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Integration in Everyday Life



Summary

Norwegian integration policy has traditionally focused on employment and education. Today, however, most agree that integration policies also must focus on the social and subjective aspects of immigrants' lives in Norway. This is why Norway's government in 2019 highlighted 'integration in everyday life' as one of four main focus areas in integration policy. The aim was that people with an immigrant background should experience a greater sense of belonging in society, and that this could be achieved by facilitating common meeting places and interaction between immigrants and the rest of the population. However, there is limited knowledge about how people with an immigrant background experience everyday life in Norway, and what might help to increase people's sense of trust and belonging in society.

This report presents the findings from a large, nationwide study of the social and subjective aspects of immigrants' integration in Norway, with the aim of establishing a knowledge base for monitoring developments over time. The report focuses on the following topics:

- Volunteering, participation in organizations, and contact across groups
- Trust in people and in various social institutions in Norway
- Identity and belonging in Norway
- Perceived discrimination and negative experiences on various arenas
- Views on integration-related issues

In the analyses, we first describe the main trends among people with an immigrant background, before taking a closer look at differences between subgroups of the population with an immigration background. We then analyse various factors that may inhibit or promote integration in everyday life, such as religious affiliation, generation, the importance of social contact, volunteering and labour participation, level of education and the difference between living in small and large communities.

Overall patterns of participation, trust, belonging and discrimination

When it comes to social participation, we find that people with an immigrant background are relatively similar to people without an immigrant background in terms of everyday social activities, but some people with an immigrant background spend a little less time on voluntary work and a little more time at religious meeting places. When it comes to identity and belonging, we find that many people with an immigrant background have an identity that is at least partly Norwegian. However, many feel that others see them as far less Norwegian than they feel themselves to be, and this is particularly evident in their view of their own children. The perceived gap between their own identity and others' recognition raises questions about how inclusive the established Norwegian identity is in relation to migrant groups. Among several groups, we also find a similar discrepancy between people's experience of their own integration and the feeling of being accepted as they are in Norwegian society.

When it comes to trust, we find that some groups with an immigrant background have a slightly lower level of trust in most people, but at the same time often have relatively high levels of trust in institutions. They also have high confidence that they will receive the help they need in the event of, for example, illness, unemployment or if they become victims of crime, compared with people without an immigrant background.

When it comes to perceived discrimination, we find that a relatively large number of people with an immigrant background feel discriminated against and treated with less respect and recognition than others. Immigrants experience discrimination mostly in connection with employment and job searches, but many also report discrimination in the neighbourhood and in public places, at school, in the housing market and by employees in public offices. Many also report more subtle negative experiences in everyday life, and people with an immigrant background are more exposed to hate speech and violence than people without an immigrant background. Most believe that they are discriminated against because of their ethnic background, but in some groups many people also mention skin colour and religion.

When it comes to perspectives on integration, we find that people with an immigrant background have a slightly more positive view of how integration is going in Norway compared to people without an immigrant background. Most agree that immigrants are treated well in Norway.

Variation between different groups

There is considerable variation across different groups with an immigrant background. Broadly speaking, we find variation across people with a background from three different country groups:

Immigrants from country group 1 (Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand) differ very little from the non-immigrant population in terms of participation and trust (if anything, they have more general trust than people without an immigrant background), as well as in perspectives on integration. They experience little discrepancy between their own identity and how they think others see them, and they encounter little discrimination on all arenas.

Immigrants from country group 2 (relatively new EU member states in Eastern and Central Europe) differ both from the population without an immigrant background and from people with a background from other country groups. In general, they participate less in voluntary work and organisational life, and they are relatively less oriented towards an identity as Norwegians. They have less trust in public institutions than other immigrants, and they feel less integrated into Norwegian society than people with an immigrant background from other parts of the world. People with an immigrant background from country group 2 also report some discrimination, primarily in the labour market and less on other arenas.

People with an immigrant background from country group 3 (countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America) are characterised by the fact that, on average, they have slightly less contact with people without an immigrant background in working life and in the neighborhood, and they are slightly more interested in religion. People with a

background from country group 3 have relatively low trust in strangers, but at the same time have relatively high trust in public institutions. They also largely orientate themselves towards an identity as Norwegians, both for themselves and their children, but at the same time feel that their identity as Norwegians is less recognised by others. Similarly, many of them perceive themselves as relatively well integrated, but they also feel less accepted in Norwegian society. People with an immigrant background from country group 3 experience far more discrimination and negative experiences than others, and they also find such incidents more upsetting than immigrants from the other two country groups.

Norwegian-born to immigrant parents – more integrated and more frustrated

When it comes to generational differences, we only focus on people with an immigrant background from country group 3. The findings indicate that generation plays an ambiguous role for integration in everyday life within this group. Norwegian-born people with immigrant parents from country group 3 have more robust social networks than immigrants from country group 3, and they have more contact with non-immigrant natives. They see themselves as Norwegian to a much greater extent, and they feel much more integrated than those who have immigrated themselves. However, they are no more likely than immigrants to think that others see them as Norwegian, and the result is a greater gap in the relationship between their own identity and how they think others see them than we find among immigrants. Norwegian-born people with an immigrant background are also more likely than immigrants to experience a discrepancy between their own integration and society accepting them for who they are. Norwegian-born to immigrant parents also have less trust in public institutions than immigrants.

Norwegian-born to immigrant parents report more discrimination than immigrants, and in many cases they also find discrimination to be more upsetting. Compared with immigrants, they are also more likely to believe that discrimination occurs in Norway. Some of the differences between immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents are due to age, while other differences can be linked to education. All in all, it seems that Norwegian-born to immigrant parents are more integrated into Norwegian society, but also more frustrated by some of the barriers that still face them.

Muslims experience greater barriers to integration in everyday life than others

Religion plays a role in the sense that Muslims experience greater barriers to integration in everyday life than other religious groups. They participate slightly less in organisational life and volunteering than others, and they have less contact with people without an immigrant background.

Muslims are just as likely to see themselves as being Norwegian compared to other religious groups, but they are less likely to feel that others recognize them as being Norwegian. They also feel integrated on an equal footing with other religious groups but are simultaneously less likely to feel that they are accepted in Norwegian society. In other words, the aforementioned gaps between their own experiences and others' recognition is particularly large for Muslims. Muslims also have somewhat lower levels of trust in both the general public and public institutions than other religious groups.

Muslims report more discrimination and negative incidents in everyday life, and they more often believe that the discrimination they face is due to their religious affiliation. Muslims are also more vulnerable than Christians and people who do not belong to a religion when it comes to more serious issues such as hatred, threats and violence.

Volunteering and cross-group contact promote integration in everyday life

Contact across groups, as well as volunteering and participation in life, is positively related to perceptions of integration and acceptance in everyday life. People with an immigrant background who have a lot of contact with people without an immigrant background in the neighborhood and in connection with leisure activities and volunteering report less discrimination than those who have little contact. Both contact with people without an immigrant background and participation in volunteering and organisational life are also associated with increased trust in institutions. The same applies to employment - people with an immigrant background who work report higher levels of trust, less discrimination and feel more integrated and accepted in Norwegian society than people outside the labour market. In other words, it does not seem to be the case, as some theories in the field suggest, that increased exposure to the majority also leads to more discrimination and frustration. On the contrary, social contact and participation seem to promote a sense of belonging and acceptance among people with an immigrant background.

The education paradox

Education has a more paradoxical impact on people's experience of integration in everyday life. People with an immigrant background who have higher education have higher trust in most people, but lower trust in public institutions than people with less education. People with higher education report more discrimination in many different arenas. Those with a higher education also experience negative events as more upsetting - particularly experiences of being downgraded in status.

Education also contributes to widening the aforementioned 'gap' between the experience of personal integration and societal acceptance. People with an immigrant background who have a higher education are also more negative about the state of integration in Norway, they are more likely to believe that discrimination occurs, and they are less likely to believe that immigrants are treated well in Norway. In other words, education is associated with higher awareness of discrimination, higher expectations of being treated equally, and greater disappointment and discomfort when subjected to offence.

Integration in small and large places

Geography - measured as degree of centralization - has relatively little significance for most indicators of integration in everyday life. But on some issues, living in small places has a positive correlation with people's experiences. For example, people with an immigrant background who live in less centrally-placed communities have more contact with people without an immigrant background in the neighborhood and in connection with leisure activities than those who live in larger cities, and they also report slightly less discrimination. One possible interpretation is that small places provide less room for

segregation than is the case in larger cities, and that this has a positive effect on contact and perceived belonging.

All in all, the findings of this study indicate that it is possible to promote integration by creating meeting places and arenas for social participation, but underscore that integration also involves friction and conflict. We find that immigrants and Norwegian-born people with an immigrant background participate to a large extent in various social arenas, most feel well integrated and have an identity as part of a Norwegian community. At the same time, many express experiences of not always being accepted as part of this community. Both religion and skin color seem to play a role here, which raises questions about how inclusive the Norwegian identity and the Norwegian community is towards new groups and increasing diversity. We also find that employment, participation in volunteering and organisational life, as well as contact across groups in neighbourhoods, at workplaces and in leisure time, are linked to a stronger sense of belonging and less perceived discrimination. In other words, contact and interaction are positive factors in creating a sense of belonging.

Despite participating more in various arenas and having more contact across groups, Norwegian-born to immigrant parents express more frustration and dissatisfaction, including more perceived discrimination, than people who have immigrated themselves. In particular, increased education - which in the long term is perhaps the most important driver of integration and social mobility among people with an immigrant background - seems to be associated with more frustration, discrimination and negative experiences. Our interpretation is that increased formal status through the education system makes people less willing to accept a lower position in the informal social hierarchy. Finally, we suggest that this type of frustration is a necessary part of the social changes that are needed to create a more integrated and at the same time more diverse and tolerant society.

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