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Trends in the housing situation of refugees

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AT A GLANCE

- More and more refugees are managing to make the transition from shared accommodation to private accommodation. While a high percentage of refugees with protection status had already found accommodation in the private housing market in 2016, refugees with a different residence status (procedure pending, deportation suspended, other status) managed to make up for lost ground in the following two years.
- Indicators measuring the quality of housing in private accommodation remain fairly constant or improve slightly over the observation period. For instance, every second apartment inhabited by refugees has a balcony or terrace.
- Despite positive trends, satisfaction with the general housing situation has decreased slightly over time. The following characteristics have a positive impact on satisfaction with private accommodation: urban location, a high level of safety, apartment complexes, no other refugees living in the apartment building, a high level of furnishings and fittings as well as the size of the dwelling being deemed adequate.
- In 2018, refugees (with the exception of refugees whose deportation had been suspended) stated less often that they were subject to geographic residence restrictions than in the previous year. Refugees who were obliged to live in a certain place lived in private accommodation less often than refugees who were only restricted to one Land or could decide freely where they wanted to live.
- Generally, it is very important to refugees to be able to choose where they want to live. If they had a free choice of where to live, refugees would prefer urban regions, and there has been a sharp decline in preference for rural regions over time.
- In view of the housing preferences expressed by refugees and their plans to relocate, it can be expected that, once the temporary residence restrictions are lifted, there will be an increasing shift of residence to urban areas, especially among men and persons with secondary school qualifications.

Introduction

The personal housing situation has a strong influence on individuals' quality of life and social participation. In contrast to other population groups, the housing situation of refugees¹ is unique as both the place of residence and the type of accommodation are regulated by law at the beginning of their stay in Germany. Thus, once they arrive in Germany, asylum seekers are first accommodated at initial arrival centres before they are moved on to municipal shared and private accommodation during the asylum procedure. Accordingly, refugees start looking for private accommodation at the latest once their protection status has been recognised or a decision to suspend their deportation has been taken.² As an important success factor for the integration process, the housing situation of recognised refugees who are staying longer should show a positive trend.

There is little representative information available as yet on the housing situation of refugees and how it evolves as integration progresses. Most findings are based on case studies that only reflect the situation in individual cities (Foroutan et al. 2017; Eichholz/

Spellerberg 2019; Noack et al. 2018). One exception is the Brief Analysis conducted by Baier and Siegert (2018), which uses representative survey data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees for the year 2016. Based on this analysis, the present Brief Analysis uses more recent waves of the same survey (2017, 2018) and describes the housing situation of refugees in Germany in 2018 and how it evolved from 2016 to 2018. In addition to objective indicators of the housing situation such as the type of accommodation, subjective indicators such as the assessment of the size of the dwelling have been analysed. Subsequently, the question of housing preferences and relocation plans is examined, taking temporary residence restrictions into account.

This will not only update knowledge about the housing situation of refugees but will also shed light on possible housing preferences and mobility aspirations once residence restrictions are lifted. The latter, i.e., obtaining information on future movements of refugees in certain regions, is of great importance for efficient and long-term regional planning.

The analyses are based on data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees (Kroh et al. 2016, Infobox). The sample population of this survey consists of adults who entered Germany between 2013 and 2016 and filed an asylum application. Data will be drawn from the first to third wave of the samples that started in 2016 as well as the data from the first and second wave of the supplementary sample, which began in 2017.

- 1 Here, the terms refugees, forced migrants and persons seeking protection are not used in the legal sense, but as collective terms for persons who have filed an asylum application in Germany, regardless of whether or how this application was decided (for a detailed description of the population considered here, see: Kroh et al. 2016).
- 2 Persons who are immediately and legally obliged to leave the country and whose deportation has not been suspended are not the focus of the analyses, since they rarely have access to the private housing market.

INFOBOX: THE IAB-BAMF-SOEP SURVEY OF REFUGEES

The IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees is a nationwide longitudinal survey of persons who came to Germany and filed an asylum application between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2016 inclusive, irrespective of the course and outcome of the asylum procedure. Thus, both persons whose asylum procedure was pending (asylum seekers) and those who have been granted protection status have been taken into account. Furthermore, persons were interviewed whose asylum application had been rejected but whose departure or removal had been suspended for various reasons, the majority of whom had their deportation suspended (Kroh et al. 2016). In addition, the members of these persons' households were also interviewed. The Central Register of Foreigners (AZR) provided the basis for the sampling. When statistical weighting methods

are used, the results obtained on the basis of the data are representative of the households of the above-mentioned members of the population (for a detailed description of the sampling, see: Kroh et al. 2017a and Jacobsen et al. 2019).

The survey programme is comparatively extensive (Kroh et al. 2016) which enables a comprehensive analysis to be conducted on the living conditions of refugees. The analyses can therefore take a variety of relevant characteristics into account, such as time of entry, gender, age, country of origin, level of education and residence status. All data refer to subjective assessments of the refugees.

Refugees in the private housing market

Access to private housing

The housing situation of refugees is presented below for the respective survey periods 2016, 2017 and 2018. Figure 1 shows the total percentage of refugees as well as the percentage of refugees by residence status living in private accommodation.

In the first year of the survey (2016), slightly more than half of all refugees were living in private apartments or houses (54 %), meaning that slightly less than half were living in shared accommodation.³ In the following years, the number of refugees living in private accommodation increased significantly. From 2016 to 2018, the proportion of refugees living in private apartments increased by around 21 percentage points to 75 %. This positive development can be explained on the one hand by progressive integration, which offers better opportunities on the free housing market, and by a decline in the number of newly arriving refugees on the other. The latter means that municipalities have to accommodate a smaller number of refugees in shared accommodation centres and that more and more of them can be redistributed to municipal private accommodation that becomes available.

According to Baier and Siegert (2018), the probability of living in private rather than shared accommodation

also depends heavily on residence status. A differentiated analysis according to residence status also shows in this analysis that in 2016, around 70 % of refugees with protection status⁴ were already living in private accommodation – compared to just 39 % of refugees whose procedures were still pending. Over time, however, the proportion of refugees living in private accommodation has risen sharply regardless of their residence status. The highest increases were recorded among recognised refugees (13 percentage points) and refugees whose asylum procedure was still pending (12 percentage points).

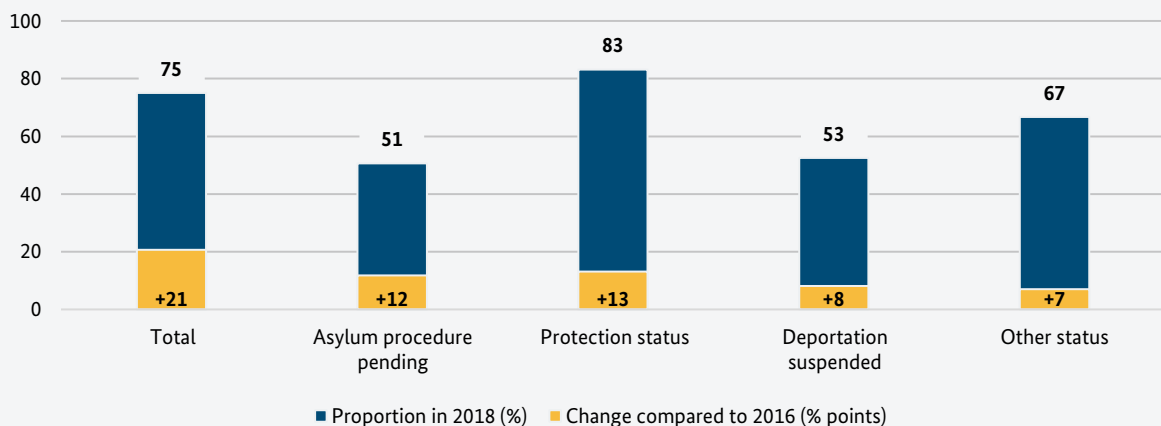
In 2018, refugees lived on average 1.5 years in their last accommodation. At 1.7 years, shared accommodation was occupied slightly longer than private accommodation (1.3 years). Among the refugees who moved between 2017 and 2018, the average number of relocations was 1.1 (including voluntary relocations or those ordered by the authorities), with the maximum being 4 relocations.

Figure 2 shows that refugees tend to require less assistance (irrespective of the type of assistance and institution) in finding accommodation. About 25 % of the refugees who were already living in private accommodation stated that they had not needed any help in finding accommodation. This represents an

³ The proportions for the year 2016 differ slightly from the Brief Analysis conducted by Baier and Siegert (2018) as the sample for these analyses was restricted differently. In addition, updated weightings were used.

⁴ The category “protection status” includes, in particular, persons entitled to asylum (residence permit pursuant to Section 25 subsection 1 of the Residence Act (Aufenthaltsgesetz (AufenthG))), persons who have been granted refugee status (residence permit pursuant to Section 25 subsection 2 of the Residence Act), who have been granted a settlement permit (pursuant to Section 26 subsection 3 of the Residence Act) or who have been admitted within the framework of admission programmes (residence permit pursuant to Section 22 or Section 23 of the Residence Act).

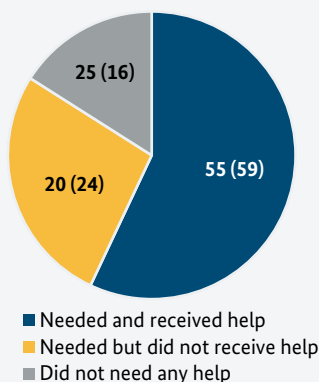
Figure 1: Refugees living in private accommodation, in total, by residence status in 2018 and change compared to 2016



Note: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees 2016–2018. Basis: 13,632 respondents, broken down as follows: 2,914 (21 %) whose asylum procedure was still pending, 9,375 (69 %) who had been granted protection status, 729 (5 %) whose deportation had been suspended and 615 (5 %) who had other status. Data weighted.

increase of 9 percentage points compared to 2016 and is further illustrated by the fact that a smaller proportion of refugees in 2018 said that they needed help but did not receive it than in 2016. In the latter case, the large number of newly developed support services for refugees also seems to be having an impact. This is particularly encouraging since 37 % of refugees were looking for accommodation in 2018.

Figure 2: Refugees living in private accommodation in 2018 (2016), by receiving assistance in finding accommodation (in percent)



Note: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees 2016-2018.
Basis: 10,020 respondents. Data weighted.

Indicators of housing quality for private housing

Although the proportion of refugees living in private accommodation increased significantly from 2016 to 2018, it can be assumed that it is not easy for refugees to move from shared accommodation to private accommodation due to legal and bureaucratic obstacles (e.g., residence restrictions or lengthy inspections by public authorities) as well as experiences of discrimination or lack of information about Land-specific housing market structures (Baraulina/Bitterwolf 2016; Foroutan et al. 2017; Dräger 2020). For this reason, the literature points out that refugees who manage to gain access to the private housing market, move into apartments of a lower quality, especially in the first few years (Hiebert 2017; Reimann 2017). The housing situation appears to improve the longer refugees reside in Germany, the more their German language proficiency improves and the more they earn.

In view of the fact that the vast majority of refugees are already living in private accommodation and that the data on furnishings and fittings was collected only for private accommodation, the following section will only consider refugees residing in private apartments

and houses, although it should be noted that this applies in particular to refugees with protection status.

Location, type of building, concentration of refugees and safety

No changes have been observed over time with regard to the location of the housing, the residential environment and the type of building. As in the first wave of the survey (2016), about 72 % of the refugees were living in urban areas and 28 % in rural areas when the third wave of surveys was conducted in 2018 (Figure 3).⁵ In 2018, three out of four refugees (76 %) were living in strictly residential areas, followed by so-called mixed areas (21 %). In 2018, as in 2016, significantly more than half of the refugees were living in large apartment buildings containing three to eight apartments (57 %), followed by apartment buildings with more than nine parties (25 %). Around 17 % of the refugees were living in buildings designed for one or two families. In general, it can be concluded that the distribution by house type reflects quite well the distribution between urban and rural regions in terms of their building structure. As in 2016, just over 20 % of the refugees indicated in 2018 that there was another apartment in their building that was occupied by refugees (Figure 4). Overall, the proportion of refugees in 2018 who said they were the only household in the building with a history of forced migration was 44 %. Irrespective of the type of residential environment, almost every respondent felt very safe or safe (96 %); here too, hardly any changes were observed over time.

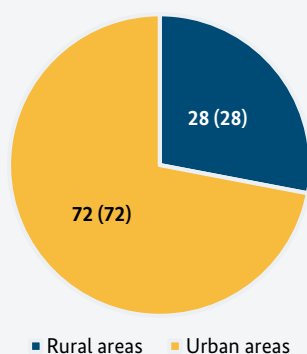
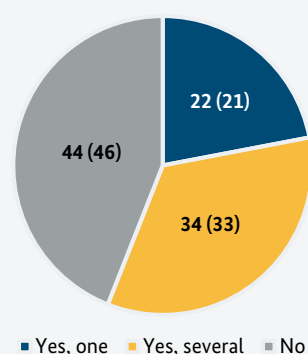
Available living space, household size and rent

Refugees in private accommodation in 2016 were living, on average, in a three-room apartment with about 3.8 persons. Each resident had around 30 m² of living space at their disposal. The average monthly rent was around EUR 601 (median: EUR 576). When these figures are compared to those of 2018, it becomes evident that the number of square metres available per person⁶ decreased to 28 m², although the average number of persons sharing a household also rose by 0.3 to 4.1 persons. Based on the general trend of rent increases in Germany⁷, rents paid by refugees rose by around EUR 81 to EUR 682 in 2018 (median: EUR 650). This corresponds to an average rent increase of

⁵ The study conducted by Röscher et al. 2020 provides a detailed overview of refugees in rural areas.

⁶ By comparison, German nationals had around 44 m² of living space available per person in 2018 (own calculations based on SOEP 2018).

⁷ Between 2016 and 2018, average rents (first-time rental and re-letting) in the federal territory rose by around 5 % per year, with rents rising above all in large cities (by around 6 % per annum) (BMI 2018).

Figure 3: Refugees in private accommodation in 2018 (2016), by type of region (in percent)**Figure 4: Refugees in private accommodation in 2018 (2016), by apartments in the building occupied by other refugees (in percent)**

Note: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees 2016–2018. Basis: 10,020 respondents. Data weighted.

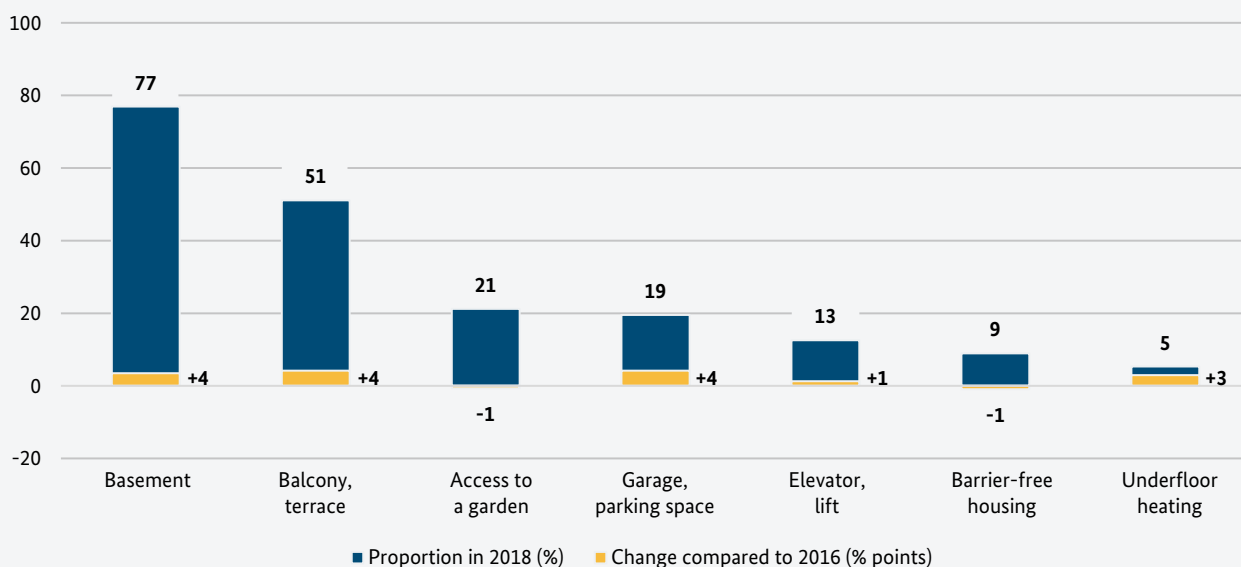
13.5 % in three years. In view of the fact that the living space available per person has decreased slightly, the conclusion could be drawn that refugees' assessment of the size of the dwellings is also more negative, yet this is not the case. On a scale of five from "much too small" to "just right" to "much too big", the assessment for both 2016 and 2018, at 2.5 points, falls between "slightly too small" and "just right".

Furnishings and fittings

In addition to criteria such as location and size of the dwelling, furnishings and fittings of private accommodation are of paramount importance for housing quality. As Figure 5 shows, it is evident that not only has the probability of living in private accommodation increased for refugees since 2016 but most of the

furnishings and fittings in private accommodation have improved, albeit only slightly.

In 2018, more than three out of four apartments were equipped with a basement (77 %). Compared to 2016, this represents an increase of 4 percentage points. Furthermore, more than half of the inhabited dwellings had a balcony or terrace (51 %). Here, too, an increase of about 4 percentage points was recorded. In one out of every five dwellings, the residents had access to a garden (21 %). However, this is a very slight decrease compared to 2016. The same applies to the proportion of barrier-free housing, which has fallen by one percentage point. By contrast, the proportion of apartments including a garage or parking space among refugees has risen by 4 percentage points. Thus, in

Figure 5: Furnishings and fittings of private accommodation in 2018 and change compared to 2016

Note: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees 2016–2018. Basis: 10,020 respondents. Data weighted.

2018, almost one out of every five apartments had a car parking space. The positive change here compared to 2016 can be explained by the increasing individual mobility of refugees over time. Refugees were the least likely to live in apartments with underfloor heating (5 %).⁸

Satisfaction with the general housing situation

One characteristic that probably best reflects the housing situation and thus the individual quality of life of refugees is their general satisfaction with the

housing situation. Satisfaction was measured on an eleven-point scale ranging from 0 “not satisfied at all” to 5 “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” to 10 “fully satisfied”. On average, the satisfaction of refugees in private accommodation was 7.0 points in 2018, 7.1 points in 2017 and 7.3 points in 2016. Among refugees in shared accommodation, satisfaction is consistently lower and the trend over time is more negative (2016: 5.1 points; 2017: 4.4 points; 2018: 4.6 points).

It can be assumed that satisfaction with the general housing situation can be explained to a large extent by the above-mentioned indicators. In order to calculate the direction (positive/negative) and the strength of the influence of the indicators, a multivariate analysis was carried out using a linear regression model. Multivariate models have the advantage that a large number of influencing factors (here: housing indicators) can be

⁸ By comparison: dwellings of German nationals were equipped as follows in 2018: 93 % had a basement, 84 % had a balcony/terrace, 66 % had access to a garden, 76 % had a garage/parking space, 10 % had an elevator/lift, 16 % had barrier-free access and 23 % had underfloor heating. The figures refer to own calculations based on SOEP 2018.

Table 1: Estimation of general satisfaction with the housing situation in private dwellings – linear regression model

Explanatory variables	Coefficient	(standard error)
Rural area (ref.: urban area)	-0.259**	(0.084)
Safety in the residential area	0.471***	(0.068)
Living environment (ref.: pure residential area)		
Residential and industrial estate	-0.028	(0.089)
Business district	-0.246	(0.218)
Industrial area	-0.430	(0.315)
House type (ref.: building designed for one or two families)		
Residential building with 3-8 apartments	0.259**	(0.097)
Residential building with 9 or more apartments	0.363**	(0.116)
Residential property inhabited by other refugees (ref.: no)		
Yes, one other apartment	-0.205*	(0.091)
Yes, several apartments	-0.195*	(0.083)
Assessment of the size of the apartment	1.167***	(0.054)
Number of persons living in the household	0.047*	(0.020)
Index of furnishings and fittings	0.250***	(0.031)
Survey year (ref.: 2016)		
2017	-0.354***	(0.072)
2018	-0.372***	(0.077)
Region (ref.: South)		
West	-0.216*	(0.097)
North	-0.306**	(0.107)
East	0.118	(0.123)
Number of observations	7,514	
R ²	0.179	

Note: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees 2016–2018 (pooled). Dependent variable: satisfaction with the general housing situation in private accommodation. Other control variables: age, gender, level of education (compulsory education completed without any qualifications, compulsory education completed with a qualification, secondary school leaving certificate, other school leaving certificate), residence status (asylum procedure pending, protection status, deportation suspended, other status), marital status (single, married, divorced, widowed), region of origin (Europe, Near and Middle East, Asia, North Africa, Rest of Africa, Other). Significance level: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001. Standard errors clustered at household level.

taken into account simultaneously for a specific situation (here: satisfaction). Since, as mentioned above, most of the housing indicators were only surveyed for private accommodation, the analysis again refers only to refugees who were already living in private accommodation.

Most of the indicators are included in the model as described. A summary index has been established for the furnishings and fittings, which assumes a value of zero if the private accommodation does not have any of the above-mentioned amenities; similarly, the index is seven if the dwelling offers all (seven) features. Indicators described above that were not included in the model have a high number of missing data that could lead to possible distortions. In order to rule out further potential distortions due to individual, time-related and regional effects, additional individual characteristics, the year in which the survey was carried out and two variables on geographical location were included.

A significant negative correlation has been confirmed between satisfaction with the housing situation and rural areas (Table 1). According to this, refugees whose private accommodation is in a rural area seem to be less satisfied than refugees in urban areas by almost 0.3 points. Furthermore, a similarly high negative trend over time can be seen in the multivariate model: refugees were almost 0.4 points less satisfied with their housing situation in 2018 than in 2016.

On the other hand, there is a positive and at the same time very strong correlation between, for instance, the assessment of the size of the dwelling and satisfaction: the more refugees assess the size of their dwelling as being appropriate, the more satisfied they are with their private accommodation. A further example of a positive correlation exists between satisfaction and the furnishings and fittings of the accommodation. With each additional feature, satisfaction increases, on average, by 0.3 points.

Other characteristics included to check individual differences, such as the residence status of refugees, have little or no influence on satisfaction with the general housing situation.

Housing situation of refugees facing legal residence restrictions

Against the backdrop of the housing situation under review, the question arises as to why refugees who are dissatisfied do not simply adapt their housing situation to their preferences and change their housing situation

by moving. However, actual relocation preferences depend, among other things, on the legal possibilities.

Being able to choose freely where they want to live, immigrants tend to concentrate on individual urban regions within the country of destination and on individual residential areas within these regions (Farwick 2018). This settlement pattern can be observed in many classic immigration countries (such as the USA and Canada), but also in Germany. However, an ethnically concentrated residential environment can hamper integration since segregation tendencies towards the majority society slow down language acquisition and the adoption of cultural norms and customs. Accordingly, state regulations try to counteract this.

Before the Integration Act (Integrationsgesetz) entered into force in the summer of 2016, only persons whose asylum procedure was pending were subject to a residence requirement to a specific place or a specific Land. In most cases, the obligation to live in a certain place applied for three months and could be eased if the refugee took up employment or faced other exceptional circumstances. This obligation lapsed once protection status was recognised, and refugees were able to move and settle anywhere they want within the federal territory. Refugees whose deportation had been suspended and whose subsistence was not ensured were subsequently subject to a residence requirement which only restricted the freedom of establishment but not the freedom of movement (Section 61 subsection 1d of the Residence Act). Both the three-month geographic restriction at the beginning of the asylum procedure and the residence requirement for foreigners whose deportation has been suspended remain unchanged to this day.

In order to counteract integration-inhibiting segregation tendencies in the long term (Deutscher Bundestag 2016), the Federal Government additionally restricted the ability of persons with protection status to choose their place of residence within the framework of the Integration Act, which entered into force on 6 August 2016. Accordingly, persons entitled to asylum, recognised refugees whose asylum decision was/will be taken after January 2016, are required to take up their habitual residence (place of residence) in the particular Land to which they have been allocated for the purposes of their asylum procedure for a maximum period of three years (also retroactively) (Section 12a subsection 1 sentence 1 of the Residence Act). Furthermore, it is at the discretion of the Länder to require foreigners to take up their habitual residence (place of residence) in other specific locations (Section 12a subsection 2 sentence 1 of the Residence Act). At the end of this

three-year residence regulation, recognised refugees can freely choose where they want to live throughout Germany. The residence rule – similar to the geographic restriction – can also be lifted if the foreigner is in employment with full social security coverage, or hardship provisions or exemptions exist (Section 12a subsection 1 sentence 2 of the Residence Act). In view of the strained German housing market, the importance of the housing situation for the integration process and the desire to maintain social cohesion, a declared aim of the scheme is also to ensure the long-term provision of adequate housing.

In summary, persons whose asylum procedure is pending are thus initially subject to a geographic restriction that determines where they live. Once their protection status has been recognised, a temporary residence regulation (place/Land) may be imposed, limiting their freedom of settlement. Foreigners whose deportation has been suspended, on the other hand, are subject to a residence requirement similar to the residence regulation. The refugee group is thus in some cases severely restricted in its choice of place of residence and differs significantly from other migration groups.

As a matter of principle, all refugees who were interviewed in 2017 or 2018 are included in the following analyses, regardless of their residence status and type of accommodation (shared or private). Due to the deliberately general nature of the question and regional differences in the application of the requirements, it is not possible to make a clear distinction between geographic restriction, residence requirement and residence regulation. The collective term “residence restriction” is therefore used in the following.

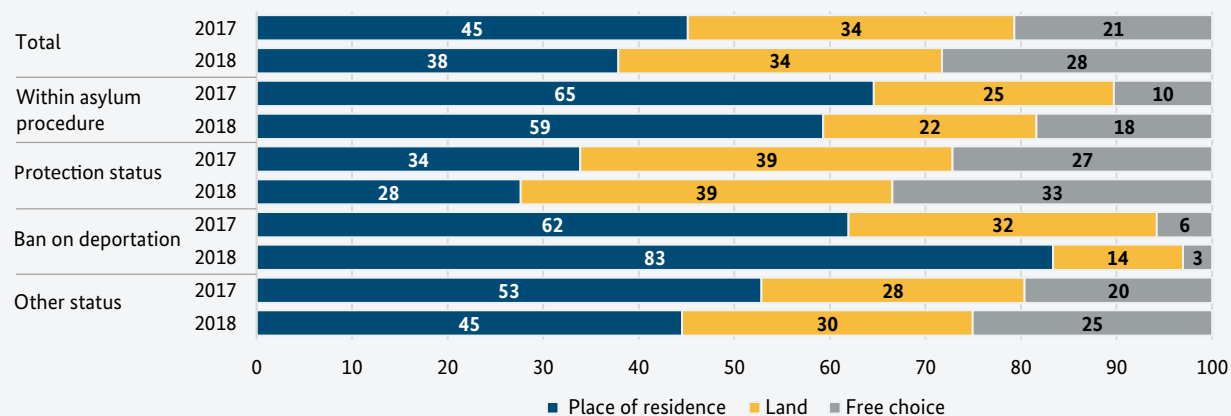
Refugees affected by residence restrictions

In 2018, 38 % of the refugees surveyed said that they were obliged to take up residence in a certain place within the federal territory (Figure 6). Compared to the previous year, however, the number of respondents affected by the most restrictive type of residence restriction decreased by 7 percentage points. While the proportion of refugees who are only allowed to reside in a certain Land (34 %) has not changed, the proportion of refugees who stated that they can choose freely where they want to live in Germany has risen accordingly by 7 percentage points. Nevertheless, the proportion of refugees who are free to choose their place of residence, at 28 %, is still the lowest in 2018 compared with the other categories.

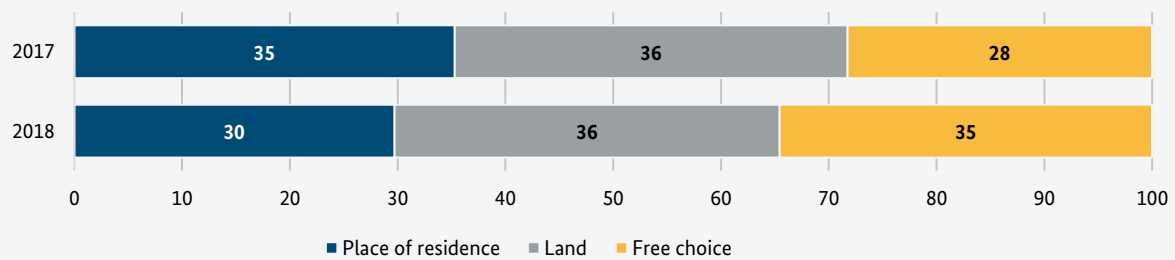
A comparison of the extent to which they were affected based on their residence status shows that refugees whose deportation had been suspended in 2018 were disproportionately affected by the obligation to take up residence in a specific place (83 %). This can be explained by the currently valid legal regulations for foreigners whose deportation has been suspended. In addition, the proportion of members of this group who are required to take up residence in a specific place has increased significantly compared to the previous year (21 percentage points), whereas it has decreased for all other groups (procedure pending, foreigners granted protection status and other status). Thus, more and more refugees have been able to choose their place of residence.

As mentioned above, one objective of residence restrictions is the legal distribution of refugees to regions where the housing market is less strained.

Figure 6: Refugees affected by residence restrictions, by residence status and survey year (in percent)



Note: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees 2017-2018. Basis: 9,164 respondents, broken down as follows: 1,493 (16 %) whose asylum procedure was still pending, 6,873 (75 %) who had been granted protection status, 436 (5 %) whose deportation had been suspended and 392 (4 %) who had other status. Data weighted.

Figure 7: Private accommodation of refugees affected by residence restrictions, by survey year (in percent)

Note: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees 2017-2018. Basis: 7,006 respondents. Data weighted.

A restriction to one location has been introduced in particular by those German Länder that suffer from extremely strained housing markets, such as Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia. It is therefore not surprising that refugees facing residence restrictions are least likely to live in private accommodation (Figure 7). Rather, their proportion has further decreased by about 5 percentage points from 35 % in 2017 to 30 % in 2018. Conversely, those refugees who are free to choose their place of residence have increasingly moved into the private housing market (35 %). However, the proportion of refugees living in private accommodation is still smaller than among refugees who are obliged to reside in a particular Land (36 %).

Importance of free choice of residence for refugees facing residence restrictions

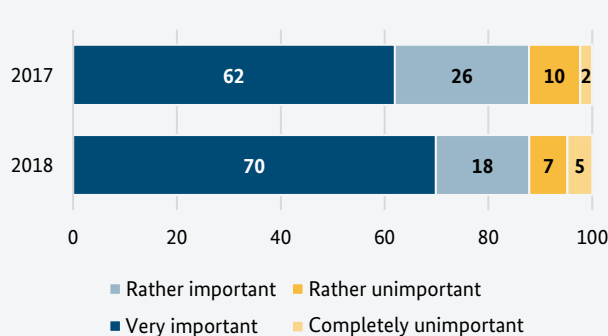
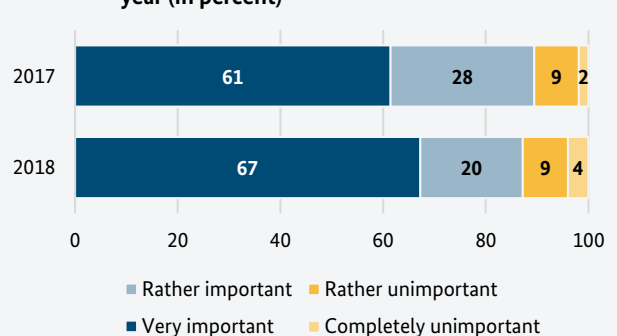
In order to estimate the extent to which refugees feel restricted by residence restrictions (place/Land), Figure 8 illustrates the subjective importance of being able to choose their place of residence freely. It shows that in 2018, the vast majority (70 %) of refugees stated that the free choice of residence was “very important”. Compared to the previous year, this category grew strongly (8 percentage points). By contrast, only 5 %

of refugees considered it “completely unimportant” to be able to choose their place of residence themselves. However, even in this group, the proportion increased slightly by 3 percentage points. This indicates a slight polarisation between the two extreme categories “very important” and “completely unimportant” with regard to the importance of a free choice of place of residence.

If only refugees in private accommodation are considered, it becomes evident that a free choice of place of residence is slightly less important for this group (Figure 9). Accordingly, the decision on where to live is slightly more important for persons in shared accommodation.

Preferences regarding place of residence of refugees affected by residential restrictions

Gathering information about future arrivals and departures of refugees in specific regions is of great importance for efficient regional planning once temporary residence restrictions have been lifted. Figures 10 and 11 show the total number of refugees surveyed by place of residence in urban and rural regions with regard to their preferences concerning their place of residence. It is evident that in 2018 most of the

Figure 8: Importance of free choice, by survey year (in percent)**Figure 9: Importance of free choice of place of residence for refugees in private accommodation, by survey year (in percent)**

Note: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees 2017-2018. Basis: 9,164 (7,006) respondents. Data weighted.

Figure 10: Preferences regarding place of residence of refugees living in urban regions in 2018 and change compared to 2017

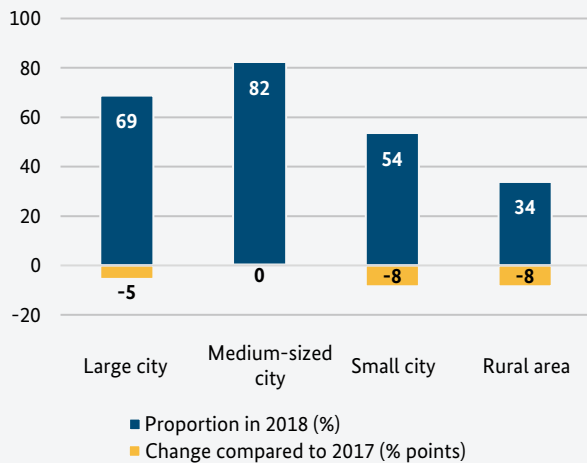
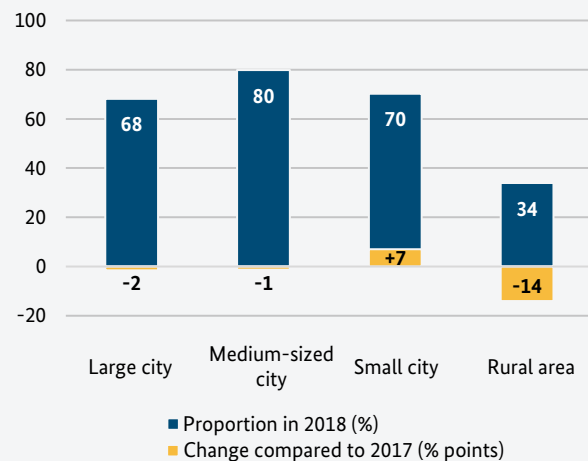


Figure 11: Preferences regarding place of residence of refugees living in rural regions in 2018 and change compared to 2017



Note: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees 2017-2018. Basis: 6,793 respondents. Data weighted.

refugees (if multiple choices are made) would prefer to live in medium-sized cities – regardless of whether they currently live in urban or rural areas. This proportion has hardly changed between 2017 and 2018 and is consistent with existing studies (Rösch et al. 2020). Over time, the desire to live in a rural area has changed significantly in both groups. Of those currently living in urban regions, only 34 % said they would like to live in a rural area (change: -8 percentage points). Among those already living in rural regions, even fewer respondents can imagine living in a rural area (change: -14 percentage points). As only just over one-third of all refugees were able to imagine living in a rural area in 2018, it can be assumed that rural-urban migration is likely to increase once residence restrictions are lifted.

Relocation plans once residence restrictions have been lifted

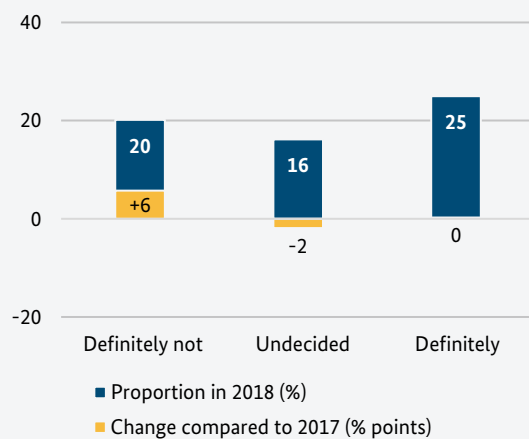
As mentioned above, restrictions on residence are imposed to ease the burden on individual cities and regions where refugees might prefer to settle. For local and regional planning, it is therefore of particular importance to obtain reliable forecasts about the future relocation behaviour of refugees.

A small number of previous analyses regarding the total population show, for instance, that relocation plans are subject to strong fluctuations over the course of a person's life (Dommermuth/Klüsener 2018). In addition to age, the search for training and employment or starting a family influences relocation behaviour. Other factors must also be taken into account in the case of refugees who are assigned to

their place of residence by law. For example, it may be assumed that refugees who have been assigned to regions with a very low proportion of foreigners (this applies, in particular, to rural areas (Rösch et al. 2020)) are more likely to want to move to areas with a higher proportion of their own ethnic group. Particularly high proportions of foreigners of different ethnicities are found in the large cities in the western Länder. Due to a long history of immigration, a migration-specific infrastructure (cultural institutions, special food shops or various migration-specific counselling services) has been established in those regions, making it easier for new immigrants to integrate successfully into the host society because cultural or language barriers are lower (Tanis 2018).

The probability of a future move once the residence restriction has been lifted was assessed on an eleven-point scale ranging from 0 “definitely not” to 10 “definitely”. The average probability of refugees moving was 53 % in 2018, while the probability of wanting to move was slightly higher in 2017, at 59 %. The probability is consistently higher for refugees in shared accommodation (2017: 65 %; 2018: 58 %). More detailed analyses of individual categories of refugees affected by residence restrictions show that around 20 % definitely did not want to move in 2018 (Figure 12). A positive trend can be observed here over time (change relative to 2017: +6 percentage points). While 16 % of the refugees stated that they were undecided, 25 % said they were convinced they would want to move once the residence restrictions had expired.

As with satisfaction with the general housing situation, the desire to move depends on a number of factors,

Figure 12: Probability of moving once residence restrictions expire in 2018 and change compared to 2017

Note: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees 2017-2018.
Basis: 6,793 respondents. Data weighted.

the influence and strength of which are again presented in a multivariate regression model (Table 2). The variable to be explained is the probability of moving once the residence restriction has been lifted. Hence, the analysis only includes refugees who in 2017 or 2018 were subject to a residence restriction for a specific town or city or a specific Land. This time, satisfaction with the general housing situation was included in the model as a global measure to explain the probability of a move. First of all, it is evident that the type of accommodation, taking all other characteristics

into account, has no influence on the probability of a move (Table 2). However, the probability of the desire to move increases significantly if it is important to refugees to be able to choose their place of residence freely or if they live in rural regions or eastern Länder. On the other hand, the probability of a move is negatively influenced by a high level of satisfaction with the housing situation, a residence restriction that only affects that particular Land or allocation to northern Länder. If a residence restriction only affects the Land and not a specific place of residence, it can be assumed that refugees have already been able to pursue their preferences in terms of where they wish to live, for example, wanting to live in the city, and therefore show a lower probability of moving than refugees who are tied to a specific town or city.

Looking at the individual characteristics, the known mobile groups (men as well as individuals with a secondary school leaving certificate) also show a higher probability of moving among refugees. Compared to recognised refugees, refugees with the status “deportation suspended” or “procedure pending” have no higher or lower probability of moving.

To sum up, the analysis of refugees’ relocation plans once the residence restriction has been lifted also indicates that refugees wish to continue gaining a foothold in the private housing market – but preferably in urban areas.

Table 2: Estimation of the moving probability once the residence restriction has been lifted – linear regression model

Explanatory variables	Coefficient	(standard error)
Private accommodation (ref.: shared accommodation)	0.449	(1.963)
Satisfaction with the general housing situation	-2.199***	(0.241)
Residence restricted to a specific Land (ref.: specific place of residence)	-5.736***	(1.479)
Importance of free choice of place of residence	11.910***	(0.793)
Rural area (ref.: urban area)	8.408***	(1.756)
Region (ref.: South)		
West	-0.564	(1.983)
North	-5.289*	(2.172)
East	9.540***	(2.201)
Survey year 2018 (ref.: 2017)	-3.737**	(1.323)
Number of observations	3,780	
R ²	0.168	

Note: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees 2017-2018 (pooled).

Dependent variable: probability of moving once the residence restriction expires. Other control variables: age, gender, level of education (compulsory education completed without any qualifications, compulsory education completed with a qualification, secondary school leaving certificate, other school leaving certificate), residence status (asylum procedure pending, protection status, deportation suspended, other status), marital status (single, married, divorced, widowed), region of origin (Europe, Near and Middle East, Asia, North Africa, Rest of Africa, Other). Significance level: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001. Standard errors clustered at household level.

Summary

The housing situation has a significant impact on social participation and an individual's quality of life, especially for refugees. This explains why the housing situation and its development over time, in addition to labour force participation and language acquisition, is an important success factor for the integration process of refugees. This Brief Analysis therefore uses current waves of the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees to examine how refugees live in private accommodation and how their housing situation changed between 2016 and 2018. In order to gain an overall impression of the housing situation of refugees, their level of satisfaction with their general housing situation in private accommodation was analysed too. Finally, the extent to which they were affected by residence restrictions was examined and what residence preferences and relocation plans were expressed after these restrictions are lifted.

In general, it can be ascertained that more and more refugees are making the transition from shared accommodation to a private apartment or house. While in 2016, every second refugee was living in private accommodation, by 2018 the figure had risen to 75 %. The average number of refugees with protection status living in private accommodation is above average. The need for support in finding accommodation decreases over time. By contrast, the features of private accommodation have hardly changed over the period under review. A multivariate analysis showed that satisfaction with the general housing situation is positively influenced mainly by an urban location, a high level of safety, apartment complexes, no further refugees living in the apartment building, a high level of furnishings and fittings as well as the size of the dwelling being deemed adequate. Although these indicators have fairly remained constant over time, it has been observed that satisfaction with the housing situation decreases over time among refugees. The latter applies not only to refugees in private accommodation but also to refugees in shared accommodation.

In 2018, almost three of four refugees in question were affected by a residence restriction (place/Land). Overall, this was slightly less than in the previous year. However, if only the group of persons whose deportation has been suspended is considered, the number of refugees who said they were obliged to take up residence in a specific place was significantly higher than in 2017. The number of refugees who were obliged to take up residence in a specific place and were living in private accommodation was lower than those who enjoyed greater freedom of establishment. A free

choice of place of residence is of great importance for the majority of refugees. With regard to the housing preferences expressed and plans to move after the residence restrictions have been lifted, it is clear that refugees give preference to urban areas. Accordingly, refugees with a free choice of place of residence will increasingly settle in these areas in the future. Men and persons with secondary school-leaving qualifications in particular are expressing the desire to relocate. In order to prevent further segregation and to enable refugees to have access to private housing that offers an appropriate quality of living, these tendencies ought to be taken into account in future spatial and urban planning. The characteristics considered here are, however, only plans and wishes expressed by refugees, actual internal migration behaviour after residence restrictions have been lifted (in particular the residence rule) therefore needs to be observed more closely in further analyses.

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