raumabgrenzungen/Kreistypen4/kreistypen.html)).

Figure 2: Distribution to living quarters by type of accommodation (in percent)



Note: Data weighted. Based on 4,387 respondents.

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey 2016.

in single accommodation comprised an average of three rooms, 49 % of those living in shared accommodation had a self-contained residential unit available to them. However, this also means that 51 % of residents in shared accommodation surveyed were not offered such a personal and permanently designed retreat. It remains open, however, whether a private room was available for personal use at least temporarily.

### Security in the accommodation and the residential area

It has already been noted that the security situation in shared accommodation, especially for women, is sometimes viewed critically (Aumüller et al. 2015: 35 et seq., Bauer 2017: 13). Therefore, the subjectively perceived security in the accommodation and residential area will be looked at below.

It can be seen that the majority of refugees surveyed rated their residential area as very or fairly safe (93 %). Slight differences can be seen in the type of accommodation: while the proportion of persons in shared accommodation who rated the security of the residential area as very or fairly secure is 91 %, the proportion of persons in single accommodation is 96 %. There are only marginal differences between men and women throughout.

With regard to the accommodation itself, the shared accommodation was considered somewhat less safe than the residential area, but the majority of the residents (86 %) found the accommodation to be very or fairly safe. Men rated the shared accommodation approximately as safe as women (86 % and 87 %).

### Satisfaction with the housing situation

In conclusion, how satisfied refugees were with their housing situation is discussed.<sup>9</sup> The results show that the refugees surveyed were on average only slightly satisfied with their overall housing situation (mean: 6.2). They were particularly satisfied with safety in the neighbourhood (mean: 8.4) and security in the dwelling or accommodation (mean: 8.0), least satisfied with the leisure facilities in their surroundings (mean: 5.1) and the possibility to learn German at the accommodation or in the immediate surroundings (mean: 5.7).

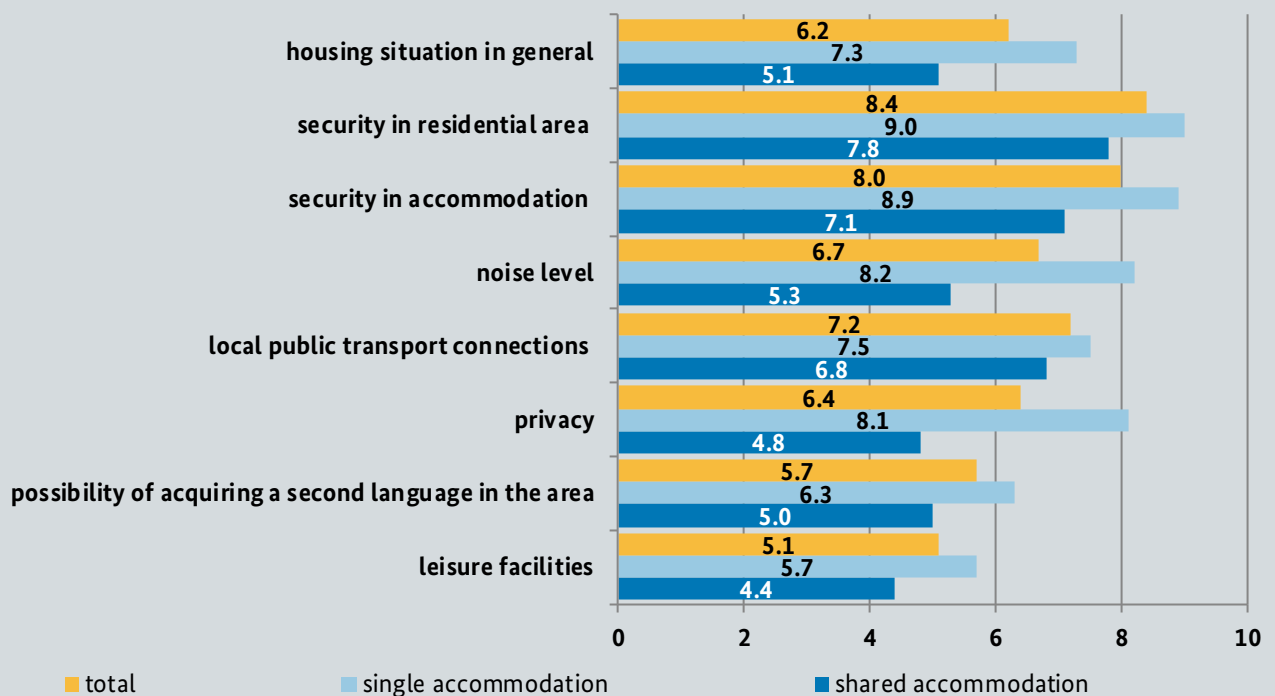
People living in individual accommodation were generally more satisfied with their housing situation in general, as well as with the individual aspects of the housing situation, than refugees living in shared accommodation (Figure 3).<sup>10</sup> The biggest differences can be seen in the assessment of privacy, noise levels and the general living situation. In particular, refugees who lived in shared accommodation and did not have a self-contained unit were significantly less satisfied with their privacy than those who had access to a self-contained area or who lived in single accommodation (results not shown here). The smallest differences can be seen in the assessment of local public transport connections and the possibility of acquiring a second language in the area.

<sup>9</sup> The evaluation of the individual aspects of the housing situation was recorded on a scale of 0 "completely dissatisfied" to 10 "completely satisfied".

<sup>10</sup> See also Scheible/Schacht/Trübswetter 2016: 33.



**Figure 3:** Average satisfaction with the housing situation (0 “completely dissatisfied” to 10 “completely satisfied”) by type of accommodation



Note: Data weighted. Based on 4,387 respondents.

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey 2016.

## Summary

In the second half of 2016, one half (52 %) of the refugees interviewed lived in single accommodation after one to three years living in Germany, while the other half (48 %) (still) lived in shared accommodation. It must be noted that the housing situation of refugees is initially strongly regulated by law and determined by institutional allocation processes. Accordingly, the situation reflects the situation of the refugees on the free housing market only to a limited extent. For example, the likelihood of living in single rather than shared accommodation depended to a high degree on the residence status or family situation, but also on the federal state in which the refugees interviewed lived. In addition, just over half of the residents in single accommodation had been placed through aid organisations or government agencies. Nevertheless, it is also apparent that the individual resources of refugees, such as German language skills and income, partly influenced the likelihood of living in single rather than shared accommodation.

Compared to shared accommodation, single accommodation occupied by refugees was more frequently located in urban areas than in rural areas,

and less frequently in commercial and especially industrial areas. Furthermore, residents in single accommodation felt slightly safer in their residential area than residents in shared accommodation. However, the majority of refugees surveyed perceived their residential area as at least fairly safe.

In contrast to the security situation, the refugees in shared accommodation were less satisfied with the leisure activities offered in their living environment and the opportunities to learn German in their accommodation or in the immediate vicinity. These two aspects seem to play a considerable role for those affected, as respondents were only fairly with their overall housing situation. People living in single accommodation were consistently more satisfied with their housing situation than refugees living in shared accommodation. The biggest differences were found in the assessment of privacy and noise exposure. It should be considered that 51 % of residents in shared accommodation did not have access to separate, self-contained housing units.

At the time of the survey, i.e. in the second half of 2016, some of the refugees had not yet reached the housing market in full (BBSR 2017: 72, 75) and the majority apparently still had difficulties in

navigating their way there independently. More than half of those who already lived in single accommodation had their accommodation arranged through professional help and only 17 % of those surveyed stated that they did not need help in finding accommodation. This indicates that the position of refugees in the housing market is (still) relatively precarious, which, in particular given the strained housing market, can lead them into moving to rather unfavourable housing segments more frequently. Given the aforementioned relevance of the individual housing situation for social participation, the development of refugees' housing situation should be pursued further so that potential undesirable developments can be identified as early as possible. This is especially important in the light of positive neighbourhood effects (Galster 2012) that have not yet had much time to develop.

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