Voices of Syrians: resettled refugees in Ireland

A report by IOM Ireland for the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme

IOM UN MIGRATION

An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais, Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

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An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais, Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

FOREWORD FROM IRPP

I welcome the publication of this research into the experiences of refugees who have resettled in Ireland as part of the Irish Government's Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP).

The story of integration which emerges from this report is one which is shaped by the narrative of the refugees themselves. Through this report, refugees have described their hopes and fears about life in Ireland, their growing relationships with neighbours and new communities, their efforts to become fluent in English and to become a part of the Irish labour market. I welcome these very valuable insights which not only give voice to refugees but also provide important insights for those providing services to those hoping to make a home in Ireland.

There are some very important and positive findings in this report. A strong sense of belonging and safety emerges, children are integrating well in their neighbourhoods and doing well in school, women, in particular, note appreciation of freedom to participate in activities outside the home.

It is evident from this report that refugees have a wealth of experience to contribute to the Irish Stare. This is to be celebrated. However, integration is not without its challenges. I note, in particular, the challenge posed by barriers resulting from poor language skills and hope that this particular challenge will continue to be addressed.

The Covid pandemic has resulted in increasing pressures on families resettling in Ireland. I look forward to even greater progress as we all emerge from this difficult time.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the author of this report Dr Lucy Michael and the staff of IOM led by Lalini Veerassamy for their work on this project. I would also like to thank the IRPP team in DCEDIY led by Eibhlin Byrne for their ongoing work on refugee resettlement as well as their commitment to successful integration. Finally, and importantly, I would like to thank all of those refugees and service providers who gave their time and experiences to make this a valuable piece of research.

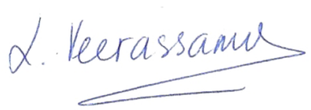
Roderic O'Gorman
Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I share this report: Voices of Syrians: resettled refugees in Ireland. In 2021, the Government of Ireland through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP), expressed the ambition to carry out a study on the integration outcomes of resettled Syrian refugees in Ireland, with a specific focus on refugees that resettled in Ireland since 2015. IOM Ireland was commissioned to carry out the research.

This report provides invaluable insights into the experiences of resettled Syrian refugees in Ireland in recent years. It explores the challenges and needs that resettled refugees have experienced in Ireland, providing lessons to improve future integration outcomes to the benefit of both Syrian refugees in Ireland, and the communities in which they live. It also makes an important contribution to our own evidence base, ensuring positive experiences for both refugees resettled in Ireland and local communities.

I praise the Government of Ireland's leadership in commissioning this report and I express my gratitude to the IRPP and look forward to our continued collaboration.



Lalini Veerassamy
IOM Ireland Chief of Mission

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was commissioned by the Government of Ireland through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) to understand the integration outcomes of resettled Syrian refugees in Ireland. A special word of thanks to Eibhlin Byrne, Head of the IRPP for pushing for this important piece of research and for trusting IOM to lead and deliver.

Many thanks to the research team, specifically Dr Lucy Michael, Dr Meera Sethi, Dr Niloufar Omidi and Daniel Reynolds with Wael Al Sakka, Heidar Al-Hashimi, Rim Kadib Alban, Bilquis Al Sharabi, Hanan Amer and Dr Marta Kempny.

Our appreciation also goes to the Research Steering Committee. Your time, feedback and contributions shaped this research.

We also wish to extend our gratitude to the interviewees for their time and willingness to contribute to the research. Your invaluable contributions have provided important insight which allows stakeholders to better understand the challenges and needs that resettled refugees have experienced in Ireland. This study would not have been a success without your contributions. Thank you very much.

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESRI	Economic Social Research Institute
EROC	Emergency Reception and Orientation Centre
ETB	Educational Training Board
GP	general practitioner
HSE	Health Service Executive
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRPP	Irish Refugee Protection Programme
MIPEX	Migrant Integration Policy Index
MRCOs	migrant refugee community organizations
NGOs	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015 the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) was established as a direct response to the humanitarian crisis that developed in Southern Europe. More than 13 million Syrians were displaced by war, half of them outside Syria. Between 2000 and 2019, over 3000 refugees from almost 30 nationalities were resettled to Ireland. Under the UNHCR-led refugee resettlement programme, Ireland brought 2,108 Syrian refugees from Lebanon and Jordan to resettle by 2021.. The majority of those arriving under the programme are family groups, with 40 per cent minors of whom three-quarters are children under 12. In order to understand the integration of these Syrian refugees in Irish society, this research conducted interviews with 153 Syrians who arrived in Ireland between 2015 and 2019.

The research findings show that integration was particularly strong in respect of refugees security of immigration status, sense of belonging, feelings of safety, housing security, and children's' experiences in education. Housing security had a positive impact on other areas of their lives, it helped increasing confidence amongst refugees of their future safety in Ireland and the value of social connections in their new neighbourhoods. Social welfare provisions have largely provided the security needed to settle families and plan towards work and education opportunities.

There is significant enthusiasm to learn English amongst all the refugees, but there are some challenges in matching formal language education provision with refugee needs post arrival. Whilst some refugees face literacy challenges due to interrupted education in their home country or a third country, but fluency in English has had the largest impact on their access to work, including self-employment. Many experienced workers with a specialized trade or craft struggle to get employment because English fluency is a prerequisite. Although all refugees have access to a mobile phone, but only a quarter have access to a laptop or computer. Digital literacy is thus affecting access to services, information, and employment. Women are increasingly learning to drive and planning ways in which they can work outside the home when their children are old enough but they are inhibited by the absence of extended family and the cost of childcare.

Parents are mostly happy with their children's experiences in schools. A small percentage experience bullying, isolation and trauma-related problems which can impact on family life as well as their experience in education and relationships with other children.

Mental health is a key concern. Refugees often cope with trauma, separation from family members and isolation, and in some cases, physical health problems. Healthcare quality is affected by access to interpreter services and delays integration in other areas. Syrian groups have been formed which provide valuable sources of mutual aid and recognition to their members and increase the resilience of the Syrian population to changes which affect them.

Participants mostly feel safe in their neighbourhoods. There are a small number of cases of persistent racial harassment. Almost all participants have made a close friend since arriving in Ireland, over half in their local neighbourhood, while 37 per cent retain a close friend, they made in a reception centre.... Almost all participants speak daily or weekly with family outside Ireland, and this is important to their wellbeing. Almost all participants say they consider Ireland to be their home now and express a strong sense of belonging. There is a strong sense of commitment to live in Ireland, increasing independence and fully engaged citizenship.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

THE IRISH REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME

In 1998, Ireland was among the first six countries in Europe to establish a resettlement programme. A refugee resettlement programme has been in operation in Ireland since 2000, bringing vulnerable persons from 30 different countries. In 2015 the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) was established as a direct response to the humanitarian crisis that developed in Southern Europe. Syrian refugees were the subject of specific Government commitments to accept up to 4,000 through a combination of the European Union Relocation Programme to assist Italy and Greece, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)-led Refugee Resettlement Programme focussed on resettling refugees from Lebanon and Jordan.

Resettled refugees differ from those persons seeking asylum in that they are normally referred for resettlement by the UNHCR and have already been recognized as refugees in their host country. Resettled refugees do not enter Ireland until they have permission to do so by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. More than 13 million Syrians have been displaced by war, half of them outside of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Between 2000 and 2019, over 3,000 refugees from almost 30 nationalities were resettled to Ireland. Ireland has committed to a new Refugee Protection Programme which aims to give shelter to 2,900 refugees over the four-year period from 2020–2023.

Under the UNHCR-led refugee resettlement programme,[1] which assists in identifying and supporting refugees in third countries, Ireland brought 2,108 Syrian refugees from Lebanon and Jordan to resettle by 27 January 2021. The Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) prioritises family groups and addresses the position of unaccompanied children. The majority of those arriving under the programme are family groups, with 40 per cent minors of whom three-quarters are children under 12.[2] There is also an EU relocation strand which brings refugees from Greece in smaller numbers.

RESETTLING REFUGEES IN IRELAND

The Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme conducts pre-departure orientation for refugees in Lebanon and Jordan to provide details of the key facts about life in Ireland and the rights of refugees resettled here. Healthcare and family reunification are included in this orientation information. Syrian refugees living in Lebanon and Jordan mainly live outside refugee camps. Nine out of ten Syrian refugee families in Lebanon are now living in extreme poverty.[3] Families are selected while living in Lebanon and Jordan, and travel to Ireland with the assistance of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

When resettled families arrive in Ireland, they are initially accommodated in one of three Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs) where they participate in a language and orientation programme organized by the Department of Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (formerly by the Department of Justice and Equality), before being resettled into receiving counties.[4] The Education and Training Board (ETB) provides an 8–10 week language training and orientation programme. They are given a full health assessment and referred to appropriate health services. They will typically spend about four to five months in these centres before moving into rental accommodation around the country,[5] although in some cases refugees have been in EROCs for up to a year awaiting appropriate accommodation and because of delays related to COVID-19.

Refugees arriving through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme are almost exclusively resettled outside the capital, Dublin, due to the availability of suitable housing and the belief that smaller communities can offer a better welcome and support.[6] Resettled refugees have been homed in 23 counties across Ireland to date. Between 85 and 226 refugees have been settled in each county.

The local ETB provides English classes for Syrian refugee resettlement programmes. Other mainstream services are offered to resettle Syrian refugees by the appropriate bodies, who have statutory responsibilities, including areas of health and social protection. The IRPP manages these activities, working closely with partners in an interagency coordination group chaired by the local authority.[7] In respect of housing, the IRPP works closely with the relevant local authorities and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, on education, with the Department of Education and local education service providers, and on health, the IRPP liaises with the HSE and local medical practitioners to facilitate medical cover when refugees are in EROCs or moving to the community.[8]

Syrian families are provided with resettlement support services through the county councils. Up to two Resettlement Workers and two Intercultural Workers are employed to implement the programme, to ensure that refugees can settle into the community, can access services appropriately, and build lasting relationships within the local community. The local support is overseen by a Resettlement Interagency Working group. For example, in County Mayo the group is made up of senior representatives from various services including education, health, housing, Gardai, social protection, childcare, community and local development (Mayo County Council, n.d.). In County Monaghan representatives of the local mainstream service providers (HSE,

1 UNHCR (n.d.), Resettlement. Available online https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/resettlement-58c923ff4.html.
2 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth, *IRPP Divisional Manual* (January 2021).
3 UNHCR (18 Dec 2020), Nine out of ten Syrian refugee families in Lebanon are now living in extreme poverty, UN study says. Available online https://www.unhcr.org/lb/14025-nine-out-of-ten-syrian-refugee-families-in-lebanon-are-now-living-in-extreme-poverty-un-study-says.html.
4 Respond support (n.d.) *Resettlement Services. Supporting the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP)*. https://respondsupport.ie/refugee-resettlement-services/ ; See also Department of Justice (26.01.2016). Seanad Commencement Matter. http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/speech-260117.
5 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth, IRPP Divisional Manual, pp. 8–9.
6 Arnold, S., and Quinn, E. (2016). *Resettlement of Refugees and Private Sponsorship in Ireland*. Dublin: ESRI, p. 41.
7 Department of Justice (6 July 2015), Tánaiste confirms plans to accept 260 more refugees under resettlement programme. http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR16000182.
8 Department of Justice (3 Oct 2017). Parliamentary Questions. http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PQ-03-10-2017-256.

Cavan/Monaghan Education & Training Board, Department of Social Protection, Túsla, An Garda Síochána, Citizens Information, County Childcare Committee and Monaghan Integrated Development, etc.) come together to plan for and ensure that required services are available.[9] County-level inter-agency working is essential to the success of resettlement. Support to Syrian refugees has been delivered through local development companies and through charity and voluntary organizations, such as Doras who have provided refugee resettlement support from early 2015 until the end of 2019 to people in Laois, Limerick, and Wexford under the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH

In 2021, the Government of Ireland, through the IRPP, expressed the ambition to carry out a study on the integration outcomes of resettled Syrian refugees in Ireland, with a specific focus on refugees that resettled in Ireland since 2015. IOM was commissioned to carry out the research in coordination with IRPP and a Research Steering Group.

This report focuses only on those Syrian refugees who arrived in Ireland through the UNHCR-led programme. The findings in this report are based on original interviews with 153 Syrian refugees across 12 counties in Ireland, conducted in July and August 2021, reflecting each of the cohorts arriving between 2015 and 2019. The study does not include any refugees who have been relocated from Greece or who are part of the Community Sponsorship schemes which began later, nor any refugees who arrived through Family Reunification. The present research contributes to better improving the integration outcomes of resettled refugees in Ireland by understanding the challenges and needs that resettled refugees have experienced in Ireland. Many, but not all, of the findings may be applicable to other refugee groups in Ireland.

REFUGEE INTEGRATION: WHAT WORKS

Integration requires a wide range of people, organizations, and institutions to come together and create a shared and inclusive sense of belonging. Integration should be viewed as encompassing multiple factors (multi-dimensional) and involving adjustments from all in society (multi-directional). Approaches to integration that do not recognize this are unlikely to be successful.

Integration is a process of participation across economic, social, cultural, civil and political spheres of society and can lead to an evolving, shared sense of belonging at the local and national level.[10] Migrant integration policy frameworks, and the interventions that are made to increase integration, should take into consideration the rights and obligations of migrants, receiving communities and institutions; this includes access to the labour market, health and social services, and education for children and adults. Comprehensive approaches to migrant integration help to ensure that migrants can fully engage in the host society whether socioeconomically, politically, or culturally. They allow migrants to develop their human capital during their stay, thereby fostering economic growth while building positive and diverse social relationships in the host society. Such approaches and related policies are most effective when tailored to address the specific migration context, considering migrant characteristics (including gender and age), duration of stay, and overall economic and societal trends in the receiving country.

Integration is not a one-way process, with the onus only on immigrants, but rather a process that needs to involve both migrants and receiving communities, as well as all relevant actors present in communities, including local and national Government. Open and transparent dialogue on the benefits and challenges of integration among all actors can help to reduce misperceptions and foster a sense of common understanding.

Evidence on what works

Much work has been conducted internationally on establishing what works in supporting integration of refugees. There are five key elements which are acknowledged to work across a wide variety of contexts, including cultural orientation, language skill support, facilitation of high-quality social connections, capacity building and partnership supporting refugee self-organization, and projects which are tailored to the needs of refugees and involve long-term investment.[11]

Cultural orientation, before arrival, can help to address unrealistic expectations, and therefore large gaps between expectations and the reality refugees find themselves in.[12] Post arrival cultural orientations are also useful to reinforce information and to ensure consistent information sharing, especially because refugees may be experiencing effects of trauma. We will see the impact of trauma on how information is received later in this report when we look at family reunification hopes. Disappointment around access to family reunification post resettlement (failed or delayed) leads to poorer mental health.[13] Having family abroad is mentally distressing for refugees, as kin might not live in safety. Additionally, reuniting with family members can be a source of support in the new environment.[14]

9 Monaghan County Council. (n.d.) *Syrian Refugee Resettlement Project.* https://monaghan.ie/planning/syrian-refugee-resettlement-project/.
10 Spencer, S. (2011) The Migration Debate. Bristol: Policy Press.
11 Coley, J., Godin, M., Phillimore, J., & Tah, C. (2019). *Integrating refugees: What works? What can work? What does not work? A summary of the evidence, second edition.* Project Report. London, Home Office.
12 Collyer, M., Morrice, L., Tip, L., Brown, R. and Odermatt, E. (2018) *A Long-Term Commitment: Integration of Resettled Refugees in the UK.* http://www.sussex.ac.uk/migration/documents/4375-resettled-refugees-report-web.pdf.
13 Choummanivong, C., Poole, G. E., & Cooper, A. (2014). Refugee family reunification and mental health in resettlement. Kotuitui: *New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online,* 9(2), 89–100.
14 Löbel, L. M., & Jacobsen, J. (2021). Waiting for kin: a longitudinal study of family reunification and refugee mental health in Germany. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1–22.

Refugees with poor language skills are most at risk of exclusion and long-term dependency[15] but increasing language skills can increase contact with other communities,[16] and those with intermediate fluency have significantly higher change of finding employment.[17] The most effective language programmes are those tailored to the diverse needs of refugees, which include both informal learning opportunities for those with limited educational background and fast track programmes for those with higher level skills.[18]

The overall wellbeing of refugees is affected by the quality of social networks within and between communities, and with their families overseas.[19] These various social relationships are equally important to maintain wellbeing and a sense of stability. As well as reducing feelings of isolation and depression, they also provide mutual aid, emotional support and access to health and welfare services.[20] The role of neighbours as strong resources for integration should not be underestimated. Neighbourly expectations can vary dramatically internationally and even between urban and rural areas, but for many refugees, neighbours are often a first point of social contact and support in the community.[21]

The expertise and practice of migrant refugee community organizations (MRCOs) can help to promote change in other organizations, supporting them to make their services more refugee-friendly and prompt innovation in the resettlement landscape overall.[22] Refugee-led organizations often act as intermediaries or even suppliers of social services, making them integral but overlooked actors within refugee assistance.[23] The growth of refugee-led groups, formal and informal, is a positive addition to the resettlement landscape and should be facilitated and included in planning considerations.[24]

Resettlement of refugees involves some immediate goals for integration (for example, housing and healthcare) as well as medium-term (like employment, which can take five years from arrival), and long-term (home ownership, citizenship).[25] Refugees need time to invest in their English language skills, education, and training to avoid long-term precarity and exclusion. Resettlement projects need time to establish, build trust and create networks between refugees and local organizations and agencies.[26]

Added to this, there are several approaches which can support successful integration, including:

- Projects that are adaptable, developed from best practice, co-designed, co-delivered and effectively evaluated.
- Focusing on the community.
- Developing leaders in refugee communities.
- Recognizing the needs of different refugee groups.
- Strategies at the national and local level are needed to facilitate integration.
- Strategies that facilitate migrants' access to the labour market.
- The presence of family members facilitates integration.
- Supporting refugees' physical and psychological health.

Our approach in this report has been to specifically direct the research towards the outcomes of integration as experienced and perceived by resettled refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic in Ireland. We have not undertaken an evaluation of the IRPP, although we note that it reflects some of the important features detailed above, particularly in relation to cultural orientation and language provision, co-delivery with local agencies, and focus on the local community.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To understand the longer-term experiences of resettled refugees in Ireland, IOM Ireland undertook research to record and share the views of Syrians who arrived in Ireland through the resettlement programme from Lebanon and Jordan between 2015 and 2019. The purpose of these voluntary interviews is to hear the stories of refugees about their life in new communities, how things have

15 Collyer et al., 2018, *ibid.*
16 Tip, L.K., Brown, R., Morrice, L., Collyer, M. and Easterbrook, M. J. (2018) 'Improving refugee well-being with better language skills and more intergroup contact', *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 10 (2), 144–151.
17 Degler, E. and Liebig, T. (2017) Finding their way. Labour market integration of refugees in Germany. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/Finding-their-Way-Germany.pdf.
18 Morrice, L., Tip, L. K., Collyer, M., & Brown, R. (2021). 'You can't have a good integration when you don't have a good communication': English-language learning among resettled refugees in England. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 34*(1), 681–699.
19 Collyer et al., A Long-Term Commitment.
20 Cheung, S. Y., and Phillimore, J. (2016) 'Gender and refugee integration: a quantitative analysis of integration and social policy outcomes', *Journal of Social Policy,* 46 (2), pp.211–230.; Spicer, N. (2008) 'Places of Exclusion and Inclusion: Asylum and Refugee Experiences of Neighbourhoods in the UK', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 34 (3), 491–510.
21 Hebbani, A., Colic-Peisker, V., & Mackinnon, M. (2018). Know thy neighbour: Residential integration and social bridging among refugee settlers in Greater Brisbane. *Journal of Refugee Studies,* 31(1), 82–103.
22 Phillimore, J. (2012) 'Implementing integration in the UK; lessons for theory, policy and practice', *Policy and Politics,* 40 (4), 525–545.
23 Easton-Calabria, E., & Wood, J. (2020). Bridging, bonding, and linking? Syrian refugee-led organizations and integration in Berlin. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 1–19.
24 Lukes, S. (2009). *The potential of Migrant and Refugee Community Organizations to influence policy.* York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
25 Dumont, J. C., Liebig, T., Peschner, J., Tanay, F., & Xenogiani, T. (2016). How are Refugees Faring on the Labour Market in Europe?: A First Evaluation Based on the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey Ad Hoc Module. European Union. https://op.europa.eu/s/uP6j.
26 Collyer et al., *A Long-Term Commitment.*

changed since they arrived, and their hopes for the future. The research provides a unique opportunity for Syrian refugees to share their voice and experiences in their own words with many other people across Ireland.

Five interviewers were employed to recruit and interview participants, and to contribute to the analysis of the data. The interviewers were three women and two men, all native Arabic speakers, including two people of Syrian nationality. The research team of nine in total included six migrants, of whom four have refugee status. This was an important contributor to the development of the research approach and analysis. A Research Steering Group established by IOM and the IRPP team included representatives of nine government departments and statutory bodies, and four NGOs supporting refugees, including UNHCR.

Face-to-face interviews (with COVID-19 precautions in place) were conducted in Arabic in refugees' own homes. Research outlines and consent forms were sent in advance in most cases and provided in paper copy at the start of the interview, being reviewed verbally in Arabic with participants prior to consent being given in writing.

The interview schedule is attached in Appendix 1. Interviews took between 45 minutes and 1 hour each, and addressed a range of topics including:

- Employment and skills development
- Education for adults and children
- Health and wellbeing
- Accommodation
- Leisure
- Social relations, including social bonds, social bridges, and social links
- Belonging and community
- Everyday use of English
- Safety and stability
- Digital inclusion
- Cultural difference and adaptation
- Aspirations for the future

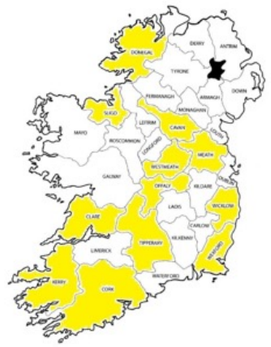
Interviewers attended training on interview methodology, ethics, and consent, and were given both verbal and written practical guidance for recruiting participants, conducting interviews, and managing data. A WhatsApp group additionally supported the interview team in real time to address any queries or problems arising during interviews. Each interviewer met with the research consultant weekly to review the interview content and sampling strategy fulfilment, as well as communication by phone and email in relation to queries arising during the interviews. Recordings of interviews were transferred to the research consultant immediately after the interview, along with consent forms and profiles of participants. Interviews were transcribed from Arabic to English by the interviewers, and the English language transcripts were used for analysis, in consultation with the interview team. All participants have been assigned a pseudonym to accompany their quotes in this report, and names in quotes have also been changed.

Participants were recruited through a snowballing methodology, through informal representatives of the Syrian community, NGOs who have been involved in resettlement, and through current and former resettlement workers as well as other participants. A purposive sample was sought reflecting the diversity of year of arrival, gender, age, and literacy within the adult Syrian resettled population in Ireland. We did not collect data on the ethnic background(s) of participants, although there are a range of ethnic and ethno-religious groups in the Syrian Arab Republic. The sample is representative of the numbers arriving each year. However, it has not been possible to say if they are representative in respect of adult age range or literacy.[27] Participants must have been 18 years of age or over at the time of interview.

Age	
36-45	49
26-35	40
18-25	30
46-55	25
56-65	6
Over 65	3

Year of Arrival	
2015	28
2016	9
2017	11
2018	27
2019	77

Participants were contacted directly by interviewers to request their participation in the research. Participants were recruited in 12 counties, including Clare, Donegal, Wicklow, Westmeath, Tipperary, Kerry, Cork, Wexford, Roscommon, Offaly, Laois, and Sligo. The counties have been selected to reflect various length of settlement, experiences of local programming, and variable infrastructure and sociodemographic profiles. We have additionally sought to recruit from Limerick and Carlow, where there were earlier cohorts of resettled refugees, however we were unsuccessful, explained in part by research fatigue.



County	Arrival year(s)
Cavan	2018
Clare	2016
Cork	2015/16/17
Donegal	2018
Kerry	2015/16
Meath	2018
Offaly	2019
Sligo	2017
Tipperary	2015
Westmeath	2017
Wexford	2017/18
Wicklow	2018

27 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth, *IRPP Divisional Manual*, p. 14.

A target of 120 interviews was set and exceeded during the 2 months of data collection. In total, interviews were conducted with 153 refugees. Of these, nearly half (47%) were female, of which 70 per cent were interviewed by a female interviewer. Nearly two-fifths (39%) were between 18 and 35 years old. Forty per cent were between 35 and 55 years old. The largest cohort was those who had arrived in 2019 including 69 people, with 25 who arrived in 2018, 29 in 2015, and much smaller numbers arrived in 2016 and 2017 (9 and 10 respectively), reflecting the smaller arriving population in those years. In terms of literacy, 42 per cent had basic literacy in Arabic, and 46 per cent above basic, while 57 per cent had basic literacy in English, and just 18 per cent above basic.

Participants were asked 43 questions each, mostly open-ended, and quantitative data was created from answers to both closed and open questions. The emphasis on open-ended questions was designed to enable participants to tell their stories in their own words. We quote those here as faithfully as possible with translation. Some of the participants had not been interviewed before, and our interview team spent additional time with them to explain the process, verify consent at start and end, support them through the interview and give them the opportunity to review and revise their answers as necessary.

Indicators of integration in Ireland

Integration can be measured in respect of three key areas: integration outcomes, which show the extent to which immigrants participate in the receiving society, and whether their participation converges with that of native-born residents; integration processes, the services and supports that exist to facilitate immigrant integration; and integration policies, which create the conditions that enable immigrant integration.[28]

There are a variety of frameworks available internationally for evaluating state capacity and resources for migrant integration. The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) framework addresses government policies on migration rights and the extent to which they enable inclusion, but does not evaluate outcomes.[29] The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has used 74 indicators of migrant integration based on three strands: labour market and skills; living conditions; and civic engagement and social integration.[30] Specific use has also been made of these to provide international comparison on refugee outcomes.[31] A UNHCR integration evaluation tool which specifically looks at refugee integration uses 221 indicators to assess general considerations (impact of reception conditions on integration, mainstreaming of refugees into general policies), legal integration (residency rights, family reunification), socio-economic indicators (housing, employment, health) and socio-cultural indicators (language learning, participation).[32]

Among EU Member States, the "Zaragoza indicators" adopted in 2010 use data from four policy areas to assess migrant integration along 15 indicators in employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship.[33] Ireland's use of the Zaragoza indicators to assess migrant integration has enabled official assessment of integration outcomes on a small number of quantitative measures and has not included a disaggregated analysis for refugees. Assessment has not included the Zaragoza indicators on language proficiency, quality of employment, public sector employment, membership of trade unions, or any of the indicators of a 'welcoming society'.[34]

No indicators have been adopted to date in Ireland to assess refugee integration policies or outcomes. The Economic Social Research Institute (ESRI) Monitoring report on integration 2020, for example, reviews how migrants of other nationalities fare compared to Irish nationals, in terms of key life domains: employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship.[35] There are, at present, no initiatives to track integration outcomes of refugees. Convention refugees, subsidiary protection holders and programme refugees have similar rights to Irish citizens, including access to the labour market and third-level education (Arnold et al., 2018), although resettled refugees are offered substantially more integration supports than international protection beneficiaries and subsidiary protection beneficiaries. Information on their integration outcomes in employment and unemployment rates, poverty and social exclusion, or any socio-cultural integration measures, either as a whole group or in respect of their differences, cannot be extracted from existing data sources and are thus not reported.[36] Since refugees face greater challenges when compared to other groups of migrants, for example in the labour market, due to lower language proficiency, trauma and lack of support from social and other networks, the data gap presents a challenge to policymakers and others in planning integration measures and effective supports for refugees.[37] Previous studies have suggested that targeted supports may be required, for example, to support refugees in accessing the labour market,[38] but specific data on this population has not been available.

There are a number of challenges with adopting indicator sets to assess refugee outcomes. Indicators based on policy, for example, do not assess the extent to which those policies achieve integration in practice. Indicators which assess services and supports meet many of the same challenges. For refugee integration, much state-level data is classified by nationality or place of birth and does not adequately identify those with refugee status or who have arrived as refugees. To become meaningful, indicators results have to be compared over time and – more importantly – to other sets of data. Indicators facilitate a benchmarking of data, and review over time. Data may be comparable internationally, but it should also be capable of being monitored over time within country to assess progress (this is assessed in Ireland in respect of overall migrant outcomes through Eurostat data, but not refugee outcomes). Finally, indicators can be most useful when they are embedded in a framework which clearly sets out the relationship between indicators and the ways in which they are facilitators, means or markers of integration.

This report makes use of a 2004 framework by Ager and Strang which has been highly cited and used internationally to assess refugee outcomes, using indicators based on published research evidence on 'what works'.[39] The framework was updated in 2019 by Strang and others to reflect the newest available evidence.[40] This framework offers a valuable means to facilitate discussion regarding perceptions of integration that is accessible to policymakers, researchers, service providers and refugees themselves. It is aligned with the MIPEX, OECD and EU indicators adopted to date, and provides a helpful 'theory of change' which supports integration programming over the long-term.

The updated framework utilizes 14 evidence-based domains of integration. These are categorized as:

- Markers and Means: Work, Housing, Education, Health and Social Care, and Leisure.
- Social Connections': Social Bonds, Social Bridges and Social Links.
- Facilitators of integration: Culture, Language and Communication, Digital Skills, Security and Stability.
- Foundation of integration: Rights and Responsibilities.[41]

Importantly for the purposes of this report on refugee outcomes, it includes a strong emphasis on facilitators of integration, and on social relationships supporting integration. These are uniquely positioned within this framework compared to other integration frameworks and provide a valuable opportunity to understand how refugees and receiving communities can both be supported in their journey to integration.

Figure 1: Ndofor-Tah et al. (2019) Indicators of Integration Framework

Success in one domain can influence success in another, for example new qualifications may facilitate greater success in work, secure housing can influence positive health outcomes, and family reunification reduces refugee stress and increases confidence, supporting social relationships with wider society. Positive outcomes in one domain do not necessarily result in long-term integration, however. Early entry into employment that does not require knowledge of the English language, for example, can lead to segmented assimilation and long-term marginalization, particularly if the primary incentive to learn the host language is lost.[42]

The Indicators of Integration framework 2019 is based on four key principles which make it useful in progressing integration as well as measuring it.[43] In this framework, integration is multi-dimensional and can depend upon a broad range of factors. Integration encompasses access to resources, like education and healthcare, opportunities for work and leisure, as well as broader concepts like social mixing. Integration is multi-directional – involving adjustments by everyone in society. Integrating successfully involves a wide variety of individuals, agents, and stakeholders; no organization, however capable, can integrate people single-handedly. Receiving communities adapt to newcomers at the same time as newcomers become more included in their new communities. Integration depends upon shared responsibility, including newly arrived residents, receiving communities and government at all levels. Finally, integration is context specific and needs to be understood and planned in relation to its particular context and within a bespoke timeframe.

In measuring integration, it is most useful to measure the rate of progress in an area, or across different groups, while recognizing that progress will likely be slower for those with multiple disadvantages. Integration has been achieved where there is a reasonable parity between opportunities, experiences, and outcomes for different people. The current report should be considered as providing an opportunity to benchmark data for each cohort, which can be used in future to assess progress.

28 Gilmartin, M and Dagg, J. (2018) *Immigrant integration and settlement services in Ireland.* Project Report. Irish Research Council. https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/10114/1/Immigrant%20Integration%20Final%20Report%202018%20%28002%29.pdf.
29 https://www.mipex.eu/.
30 OECD (2018) Settling In: Indicators of Immigrant Integration. 9 Dec 2018. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264307216-en.
31 OECD (2016), Making Integration Work: *Refugees and others in need of protection*. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264251236-en.
32 UNHCR (2016) *Refugee Integration Evaluation Tool* https://www.unhcr.org/50aa083d9.pdf.
33 Eurostat (2011) *Indicators of Integration: A Pilot Study.* https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3888793/5849845/KS-RA-11-009-EN.PDF.
34 Gilmartin, M., and Dagg, J. (2021) Finding the Gap: Immigrant Integration Outcomes and Settlement Service Provision in the Republic of Ireland. *Int. Migration & Integration* (2021). https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-021-00862-w.
35 ESRI (2021) *Monitoring report on integration 2020*, Dublin, ESRI. https://doi.org/10.26504/bkmnext403.
36 *Ibid.*, p.18.
37 *Ibid.*, p. 103.
38 McGinnity, F., Privalko, I., Fahey, É., Enright, S., & O'Brien, D. (2020). *Origin and integration: a study of migrants in the 2016 Irish Census.* Dublin: ESRI/ Department of Justice and Equality. https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/BKMNEXT392_2.pdf ; UNHCR (2013). *Towards A New Beginning: Refugee Integration in Ireland.* Dublin: UNHCR.; UNHCR (2014). *Refugee Integration, Capacity and Evaluation in Europe: Ireland Report,* Dublin: UNHCR.; UNHCR (2016), *Report of UNHCR's Participatory Assessments with Syrian Refugees,* Dublin: UNHCR. https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/5d7f63734.pdf.
39 Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of refugee studies*, 21(2), 166–191.
40 Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2004). *Indicators of integration*. Home Office, Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.; Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of refugee studies*, 21(2), 166–191.
41 Home Office (2019) *Indicators of Integration framework, 2019*. London, Home Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-indicators-of-integration-framework-2019.
42 Collyer et al., *A Long-Term Commitment.*
43 Ndofor-Tah, C., Strang, A., Phillimore, J., Morrice, L., Michael, L., Wood, P., & Simmons, J. (2019). *Indicators of Integration framework 2019*. London, Home Office. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805870/home-office-indicators-of-integration-framework-2019-horr109.pdf.

Long term, expectations for such groups should be related to expectations for other members of the local population. In measures of integration, it is good practice to acknowledge diversity within and between groups on the basis of gender, age, sexuality, disability, class, length of residence, education, and income. For example, some groups may have significantly different profiles based on the above, leaving aside ethnicity, nationality, language, or migration history. We have sought in the current report to ensure good representation of gender, age, disability, education, and length of residence. Subsequent chapters of this report reflect the groupings of domains set out in the Indicators of Integration framework. This allows us to group the Markers and Means, Social Connections and Facilitators with one another, and to give structure to the report which lends itself to an informed analysis.

Most importantly, the story of integration which emerges in this report is one which is shaped by the narratives of the refugees themselves. We have adopted this framework to enable us to convey those stories as faithfully as possible to the original narrative while facilitating observations about the ways in which integration patterns and experiences play out for this particular group and through this particular resettlement programme. This, we suggest, allows this report both to convey the lived experience of Syrian refugees clearly in their own words, and to enable institutional and public responses to those stories which centre the refugee experience.

CHAPTER 1: THE MARKERS AND MEANS OF INTEGRATION

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In this section, we examine five key domains of integration: work, housing, education, health and social care, and leisure. These domains represent the context in which integration can take place as well as major areas of attainment that are widely recognized as critical to the integration process. Achievement in each of these domains, however, should not be seen purely as an 'outcome' of integration, they also serve as 'means' to that end as well. Therefore, these five domains both demonstrate progress towards integration and support achievement in other areas. For example, access to – and progress within – the education system serves as a significant marker of integration, and as a major means towards integration, such as creating significant opportunities for employment, for wider social connection and mixing, for language learning and cultural exchange. In short, these domains are markers, because success in these domains is an indication of positive integration outcomes; and means because success in these domains is likely to assist the wider integration process.

WORK

Employment is a key factor supporting integration, being both a means to connection and stability, and a marker of integration at the same time, because it demonstrates adaptation to local labour markets, and connections in the workplace. Economic independence is important to self-determination for migrants, and work can provide important social roles and relationships. Employment is also strongly positively correlated with stability, both resulting from and supporting sustainable engagement with wider society and its institutions.

On average it can take more than five years for refugees to secure employment after arrival in Europe. This is because of the time it takes to develop English, gain qualifications, and adjust to other changes. In many countries, some vulnerable migrant groups – such as refugees – may take 15 years or more, on average, to reach similar employment rates as the native-born and labour migrants.[44] The 'refugee gap' tends to vanish with longer durations of residence and work in the receiving countries. Being part of the working population makes a significant difference to the life of refugees and their significant others, increasing recognition in their social networks and the host society, helping support family members abroad, and allowing them to be independent of welfare provisions. Refugees tend to join labour markets later than labour migrants, experience loss and depreciation of human capital and credentials during asylum procedures and are affected by lower health levels. Rapid entry into the labour market prevents long-term detrimental effects of exclusion.

Resettled refugees in Ireland are encouraged and expected to seek work as soon as they are able. The responsibility for finding work is placed on the refugees. Support is provided intermittently by resettlement workers with informal labour market advice. As well as this there is support offered by Intreo during the resettlement period. Resettlement workers in discussion with the research team noted that participation in such programmes is limited by language capacity. To facilitate refugees, courses are available for skill gaps through the Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The Department of Social Protections offers a Training Support Grant of EUR 1,000 towards courses not currently free. Doras has noted that interventions which provide early language tuition for work, skills assessments, supports for individual career planning, job search assistance and mentoring can be successful in quickening transitions into sustainable work.[45]

Labour market participation

Most participants in this research have not worked since arriving in Ireland. A small proportion (11%) of men have undertaken some form of employment, but only two are currently employed full-time. Almost all (98%) of female participants have not worked in Ireland. Importantly, all 153 participants expressed a wish to engage in paid work now or in the future, and many said that lack of employment affected their mental health, ability to make new friends and opportunity to improve their language skills. There is evidence of earlier resettled Syrian refugees finding employment and establishing their own businesses. The interview team are also aware of other refugees in this programme in employment, but they were not available to participate in this research.

Job applications

Fewer than a third (29%) of participants have applied for jobs. Amongst these, very few received positive responses or reached the interview stage. Those who arrived between 2015 and 2018 were twice as likely to have applied for jobs, compared to those who arrived in 2019. Participants told our research team that factors preventing them from securing employment included low English ability (66%), lacking references (2%), non-recognition of their qualifications and experience not being recognized (11%), childcare responsibilities (29%), and/or health issues (30%).

"I struggled a lot in recruitment. I applied for 100 jobs, unfortunately, I did not have a reference, no work experience. I did my best, but nothing worked." (Khairat, female, 30 years old)

Language was the main barrier for 41 per cent of men, hindering them at all stages of recruitment. A quarter (25%) of women were also hindered primarily by language. Not having relevant and recognized qualifications or experience was the key barrier for 12 per cent of men. Refugees fleeing conflict can struggle with missing documentation,[46] but also the recognition of qualifications in the Irish labour market.

44 Dumont, J. C., Liebig, T., Peschner, J., Tanay, F., & Xenogiani, T. (2016). How are Refugees Faring on the Labour Market in Europe?: A First Evaluation Based on the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey Ad Hoc Module. European Union. https://op.europa.eu/s/uP6j.
45 Doras (2021) *Getting Right to Work: Access to Employment & Decent Work for International Protection Applicants in Ireland.* http://Doras.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Doras-Getting-Right-to-Work-e-copy.pdf.
46 Doras (2020). *Refugee resettlement toolkit.* https://doras.org/all-resources/resources-refugee-resettlement-toolkit/.

Refugees in the resettlement programme usually have a one year 'grace period' to learn English before the Department of Social Protection will 'activate' them for employment.[47] Based on the sample, it appears that after one year most refugees will have basic English. However, to access education and the labour market they will require more than basic English, as well as support with job applications, since there were also very few in jobs not requiring English.

It can take more than five years for refugees to secure employment.

Qualifications and experience

Participants described a wide range of work experience in the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon, and Jordan. Amongst the most labour-intensive occupations were farmer, carpenter, and chef. Others were more advanced occupations such as pharmacist, teacher, or university professor. Common occupations for men were in crafts, trades and manual labour, or family-owned businesses. These occupations indicate the refugees possess a wealth of transferable skills and experience, which with some assistance could be implemented in the Irish labour market.

Non-recognition of qualifications is a common problem for migrant groups.[48] Professions or trades typically require qualifications in Ireland, but not in the Syrian Arab Republic. However, when attempting to access courses and gain qualifications in Ireland refugees face multiple barriers, particularly their literacy.[49] Refugees need help in accessing pathways to work. Despite many participants sharing an interest in pathways to work, there was no mention of apprenticeships, job training, or work experience programs.

Adding to this, experience is essential for many jobs and experience in other countries is not always given equal consideration. Most male participants had work experience, except for those who came of age in Ireland. Amongst women, 91 per cent had never worked before arriving in Ireland. Those who had previously worked outside the home (9%) were experienced in roles including seamstress, teacher, hairdresser, and a business owner.

"Ideally refugees should have the option to avail of job training programmes such as CV preparation and interview support, intercultural awareness training in the workplace and work experience placements. It is vital that refugees have a firm understanding of their rights in the workplace and support and procedures in place should they consider these rights abused."[50]

Age

Those as young as 18 were likely to have only recently started seeking work if they are not engaged in study or training. Based on the participants' answers most parents are putting a strong emphasis on their children's education, supporting them to get a degree. However, because of this, young refugees may delay work until after they complete their education. There is also a tendency for some young people to stay longer in education rather than seeking work in a depressed market, although having gained qualifications they potentially will have a greater chance at securing work.

"When I graduated from college last week, I was offered a job the next day."
(Faisal, male, 29 years old)

Key barriers to employment were English language fluency, health issues, and caring responsibilities.

Women and work

In the Syrian Arab Republic, it is not common for married women to work outside the home due to gender discrimination and low pay. Only nine per cent of female participants worked before arriving in Ireland. Women in the workforce in the Syrian Arab Republic tend to come from upper class, educated backgrounds.[51] All of the women in our sample expressed an interest in entering the labour market. Those who previously worked intend to return to employment, some stating they want to return to their previous profession. To do this they want help in developing their skills and gaining qualifications. In their responses, courses mentioned developed their domestic skills or beauty skills, and a few wanted to learn about self-employment. Among requests for courses are women who have not previously worked, but still have expressed interest in gaining qualifications.

"I want to develop my skills in beauty and cosmetics, I would like to have a course for that." (Anisah, female, 27 years old)

Women are particularly influenced by seeing the choices made by other women in Ireland when thinking about the future and how they can best contribute to their success. Few women drive in the Syrian Arab Republic, but since arriving in Ireland at least 34 per cent of female participants had started driving or learning to drive.

"Despite all my busy days, I started studying for a theory test for my driving license. I have never driven a car in all my life, and I would like to work too. I saw Irish women drive and work, in our country it is so limited, the man is responsible for everything, and the woman has to take care of the children and home. But here I see equality which encourages me to think of working." (Takia, female, 24 years old)

Barriers to participation: Childcare

Both men and women describe childcare as a constraint on being available for work or securing work. Caring roles are generally a more common obstacle for refugee women, and a recent OECD study shows that 35 per cent of immigrant women in the EU cite caring responsibilities as the reason for involuntary inactivity.[52] In this study, 29 per cent of women interviewed had responsibilities to care for children or a partner. Some indicated they had to delay securing their own job to allow their husband to work, though many in this study plan to seek work once children were older and in school.

"Now my husband is working I have no place to put my small daughter." (Reem, female, 20 years old)

Barriers to participation: health

This study shows that health problems prevent 11 per cent of men and 19 per cent of women from working. Some of these conditions could be managed with appropriate care, enabling those affected to take up employment. Injuries acquired due to conditions in third countries (in refugee camps and poor employment conditions) are common. Health conditions also affect a partners' ability to find work, due to the absence of extended family to help at home. Lack of connection to health and disability services are prominent issues for those who experience significant disability and their families. One active jobseeker described the constraints on their family due to health difficulties experienced by his wife, and as a result he is seeking flexible working hours:

"As you know, my wife has back pains and I have to collect my children from school. Sometimes, my wife can't sit or stand unless I support her." (Abbas, male, 31 years old)

Work aspirations

When asked if they believed barriers to education and work could change in the future more, 51 per cent of all participants said yes. Some are waiting for children to go to school, their English to improve, or the pandemic to end. However, a few have mentioned a more proactive approach, by moving to the city or training to improve their prospects. All of the participants said they would like to improve their English, mostly so that they could work. Participants also identified other skills which would assist them in securing employment. These included studying driving, IT, hair and beauty, and more. Although, most answers focused on English and working towards gaining a job.

"I would like to improve my English in terms of writing and reading for the future, and graduate with an electrician degree to provide more money for my family." (Cemal, male, 25 years old)

Some participants described not feeling prepared yet to enter the labour market in Ireland, and they are keen to develop their skills. These include IT, design and video editing, cooking and bakery (11%), drawing, photography, driving, fitness, plant care, sewing skills (5%), language skills (English, French, Spanish), barbering (3%), car mechanics, crafts, hairdressing and makeup (22%), farming (5%), opening their own business (especially in food production / retail), and continuing higher education and completing a degree, such as medicine, engineering and law (3%).

"I want to finish college then I feel like I have succeeded in my life." (Fayez, male, 20 years old)

Many interviewees found skills training courses provided in the Emergency Reception and Orientation Centre (EROC) efficient and helpful.

"When I was in the reception centre, I have been involved in a number of courses to develop my skills such as cooking, hairdressing and sewing. These courses are important for us to learn English as well as to get confidence and qualifications for life experiences. They are good to develop personal skills." (Ahima, female, 44 years old)

Women in particular were looking to monetize domestic skills they already held, such as baking, interior decor and seamstressing as a means of flexibly entering the labour market to start increasing their experience and income while continuing to manage care of young children.

COVID-19 and unemployment

The impact of COVID-19 on the availability of refugees to work, due to illness and the availability to work during government restrictions on businesses opening, has been significant. Refugees in work before 2020 lost employment in some cases.

"I worked for a while like one months and two weeks, then I couldn't work because I got COVID-19. When I went back, they said 'we don't need a carpenter, if you like you can work as a painter', but I have problems breathing. The company informed me that in case they need me they will call." (Miran, male, 35 years old)

Refugees arriving in Ireland in 2019 were resettled at the same time as many businesses closed or reduced their staff, employment support services also became primarily online. Fifty per cent of participants were in this 2019 group and have been unable to secure work in these labour market conditions. Although we would not expect refugees to have found work within the first year of arrival, the pandemic is likely to delay their opportunity to join the labour market more than other workers.[53]

Location and transport

Many refugees have been resettled in rural areas. Due to remoteness, there are not always suitable opportunities in the local area for work. Commuting becomes necessary both for jobs matching previous experience, but also for jobs which do not require advanced literacy. The cost of travel, either by public transport or car, on low wages caused difficulties for 14 per cent of participants. Limited public transport in some areas also restricts job opportunities for those without a car. Some responses from participants emphasise a desire to move for these reasons.

"Yes, there are different experiences. Syrians in other places have other experiences. For example, in [that county], there is a better chance to get a job. The study is better there." (Ahmed, male, 43 years old)

47 UNHCR (2011) *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook*, https://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf , p.76.
48 OECD, *Settling In*, p. 66.
49 Ndofor-Tah et al., *Indicators of Integration framework*, p.25.
50 Doras, *Refugee Resettlement Toolkit*, p. 114.
51 *Ibid*, p.94.
52 OECD, *Settling In*, p. 150.
53 During the 2008 recession migrants in employment fell nearly 80,000 by 2012, with only 32,000 back in work by 2015. In 2013 long-term unemployment represented 61.4 per cent of all unemployed, and it was expected this would take years to tackle.

"Just in one sentence as soon as we move from this house to another house in [the] city all my problems will disappear." (Khairat, female, 30 years old)

Job matching between refugee skills and localities with available work and education opportunities is not a feature of the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme, although it has been taken up with some success in Sweden.[54]

HOUSING

Housing structures much of an individual's experience of integration. Housing conditions impact on a community's sense of security and stability, opportunities for social connection, and access to healthcare, education and employment. For this reason, secure housing, satisfaction with housing conditions, prevalence of homeless or overcrowding, and satisfaction with neighbourhood are all indicators of integration.

Resettled refugees in Ireland have mostly been allocated social housing through local authorities participating in the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme. This is an allocated budget for housing, and resettled refugees will only join the social housing lists if they choose to move accommodation at a later stage. This has been a key difference between the IRPP and other refugee protection strands such as Community Sponsorship or EU Relocation. Housing has been a pivotal aspect of the Resettlement Program, as it is the starting point for their new life. The new connections refugee families will make, the schools they will attend, even job opportunities, will all be influenced by where they are assigned housing. For the majority of participants (95%) there is a long-term security that stems from being allocated secure tenancies. The potential to buy their house was also appealing to refugee families.

Though there were only a small number of participants living in private rentals or other types of tenancies which were less secure than social housing, these participants felt significantly less secure. These were refugees who were given Housing Assistant Payments instead of social housing. Trying to find new tenancies at the end of contracts, discrimination from landlords, and properties which did not meet their needs were more common in this group.

"I live in a non-council house and have until [next month] to find a new house which is very difficult to find and has been stressing me a lot. […] My landlord is very racist, and I experienced sexual harassment from him." (Zoha, female, 41 years old)

The importance of housing for a sense of stability is clear. Two thirds (66%) of participants said securing a house was their best moment since arriving in Ireland.

"The local council here said to me that this is your permanent house. You can buy the house if you want. This is what they said once they welcomed us in the house." (Urooj, male, 49 years old)

Satisfaction with the Local Area

Many participants spoke well of their local areas and amenities, and a significant number commented on the beauty of Ireland and felt welcomed by local people. However, the location of many families in rural areas means that many are struggling with poor transport links, distance from education and work opportunities, healthcare services they need, and also shops and community facilities. While many of these issues are shared with other groups residing in these areas, the key concern arises because refugees need more opportunities to make connections and access education or employment options. Parents worry about their children having to leave home to go to university or get jobs, putting additional financial and emotional strain on their families.

"Transportation here in this town is rare and difficult, which ties me a lot." (Hady, male, 26 years old)

Those in areas with more migrants seemed happier and more socially engaged, even if migrants are not from the same background. Because most refugees arrive in Ireland with little English or knowledge of life in Ireland, they need the support of those around them, especially when support services end. Those in communities with more migrants have more people who can better understand and help.

"I mostly contact my friend [a fellow Syrian] when I need support. He has very good English. He supports me with finding and filling forms. He supports me in many things like getting appointments with the GP. I recently got a new-born baby, and he is going to help me get a birth certificate for my baby." (Irfan, male, 36 years old)

An encouraging indicator of satisfaction with the area is that when asked if they feel a sense of belonging in the neighbourhood, 95 per cent agreed, and overwhelmingly they talked about the support and kindness of Irish people. The positive impact which a single friend or neighbour has in the lives of Syrian refugees is significant, according to these interviews. Volunteer befriending programmes and cultural awareness activities at local level would provide a welcome boost and opportunity to meet new friends for those without such friendships and support.

More than half have made a close friend in their neighbourhood.

Housing satisfaction

Satisfaction with housing was mixed. When asked if they had worries about the housing, 46 per cent had no issues or concerns. Those who were most satisfied described their house as good or excellent, felt safe, liked the local area, and had enough space for their family. Answers also indicated family investment in the house.

Two thirds of refugees said securing a house was their best moment since arrival.

54 In Sweden, the government allocates refugees to various municipalities based mostly on job opportunities. When they receive their residence permit, they are informed about job availabilities in a meeting with the public employment service. Refugees then move to localities that match their profile, based on their education level and work experience, local employment rates, the locality's size, its concentrations of foreign-born people and the availability of housing. International Monetary Fund, "Sweden: Selected Issues", IMF Country Report No.15/330, December 2015 https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2015/cr15330.pdf; Legrain, P. (2017) *How to get Refugees into work quickly.* Tent and Open Network, August 2017. https://www.opennetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/TENT_StepUp_FINAL.pdf.

"I have a government house that I am really happy with, I like to take care of the house and the garden, cut the grass, grow some plants, and I even started growing some nice flowers I love." (Nader, male, 32 years old)

Amongst the 54 per cent who indicated that they had some worries, there were some common patterns. The most common concern in housing was overcrowding. A third (34%) of participants described living in overcrowded homes,[55] compared to 3.2 per cent for Ireland generally[56] and 17 per cent for immigrant households across the EU.[57]

Housing allocations are based on the family's size at arrival in Ireland, so accommodation was not fully prepared for new births, and only a declared intention for family reunification was considered in allocation of home size. More than a third (36%) of families had at least 1 birth since arriving in Ireland, and multiple new children were not uncommon. However, there is indication of support for growing families, albeit in the context of a national housing shortage which may produce delays to mobility.

"My house is unsuitable if my family gets bigger. The council told us if we have a new baby we could change the house, so I am not worrying." (Mariam, female, 41 years old)

New marriages added to overcrowding, as new couples chose to live with parents.

"I am comfortable here, my worry is just for my big sons if they want to be married, where to live or settle." (Uri, female, 40 years old)

Few overcrowded homes involved family reunification, because only five per cent of the sample had been successful in their applications.

Suitability of housing in relation to health conditions and disability were also common problems, particularly when health issues emerged after arrival at the new home. Stairs presented a common challenge to participants with mobility issues, conditions like arthritis, or pregnancy related issues. Two participants had received letters from medical professionals advising the local authorities that they should move house for health reasons, but both reported significant delays in movement. Others who asked for alternative accommodation for disability-related or health-related reasons felt that they were not aware enough of their rights in relation to social housing and how to secure them.

"My dad is suffering from his disability not allowing him to move in the house, he can't go upstairs to use his bedroom to sleep. We informed the housing department about that issue, but no one listened to us." (Khairat, female, 30 years old)

Cultural issues in housing related to the lack of curtains on arrival, which meant that women could not remove hijabs in the house until they got curtains, and the prevalence of open plan living spaces which did not provide for spaces where women could remove hijab during extended social visits (which are a particular feature of Syrian culture) or when sharing a home with men of the extended family. There were concerns raised about the costs of moving into unfurnished homes, with furniture and appliances needed, and energy bills, particularly in winter. These are issues which can be resolved with greater cultural awareness in the allocation process, and advance information for refugees about home costs, bills, and grants.

Despite these issues, the provision of secure housing is one of the strongest features of the IRPP and contributes significantly to integration across many of the other domains, supporting long-term relationships within neighbourhoods, psychological security for refugees, and the stability of not having to encounter the private rental market and the discrimination that arises there both in relation to housing benefits and racism against refugees.[58] Migrants are overrepresented amongst the homeless population in Ireland, largely due to discrimination in the market for rentals.[59] In this respect, the current format of the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme reflects a strong trauma-informed approach to housing, which takes seriously the links between secure housing, stability, and integration in other domains. Some variation was evident between regions and local authorities.

EDUCATION

Education is an important issue with long-term implications for integration. Access to, and progress within, the education system serves as a significant integration marker, and as a major means towards this goal. Education creates significant opportunities for employment, for wider social connection, and mixing for language learning and cultural exchange.

Immediately prior to the war, the Syrian Arab Republic had a high level of education and literacy. Primary school attendance was high for both boys and girls. Higher education was provided at little or no cost. However, many schools had been severely damaged or were being used by armed groups and displaced persons seeking shelter. Therefore, many Syrian children have missed a number of years of schooling during their childhood in the Syrian Arab Republic and on their journey to Ireland. Some may have had no formal schooling due to exclusion from education in third countries.[60]

Children's education

Almost all families (88% of participants) reported that they have school-age children which all attend school. According to the survey participants, most children, especially at primary (first level) education, had made considerable progress in the English

55 Housing Act of 1966.
56 Social Justice Ireland (17 Feb 2021) Under-occupied and Over-crowded - a snapshot of Ireland's housing. https://www.socialjustice.ie/content/policy-issues/under-occupied-and-over-crowded-snapshot-irelands-housing.
57 OECD, *Settling In*, p. 104.
58 Grotti, R., Russell, H., Fahey, É., & Maître, B. (2018). *Discrimination and inequality in housing in Ireland.* Dublin, ESRI and Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.; Ní Raghallaigh, M., Foreman, M. and Feeley, M. (2016) *Transition: from Direct Provision to life in the community: The experiences of those who have been granted refugee status, subsidiary protection or leave to remain in Ireland.* 1 Jan 2016. University College Dublin. https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/TransitionReport2016(1).pdf.
59 Morrin, H., & O'Donoghue-Hynes, B. (2018). *A report on the 2016 and 2017 families who experienced homelessness in the Dublin region.* Dublin: Dublin Region Homeless Executive.
60 Doras, *Refugee Resettlement Toolkit.* p. 87

language. Eighty-nine per cent of parents who participated in this survey described their children as integrating well with Irish neighbourhood kids and classmates, adapting well, making friends at school, engaging in events, and interested in living in Ireland. This is important because students' self-reported feeling of belonging at school is an indicator of integration.

"They are very happy. Thank God, their teachers are very good with them. Their friends are good with them. My daughter is speaking English very well. When they are speaking together, I don't understand sometimes. My son sometimes translates for me. Although they didn't get to school very well due to the lockdown (COVID-19 restrictions), they are very good." (Abbas, male, 31 years old)

Children were described as particularly enjoying activities such as sport, computer class, music class, and woodwork. It is notable that these are subjects which do not require the same levels of literacy as other academic subjects and also facilitate the development of interpersonal relationships with other students around mutual interests and skills. Some teenagers are interested in practical skills careers to continue their parents' business/work as skilled tradespeople. Additionally, parents of female children have expressed their satisfaction with available opportunities to progress in education for their young daughters and follow their dreams. Education of children is the most important priority for 90 per cent of parents.

"I am now in a stable life and more optimistic for my children's future, because in Lebanon I know there is no future and no university for them." (Usama, male, 45 years old)

Nonetheless, there were common concerns expressed about whether they could keep up academically with their peers due to having English as a second language, at secondary schools. Some parents and teenagers were concerned about slow progress in the English language at secondary and higher education which caused frustration in previously high performing children, who may not maintain ongoing additional supports if the school prioritises children more at risk of exclusion (in line with allocation model).

Language issues also produced problems with loneliness (5%) and bullying (6%), the latter mainly in post-primary schools, with resulting impact on mental health of young people.

"They have bullied my daughter multiple times and tried to remove her hijab multiple times, where she wore the hijab with her own consent. We have communicated it with the administration and the teachers." (Samer, male, 36 years old) [There was no further discussion about the school's response and outcomes.]

This has particular impacts on teenagers who have experienced the war first-hand and who are experiencing the effects of trauma still.

"My son's experience is very difficult. He is staying in the house most of the time because he has no friends. I think this is because his English is not strong. The language is most important. He is studying English in his school now. They teach him one day a week in person at the school and two hours online weekly [due to COVID-19]. He finds it not enough to understand and learn in the correct way. He needs more time. He is unable to study by himself. In our country or in Lebanon, he didn't continue his learning in school. He stopped and ceased school at 5th class because of the war in the Syrian Arab Republic. He is traumatised because of missing his brother. His older brother has been killed in the Syrian Arab Republic." (Adelmira, female, 54 years old)

Resettlement project workers relayed multiple examples of behavioural issues in the classroom precipitated by trauma-related anger, and this presented challenges for families and schools in reducing the isolation of those children. There were also examples relayed of families under severe emotional pressure because of the delayed effects of trauma on children. Just a small number of families in this study mentioned these problems. The Doras Resettlement Support team reported psychosocial issues presenting in Syrian refugee children in Ireland including bedwetting, nightmares, fear of being alone, and common symptoms of "toxic stress" or posttraumatic stress disorder. [61]These present challenges for children's integration in school and social settings, and particularly for peaceable family life.

Parent-school relationships

Parents also overwhelmingly comment on their children's good treatment by schools. They are happy overall with services provided, such as after school studies, extra English classes, regular meetings, and reports, and even school staff occasionally visiting children at home (4%). Almost all parents (98%) are very satisfied with regular school communication. Schools are communicating with parents through a range of methods, including technology-based solutions, such as the ClassDojo app, email, and text. Traditional methods such as notes, letters, phone calls and messages through an Irish friend are also used. The main concern is translating notes and lack of access to interpreters. Parents use Google Translate if they are literate enough in Arabic and can use the technology, or they send school notes to the resettlement programme interpreter. One participant mentioned the school helping when translating. Children can act as a translator for their parents, and even can convey the Irish culture that they quickly picked up from school to their parents. However, there are concerns that their children have to take responsibility for their own translations of school correspondence with parents, as this parent with only basic Arabic literacy and pre-literate English explained.

"To be honest, if I get a note from school, I don't understand English, so I get my child to read and interpret it for me. Therefore, I have difficulty in this matter. [...] This issue is related to the lack of the interpretation services. If I have a cooperative interpreter, I will understand everything related to my kids in the school." (Mahir, male, 39 years old)

Awareness of key institutions, rights, supports and pathways to participation is an indicator of integration in education. While the communication between school staff and parents appears good overall, especially in primary schools, parents have difficulties getting advice and guidance for teenagers. Syrian secondary school pupils find it difficult to navigate subject choices, career options and accessing third level education.

61 *Ibid.*

"I don't say they don't help them; I want to say that if he wants to continue his study enrol to any course, he needs someone to show him how and where. Sometimes things go so hard for us here." (Cemal, male, 40 years old)

Correspondence with schools is mainly limited to informing parents of children's progress/situation. There is no evidence indicating engagement with parents in planning for children's education, particularly when parents have low levels of education themselves. Parents are reliant on informal information from other parents and neighbours if they are fortunate to have those kinds of relationships with English communication. Parents who are pre-literate or who have no relations with neighbours or other parents struggle to navigate the education landscape.

COVID-19 & children's education

The impact of COVID-19 restrictions on children's education is one of the most significant factors expressed by participants. These restrictions affected interpersonal relationships with other children and with teachers, consequently effecting English language proficiency, leading to isolation. Additionally, there were some references to the less regular communication between schools and parents in the context of the pandemic restrictions. Online school has been challenging for children who have difficulties in accessing both hardware (laptops or computers) and data. While some parents appreciated the provision of laptops for children to facilitate on-line learning, the majority of participants (74%) do not have access to laptops and computers. It is also important to note that most educational needs are not addressed by smartphones, as many educational software and materials may not be compatible with smartphones.

"Before the lockdown, they arranged for my son to take an extra class (supportive class). He told me mum if I get more like this class, I would be better, it is very good. They supported him with a teacher to teach him basics in English language. But Covid 19 destroyed everything, now he is still isolated from other friends, and he sits lonely." (Uri, female, 40 years old)

The interviews reflect that while the majority of schools are making efforts to support resettled refugees, more training and resources could be allocated based on refugees' needs, as well as cultural awareness training for personnel. Teachers need more time, support, and awareness to be able to play an efficient role in dealing with traumatised children, considering the impact of past experiences of war and leaving their home country on mental health, concentration and education. Holistic support is needed to address social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in the education system. Refugee children benefit from access to social networks such as youth clubs and specialist support such as homework clubs and additional English language assistance if required,[62] and from information about the wider range of educational supports available for young people at risk of exclusion. Particularly after COVID-19, children and teenagers will benefit from opportunities to catch up with their peers, practice their English in social situations, and grow confidence through social interactions outside the classroom. The English language barrier was raised as a main issue that hinders the integration and education progress of teenagers. Parents are keen to engage with schools on how best to support teenagers' education in parallel with schools.

Considering the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on the progress of recently arrived children and teenagers in learning English and catching up on missed education, reviewing progress in this area is time sensitive. To mitigate this gap, a COVID-19 Learning, and Support Scheme (CLASS) has been put in place to help schools mitigate the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on pupil/student learning loss and wellbeing arising from the periods of school closures in 2020 and 2021.

University / college access for under 25s

An indicator of integration in education is the proportion of young people and adults achieving admission to tertiary education compared to the overall population. Refugees who want to participate in the third level education, may find it difficult to navigate the complex system of differing entry policies, and may find it challenging to take IELTS or TOEFL tests. They often need help with understanding how to complete grant and scholarship applications and what support is available.[63]

"We tried to contact my son's college recruiting institution but we never had any replies whatsoever, and that has been hard since we are trying to find a good collage and get a scholarship for my son because I wouldn't be able to afford the price of a good collage, and I am sure my son would be eligible for scholarships since he has been such a high achiever in high school." (Tammam, male, 43 years old)

Those who have been living in Ireland for less than three years have to pay international fees (non-EU fees), with no access to grants. Additionally, available grants for higher education students can be insufficient to cover living costs for those who have to move away from home to go to college. Parents are concerned about the expenses of higher education when children complete secondary school.

"I have a son close to 18 and they said to me that he must pay for university if he wants to study medicine, that's what I'm worried about." (Jamila, female, 38 years old)

The 16–25-year-old cohort in particular – because of missed education opportunities - would benefit from international good practice, including: availability of support structures for young people e.g. support for learning at 19+; bridging courses available for 16–23-year-olds; provision of information on scholarships and bursaries to access higher education; flexible entry requirements and recognition of alternative and overseas qualifications by higher education and training providers. These measures will also benefit older adults who are returning to education, converting, or expanding their qualifications.

62 *Ibid.*
63 Doras, *Refugee Resettlement Toolkit*, p. 87.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Good health enables greater social participation and engagement in employment and education activities. Resettled refugees often arrive with health conditions caused by lack of access to general healthcare during conflict and poor conditions during travel or stay in a third country, as well as those related to violence or hardship. Healthcare includes women's reproductive healthcare, which is particularly relevant given the age range of those arriving and the proportion of those with young children or planning families. Indicators of integration in health include registration with services such as a General Practitioner (GP) and dentist and access to prevention services and specialized services (such as antenatal care, mental health services, support for domestic abuse victims and victims of trauma), as well as how many have access to interpretation or translation services during medical appointments.
Indicators used in this report include refugees' understanding how to access health and social care, how many express good self-rated health and wellbeing, how many report high happiness and life satisfaction, and how many adults walk at least five times per week.

Upon arrival, resettled refugees are generally accommodated in Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs). This allows for initial orientation and assessment for access to services such as health and social welfare.[64] Refugees have access to a medical card which grants free GP visits and prescribed medicines, some dental and optometry treatments, with some prescription charges. Many resettled refugees will not have had access to dental services for a number of years and present with serious issues, for example a need for root canal treatments. It is important to note that not all medical/dental treatments are covered by the medical card.[65] Additionally, they face issues with the healthcare system such as long waiting lists, transportation, and language barriers in accessing healthcare services. Digital illiteracy along with lack of knowledge about the health system in Ireland also reduced the frequency and quality of access.

Language and health

The length of time it takes for refugees to learn a language, and the difficulties for people not in employment or interacting with others in the local community to practice a language, increases reliance on interpreters for basic as well as advanced healthcare access. It was common in interviews to be told about lack of available interpreters, the refusals of GPs and hospitals to fund interpreters with their own budgets, families paying unqualified and inexperienced interpreters directly, or needing family members and friends to interpret with sometimes extremely poor outcomes.

Forty-five per cent say their health is worse since arriving in Ireland, mainly due to stress of family separation and isolation.

"I think we are in need of interpretation and support services. The one who was with us was just for six–seven months and then stopped. We are in desperate need of these services. Our English language is poor, and we need to understand the services and laws in the country. For example, I can't get or attend an appointment with the GP or a hospital by myself. I need an interpreter for this purpose." (Abdul, male, 35 years old, arrived 2018)

In several cases, the issue of children as interpreters was raised. HSE guidelines on interpreting services explicitly warn against this: "Children should never be used as interpreters. Using children as interpreters totally disregards the harmful effects it may have on the child."[66]

"Once my wife had an appointment in hospital for [an invasive diagnostic procedure]. We were there on time. We told them that we don't speak English. They told us your interpreter should attend with you. We called him on the phone. The doctor said, "I am not working on the phone". The interpreter argued with them that the hospital should bring an interpreter. Later, they agreed with him to be on phone. By that time, we were about to lose the appointment we waited a long time for. Now we have no interpretation and support services. When we argued with them, they said that we can take our son (17 years old) to appointments with us. My son is in school for just one and a half years. He is not a professional interpreter. But I can't do it by myself. I have very poor language." (Akmal, male, 50s, arrived 2019)

There are some translated resources available. Doras interpreters have translated various health information guides for distribution to families, e.g. oral health for children; when to keep children from school; how to access CareDoc, etc.[67] Health promotion materials translated into Arabic are useful for many of the refugees, but there are two key considerations of note. Almost half (49%) of participants had only basic Arabic literacy or were preliterate, and this affects their understanding of written materials even when translated. In addition, direct translations of health-related materials may not contain the contextual information which migrants and refugees need to make sense of health concepts and services in Ireland after arrival. Some confusion is reported by resettlement workers, for example, around access to dental care.

Thirty-six per cent welcomed a new baby in their family since arrival in Ireland.

Interpreting is a highly skilled activity involving processing information in one language and conveying it accurately in a second language. Interpreters need high levels of proficiency in both languages and interpreting skills, to understand the context, the information they are interpreting, and ethical principles such as confidentiality, impartiality, and accuracy. There is no accredited training course for interpreters nor systems to recognise competency, nor quality standards. There is also a pervasive assumption that anyone who speaks English, and another language can interpret. In general, hospitals and health clinics pay for their own interpretation services from their allocated budgets. GPs and dentists have access to a telephone/in person interpretation service paid for by the HSE, but must be aware of and request access to it.[68] The HSE Social Inclusion Unit does directly fund some interpreters for a small number of GPs, particularly in the areas where EROCs (reception centres) are based, but not for the wider resettled population.[69] There is published guidance on the use of interpreters in healthcare, but the data in this research suggests that these are not familiar to some GPs.

Interpreter provision in respect of healthcare should be viewed both in light of risk reduction and improvement of capacity to participate fully in other areas.

Self-rated health and wellbeing, high happiness, and life satisfaction

Almost a third (32%) of participants feel better in physical health since coming to Ireland, while 44 per cent feel worse, and 22 per cent feel the same in terms of their physical health. Those experiencing worse physical health have a variety of issues, the most common of which seems to be continuing pain and joint issues. Nearly a fifth (18%) connected their physical health in Ireland with the stress of having family in the Syrian Arab Republic, or in a third country, in hardship. Back, leg, foot or joint pain affect 11 per cent. For some this was the result of pregnancy, as many of the women who have been pregnant since arrival complain of issues with their back or knees. The other most common link was to do with age, many of the older participants were experiencing physical issues. Some ascribe the worse health to climactic factors like damp and Vitamin D levels – several also describe extreme fatigue and other symptoms that resemble Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Health problems further impacts on 11 per cent of men and 19 per cent of women by preventing them from working. Unemployment, however, also has an impact on health. Multiple comments on weight gain, feeling lazy, or describing themselves as exhausted since coming to Ireland, stating they were more active in the Syrian Arab Republic /Lebanon. Many see remaining at home as a negative impact on health, in part due to unemployment, in part due to COVID-19.

Fifty-four per cent raised concerns about their mental health.

More than half (54%) raised concerns about their mental health. Nearly a third (30%) feel depressed or hopeless regularly or often. A further quarter (24%) feel depressed sometimes (usually in relation to fear for family abroad, losing housing, and concern for their children's future). Just eight per cent feel that their mental health has worsened since coming to Ireland. There is no evidence that any participant has been utilising mental healthcare specialized services or has been aware of such services. However, accessing and using mental healthcare services is an indicator of good health, and enables greater social participation and engagement in employment and education activities.

Mental health takes a physical toll and affects other domains of integration such as ability to work, learning English, and social bonds. Most respondents stated they had had some mental health challenges, strongly linked to separation from family, isolation in Ireland, and untreated trauma.

Nearly half (44%) say they are not depressed, or no longer depressed. Those who feel better believe that coming to Ireland has improved their mental health, say that the stability offered here is a relief after the war and tough conditions in third countries.

Mental health crises, hopelessness, depression, and lack of concentration are more experienced by those who are constantly worried about the situation of their family members in the Syrian Arab Republic or in a third country. Additionally, they attributed their mental health problems to uncertainty about their future and their children's future, loneliness, feeling helpless. The lack of ability to communicate with the wider community due to the language barrier makes them feel more isolated and ineffective in society. Two participants described previously being at risk of suicide.[70]

Those who did not experience mental health issues recently, or had after arrival but not now, mention a mental adjustment period to resettlement that will take a toll and improve over time. Additionally, having their family or a spouse with them, having support, and faith as a means to inner peace were highlighted as effective causes of their mental health wellbeing.

The provision of interpreter services in local counselling services is a crucial step in mental health provision to this group. It takes time, the development of trust and a certain level of security before individuals are ready to address personal mental health issues.

High happiness and life satisfaction is a recognised indicator of health. In this study, refugees overall did not express high levels of life satisfaction. However key areas of satisfaction included: satisfaction with their children's education, housing conditions, having a decent job, safety, social security, and bonds. Most reported improved physical and mental health increased with the length of stay in Ireland. Key barriers to high levels of life satisfaction included: lack of English language knowledge, difficulties in family reunification, being jobless, and unsuitable housing conditions.

Exercise

Over 50 per cent of all participants indicated some physical activity, commonly walking (49%), with a few adding running. Just 10 per cent of responses (mainly women) mentioned doing exercise at home, and 8 per cent of participants (mainly men) mentioned going to the gym.

COVID-19 & health

The impact of COVID-19 restriction on mental health and getting other necessary healthcare services are significant.

64 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth, *IRPP Divisional Manual*, p. 8.
65 Doras, *Refugee Resettlement Toolkit*, p. 80.
66 HSE Social Inclusion Unit (2009) *On Speaking Terms: Good Practice Guidelines for HSE Staff in the Provision of Interpreting Services.* Dublin, HSE. https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/socialinclusion/emaspeaking.pdf.
67 Doras, *Refugee Resettlement Toolkit*, p. 143.
68 HSE Social Inclusion Unit (2007). Guidance in Using Interpretation Services. https://emed.ie/_docs/Guidance-Using-Interpretation-Services-20070912.pdf; HSE Social Inclusion Unit, *On Speaking Terms.*
69 Gallagher, S. (2019) Lost in translation? Medical Independent, 11 September 2019. https://www.medicalindependent.ie/lost-in-translation/.
70 These cases were reviewed by our team to signpost key services.

Multiple comments on weight gain, feeling lazy and less efficient, feeling depressed and isolated as a result of remaining at home in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions. Additionally, access to information and healthcare services were halted by COVID-19. The healthcare system has become slower and less responsive. The impact of COVID-19 on health services is not fully appreciated by refugees, who have no reference point either for the pace of the Irish health system nor the measures taken to address the pandemic. This has led to deep frustration amongst some, particularly where health is delaying progress in other areas of their lives.

"I was astonished that no one helped me for my hand operation as they promised me in Lebanon so I can work, we are still waiting for one year. In COVID-19 time I haven't got the doctor appointment for more than one year and four months." (Waleed, male, 42 years old)

The negative impacts of remaining at home in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions should be addressed in new strategies. Access to mental healthcare services is particularly important given participants reported experiences of poor mental health, as it is a key indicator connected to greater social participation and engagement in employment and education activities.

LEISURE

Leisure is for relaxation, socialising, and otherwise helping to maintain good physical and mental health. All humans need leisure time to recover, but for refugees it is important to feel settled into their new surroundings. Time spent socialising with the local community, exercising, or resting all invite a sense of safety and stability. Leisure activities can help individuals learn more about the culture of a country or local area, and can provide opportunities to establish social connections, practice language skills and improve overall individual health and wellbeing.

While there are few indicators of integration in this domain, compared with health or work, for example, they provide good insight into the daily lives of refugees. Leisure indicators include membership of local library or sports facilities, participation in local social and leisure groups, and how many report engagement in at least one preferred leisure activity in the last month.

We asked three questions to elicit information about how Syrian refugees spent their leisure time: "Tell me about a typical day and a typical week in your life now", "What do you do to relax in your free time?", and "Do you take any exercise?" Nearly three-quarters could indicate regular relaxation activities, with a third mentioning spending time with family and friends. Syrians place importance on family, and many of our sample have low English, so this result is a very positive one. Around a fifth (18%, mostly parents of young children) mainly relaxed at home, where they felt safe and confident, including gardening, drinking coffee, or resting.

"When my children are at home I have no free time, when they are at school I sit and drink coffee looking at nature." (Ranim, female, 30 years old)

However, parents were also most likely to say that they had little or no time to relax (21% of participants). Some only got the opportunity to relax when their partner took the children out or when they slept. The absence of extended family to help with young children was particularly felt by this group, who also missed out on opportunities to mix with the wider community.

"It is a difficult question I am the father for big family. I work in summertime, study in wintertime, I have only time to myself when I go to sleep" (Ranim, male, 40 years old)

Exercise and sport

Just over half of participants regularly did some physical activity. The most common exercise was walking (49%). This was the most convenient option and is an opportunity for time with family or friends as well as exercise and relaxation. The majority of those exercising at home were women, where they did not need to wear hijab, and in the absence of women-only classes in the local area (particularly during COVID-19), a few did online zumba classes together. Men were more likely to go to gyms, although it was not a particularly popular option overall (8%), but COVID-19 and financial demands on families had also restricted this. A small number of younger men took part in rugby or football in the local area.

"I used to play soccer a lot every day, but now it is not the same because of COVID-19. I also used to weightlift when I used to go to the gym, but as I told you with COVID-19, they closed all the places, and we couldn't go out a lot." (Roshin, male, 21 years old)

Developing hobbies and skills

When asked if developing hobbies or skills would increase satisfaction with their life 84 per cent agreed. Not many suggested what kinds of hobby or skill they would like to develop, but 24 per cent of responses suggested an interest in learning, mentioning courses or studying. More than half (57%) wanted to learn English, and many were already using their spare time to learn independently (using online resources). This shows a willingness to learn, and that refugees understand the importance of English towards their integration. Others wanted to use their free time to develop skills towards work, included hairdressing, cosmetics, and IT, developing existing skills. Those who were uninterested in hobbies or skills were already preoccupied with studying or children. Older people (60+) mostly did not see the need for new hobbies and were content with family life.

CHAPTER 2: THE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS FOR INTEGRATION

CHAPTER 2: THE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS FOR INTEGRATION

There are three domains discussed here under the heading social connections: social bridges, social bonds and social links. Taken together they recognise the importance of relationships to our understanding of the integration process and elaborate different kinds of relationships that contribute to integration. These three domains emphasise the importance of relationships between people as key to both the definition and achievement of integration.

SOCIAL BONDS

Social bonds are connections with others with a shared sense of identity. It is argued that the strongest ties are formed between people who identify most closely with each other. So, for example, family relationships generally create networks of bonds with high levels of trust and reciprocity. Close friendships that demonstrate similarly high levels of trust and reciprocity would also be described as bonds. Social bonds are characterised by the exchange of both practical and emotional support and can provide individuals and groups with the confidence and security required for integration. Social isolation is characterised by a lack of social bonds. Social bonds have considerable impact on other domains of integration such as health, work, and education and therefore, refugees should be supported to maintain their own culture, values and language, while integrating with the host community.

Social bonds with family

Almost everyone (99%) reported that they have family outside Ireland that they keep in touch with regularly. The largest proportion use WhatsApp (48%), audio messages and video calls, followed by other forms of social media. A tenth mentioned phone calls and a further tenth video calls. These daily or weekly calls can be time consuming (some report spending hours at night on the phone to family) but provide a valuable source of connection for refugees in Ireland. Ownership of smart phones (common in Lebanon and Jordan amongst Syrian refugees) permits connection at low cost, across time zones, and supports engagement by the whole family in these connections. Almost a third (29%) are seriously worried about the situation of family in third countries, and regular connection helps them to cope.

Family reunification is the crucial key issue for most resettled refugees, after language acquisition, to establish their new lives within a new community. UNHCR is in communication regularly with refugees in Ireland who worry constantly about family members living in Lebanon and Jordan, as well as those still in the Syrian Arab Republic.[71] Under the IRPP Humanitarian Admission Programme 2018/19 (IHAP), a commitment was made to admit 740 family members of refugees, of which 361 people have arrived in Ireland.[72] Under this programme, refugees can only apply for admission their family members within 12 months of arrival, and for adult applicants, eligible family members are defined as spouses or civil partners (pre-existing), or children under 18 years old. Parents and siblings of adult refugees are not included in the scheme, nor children who are over 18 or married.

In 2016, the UNHCR reported a high level of satisfaction and performance among resettled refugees in Ireland who were reunited with their family members under resettlement or family reunification compared with other refugees. The main concern for this group was to improve their English language. In contrast, refugees who worry constantly about family members living under extremely dangerous circumstances in the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere cannot focus on and prioritise improving their English. They generally had difficulties getting involved in voluntary work or interacting with the local community.[73] Secure social bonds with family facilitated confidence in wider integration.

Forty-three per cent say family reunification remains a significant concern for them.

Family reunification remains one of the most significant concerns for 43 per cent of participants in this study. Nearly a third (30%) are worried due to unsafe conditions, war, lack of financial support, mandatory military service for young men, and risk of torture of family members. Some had to give up the names of their family members or friends in the Syrian Arab Republic under torture, and they carry guilt and fear from this. Participants described this affecting their mental health, concentration, and ability to learn new languages and skills.

"It is very difficult for me. I am trying to learn as much as possible. I am thinking too much about my sons. I don't understand what I am learning. It affects my concentration. I mean, what I get here, I forget it quickly because I am thinking of my sons frequently. [Are there any problems with the education system of your tutors or the curriculum maybe?] No, they are very nice. They teach us in a good way. The problem is me. My situation is that I keep thinking that my sons' situation will worsen, and it affects my health and ability to learn." (Abia, female, 48 years old, arrived 2018)

Family reunification is sought for adult sons (14%), adult daughters and grandchildren (21%), parents (14%), adult siblings (37%), and families in general (14%). For more than a third of those seeking family reunification, the purpose was in part to assist the family already in Ireland with caring responsibilities for themselves, their spouses, or children, to release able family members to the labour market, and to provide other forms of support.

"I would like to ask the Government to allow family reunification, or when they want to resettle families, not to separate them. We feel lonely here, family being together is very important to work even if we can work like one hand. We can share information and support each

71 A previous scheme, which closed in 2014, permitted naturalised Irish citizens of Syrian birth and Syrian nationals already lawfully resident in the State to make applications for vulnerable close family members to join them in Ireland on a temporary basis for up to two years. Family reunification conditions were amended by the International Protection Act 2015. UNHCR, *Report of UNHCR's Participatory Assessments with Syrian Refugees*, p.19.; Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme Information Leaflet, UNHCR (December 2016), p. 32.; International Protection Act 2015, Sections 56–57.

72 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth, *IRPP Divisional Manual*, p. 5.

73 UNHCR, *Report of UNHCR's Participatory Assessments with Syrian Refugees*, p 22.

other to integrate more. All refugees in Lebanon and Jordan are in a bad condition." (Usama, male, 45 years old, arrived 2018)

Just under a tenth (8%) of participants in this study had successful family reunification. Their responses indicate a greater satisfaction being in Ireland, with a more positive outlook and more focus on integration. Five per cent mentioned unsuccessful applications. Lack of understanding of the process and its limitations on eligible family led to frustration and disappointment, as well as conflict with resettlement workers and interpreters who refused to help or discouraged applications. Requests for help with family reunification were the most common additional information at the end of interviews in this study. Although information is provided in pre-departure orientation on eligibility for reunification, evidence suggests that trauma may affect the way in which information is processed, and repetition of this information specifically could reduce later distress, as family reunification possibilities are so important to a choice of destination for resettled refugees who choose to travel ahead of other family members.

Social bonds with other Syrians and/or Muslims in Ireland

For first generation migrants, connection to communities of origin can reduce the stress associated with waiting for family reunification, and build mutual help, which reduce the feeling of being a 'guest' in a new land, as well as bolstering their children's cultural knowledge, language skills and pride in their identity. Group efforts can improve experiences in the local area as schools and other institutions become aware of cultural and linguistic preferences and reduce fear and discomfort on all sides. Refugees benefit from supports to become more involved in their own ethnic and faith communities, for example by attending events, social groups and becoming part of a community of origin, whilst also being becoming part of the wider community.[74]

Forty-three per cent are part of self-organized Syrian groups in Ireland, giving and receiving help through them.

To explore the strength of mutual exchange networks amongst the participants, they were asked, 'Are you part of any Syrian groups here in Ireland?', and 'Do you get help or advice from these groups? Do you help anyone else in these groups?'. Just under half (43%) reported that they are part of one or more Syrian group/s. These include groups of people who travelled together from Lebanon, Syrian/Muslim community organizations, a women's group in Donegal, an angling group in Thurles and Syrian groups on social media (helpful for those at a distance and/or with few transport options). Thirteen per cent are in WhatsApp groups. Fourteen per cent made new friends during the transition to Ireland from Lebanon or Jordan, and 37 per cent had friends from their time in the EROCs that they maintained contact with.

"I saw him at first at the UNHCR Lebanon. We were about to finish our preparations for travel to Ireland. The good coincidence is that he has been settled in the same town I live. later, we came closer to make a strong friendship." (Kadeem, male, 50 years old, arrived 2018)

"I have a friend, I met him at the hotel (reception centre) upon arrival. I met many people I have never met. They are from my hometown, but I met them here." (Anas, male, 51 years old)

More than half of participants had found new friends (Syrian or Muslim) in the local area or neighbourhood, through schools, mosque, or gyms.

"I am very sociable, for example when I was shopping, I saw a lady wearing a hijab, I went and said 'hi' and I told her I am from [a city in the Syrian Arab Republic] and we made friends and we became very good friends." (Anisah, female, 27 years old, arrived 2018)

Length of time resident in Ireland had no impact on the membership of such groups, with similar proportions of each cohort enjoying these bonds. All of those who said they were part of such groups agreed that they get help or advice from these groups. This included language and emotional support. All also said that they offered advice and help where they could. Those who did so proactively found a source of pride in this. Participants were also asked if they have someone from their own community to talk with when they need support. Almost two-thirds (65%) confirmed that they did.

"I know my neighbour who is from the Syrian Arab Republic, and he is very helpful. He supports me. He has good English because he studied in the Syrian Arabic Republic. If we have difficulty understanding matters, we (my wife and I) get his help." (Abbas, male, 31 years old, arrived 2018)

Some of these groups have facilitated intensive social bonds, with families supporting each other in relation to weddings, bereavements, children's education, beginning to drive, shopping, and other day-to-day activities. They provide each other with support on social, moral, and emotional issues, however families can also be very private, afraid of stigmatisation by others in their community. Participants meet on occasions like Ramadan and Eid, and those with access to a car often visit other Syrian families at weekends.

"We have a group in WhatsApp, we send questions through it, who know the answer will arrive. Also, I told you I organize every Eid party for children. I rent some bouncing castles, slides, swings." (Hady, male, 26 years old, arrived 2015)

Almost half (46%) of participants prefer not to ask for help from other members of the Syrian community due to unreliable information, and prefer to refer to ask resettlement workers, interpreters, local authorities, or Irish friends/neighbours and then verify with their social network.

"No, I don't get help from my friends. That's because all my friends are like me. They do not know the English language. They need support like me too." (Sandra, female, 39 years old, arrived 2019)

74 *Ibid.*

SOCIAL BRIDGES

Social bridges are connections with people of a different background. These relationships connect diverse people or groups. Whilst they are not characterised by the same high levels of trust as social bonds, social bridges are characterised by sufficient trust to enable people to interact and exchange resources. Social bridges provide the route for the sharing of resource and opportunity between people who are dissimilar.

Social bridges are the relationships made in the new community that facilitate integration through facilitating further interactions. A sense of community and a feeling of investment in the area encourages long-term settlement. More connections in the local community facilitates further efforts by refugees to integration. Through social mixing in the wider community, trust and reciprocity is built up. A lack of social bridges leads to social segregation in a local area. Tight social networks in an area which exclude newcomers, distrust of difference, and racism amongst the receiving population can make social bridges difficult to establish, especially since they can decrease refugee confidence and deter from further attempts to connect. Clear and visible signs of inclusion by receiving communities, with proactive efforts to encounter newcomers, are often necessary to indicate that new connections can be forged and are welcome.

Syrian refugees belong

A sense of belonging to the neighbourhood and local area, and confidence to ask neighbours for help are useful indicators of social bridges. Almost all (95%) of participants in this study felt a sense of belonging. Around a third (35%) feel confident to ask their neighbours of all backgrounds for help (i.e. in filling forms,).

"I have been in this region for about two years. I feel this area is my homeland. I feel a sense of belonging. Whenever I go, I feel that I miss this community. Even if I go to other beautiful counties like Dublin, I still feel that this community is preferred to me. That's because I have created a very good community network." (Kadeem, male, 50 years old, arrived 2018)

Ninety-five per cent feel a sense of belonging in Ireland.

"I would like to tell you that the community is very helpful, they support me to understand language, but [I'm] still weak" (Ayesha, female, 50 years old, arrived 2015)

We asked participants what helped Ireland feel like home, and 95 per cent of responses were highly positive, mostly indicating they felt Ireland was their 'new home'. Sixty per cent attributed this to a sense of safety in Ireland. This was often followed with praise and gratitude for the Irish people, with 43 per cent ascribing feeling at home to their kindness. Additionally, 32 per cent talked about Ireland as a country of equality and human rights, making comparisons to their experience in Lebanon or Jordan, where they described feeling unwelcome and unwanted. Refugee parents also talked about the hope they felt for their children's future. These responses are positive indicators for how well refugees are being received by communities.

"Safety, having my husband and kids by my side, Ireland is such an amazing place. The only thing better is the Irish people." (Ayesha, female, 31 years old)

Participants mentioned a process of slowly adjusting to their surroundings until they felt they belonged. There was mention of English as a hurdle to this transition, answers indicating participants want to improve their English to encourage a feeling of belonging. A few responses talked about how it helped when local people were more social, they felt less like a foreigner. Those who lived in communities with more migrants also felt more equal and accepted. There were no suggestions that participants wanted to leave Ireland, in fact, a few participants had such a sense of connection to the area they said they missed it when they left and stated they do not want to leave.

"Yes, I feel a sense of belonging. I feel that I am part of this area. Even if they offer me another place, I will choose this area." (Mahir, male, 39 years old)

Different backgrounds getting along

We asked participants if they felt people of different backgrounds got along in their local area, and 93 per cent said they could. Refugees mostly felt they were treated with respect and free to practice their faith. In addition, refugees shared respect for others. A minority talked about experiences in rural areas, where refugees felt locals were far less social. Participants also talk about how they would like events to experience different cultures, but due to the pandemic these have stopped. Community events and awareness raising initiatives have an integral function in resettlement projects.[75]

"Yes, everyone gets along together, we used to have get-together parties before the pandemic." (Abdul, male, 35 years old)

Participants were also asked if they thought Syrians in other parts of Ireland had different experiences. Almost all (95%) said there were differences, some better, some worse. Difference of opportunity was the most frequently mentioned issue. Some talked about the experience of friends or family living in areas where local people were more supportive and social, while others focused on greater opportunities to work and study in cities and large towns than in rural areas. Negative views were most often related to the level of support provided on arrival in a county, since this most heavily impacted how refugees navigated the physical, information and social landscape of an area during the first year in their new home. These opinions were informed by conversations with other refugees, and for some by visits to other areas.

Making friends

Participants were asked about friends they had made since arriving in Ireland. Only seven per cent said they did not make any friends. Most (91%) had made a close friend, often with other refugees and migrants. While some of these met during the resettlement

75 UNHCR, Resettlement Handbook.

process, others met after arriving in their new house. Participants made friends in their neighbourhoods, schools, shops, and through social media. Other nationalities were not uncommon, some friends were Irish, Moroccan, Egyptian, Polish, and more. But participants noted that without support to develop their English, they struggled to make friends with non-Arabic speakers. This regret about the language barrier is an indicator of refugees' interest to interact with the local community and integrate into Irish society. Difficulties making friends were greatest for those with health issues that limited their opportunities to meet new people.

"I do not have Irish friends because of my health condition, I can't leave my house, and then the language barrier." (Samer, male, 36 years old)

The majority of refugees (54%) made new acquaintances in the local area, often neighbours, and they often provided important support functions, helping with language, post, appointments and sharing daily friendly exchanges (even with little common language). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the connections refugees could make, especially among the 2019 cohort, who reached their new homes just a year to six months before the first lockdown. Beyond integration, interactions and connections are essential for refugees to combat loneliness, and mental health issues that come from isolation.[76]

"I am trying to create situations that lead to conversation, but you know some people try to avoid others due to the COVID-19 restrictions. One of my neighbours, for example, I tried knocking his door and presenting a plate of sweets and cake as this is our custom in my culture when we have Eid (Eid Al-Fitr). He picked just one piece and avoided talking." (Abbas, male, 31 years old)

SOCIAL LINKS

While social bonds and bridges describe relationships between individuals within a society and can be understood as 'horizontal' relationships, social links refer to the 'vertical' relationships between people and the institutions of the society in which they live. Social links are connections with institutions, including local and central government services. To live as a full member of a society, it is necessary to access rights or services and to fulfil obligations. Social links connect the individual to the power structures of society in both directions, as a contributor (e.g. through voting) as well as a beneficiary (e.g. when needing to access support). A sense of alienation may be characterised by a lack of social links.

After resettlement in Ireland, resettled refugees are provided with a resettlement worker, interpreter, and other support services. These services have been put in place by each local partnership for between 12 and 18 months. This is a short-term source of support, providing initial linkages with local institutions, responding to urgent queries, and putting in place initial arrangements such as helping families to set up a bank account and register with a GP. Interpreter support is available for the duration of the programme, although there is significant pressure on interpreter time. Interpreters can be mainly occupied interpreting between refugees and a resettlement worker (Arabic is not a requirement of the post) rather than between refugees and institutions.

Low confidence in English undermines refugee's ability to ask for help.

Where to find support

When looking for advice, 39 per cent said they would ask their interpreter first. The majority of this response came from refugees that arrived in 2019, with 18 per cent arriving in 2018 and 8 per cent in 2017. In the responses it was made clear that many of them still have low English. A few participants raised concerns about what they will do when the support ends in the coming months, when contracts with interpreters end, when they will be required to pay for translations and will not be a priority for interpreters.

"I used to get support from the support worker. He was an interpreter and support worker at the same time. Before they ended his contract a few weeks ago, we used to get support from him on many issues. Now I am stuck. I have a number of issues related to services and laws, but I have no support." (Ghazi, male, 25 years old)

Resettlement workers try to encourage refugees to be independent, but some still struggle after the initial resettlement period, as earlier cohorts did.[77] Sixteen per cent stated they had no one to help and they were not sure where to get the right information. Half of those arrived in 2019, but this was also true for refugees in all earlier cohorts. Signposting to other sources of support should occur during the resettlement period, but the 2019 cohort was particularly affected, likely due to the effects of the pandemic on their English learning, office closure of organizations providing advice and limited opportunities to meet others socially who might help.

65 per cent are not confident they can find and complete forms they need alone.

"The period of the lockdown during COVID-19 should not be accounted for on the contract of those who give support. I mean, we were sitting home, and no service was working. We should get an extra period so that we benefit from support and interpretation services. It is a big problem and a mistake if we lose this period of support, because it will affect our integration in this country. We are still vulnerable immigrants. We need support, please." (Souzan, female, 38 years old)

Increased length of residence meant that refugees on the whole did develop other sources of support. Those mentioned include friends (10%); Citizens Information (8.5%); a capable/fluent family member (7%); neighbours (6%); or a lawyer (perhaps in an NGO) (5%). It is notable that very few of these mention institutions or organizations which can provide reliable advice and support. Children were frequently required to translate in these and other situations.

"To be frank I only depend on my husband first, then my son. Then they will ask the council or a translator." (Farida, female, 49 years old)

"Citizen information is a trusted resource for me." (Elias, male, 36 years old)

Poor English was the reason that many did not ask for help from other sources. Those who had been here longer were less likely to give this response, which suggests given time they can become more independent, but they need help achieving this sooner.

"This is one of the concerns and worries I have. I ask myself "Who will support us when they leave us?". Especially, I am alone here." (Abia, female, 48 years old)

Investigating refugees' dependence on support services, we asked them if they felt confident finding and completing forms. Just over 26 per cent felt confident finding and completing forms, but needed some assistance, at minimum they said they could complete their details and answer simple questions. A slight majority (55%) did not feel confident at all, and this group included most with basic or less than basic English. The remaining portion of responses (12%) stated they felt confident completing forms and did not suggest they needed any help.

"Yes, I can fill any form alone but with little help from the interpreter." (Waleed, male, 32 years old)

AWARENESS OF KEY INSTITUTIONS

An understanding of the roles of key institutions in the local area will be important. Being able to contact and interact with institutions like the local authority and Gardaí could become necessary for a number of reasons. Refugees were asked if they trusted the local authority and Gardaí. Most (82%) indicated a good level of trust in the local authority, and refugees suggested they valued the support given to them, or felt they had no reason not to trust them. A few did not trust the local authority (8%) because of bad experiences, particularly poor communication.

"I would like the administrators and the local authorities to communicate with us. I would like to request their help with any issues we deal with and our needs. I would like to request from them to form some social activities for us to join, and I would like them to listen to us." (Rosarita, female, 26 years old)

A slightly larger proportion (91%) trusted the Gardaí, although most said they had no interactions with them. Some described the Gardaí as helpful and good people. A small minority, just over five per cent, did not trust the police, having had bad experiences, feeling they had been discriminated against, or that Gardaí response to racial harassment was disappointing. Some who said they did trust Gardaí differentiated this from their fear and intimidation during experiences in Syrian Arabic Republic and Lebanon, and events to introduce refugees to Gardaí were suggested, to ease this anxiety and give refugees opportunities to ask about local laws (like angling).

76 58 per cent of migrants and refugees in London described loneliness and isolation as their biggest challenge – The Forum (2015) This is how it feels to be lonely: A report on migrants and refugees' experiences with loneliness in London. Christodoulou P (2014) This Is How It Feels to Be Lonely: A Report on Migrants' and Refugees' Experience with Loneliness in London. London: Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum.p.6

77 UNHCR (2016), *Report of UNHCR's Participatory Assessments with Syrian Refugees*, Pg. 23. https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/publications/brochures/5d7f63734/report-of-unhcrs-participatory-assessments-with-syrian-refugees.html.

CHAPTER 3: THE FACILITATORS AND FOUNDATION OF INTEGRATION

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There are five domains within the framework under the heading Facilitators: language, culture, digital skills, safety and stability. These represent key facilitating factors for the process of integration. Each is recognised as necessary for people to effectively integrate into the wider community. Language and communication are well-established facilitators of integration across a wide range of areas, but they also help to secure rights in important areas like healthcare, housing, and education on arrival. Culture refers to the way that an understanding of others' cultural values, practices and beliefs promotes integration between people of different backgrounds. The domain of digital skills recognises significant developments in new communication technologies that mean access to people, services and rights are often now either dependent on, or facilitated by, technology. A sense of personal safety and of social stability allows people to engage with services and with other people to establish their lives and to integrate. We first interrogate these five domains before exploring the final domain, rights and responsibilities, which assesses how refugees are aware of and enabled to exercise their rights and fulfil the ordinary responsibilities of living in the receiving country.

CULTURE

Integration is facilitated by the ability of refugees "to participate to the extent that a person needs and wishes in all of the major components of society without having to relinquish his or her own cultural identity." In other words, integration is not assimilation into Irish culture but is better thought of in terms of mutual accommodation between migrants and receiving communities.[78]

Cultural knowledge includes very practical information for daily living (e.g. regarding transport, utilities, benefits) as well as customs and social expectations. Mutual knowledge of one another's values, cultures and practices promotes the developing of social connections between people of diverse backgrounds.

The integration of refugees is supported through the provision of access to mainstream State services through local resettlement support teams. Each Support Team consists of a Resettlement Support Worker with social care and integration experience, and an Arabic-speaking Intercultural Support Worker. Upon arrival, resettled refugees are generally accommodated in EROCs for initial orientation. This period provides refugees with an opportunity to be familiar with the Irish cultural context, while they begin to recover from trauma associated with war and leaving their home country and beloved ones.[79] Resettlement workers are aware of emotional and cultural challenges that refugees had to deal with during their journey to that point.[80]

Almost half (48%) of participants see no cultural barriers to integration in Irish society. Forty-two per cent of participants see religious differences as part of cultural differences that includes differences in terms of food highlighted by 18 per cent (e.g. pork consumption) and differences related to drinking alcohol highlighted by 29 per cent of participants. Only a few women mentioned differences around gender expectations. There is a significant difference regarding women's freedom to work and drive in Ireland that is appreciated by female participants. A third of female participants mentioned the opportunity to drive in Ireland as a cultural norm in Irish society. There were references to the cultural differences such as wearing hijab in Islamic culture and mixed-gender events in Irish culture.

"There are no cultural differences with the Irish people that stop me joining in activities here. The Irish people are a lovely community who doesn't only like to explore other people's cultures, but they also like to show their cultures to others." (Daniya, female, 33 years old, arrived 2019)

Regardless of religious differences, there were many mentions of similarities between two cultures, such as the importance of family in both cultures, or friendly relationships among neighbours and also between kids in one neighbourhood.

"I don't really have much culture clash as my Irish friends are very respectful." (Sara, female, 41 years old)

"Neighbours are so helpful; kids play with other kids around us. In the area, the people like to integrate my kids. They knock at our doors to ask the girls to play with them, I felt there are similarities between our tradition and theirs." (Layal, female, 38 years old)

Although there were references to cultural differences, generally participants do not feel that these stop them from engaging with activities and integrating in Irish society. Many commented on the respect they receive from the local community, the openness of Irish people, highlighting several points of similarities between the two cultures.

"We have a new life in Ireland, different traditions, different culture, here, they respect human beings. People are equal, there is a law that they respect. The president and a minister are the same, like all people. No discrimination, social life is different, we used to welcome people if they knock at our doors doesn't matter the time." (Bashir, male, 52 years old, arrived 2018)

"I don't drink alcohol and I don't eat bacon or ham. If they invite me, I go with them and tell them this is my culture." (Abia, female, 28 years old, arrived 2018)

However, while many participants mentioned that they had no problem in explaining the cultural differences (e.g. in refusing alcohol), there were some mentions of feeling embarrassed in such situations and tendency to decline any upcoming invitations. While Irish people are mainly described as friendly by the majority of participants, there were some perceptions that they are not as

78 Doras, *Refugee Resettlement Toolkit*, p. 13.
79 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth, *IRPP Divisional Manual* p. 8; Also see Doras (2019) Experiences of Resettlement, The Wexford Refugee Resettlement, Programme - Two Years On.
80 Doras, *Experiences of Resettlement.*

social as Syrians from their perspective. Additionally, the lack of English language knowledge prevents cultural exchange between refugees and the Irish community.

"I wish I received support in language to integrate with Irish people, I can't join them or explain about our culture. I wish they could invite us to their events to integrate more and support us with interpreters, but the interpreter did not help us too much. I want the translator to be with us or tell us about events and help us to integrate with them and understand more, and also for the other side to let them know what we want to say and can know us better in customs and religion." (Abelarda, female, 22 years old, arrived 2018)

Overall, it appears that the majority of participants expect that cultural differences to be mutually respected and celebrated. Some participants expressed their interest in multi-cultural events/ festivals to learn about other cultures.

"It is nice to know other cultures, but nobody organized for us a multicultural festival like in other places in Ireland. I would like to know but it is not available. This matter is away from the resettlement support coordinator. We are here in [this town] and have no cultural festivals." (Mahir, male, 39 years old, arrived 2018)

The impact of COVID-19 restrictions on cultural exchange

It should also be taken into consideration that pandemic restrictions acted as a serious barrier in mixing different groups to get to know each other's cultures in a multi-cultural context, especially for those who arrived in 2019. This fact added barriers in the domain of culture along with language barriers. Additionally, the lack of opportunity to be familiar with Irish culture can have a negative impact on other domains of integration such as work and social bonds. The lack of awareness of the local work cultures might deprive job seekers of finding their desirable jobs.

Awareness raising about cultural norms can help both refugees and host communities to have a productive mutual exchange and benefit from each other's presence. To this purpose, material and immaterial resources must be allocated to make both sides aware of cultural differences. For example, arranging events, festivals, and workshops can improve intercultural exchanges and facilitate integration without assimilation. Engagement with wider cultural institutions and events on a regular basis should also be facilitated and encouraged through supported initiatives.

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

The ability to communicate is essential for all social connections including, crucially, with other communities and with state and voluntary agencies such as local government and non-government services, political processes and being able to perform civic duties. Higher language proficiency among resettled refugees also importantly leads to more contact, and more positive contact, with the majority population, which in turn leads to higher well-being among refugees.

Many refugees spend years in third countries prior to resettlement and have experienced prolonged conflict and traumatic events. Unlike other migrants, refugees have often experienced interruptions to their education, or lack of access to education. Furthermore, refugees are resettled on grounds of their vulnerability. There is some evidence that past traumatic experiences influence motivation for language learning, yet little is understood internationally about how trauma or health affects language acquisition.[81] While refugees develop their language skills, their access to interpretation and translation services are crucial for providing them with the confidence they need to settle in the new community. Self-confidence is an important factor in the learning of any second language. The more refugees feel part of the receiving country and its society the more they are ready to acquire the necessary (linguistic and other) competencies to be(come) successful members.[82]

Language support

When families arrive in Ireland, they are initially accommodated in EROCs where they participate in a language and orientation programme organized by the Department of Justice and Equality, before being resettled into receiving counties.[83] The Education and Training board provides an 8–10-week language training and orientation programme. The local Education Training Board (ETB) provides English classes for Syrian refugee resettlement programmes. There is a wide variation in the educational requirements and achievements of the Syrian adults in the resettlement programme. In the early 2000s, the Syrian Arabic Republic's adult basic literacy rate was over 90 per cent for men and over 77 per cent for women, having risen drastically in the preceding 20 years.[84] The level of this research participants' literacy in Arabic and English languages are reflected in the following graph:

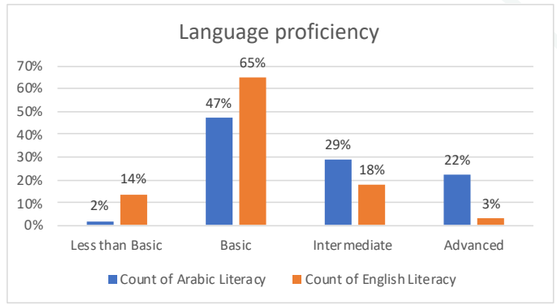

Figure 2: Language Proficiency among respondents to the survey.

The majority of participants are literate in Arabic and more than 80 per cent of them have basic English language knowledge. They all are keen to improve their English language literacy and skills to engage with the local community and become self-reliant through education and/or employment.

Forty-nine per cent have only basic Arabic literacy or are preliterate

Language education is the most utilised form of education for adult refugees, and it plays an important part in the process of integration, providing skills necessary for effective functioning in the community and the workforce. Without exception, all of the participants believe that they should improve their English language. Some structural barriers in the system of English language training were highlighted by participants, such as short and unstable courses, limited levels of English courses with mixed level English learners, and the lack of Arabic speaking English teachers. These issues in the learner experience can impact other integration domains such as work, mental health, and social relationships. Participants felt they had better opportunities in the EROCs to develop their English language alongside other skills with considerable impact on their confidence, and upon their entrance into society they lost such support.

"We didn't get the full opportunity to learn English. That is due to COVID-19 restrictions and the lockdown. We learn one to two hours weekly. I think this is not enough. Even the materials we study are not going to be memorised or stick in my mind from this week to the next week. However, when we were in the reception centre, we were attending five days a week. It was very beneficial for us. At that time, I learnt a lot in five months. What helped me to focus on learning was because I had nothing to do except learning. Later, when we moved to the house, I felt distracted by many concerns rather than learning English. This situation is not only for me. It is for most or all the refugees." (Kadeem, male, 50 years old, arrived 2018)

Many Syrians have some knowledge of the English language prior to arrival but most likely few will have advanced proficiency. Learning English has to be a priority for refugees. English will help with daily life, integration, and independence. Without English refugees may struggle to access education or work, and experience difficulties communicating with services. For Resettlement Programmes the local Education and Training Board (ETB) is responsible for providing English lessons (ESOL). This should normally be approximately 15 or 20 hours of learning per week for one year.[85] Challenges with participation for Syrian refugees in Ireland have been extensively addressed elsewhere.[86]

Satisfaction with learning English

When asked about their experience with learning English in Ireland, 42 per cent indicated they were satisfied. The 2019 cohort made up nearly half of those satisfied, but only a third of the total 2019 cohort was satisfied. Positive comments talked about the encouraging teachers and self-evaluated progress from no English.

Forty-eight per cent have a neighbour or someone else they talk to regularly in English.

"From the first month of our arrival the council created for us an English class, they evaluated our levels and divided us. I had zero English. We stayed 2 years at school, it really was amazing, I learned a lot from them" (Nour, female, 24 years old)

Around half (48%) were not satisfied with the courses provided, because of shortness of classes, lack of higher-level courses, and lack of available childcare. Some mentioned being in Syrian-only classes, stating they would prefer mixed classes, believing this would help with their English.

"My idea is to create chances of mixing Syrian refugees with Irish people. I mean, we will get better chances to practice hearing and listening to English language speakers. We will learn from them better than in classes only." (Zuhair, male, 31 years old)

There are significant challenges presented by prior levels of literacy in Arabic and confidence in the English language. More than three-quarters (79%) reported having only basic or less than basic English. Length of residence was not determinant of better English. This indicates an issue with language learning among refugees that needs to be addressed. Many of the 2019 cohort commented on their experiences of online classes (due to COVID-19). A shared frustration across all cohorts was reduction from 20 hours of class a week to 2 hours a week, which affected motivation and their ability to consistently attend. Another was the provision of English courses with just one class for all levels. For those without much formal schooling in their own language, there is a need to have comprehensive learning supports and resource teachers who have adequate training and skills to teach outside the standard ESOL approach.

Participants often stop attending English classes when they find that health appointments or other commitments, transport or lack of childcare prevent regular attendance, or the classes do not meet their learning needs, and this has been an ongoing challenge for both providers and refugees. Thirteen per cent of participants in our sample actively chose independent study. However, most participants commonly stated their desire to improve their English and emphasised that they understood the importance of English.

"Yes, I have to study more and work. I feel bored at home. I would like to go to study. It would support me in integration." (Ranim, female, 30 years old)

Opportunities to practice

A large majority (84%) expressed difficulty when trying to speak with English speakers. The common reasons shared for this was that the refugees felt they could only say or understand simple phrases, some struggled to remember their words, but the dialect and speed of Irish people seems to be a key issue. Participants felt that courses provided did not prepare them for how local people actually talk.

81 Morrice, L., Tip, L.K., Collyer, M. and Brown, R. (2019). 'You can't have a good integration when you don't have a good communication': English language learning among resettled refugees in the UK. Journal of Refugee Studies. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fez023.
82 Krumm, H. J., & Plutzar, V. (2008). *Tailoring language provision and requirements to the needs and capacities of adult migrants.* Council of Europe: Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LIAM) project. https://rm.coe.int/16802fc1c8.
83 Respond support, Resettlement Services. Supporting the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). https://respondsupport.ie/refugee-resettlement-services/; Department of Justice (26.01.2017). Seanad Commencement Matter. Available online: http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/speech-260117.
84 *Doras, Resettlement Toolkit*, p.87.
85 Doras, *Refugee Resettlement Toolkit*, p. 47.
86 Ćatibušić, B., Gallagher, F., & Karazi, S. (2019). An investigation of ESOL provision for adult Syrian refugees in Ireland: Voices of support providers. In *ESOL provision in the UK and Ireland: Challenges and opportunities*, edited by Mishan, F.,133-154. Bern: Peter Lang.; Ćatibušić, B., Gallagher, F., & Karazi, S. (2019). Beyond ESOL provision: Perspectives on language, intercultural and integration support for Syrian refugees in Ireland.. In F. Mishan (Ed.), ESOL provision in the UK and Ireland: challenges and opportunities, pp. 287–314. Bern: Peter Lang. https://www.peterlang.com/view/title/64036; Ćatibušić, B., F. Gallagher and S. Karazi (2021) Syrian voices: an exploration of the language learning needs and integration supports for adult Syrian refugees in Ireland, *International Journal of Inclusive Education* (25)1: 22-39, DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2019.1673957.

"There are some difficulties in communicating with people. I need to practice; they speak so fast." (Bashir, male, 52 years old)

Interestingly, even though they said they had difficulties communicating, 39 per cent of participants indicated they attempted to continue conversations. This was most common among the 2015 and 2016 cohorts, and over 60 per cent of those who attempted to overcome this issue were basic or less than basic English speakers. This shows motivation to overcome the language barrier, with answers suggesting local English speakers help.

"I can overcome this problem and learn English. They try to encourage me by correcting my language to learn better, when I have a dialogue with them, I will learn faster." (Sobhy, male, 49 years old)

We asked refugees if they had neighbours or someone else who they regularly practiced English with. Just 48 per cent said yes, and amongst these, two-thirds were engaged only in simple greetings or small talk. Only a fifth of participants engage in full conversations with English speakers regularly, the majority of those living in Ireland since 2015.

"Yeah, my friends near my house we always go around the town and we speak English between us." (Zahir, male, 60 years old)

Despite 45 per cent of participants saying they did not regularly speak with anyone, most mentioned short interactions. Even those recently arrived, with low English language proficiency, greet people and attempt small talk.

"Yeah, my neighbours. Not a lot, more of a good morning, goodnight, how's it going, and other small talk like that." (Mohamed, male, 32 years old).

Children and language

Although we did not interview anyone under 18, half of all refugees resettled in Ireland come under the age of 18 (most with their parents), and they too face challenges in language learning. Previous research with both teachers and parents found that primary and secondary school teachers faced issues with lack of language support, and many teachers felt they needed training.[87] We asked participants about how their children were doing in school, and parents reported that the younger they were the better they adapted to English. Engaging with secondary school subjects in English was a particular challenge. It needs to be remembered that most of these children are at a great disadvantage, they have had serious disruptions to their education, on top of the language barrier. Teachers were praised by parents for their efforts to support their children.

"At the beginning teachers helped him a lot. They try to give him more attention and support. Not to let him feel less than his friends in the same class." (Ranim, female, 30 years old)

DIGITAL SKILLS

Digital skills empower individuals and families to benefit from all available online facilities and information and promote independence among refugees. Syrian refugees have relied on their phones throughout their migration journeys for accurate information, navigation, and to stay connected to family members.[88] Digital skills of refugees are also important in resettlement. Through technology, refugees can access support for many issues[89] including housing, health services and social welfare. In terms of integration, digital skills can be as important as language, as more job applications, courses, and services are based online. For this reason, digital skills are recognised as a domain of integration.[90]

Access to digitised information, services and digital communities is increasingly essential to integration. Refugees are highly motivated to acquire digital skills at key transition points, particularly in relation to early acquisition of information about opportunities for work and education, and to establish contact with receiving communities.

Key indicators include how many have access to a smartphone or computer, have access to the internet, can access digital training courses, report confidence in using technology to communicate with family and friends, and report confidence in using technology to access digital services.

Access to and use of technology

Almost all (99%) of participants had access to a mobile phone, with less than four per cent sharing a phone with a partner, and a few on loan. These were mostly smartphones. Laptops and computers were far less common, with only 26 per cent reporting access to one. Often these were shared among the family. Almost a third of participants stated they did not know how to use a computer without being asked, mostly women. Families need digital skills as well as literacy in Arabic or English in order to benefit from the availability of a computer, as lack of experience and low literacy will limit most refugees in utilizing technology. The few participants who mentioned having access to a loaned laptop due to COVID-19 service closures will have to return them soon.

Only 26 per cent have access to a laptop or computer

"I borrowed one from my school to use for online study. However, they ask to get it back again." (Abbas, male, 31 years old)

The most common use for phones was contacting family and friends. Most contact with families overseas was made through social media, around 48 per cent through WhatsApp. Research on smartphone usage by Syrian refugees shows that voice functions in messenger apps are most popular for emotional connection with family and to circumvent literacy issues, and many other popular apps are capable of use with limited text input, but this should not be read as a proxy for digital literacy with computers or literacy overall.[91] Some parents were able to use the ClassDojo app on phones with school teachers to track children's progress and communicate with translations inside the app.

"My kids are in Lebanon; we keep in touch by phone through WhatsApp." (Qamar, female, 48 years old)

Digital skills are also increasingly necessary for children and young people, who use digital communications inside and outside the classroom to complete their schoolwork. The role of digital literacy in supporting education for resettled refugee children has been less widely considered, but it is evident that limited parental capacity to support digital skills and awareness at home has an impact on children's participation in education.[92]

Additionally, young refugees should have proper access to online information about available courses, enrolment process and grants, and many opportunities of education and work. However, only 26 per cent of participants report access to a laptop or computer which is often shared in the family. A few participants mentioned having access to a loaned laptop that should be returned due to COVID-19 service closures. Additionally, access to smartphones do not give them full access to the digital world.

Laptops were exclusively described as being for work or study. Those who had received laptops on loan were given them for online classes, either for the parents or children. Beyond this, references to using technology were sparse. A significant proportion of those literate in Arabic make use of translator apps to assist with forms, but also in some cases to communicate in real time.

"Depends on the subject, if the conversation is general and easy, I can speak and understand, if they go deep, I can't go on and I have to use a translator." (Maya, female, 28 years old)

In sum, resettled refugees in Ireland have good access to smartphones and internet, but not laptops, are confident communicating with family and friends, but have little access to computers and digital training courses and few use technology to access services.

COVID-19 particularly illustrated the digital literacy gap that affects refugees, as many refugees have difficulties in accessing online teaching and learning, but also everyday services. In response to COVID-19, families in Ireland could have benefited from additional educational supports such as online grinds and tuition or supervised study. Nonetheless, the barriers faced by refugee parents has impacted their children's ability to gain access to available social and educational resources in this context. Increasing digital skills can be an effective way to assist refugees into accessing key services independently, although literacy in Arabic and English should be borne in mind. Language literacy is both an important predictor and result of the capacity to develop digital skills quickly. Digital skills can assist language learners with access to translation and practice apps, as well as immersion in the destination country language. However, for those who have low levels of literacy in their own language (coming from primarily oral or low literacy contexts), text-based apps and websites are not only a challenge in terms of comprehension (regardless of own or other language) but also cause a particular form of cultural stress, where written communications are seen as formal and urgent, and experienced as alienating. Refugees with low literacy favour voice-note apps, which are convenient for low connectivity (cheaper than calls, images, or video), but this does not predict development into other digital skills areas without additional language support.

A digital skills gap undermines efforts in the resettlement programme to expand access to information and services. Digital skills provision embedded in training and information sessions directly aimed at securing employment and education and other opportunities, and that exposes refugees to the digital capabilities of a range of devices, including their own smartphones, could maximise their capacity to develop skills despite the challenges of accessing computer equipment and internet access as they navigate their new environment. Training to support refugees to navigate digital information landscapes, and digital champions who share the home languages of refugee learners, can increase their capacity to engage with the intensive digitalisation of both service provision and social interaction post COVID-19.

SAFETY

Conflict and persecution have forced refugees to flee their homes in search of safety. It is important to bear in mind that while they have resettled in a safe country, they still carry the trauma of having left behind their home country, family, and friends. They may feel conflicted, happy to be here but mournful of the lives they have had to leave behind."[93] A sense of safety provides an essential foundation to forming relationships with people and society, enabling progress through education and/or employment and participating in leisure pursuits. Refugees unfortunately may face racist violence or may live in neighbourhoods where they are exposed to crime. These can erode confidence, constrains engagement in social connection and distorts cultural knowledge. Key indicators include trust in police, experience of hate crime and awareness of rights.

As part of the IRPP, refugees are supported to settle in safe areas and secure housing conditions. They are also provided information regarding child protection and safety in Ireland.[94] The majority of participants appreciate the Irish government for offering them safety and security. Just five per cent of participants reported that they do not feel safe in their own neighbourhood. A significant majority (78%) explicitly expressed they feel safe in their neighbourhood. As well, 91 per cent of participants trust police, and 82 per cent trust local authorities.

One fifth (19%) have experienced antisocial behaviour in Ireland, with 12 per cent experiencing racist incidents including

87 Ní Raghallaigh, M., Smith, K. M., & Scholtz, J. (2019). *Safe haven: The needs of refugee children arriving in Ireland through the Irish refugee protection programme: An exploratory study.* Children's Rights Alliance.
88 Latonero, M., & Kift, P. (2018). On digital passages and borders: Refugees and the new infrastructure for movement and control. *Social Media+ Society*, 4(1), 2056305118764432.
89 Ram, A. (2015, December 15). Smartphones bring solace and aid to desperate refugees. *Wired*. Retrieved from http://www.wired.com/2015/12/smartphone-syrian-refugee-crisis/.
90 Ndofor-Tah, *Indicators of Integration framework*.
91 Talhouk, R., Mesmar, S., Thieme, A., Balaam, M., Olivier, P., Akik, C., & Ghattas, H. (2016, May). Syrian refugees and digital health in Lebanon: Opportunities for improving antenatal health. *In Proceedings of the 2016 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 331–342).
92 Omerbašić, Delila (2015). Literacy as a Translocal Practice: Digital Multimodal Literacy Practices Among Girls Resettled as Refugees. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 58(6), 472– 481. doi:10.1002/jaal.389.
93 Doras, *Resettlement Toolkit*, p. 41.
94 *Ibid*.

microaggressions, vandalism and violence. One participant reported racial and sexual harassment by her landlord, and amongst those who had contact with Gardaí, there was frustration with poor responses to their situations as well as good experiences. However, there is no evidence that participants were aware of key institutions, their rights and supports in these cases, which might indicate integration in this area. As with social links, signposting needs reinforcement and clarity for refugees to counter language barriers and adaptation.

Generally, antisocial behaviours were experienced at different levels, such as experiences of racial, cultural, or religious harassment or incidents and hate crime, especially by Muslim women who wearing hijab. School-age children reporting experiences of incidents of bullying or racist abuse in schools and feeling fearful or insecure. There are a small number of cases of children being bullied or excluded, however the majority feel safe.

"I experienced antisocial behaviour in my local Tesco twice where there was a lot of shouting involved and I would say I was targeted cause I wear the hijab" (Maisha, female, 58 years old, arrived 2015)

While antisocial behaviours are more reported in some areas, participants from some particular areas such as Donegal and Cavan expressed their full satisfaction with their neighbourhood in terms of community safety, social cohesion and availability of necessary amenities along with financial security. Generally, people feel welcome in the area and have not experienced hostility.

Generally, parents of young girls expressed their satisfaction that their daughters are safe in Ireland, and thus they have more opportunities to participate and progress in different fields to follow their goals in work and education.

"My daughters are happy in Ireland. They are studying, and safe now in comparison to Lebanon, which was not safe for my daughters to go outside of the house on their own. But in Ireland, they have the confidence to go outside and can go walking on the beach on their own." (Ahima, female, 44 years old, arrived 2019)

STABILITY

Individuals benefit from a sense of stability in their lives, such as a stable routine in their work, education, living circumstances and access to services. Stability is necessary for sustainable engagement with employment or education and other services. Mobility disrupts social networks, whereas stability supports social connections and can help to improve individual's perceptions of the area in which they live. Indicators in this domain include security of housing tenure, access to permanent employment, satisfaction with the local area, secure immigration status, family reunification, sense of belonging to an area, and reporting financial security. Some of these indicators already appear in other domains and have been discussed above in relation to housing, work, social bonds, and social bridges.

Financial security

Refugees are experiencing challenges in seeking work and establishing their own income. This means they remain dependent on the Social Welfare payments they receive. This payment is calculated based on the number of adults and children in the house and aims to provide enough to meet their basic needs.

When asked if they had worries about money, 55 per cent said yes. This response was more common for counties Cavan, Clare, Kerry, and Wexford, and amongst the 2019 cohort. A general concern was that welfare payments were not enough to match the cost of living, and since many were having difficulties stretching their budget, these answers suggest some financial insecurity. As intended, social welfare only covers basic needs, but this means that families had no extra money to save if there was an issue, if their children needed something for school, and some reported having to decide which bills to pay. This can be an emotional burden, which some described as causing them frustration that they could not provide for their family.

Seventy-eight per cent say they feel safe in their neighbourhood.

"Yes, I have. What I get is just for the basic needs. I live with the worry that if I have an emergency, I will have nothing to do. I don't go to restaurants or cafes because it is very expensive. This month I didn't pay my internet bill because I couldn't afford it." (Ghazi, male, 25 years old)

Two-fifths (37%) however were not concerned particularly about money, though frugality was a common feature of many discussions around leisure, education, and planning for the future. There were no strong indicators as to the difference between the two groups. Some refugees who were not aware of grants available for furniture, for example, got badly into debt on moving into their new house. Others have additional expenses caused by illness or disability. Many of them are also hoping to provide in future financially for family abroad, when they get work, but there is no evidence of them doing so at this time.

"They have been taking care of us really well and I am so grateful for it." (Mohamed, male, 32 years old)

There are a number of responses to this question on money where refugees say they do not want to depend on social welfare, they describe it as unsustainable. These participants seem motivated to be independent, talking about their job, looking for work, or plans to open a business. On the other hand, another participant described the stress and difficulty of managing work, study, a family, and house. Employment was low among the sample interviewed, and one participant talked about how even if they worked full-time, they would still not make enough. This is an issue for many migrants in general across Europe, with the immigrant in-work poverty rate at about 19 per cent in the EU.[95]

95 OECD (2018), Settling In, p. 104.

"Yes, I have worries. I have a family and what I get is not enough. I tried to get a full-time job, but it is low pay. It is the same payment as what I got from social welfare. I am worried that if my teenage kids ask me to buy something, I will not be able to get it for them." (Mahir, male, 39 years old)

Other key concerns

When asked what other worries they had, the most common answer was about the future of their children. Twenty-four per cent of participants had concerns about not being able to provide for their children's needs, they shared concerns about paying for their education, buying them what they need, and supporting their education. Seven per cent mentioned having children outside Ireland they worry they will never see again without reunification. These fears were most common among the 2018 and 2019 cohorts who have had less time to in Ireland, and due to COVID-19 their children have likely missed time in school integrating. With children having their education disrupted, having to experience hardship, it is unsurprising that parents would be concerned about supporting their integration and providing for their children.

Ireland feels like home because of a sense of safety, followed by the friendliness of local people

"My kid's future and education. They haven't made very many friends in school or outside of school, it was really a shock to them when they first came here from Lebanon, and I hope they will be able to feel like they belong here." (Fawaz, male, 37 years old)

There are worries among a small number of participants about immigration status. They expressed concern that they might be returned by the Irish government to their home country while it is still an unsafe place, and this brings them a sense of instability. In general, refugees are looking forward to applying for Irish citizenship and enjoying mobility within the EU, reconnecting with family who have gone to other EU countries. Deferred travel, particularly during the pandemic, has also been a source of some distress, but not reflective of significant insecurity. All refugees resettled in Ireland are eligible for Irish citizenship, and this is well known amongst the refugees.

Twenty-four per cent have concerns about not being able to provide for their children.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This last domain represents the basis upon which mutual expectations and obligations which support the process of integration are established. Ideas of citizenship and nationality – and the associated rights – fundamentally shape what counts as integration in a particular context. The acquisition of citizenship and exercise of the rights and actions this entails (such as voting) provides an important bedrock to the integration of any individual in a society. Research also highlights how both the attitudes of members of receiving communities towards groups such as migrants or refugees, and members of minority groups towards the process of integration itself, are influenced by perceptions of responsibilities, rights, and entitlements. This domain explicitly combines responsibilities and rights, recognising that both must be measured from the perspective of groups such as migrants as well as the receiving communities.

Indicators of integration in this domain includes how many refugees and people in the receiving communities understand and apply local law and responsibilities, report a sense of responsibility towards the local community, have a sense of equity in access to services, utilise affordable legal advice and welfare benefits advice, apply for citizenship and register to vote, participate in local civic forums, and understand anti-discrimination protections.

In previous sections, the barriers which are presented by language, low awareness of rights and supports in each of the key domains, and the lack of confidence in engaging with key institutions mark this domain as one which warrants much more attention. However, we also saw positive results in relation to citizenship, sense of belonging and enthusiasm to understand local laws and take responsibility for themselves and others in the Syrian and local community. These are very positive indicators and may prompt confidence that efforts to address the barriers above will meet with enthusiasm and investment from Syrian refugees in turn.

Understanding and awareness of rights and responsibilities are key factors to implement rights of different groups in society. English language knowledge is the key element to know rights and responsibilities. While participants rely on help with the English language, they also rely on interpreters, NGO staff and friends to realize their rights and entitlements. Measures should be adopted to develop rights awareness among refugees in Ireland. To this purpose, refugees in Ireland should have access to information in a range of languages on rights and entitlements in Ireland and responsibilities related to living in Ireland. Additionally, strategies should be developed to enable them to exercise their rights and entitlements, such as continuity of support services, availability of interpreting services to support information access and financial support for advice on rights.

CHAPTER 4: THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INTEGRATION

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The global pandemic has disrupted not only migration flows across the world, but also resettlement and integration activities designed to support refugees and migrants in their arrival countries. The emergency has impacted on all of the key domains of integration, including refugees and other migrants' ability to access/use support services, and the implications of new emerging needs for support priorities.

In mid-March 2020, protective measures were implemented across Europe to prevent the spread of COVID-19, mainly by reducing or avoiding face-to-face contacts and introducing extra hygienic precautions. These efforts to control the pandemic epidemiologically coincided with severe restrictions in the economic, public, and social life culminating in curfews and a far-reaching shutdown of the economy and public administration. The protective measures severely hampered a wide range of areas of social, economic, and political life. All of these have implications for the integration of migrants. The particularly lengthy nature of the restrictions, going on over more than a year in many countries, have prompted serious concerns about the isolation of migrants, particularly those who are newly arrived. Many migrant groups are specifically vulnerable to the health and socioeconomic impacts of the outbreak and encounter particular challenges due to restricted mobility and heightened xenophobia.[96]

Language acquisition

English learning appears to have endured major impacts. Many in the 2019 cohort had not completed a year of English classes before the pandemic began, classes were cancelled and moved online, and many participants shared that this negatively impacted their learning. Complaints of online classes were common, mostly because the classes were cut from 20 hours a week to 2 hours. Many had difficulties with the online format, as only a minority had access to a computer (26%). Furthermore, participants claimed the quality of their experience in lessons declined, and this demotivated some. Participants said they hope to return to classes as normal in the future.

"Three months after our arrival, COVID-19 had started so we did not get a good chance to attend English school. It turned out to be online classes. It was not very useful, one or two times per week. I wish it was daily even if they put me at the same school as my kids." (Ranim, female, 30 years old)

Children's education

Children across Ireland were impacted by closing schools. Refugee children have experienced major disruptions to their learning, and many were very eager to go to school. For these children it is important they are in school receiving support, teachers often provide additional support to refugee children. With the coronavirus lockdown, they have lost this support. Those who arrived closer to the start of lockdown will have been most affected.

"Because of COVID-19 they have suffered from weak integration with the Irish community. We left Mosney after we stayed just five months, then COVID-19 started. No schools. We know this is the world, not just for us, but it had a bad effect on them." (Usama, male, 45 years old)

Health

Many refugees have spent a long time in conflict zones and in crowded living conditions in third countries. (For example, in Lebanon, in the absence of refugee camps, some registered refugees live in spontaneously set up tended settlements.[97]) Coming to Ireland, many experience psychological issues. More than half (54%) of participants in this research experienced symptoms of depression or hopelessness. The emotional weight of the pandemic affects other aspects of refugee integration, possibly into the long term, such as their physical health, learning, and confidence in interactions. Considerations should be made to provide more mental health support to refugees.

"During COVID-19, some days I did not sleep." (Burhan, male, 35 years old)

Physical health also seems to have been impacted by the pandemic. Due to the COVID-19 public health restrictions everyone was encouraged to stay at home, this resulted in some people neglecting their physical fitness, and this also seems true for refugees. Responses talk about weight gain and fatigue as consequences of the lockdown restrictions.

"Just the fitness, I didn't take care of my fitness because of COVID-19 I stayed home a lot." (Roshin, male, 21 years old)

Accessing support services

Since a large majority (78%) of participants in this study have only basic or even less English ability, many rely on support to deal with various issues from health to housing. The pandemic has caused delays in a lot of services, and due to this there have long delays in receiving responses to queries, receiving important documents, or they have not received help from public services. These frustrations are not exclusive to refugees, but due to the nature of their circumstances, they require extra attention. As services moved online, refugees with little literacy and few or no digital skills were at a distinct disadvantage:

"I trust the local authority but with COVID-19 it's very difficult to get the help you need because everything is online." (Carim, male, 25 years old)

Integration with the local community

More widely experienced, and in common with the rest of Ireland, was the lack of social interaction. With the lockdown and on-going concerns about the virus, isolation and self-segregation

96 Guadagno, L. (2020) *Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: An initial analysis*. Geneva: IOM.
97 UNHCR (2017) *2017 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR)* https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2018/01/VASyR-2017.pdf.

increased. Rising xenophobia that connected migrants to the virus was widely reflected in national and local media.[98] Refugees have had less opportunities to interact, practice their English, or make new social connections. This has started to improve as the restrictions are relaxed, but this experience has likely delayed refugees progress in several domains.

"Recently, we started talking with neighbours, because of COVID-19 there was no chance to talk or visit anybody." (Maya, female, 28 years old)

Many who had work are unemployed due to the pandemic, this means that for refugees seeking work, there is more competition for fewer vacancies. With low English common, unrecognised qualifications and experience, and various other factors like childcare and transport, the pandemic has made it significantly harder for refugees seeking employment. They are likely to be outmatched by more suitable candidates, and at risk of losing work they have.

"There was a support worker, he told me about an organization which made clothes for refugees, I joined them as a volunteer. The workers there were very good, the manager was good, but they closed the first project. When they reopened, they asked me to work, they started introducing hand sanitizer in the COVID-19 pandemic period. It closed again, now I am at home." (Hady, male, 26 years old)

we observe significant disruption to the key markers of integration, and important means to integration: work, housing, education, health and social care, and leisure. Closures of services, reduced mobility, economic measures, and distancing measures have sharply changed the way in which these domains could operate to support integration during the pandemic. Secondly, we observe significant disconnection in social relationships, both established and anticipated. Social distancing in public spaces and restrictions on gatherings has impacted severely on the development of 'social bridge' relations, while closures have affected 'social links' between migrants and the institutions supporting access to rights and services. Finally, we observe significant disempowerment amongst migrants, as the key facilitators of integration (language and communication, culture, digital skills, safety, and stability) which are often supported through integration planning and migrant support services have lost many of those supports. Without these facilitators, integration does not happen as easily. These combined effects undermine the development of mutual expectations and obligations within and between receiving communities and newcomers, including awareness of the rights and responsibilities of all. The impacts in this period on adaptation processes that are crucial for integration could, for some, turn into a 'critical event' in entire integration trajectories.

We identify three key impacts of the COVID-19 restrictions. Firstly,

98 Michael, L. (2021) iReport.ie Reports of Racism in Ireland, 2020. Dublin: Irish Network Against Racism. https://inar.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2020_iReport.pdf , accessed 12 October 2021.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This report has described the experiences of 153 Syrian refugees who arrived in Ireland between 2015 and 2019 through the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme. Their perspectives and experiences of integration provide a valuable insight into the ways in which refugees settle into new lives and become part of their local communities and neighbourhoods. Through this report, they have described their hopes and fears about life after the Syrian Arabic Republic, their relationships with family overseas and here in Ireland, their growing relationships with neighbours, their efforts to convert qualifications and work experience for the Irish labour market, supporting their children and partners, and the challenges of becoming fluent in another language.

Across the 14 domains of integration which provided the framework for this study of resettled refugees integration, there are some very positive findings.

Integration is particularly strong in respect of refugees' security of immigration status, sense of belonging, feelings of safety, security of tenure in housing, and children's experiences in education. These are areas in which it is clear that planning and cooperation have provided a strong basis for refugees to start from in building their new lives in Ireland, even while coping with trauma and separation from family members, and in some cases, physical health problems.

Security of housing clearly has an impact on other domains, providing confidence amongst refugees of their future safety in Ireland and the value of investing in social connections in their new neighbourhoods, even with significant language barriers to surmount. Social welfare provisions have largely provided the security needed to settle families and plan towards work and education opportunities. There are few cultural issues in adaptation, and there is evidence that both refugees and local communities are making efforts to integrate with one another. In addition, Syrian groups have been formed which provide valuable sources of mutual aid and recognition to their members and increase the resilience of the Syrian population to changes which affect them. There is a strong sense of commitment to lives in Ireland, increasing independence and fully engaged citizenship.

There are also some areas of significant concern, but which may be addressed with cooperation between institutions and some targeted investment. Health and wellbeing highlight the impact of access to employment, family reunification and social connections in particular. Self-rated health assessments were accompanied by strong narratives of isolation, and low levels of spoken English clearly aggravate this isolation. Healthcare quality is, on the whole, affected primarily by one concern, and that is language. Access to interpreters is inconsistent and frequently falls below standards established in the Irish health system. Poor digital skills and low literacy even in Arabic means that cultural translation is a necessary part of any solutions in this area. Digital literacy also affects access to other services and will, in due course, affect the employability of refugees.

The area of most significant concern overall is that of language. Despite an overwhelming enthusiasm to learn the language amongst the interviewed refugees, provision of formal language education, supplementary resources, and opportunities for natural language acquisition (through community events and interpreter-supported participation in cultural events) have not been able to keep pace with the demands that refugees face in acquiring the new language and using it in day-to-day life while establishing their new lives. The domain upon which this has had the most significant impact is work, with language barriers affecting refugees' uptake of labour market entry supports, application for jobs, participation in the labour market, and access to higher or further education courses which will help them to convert or acquire new qualifications appropriate to the local labour market context. Job matching can reduce this gap by increasing information to refugees about work roles and to employers about available skills and experience. Information about internal migration and supports to relocate for suitable employment could also be beneficial in facilitating refugees to access appropriate level employment and contribute to sectors where their qualifications are relevant.

Encouraging refugees into work without the English language (as some have experienced) would be an insufficient response alone – international research shows that migrants in such work are less likely to acquire fluency in the new language. Concerted efforts to provide language supports in access to services like health, additional formal education supports to get refugees into adult education, and engagement with the barriers to English language learning and the use of English in everyday social situations are all necessary to address these key integration concerns.

The good practice embedded in the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme with respect to housing and health, for example, demonstrates the impact that can be achieved through clear adoption of indicators and international good practice. Clear outcomes in other integration domains can be achieved through similar focus and adoption of international good practice in respect of firstly, the facilitator domains and domain of 'rights and responsibilities', and secondly, the power of social connections to amplify those and drive progress right across the full range of integration domains, benefitting both Syrian refugees in Ireland, and the communities in which they live. Syrian refugees have much to offer to Ireland, are committed to the future of their families in Ireland and look forward to the supports which can increase their independence and capacity to contribute to wider society.

APPENDICES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW BRIEFING AND CONSENT FORM

Consent to Interview

موافقتك

حضرة السيد/ السيدة المحترمين،

Dear sir/ madam

شكراً لموافقتك على المشاركة في المشروع البحثي "أصوات السوريين في أيرلندا"

"Thank you for agreeing to take part in the research project "Voices of Syrians in Ireland

من أجل فهم التجارب طويلة المدى للاجئين المعاد توطينهم في أيرلندا ، تجري المنظمة الدولية للهجرة في أيرلندا بحثًا لتسجيل وتبادل آراء السوريين الذين وصلوا إلى أيرلندا من خلال برنامج إعادة التوطين من لبنان والأردن بين عامي 2015 و 2019.
الغرض من هذه المقابلات الطوعية هو سماع قصص اللاجئين عن حياتهم في مجتمعات جديدة ، وكيف تغيرت الأمور منذ وصولهم ، وآمالهم في المستقبل.
سيوفر البحث فرصة فريدة للاجئين السوريين لسرد هذه القصة بكلماتهم الخاصة. نأمل أن تغتنم هذه الفرصة لمشاركة صوتك وتجربتك مع العديد من الأشخاص الآخرين في جميع أنحاء أيرلندا. سنعقد مقابلات وجهًا لوجه باللغة العربية لسماع قصص الناس ووجهات نظرهم وفهم كيف يتغير هذا المجتمع المتنامي في أيرلندا بمرور الوقت.

In order to understand the longer-term experiences of resettled refugees in Ireland, IOM Ireland is undertaking research to record and share the views of Syrians who arrived .in Ireland through the Resettlement programme from Lebanon and Jordan between 2015 and 2019
The purpose of these voluntary interviews is to hear the stories of refugees about their life in new communities, how things have changed since they arrived, and their hopes for .the future
The research will provide a unique opportunity for Syrian refugees to tell this story in their own words. We hope that you will use this opportunity to share your voice and experience with many other people across Ireland. We will hold face-to-face interviews in Arabic to hear people's stories and views and understand how this growing community .in Ireland is changing over time

الأمر متروك لك تمامًا فيما إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة في هذه المناقشات أم لا.

It is entirely up to you whether you would like to participate in these discussions or not .

فردية المقابلة: سنلتقي مع كل شخص على حدة.
- الخصوصية : لضمان الحفاظ على سرية جميع الردود تمامًا ، لن نشارك أسماء الأشخاص أو هوياتهم في التقرير.
- مدة المقابلة: تستغرق كل مقابلة ساعة واحدة كحد أقصى.
- أهلية المشاركين :
١. السوريين الذين وصلوا إلى أيرلندا (ذكورا واناث(
٢. القادمين من خلال برنامج إعادة التوطين من لبنان والأردن بين عامي 2015 و 2019
٣. سنجري مقابلات مع الأشخاص الذين تبلغ أعمارهم 18 عامًا فما فوق فقط

We will meet with each person individually. In order to ensure that all responses are kept entirely confidential, we will not share people's names or identities in the report. Each interview will take 1 hour maximum. We will only interview people who are 18 years of age and over

- سيتم تسجيل المقابلة بحيث يتم كتابة كلماتك بالضبط في البحث
- سيتم إتلاف التسجيل بعد كتابة التقرير. يمكنك طلب نسخة من الصوت الخاص بك في أي وقت قبل ذلك.
- يمكنك إيقاف المقابلة في أي وقت لأخذ قسط من الراحة أو لطرح الأسئلة.
- سيبدأ التسجيل مرة أخرى عندما توافق.

The interview will be recorded so that your exact words are typed into the search. The recording will be destroyed after the report is written. You can request a copy of your recording any time before that. You can stop the interview at any time to take a break or to ask questions. The recording will begin again when you agree

سيبقى اسمك منفصلاً عن ملف الصوت. لن يتم مشاركة اسمك أو تفاصيل الاتصال الخاصة بك مع أي شخص آخر.

Your name will be kept separately from the audio. Your name or contact details will not be shared with anyone else.

نخطط لنشر التقرير البحثي في خريف عام 2021.

We plan to publish the research report in autumn 2021.

في أي وقت ، يمكنك طلب معلومات إضافية حول المشروع. يمكنك الاتصال بلوسي مباشرة عبر البريد الإلكتروني ، باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية.

At any time, you can request additional information about the project. You can contact Lucy directly via email, in both Arabic and English.

لا ترددوا بالإتصال بنا في حال كانت لديكم أية اسئلة.

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

تفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام

Yours sincerely

د. لوسي مايكل
enquiries@lucymichael.ie

Dr. Lucy Michael
enquiries@lucymichael.ie

Consent to Interview

موافقتك

أوافق على السماح للوسي مايكل و _____ بتسجيل هذه المقابلة والاحتفاظ بالتسجيل لمدة 6 أشهر.

I agree to allow Lucy Michael and _____ (Interviewer name) to record this interview and to keep the recording for 6 months.

أفهم أن هذه المقابلة مجهولة المصدر ، وأن التفاصيل الشخصية ستكون سرية.

I understand that this interview is anonymous, and personal details will be confidential.

التوقيع
Signature

_____

اسم
Name

_____

تاريخ
Date

_____

Interview Questions

اسئلة المقابلة

Introduction

مقدمة

تتناول هذه المقابلة كيف تغيرت حياتك في أيرلندا منذ خروجك من مركز الاستقبال. نحن مهتمون برواية قصص اللاجئين السوريين في أيرلندا حتى تستمع الحكومة والجمهور إلى تجاربك في أيرلندا بأسلوبك الخاص.

نحن مهتمون بحياتك هنا ، ولست بحاجة إلى إخبارنا بأي شيء عن ماضيك قبل المجيء إلى أيرلندا إلا إذا كنت ترغب في ذلك.

عندما نكتب التقرير ، لن نستخدم اسمك أو تفاصيل عنك من شأنها تحديد هويتك. سيتم تقديم جميع القصص من اللاجئين السوريين في جميع أنحاء أيرلندا معًا.

لا يمكننا تقديم النصح أو المساعدة لك بشأن المشاكل الفردية. يمكننا توجيهك إلى المنظمات التي قد تكون قادرة على مساعدتك.

This interview is about how your life in Ireland has changed since you moved out of the Reception Centre. We are interested in telling the stories of Syrian refugees in Ireland so that the government and the public will hear your experiences in Ireland in your own words.

We are interested in your life here, and you do not need to tell us anything about your past before coming to Ireland unless you wish to.

When we write the report, we will not use your name or details about you which would identify you. All of the stories from Syrian refugees across Ireland will be presented together.

We cannot advise or assist you on individual problems. We can direct you to organisations who may be able to help you.

We will now review the consent form

سنقوم الآن بمراجعة نموذج الموافقة

Are you happy to start the recording now?

هل أنت سعيد لبدء التسجيل الآن؟

يرجى إعلامي إذا كنت تريد التوقف في أي وقت لقضاء فترة راحة

Please let me know if you want to stop at any time for a break.

1.	*Tell me about a typical day and a typical week in your life now.*	أخبرني عن يوم عادي وأسبوع عادي في حياتك الآن
2.	*What helps you to feel that Ireland is home now?*	ما الذي يساعدك على الشعور بأن أيرلندا هي موطنك الآن؟
3.	*Do you feel a sense of belonging in your neighbourhood and the local community?*	هل تشعر بالانتماء إلى منطقتك والمجتمع المحلي؟
4.	*Do you think that people here from different backgrounds get on well together in this town?*	هل تعتقد أن الناس هنا من خلفيات مختلفة يجتمعون جيدًا في هذه المدينة؟
5.	*Do you think that Syrians in other parts of Ireland have a different experience?*	هل تعتقد أن السوريين في أجزاء أخرى من أيرلندا لديهم تجارب مختلفة؟
6.	*Do you have a close friend now in Ireland who you did not know before you came here?* *- How did you meet them?*	هل لديك صديق مقرب الآن في أيرلندا لم تكن تعرفه قبل مجيئك إلى هنا؟ - كيف قابلتهم؟
7.	*Do you have someone from your own community to talk with when you need support?*	هل لديك شخص من مجتمعك يمكنك التحدث معه عندما تحتاج إلى دعم؟
8.	*Do you have other friends in Ireland? Tell me about your friendship with them.*	هل لديك أصدقاء آخرون في أيرلندا؟ أخبرني عن صداقتك معهم
9.	*How do you meet new people who are potential friends?*	كيف تقابل أشخاصًا جددًا من الممكن ان يكونوا أصدقاء محتملون؟
10.	*When you are looking for advice about services or the law in Ireland, who do you ask first?* *- Who else do you trust to give you the right information?* *- Are you confident finding and filling out forms you need?* *- Do you feel that you can trust local authority staff?* *- Do you feel that you can trust police here?*	عندما تبحث عن نصيحة ما حول الخدمات أو القوانين في أيرلندا ، من تسأل أولاً؟ - بمن تثق أيضًا لمنحك المعلومات الصحيحة؟ - هل أنت قادر على إيجاد وملء النماذج التي تحتاجها؟ - هل تشعر أنه يمكنك الوثوق بموظفي السلطة المحلية؟ - هل تشعر أنه يمكنك الوثوق بالشرطة هنا؟

11.	*Do you have family outside Ireland that you keep in touch with?* *- How do you keep in touch (text, voice notes, email, social media)?*	هل لديك عائلة خارج أيرلندا وتبقى على اتصال بهم؟ - كيف يمكنك البقاء على اتصال (رسالة نصية ، رسائل صوتية ، بريد إلكتروني ، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي)؟
12.	*Do you have access to your own phone or a shared phone?* *- And a computer?*	هل يمكنك الوصول إلى هاتفك الخاص أو هاتف مشترك؟ - وجهاز كمبيوتر؟
13.	*Has your family changed since arriving in Ireland …?* *- new babies* *- child moved out* *- marriage or separation* *- family reunification*	هل تغيرت عائلتك منذ وصولك إلى أيرلندا ...؟ - اطفال جدد - خروج الطفل - الزواج أو الانفصال - لم شمل العائلة
14.	*How many people now live in your house? In how many bedrooms?*	كم شخص يعيش الآن في منزلك؟ في كم غرفة نوم؟
15.	*Do you have any worries about housing?*	هل لديك مخاوف بشأن السكن؟
16.	*Have you ever experienced antisocial behaviour in this neighbourhood?* *Do you feel safe in this neighbourhood now?*	هل سبق لك أن واجهت سلوكًا معاديًا للمجتمع في هذا الحي؟ - هل تشعر بالأمان في هذا الحي الآن؟
17.	*Is money ever a worry for you?* *- What worries you most?*	هل المال مصدر قلق بالنسبة لك؟ - ما الذي يقلقك أكثر؟
18.	*Do you have children?* *- how would you describe their experience of living here?*	هل لديك أطفال؟ - كيف تصف تجربتهم في العيش هنا؟
19.	*What do they enjoy most about school? And least?* *- How do their school help you to understand their education?* *- What are your priorities for your children right now?*	ما هو أكثر شيء في المدرسة يستمتعون به اطفالك؟ وأقل شيء؟ كيف تساعدك مدرستهم على فهم تعليمهم؟ - ما هي أولوياتك لأطفالك الآن؟
20.	*What work did you do before arriving in Ireland?*	ما هو عملك قبل وصولك ايرلندا؟
21.	*Have you used your work experience or any other skills in Ireland?*	هل استخدمت خبرتك العملية أو أي مهارات أخرى في أيرلندا؟
22.	*Tell me about applying for jobs here.*	أخبرني عن التقدم للوظائف هنا
23.	*What education or work skills would you like to develop now?*	ما هي مهارات التعليم أو العمل التي ترغب في تطويرها الآن؟
24.	*Is there any issue that prevents you going to study or work (e.g. childcare, distance, cost, work etc(?* *- Do you think that will change in the future?*	هل هناك أي مشكلة تمنعك من الذهاب للدراسة أو العمل (مثل رعاية الأطفال والمسافة والتكلفة والعمل وما إلى ذلك) ؟ - هل تعتقد أن ذلك سيتغير في المستقبل؟
25.	*How would you describe your experience learning English here in Ireland?*	كيف تصف تجربتك في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية هنا في أيرلندا؟
26.	*Do you find it difficult to communicate with people in English?*	هل تجد صعوبة في التواصل مع الناس باللغة الإنجليزية؟
27.	*Are there neighbours or other people you talk to regularly in English? Tell me about that.*	هل هناك جيران أو أشخاص آخرون تتحدث معهم بانتظام باللغة الإنجليزية؟ أخبرني عن ذلك
28.	*How do you get around to the places you need to go? Where do you go regularly?*	كيف تتجول في الأماكن التي تريد الذهاب إليها؟ إلى أين تذهب بانتظام؟
29.	*Are there other places in Ireland you would go if it was easier to travel or if you had the time/money to go?*	هل هناك أماكن أخرى في أيرلندا قد تذهب إليها إذا كان السفر أسهل أو إذا كان لديك الوقت / المال للذهاب؟
30.	*What do you do to relax in your free time?*	ماذا تفعل للاسترخاء في وقت فراغك؟
31.	*Do you take any exercise? Tell me about that.*	هل تمارس أي تمرين؟ أخبرني عن ذلك
32.	*Would developing more hobbies or skills give you a more satisfying life now?*	هل يمنحك تطوير المزيد من الهوايات أو المهارات حياة أكثر إرضاءً الآن؟

33.	*What are the cultural differences with the Irish people that stop you joining in activities here?*	ما الاختلافات الثقافية مع الشعب الأيرلندي التي تمنعك من المشاركة في الأنشطة هنا؟
34.	*Are you part of any Syrian groups here in Ireland?*	هل أنت جزء من أي مجموعات سورية هنا في إيرلندا؟
35.	*Do you get help or advice from these groups?* *Do you help anyone else in these groups?*	هل تحصل على مساعدة أو نصيحة من هذه المجموعات؟ هل تساعد أي شخص آخر في هذه المجموعات؟
36.	*Do you think your physical health is better or worse than when you arrived in Ireland?*	هل تعتقد أن صحتك الجسدية أفضل أم أسوأ مما كانت عليه عندما وصلت إلى أيرلندا؟
37.	*What has had the biggest impact on your physical health here?*	ما هو أكبر تأثير على صحتك الجسدية هنا؟
38.	*Do you ever feel hopeless or depressed about the future?*	هل شعرت يومًا باليأس أو الاكتئاب بشأن المستقبل؟
39.	*What has been the best moment in your life since you moved out of the Reception Centre?*	ما هي أفضل لحظة في حياتك منذ خروجك من مركز الاستقبال؟
40.	*What has been the lowest point since you moved out of the Reception Centre?* *- How did you and your family deal with that? Was anybody able to help?*	ما هي أدنى نقطة منذ خروجك من مركز الاستقبال؟ - كيف تعاملت أنت وعائلتك مع ذلك؟ هل كان أي شخص قادرًا على المساعدة؟
41.	*Do you feel more or less positive now than when you arrived in Ireland?*	هل تشعر الآن بإيجابية أكثر أم أقل مما كانت عليه عندما وصلت إلى أيرلندا؟
42.	*What would a successful life in Ireland be for you?*	ماذا ستكون الحياة الناجحة في أيرلندا بالنسبة لك؟
43.	*Is there anything else you want to add?*	هل هناك أي شيء آخر تريد إضافته؟

Thank you very much for your participation

شكرا جزيلا لك على مشاركتك

VOICES OF SYRIANS: RESETTLED REFUGEES IN IRELAND

A report by IOM Ireland for the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme

IOM UN MIGRATION

An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais, Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth