

Helping new refugees integrate into the UK: baseline data analysis from the Survey of New Refugees

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Refugees have a diverse range of experiences and skills which may be of benefit to the UK. Variation in the education and skills of refugees upon arrival in the UK is closely linked to their country of origin.

English language ability varied by country of origin and length of time in the UK. Demand for English language training and interpretation services may increase as asylum cases are concluded more quickly through the New Asylum Model (NAM +). Changes in key countries of origin may be useful in forecasting trends in the demand/need for language services and training.

Some refugees, such as those from Somalia and Afghanistan, may need help improving their English language so they can gain employment appropriate to their qualifications.

Whilst many refugees come equipped with a variety of skills, a substantial proportion of new refugees had spent no years in education (14%) or had relatively limited education (13% spent six or less years in education) before coming to the UK. They may find it difficult to gain employment and may need extra help to develop basic numeracy and literacy skills.

Refugees from some countries, for example Eritrea and Somalia (which together made up one-third of the sample), are likely to need more assistance in finding employment than others.

Refugees who did not have experience of employment before coming to the UK, such as those who had been students (16%) or looking after home or family (16%), may need support to study and develop the skills needed for employment.

Some groups of refugees are likely to experience multiple barriers to integration in the UK. For example those from Eritrea and Somalia are likely to have low English language ability and no qualifications on arrival in the UK. Older refugees are more likely to have a low level of English language ability and to experience poorer health than younger refugees. These groups may require additional support.

Almost two-thirds of refugees who lived with children had at least one child under the age of five in their care. Education and language training opportunities for parents or guardians should continue to take into account the need for childcare and flexible attendance.

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Keywords

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Refugees have poorer general and emotional health than the general population. The poorer health of some refugees may need to be addressed before other integration objectives, such as employment, can be achieved. Service providers may need to be aware of the implications of this for resource management.

Refugees may gain help or support from different types of groups or organisations in the UK, such as groups set up for their national or ethnic community or place of worship. The majority of refugees appear to be receiving good support from these groups. However, one in five refugees reported that the help they received from these groups or organisations in the UK was not beneficial.

Seventeen per cent of refugees reported having no friends or relatives in the UK. This group is likely to be particularly vulnerable and may benefit from additional support.

Cross-departmental working, for example with Communities and Local Government, Department for Children, Schools and Families, the National Health Service (NHS) and local authorities aids the development of effective support services for refugees.