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Cristina Samper

# Intentions to work of refugee women in Germany: Evidence from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees

## **Forschung zu Kindern, Jugendlichen und Familien an der Schnittstelle von Wissenschaft, Politik und Fachpraxis**

Das Deutsche Jugendinstitut e.V. (DJI) ist eines der größten sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschungsinstitute Europas. Seit über 50 Jahren erforscht es die Lebenslagen von Kindern, Jugendlichen und Familien, berät Bund, Länder und Gemeinden und liefert wichtige Impulse für die Fachpraxis. Träger des 1963 gegründeten Instituts ist ein gemeinnütziger Verein mit Mitgliedern aus Politik, Wissenschaft, Verbänden und Einrichtungen der Kinder-, Jugend- und Familienhilfe. Die Finanzierung erfolgt überwiegend aus Mitteln des Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend und den Bundesländern. Weitere Zuwendungen erhält das DJI im Rahmen von Projektförderungen vom Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, der Europäischen Kommission, der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft, Stiftungen und anderen Institutionen der Wissenschaftsförderung. Aktuell arbeiten und forschen mehr als 450 Mitarbeiter/innen (davon rund 280 Wissenschaftler/innen) an den beiden Standorten München und Halle (Saale).

Der vorliegende Band umfasst die Expertisen zum Neunten Familienbericht der Bundesregierung. Ihre Erstellung wurde vom Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend gefördert.

Der Sachverständigenkommission, die diese Expertisen herausgibt, gehörten folgende Mitglieder an: Prof. Dr. Helen Baykara-Krumme, Prof. Dr. Miriam Beblo, Prof. Dr. Nina Dethloff (stellv. Vorsitzende), Prof. Dr. Michaela Kreyenfeld, Prof. Dr. Axel Plünnecke, Prof. Dr. Reinhard Pollak und Prof. Dr. Sabine Walper (Vorsitzende).

In der Geschäftsstelle der Sachverständigenkommission am Deutschen Jugendinstitut e.V. wirkten mit: Dr. Janine Bernhardt, Leonie Kleinschrot, Dagmar Müller (Leitung), Meike Schüle-Tschersich, Dr. Johanna Schütz, Sonja Schußmüller sowie Annika Hudelmayer und Dennis Wolfram als wissenschaftliche Hilfskräfte.

Dieser Einzeldruck der Expertise ist ein seitengleicher Abdruck der Expertise aus dem Buch:

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## Vorwort

Durch Beschluss des Deutschen Bundestages ist die Bundesregierung aufgefordert, dem Deutschen Bundestag in jeder zweiten Wahlperiode einen Bericht über die Lage der Familien in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland mit einer Stellungnahme der Bundesregierung vorzulegen.

Der Neunte Familienbericht „Eltern sein in Deutschland – Ansprüche, Anforderungen und Angebote bei wachsender Vielfalt. Empfehlungen für eine wirksame Politik für Familien“ wurde am 11. Juli 2018 mit der Einberufung einer aus sieben Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftlern interdisziplinär zusammengesetzten Sachverständigenkommission durch die Bundesministerin für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend Franziska Giffey in Auftrag gegeben. Ziel des Neunten Familienberichts war es, mit einem Fokus auf Elternschaft ein allgemeines Thema der Familienpolitik aufzugreifen, eine umfassende Darstellung der Situation von Familien in Deutschland vorzulegen und Vorschläge für eine nachhaltige und zukunftsorientierte Familienpolitik zu erarbeiten. Der Neunte Familienbericht wurde am 3. März 2021 zusammen mit der Stellungnahme der Bundesregierung veröffentlicht.

Wie auch bei vorangegangenen Berichten war der Entstehungsprozess des Neunten Familienberichts nicht nur von intensiven kommissionsinternen Diskussionen geprägt, es wurde auch auf Fachkenntnisse externer Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler zurückgegriffen. Um das interdisziplinäre Thema Elternschaft in seiner ganzen Vielfalt zu beleuchten, wurden – neben Anhörungen und fachbezogenen Workshops – Expertisen zu Fragestellungen aus Forschungsgebieten und Disziplinen vergeben, welche durch die Kommission nicht repräsentiert wurden. Darüber hinaus wurden detaillierte Analysen von Kolleginnen am Deutschen Jugendinstitut – dem Sitz der Geschäftsstelle des Neunten Familienberichts – erarbeitet, die ebenfalls in den Neunten Familienbericht eingeflossen sind.

Die Kommission hat beschlossen, die Expertisen als Online-Publikationen einer breiten Öffentlichkeit zugänglich zu machen. Die einzelnen Beiträge, deren Inhalte ausschließlich von den Autorinnen und Autoren selbst verantwortet werden, können auf der DJI-Webseite der Geschäftsstelle des Neunten Familienberichts unter [www.dji.de/9\\_familienbericht](http://www.dji.de/9_familienbericht) abgerufen werden.

Die Sachverständigenkommission dankt allen Autorinnen und Autoren der Expertisen für ihre wertvolle Unterstützung bei der Erstellung des Neunten Familienberichts.

München, im März 2021

Prof. Dr. Sabine Walper,  
Vorsitzende der Sachverständigenkommission für den Neunten Familienbericht

Cristina Samper

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## 1. Introduction

In this report we measure and discuss the preparation and stated intentions to work of the refugee population that arrived in Germany between 2013 and 2017. In the observed period, more than 1.6 million humanitarian migrants applied for asylum in Germany (BAMF 2019). The biggest groups to arrive came from: Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Eritrea (BAMF 2017, Worbs and Baraulina 2017). Despite the flows being highly male dominated, the number of women who have arrived is not negligible and their integration into society will not only be important for their own subsistence, but also for the integration of their children. Most of these women have arrived as part of a family unit with children of young ages and many have also had pregnancies around their time of arrival (Gambaro et al. 2018). Additionally, the larger proportion of men over women amongst the asylum-seeking population in Germany, amongst other reasons, is due to the costly and difficult journey to arrive in Europe. So many of these men have adventured themselves as pioneers. Traveling with the support of their families, they hope to bring their families to Germany one day. Accordingly, family reunification numbers have increased in the last years and a large proportion of these permits are granted to women (BMI 2017).

Participation in the labor market is an essential step for economic independence and integration into society. A timely integration is especially important in the case of families, as they begin to raise their children in Germany and if the situations in their home countries do not improve, many will possibly settle for good. In a positive light, the larger part of refugees arrives at young ages and this means they still have many years ahead to contribute to society and find a new life after hardship. However, arriving and subsisting in a country without a family support network is difficult and above all, the spontaneous necessity to flee also means most refugees lack the required skills and preparation [time] in order to learn e.g. the German language making it nearly impossible to enter the labor market directly. For this reason, different integration measures have been set up to help refugees acquire the necessary language skills and accelerate the validation of their credentials.

In the case of refugee women, apart from the necessity to invest time in improving their human capital, in cases when they are married and especially if they are mothers, they might have additional responsibilities like caring for their husbands, children and the household in general. Large family constellations might then signify further limitations to participate in the labor market, on one hand because of their housework, but also possibly due to their cultural expectations regarding women's employment. Gender role norms in the countries of origin tend to be very marked and unequal. Women in the above mentioned countries of origin are many times socialized to accept an inferior position to men. Despite the global trends of increased female employment, the most recent waves of refugee women tend to come from countries that still lag behind in this respect (Sidani 2016). Traditional breadwinner families are the norm and women are considered to exist for bearing children and caring for their families. Nonetheless, refugees are a select group

in the population and on average might differ from those in their origin country, being as well partially the reasons why they fled in the first place (e.g. Buber-Ennser et al. 2016). With this in mind, we will consult the 2017 version of the IAB-SOEP-BAMF Refugee Sample, which is representative of the refugee inflows to Germany from 2013 to 2016. The detailed questionnaire, apart from questions on the current employment status, for which most refugees (especially women) are not working at the time of interview, also provides information on their expectations to integrate into the labor market in the future. We will analyze their expectations to work in Germany along with factors related to their personal experience before migration in relation to human capital accumulation and the family state they are in at the time of interview. Our guiding questions are the following:

- How do expectations of future employment in Germany differ by gender and country of origin?
- How do family state and human capital endowment relate to refugees' expectations of future employment in Germany?
- What differences, by origin, can be found in relation to family size (number of children) and family formation state (partner-childbirth biographies and age of the youngest child)?
- What differences, by origin and family formation state, can be found in relation to human capital endowment at arrival (work experience, education, German language ability)?
- What can differences by origin and family state tell us about the gender values / gender role attitudes of the recently arrived refugee population?

The rest of the document is structured as follows. First, we will review the background and circumstances in which the population of asylum seekers arrived in Germany for the observed period. Then we will review some previous literature in the topic of refugee employment and describe the context in the countries of origin. In the second section we will do an empirical investigation to complement previous research. We will divide this section between a description of our sample and the family state refugees are in by gender and origin. Then we will look at differences in human capital endowment between these groups and to end we will analyze their intentions to work across origin, family form and stage in the integration course process.

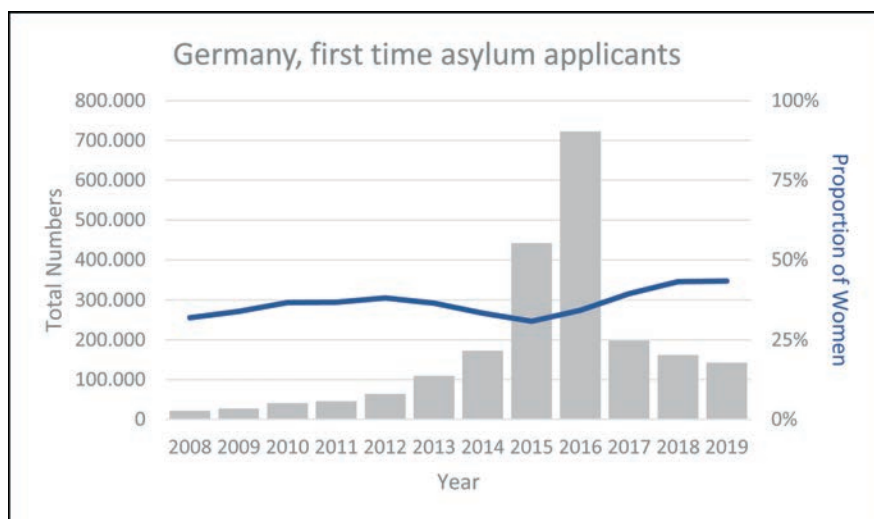
## 2. Background

*Overview on flows of asylum seekers/refugees since 2013 – based on official statistics*

There is a strong rising trend in forced displacement globally (UNHCR 2019). In 2018, 70 million people were displaced from their homes, and of these, 29.4 m were internationally displaced. The two most displaced populations in the world in 2018 were from Syria

(6.5m) and Afghanistan (2.7m) (UNHCR 2019). Most refugees live in neighboring countries, but recently many ventured on dangerous journeys and arrived on the European continent. Despite being thousands of kilometers away from conflict regions, in 2018 Germany was the 5<sup>th</sup> country to host refugees (1.1 m), while Turkey was the first (3.5 m). As you can see in Figure 1, between the years 2013 and 2017 there was a large surge in applications for asylum in Germany. Apart from the numerous first time applications in 2013 there were a total of 127,023 asylum applications (including follow ups), which jumped up to 476,640 in 2015 and peaked with 745,545 applications in 2016 – almost six times the amount of 2013 (BAMF 2019). The largest proportion of asylum seekers came from Syria, around 326,872. (BMI 2017). Then, after 2015 with the Asylum package I and in 2016 with the Asylum package II, measures were taken to streamline procedures and make quicker decisions for those who would have to leave. Additionally, with the adjustment in the border controls, the reclassification of ‘safe countries of origin’ and a series of bilateral agreements, in year 2017 the level of asylum applications decreased again to 222,683 (BAMF 2019).

Figure 1: Absolute numbers of first-time asylum applications in Germany between 2009 and 2018 and the yearly proportion of women.



Source: Eurostat 2019

The numerous protracted conflicts around the world have meant that the flows of asylum seekers are very heterogeneous in terms of countries of origin and ethnic groups. In 2015 and 2016, the years with the highest number of incoming humanitarian migrants, Syrians were the largest group (around 36 % both years). In 2015 Syrians were followed in proportion by a large amount of applications from Albania and Kosovo, but their opportunities for asylum were low, so in 2016 the numbers for these groups are also much lower. Afghanistan and Iraq were both years amongst the top five most represented origins to apply and Eritrea was amongst the top ten (BAMF 2017). Despite the decreasing absolute number of applications, in August 2019 Syrians were still the most represented nationality (27 %) soliciting asylum; Iraq followed with 9,6 %, Afghanistan was 7,8 % and Eritrea with 2 % still figured amongst the top nationalities (BAMF 2019). From Figure 1 we can see that the flows have always been predominantly male, especially in the high peak period, but the number of women from the same origins might increase due to family reunification. Between 2015 and 2016 the number of family reunions increased by 28 %, and in 2017 by 8,8 percentage points more. In 2017 around 114,861 resident permits were given for family reasons, the majority to Syrians (BMI 2017).

As for the asylum decisions, according to the statistics from the BAMF (2019), since 2015 there was a large increase in persons recognized as refugees. Positive decisions were greater than the number of denials. In 2016, the peak year, the accepted refugee claims almost doubled compared to 2015. There was also an increase in subsidiary protection, which is more restrictive with regard to family reunification. Thereafter many of the arriving flows were sent back due to the Dublin process and since 2018 you can see a sharp decrease of accepted applications, from more than 400,000 in 2016 to below 100,000 in 2018 (BAMF 2019). After a positive asylum decision, the next steps for refugees to integrate in society are the integration courses. In 2018 and 2019 every month there were around 22,000 participants in courses. For the year 2019 until August 2019, 100,000 participants were counted; of those 81,580 were new participants. The same number of new participants also took part in occupational specific language courses (BAMF 2019).

#### *Prior research on labor market integration of forced migrants with emphasis on female migrants and families*

The main human capital determinants for migrant employment are pre-migration education, previous work experience and especially language acquisition (Borjas 1991, Dustmann and Fabbri 2003, Brücker et al. 2014). From previous studies on the employment of female migrants it is also known that patterns can vary by family composition in relation to ethnic origin (Dale et al. 2006, Bevelander and Groeneveld 2012). Particularly, in the case of women who come from origins where marriage and family formation are defining for women's labor market participation, the size of their family, stage in their life course, as well as their gender values, will be highly defining of their desire and possibility to work (Spierings et al. 2010). In the case of refugee women,



they have been seen to face a triple disadvantage when it comes to integration (Liebig and Tronstad 2018). Being women, foreigners and many times mothers, they are found to be a particularly vulnerable group that in many cases also arrive through the channel of family reunification and tend to show lower levels of education, language skills and in the general preparation for the labor market in comparison to other migrant women (Liebig and Tronstad 2018, Salikutluk et al. 2016). In countries with high support for integration like Sweden, refugee women tend to take longer to integrate into the labor market than refugee men, historically the duration has been between ten and fifteen years (Liebig and Tronstad 2018). Studies in Germany based on refugees from the Balkans in the 1990s, have also shown that after ten years less than half of the women had entered the labor market (Salikutluk et al. 2016). It has been suggested these slow labor market integration rates could be related to refugee women having a high likelihood to be pregnant in the year of arrival. A behavior that has been attributed to the high fertility rates in their origin countries, but also due to the feeling of uncertainty, and in cases of reunification, with the separation time from their partner due to the migration process (Liebig and Tronstad 2018).

In Germany, different efforts have been made to get women to participate in the integration courses regardless of their family situation. For example, many of these courses include childcare facilities. So far studies have found very positive results for those who participate in the integration course (Schuller et al, 2011; Worbs and Baraulina 2017). Women with children, especially with small children, however, are known to be less likely to attend these courses (Fendel 2019). In Sweden similar results have been found, induction activities have shown positive effects, but this has not been the case for those with young children (Liebig and Tronstad 2018).

Apart from studies on employment participation based on the refugees who came to Germany in the 1990's (Salikutluk et al. 2016, Liebau and Salikutluk 2016, Brücker et al. 2014), some studies have already been produced around the topic of the expectations to work using the 2016 version of the same IAB-BAMF-SOEP sample. This investigation can therefore be seen as an extension to the findings of a paper on refugees' intentions to participate in the labor market by Haan et al. (2017). In contrast, we consider more nationalities and analyze the attitudes of Afghani and Eritrean refugees along with those from Syrians and Iraqis (this is possible due to the increased sample size of women with asylum status in the 2017 survey wave). Also, our study serves as a complement to the findings of Fendel (2019) who analyzed the 2017 sample and investigated differences in marital status, participation in education, integration courses and German knowledge by gender and family status. We investigate factors such as pre-migration education, work experience and family composition as well as employment expectations in order to achieve closer insight into different social groups. Furthermore, we will see how being in different stages of the integration process (participation in the integration measures) also influences women's confidence in their expectations to work. It has already been shown that women with small children are the group to less likely participating in the integration measures (Worbs and Baraulina 2017, Fendel 2019).

### *Description of cultures and country context of main countries of origin*

Our investigation focuses on four of the most represented refugee origin groups hosted in Germany: Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Eritrea. At the present time, all of these countries have weak and unstable institutions that do not guarantee the human rights protection of their citizens, and for this reason many have had to flee. Even though we do acknowledge that large differences may occur and prevail between the citizens of every country with respect to their social status, regional origin (urban/rural), religion, ethnic group, education etc., we will nonetheless give general descriptions of the situation in the countries above. We will describe some of the structural conditions that shape the networks of family relations and the working life of individuals within family structures in these cultures.

In the countries of origin considered in this study, family is the pillar and organizing agent in society. In Arabic countries family is a cohesive institution based on the cooperation of family members. There is a common notion of solidarity and inter-generational mutual responsibility (Sauer et al. 2018). It is a patriarchal culture that follows a pyramidal structure particularly with regard to age and sex. The father is the supreme authority and responsible for the family and, as brothers become older they also begin to gain authority over their sisters and mothers (Sauer et al. 2018, Sidani 2016). The expectation is that family welfare has precedence over individual desires and personal satisfaction; this includes extended family (Sidani 2016, Spierings 2010). Islam also regulates the relationship between husband and wife and marriage is a sacrament that cannot be dissolved by humans, women are subordinate to men when it comes to divorce (Moghadam 2004). Through these types of laws and bureaucratic procedures the state also preserves and encourages marriage, as well as the hierarchical structures where family is the unity of society. This can also be seen in the fact that most recently, since many men have died in the war, for economic and social reasons, polygamous marriages have risen in Damascus (Sauer et al. 2018, Haddad 2016). Regarding working life, in comparison to the rest of the world, Arabic countries have the biggest gender gap (Sidani 2016, WEF 2018). In the Gender Gap Report 2018, in the Economic Participation and Opportunity Index, out of 149 countries, Syria was number 146 and Iraq was number 147 (WEF 2018). Women are particularly valued for being the harmony within families and work outside the household is commonly incompatible with this notion in these countries (Sidani 2016). Many women have for a long time worked in agriculture and crafts but employed salaried women are novel (Sidani 2016, Spierings et al. 2010). Despite the general expansion in education this has not been seen to largely change societal norms and attitudes (Sidani 2016). Furthermore, despite unmarried women having higher participation rates than married women and that women live with their parents until they are married, it is reported that women who are employed usually have a double burden with the household as they are expected to take on many domestic chores (Sidani 2016).

The case of Afghani women is not much better. In the 1950s there was an extensive period of modernization: an educational expansion and women being encouraged to be

economically active and allowed to participate in the political sphere (Forooqi 2018). When the civil war broke out in 1979 and the Russian government tried to maintain a progressive government by invading Afghanistan and trying to lower the power of conservative groups. However, in 1989 the Russians left, and this marked the halt in women's advancement (Forooqi 2018). After severe political upheavals in 1999 the Taliban took over the Afghan government and enforced strict separation between men and women. They banned women from public life and forced them to have a male accompany them in every circumstance, forcing them into strong dependency (Forooqi 2018). Using the Quran some judges have sustained women are inferior to men (Forooqi 2018). In this way, women were confined to their home. After the Taliban fell in 2001, women recovered many rights but their labor market participation has not significantly increased. In 2012 women only made up 16% of the workforce (UNDP 2013). Furthermore, early marriage is a common practice that is known to interfere with women's education and further development outside the household (WB 2005).

In sub-Saharan African countries, particularly in Eritrea, the predominant stance on family and work is not that different to the other societies described above. The cohesive concept of family and the position of women are very similar. People also tend to live with extended family and in two-generation households (Sauer et al. 2016). Kinship compensates for what the state does not provide for; family is the safety net and the decisions to migrate are usually family made (Sauer et al. 2016). Like in Arabic countries and other traditional societies, such as Eritrea, women are valued solely in their role as wives and mothers. Additionally, they suffer sociocultural and economic discrimination, having fewer opportunities for education and work than Eritrean men. Marriage seems to be universal in Eritrea, in 2002 99% of the women between 45 and 49 were married at least once (Woldemicael 2008). Despite this, only half of these actually lived with their husband in 2002. This has been partially attributed to the war, but it also shows that living apart together is a common living form for families in Eritrea (Sauer et al 2016). However, things have slightly changed in the recent years. Due to women's participation in the political process of independence, also as women fighters in the claim for equal rights, it is possible that the roles and position of women have been improving in the last decade (Sauer et al 2016). War also forced many women to become single heads of the household and enter the labor market (Rena 2007).

All in all, along with the global trends, these countries have been changing in values and general conditions. Due to war and also educational expansion, fertility rates are decreasing, families have become less numerous, and they are also more frequently separated while intergenerational cohesion is declining (Sauer et al. 2016, Roser 2017). Women are also more likely to work than in the past (Spierings et al. 2010). Nonetheless, in comparison to the rest of the world and particularly to Germany, they are behind in gender equality and this is deeply rooted in their cultures.

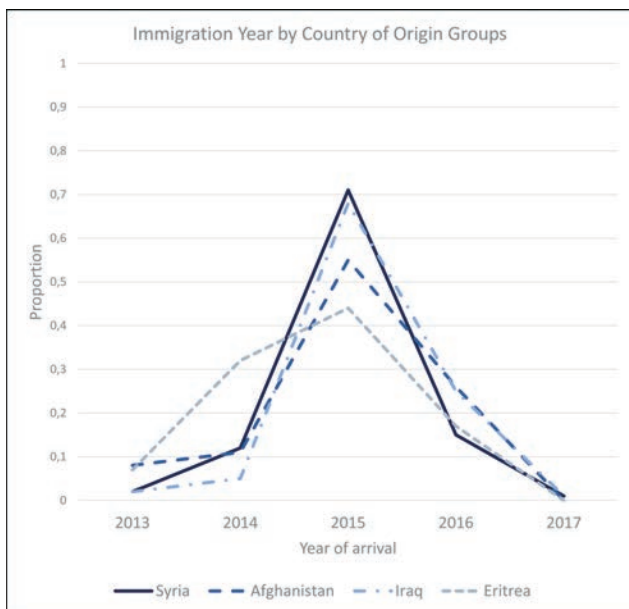
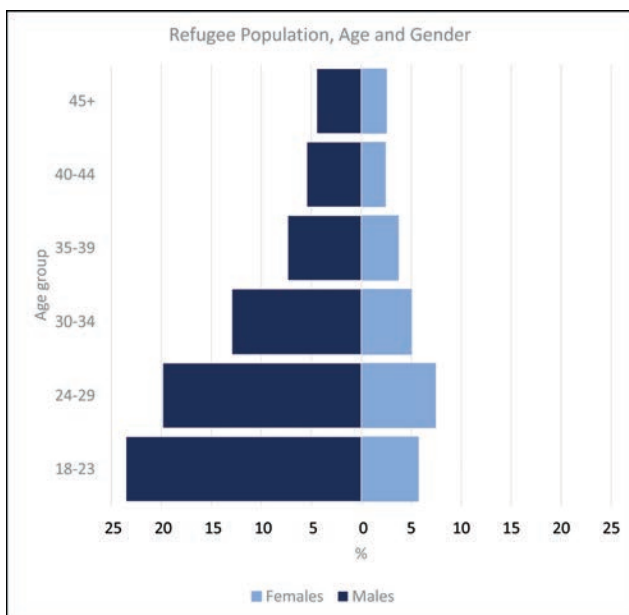
### 3. Empirical investigation

#### *Description of analytical sample*

For our analysis we are using data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey 2017. It is a random sample selected from people who were registered in the Central Register of Foreigners (AZR) and applied for asylum between 2013 and 2016. The survey collects information on their educational attainment, language skills, family conditions and, since most were not yet working at the moment of interview, they were also asked about their expectations and intentions to get further training and work. We consider adult (older than 18 years old) respondents surveyed in 2016 and 2017 if they have been given a temporary permission to stay in Germany at the time of the interview. Meaning, that we eliminated those who had to leave Germany and those who had not yet received an asylum decision. The vast majority has been recognized as refugees. Each person is included once, and the estimations were weighted according to the first appearance weight. The results represent the population of refugees between 2016 and 2017 (Jacobsen et al. 2019, Kroh et al. 2017). To compare different origin groups, we have also limited our analytical sample to those who come from the four most surveyed nationalities: Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Eritrea. The original sample consists of 6,733 individuals. After limiting our sample according to the criteria described above, we are left with 5,420 persons. Taking the weighted frequencies, 26.2 % of the total are women.

In Figures 2a and 2b we can see some general characteristics of our sample. The age distribution is differentiated by gender, and the arrival year distribution is differentiated by country of origin. On average we can see the group of men is much larger and younger than the group of women. As we will see below, this is particularly related to women being more likely to have arrived as part of a family unit and to already have children at the time of interview in comparison to men. Regarding the year of arrival, most of the respondents in our sample arrived in Germany in 2015. Eritreans are the only ones who slightly differ; a high proportion had already arrived in 2014. This is consistent with the global asylum application trends from Eritrea, they figured amongst the top origin countries that applied for asylum between 2014 and 2015 (OECD 2019). If we further investigate the age distribution by origin groups (not shown) we find Eritreans are also a younger population on average; while the median age amongst the other origins is around 30, for Eritreans it is 26.

Figures 2a and 2b: Age distribution and migration year



Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany 2017, own calculations, weighted.

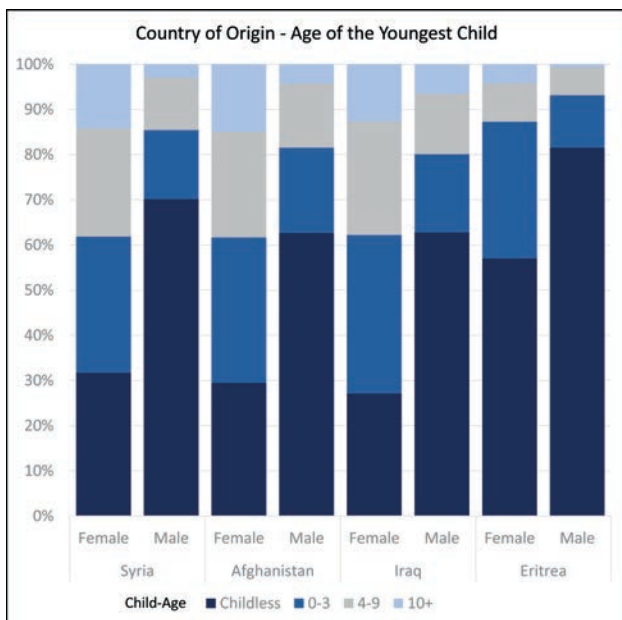
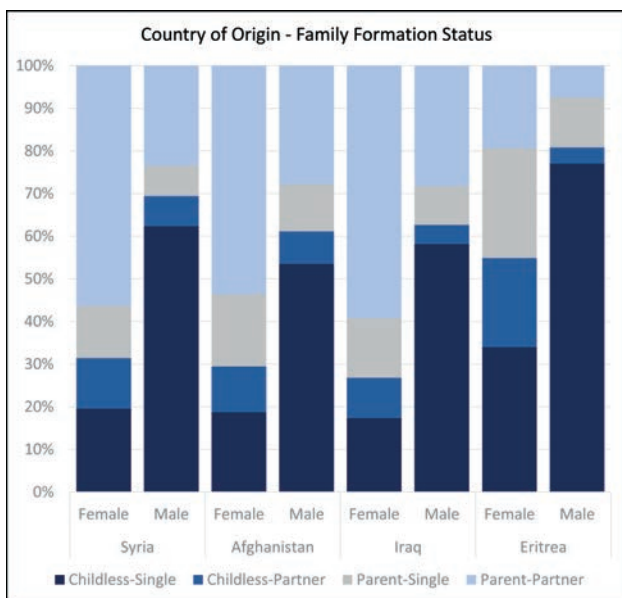
In the next sections we will first look at further differences by origin countries, gender and family composition. Then we will look at three dimensions that assess preparation for the labor market and to end we will look at differences in the confidence refugees have regarding future employment.

### *Differences in family composition*

In Figure 3a we can see the family formation stage refugees of different origin groups are in at the moment of interview. The age differences between origin groups are seen reflected in the most common family states of the different groups. We differentiate between four categories of family states: we distinguish whether respondents are partnered and have a child. While no evident differences exist between Syrian, Afghani and Iraqi populations, Eritreans who are younger, are more likely to be single and less likely to have children. The incidence of single motherhood is also larger for this group. The largest differences exist between genders. For the group of Syrian, Afghani, and Iraqi women more than 70 % have at least one child at interview and at least 55 % have their partner with them. For the men of these origins only around 30 % have a child and a similar proportion has a partner.<sup>1</sup> Eritrean men are even more likely to be childless and single than the other men. For those who have children, the median number of children in families from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq is 3, while the median for Eritrean families is only 1. In Figure 2b we can further see that from those women who have children, at least half have a child under the age of 3. Regardless of the origin, women tend on average to have more small children care responsibilities than men.

<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that these men who report having a partner are the partners of the women who report having a partner as well.

Figures 3a and 3b: Family status and number of children differences by gender and country of origin



Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany 2017, own calculations, weighted.

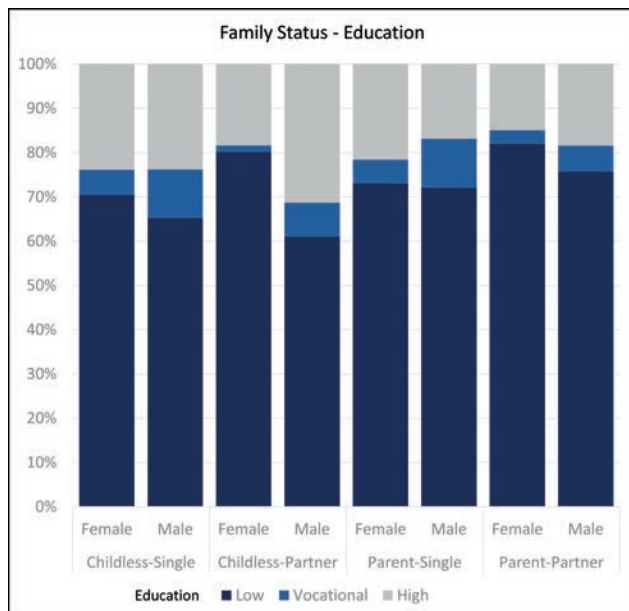
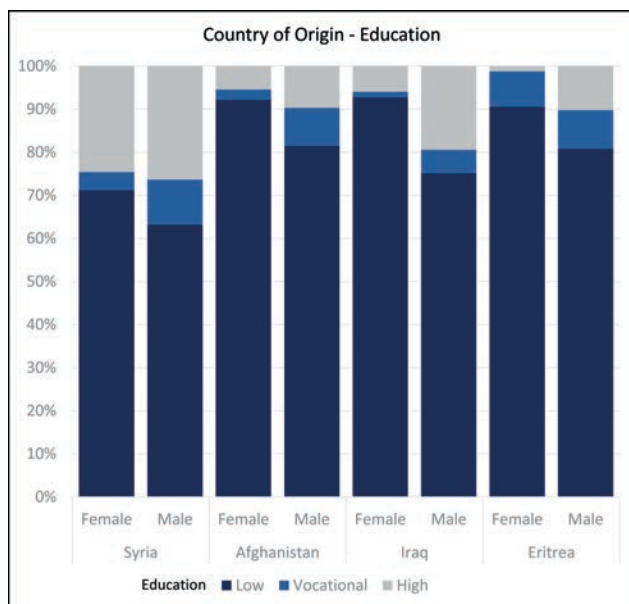
### *Differences in human capital for the German labor market*

Now that we've got an idea of the family constellations men and women of different origins live in, in this section we are interested in seeing differences in indicators of labor market preparation (education, work experience, and German language abilities) considering three dimensions: gender, origin country and family status.

In Figures 4a and 4b we observe the educational attainment distributions by origin groups and family status groups. We differentiate between low educated (those who have no degree beyond secondary education), those who have some kind of vocational training, and highly educated (university degree and beyond). The first noticeable characteristic of these figures is, that the majority of the observed population has no formal education beyond secondary schooling. Although, as expected from the description of the country of origin contexts, men do seem to be slightly better educated than women, the gender differences are not greater than 10 percentage points for any of the considered groups. Regarding differences by origin, to a minimal level (10–20 percentage points) Syrian origin refugees are more highly educated than the rest of the observed populations, both men and women. Afghani, Iraqi and Eritrean women are very unlikely to have had an education, less than 10% do. Amongst the different family statuses (Figure 4b) we can see differences are almost negligible, also between genders. Childless partnered male refugees are the group with the highest proportion of highly educated individuals; this is not the case for partnered females. Almost no gender differences exist between single childless refugees.



Figures 4a and 4b: Differences in educational attainment by gender, country of origin and family status

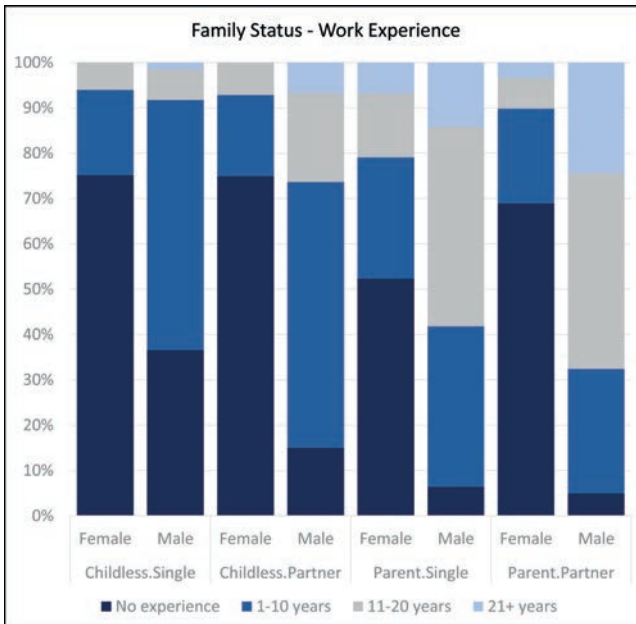
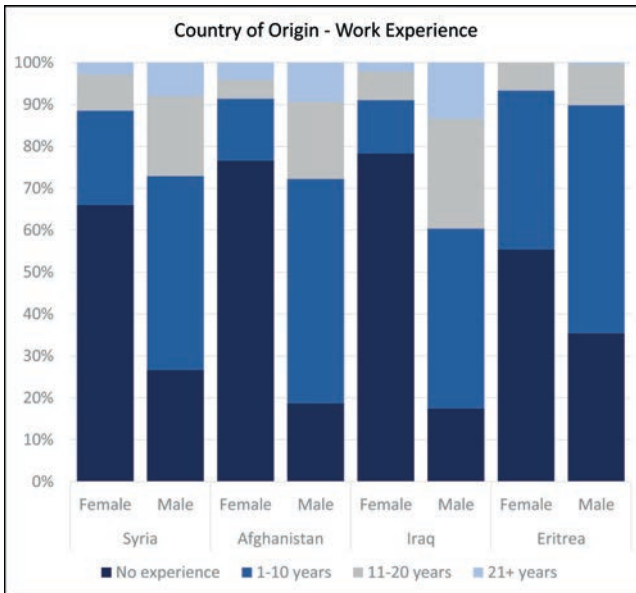


Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany 2017, own calculations, weighted.

The gender differences picture is much more varied when we consider work experience before emigration (Figures 5a and 5b). In contrast to men, most of the women in the sample have no previous work experience. This is equally the case for women who come from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq; at least 65 % of all women have no experience. For the men from these same origins the graphs depict the opposite, at least 75 % have some years of work experience. The youth of the male population is reflected in the fact that the majority has work experience of less than 10 years. In the case of Eritrean women, in comparison to other women, a larger proportion has had some work experience before emigrating. Male Eritreans have on average less work experience than the other origins; this is most possibly related to the younger than average ages in this population.

Since family formation status varies especially with the life course stage, work experience also varies highly in relation to the family formation stage. The strongest variation can be found in the case of males. In contrast to childless single males who most likely have less than 10 years of experience, those who have children and a partner are likely to have 11 or more years of work experience. There is also large variation by gender. Childless single women are very unlikely to have any work experience, while males in this same category do have some limited work experience. This limited amount of work experience is largely connected with the low average age in this childless-single category. But also the gender differences in the childless-single category could be evidence for gender inequalities in work behavior already starting from a young age in these cultures. Women, who are partnered, regardless of whether they have children, show similar behavior on very low proportions of work experience, only 25 % of partnered women have any type of work experience. Males are generally the ones to bring work experience, a pattern that could be expected from traditional breadwinner societies. The low educational attainment and high levels of work experience amongst male refugees is in line with previous findings from Liebau and Salikutliuk (2016).

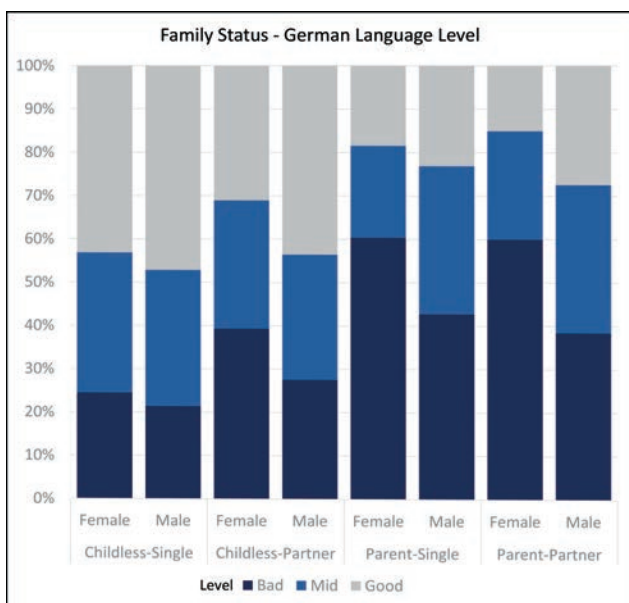
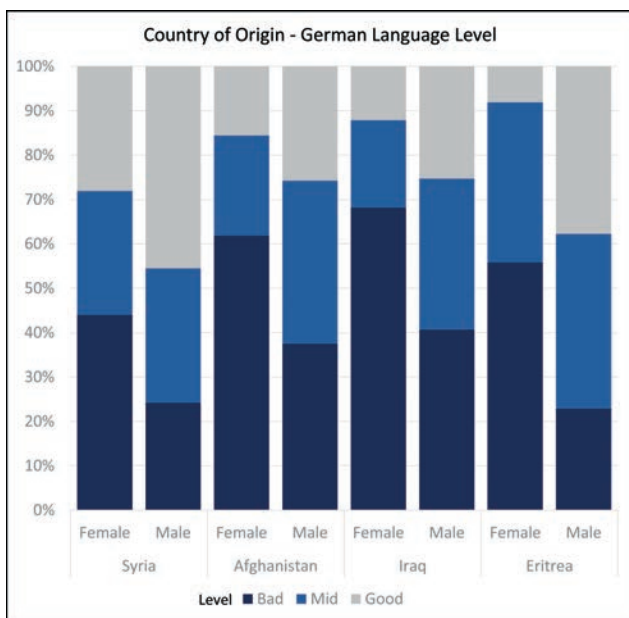
Figures 5a and 5b: Differences in work experience by gender, country of origin and family status



Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany 2017, own calculations, weighted.

The final human capital dimension that we will study is German language level at the moment of interview (Figures 6a and 6b). As found in previous reports, when we compare by gender, we see significant differences (Fendel 2019, Worbs and Baraulina 2017). Men are generally more likely to assess their German level in a mid or good level, while women are more likely to state that their level is bad. Some small differences are visible between countries of origin. Syrians on average assess their German language level to be in a mid to good level in contrast to other origins, the same is the case for Eritrean men. In Figure 6b, when we look at the family dimension, differences in gender are nonexistent for those single childless migrants, they are also the ones who have the best German skills. This could partially be due to the younger average age of this group, which might facilitate language acquisition, and also be an indicator for single childless migrants to have more time resources for their integration. In the case of childless women, if they are single, they are perhaps more likely to socialize with other German speakers than partnered women, who show lower levels of language acquisition. Childless partnered males on the other hand, are at the same levels of childless single males. This could be an indicator for some gender role differences within couples. As for those who already have children, their language levels are lower, and men are at a higher level than women, this could be evidence for uneven childcare responsibilities.

Figures 6a and 6b: Differences in self assessed German language knowledge by gender, country of origin and family status



Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany 2017, own calculations, weighted.

To sum up, we have found strong gender differences regarding human capital for the labor market. These differences are lowest regarding the dimension of education, but this is mostly due to the generally low levels of education in the population. The largest differences occur in work experience. While most men, particularly those who have a family immigrate with many years of work experience, women in general, except those who are single mothers, have almost no work experience. Regarding differences by country of origin, Syrian refugees have on average slightly more work experience, higher education and more German language skills than the rest of the groups. Large differences also exist between family formation stages.

### *Differences in intentions to work*

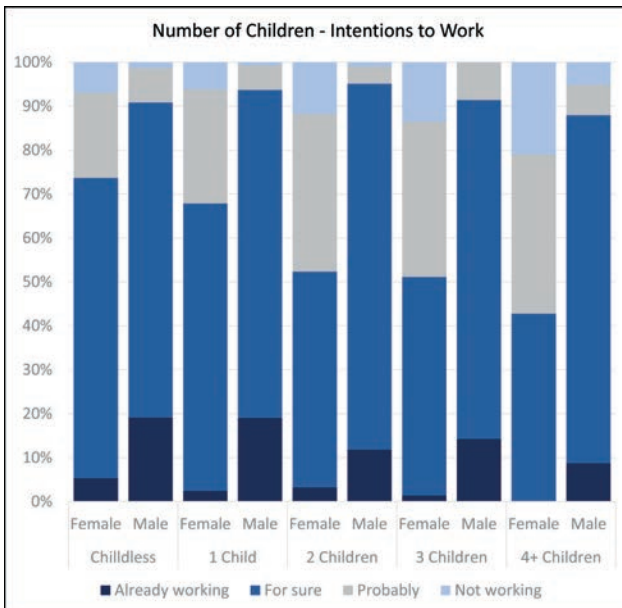
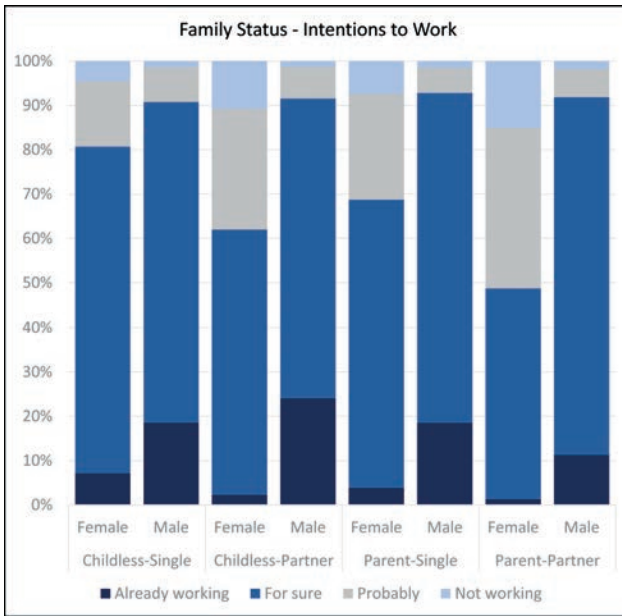
Now with a background on family conditions and preparation for the labor market of the different groups we will study how these dimensions further relate to different work intentions first by the family composition and second by origin countries and stage in the integration process.

The question on the intentions to work in the survey of refugees has four different categories. They go from ‘absolutely not’ and ‘improbably’ (we classified as not working) to ‘probably’ and the highest category is ‘for sure’. Those who were already working were included as already working.

In Figures 7a and 7b we can see the variable on the intentions to work differentiated by family formation stage and number of children. The first thing to note from both figures is that very few refugees report not having intentions to work. Some groups are less likely than others to state that they will work ‘for sure’. ‘Probably’ is also an indicative refugees use to express that they are aware of the necessity to work, if they were to live in Germany. Notwithstanding, if we read into the differences of those who are sure they will work and those who still have some doubts, we can see that there are prevalent gender and family formation stage differences. Similar to what we found on human capital differences, in comparison to women, men are much more sure about participating in the labor market than women. In fact, if we look at the proportions of refugees who are already working, the majority are men. Family responsibilities seem to be one of the main reasons why women are doubtful about pursuing (any) work. Childless single women are only slightly (10 percentage points) less certain about working in a job than men. There are larger differences amongst those, who have a partner or children. In fact, women with a partner represent the group most likely to state to only ‘probably’ work vs. ‘for sure’. When we look at these differences by number of children, we come to the conclusion, that the more children women have, the less certain they seem to be able to take up work. This is demonstrated in the gradient of Figure 7b. In fact, we can see that of all those, who say they will ‘not work’, the group to be most likely to report this answer are women who have 4 or more children (25 %). As we mentioned above, amongst women with children, 3 is the median number of children they have, so this is a substantial group within the total

of refugee women. When assessing these differences by the age of the youngest child (not shown) we can tell, that the differences in intentions to work are not necessarily from the age of the youngest child, but rather connected to motherhood per se. So, corroborating past studies, family life does seem to be a limiting factor for women's expectations to pursue a job.

Figures 7a and 7b: Differences in intentions to work by family status



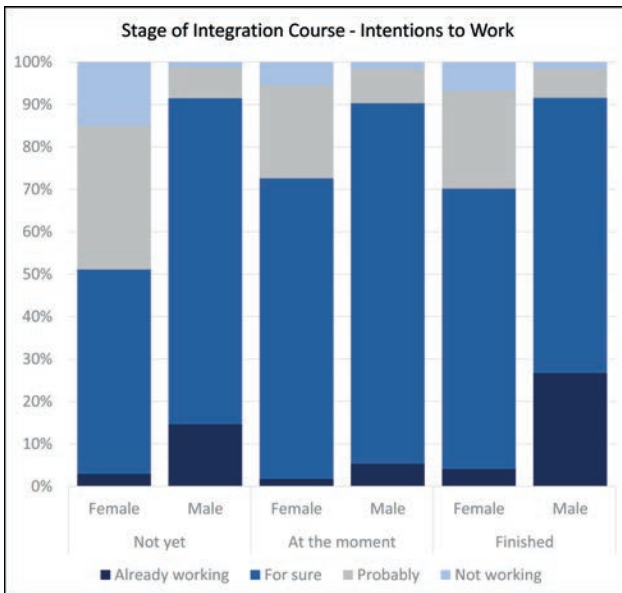
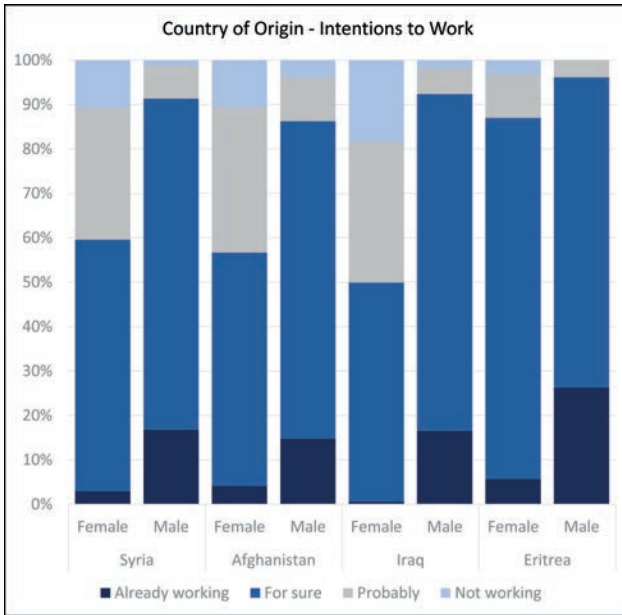
Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany 2017, own calculations, weighted.



In the final Figures 8a and 8b we look at differences in intentions to work by two dimensions: origin and integration course status. In Figure 8a, similar to what we found in the human capital descriptives, few differences are found in the intentions to work between different origins. The only one to show a slightly different pattern are Eritrean women, 90 % are sure they will work. As we saw above, this is mostly due to origin groups being on average in different family formation stages and having different age compositions at the moment of interview. Amongst the other groups around 55 % of the women say they are 'sure' they will work, around 30 % say they will 'probably' work and then only a small 10–15 % say they will 'not work'.

In the last figure (Figure 8b) we can see how the intentions to work differ by the stage of the integration process refugees are at. Integration courses are part of the requisites that refugees and other migrants have to fulfil in order to maintain their residence permit. Men, the ones who are in an integration course at the moment of interview, are less likely to be working, but on average most are still 'sure' they will work. As expected, those who finished the integration courses are the most likely to take up a job. Of all the men, who took the course, 25 % are already working. As for women, we can see a 22-percentage point difference in their intentions to work between those who have not yet been in integration courses and those who have already participated in them. Despite the actual low labor market participation at the moment of interview, the elevated confidence of participating in the labor market for women during and after the integration courses signals that the participation in integration programs is related to a higher motivation to work in the future, whether this is a causal relation would however take a more advanced econometric analysis.

Figures 8a and 8b: Differences in intentions to work by country of origin and stage in the 'integration' process



Source: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany 2017, own calculations, weighted.

## 4. Discussion – back to the research questions

In this report we have investigated refugees' reported intentions to work in relation to different human capital and family responsibilities situations. To review the findings of this empirical investigation we will refer back to the questions that we formulated in the introduction:

With respect to the main question on the intentions to work of the refugee population, the majority of refugees, regardless of their gender and origin, report high intentions of working in the future if they are not yet working at the moment. Women from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq were generally very similar in all dimensions of human capital and also in their statements regarding their intentions to work. Around 55 % were 'sure' they would work, while the other 30% said they would 'probably' work and a maximum of 15 % said they would 'not work'. Some differences in the certainty to be employed in the future were however found between this group and the group of women from Eritrea, who on average showed more confidence of future labor market participation.

Second, we found that despite the general high average in expectations to work of all refugee women, those who are partnered, and especially those who have a large number of children are the most unsure to be able to participate in the labor market in the future. The age of the youngest child did not appear to matter greatly for the intentions to work; it was rather being a mother that marked a difference within the group of women. We must see this result, however, taking into consideration that the large majority of women who had children at interview had toddlers or young children who are still in an age that requires constant care. When we look at the work experience variable, seeing that a large proportion of women have no previous experience, especially if they have a family, this could also be one of the reasons the labor market does not seem as accessible to them as for other groups.

Few differences were found between different countries of origin. Women from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq show very similar patterns regarding family status and family size (for those who had children). Some differences were found between these origins and Eritrean women. Eritrean women were on average younger, had fewer children and showed higher intentions to participate in the labor market.

Regarding human capital endowment, we found that the large majority of refugees have low educational attainment. Men were slightly more likely to be highly educated than women but differences are almost negligible. Large gender differences are rather found in the amount of work experience refugees brought with them. While the majority of women had no work experience, the opposite was true for the group of men. Between the different countries of origin, Syrian refugees seem to be the most prepared on average for the labor market in terms of education and German knowledge, but the sample sizes of other groups are not large enough to draw conclusions on these differences. What is evident is that family responsibilities do seem to lower some of the motivation for women, in particular

because those who have the largest families are also the ones who have the least previous contact with the labor market.

Lastly, we wanted to see how differences in family status and human capital were related to differences in gender role values. From the review of the country of origin context it is clear that all refugees in our sample come from countries that are patriarchal and hierarchical. It is, however, not evident that migrants and particularly refugees, who are fleeing their countries, will share the same values as those from the countries they fled from. In fact, there are questions in the survey that inquired on gender roles and what they show is that the large majority answer in line with the liberal gender values found in Germany (Brücker et al. 2016). Nonetheless, from the patterns above we can see there is a certain legacy from the unequal gender structures in the countries of origin that are reflected in their biographies and expectations. Most women who arrived did so with a partner and children, while many men arrived alone. Women also showed on average very small amounts of accumulated work experience. From the differences between childless single and childless partnered women (eg. in German level acquisition) it is also possible to see gender differences in the expectations to work exist especially within couples.

To conclude, as has already been found in other studies, refugee women are less likely than men to be motivated and capable to enter the labor market, especially when they have family responsibilities. Working could be a good way for them to gain some economic independence and integrate into society, so far however evidence is showing this could be a slow process. The positive attitudes related to the integration courses can however be seen as a good sign that with good accompaniment, refugee men and women have a good potential to integrate and adapt to their new living environment.

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- Figure 1: Absolute numbers of first-time asylum applications in Germany between 2009 and 2018 and the yearly proportion of women  
Figures 2a and 2b: Age distribution and migration year
- Figures 3a and 3b: Family status and number of children differences by gender and country of origin
- Figures 4a and 4b: Differences in educational attainment by gender, country of origin and family status
- Figures 5a and 5b: Differences in work experience by gender, country of origin and family status
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- Figures 7a and 7b: Differences in intentions to work by family status
- Figures 8a and 8b: Differences in intentions to work by country of origin and stage in the 'integration' process

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