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## **User relations and trust**

A study of Somali- and Arabic-speaking immigrants' experiences with Nav



Immigrants who lack Norwegian language skills, possess little formal education and face complex challenges in the labour market represent a group that requires substantial resources and considerable follow-up by NAV. Qualitative studies suggest that building good relationships with this service user group has been a challenge. However, since regular user surveys are often unable to include the most vulnerable, there is little systematic knowledge about how this group experiences their relationship with NAV. In this report, we present the results of a field survey conducted at three NAV offices in Oslo. The survey was designed to enable the participation of service users who do not normally respond to surveys. The questionnaires were translated, and the service users were interviewed in person by interviewers who speak their native language. Financial incentives were also used. The results were then compared with the results of NAV's regular user survey. This is the first study to systematically explore the experiences of a service user group that constitutes a large part of NAV's daily work but is rarely heard from.

The survey's target group was limited to immigrant Somali- and Arabic-speaking service users who are required to attend NAV's offices in person. The results show that this group has a consistently more negative experience than NAV's other service users. This is partly reflected in questions about the communication with NAV and how well they understand the information they receive. It is also expressed in questions about their personal relationship with NAV's advisors. However, the greatest dissatisfaction relates to the insufficient opportunity to meet with advisors in person and explain their situation, to the lack of opportunity to shape their own follow-up, and the feeling of being subjected to NAV's control regime. Furthermore, they consider the measures and activities they participate in to be far less beneficial than other service users. The highest prevalence of reported negative service user experiences is among those with poor Norwegian language skills whose profile is characterised by needs-tested benefits and mandatory activities, and who tend to be mistrusting of strangers in general. The findings indicate that what largely defines this group's experiences with NAV is the power dynamic between them and NAV, and the feeling of powerlessness in dealing with the system.

Compared to other institutions, NAV enjoys a moderate level of trust among service users from all backgrounds. In fact, newly arrived immigrants have quite high levels of institutional trust, including in NAV. This is even more evident among those with the fewest resources in the form of limited Norwegian language skills and education, despite many of them having low social trust in general. However, this institutional trust seems to diminish over time. Immigrant service users who have lived in Norway for a long time have significantly lower trust in NAV than both native Norwegians and newly arrived immigrants. The reasons for this are complex, but negative user experiences and feelings of powerlessness when dealing with the system seem to play an important role.

The field survey method is highly resource-intensive, but the results suggest that it has successfully captured an important service user group that is difficult to reach using other survey methods.