



the recent IAB study, around 64 percent of refugees who arrived in 2015 were employed by the end of 2024, compared to 70 percent in the general population. Roughly 90 percent of them held jobs subject to social insurance contributions, and most worked full-time. Herbert Brücker, head of research at IAB, noted that this fast pace of integration "is by no means self-evident given the initially unfavorable starting conditions."



A man working in a restaurant kitchen in Germany | Photo: picture-alliance

However, the IAB highlights that gender disparities remain stark: 76 percent of men are employed, compared to only 35 percent of women. The study identifies childcare burdens, lower educational attainment, and limited access to language courses as key obstacles.

IAB researcher Yuliya Kosyakova noted: "The labor market integration of refugees who arrived since 2015 is progressing somewhat faster than in previous flight movements. Seven years after arrival, 63 percent were employed – a clear integration success that reflects the combined efforts of government, employers, and the refugees themselves. At the same time, women's participation remains significantly lower, with long-term potential still untapped."

Earnings among refugees have risen steadily, though they remain below average. Median monthly wages for full-time refugee workers increased from 1,398 euros in 2016 to 2,675 euros in 2023 – about 71 percent of the national median and just above the low-wage threshold. Welfare dependence has declined: [only 34 percent of working-age refugees from 2015 still relied on benefits in 2023](#), compared with nearly all in the early years.

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Education

Schools absorbed about 250,000 refugee pupils within two years of 2015. The rapid intake was unprecedented and often managed through separate "welcome classes" with additional German language support. While these were initially helpful, critics argued they slowed integration. Later reforms placed more children in mainstream classrooms with targeted German support.



Refugees at an art school in Germany | Photo: Picture-alliance/dpa/S.Willnow

According to the study, challenges persist. Many refugee students entered grades below their age level, particularly older pupils, and were more