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Refugees in Germany:

New Findings on the Need for Assistance and the Use of Counselling Services

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AT A GLANCE

- The situation of newly arrived refugees is often characterised by multiple everyday problems. There is usually a **need for assistance in several areas of life**. Targeted public **counselling services** aim to effectively cover these needs.
- Both **awareness and use of the counselling services** increased continuously from 2016 to 2018. The use of the counselling services increased by 19 percentage points from 19% to 38%. The proportion of people who were aware of the counselling services but had not (yet) used them almost doubled from 11% to 20%.
- Needs for assistance in basic areas of life, such as **medical care and financial security**, were comparatively high among the refugees, at 84% and 88% respectively. At the same time, about 90% of those in need of assistance in the survey years 2016 and 2017 stated that they had already successfully received support.
- On the other hand, there was an unattended need for assistance in the areas of **education, work, housing and legal counselling on asylum issues** – in these areas, only between 32% (education, work, housing) and 65% (asylum issues) of those in need of help had received support at the time of the survey.
- Across all areas of life examined in more detail, the **use of counselling services** had a strong positive effect on the subjective perception of receiving assistance. Such external offers seem to be able to provide support in particular with **legal questions about the asylum procedure** and facilitate the successful search for **private accommodation**.
- In the area of **recognition of educational or vocational qualifications**, unmet needs for assistance were reported more frequently – even when counselling services were used – especially by refugees with higher educational qualifications.

Introduction

The situation of refugees in Germany is often characterised by multiple problems such as securing a livelihood, settling into a foreign culture, establishing a new social environment and learning a new language. External counselling and assistance services can help to cope with these issues more easily. This brief analysis looks at the extent to which refugees need help in various areas and whether public counselling services have been used.

Within the framework of the integration process of immigrants, counselling services and meeting the needs of those persons affected, play an important role in making their arrival and settling in as easy as possible (Scheible/Böhm 2018). Counselling services must be tailored to the respective target groups and their specific needs in order to provide efficient support. Due to the increasing number of people with a refugee background in recent years, many existing counselling services have been expanded and increasingly adapted to the needs of refugees¹ (see below). Nevertheless, in many cases it is unclear whether the counselling services actually reach the intended target groups, i.e. whether the services are known to them and to what extent they are used by them. In addition, there is hardly any systematically recorded information on the scope of various assistance needs of refugees and how they are met, which could provide information to the providers and other stakeholders about any

gaps in the counselling services. This underscores the importance of this evaluation for clarifying the extent of needs for assistance on the one hand and the use and awareness of counselling services in the population of refugees on the other.

In 2018, Scheible and Böhm used data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees (cf. Box 1) to examine the need for assistance in various areas of life as well as the degree of awareness and use of counselling services. At the time of the survey, the second half of 2016, the surveyed refugees most frequently stated that they needed help with learning German, their financial situation, their medical care, and finding accommodation. The needs for assistance regarding financial and medical (i.e. basic) care were largely met, but there were still greater unmet needs for assistance in the areas of education and employment. However, since the majority of respondents had only been in Germany for a short time at the time of the survey, the overall need in this area was 'still relatively low' (Scheible/Böhm 2018: 4).

Both the awareness and the use of asylum and migration counselling by refugees was still not widespread at the time of the survey, also due to restrictions in access. Generally, however, there was a positive correlation between the use of counselling services and the subjective perception of receiving help when needed: Those who had used counselling services also tended to find them helpful.

This brief analysis focuses on the scope and coverage of various needs for assistance of refugees as well as

¹ The term refugees is not used here in the legal sense, but as a collective term for persons who have applied for asylum 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).

Box 1: The IAB-BAMF SOEP SURVEY OF REFUGEES

The **IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees** is a nationwide longitudinal survey that has been running since 2016, surveying persons who came to Germany between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2016 and who applied for asylum, regardless of the course and outcome of the asylum procedure. Thus, persons who were in the asylum procedure (asylum seekers) and those who had already been granted protection status were taken into account. Furthermore, persons were interviewed whose asylum application had been rejected but whose departure or removal had been suspended for various reasons (so called 'Duldung'; Kroh et al. 2016). In addition, the household members of these individuals are also interviewed. The sample was drawn on the basis of the

Central Register of Foreigners (AZR). Using statistical weighting procedures, the results obtained on the basis of the data are representative of households in the population defined above (for a detailed description of the sampling: Kroh et al. 2016; Kühne et al. 2019; Jacobsen et al. 2019).

The survey programme is comparatively extensive (Kroh et al. 2018), which allows a detailed analysis of the living conditions of the refugees. In the analyses, it is therefore possible to take into account a variety of relevant characteristics – such as time of entry, gender, age, country of origin, level of education or legal residence status.

the awareness and use of counselling services (box 2). It also examines whether certain groups of people are at particularly high risk of needing assistance in certain areas but have not received any. The topics examined in more detail are legal counselling in refugee and asylum matters, the recognition of vocational and educational qualifications and the search for housing. Data

from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees from 2016 to 2018 is used for the analyses. This study thus represents an expansion of the BAMF brief analysis 'Hilfebedarfe und Nutzung von Beratungsangeboten' (Scheible/Böhm 2018) based on the data from 2016 and supplements its results with additionally surveyed persons and more recent data.

BOX 2: QUESTION ITEMS TO ASSESS COUNSELLING SERVICES AND NEEDS FOR ASSISTANCE

Assessment of awareness and use of counselling services

The counselling services were included in the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in a separate questionnaire block, broken down by topic. The questions were asked of both first-time respondents and repeatedly interviewed respondents². Counselling services surveyed in the questionnaire included refugee and asylum counselling, the Youth Migration Service (JMD, 2016 only) and Migration Counselling for Adult Immigrants (MBE), return counselling (2017 and 2018 only) and other institutionalised counselling services (2017 and 2018 only). While the JMD and the MBE are specific counselling services, the refugee and asylum counselling, return counselling and other institutionalised counselling services were deliberately asked as content categories, which can include several counselling services or providers. The answer categories were 'Yes, I have already made use of them', 'Yes, but I have not yet made use of them' and 'No, I don't know them.'

1. Do you know the **refugee and asylum counselling service**?
2. Are you aware of the **return counselling services** (2017 and 2018)?
3. Do you know the **Migration Counselling for Adult Immigrants (MBE)**?
4. Do you know the **Youth Migration Service (JMD)**? (2016 only)
5. Are you aware of **other** institutionalised counselling services on migration and integration (for example youth migration service)? (2017 and 2018)

² First-time respondents are persons who are interviewed for the first time in a longitudinal survey in which participants are re-interviewed at regular intervals. In contrast, re-interviewees are people who have already been interviewed for the second time or more.

Assessment of need for assistance

The needs for assistance were assessed in a similar way as the counselling services. The answers to the questions about needs for assistance and receiving help are aimed at the respondents' own subjective assessment. The questions could be answered with 'Yes, I received help', 'No, I needed help but did not receive it' or 'No, I did not need help'. In contrast to the counselling services, the questions about needs for assistance were only asked of the first-time respondents in the respective waves.³ This means that only cross-sectional data is available for these questions.

1. Did you received legal **advice on refugee and asylum issues**?
2. Did you received help in **learning German**?
3. Did you received help in **finding a job**?
4. Did you received help in **finding schools, universities, apprenticeships or further education opportunities**?
5. Did you received help with the **recognition of your educational or vocational qualification**?
6. Did you received help in **finding a place to live**?
7. Did you received help with **medical care**?
8. Did you received help in **securing your financial situation**? This includes help with accessing state benefits.
9. Did you received help in finding **childcare, school or vocational training places for your child** or children?

³ Assistance needs were only asked of first-time respondents. This applied to all respondents in the first wave in 2016 and to all persons in the refreshment sample in the second wave in 2017. In the third wave in 2018, there was no refreshment (Jacobsen et al. 2019). First-time interviews thus only took place in 2018 when new people had moved into households that had already been interviewed. Due to the selective characteristics of those persons as well as the small number of cases, the first-time respondents from 2018 were excluded from analyses concerning the need for assistance.

EXCURSUS: COUNSELLING SERVICES FOR REFUGEES

Before the respondents' statements on awareness and use of various counselling services are presented, a brief overview of selected available counselling services for refugees is given below. The focus here is on institutionalised services offered by the federal government. It should be noted, however, that the counselling landscape is very diverse and that the federal government's offers are supplemented by those of the Federal States, municipalities and private providers.

Migration Counselling for Adult Immigrants (MBE)

is a service targeting integration issues for immigrants over the age of 27. The topics of MBE are varied: they range from basic questions 'about language courses, housing, work, health, childcare/school' (BMI 2020) to legal issues. If possible, counselling is provided in the native language of those seeking counselling. The MBE usually works together with other institutions. For example, there are affiliations with job centres, integration course providers and other regular services. Initially, the MBE's target group was mainly immigrants from third countries. An opening for refugees with good prospects of staying came into force in 2016 (EMN/BAMF 2019: 55f.).

According to the Residence Act, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) is responsible for implementing MBE. The central associations of the Non-statutory Welfare (Freie Wohlfahrtspflege) and the Federation of Displaced Persons (Bund der Vertriebenen) are in charge of the actual implementation of the counselling activities. Those seeking counselling can take advantage of the counselling offered by the MBE at main locations and so-called mobile counselling offices, which pay temporary visits on various places during the week. In recent years, MBE has recorded increasing or constantly high numbers of counselled persons (2011: 144,000, 2016: 402,000, 2018: 590,000, 2019: 560,000 incl. co-advised persons; *ibid.*).

In addition to the MBE, there is also the **Youth Migration Service (JMD)**, funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), with which the MBE collaborates closely. The JMD's services are aimed at adolescents and young adults with a migration background between the ages of 12 and 27. The JMD also focuses on individual counselling, 'working together with schools, companies offering vocational training, integration course providers and other youth welfare

institutions' (EMN/BAMF 2019: 57; JMD 2017a). In 2015, the model project 'jmd2start – support for young refugees' was set up at 24 counselling locations. The focus here was on counselling services specifically aimed at young refugees and persons with suspension of removal. In 2017, counselling was extended to more than 450 JMD counselling centres (EMN/BAMF 2019: 57; JMD 2017b).

In recent years, there has also been an increase in **online services**. At the end of 2018, the MBE was supplemented by a messenger app and the on-line platform 'mbeon' (<https://www.mbeon.de>), in which counselling takes place via messenger and chat functions. In this way, counselling can take place in a particularly low-threshold manner (EMN/BAMF 2019: 57). Caritas' online counselling works in a similar way. Anyone seeking advice can log on to their counselling platform and receive advice on a wide range of topics via chat. The website www.Handbookgermany.de of the new German media makers (Neue deutsche Medienmacher*innen, NdM), which is funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration and implemented with partners from the private sector, has been available since 2016. The site provides a comprehensive overview of the legal, social and structural framework of various areas of life in Germany and is updated regularly.

Until 2016, legal counselling for refugees specifically on the asylum procedure was mainly provided by the asylum social counselling, which was mainly carried out by welfare organisations. When the MBE was also opened to refugees in 2016, counselling on asylum law issues also took place within the framework of the MBE. Finally, in 2018, the **Asylum Procedure Counselling (AVB)** was introduced and piloted first in 14 and later in 16 AnKER centres⁴ and functionally equivalent facilities before being extended to all BAMF field offices by 2020. This is a voluntary service that is intended to support asylum applicants independently and free of charge. The asylum procedure counselling is not legal counselling in the sense of the Legal Services Act (RDG). The offer of individual asylum procedure counselling also takes place in parallel to the corresponding offers of the welfare organisations and other providers and does not re-

⁴ Arrival, Decision and Return Centres (AnKER Centres) have been set up as centralised facilities to conduct the entire asylum procedure from application to asylum decision. Furthermore, return counselling as well as the implementation of voluntary return and repatriation are also carried out there.

place them. The central concerns of the AVB are ‘[...] the guarantee of a uniform information, counselling and support service for asylum seekers, the coordination, cooperation and networking between the asylum procedure counselling of the Federal Office and counselling services of third parties, and the further development of uniform nationwide standards of asylum procedure counselling to ensure the quality of counselling’ (BAMF 2020a). This current development could not yet be recorded with the available data for 2016 and 2017.

Return counselling represents an important component in the process of voluntary return and reintegration (Schmitt et al. 2019: 45 f.). The joint information portal of the BAMF and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the nationwide ‘return hotline’ play a central role here, providing an overview of the processes of voluntary return, the existing counselling landscape and the various return programmes. In the so-called return counselling centres, interested persons receive personal counselling tailored to their individual initial situations. Return

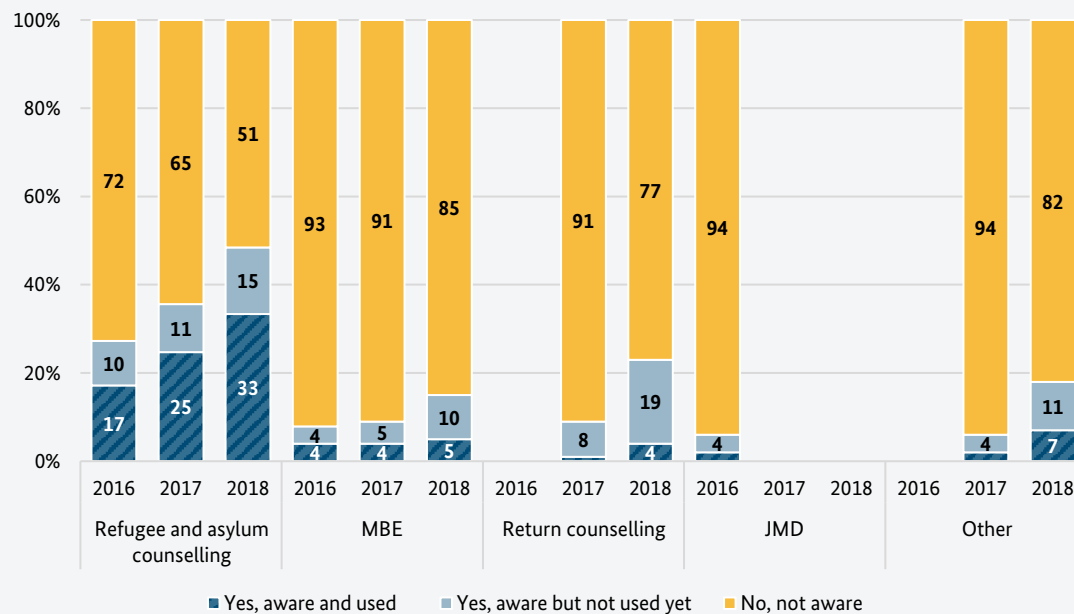
counselling is organised on a decentralised basis and is the responsibility of the Federal States. It is carried out by both state agencies and voluntary welfare organisations. In Saxony, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Western Pomerania and Saarland, the BAMF carries out return counselling in AnKER and functionally equivalent facilities at the request of the Federal States (BAMF 2020b).

In addition, the Central Office for Information on Return Assistance (Zentralstelle für Informationsvermittlung zur Rückkehrförderung, ZIRF) has been in existence since 2017, which is a detailed, country-specific database aimed specifically at vulnerable target groups: Among other things, it contains information on infrastructure, the economic situation and medical care in the countries of origin and in some cases even in the regions of origin (BAMF 2019, BAMF 2020b). In addition, IOM offers ‘Virtual Counselling’, which is funded by the BAMF and allows interested persons to receive counselling anonymously via digital communication channels such as WhatsApp or Skype.

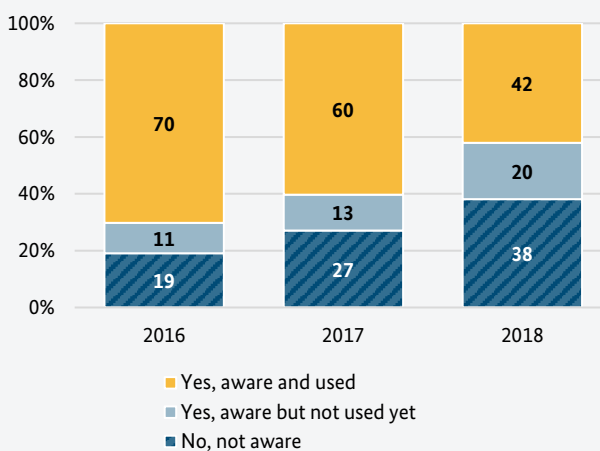
Awareness and use of counselling services

In the following, the awareness and use of counselling services are examined in more detail using the IAB-BAMF-SOEP data. In the questionnaire, the questions were rather adapted to thematic content and therefore do not necessarily correspond to the wording of the counselling services mentioned above. Figure 1 clearly shows the particular importance of counselling on asylum law. It had the highest level of awareness of all the assistance services surveyed and was used most frequently by far. In 2018, one third of the refugees had already made use of it and a further 15% were aware of the offer but had not used it. In comparison, the percentage of use of the other counselling services surveyed was consistently below 8%. However, an increase in the level of awareness was recorded for both MBE and return counselling. In the case of MBE, this could be due to the expansion of online services and the opening of MBE to refugees. Return counselling also received greater attention, for example, through the website www.ReturningfromGermany.de. Furthermore, the introduction of the reintegration programme ‘StarthilfePlus’ in 2017 could have contributed to the rise of awareness of return counselling.

Overall, an increasing awareness and use of such counselling services was evident over the three years observed and across all counselling services (Figure 2). While in 2016 only 19% of the respondents used at least one counselling service, in 2018 it was already 38% (cumulative values). Not only the use, but also the level of awareness increased (independent of the use) by 9 percentage points from 11% to 20%. Overall, more than half of the refugees surveyed knew at least one of the counselling services in 2018.

Figure 1: Awareness and use of counselling services by type of service and year (in percent)

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2018, weighted data, 13,900 observations.

Figure 2: Awareness and use of at least one counselling service (cumulative over 2016 to 2018, in percent)

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2018, weighted data, 13,900 observations.

Scope and coverage of assistance needs

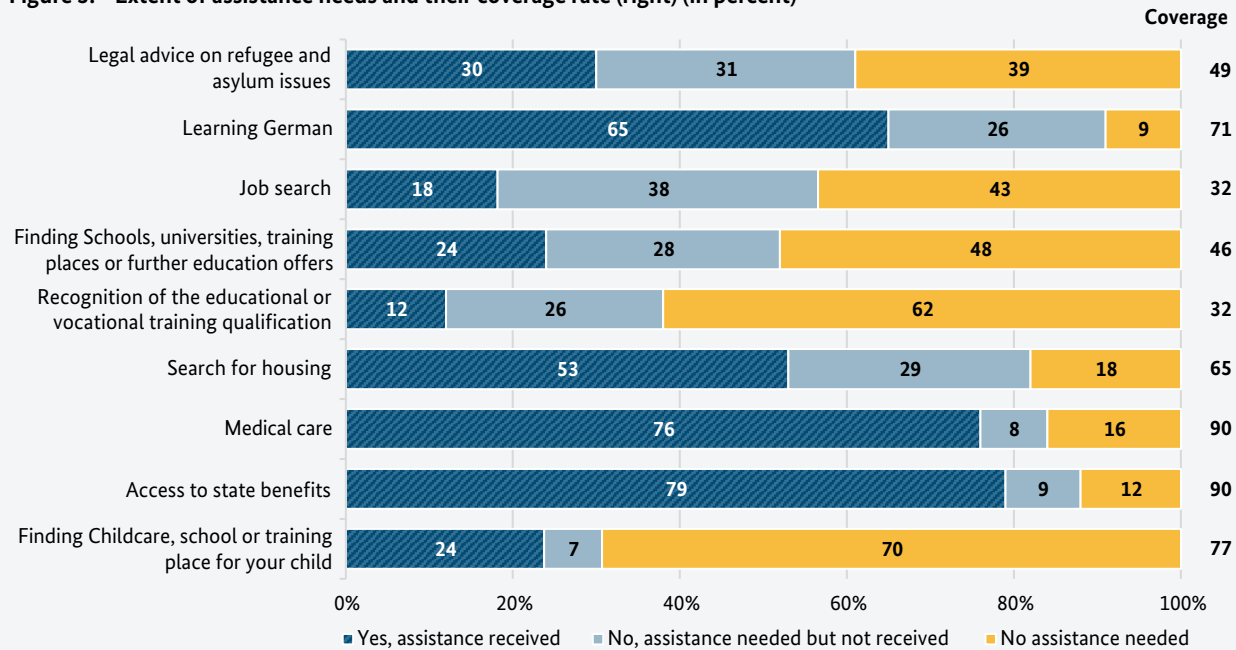
Counselling services aim to meet open needs for assistance among refugees. However, as already mentioned, very little is known about the extent and coverage of assistance needs. In the following, we will take a closer look at this empirically.

The need for assistance⁵ in the basic areas of learning German, medical care and access to state benefits was particularly high in the first survey in 2016 or 2017 (Figure 3). At the same time, however, the coverage rate⁶ in these areas was particularly high, at 71% for language learning and 90% each for medical care and access to state benefits. Help with searching for housing was also a big issue among respondents, with 82% overall need for assistance. However, the coverage rate of 65% was rather average compared to the other categories.

The categories of legal advice on refugee and asylum issues, job search and educational offers (schools, universities, training places or further education offers) showed a medium-sized scope of assistance needs. In terms of legal advice on refugee and asylum issues, 39% of respondents said they had not needed any help. About half of those who needed help in this area actually received it. In the area of job search, the need for assistance was at 57%. The coverage rate was rather low at 32%. In the case of educational opportunities, the need for assistance was slightly lower (52%) than in the case of job search, but the coverage rate was significantly higher (46%).

⁵ The need for assistance is the sum of the answers 'Yes, I received help' and 'No, I needed help but did not receive any'.

⁶ The coverage rate is the share of persons who answered 'Yes, I received help' of all persons in need for assistance. Coverage rates were calculated using rounded values.

Figure 3: Extent of assistance needs and their coverage rate (right) (in percent)

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2017 pooled, weighted data, 7,114 observations.

Among all the refugees surveyed, the need for assistance was lowest for the recognition of educational or vocational qualifications and for childcare ('childcare, school or training place for your child'). While only about one third of the needs for recognition of educational or vocational qualifications were covered, almost 80% of the needs for childcare were covered.

Differences between respondents in 2016 and 2017

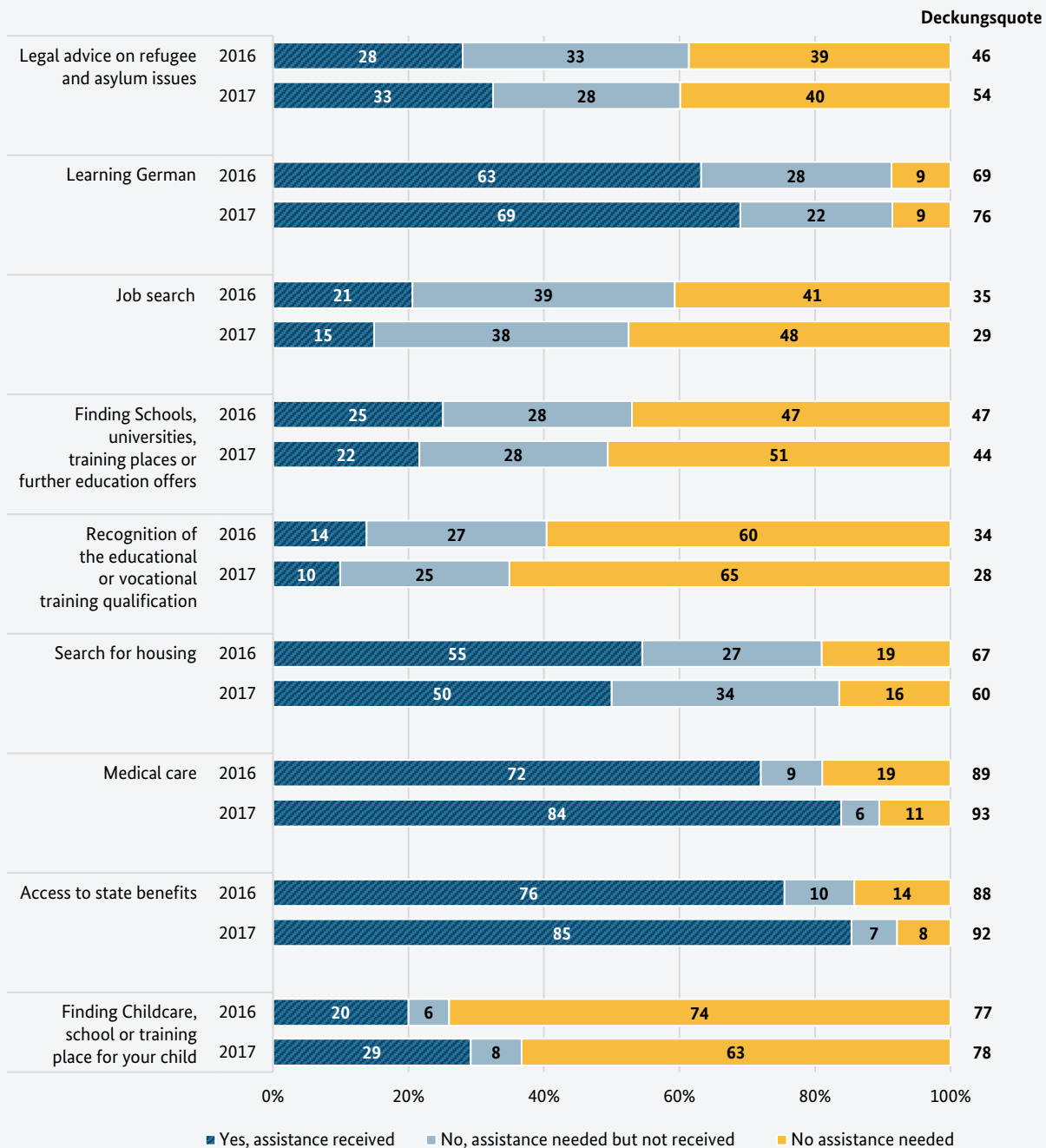
Figure 4 shows the change in the need for assistance between the refugees surveyed in 2016 and 2017 (cf. Scheible/Böhm 2018). Questions about the need for assistance were only asked of the first-time respondents in each survey wave.⁷ On the whole, there were hardly any systematic changes in the respective first-time respondents across the two years. It should be emphasised that in the areas of work and education (help with finding a job, finding schools and training places and the recognition of educational and vocational qualifications), the need for assistance was lower among the 2017 respondents than among the refugees surveyed in 2016. Overall, however, the results suggest that the scope and coverage of assistance needs are quite universal and stable over time.

Selected assistance needs and particularly affected groups of people

Especially for members of very vulnerable groups, unmet needs for assistance can have serious consequences for the current living situation and the course of integration. Baier and Siegert (2018) demonstrated that most refugees living in private accommodation had found it through external help. Not receiving this kind of support and remaining in shared accommodation, can have negative consequences. For instance, the housing situation in shared accommodation, in contrast to private accommodation, can have a negative impact on language acquisition (Baier et al. 2020). A lack of childcare can be just as consequential, as it makes it difficult, for women in particular, to participate in integration and language courses and to take up employment (Tissot et al. 2019). The following analyses are therefore intended to shed light on which persons (groups) are at particularly high risk of having needed help but not having received it.

The following analyses focus on three selected needs for assistance. These include, firstly, legal counselling in refugee and asylum matters, secondly, recognition of educational or vocational training qualifications, and thirdly, assistance in finding accommodation. They are of particular importance for the following reasons: Legal counselling in refugee and asylum matters is already relevant for all asylum applicants directly after

⁷ Since the need for assistance was only surveyed among the first-time respondents of the respective wave, a longitudinal evaluation by year is not possible at this point.

Figure 4: Extent of need for assistance according to subject areas and survey years (in percent)

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2017, weighted data, 7,114 observations.

entry and filing of the asylum application within the framework of the asylum procedure. The recognition of education or vocational training qualifications makes it easier for people to enter the labour market. However, the scientific data base on assistance needs in this area is scarce. The search for housing is of particular importance in view of the sometimes difficult situations in shared accommodation (e.g. hygiene, security and privacy). It also has a strong influence on the integration process of those affected (Baier/Siegert 2018; Tissot/Croisier 2020).

Relationship between the coverage of selected assistance needs and counselling services

Before these three selected areas are examined in detail with regard to the influencing and risk factors for unmet need for assistance, the correlations between the need for assistance in these areas and the counselling services are first examined in more detail. For this purpose, Table 1 presents the respective need for assistance and its coverage crossed with the awareness and use of counselling services and compares the coverage rates of the need for assistance depending

on the awareness and use of counselling services (for a quantification of the effect size, see Scheible/Böhm 2018). The rows show the three areas of need for assistance examined in more detail with the three response categories (help received, help needed but not received, no help needed). The columns show the three response categories of use or awareness of at least one counselling service (used, not yet used, not known). The individual percentages (left column) show the extent to which the respective need for assistance was met, depending on how often counselling services were used or known about. In addition, the coverage rates (right column; the share of persons who received help in the total need for assistance) for the respective use or awareness category of the counselling services are presented for each area of help. From the comparison of the coverage rates per area of help, it becomes visible to what extent the use or awareness of the counselling services in the respective subject areas have a positive effect on receiving help.

In the area of legal counselling in refugee and asylum matters as well as regarding housing, the proportion of those who stated that they had received help in this area and had also used a counselling service at the same time was particularly high at 57% and 58% respectively. The coverage rates in these categories reached comparatively high values of 77% and 73%. In the category of legal counselling on refugee and asylum issues, the effectiveness of the use of the offers is clearly visible, as the coverage rate (77%) was higher than among those who were aware of the offers but did not make use of them (52%) and those who were not aware of the offers (38%). A similar pattern to that of legal counselling on refugee and asylum issues was with regard to counselling services on finding housing, where the coverage rate for people who had used counselling services was also over 70%. However, the coverage rates for people, who did not use counselling services were only slightly lower (67% and 62%).

Table 1: Distribution of need for assistance according to use and awareness of counselling services (in percent)

Need for assistance		Use and awareness of counselling services (at least one)							
		Yes, already used		Yes, not yet used		No, I don't know		Total	
		Shares in %	Coverage	Shares in %	Coverage	Shares in %	Coverage	Shares in %	Coverage
Legal advice on refugee and asylum issues	Yes, assistance received	57	77	30	52	22	38	30	49
	Need for assistance, but none received	17		28		36		31	
	No need for assistance	26		43		42		39	
	Total	100		100		100		100	
Recognition of the educational or vocational training qualification	Yes, assistance received	20	49	21	45	9	25	12	32
	Need for assistance, but none received	21		26		27		26	
	No need for assistance	59		53		64		62	
	Total	100		100		100		100	
Search for housing	Yes, assistance received	58	73	54	67	51	62	53	65
	Need for assistance, but none received	22		27		31		29	
	No need for assistance	20		19		18		18	
	Total	100		100		100		100	

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2017 pooled, weighted data, 7,114 observations.

Reading example: In terms of legal counselling on refugee and asylum issues, a total of 30% of respondents stated that they had received help. Among those, the proportion of those who had already made use of a counselling service was 57%. Persons who were not aware of any counselling offer, received help in only 22% of cases. On average, the coverage rate (proportion of covered need for assistance to total need for assistance) in the category of legal advice on refugee and asylum issues was 49%. Among those who were aware of counselling services, the coverage rate was 77%.

On the other hand, the different coverage rates for the recognition of educational or training qualifications were less pronounced: among those who had taken advantage of counselling, the coverage rate was 49%. This was followed (by minus 4 percentage points) by those who were aware of at least one counselling offer but did not take advantage of any. Finally, the coverage rate among those who were not aware of any counselling services was significantly lower at 25%.

Legal advice on refugee and asylum issues

Figure 1 showed that counselling on questions regarding the asylum procedure was the most important and best-known counselling offer, although it should be noted that this response category includes various offers (see above). Figure 3 also showed that the respondents had a high need for assistance with legal counselling on refugee and asylum issues. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that these needs for assistance differ depending on the situation regarding the right of residence. Table 2 shows the extent of these differences: Overall, around three quarters of the persons surveyed who were still in the asylum procedure in 2016/2017 or had received a suspension of removal had a need for assistance, while this proportion was significantly lower at 49% for persons with recognised protection status. The coverage rate was highest for persons with recognised protection status (55%) and lowest for those who were still in the procedure, for whom the coverage rate was only 44%. Persons with a suspension of removal or persons with other residence status had a coverage rate of around 50%. In relation to the extent of the need for assistance, the coverage rates differed only slightly. This means that despite the increased need for assistance among persons with a suspension of removal, only about as many or even fewer assistance needs were covered as among persons with a recognised residence title.

This is also confirmed in the multivariate analysis⁸ (Figure 5): In contrast to persons with recognised protection status, persons who were still in the asylum procedure at the time of the survey and persons whose asylum application had been rejected answered with a significantly higher probability that they would have needed help but did not receive it.

Furthermore, men were 8 percentage points more likely than women to have needed, but not received help with refugee and asylum issues. This is probably partly due to the fact that among couples or families in this target group, it is more often the men who take care of formal matters (cf. Habib 2018: 15). Women were nevertheless more likely than men not to have needed any help at all. This gender effect remains, even when considering that many women, in contrast to men, were admitted to Germany via other channels (e.g. family reunification or other humanitarian reasons) than the general asylum procedure and were thus exposed to other legal and formal conditions (not shown).

The awareness and use of counselling services also played a major role in the multivariate model. People who were aware of the counselling services but had not made use of them (yet) were 11 percentage points more likely not to have received help. Among those who did not know about the counselling offers, it was even 18 percentage points. On the other hand, people with children aged 16 or younger in the household and those in employment were less likely to have an unmet need for assistance.

⁸ The complete regression tables can be obtained from the author.

Table 2: Need for assistance with legal advice on refugee and asylum issues by residence status (in percent)

Need for assistance: Legal advice on refugee and asylum issues					
Residence status	Yes, assistance received	Need for assistance, but none received	No need for assistance	Total	Coverage
Protection status granted	27	22	51	100	55
In procedure	32	41	27	100	44
Suspension of removal	37	37	26	100	50
Other	27	28	45	100	49

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2017 pooled, weighted data, 7,114 observations.

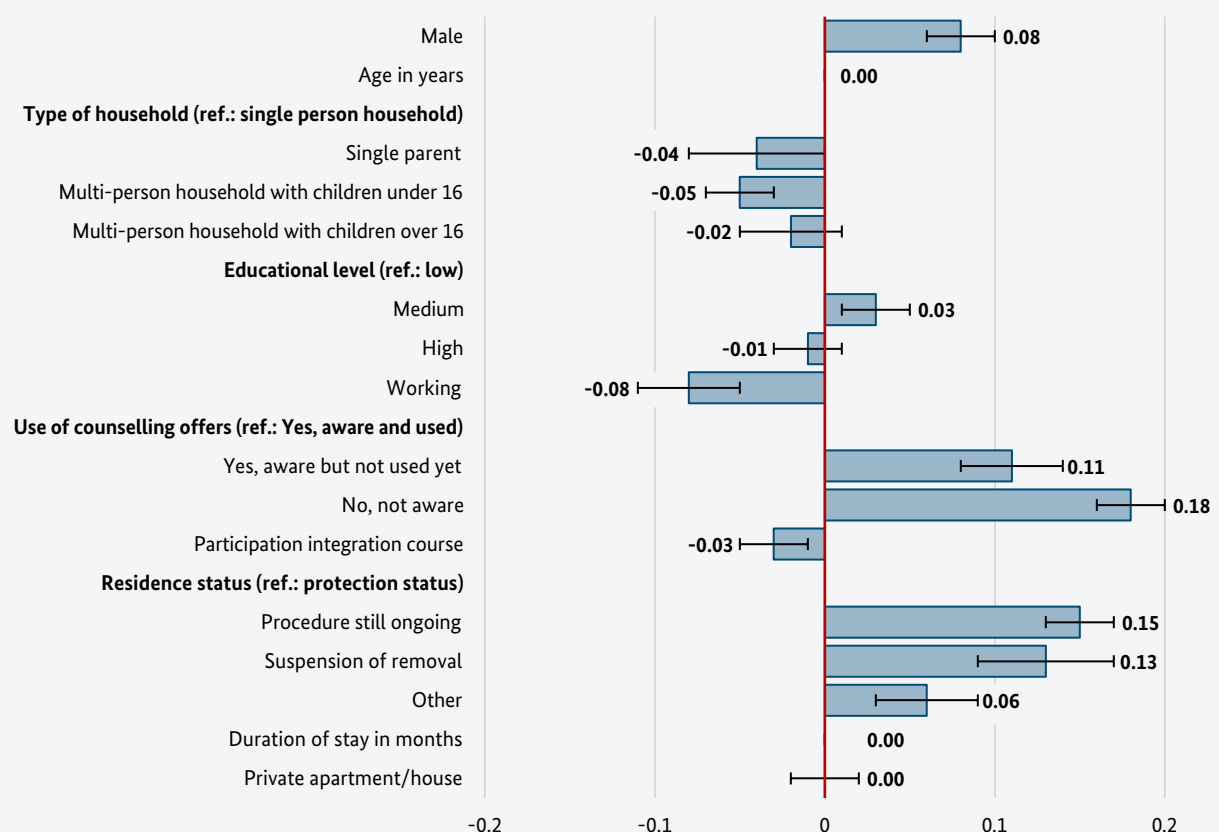
Recognition of the educational or vocational qualification

Anyone who has acquired a vocational or educational qualification abroad can have it examined and recognised in Germany. The Federal States determine the equivalence of school-leaving qualifications.⁹ In order to practice so-called regulated professions (e.g. doctors, lawyers or teachers), specified qualifications are required. Without recognition of the equivalence of the qualification, a regulated profession may not be practised in Germany. For unregulated professions, recognition is not mandatory, but it is often advantageous because an equivalent qualification makes it easier for employers to assess the qualifications and

9 The recognition process in Germany is regulated by the Recognition Act ('Gesetz zur Verbesserung der Feststellung und Anerkennung im Ausland erworbener Berufsqualifikationen'), in particular the Vocational Qualifications Assessment Act (Berufsqualifikationsfeststellungsgesetz, BQFG).

the fit of the applicant for the advertised position (BQ-Portal 2020a). The costs for the recognition of a qualification vary and amount to 25 € to 1,000 €, plus the costs for the translation and certification of the necessary documents (BQ-Portal 2020b). These regulations apply to qualifications from other EU countries as well as from third countries. An unmet need for assistance with the recognition of qualifications can be due to a lack of financial resources as well as to a lack of guidance. In addition, formal requirements can be a hurdle. One example is people from Eritrea, whose school-leaving certificates are only issued after decades of military service in some cases and are therefore not available to applicants who fled military service (Jacobsen/Siebert 2018). In the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in the survey year 2016, 31% of all respondents stated that they had applied for recognition of a qualification. This was predominantly the case for persons with a secure residence status and thus better prospects of staying. Applications were

Figure 5: Factors influencing unmet need for assistance in legal counselling on refugee and asylum issues



Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2017 pooled, weighted data, 5,962 observations.

Note: Multinomial logistic regression for the dependent variable 'Legal advice on refugee and asylum issues', AMEs for the response category 'Assistance needed but not received' with standard errors, reference category 'Assistance received'. The coefficient indicates the change in probability by one scaling unit of the variable.

Additionally controlled for time spent with Germans, persons from the country of origin as well as persons from other countries of origin, German language skills, region of residence, survey year and sample membership.

Reading example: For men, the probability of having needed but not received asylum and refugee counselling is on average 8 percentage points higher than for women. In contrast, people in multi-person households with a child aged 16 or younger are 5 percentage points less likely to have needed but not received assistance than those without a child living in the household.

mainly for the recognition of formal qualifications such as those from vocational schools and universities. People who were trained in companies applied for recognition of a training qualification only to a very small extent (Jacobsen/Siebert 2018: 48).

Table 3 shows that the need for assistance with regard to the recognition of educational and vocational qualifications increased significantly with higher education. For example, among those with low education, 72% reported no need for assistance, which may be mainly due to the fact that there are few people with degrees in this group. Among those with high education, on the other hand, only 36% had no need for assistance. Likewise, 36% of those with high education said they had needed help but had not received it. The probability that the need for assistance in this area was covered also increased with higher education: The coverage rate among those with high education was 44%, the highest among the coverage rates in the different educational levels. Nevertheless, in the category with the highest need for assistance (high education), only less than half of the needs were covered. Possible reasons for the increasing need for assistance for higher education levels may lie in the way the authorities deal with the internationally differing education systems. While school qualifications can be more easily classified and thus recognised, the recognition of higher qualifications, i.e. vocational or academic degrees, is more complex.

This result was also confirmed in the multivariate model (Figure 6), controlling for all other variables. People with high education had a higher unmet need than people with medium or low education. With higher degrees, the probability of not having needed help also became lower (not shown). Men were 3 percentage points more likely than women not to have received help. Not having taken advantage of counselling services also increased the probability of not

having received help. Although the residence status has no legal influence on the recognition of vocational and educational qualifications (BAMF 2020c), people who were still in the asylum procedure or had received a suspension of removal were also more likely not to have received any help so far – despite an existing need for assistance.

Search for housing

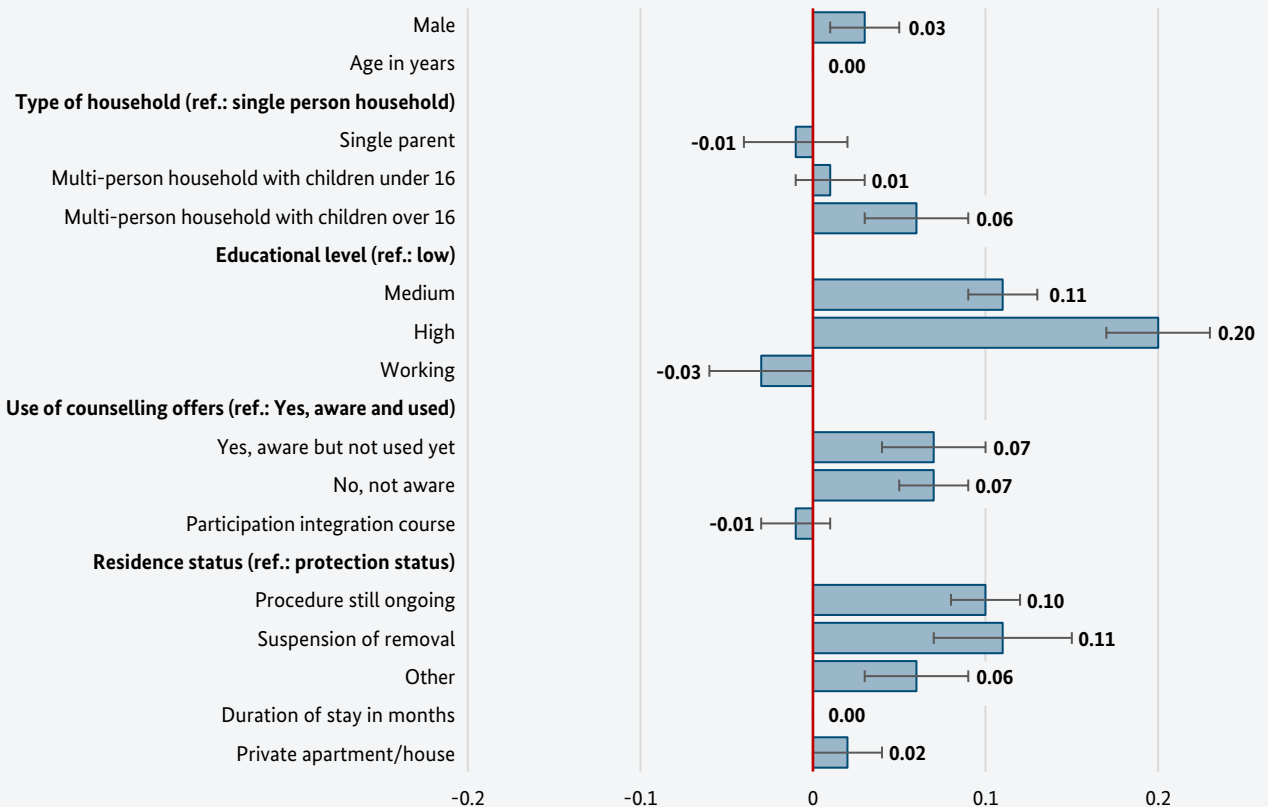
The housing situation of refugees in 2015 and 2016 was ambivalent. Depending on the respective residence status and year of entry, there were various conditions regarding accommodation (e.g. residence obligation for persons during the asylum procedure), which were constantly adapted over the years (for an overview of the legal regulations, see Röscher et al. 2020: 29). Overall, the legal regulation of residence restrictions and residence allocation meant that many newly arrived refugees had little room for manoeuvre in their search for housing. Accordingly, it was mainly persons with poor prospects of staying or in ongoing asylum procedures who were accommodated in shared accommodation for the medium and long term, while persons with recognised residence status were significantly more likely to already be living in private accommodation. Thus, in 2016, with a share of 54%, around half of all refugees lived in single accommodation. By 2018, however, this share had risen to 75% (Tanis 2020). In addition to residence status, various resources available to the refugees played a role here, such as German language skills, income and social networks (Baier/Siebert 2018). Furthermore, in 2017, only 30% stated that they had never been disadvantaged in their search for housing because of their origin, which indicates that the independent search for private accommodation is accompanied by greater difficulties for those affected. This is also in line with previous research (e.g. Foroutan et al. 2017).

Table 3: Need for assistance with the recognition of education or vocational training qualifications by level of education (in percent)

Need for assistance: Recognition of education or vocational training qualification					
	Yes, assistance received	Need for assistance, but none received	No need for assistance	Total	Coverage
Low education	7	20	72	100	26
Medium education	15	32	53	100	32
High education	28	36	36	100	44

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016–2017 pooled, weighted data, 6,559 observations.

Note: Low education includes no schooling, primary and lower secondary education, medium education includes higher secondary education as well as post-secondary but not tertiary education (e.g. training), high education includes tertiary education (college or university degree and above).

Figure 6: Factors influencing unmet needs for assistance in the recognition of educational or vocational qualifications

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2017 pooled, weighted data, 6,028 observations.

Note: Multinomial logistic regression for the dependent variable 'recognition of education or training qualification', AMEs for the response category 'Assistance needed but not received' with standard errors, reference category 'Assistance received'. The coefficient indicates the change in probability by one scaling unit of the variable.

Additionally controlled for time spent with Germans, persons from the country of origin as well as persons from other countries of origin, knowledge of German, region of residence, survey year and sample membership.

Support in finding accommodation therefore seems to be of great importance to the respondents. Assistance in finding accommodation does not only mean assistance in finding private accommodation from a shared accommodation, but can also refer, for example, to the search for a larger or better place to live or a flat in another location. It is also conceivable that residents of shared accommodation, who are still bound to it due to the residence obligation, may nevertheless wish to move to other (safer or more favourably located) shared accommodation or private accommodation. In

this respect, the need for assistance can also exist independently of the respective residence status and the associated legal regulations. Looking at the need for assistance by type of accommodation (shared accommodation and private accommodation (Table 4)), 70% of those who lived in private accommodation stated that they had received assistance in finding accommodation – but only 31% of those in shared accommodation. However, the need for assistance of people in private accommodation was also higher overall (85%) than that of people in shared accommodation (78%).

Table 4: Need for assistance in finding accommodation by type of accommodation (in percent)

Need for assistance: Search for housing					
	Yes, assistance received	Need for assistance, but none received	No need for assistance	Total	Coverage
Community accommodation	31	47	22	100	40
Private apartment/house	70	15	15	100	82

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2017 pooled, weighted data, 7,111 observations.

This fact leads to the question of whether people who objectively had a higher need for private accommodation were also more likely to have received help. In this case this applies especially to women and families. The data initially showed that women and men, as well as persons with and without children in the household, indicated a roughly equal subjective need for assistance. However, the coverage rates showed that households with children had a significantly higher coverage rate than households without children, meaning that they had received assistance more often (Table 5).

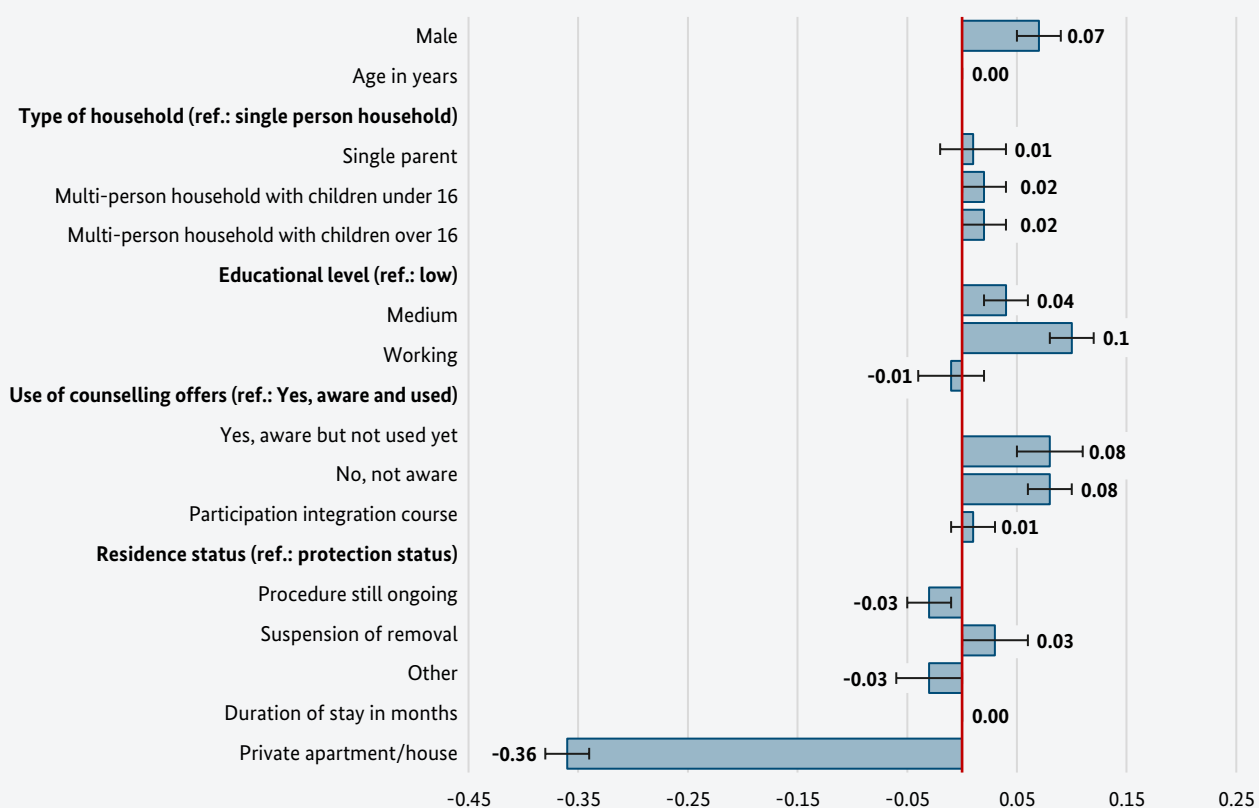
In the multivariate model (Figure 7), despite similar needs, men had worse chances than women of receiving housing assistance. They were 7 percentage points more likely than women to have needed but not received help. Similarly, those with middle education were 4 percentage points more likely to be in this category compared to those with lower education – those with high education were 10 percentage points more likely. As already mentioned above, the multivariate model did not show any effects of the family situation, neither in terms of marital status nor in terms of chil-

Table 5: Need for assistance in finding housing by household type (in percent)

Need for assistance: Housing search					Coverage
	Yes, assistance received	Need for assistance, but none received	No need for assistance	Total	
Child under 16 in household	65	19	16	100	77
No child under 16 in the household	50	31	19	100	62

Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2017 pooled, weighted data, 7,111 observations.

Figure 7: Factors influencing unmet need for housing assistance



Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, 2016-2017 pooled, weighted data, 6,156 observations.

Note: Multinomial logistic regression for the dependent variable 'looking for housing', AMEs for the response category 'Assistance needed but not received' with standard errors, reference category 'Assistance received'. The coefficient indicates the change in probability by one scaling unit of the variable.

Additionally controlled for time spent with Germans, persons from the country of origin as well as persons from other countries of origin, knowledge of German, region of residence, survey year and sample membership.

dren in the household, on the probability of not having received help despite needing it.

Systematic differences in the awareness and use of counselling services as well as the need for assistance, which were already found in Table 1, were also confirmed in the multivariate model: those who had not made use of any counselling services had a higher risk of not having received any help. As with the recognition of educational and vocational qualifications, there was no difference in whether the counselling services were known or not. The mere fact that a counselling service was actually used led to a reduction in the probability of not having received help.

However, the type of accommodation had the greatest negative effect: those who lived in shared accommodation were 35 percentage points more likely not to have received assistance. This result also corroborates the bivariate results from Table 4. However, the causal direction is not clarified in this model, as it is not known whether the respondents had already received assistance and therefore lived in private accommodation, or had already lived in private accommodation and therefore no longer needed assistance.

Summary

Newly arrived refugees need support in many areas of life. In order to facilitate their arrival and settling in, there are various counselling services offered by public and private organisations. Although there has been an **increase in awareness and use** of these counselling services over the years, they have remained at a low level overall. One exception was counselling on legal refugee and asylum issues, which was already used by 33% of respondents in 2018 and known by an additional 15%. It is likely that some of these counselling services took place within the framework of 'Migration Counselling for Adults', but the respondents were not aware of this designation and thus were not assigned to this category in the survey.

With regard to the **different areas of life**, the analyses showed the highest need for assistance in learning the German language, in medical care and in the financial situation, followed by the search for housing. A very high coverage of these reported needs for assistance was found above all in the area of basic care, i.e. in particular medical care and basic financial security (coverage rate of 90% each). On the other hand, the coverage rates in other areas of life were much lower.

For three of these areas of life, further analyses were conducted on the reported existing needs for assistance and the support received. In the area of the need for assistance with **legal counselling in refugee and asylum matters**, it first became apparent that a total of almost two-thirds of the refugees, especially those who were still in the procedure or had received a suspension of removal, indicated a need for assistance. However, only about half of those in need of assistance had received support so far. The strongest influence on having received help with questions about the asylum procedure was the use of counselling services. At the time of the surveys in the years 2016 to 2018, however, it was not yet possible to take into account the BAMF's asylum procedure counselling, which was implemented across the board in 2020. In this respect, it would have to be examined with future data whether the nationwide coverage of the counselling services has not already contributed to a higher coverage of demand.

In the areas of **work and education**, rather low needs for assistance were found (between 38% for recognition of qualifications and 56% for job search). Nevertheless, the coverage rates between 32% and 46% only suggested a relatively weak coverage of the needs. The analyses in the area of recognition of qualifications further showed that the need for assistance increased the higher the educational qualification. In addition, the higher the level of education, the greater the likelihood of not having received assistance. In addition to the level of education, the use of counselling services was also strongly correlated with the probability of having received support when in need of assistance: While only a quarter of the refugees without knowledge of counselling services were able to meet their need for assistance, half of those in need of assistance who had used counselling services received assistance. Furthermore, refugees who were still in the asylum procedure at the time of the survey or who had been granted a temporary suspension of removal were less likely to have received support when they needed it, even though the application for the recognition procedure is independent of the residence status and there was a need for assistance. It is conceivable that the persons concerned were not aware of this fact or that other areas of life were considered more urgent. In addition, the uncertain prospects of staying and the ban on taking up employment could have had an effect on the motivation to plan long-term employment and thus on the application. Because of that, at the time of the survey, there was still potential to expand counselling or assistance services and to make the recognition procedure more accessible and feasible, especially for well-qualified and highly qualified persons. The extent

to which this potential has been covered in the meantime and where there are still open needs must still be examined by further research.

In the third area of life considered, the **search for housing**, there was a particularly high need for assistance: 82% of the refugees indicated a need for support. The coverage rates of 65% and 83% among refugees who were already living in private accommodation showed exemplary that a large proportion of those in need of assistance had already received support. The use of counselling services contributed significantly to this. For example, the coverage rate among people who took advantage of at least one counselling offer was 11 percentage points higher than among those who were not aware of any of the counselling offers. External assistance thus seems to facilitate the successful search for **private accommodation**.

Overall, it can be seen that refugees face major challenges in various areas of life after their arrival in Germany, and that they are dependent on external and institutionalised help. More basic needs for assistance were already largely covered at the time of the survey.

On the other hand, there were open needs for assistance in many areas of life that concern a longer-term perspective in Germany. Although the high coverage of existential needs is good news, it is not yet sufficient for a successful integration process. This also requires a **sustainable coverage** of assistance needs that goes beyond the initial basic security.

Counselling services are an **effective means of meeting needs** of refugees. Overall, however, both the level of awareness and the degree of utilisation of the counselling services were limited, even though increasing trends could be observed in the survey years 2016 to 2018. These trends are likely to have continued since the last survey in 2018 due to the expansion of asylum procedure counselling in terms of area, as well as the general expansion and increase in online counselling options, which could not yet be captured in this study. Nevertheless, promoting awareness and encouraging the use of existing services, e.g. through low-threshold and/or outreach services, continues to play an important role at an early stage in order to facilitate arrival and integration processes and thus also promote social cohesion.

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