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BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

STATE OF IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

























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State of Immigrant Integration – **Austria**

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BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

State of Immigrant Integration: **AUSTRIA**

While immigrants and their children constitute more than one in every four individuals living in Austria, their outcomes do not always reflect those of their peers with native-born parents. Against this backdrop, integration is a key policy issue in the country. The second in a new OECD series, the present *State of Immigrant Integration – Austria* report highlights the key characteristics of the immigrant population and the primary integration topics in the country (see **Box 1**). Comparative analysis with other major OECD migrant destinations provides a benchmark for identifying strengths and challenges to integration in Austria. Austria's peer countries for the purpose of this report are Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. They are also referred to as "major destinations".

This report is based on the joint OECD-EU indicators of immigrant integration report (see OECD/European Commission, 2023[1]) and other comparative information by the OECD. Additional analyses were conducted using the Austrian microcensus and cross-national surveys such as the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS), the EU Statistics of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), the European Social Survey (ESS), the Eurobarometer and the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Box 1 **Definition of the immigrant population**

This report defines immigrants as individuals born outside of Austria, regardless of whether they hold Austrian citizenship. People born in Austria are referred to as native-born. This definition recognises that while citizenship can change over time, birthplace does not. Additionally, the conditions for obtaining host country citizenship vary across countries, making international comparisons based on this criterion difficult. This report avoids the term "immigration background" or "immigration history" – which is often employed to refer to both immigrants and their native-born offspring (i.e. native-born children with two immigrant parents) – and analyses the integration outcomes of these two groups separately. Indeed, the issues and challenges faced by persons born abroad, especially those who immigrated as adults, differ from those of their children who were born and raised in the host country.



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Executive Summary

While immigrants and their children account for more than one fourth of Austria's total population, their outcomes do not always reflect those of their native-born peers. Integration has therefore become a priority on the national policy agenda. Although public debate often focuses on refugees and their families, the predominant channel for immigration to Austria is the EU's free mobility scheme.

The overall educational attainment of immigrants in Austria is favourable by international standards. This contributed to record high employment rates among both EU-born (77%) and non-EU born (65%) immigrants in 2022 – a strong recovery following the decline during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these high employment rates, immigrants tend to be concentrated in elementary occupations and are often overqualified for their jobs. Although Austria has invested in the recognition of foreign qualifications to facilitate access to high-skilled jobs, awareness of the procedures and benefits is limited, with only 13% of foreign-educated immigrants applying for recognition.

Along with recognition of foreign qualifications, language skills facilitate labour market integration in Austria, and the country has significantly increased efforts to support language learning over the past decade. These investments appear to be effective, as non-EU born immigrants show high participation in language courses in international comparison and progress relatively rapidly. In contrast, EU-born immigrants participate in language courses at lower rates and make slower progress than in most other comparison countries.

With high concentrations of immigrants in elementary occupations and relatively high rates of overqualification, immigrants are nearly three times more likely to experience relative poverty than the native-born (30% versus 11%). Furthermore, over one quarter of immigrants in Austria live in overcrowded accommodations. This is one of the highest shares among major destinations. One explanation for overcrowding may be that nearly 40% of all immigrants in Austria are living in Vienna. Nonetheless, the share of immigrants experiencing severe material and social deprivation[1] is low in international comparison.

The socioeconomic status of immigrants is often passed on to their native-born children. A third of young people with at least one immigrant parent have surpassed their parents' educational attainment, the lowest share among major destination countries. Furthermore, immigrant and native-born students with immigrant parents scored lower on the PISA assessment than in most other countries. The learning gap with their peers with native-born parents exceeds the average progress Austrian students make in a full school year. This gap can partly be attributed to the lower socioeconomic status of pupils with immigrant parents and their overrepresentation in schools with a high share of pupils from families with a low socioeconomic status.

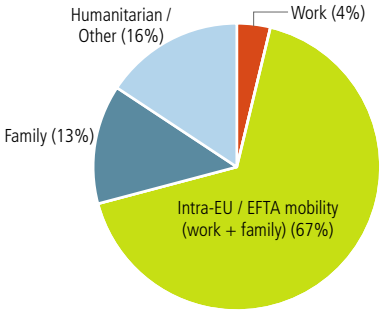
Despite these challenges, there are promising signs of improvement, suggesting that the policy initiatives to support the integration of young people from immigrant families with a low socioeconomic status have had a positive impact. In particular, both the proportion of native-born young people with migrant parents who leave school early and the proportion who are not in employment, education or training have shrunk significantly over the last decade.

1. Severe material and social deprivation is defined by whether individuals can afford at least seven out of thirteen material items deemed necessary or desirable for a decent quality of life (see footnote 21).

Key facts and figures

Intra-EU/EFTA mobility is the most significant channel for immigration to Austria

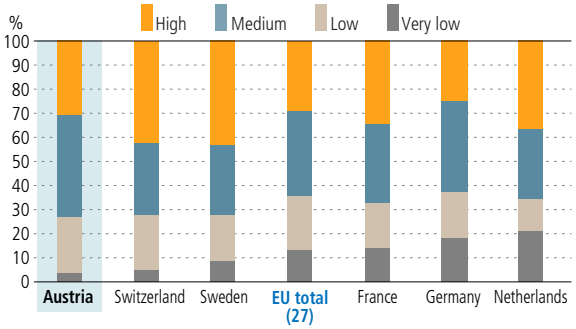
Categories of entry of permanent immigrants to Austria, all ages, 2011-2023



Despite a gradual increase since 2010, labour migration from third countries still plays a limited role.

Educational attainment of immigrants in Austria is favourable in international comparison

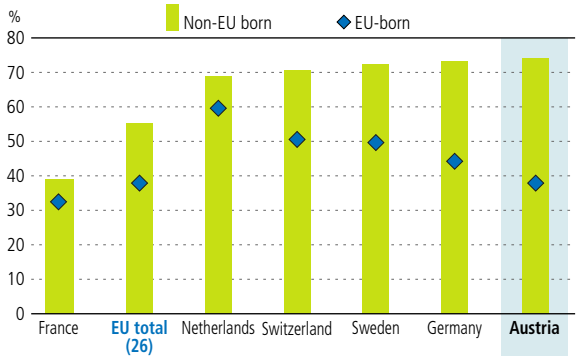
Educational attainment of immigrants, excluding individuals currently enrolled in formal education, ages 15-64, 2021



However, the picture is less favourable for immigrants born in non-EU countries.

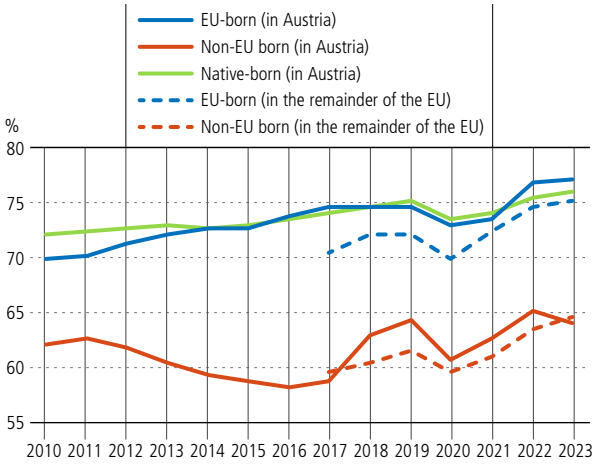
Most non-EU born immigrants who arrived in Austria less than 10 years ago participate in language courses

Self-reported participation in language courses among immigrants who arrived less than 10 years ago and are not native speakers, ages 15–64, 2021



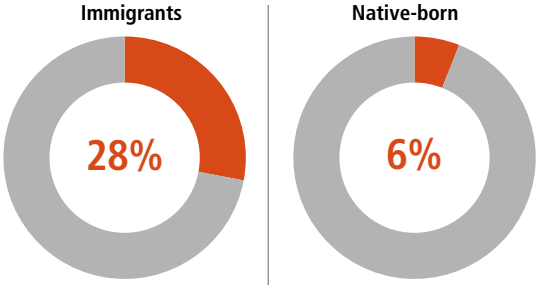
Employment rates of immigrants are high

Share of immigrants in employment, ages 15-64, 2010-2023



Immigrants are much more likely to live in overcrowded housing than the native-born

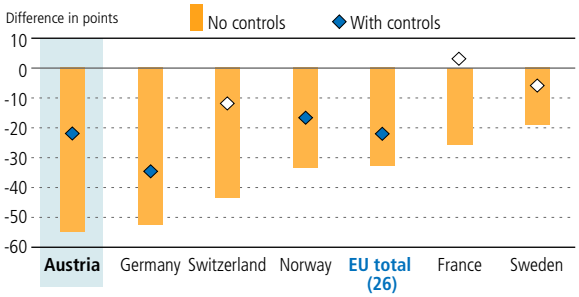
Overcrowded housing rates, ages 16 and above, 2021



Their concentration in Vienna contributes to this phenomenon.

A high concentration of children of immigrants in the same school is negatively correlated with their reading performance

Difference in PISA points between pupils in the top versus the lower three quartiles of schools ranked by the share of students with immigrant parents, native-born pupils with immigrant parents, ages 15-16, 2022



Note: Controls include age, sex, mother's education, language spoken at home, and share of low-educated mothers by school. Results that are not statistically significantly different from zero at the 5% level are marked in white.

I The context for immigrant integration

This section provides the context and demographic landscape of immigration to Austria, as well as the educational attainment of migrants living in the country.

Key takeaways

- Although Austria hosts many humanitarian and family immigrants, Intra-EU/EFTA mobility has been the dominant channel for immigration to Austria over the past two decades.
- Almost 40% of all immigrants live in Vienna, compared with only 17% of the native-born.
- The educational attainment of individuals immigrating to Austria is favourable in comparison with other European countries, driven by the high share of EU-born who have relatively high qualification levels. At the same time, there is a considerable share of very low-educated non-EU born immigrants from certain origin countries.

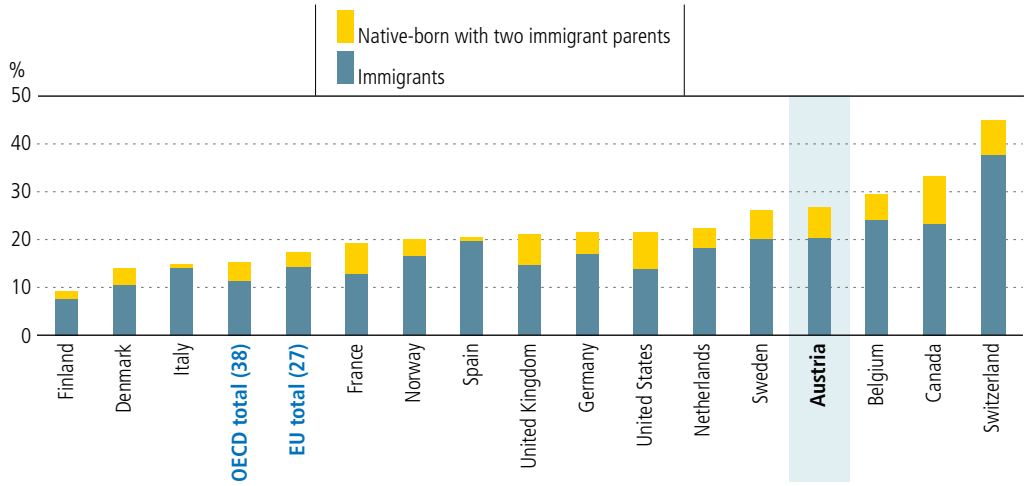
I.1 History and composition of the migrant population in Austria

Immigrants and their children make up a significant portion of the Austrian population. Both the share of immigrants and of their native-born children are higher in Austria than in most other major destination countries (see **Figure 1**). Since 2012, Austria's immigrant population has increased by nearly 40%. By 2022, the country was home to 1.8 million immigrants, accounting for around one-fifth of the total population. Furthermore, immigrants and their children account for over one in every four people living in Austria, with more than 600 000 people in the country born to two immigrant parents. Among young people aged 15-34, one in ten has two immigrant parents.

Figure 1

Immigrants and their children account for a large share of the population in Austria

Share of immigrants and native-born with two immigrant parents among total population, all ages, 2021 or most recent year



Source: See Figure 1.1 of OECD/European Commission (2023[1]).

These figures do not include over 80 000 people in Austria who have been fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Due to the recent nature of this migration, the data in this report do not yet cover this group.

Several immigration inflows in the post-war period have had a significant impact on Austria's demographic landscape (see Krause & Liebig (2011[2]) for an overview). Like many other Western countries, Austria implemented "guest worker" programmes and signed recruitment agreements with Türkiye (1964) and the former Yugoslavia (1966) to address labour shortages during the post-war economic boom. The share of foreign workers in the employed population rose from 1% in 1964 to almost 9% in 1973. By 1974, due to the oil crisis and reduced labour demand, official recruitment came to a halt. Many labour immigrants returned to their countries of origin in the following years, while others stayed and settled with their families to avoid the risk of being denied re-entry.

Until the mid-1980s, the share of immigrants in Austria remained relatively low in international comparison. However, immigration increased significantly in the early 1990s due to the fall of the Iron Curtain and favourable economic conditions. Furthermore, the wars in the former Yugoslavia resulted in a significant increase in humanitarian arrivals, with approximately 100 000 individuals seeking refuge in Austria between 1992 and 1995, the majority of whom were from Bosnia and Herzegovina (around 90 000).

Since Austria's accession to the EU in 1995, inflows from EU countries have increased rapidly, becoming the primary source of immigration to the country by the mid-2000s. From 2011 to 2023, this category accounted for around two-thirds of all permanent flows to the country. Within the comparison group, this is the highest share after Switzerland (see **Figure 2**).

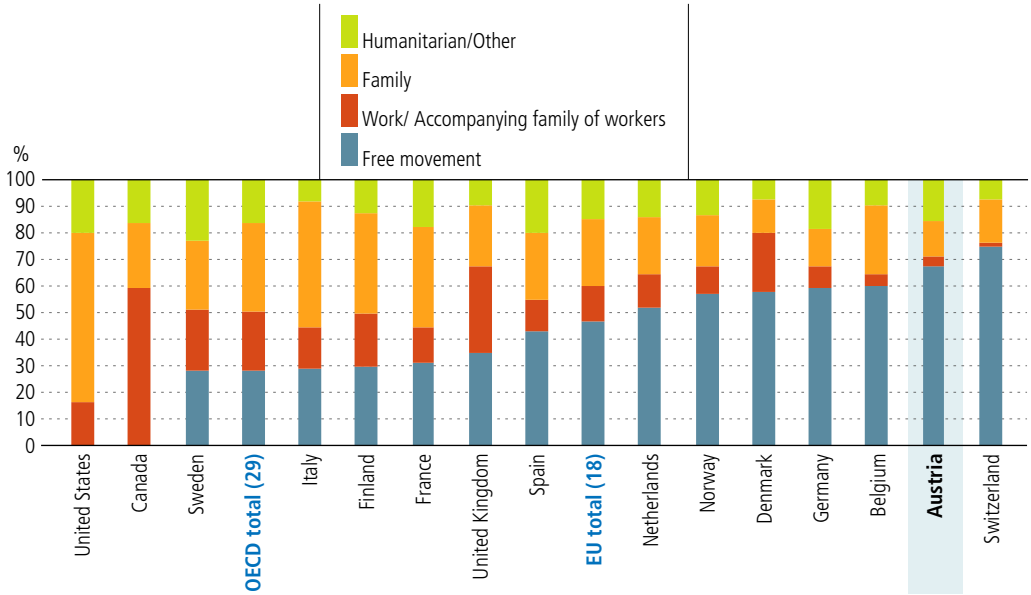
Around 80% of all immigrants to Austria were born in Europe (including Türkiye) and 44% were born in the EU (largely in Germany and Central and Eastern European countries). Among non-EU born immigrants, the majority have come from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Türkiye and Serbia.

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Figure 2

Free mobility accounts for two-thirds of permanent migration inflows to Austria

Composition of permanent migration inflows, by category of entry, all ages, 2011-2023



Note: The OECD collects and standardises administrative data by category of residence permit from OECD countries. Permanent immigrants are foreign nationals of any age who received a residence permit that, under normal circumstances, grants them the right to stay permanently in the host country. This includes foreigners who obtain a permanent residence permit upon entry, those who have an initial temporary residence permit routinely and indefinitely renewed or transformed into permanent residence, and free mobility migrants (excluding those on short-term stays). Temporary immigrants who become permanent-type residents following a change in their status are also included, such as students taking up employment after completing their studies.

Source: OECD Statistics – International Migration Database (IMD) 2011-2023.

For over 30 years, Austria has been a major destination for refugees and their families. Humanitarian immigration peaked both in the early 1990s and from 2014 to 2016, when, along with Germany and Sweden, Austria received the largest number of asylum seekers per capita in the EU. Over the past ten years, humanitarian and family migrants each accounted for around one-sixth of all permanent inflows to Austria. By contrast, labour migration from third countries continues to play a limited role, despite a gradual increase since 2010 and significant policy efforts to increase this number.

As in many other countries, policy attention in Austria is focused on the integration of recent arrivals (especially refugees and their families) (see **Box 2**), yet immigrants with fewer than five years of residence account for less than a fifth of the total immigrant population. In fact, around three in five immigrants have been in the country for over a decade.

Box 2 **Austria promotes the integration of newly arrived third country nationals through a combination of incentives and requirements**

Austria offers voluntary pre-departure measures in major origin countries in the form of digital and print material, information sessions and language courses. While pre-arrival courses remain optional, third country nationals (TCNs) (with certain exceptions), are required to achieve basic German proficiency (CEFR level A1) prior to arrival in the country.

With certain exceptions (such as among labour migrants), foreigners with non-EU/EFTA citizenship (TCNs) must fulfil Module 1 of Austria's Integration Agreement ("Integrationsvereinbarung"). This is a legal obligation for those issued a residence permit for the first time. Requirements include achieving basic proficiency in German (CEFR level A2) and successfully showing an understanding of the country's core values within two years of receiving the permit. Fulfilment enables TCNs to obtain a residence permit valid for three years, instead of just a one-year extension. By contrast, failure to fulfil Module 1 can lead to an administrative penalty. To be eligible for long-term residency or citizenship, immigrants must complete Module 2 of the Integration Agreement, which requires an intermediate level of German proficiency (CEFR level B1) and demonstrates advanced understanding of the country's core values.

As one requirement to obtain the residence permit is usually proof of sufficient income, Austria does not offer free language courses for this group aside from online courses at the language portal of the Austrian Integration Fund ("Österreichischer Integrationsfonds", ÖIF). However, for joining family members, Austria incentivises language course enrolment and completion by reimbursing 50% of the cost up to a maximum of 750€ if they attend at least 75% of classes and pass the end-of-course exam within 18 months.

Source: OECD (2023[3]), BMAW/BMI (2024[4]), ÖIF (2024[5]).

Immigrants in Austria are highly concentrated in cities. In fact, the proportion of working age immigrants living in densely populated areas is more than twice that of the native-born population (55% compared to 25%). Vienna hosts a particularly high proportion of immigrants, with almost 40% living in the capital compared to only 17% of the native-born (Statistics Austria, 2023[6]).

I.2 Educational attainment

The formal educational attainment of working-age EU-born immigrants[2] in Austria is favourable in international comparison (see **Figure 3**). In fact, the share of the highly educated immigrant population exceeds that of the native-born. Over two in five EU-born immigrants have a tertiary degree, compared with one in three of the native-born. Additionally, the population of low-educated EU-born immigrants is small, with around one in eight having completed lower secondary education and a negligible 1% having only completed primary education.

2. For the sake of simplicity, the term "EU migrant" in this report includes persons born in EU countries as well as the four EFTA countries: Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Iceland and Norway.

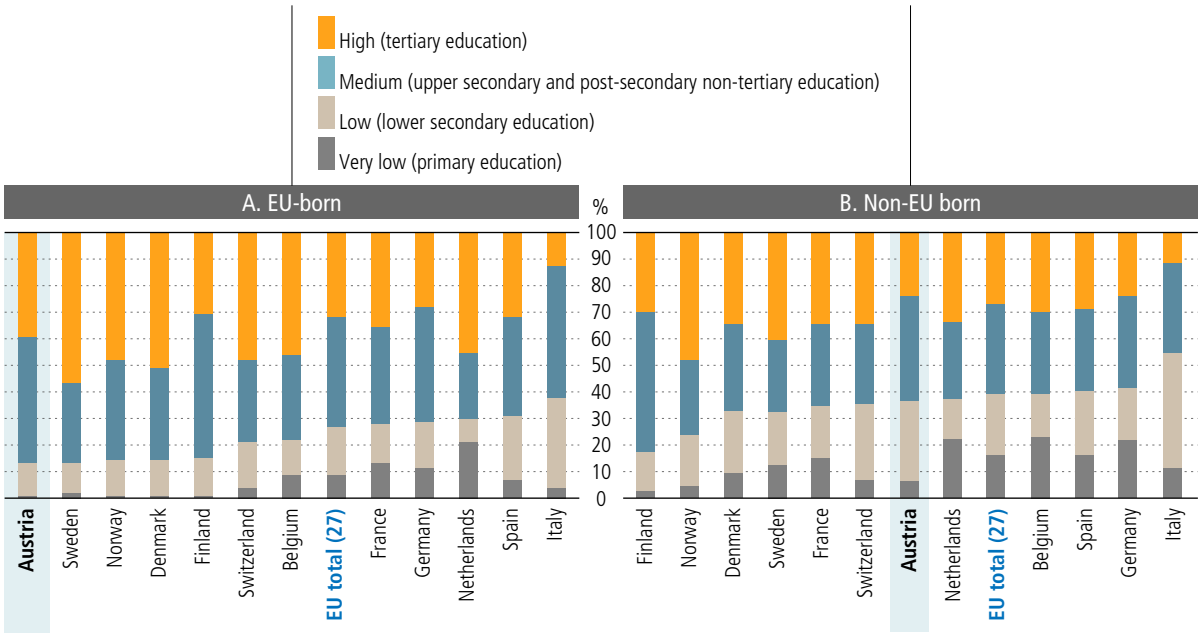
A significant proportion of non-EU born immigrants in Austria are refugees and their family members who may have had limited to no access to education in their countries of origin. As a result, the educational attainment of this group is lower than that of their EU-born counterparts. Only about a quarter of non-EU born immigrants in Austria have a tertiary degree. This is proportionally lower than many of Austria's peer countries. However, relatively few non-EU born immigrants in Austria have very low educational attainment, defined as having completed at most primary education. Only around 6% of non-EU born immigrants in Austria fall into this category, which is significantly lower than in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, where it exceeds 20%.

Over the last decade, the proportion of highly educated immigrants in Austria increased significantly. The share of highly educated immigrants who have been in the country for fewer than five years was significantly higher among those who arrived between 2017 and 2021 than those who arrived between 2007 and 2011. The share of highly educated increased by 14 percentage points among EU-born immigrants (from 27 to 41%) and by 21 percentage points among non-EU born immigrants (from 23% to 44%). While other countries have witnessed a similar trend, Austria's improvement is particularly notable.

Figure 3

Educational attainment of EU-born immigrants in Austria is favourable in international comparison, but this is less the case for the non-EU born

Educational attainment, excluding individuals who are currently enrolled in formal education, ages 15-64, 2021



Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021.

At the same time, there is also a relatively high share of low-educated non-EU born immigrants–almost four in ten have not gone beyond lower secondary education. Although – at around 6% – the overall share of those who have not gone beyond primary education is low in international comparison, of concern is the share of very low educated recent immigrants from certain regions. Shares have reached 17% among immigrants from the Near and Middle East, and 8% among those from South and South East Asia (8%). These regions include countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, which are among the most common countries of origin of asylum seekers in Austria.



II Skills and the labour market in Austria

This section outlines the labour market integration and skills acquisition of immigrants in Austria.

Key takeaways

- In 2022, employment rates in Austria reached record highs among both EU-born (77%) and non-EU born (65%) immigrants.
- Immigrants tend to be concentrated in elementary occupations[3] and are frequently overqualified for their jobs.[4]
- Despite Austria's investments in the recognition of foreign qualifications, only about one in eight foreign-educated immigrants apply for recognition.
- Participation in language courses is high among non-EU born immigrants, and their progress resembles that of non-EU born immigrants in peer countries. By contrast, EU-born immigrants progress more slowly than their peers in most other major European destinations.

II.1 The labour market integration of immigrants in Austria

Labour integration is especially relevant as four out of five immigrants in Austria are of working age, compared to around three out of five native-born. In fact, immigrants account for one-quarter of the total working-age population in Austria.

The employment rates of both EU-born and non-EU born immigrants are favourable in international comparison. The employment rate of EU-born immigrants has significantly increased over the last decade and reached a record high of 77%, reflecting overall favourable labour market conditions and exceeding employment levels of the native-born in 2022 and 2023 (see **Figure 4**).

The employment rate of the non-EU born is lower, reaching 65% in 2022. These lower employment rates can be attributed to a lower average level of educational attainment and a higher proportion of refugees and family immigrants, whose integration into the labour market is often slower (see section III.2). Moreover, the employment status of non-EU born immigrants is susceptible to economic fluctuations, as they are overrepresented in cyclical sectors like hospitality, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade. This was particularly evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, when non-EU born immigrants' employment rates dropped about twice as much as those of both EU-born immigrants and of the native-born.

A strong emphasis on formal qualifications in the Austrian labour market makes it difficult for those with low educational attainment to secure employment. Over the last decade, the unemployment rate of low-educated immigrants has risen sharply, surpassing that of low-educated native-born by four percentage points. In contrast, most other countries have seen stable or declining unemployment rates for this group.

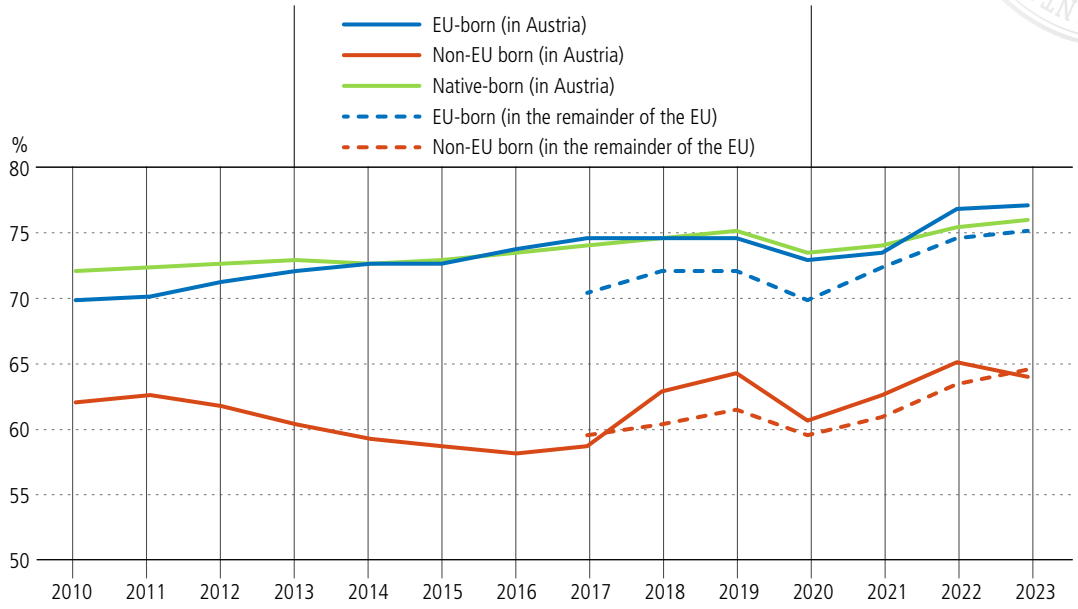
Consequently, the unemployment rate of low-educated immigrants born in both EU and non-EU countries sits at about 18%, one of the highest rates among major European destinations after Belgium, Spain and Sweden.

3. Elementary occupations are jobs that require simple, routine tasks and, often, physical effort (ISCO level 9).
4. Overqualified immigrants are highly educated immigrants who work in elementary or medium-skilled occupations – i.e. ISCO levels 4-9.

Figure 4

Immigrant employment rates in Austria reach record levels

Employment rates, ages 15-64, 2010-2023



Note: Following the break in the time series of the European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) in 2021, an adjustment methodology was applied to the figures for 2010-2020 to ensure comparability over time. More details can be found in Annex 1.B. of OECD/European Commission (2023). EU/non-EU distinctions for the remainder of the EU are only available from 2017 onwards.

Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2010-2023.

Unemployment is particularly high in Vienna, where the labour demand for occupations requiring intermediate or lower educational attainment is declining (EURES, 2023[7]). In fact, around one quarter of low-educated immigrants are unemployed in Vienna. This is over ten percentage points higher than elsewhere in the country.

Although the employment rate of highly educated immigrants greatly surpasses that of their low-educated peers, they still face a significant employment gap vis-à-vis their native-born counterparts (seven percentage points). Conversely, low-educated immigrants have a higher employment rate (52%) than their native-born peers (46%).

Immigrants in Austria, particularly those born in non-EU countries, are heavily concentrated in elementary occupations (see **Figure 5**). Despite accounting for only around two-fifths of the low-educated population, immigrants occupy most of the elementary jobs in Austria.[5] Furthermore, less than half of all immigrants with tertiary degrees (and slightly more than half in Vienna) work in jobs that reflect their level of education. Only Spain and Italy have lower rates among major destinations.

Immigrants with foreign qualifications struggle to access high-skilled jobs, especially if their qualifications come from outside of the EU. While 62% of immigrants with an Austrian tertiary degree in employment work in high-skilled jobs, 48% of their employed peers with a tertiary degree from within the EU and a mere 27% of those employed with a tertiary degree from outside the EU work in high-skilled jobs.

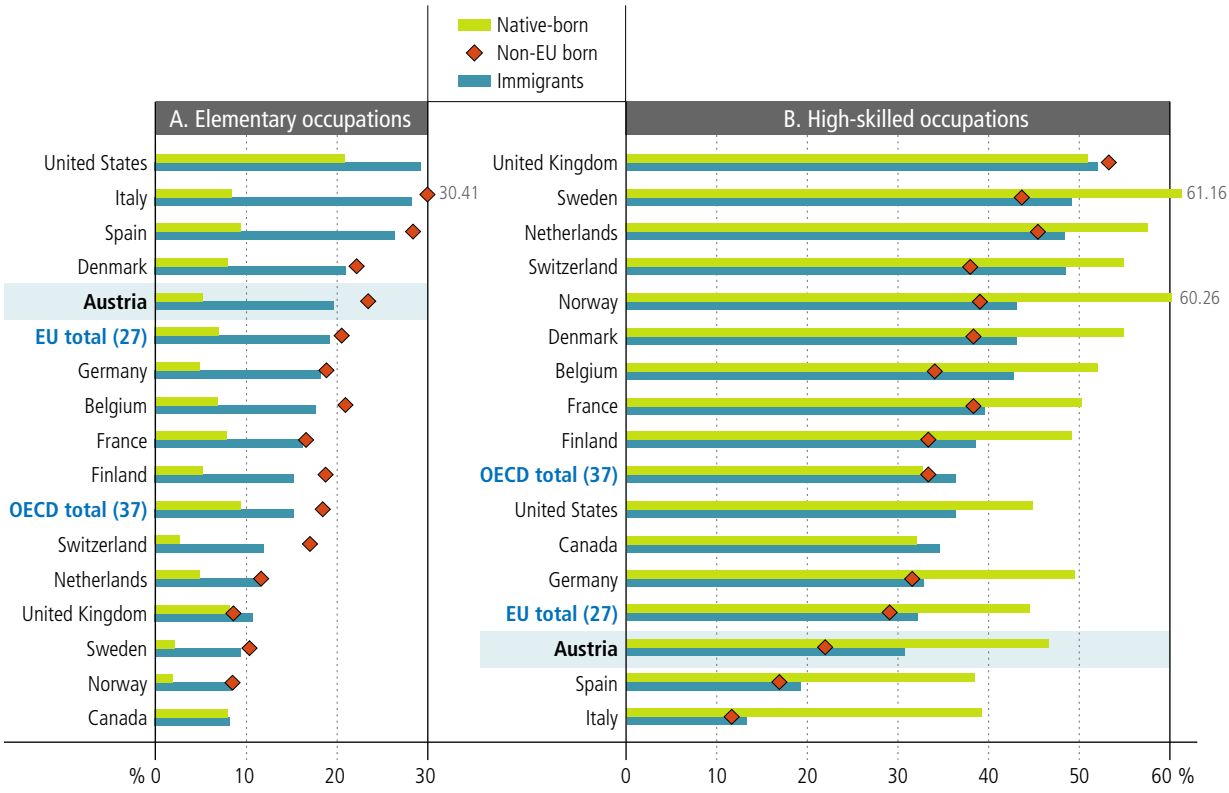
Without having their qualifications recognised (see **Box 3**), immigrants with foreign degrees are generally unable to work in regulated professions or trades. Additionally, even in non-regulated occupations, foreign qualifications are often undervalued by employers. Recognition of foreign qualifications significantly improves the chances of finding employment that reflects an individual's skills. Immigrants who have a foreign tertiary degree and at least partial recognition of their qualifications are 17 percentage points more likely to be employed in high-skilled jobs than those without recognition, after controlling for differences in age, gender, origin of qualifications, field of study, reason for migration and language proficiency.

5. This result is not driven by the prevalence of seasonal work, as 94% of immigrants in paid employment (excluding the self-employed and those still in education) covered by the EU-LFS have a permanent contract.

Figure 5

Few immigrants in Austria are employed in high-skilled jobs

Share of employed individuals working in low- and high-skilled occupations, ages 15-64, 2021



Note: The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) describes those who hold high-skilled jobs as senior managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals (ISCO levels 1-3). Elementary occupations require simple, routine tasks and, often, physical effort (ISCO level 9).

Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021.

Box 3 Austria has implemented measures to streamline the recognition process and ensure better access to information and guidance

There are four distinct forms of recognition: EU/EEA professional qualifications, recognition ("nostrification") of school and secondary school diplomas, "nostrification" of academic degrees for professional practice, and assessment of vocational qualifications. In Austria, the responsible authority and thus the formal recognition process varies depending on the specific field with no standardised set of regulations. Each federal state has its own set of regulations and competent authorities and there are several recognition bodies at the national level.

The Law on the Recognition and Assessment of Qualifications (AuBG), in force since July 2016, introduced the right to a recognition or assessment process, streamlined the process for recognising foreign qualifications and harmonised procedural requirements with EU standards. The law sets a four-month time limit for assessments and provides an online recognition portal with information, application forms, required documents, translations, certifications and procedural costs. It also provides alternative recognition procedures for refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and displaced persons who lack formal documentation. The AuBG introduced a legal obligation to provide contact points (Anlaufstellen für Personen mit im Ausland erworbenen Qualifikationen, AST) with free multilingual information and counselling throughout the assessment and recognition procedure.

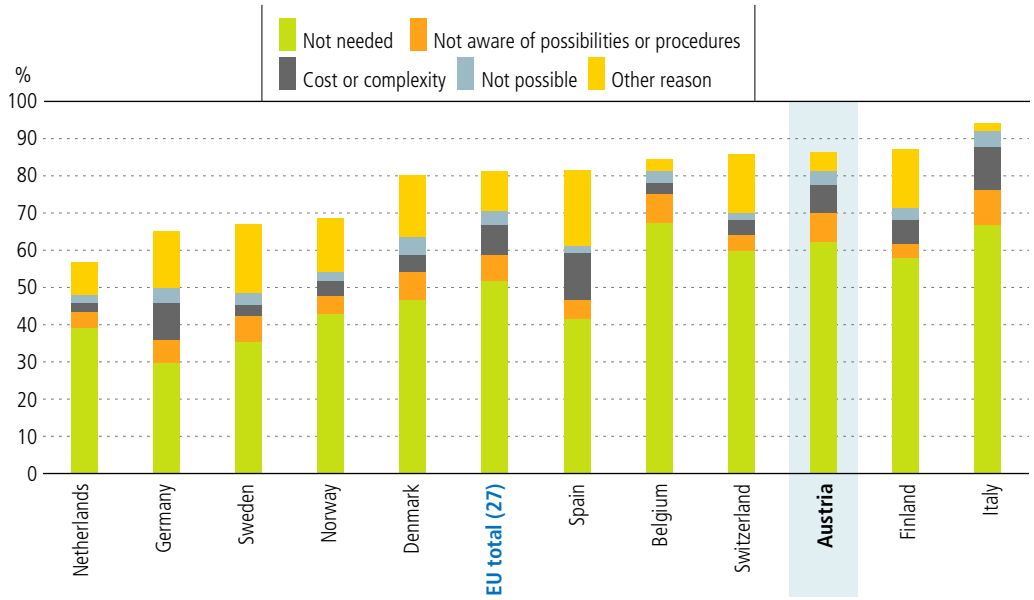
Source: OECD (2017[8]), OECD (2024[9]).

According to the 2021 EU-LFS ad hoc module, despite Austria's significant investments in tools and programming for recognition of foreign qualifications, immigrants in Austria are often unfamiliar with the procedures and their benefits. While those who applied for recognition of their qualifications had an 80% success rate, only 13% of foreign-educated immigrants of working age reported having applied. The demand for recognition is much lower than in countries such as the Netherlands and Germany, where over a third of immigrants with foreign qualifications report having applied. The primary reason for the low demand is the widespread perception among foreign-educated immigrants that the procedure is not necessary (as reported by 62% of all immigrants and 57% of those born outside the EU) (see **Figure 6**). Even among overqualified immigrants, the share who view the recognition of their qualifications as unnecessary remains at nearly 50%. Other frequently cited barriers are limited awareness of the possibility and procedures, as well as cost and complexity of the process. Insufficient language skills can also be a barrier, as a high level of German is necessary to work in the healthcare sector, for example, and good language proficiency is usually also required for supplementary training.

Figure 6

Awareness of the benefits of foreign qualification recognition is low in Austria

Self-reported reason for not applying for recognition procedures of individuals who obtained their highest formal qualification abroad, ages 15-64, 2021



Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021.

II.2 Skills acquisition of immigrants in Austria

Language skills significantly improve immigrants' employability in Austria. Having at least advanced German language proficiency (CEFR level C1) is associated with an 11-percentage point higher probability of employment, after controlling for age, gender, level of education, duration of residence, reason for migration, recognition of foreign qualifications, and origin of qualifications. In the 2021 EU-LFS ad hoc module, around 10% of immigrants (12% of non-EU born immigrants) in Austria mentioned a lack of language skills as the most common obstacle to finding suitable employment. In a recent Eurobarometer among citizens, Austrians reported that they considered mastery of the host-country language as the single most important factor for integration. Against this backdrop, Austria has increased efforts to support language learning among immigrants and has been among the leading countries in the OECD with respect to digital tools (see **Box 4**).

Box 4 **Austria offers a broad selection of tools for German language learning**

The Austrian Integration Fund ("Österreichischer Integrationsfonds", ÖIF) offers German courses ranging from basic literacy courses to CEFR level C1 language classes for refugees, people granted subsidiary protection and displaced persons from Ukraine. Asylum seekers with good prospects of staying can also attend German courses. While free courses are available for the aforementioned target groups, courses for third-country nationals and their joining family members are not free of charge or only partially subsidised (see **Box 2**).

Austria also offers vocation-specific courses. These programmes provide not only German language training but also subject-specific information, individual counselling, and support in finding an apprenticeship.

Unlike in countries such as Sweden, Germany or Switzerland, newly arrived EU citizens and long-term residents are not eligible for publicly co-financed language courses unless they are unemployed. However, ÖIF recently revamped its language website "Sprachportal", expanding its online learning programmes. The platform offers a variety of free German learning materials, which includes over 5 000 online exercises, more than 500 audio and video files, and live online courses, some of them are tailored to specific professions. The website is accessible in 12 languages.

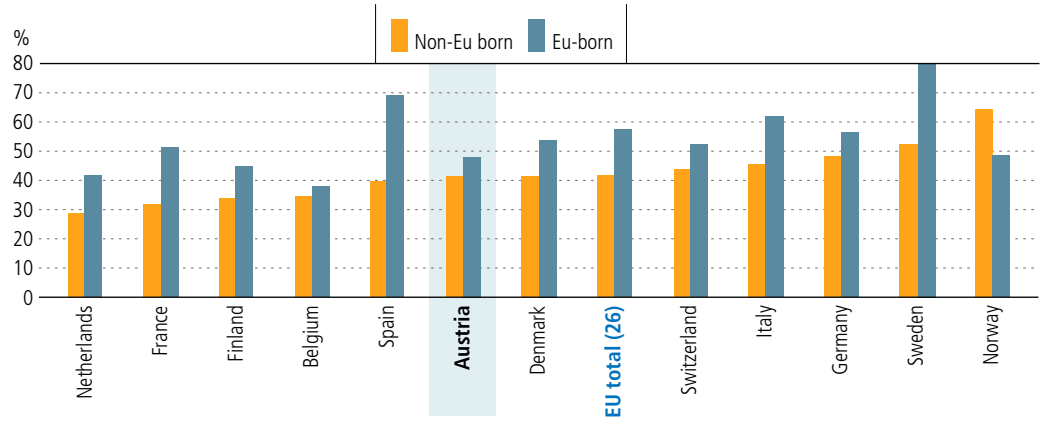
Source: ÖIF (2024[10]), OECD (2021[11]).

The vast majority of working-age non-EU born immigrants (89%) state that they arrived in Austria with beginner (CEFR level A1) or no German language skills. After at least five years in the country, around two-fifths of those who arrived with beginner German or below reported achieving fluency (CEFR level C1) (see **Figure 7**). Progress for this group generally reflects the EU total, surpassing the Netherlands, France and Belgium, but lagging behind countries such as Norway and Sweden. Among EU-born migrants, the situation is very different. More than a third identify as native speakers, which is largely due to the high proportion of foreign-born from Germany. Nevertheless, around half arrive with beginner or no language skills. After at least five years, 48% of them report attaining fluency. Although EU-born migrants tend to make more rapid progress than their non-EU born counterparts, likely due to their higher educational attainment and generally greater linguistic proximity, they lag behind their peers in most other countries. The only countries in which the progress of EU-born migrants in language learning is lower than in Austria are Belgium, the Netherlands and Finland.

Figure 7

Language progress of non-EU born immigrants in Austria resembles that of other EU countries

Share of immigrants with self-reported advanced (CEFR level C1) or higher language proficiency who arrived at least five years ago with a beginner's level (CEFR level A1) or less, ages 15–64, 2021



Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021.

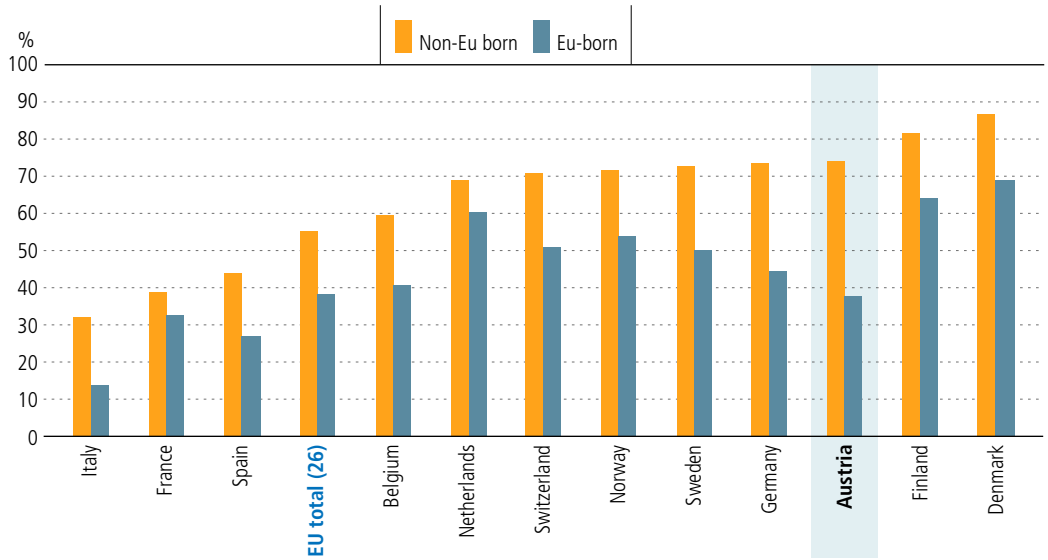
When considering gender, results show that most immigrant women in Austria report having strong German language skills. Nearly 70% of EU-born women report fluency in German compared to 63% of EU-born men. Among the non-EU born, around 45% of men and women report being fluent in German. In contrast, the proportion of non-EU born women reporting a beginner level or lower (30%) is higher than that of their male counterparts (23%). Being employed has a positive effect on language proficiency and is associated with a nine-percentage point increase in the likelihood of achieving advanced or higher language proficiency for non-EU born men and a 16-percentage point increase for non-EU born women, after controlling for age and duration of residence.

At 74%, participation in language courses among non-EU born immigrants who arrived in the last decade is high in international comparison and far exceeds the EU total (see **Figure 8**). 38% of EU-born immigrants who are not native speakers report participation, a smaller share than in countries such as Germany, Sweden, Belgium and Switzerland where EU immigrants are eligible for publicly subsidised courses. Notably, 17% of EU-born immigrants who are not native German speakers report that they did not attend language courses due to financial constraints, compared to 7% of non-EU born immigrants. Only Italy reports a higher percentage of EU-born immigrants constrained by cost among major destinations. However, all immigrants in Austria, regardless of origin, have access to the ÖIF language website "Sprachportal" (see **Box 4**), which was fundamentally modernised in 2023.

Figure 8

Participation in language courses is high among recent non-EU born immigrants

Self-reported participation in language courses among immigrants who arrived less than ten years ago and are not native speakers, ages 15–64, 2021



Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021.

III Vulnerable groups

This section highlights integration outcomes of three vulnerable groups: immigrant women with young children, refugees and other individuals in need of protection, and children of immigrants.

Key takeaways

- Immigrant women are nearly twice as likely as their native-born counterparts to be involuntarily inactive.[6]
- While few refugees pursue further formal education upon arrival in Austria, the share participating in non-formal education and training is among the highest in Europe.
- Immigrant pupils and native-born pupils with immigrant parents score significantly lower than their peers with native-born parents on the PISA reading assessment. The gap is particularly large in international comparison and exceeds the progress Austrian students make in reading over one year of schooling.

III.1 Gender and family

Women account for over half of all immigrants in Austria (51%) (OECD, 2023[12]), yet their potential is often underutilised. As mentioned in section I.2, the proportion of both EU-born and non-EU born women with a tertiary degree has almost doubled over the last decade. EU-born women are particularly well educated, outperforming both native-born women and their male counterparts. 41% of EU-born women have a tertiary degree, compared with 33% of native-born women and 39% of EU-born men. Although the share of non-EU born women with a tertiary degree remains much lower, at around 26%, it exceeds that of non-EU born men by two percentage points. Nevertheless, four in ten non-EU born women have completed lower secondary education at most, one of the highest proportions among major European destinations. This remains higher than non-EU born men, of whom only 33% have equally low educational attainment.

Despite generally having similar qualifications and language skills, immigrant women are employed at lower rates than immigrant men. These disparities are more pronounced than those observed among the native-born (see **Figure 9**). While the employment gap between native-born women and men in Austria has gradually narrowed over the last decade, it has not among immigrants. In 2021, the gender gap in employment was more than twice as high for immigrants as for the native-born, and almost three times as high for immigrants born outside the EU. Moreover, nearly half of employed migrant women are in part-time jobs.[7] Although this rate is lower than that of native-born women (46% compared to 51%), it remains one of the highest among major European destination countries, surpassed only by the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland.

Closing the gender gap in total employment for immigrants to reflect that of the native-born has the potential to bring some 55 000 additional women into employment.

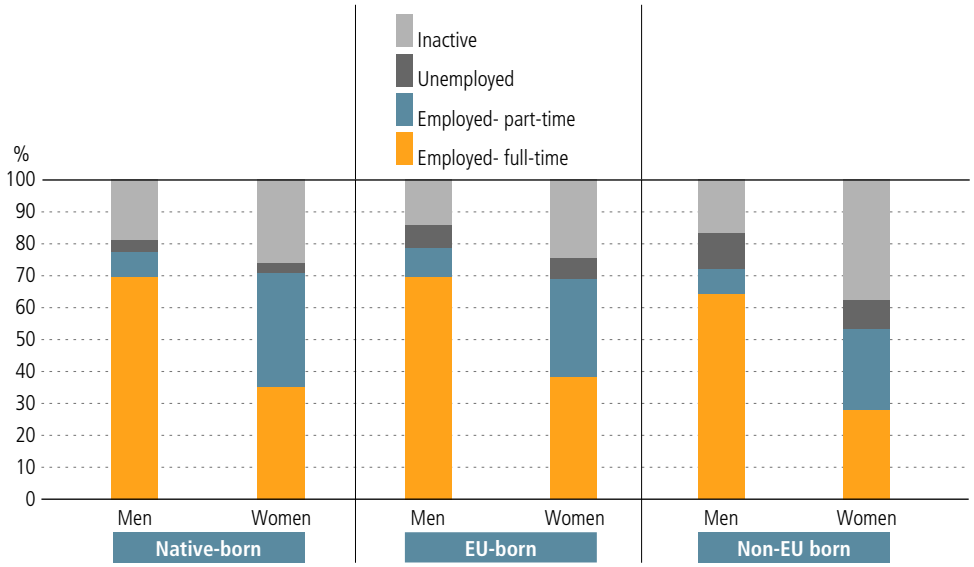
6. This indicator relates to economically inactive individuals (whom the ILO defines as neither employed nor unemployed) who wish to work but may not for different reasons (no suitable job is available, education/training, own illness/disability, family responsibilities, lay-off, other reasons).

7. Part-time work is defined here as working fewer than 30 hours per week.

Figure 9

Gender gaps in employment are more pronounced among immigrants in Austria

Labour market status, ages 15–64, 2021



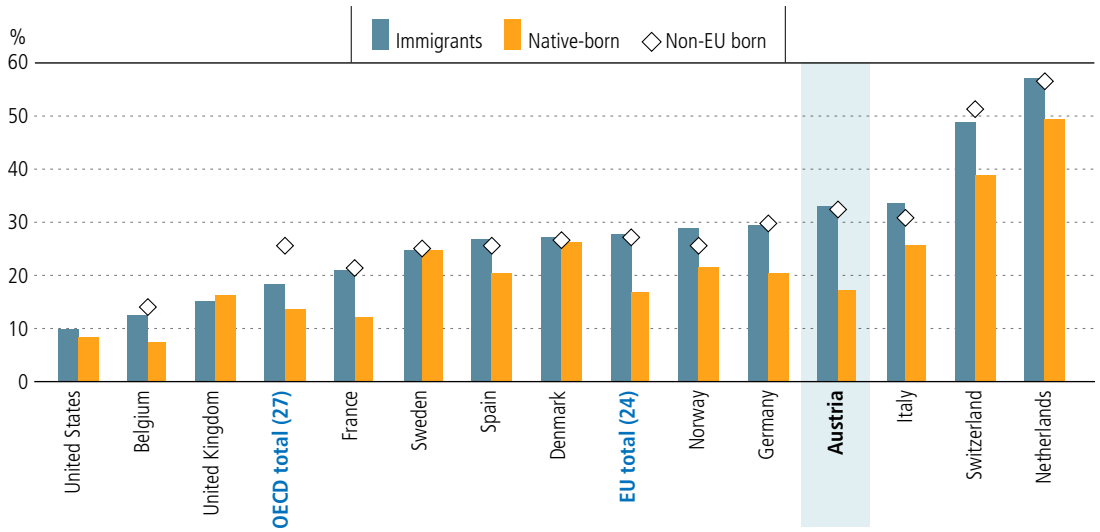
Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021.

While inactivity is widespread among immigrant women born outside the EU, EU-LFS data suggests that this inactivity is often involuntary. In Austria, immigrant women are nearly twice as likely as their native-born counterparts to be involuntarily inactive (see **Figure 10**). Among non-EU born women who are involuntarily inactive, one third report that their inactivity is due to family responsibilities. Indeed, inactivity is highest among non-EU born immigrant mothers of young children (aged 0 to 4), with nearly one in two inactive. A further 12% of non-EU born immigrant women are involuntarily inactive because they cannot find a suitable job, 16% due to an illness or disability, and 40% for other reasons.

Figure 10

Immigrant women in Austria are twice as likely as their native-born counterparts to be involuntarily inactive

Share of inactive women who are involuntarily inactive, ages 15-64, 2021



Note: Involuntarily inactive people are not looking for work for various reasons, although they would like to work.

Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021. United Kingdom: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2019. United States: Current Population Survey (CPS) 2021.

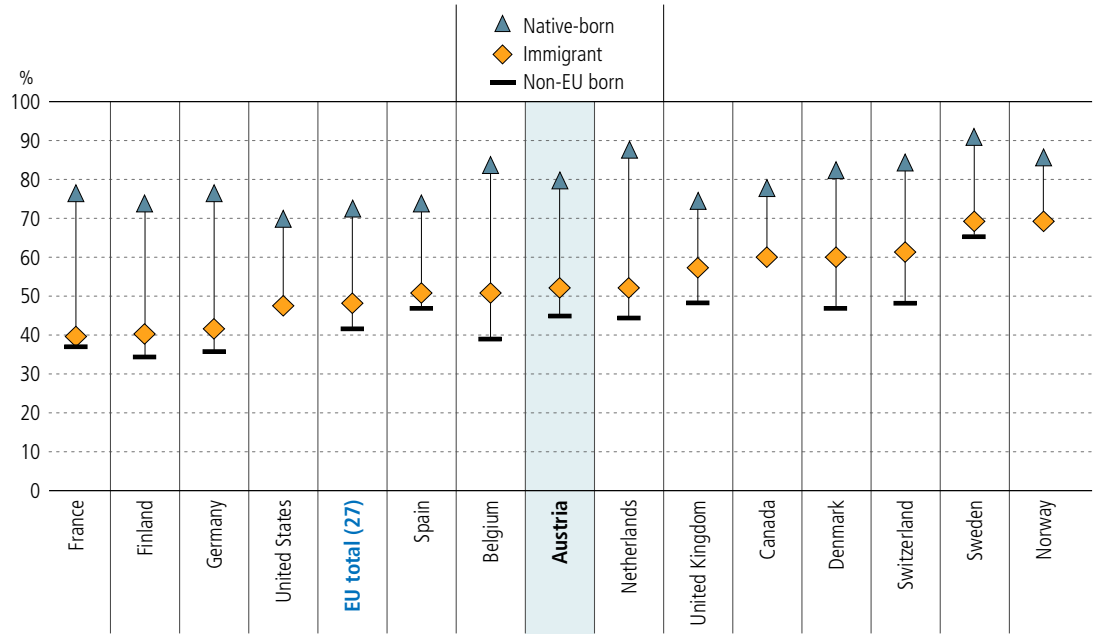
Immigration often coincides with changes in family dynamics such as marriage, family reunification and union/household formation, which may lead to elevated fertility after arrival. This can prevent immigrant mothers from acquiring the necessary country-specific skills and work experience to participate in the labour market. In addition, immigrant mothers experience limited access to and lower take-up of family support measures, lack extended family networks crucial for childcare, and often have different social and gender norms that influence fertility and employment decisions. Immigrant mothers are also often of a lower socioeconomic status and may have a weaker attachment to the labour market prior to childrearing (OECD, 2023[12]).

In Austria, slightly more than half of immigrant women (aged 25-54) mothering children aged 0-4 are employed, though this figure drops below half for mothers born in non-EU countries (see **Figure 11**). Native-born mothers with small children are 28 percentage points more likely to be employed than their immigrant counterparts. This places Austria in the middle of the country distribution, below Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Finland and France, where the gap surpasses 30 percentage points. The difference in employment between migrant mothers and their native-born peers in Austria is nearly twice as high as the difference in employment between migrant and native-born women who are partnered and childless. A large difference (23 percentage points) remains even after controlling for socio-demographic factors such as age, education level and number of children (aged 0-14).

Figure 11

The employment gap between native-born and immigrant mothers with very young children is nearly 30 percentage points in Austria

Employment rate of native-born and immigrant mothers with at least one child aged 0-4, 2021 or latest year available



Note: Data cover women aged 25-54. Mothers are defined as women with at least one child aged 0-4 (0-5 in the United States and 0-6 in Canada).

Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021. United Kingdom, Denmark and Sweden: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2019. Switzerland: Swiss Labour Force Survey (SLFS) 2022. United States: Current Population Survey (CPS) 2021. Canada: Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2019.

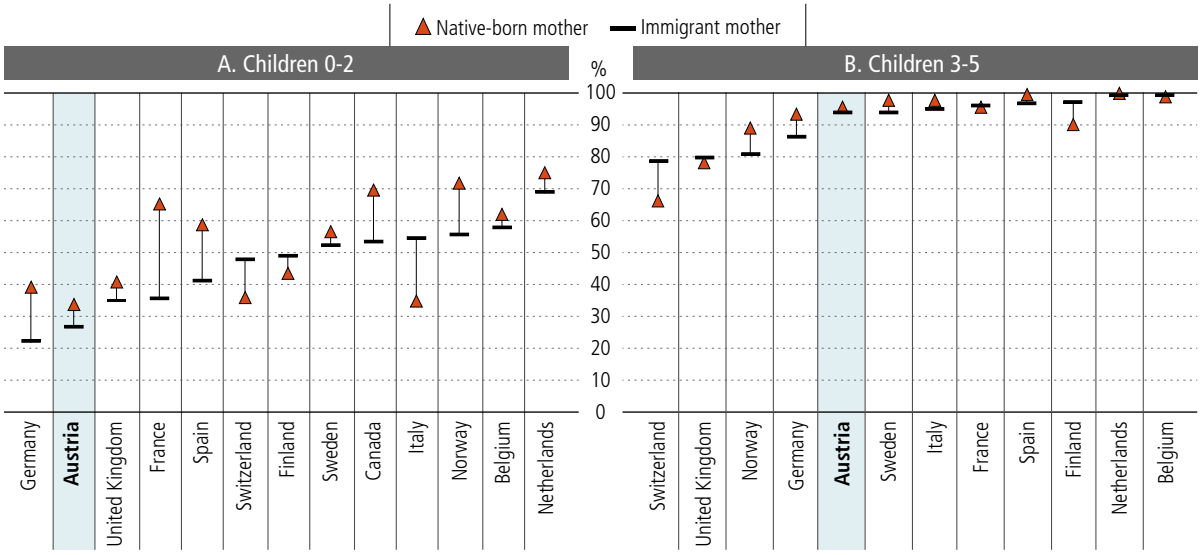
Access to affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC) services is essential for balancing paid work with family responsibilities, especially for migrant mothers, who generally have smaller private support networks in the host country. In addition, high-quality ECEC has positive effects on children's cognitive and social development, with particularly strong benefits for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (OECD, 2023[12]). In Austria, children aged 0-2 with immigrant mothers have a six-percentage point lower participation rate in formal childcare than those with native-born mothers (see **Figure 12**). Although this gap is not large in international comparison, it is noteworthy in the context of Austria's low overall participation rates in ECEC.

Fewer than one-third of all mothers of children aged 0-2 use formal childcare. A shortage in trained professionals, which results in limited capacity, contributes to low enrolment for very young children (UNICEF, 2023[13]). Enrolment rates are much higher for children aged 3-5, with 93% of migrant mothers and 95% of native-born mothers with children in this age group using formal childcare.

Figure 12

Uptake of formal childcare is similar among migrant and native-born mothers

Use of formal childcare services, 2022 or latest year available



Note: Share of children enrolled in formal childcare during a typical week. Formal childcare services include preschool, compulsory school, centre-based services, day-care centres, and professional childminders. For Canada data refer to children aged 1-3.

Source: European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) 2022. United Kingdom, Norway and Switzerland: European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) 2019. Canada: General Social Survey (GSS) 2017.

In addition to low enrolment in formal childcare, immigrant mothers are overrepresented in sectors that may offer little financial incentive to return to work after childbirth (OECD, 2023[12]). In Austria, a quarter of immigrant mothers with children under the age of 15 work in elementary occupations, most often as cleaners and helpers. Among mothers born outside the EU, this proportion rises to over a third, which is more than eight times the rate of their native-born counterparts and among the highest in major European destination countries.

III.2 Integration of refugees

Comparable information on the labour market outcomes of refugees is only available from the EU-LFS, which every two years includes information on humanitarian immigrants based on self-declared reason for migration.[8] At the time of drafting of this report, the latest available data are from 2021 which do not yet cover individuals who fled the war in Ukraine. Their initial labour market integration outcomes and related data challenges are discussed in **Box 5**.

Of the refugees of working age in Austria covered by the 2021 EU-LFS, almost 44% arrived within the prior ten years, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. In contrast to most other European countries that have a high proportion of recent arrivals among their refugee populations, namely Germany, Sweden and Spain, much of Austria's refugee population has resided in the country for more than a decade. Nearly 40% have resided in Austria for over 20 years, primarily displaced by the wars in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s.

8. Consequently, the data might include both recognised refugees and asylum seekers (i.e. people who have applied for but not yet obtained formal refugee status). Nonetheless, the coverage of asylum seekers is likely to be limited as they often reside in collective accommodation and, as a result, are not represented in the survey. For the sake of simplicity, individuals reporting migration for "international protection purposes" are collectively referred to as "refugees" in this section. People who were born in an EU or EFTA country and reported migrating for humanitarian reasons are excluded from the analysis.

In all major European destinations, except for France and Spain, men are strongly overrepresented among the refugee cohort that arrived within the last decade. In Austria, they account for around two in three recent arrivals (less than ten years of residence). By contrast, the cohort that arrived in Austria over two decades ago exhibits a more balanced gender distribution. Furthermore, recent refugees predominantly reside in the capital city, while long-established refugees are more evenly distributed across the country. Nearly half of all refugees who arrived in the past decade live in Vienna, compared to less than a third of those who have been in the country for over 20 years.

Box 5 **Comparable international data on the labour market integration of beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine is limited**

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has triggered the largest displacement of people in Europe since World War II. According to Eurostat, as of February 2024, the EU alone granted temporary protection to 4.2 million non-EU citizens, 98% of whom are Ukrainian nationals. Austria has received over 80 000 beneficiaries of temporary protection (BTPs) as of March 2025.[9] As military conscription prevents men aged 18 to 60 from leaving the country (with some exceptions), 71% of all adult BTPs in Austria are women, while 30% of the BTPs in Austria are children.

While some factors may deter the labour market integration of Ukrainian BTPs, others may foster it. Child- and eldercare responsibilities, limited language proficiency, skills mismatch, difficulties with skills recognition, exploitation risks, breakdown of family units and uncertainties about length of stay may impede swift labour market entry. Conversely, high educational attainment,[10] full and immediate labour market access and potential to leverage existing networks of Ukrainians who settled in Europe before the Russian invasion may increase labour market integration. However, existing networks were relatively small, with only around 12 700 Ukrainians living in Austria at the beginning of 2022.

Although there is a growing body of information on the early labour market outcomes of BTPs, representative and comparable data remain limited for several reasons. Firstly, recently arrived and mobile populations are often absent from traditional records of employment outcomes, such as labour force surveys. Secondly, available administrative data may not fully distinguish between Ukrainians living in the host country before 24 February 2022 and BTPs. In Austria, for instance, only beginning in April 2023, once the requirement to obtain a work permit was waived, did individuals with temporary protection status have unrestricted access to the labour market. While easing the processes for Ukrainians, this change affected available data, making it more challenging to differentiate between recent arrivals and established Ukrainian communities. Thirdly, depending on the country, employment figures for BTPs may include administrative data, surveys or employer notifications of new BTP hires. This can result in multiple records for individuals with qualitatively different employment arrangements (full-time/part-time, long-term/short-term contracts, self-employment, remote work, etc.). Finally, there is also considerable uncertainty about the reference population for calculating employment rates, as the number of registered BTPs may not accurately reflect the actual number of BTPs in the country at any given time.

Available evidence suggests that the early labour market integration of BTPs in Austria has been slower than in some other host countries but is gradually improving. At the end of March 2024, the employment rate of working-age BTPs was around 29%, an increase from around 15% in September 2022. While roughly similar rates were reported in Finland, Germany and Switzerland, employment rates have been higher in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Denmark and the Netherlands, at above 40% employment in late 2023. In Lithuania, the employment rate has been even higher, exceeding 60%.

…

9. Relative to its population, this number is lower than in Ukraine's neighbouring countries, the Baltic states, the Czech Republic and Germany, but significantly higher than for example in France, the Southern European countries and Sweden.

10. Data from the Austrian Public Employment Service suggests that 38% of registered job-seeking BTPs in Austria had a university degree as of September 2023 and some surveys suggest even higher rates between 73% and 83%.

These variations reflect differences in general labour market conditions, demographic composition of Ukrainian arrivals, levels of support provided by the host country, the possibility of working in English, pre-existing migration patterns and presence of established Ukrainian communities. A significant proportion of the observed differences may also be due to differences in methodology and reporting.

In Austria, BTPs are most frequently employed in accommodation and food services, administrative and support services, manufacturing and wholesale and retail trade. Similar sectoral distributions were found in other host countries. These sectors do not necessarily correspond to the previous experience or educational profile of the BTP, pointing to skills mismatch. In fact, a significant number of BTPs were previously employed in Ukraine in legal, administrative and office occupations, as well as in the education sector.

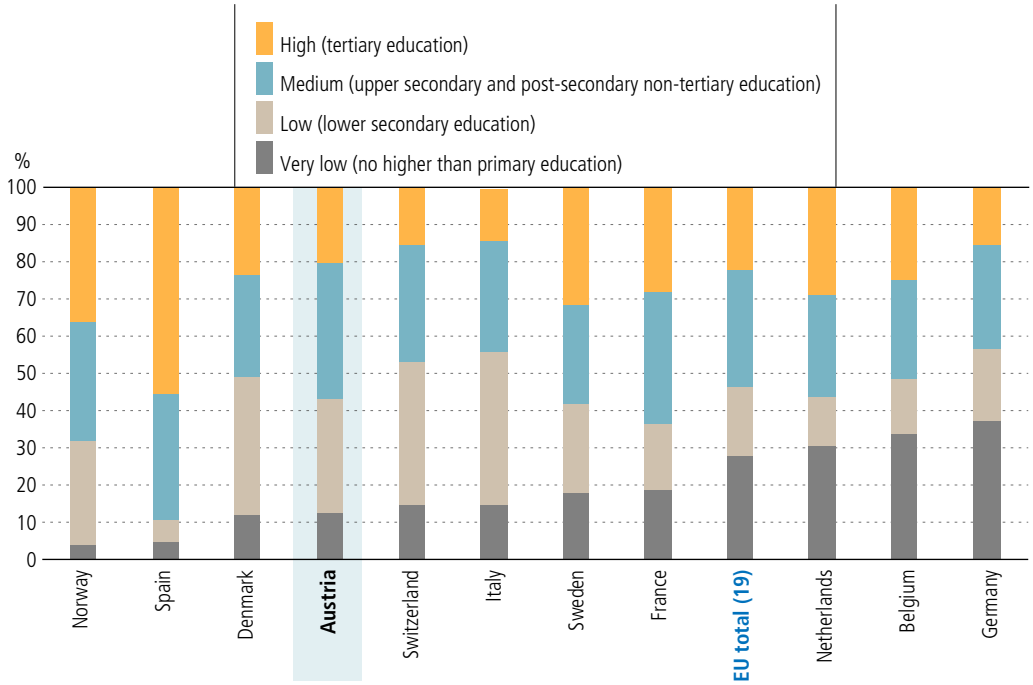
Source: EMN/OECD (2024[14]), EUAA (2022[15]), Eurostat (2024[16]), EPRS (2024[17]), AMS (2024[18]), UNHCR (2025[19]).

The educational attainment of refugees in Austria is not unfavourable in international comparison (see **Figure 13**). Over half have completed upper secondary education or hold a tertiary degree, while only about one-tenth have not progressed beyond primary education. However, among recent arrivals (less than five years of residence), the share of very low educated reaches one in seven. What is more, there are considerable differences depending on refugees' region of origin. At 21%, the share of very low-educated is particularly high among recent refugees from the Near and Middle East.

Figure 13

The educational attainment of refugees in Austria is favourable in international comparison

Educational attainment of refugees, excluding individuals who are currently enrolled in formal education, ages 15-64, 2021



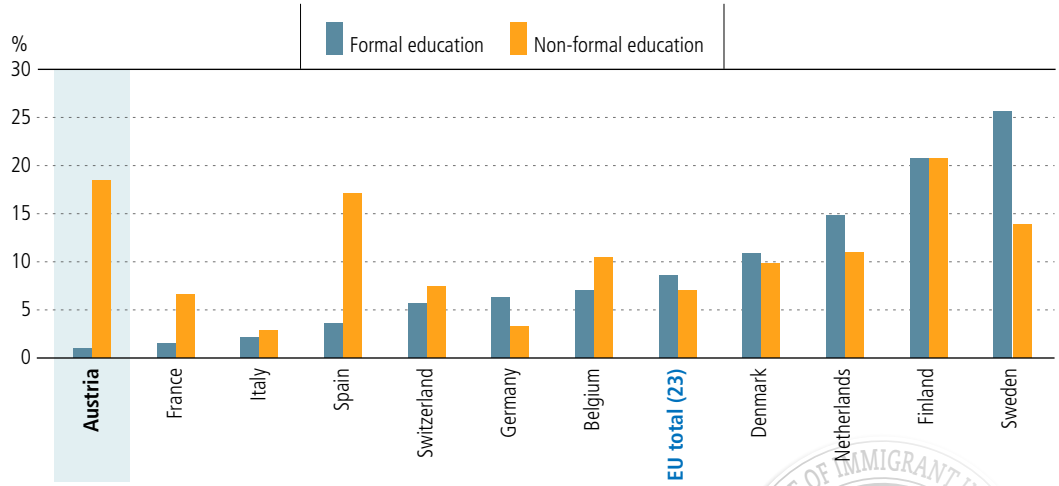
Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021.

In contrast to Sweden and Norway, which actively encourage low-educated newcomers to pursue further formal education, few refugees continue their formal education after their migration to Austria. Among refugees who arrived in the country aged 20 or older, only 1% are currently enrolled in formal education (see **Figure 14**). An additional 4% have attained an Austrian degree.

Figure 14

While few adult refugees continue their formal education in Austria, many engage in non-formal learning activities

Share of refugees who arrived in the host-country at the age of 20 or above and participated in formal or non-formal education in the four weeks prior to the survey, ages 20-64, 2021



Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021.

STATE OF IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION 2025 AUSTRIA

However, Austria invests in qualification measures outside the formal education system, including specialised counselling and skills training. Notably, 18% of refugees participated in non-formal education in the four weeks prior to the EU-LFS survey, one of the highest figures among major European destinations.[11] While such measures generally take less time and may facilitate a quicker labour market entry, they may not offer the same benefits as obtaining a host-country degree. Research suggests that obtaining an Austrian degree significantly enhances refugees' employment prospects (Baumgartner, Palinkas and Daur, 2020[20]) and reduces the likelihood of working below their qualification level in the long-term (Ludolph, 2023[21]). This may be attributable not only to the degree itself, but also to a heightened level of familiarity with the Austrian labour market, enhanced language proficiency, and strengthened social networks that come with a host-country degree.

Due to the forced nature of their migration, refugees typically lack the opportunity to prepare for life in a new country. As a result, almost all refugees arrive in Austria without any knowledge of German. Nevertheless, 86% of those who arrived in the last ten years have enrolled in a language course. This participation rate is roughly twice as high as among the cohort that arrived two decades before. Furthermore, it is among the highest in major European destinations along with Denmark and Switzerland.

Among refugees who have been in the country for five to nine years, almost one-fifth report advanced German proficiency (CEFR level C1) and around two-fifths report an intermediate level (CEFR level B1). The share reaching at least intermediate proficiency is slightly higher than in Germany and the Netherlands but lags significantly behind the Nordic countries, Switzerland and Italy (see **Figure 15**).

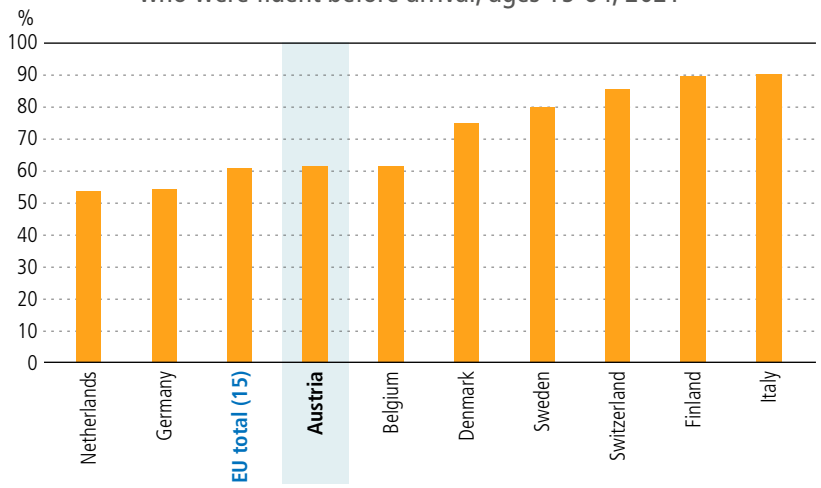
Refugees are a group that faces particular challenges in the labour market due to the forced nature of their migration, among other obstacles. Employment rates are very low in their first years but increase gradually over time. In Austria, the employment rate for those who have been in the country for fewer than ten years is 43%.

11. Non-formal education includes both job-related and non-job-related courses, seminars, workshops, private lessons, or instructions outside of the formal education system.

Figure 15

Three out of five refugees reach at least an intermediate level of German after 5 years or more in Austria

Share of refugees who have been in the country for 5-9 years and report at least intermediate proficiency (CEFR level B1) in the host-country language, excluding those who were fluent before arrival, ages 15-64, 2021



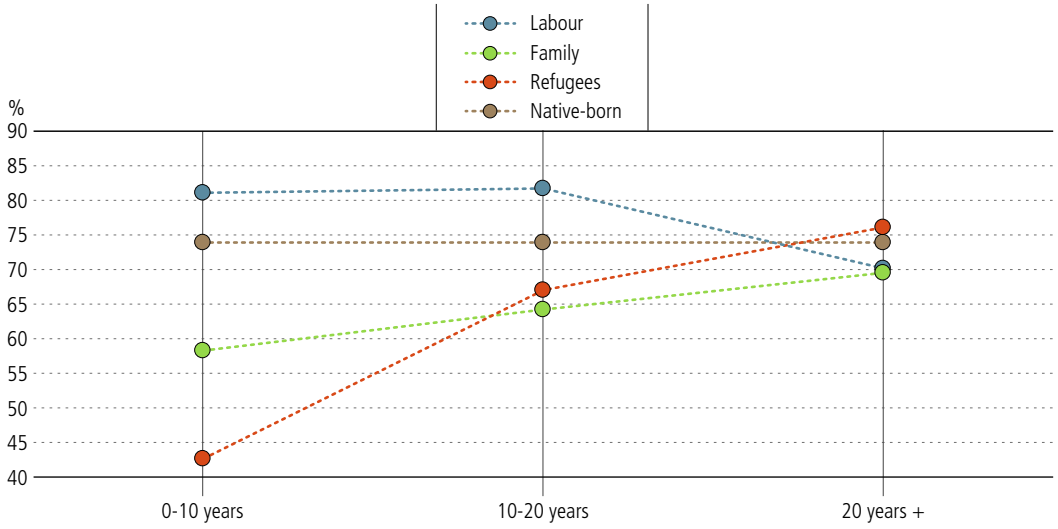
Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021.

Refugees who have been in the country for over 20 years, have seen rates of employment converge with those of the native-born as well as those of labour migrants approaching retirement age (see **Figure 16**).[12] Whether this is due to the composition of the cohorts or whether this reflects the fact that integration takes place over time is unclear. Family migrants who have lived in the country for fewer than ten years have higher employment rates than their peers who are refugees (58%). Among cohorts who have been in the country for ten to twenty years and for over twenty years, the employment rates of refugees surpass those of family migrants.

Figure 16

Employment outcomes are substantially better among refugees who have been in the country for over ten years

Employment rate by self-declared reason for migration and years of residence in Austria, ages 15-64, 2021



Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021.

12. Note that these data do not track the same individuals over time. Differences in employment rates may also be due to varying characteristics of migrant cohorts.

OECD countries are taking various measures to facilitate the labour market integration of refugees. One example is the Job-Turbo programme, which was launched by Germany in 2023 with the aim of quick integration of refugees into the labour market (see **Box 6**). Similar "Turbo" initiatives are in place in Belgium (Flanders) and Switzerland.

Box 6 The German Job-Turbo encourages early entry into the labour market for refugees

In October 2023, the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Federal Employment Agency launched the Job-Turbo programme. The programme aims to facilitate refugees' early entry into the labour market, support language learning and prevent long-term unemployment, so as to promote sustainable labour market integration.

The programme outlines three phases of labour market integration. The first phase focuses on arrival, orientation, and developing basic language skills. Skilled professionals who do not require language skills for their job (e.g. in the IT sector) may begin working immediately. The second phase emphasises entry into training and employment, while the third involves building on initial work experience and securing long-term employment.

The Job-Turbo primarily targets the second phase. After completing an integration course, refugees are expected to regularly engage with job centres and employment agencies, which help match them with employers, for instance through sector-specific matching initiatives. Employment usually starts once individuals reach language level A2 or B1. If necessary, qualification records are updated, and measures are initiated to recognise and adapt qualifications. The programme also encourages employers to hire refugees with limited German skills and to provide on-the-job training. Large companies, temporary employment agencies and industry associations are invited to support these efforts through voluntary commitments.

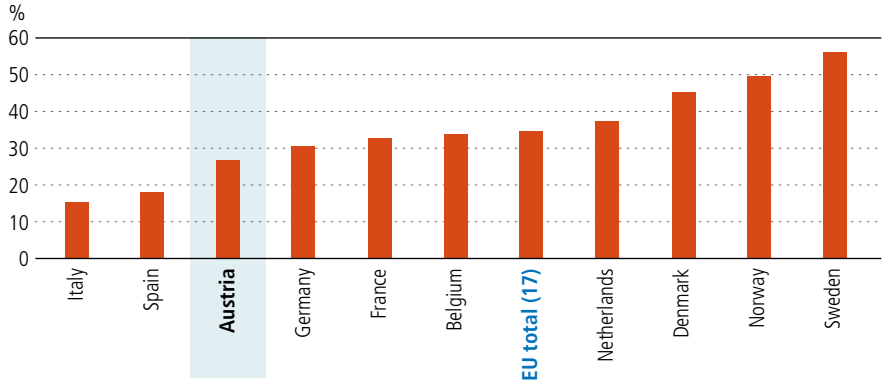
Source: BMAS (2023[22]).

While employment rates of refugees who arrived in Austria in the last decade are similar to those in countries such as Sweden, the Netherlands and Germany, Austria faces significant challenges securing skills-appropriate employment for its refugee population (see **Figure 17**). Over two thirds of refugees with a tertiary degree are employed, yet less than half of this population works in positions that correspond to their formal qualifications. Not only might employers exhibit uncertainty about the skills of those educated and trained abroad, but refugees may not be able to document their qualifications. An additional barrier might be insufficient knowledge of German.

Figure 17

Under one in three highly educated refugees has a job that matches their qualifications

Share of refugees with a tertiary degree working in high-skilled jobs, ages 15-64, 2021



Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021.

III.3 Children of immigrants

In Austria, nearly one in three people under the age of 34 is either an immigrant or has two immigrant parents. More specifically, among children under the age of 15 with immigrant parents, the number of native-born children with two immigrant parents (260 000) is almost three times as large as the number of children who immigrated themselves (97 000).

Children with immigrant parents often face challenges in school. Their lower average socioeconomic status can limit access to resources such as books, computers, parental support and conducive learning environments. Moreover, children with immigrant parents – especially those who have immigrated themselves – often grapple with language barriers, discrimination, interruptions to their education and a lack of familiarity with local school systems. The Austrian government seeks to mitigate these challenges by providing intensive German support to pupils in Austria with language difficulties ("Deutschförderklasse"/"Deutschförderkurs").

Both immigrant students and native-born students with immigrant parents tend to score lower than their native-born peers with native-born parents on the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Although this is the case in most European countries, in Austria the gap in reading scores between native-born students with immigrant parents and their peers with native-born parents is particularly pronounced, surpassed only by Finland (see **Figure 18**). The reading gap amounts to nearly 60 points, exceeding the average progress Austrian students make in a school year by a factor of two.[13] However, the reading performance of native-born students with immigrant parents varies considerably depending on the parents' region of origin (500 points for those with parents born in Europe compared to 437 points for those with parents born outside Europe). [14] The reading gap is even more pronounced among students who immigrated themselves and were born outside Europe. At 392 points, their average reading score is more than 100 points lower than that of native-born students with native-born parents. In contrast, the gap between immigrant students born in Europe and native-born students with native-born parents is less than half as large (43 points).

Socioeconomic status is a critical factor contributing to the gap in mean PISA reading scores. Nearly one in two native-born students with immigrant parents falls into the bottom quartile of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS)[15], compared to only one in seven of their peers with native-born parents. When controlling for socioeconomic status, the performance gap in mean PISA reading scores is halved. This pronounced link between socioeconomic status and academic performance may be related to specific features of the Austrian education system, such as limited availability of ECEC, an education system with early student tracking and limited permeability between tracks, and half-day schooling.

Language barriers also contribute to the performance gap between native-born students with immigrant parents and those with two parents born in Austria. Over 70% of native-born children with immigrant parents speak a language other than the local language at home, a figure surpassed only in Finland. These students average a lower German reading proficiency in relation to their peers suggesting that additional language support outside the home environment may benefit their German language development (see **Figure 19**). Even though almost 90% of pupils whose mother tongue is not German reported speaking mostly German with their classmates in the PISA 2018 survey, this gap, which amounts to the equivalent of a year of schooling, remains larger than in most other major destinations, aside from Germany, Switzerland and the United States.

13. A recent publication estimates that the average yearly learning gain in reading of students in Austria based on PISA data from 2018 is 29 points (Avvisati and Givord, 2023[29]). However, one cannot assume that the effect is linear over several school years.

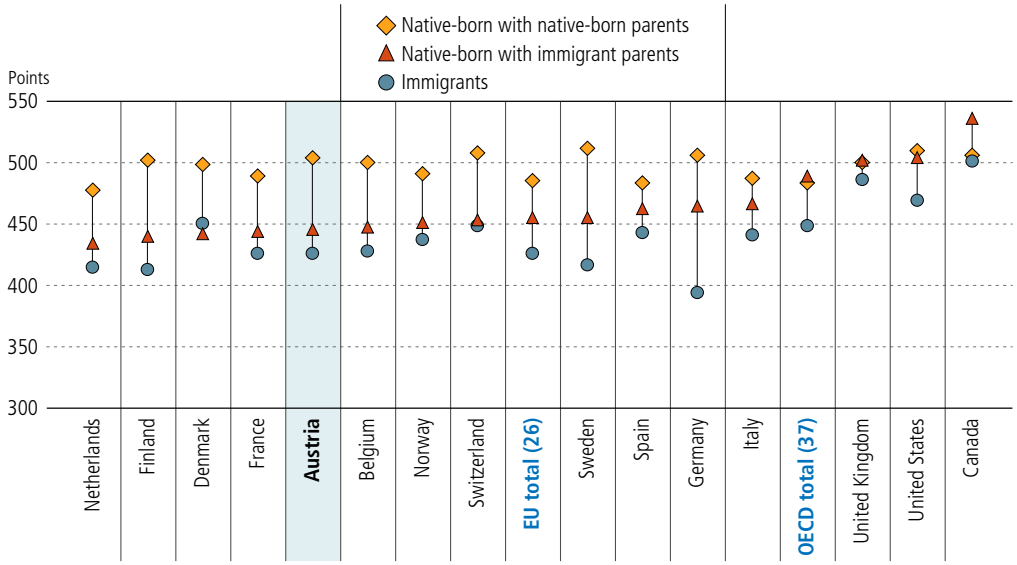
14. The PISA data for Austria does not permit for differentiation between EU-born and non-EU born immigrant students/parents. Instead, a distinction can be made between immigrant students/parents born in or outside of Europe.

15. The PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) is a composite score derived from three indicators related to family background: parents' highest education (in years), parents' highest occupational status and home possessions.

Figure 18

Children born in Austria to immigrant parents have lower reading performances than their peers in most other countries

Mean PISA reading scores, pupils ages 15-16, 2022



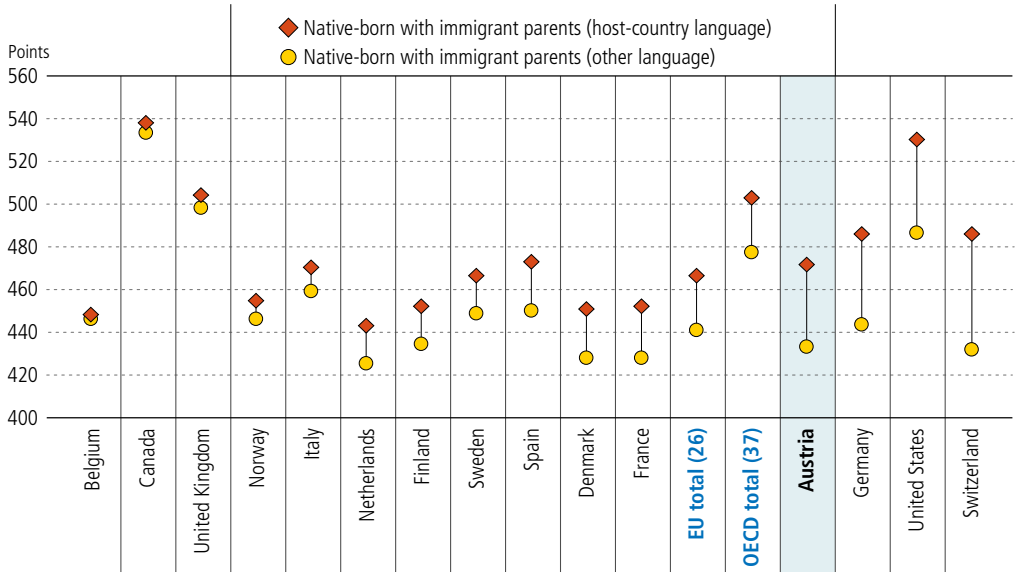
Note: Caution is required when interpreting estimates for Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, because one or more PISA sampling standards were not met (see OECD (2023[23]) for more information).

Source: OECD, PISA 2022 Database.

Figure 19

The reading performance of children born in Austria to immigrant parents varies more depending on the language spoken at home than in other countries

Mean PISA reading scores, by language spoken at home, pupils ages 15-16, 2022



Note: Caution is required when interpreting estimates for Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, because one or more PISA sampling standards were not met (see OECD (2023[23]) for more information).

Source: OECD, PISA 2022 Database.

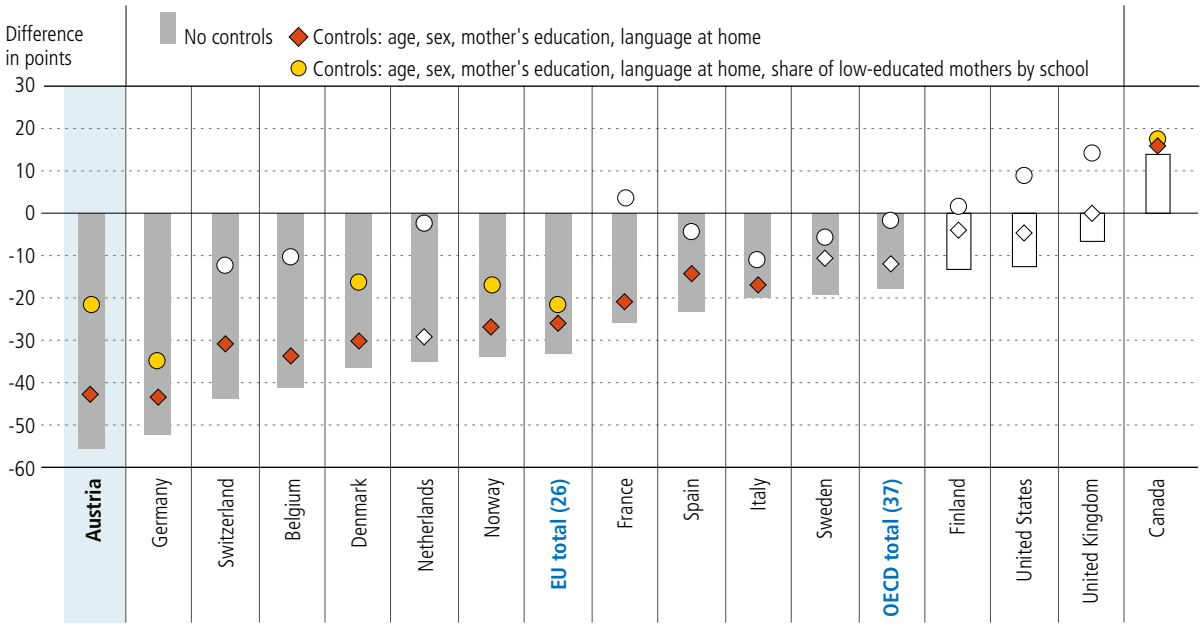
As consequential as language spoken at home and socioeconomic background is the school that students with immigrant parents attend. Among the top quartile of schools with the highest concentration of pupils that have at least one immigrant parent, scores of native-born pupils with immigrant parents on the PISA assessment are an average of 55 points lower than those in the other three quartiles (see **Figure 20**). Nowhere else is this gap

more pronounced than in Austria. However, upon controlling for the higher proportion of low-educated mothers in high concentration schools, the difference decreases sharply. This suggests that the lower performance of pupils in these schools is largely associated with high concentrations of students with a low-socioeconomic status, rather than with an immigrant background per se.

Figure 20

A high concentration of pupils with migrant parents in the same schools is negatively correlated with their reading performance

Difference in PISA points between pupils in the top versus the lower three quartiles of schools ranked by the share of students with immigrant parents, native-born pupils with immigrant parents, ages 15-16, 2022



Note: Schools with a high concentration refer to the top quartile of schools ranked by the share of students with immigrant parents (immigrants or native-born with at least one immigrant parent). Each quartile has the same number of students overall. Results that are not statistically significantly different from zero at the 5% level are marked in white. Pupils with unknown origin are excluded from the analysis. Caution is required when interpreting estimates for Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, because one or more PISA sampling standards were not met (see (OECD, 2023[23]) for more information).

Source: OECD, PISA 2022 Database.

STATE OF IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION 2025 AUSTRIA

Among other factors, the high concentrations of children with immigrant parents in certain schools also reflects their overrepresentation in lower secondary schools ("Mittelschule", MS) and underrepresentation in academic secondary schools ("allgemeinbildende höhere Schule", AHS).[16] OECD countries, including Austria, have taken measures to address high concentrations by encouraging students to attend schools with lower migrant enrolment or by developing programmes focused on mitigating these negative consequences (see **Box 7**).

16. Compulsory education lasts for nine years and begins with enrolment in a four-year primary school followed by four years of lower secondary education. During this first selective transition, students are most commonly sorted into two tracks: academic secondary school, lower cycle (AHS), which generally requires students to meet a minimum performance level and prepares them for the upper level of academic secondary school or compulsory secondary school (MS), which is open to all students and provides a comprehensive education preparing students both for further academic studies and for vocational training.

Box 7 **OECD countries follow different approaches to address high concentrations of disadvantaged youth with immigrant parents in schools**

A number of OECD countries have implemented measures to prevent high concentrations of youth with immigrant parents. For instance, the city of Rotterdam in the Netherlands raises awareness among immigrant parents about educational choices by organising bus tours for parents to visit local schools and discuss enrolment options. Similarly, the city of Copenhagen encourages immigrant parents to select schools with a predominantly non-immigrant student population, and vice versa. Participating schools provide training for teachers through integration specialists or translators with migration experience. In Denmark, there are very strong policies aimed at addressing immigrant concentrations more generally. In their "ghetto plan", most measures relate to housing and residency rather than reducing the concentration of youth with migrant parents in educational institutions. Nonetheless, there is a regulation that annual enrolment in day cares in "ghettos"be capped at 30% for children from the neighbourhood.

Rather than attempt to avoid high concentrations of immigrant children in schools, a growing number of countries have focused on efforts to mitigate the negative effects. In Switzerland, schools in the Canton of Zurich receive professional support and funding of approximately EUR 34 000 per year if over 40% of their students are foreign nationals (excluding Germans and Austrians) or speak a language at home other than one of the official Swiss languages.

Besides financial and training support for regular teachers, some countries provide additional support staff in schools with many immigrant students. In Canada, the federally funded Settlement Programme places settlement workers in schools with large newcomer populations. These workers serve as liaisons between students, families, schools and the community, providing outreach, information, orientation, needs assessment and referrals. The Settlement Programme also provides social, recreational and employment support for newcomer youth.

Source: EACEA (2023[24]), OECD (2021[25]).

As shown in **Figure 21**, the reading performance of native-born students with immigrant parents has remained stable over the last decade, after improvement in the 2000s. Following a notable performance drop in the 2015 PISA wave, the scores of immigrant students have also stabilised more recently. In contrast to other countries, the COVID-19 related school closures do not seem to have significantly affected the PISA reading scores of students with immigrant parents in Austria.[17] However, this result should be considered in the context of the low scores prior to the pandemic.

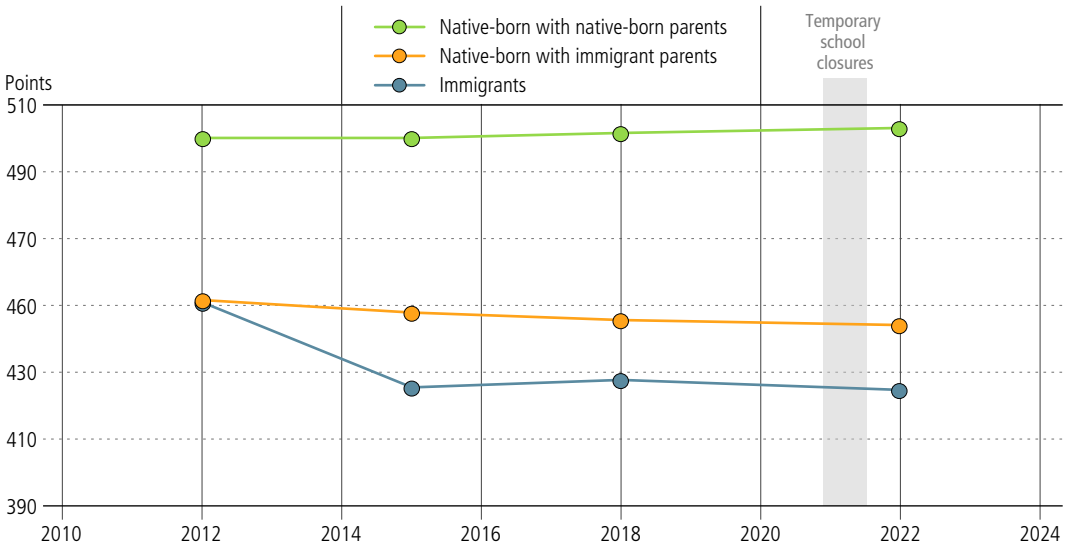
Educational challenges faced by pupils with migrant parents are reflected not only in their school performance, but also in their highest level of education achieved. Around one in five 25- to 34-year-old native-born individuals with migrant parents has not progressed beyond lower secondary education. This is around three times the proportion of their peers with native-born parents. Additionally, only one in five manages to obtain a tertiary degree, which is around half the share of their peers with native-born parents. The share of native-born with immigrant parents who hold a tertiary degree is, after Germany, the lowest among major destinations in this age group.

17. Math scores also remained stable among native-born students with immigrant parents but dropped more for immigrant students. However, their decline was less than that of native-born students with native-born parents, whose scores decreased by nine PISA points.

Figure 21

The reading performance of students with immigrant parents has remained stable over the last decade

Mean PISA reading scores, pupils ages 15-16, 2012-2022



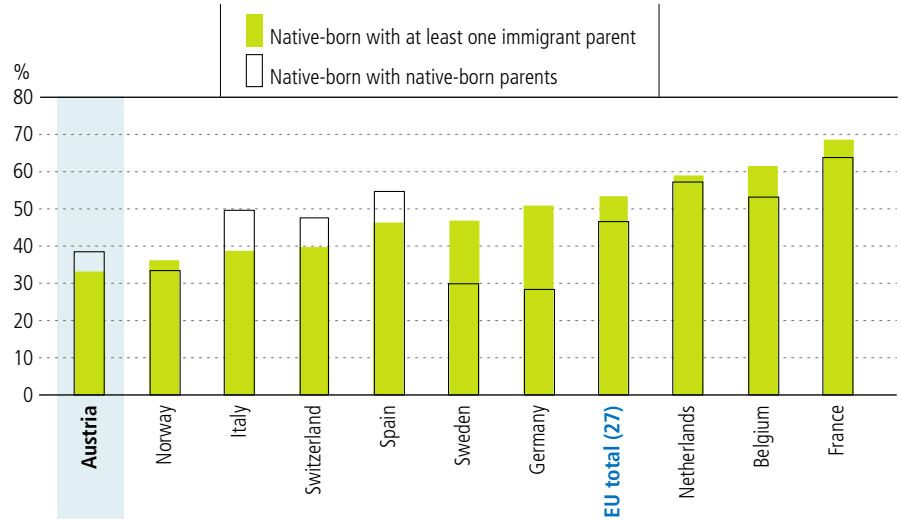
Source: OECD, PISA Database 2012-2022.

Educational attainment in Austria is strongly influenced by socioeconomic background, and especially by parental education. **Figure 22** illustrates that intergenerational mobility, which refers here to the percentage of young people who surpass their parents' educational attainment (for both medium-educated, ISCED Levels 3-4, and low-educated, ISCED Levels 0-2), is lowest in Austria among major destinations. Furthermore, it is lower among native-born with at least one immigrant parent than among their peers with two native-born parents.

Figure 22

Intergenerational mobility is low in Austria

Individuals with higher educational attainment than their parents, not in education and with medium- or low-educated parents, ages 16-34, 2019



Note: Individuals aged 16-24 are included only if they live with their parents (estimated from the SILC core module), while all individuals aged 25-34 are included.

Source: European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) 2019 module.

To reduce the impact of parental background on educational attainment and outcomes, OECD countries have implemented policies to more systematically involve immigrant parents in the education of their children (see **Box 8**).

Box 8 **Engaging with immigrant parents in schools: the example of France**

In France, the "Parent's Toolbox" (La mallette des parents) programme provides schools with educational guidelines and a structured set of topics for engaging with immigrant parents. This approach gives teachers the tools to hold regular meetings with immigrant parents to build trust and encourage engagement in their children's education. Meetings happen around pivotal moments in the school trajectory, such as the transition from primary to lower secondary education. The scheme was piloted in 2008 in urban areas with a high concentration of migrant students and has since been rolled out widely across French public schools.

In addition, more than 400 schools in France offer language courses at all levels for parents, as part of the "Opening Schools to Parents for Children's Success" (OEPRE) program.

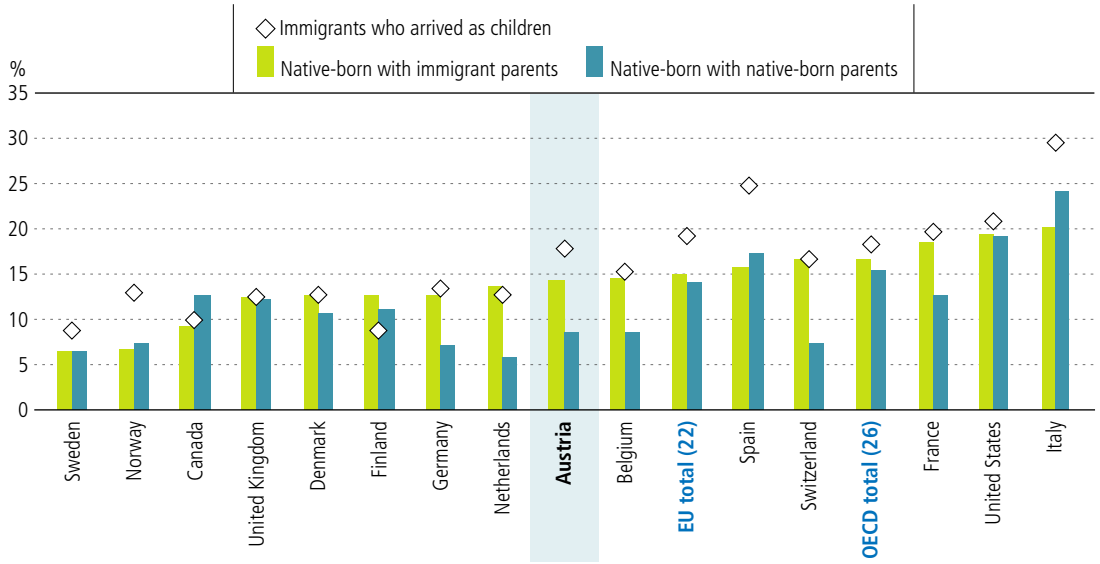
Source: OECD (2021[25]).

Despite persistent lower academic performance among native-born children with immigrant parents, other indicators show some positive trends. Between 2013 and 2021, the dropout rate, which is defined as young people aged 15 to 24 who are neither in school nor training and have gone no further than lower-secondary education, has decreased from 15% to 9%, placing Austria in the middle of the country distribution. Similarly, between 2013 and 2021, the NEET rate, which is defined as the proportion of 15- to 34-year-olds who are neither in employment, education nor training, dropped from 24% to 14% (see **Figure 23**).

Figure 23

Despite low academic performance, NEET rates among native-born youth with immigrant parents are not particularly high in international comparison

NEET rates, ages 15-34, 2021 or most recent year available



Note: For the United Kingdom, native-born with native-born parents refers to native-born whose self-reported ethnicity is "White British". Native-born with immigrant parents refers to native-born whose self-reported ethnicity is "White" – "Irish", "Gypsy or Irish Traveller", "Other White"; "Asian/Asian British" – "Indian", "Pakistani", "Bangladeshi", "Chinese", "Other Asian"; "Black/African/Caribbean/Black British"; and "Other ethnicity".

Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS 2021). Canada: Census 2016. United Kingdom: National Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2020. United States: Current Population Survey (CPS) 2020.

However, the situation is very different for youth who immigrated to Austria as children. Dropout rates stagnated and remained high, at 16% in 2021. Only Spain, Italy and the Netherlands have higher dropout rates. Furthermore, although NEET rates slightly declined since 2013, to 18%, they remain high in international comparison.

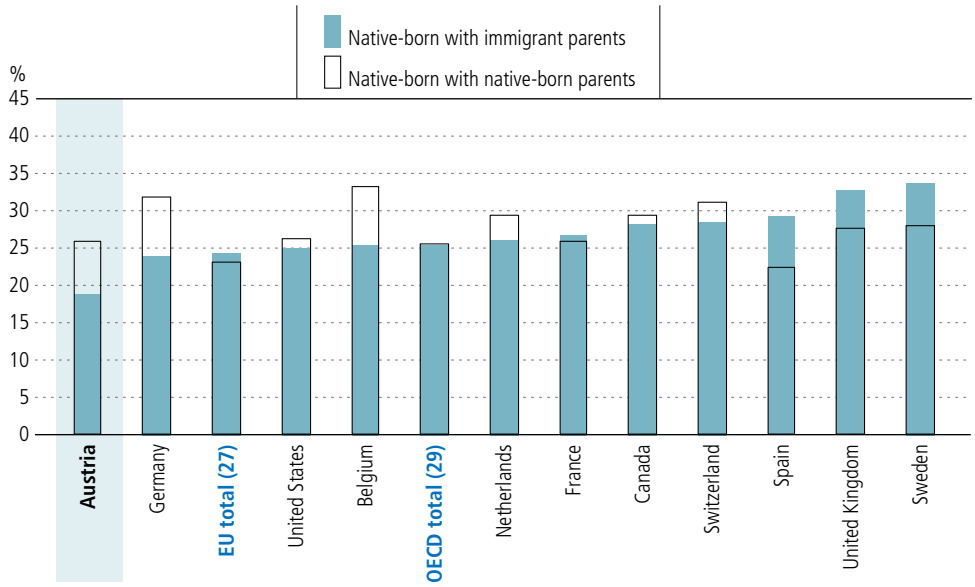
Young native-born with immigrant parents encounter challenges transitioning to the workforce due to lower educational attainment, limited personal networks, and discrimination, among other barriers. At 16%, the unemployment rate for those aged 15 to 34 (excluding those still in education) is slightly higher than for individuals who immigrated to Austria as children and, most notably, three times as high as for their peers with native-born parents. This rate is significantly higher than in Germany and the Netherlands, yet lower than in France, Belgium and the Southern European countries.

Despite increasing political awareness of the benefits of better representation of youth with immigrant parents in the public sector, they are still underrepresented in public sector jobs (including public administration, healthcare, social services, and education) in Austria (see **Figure 24**). While 26% of native-born children with native-born parents work in public sector jobs, only 19% of native-born children with immigrant parents do.

Figure 24

Young people with migrant parents are underrepresented in the Austrian public sector

Shares employed in the public service sector, ages 15-34, 2020-2021



Note: For the United Kingdom, native-born with native-born parents refers to native-born whose self-reported ethnicity is "White British". Native-born with immigrant parents refers to native-born whose self-reported ethnicity is "White" - "Irish", "Gypsy or Irish Traveller", "Other White"; "Asian/Asian British" – "Indian", "Pakistani", "Bangladeshi", "Chinese", "Other Asian"; "Black/African/Caribbean/Black British"; and "Other ethnicity".

Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2021. Canada: Census 2016. United Kingdom: National Labour Force Survey (LFS 2020). United States: Current Population Survey (CPS) 2020.

IV Social integration and living conditions

Ensuring that immigrants have equal access to resources and opportunities is essential to building equitable and inclusive societies. This section analyses differences in living conditions between immigrants and the native-born population, with a specific focus on housing and income. It also explores immigrants' experiences of discrimination as well as their participation in political and social structures.

Key takeaways

- Nearly one in three immigrants faces relative poverty (i.e. having a net household income below 60% of the median income). Among children under 16 living in non-EU immigrant households, every second is affected by relative poverty. However, very few are considered severely materially and socially deprived.
- More than one in five non-EU born immigrants in Austria reports belonging to a discriminated group, but this share has been declining over the past decade.
- Less than half of immigrants residing in Austria for over ten years has acquired Austrian citizenship.

IV.1 Living conditions

In Austria, employed migrants' median annual household income is around 27% lower than that of their native-born counterparts.[18] This marks the widest income disparity among major destination countries other than Spain and Italy. Although education generally boosts household income, this benefit is less pronounced among immigrants. In fact, the income gap with the native-born widens for highly educated immigrants, especially those from outside the EU. While the median income of employed low-educated non-EU born immigrants is 18% lower than that of the low-educated native-born, median income is 31% lower for highly educated non-EU born immigrants as compared to their native-born peers. This is influenced by highly educated immigrants' difficulties securing high-skilled jobs in Austria (section II.1).

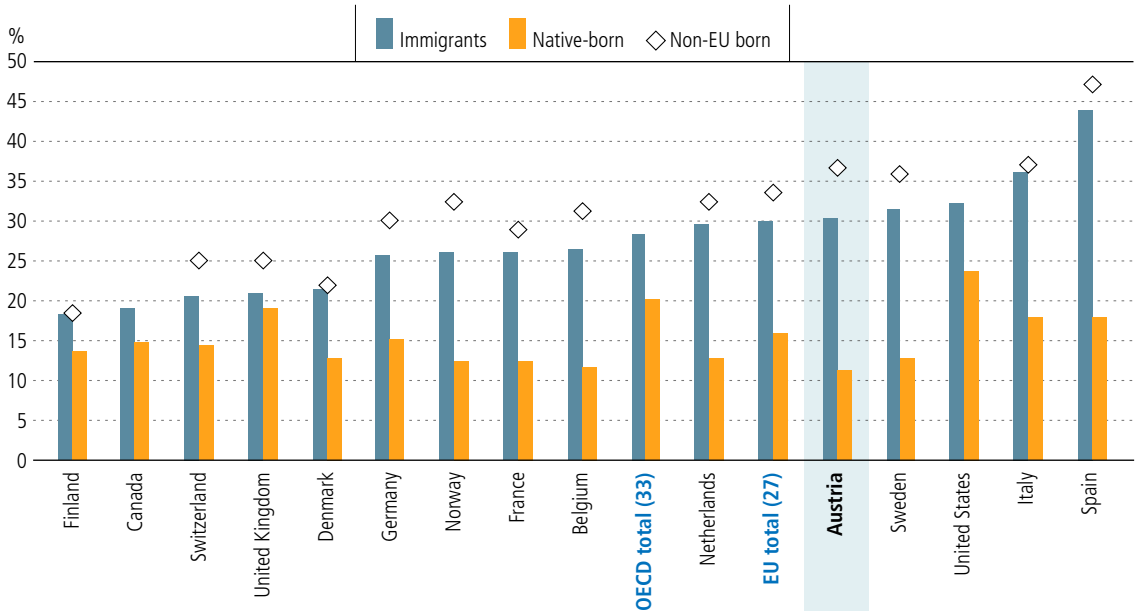
Employed immigrants' lower incomes, combined with lower employment rates among the non-EU born, result in higher risk of poverty. Almost one in three immigrants lives in relative poverty, which is defined as having an equivalised disposable household income below 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income. The relative poverty rate of immigrants is nearly three times higher than that of the native-born (see **Figure 25**). This number has remained relatively stable since 2010. Relative in-work poverty affects a lower proportion of employed immigrants, at 18%. However, this figure is higher than in most other major destinations, except for the United States, Spain and Italy. Contributing factors include the high prevalence of part-time employment and the overrepresentation of immigrants in the low-wage sector.

18. A household's annual equivalised disposable income is total earnings per capita from labour and capital adjusted by the square root of household size. Median income is the income amount that divides all households into two halves: one receives less and the other more.

Figure 25

Nearly one in three immigrants faces relative poverty

Relative poverty rates, ages 16 and above, 2021 or latest available year



Note: Data for the United States refer to amounts before deducting property tax.

Source: European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) 2021 (2020 for Norway and 2018 for the United Kingdom). Canada: Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2020. United States: Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplements (CPS ASEC) 2020.

Children living in immigrant households are particularly at risk of living in relative poverty. In Austria, every second child under the age of 16 with non-EU born immigrant parents experiences relative poverty, which is almost five times as many as among their peers with native-born parents. Although at 45% the poverty rate of young people with non-EU born parents is high in the EU as a whole, within the comparison group only the Netherlands (57%) and Spain (68%) exceed the Austrian rate. The share of young people with EU-born parents living in relative poverty is 31%, which is around three times higher than among young people with native-born parents.

Despite high relative poverty rates, few immigrants in Austria face severe material and social deprivation. Severe material and social deprivation, as defined by the EU, assesses whether individuals can afford at least seven out of thirteen material items deemed necessary or desirable for a decent quality of life.[19] Unlike the relative poverty rate, which depends on a country's median income level, this indicator sets a common threshold for all countries. While immigrants in Austria are more likely to suffer from severe material and social deprivation than the native-born (4% compared to 1%), prevalence is lower than in all other major European destination countries, except for Switzerland. In France, this number reaches 14% and in Germany and the Netherlands, it reaches 8%.

Although severe material deprivation is rare among immigrants in Austria, concentration at the lower end of the income spectrum limits their ability to save and invest in residential property. Furthermore, they may face additional challenges such as lack of social networks, access to information, discrimination and language barriers when attempting to purchase property.

19. Of the 13 deprivation items, seven relate to the household and six to the individual. Household items include the capacity to meet unexpected expenses, afford a week's holiday per year, be confronted with payment arrears, afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish, or a vegetarian equivalent every other day, keep the home adequately warm, access a car or van for personal use, and replace worn-out furniture; individual items include having internet connection, replacing worn-out clothes, owning two pairs of properly fitting shoes, spending a small amount of money on oneself each week, participating in regular leisure activities, and getting together with friends/family for a drink/meal at least once per month (Eurostat, 2023[30]).

In 2021, fewer than one in four immigrants in Austria owned their home, compared to almost two in three native-born. Even among immigrants who have lived in Austria for at least a decade, the home ownership rate was half that of the native-born. In fact, it was the lowest of all major destination countries. Immigrants born in non-EU countries are particularly underrepresented among homeowners, with only around one in six owning their home. Their high concentration in Vienna contributes to this phenomenon.

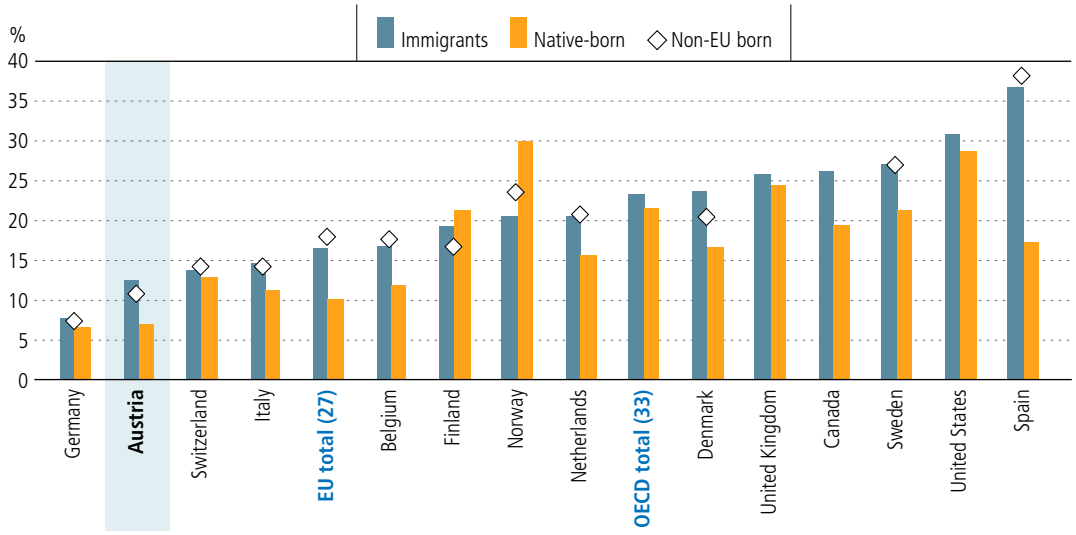
In the rental market, immigrants often pay higher rent per square metre than the native-born. In Vienna, this can be partly attributed to the fact that they are less likely to have older rental contracts with favourable conditions (Stadt Wien, 2023[26]). Additionally, immigrants face barriers to accessing housing assistance, as minimum residency requirements exclude certain segments of the immigrant population, at least temporarily, such as newcomers or highly mobile individuals (Karasz, Adamović and Scherner, 2022[27]). Despite the overrepresentation of immigrants in the city of Vienna, which has an extensive social housing system, only 22% of immigrant renters receive reduced-rate or free housing. This stands in stark contrast with native-born renters, of whom almost twice the percentage receive reduced-rate or free housing.

Nevertheless, the proportion of immigrants spending more than 40% of their household income on rent remains relatively low in international comparison, at 12% (see **Figure 26**). While this share is significantly higher than the 7% of native-born renters, it is one of the lowest among major destinations. Immigrants who arrived within the last decade are more affected, at 18%, compared with only 8% among those who have resided in Austria for at least ten years.

Figure 26

Immigrants are almost twice as likely as the native-born to be overburdened by housing costs, but rates are low in international comparison

Housing cost overburden rates, ages 16 and above, 2021 or latest available year



Note: Data for Canada cover the population aged 15 years and over.

Source: European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) 2021 (2020 for Norway and 2018 for the United Kingdom). Canada: Census 2016. United States: American Community Survey (ACS) 2019.

Furthermore, in Austria, few immigrants live in substandard dwellings compared to most other major destinations. A dwelling is considered substandard if it lacks sufficient light, does not provide exclusive access to a bathroom, or has a leaky roof. Approximately one in five immigrants in Austria reports experiencing at least one of these issues, which is nearly twice the share of the native-born population. In the Netherlands, France and Belgium, however, the proportion of immigrants affected is much higher, at almost one in three.

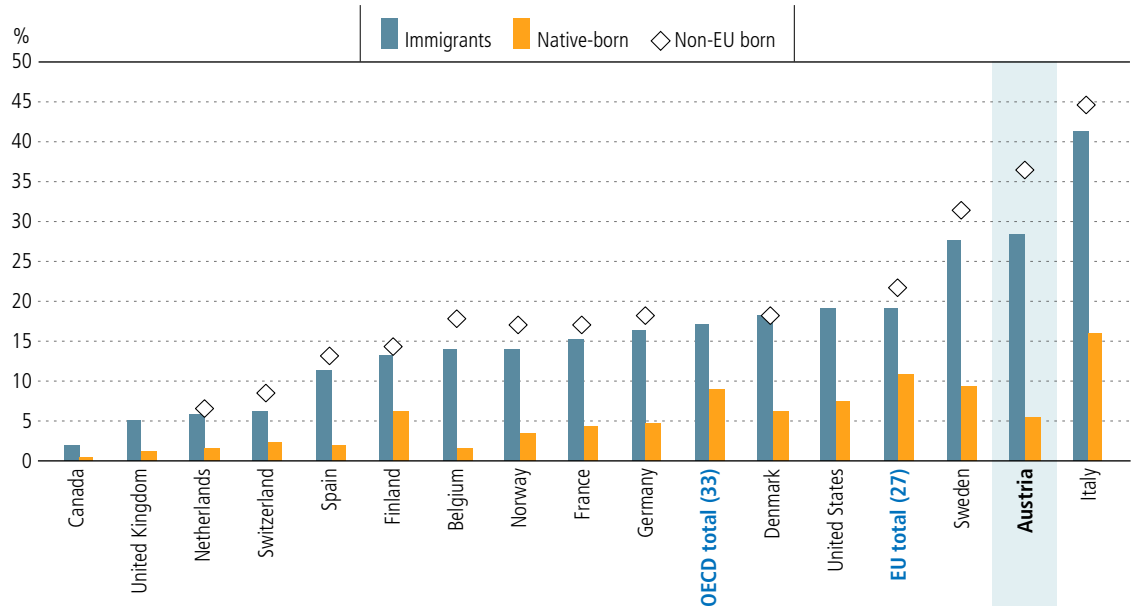
Nevertheless, immigrants in Austria face challenges finding sufficiently spacious accommodations. **Figure 27** shows that over one in four immigrants lives in overcrowded accommodations, one of the highest shares

among major destinations.[20] The share of people living in overcrowded accommodations is particularly high among non-EU born immigrants and their children. More than one in three non-EU born adults and more than one in two children in non-EU migrant households live in overcrowded accommodations. Once again, the concentration of immigrants in urban areas, and especially Vienna, where living space is limited, contributes to this phenomenon.

Figure 27

Immigrants are over four times more likely to live in overcrowded housing than the native-born

Overcrowding rates, ages 16 and above, 2021 or latest available year



Note: In the United States, overcrowding is determined by the number of bedrooms rather than by the number of rooms. Data for Canada cover the population aged 15 and over. In Canada, a dwelling is considered overcrowded if the number of bedrooms falls below certain minimum requirements: one for each adult couple, single parent or additional adult (aged over 18); one for every two children of the same sex (aged under 18), two for every two children of opposite sex and one for every two children under five of the opposite sex. A single person living in a single room without a separate bedroom is not considered overcrowded.

Source: European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) 2021 (2020 for Norway and 2018 for the United Kingdom). Canada: Census 2016. United States: American Community Survey (ACS) 2019.

Differences in housing conditions between immigrants and the native-born are also reflected in satisfaction data from the Gallup World Poll 2020. Around 56% of immigrants expressed dissatisfaction with the availability of good affordable housing in the city or area where they live, compared to only 44% of the native-born. Immigrants in the Netherlands and France share a similar level of dissatisfaction, which is significantly higher than in Germany, Sweden and Belgium.

IV.2 Discrimination

Although discrimination is difficult to quantify, many surveys assess individuals' subjective perceptions of discrimination. These responses are influenced by an individual's expectations for fair treatment and their propensity to recognise discriminatory behaviour. As such, self-reported discrimination is an important indicator of social cohesion.

More than one in five working-age non-EU born immigrants in Austria identifies as part of a discriminated group based on ethnicity, nationality or race according to data from the European Social Survey (ESS) from 2012 to 2020.

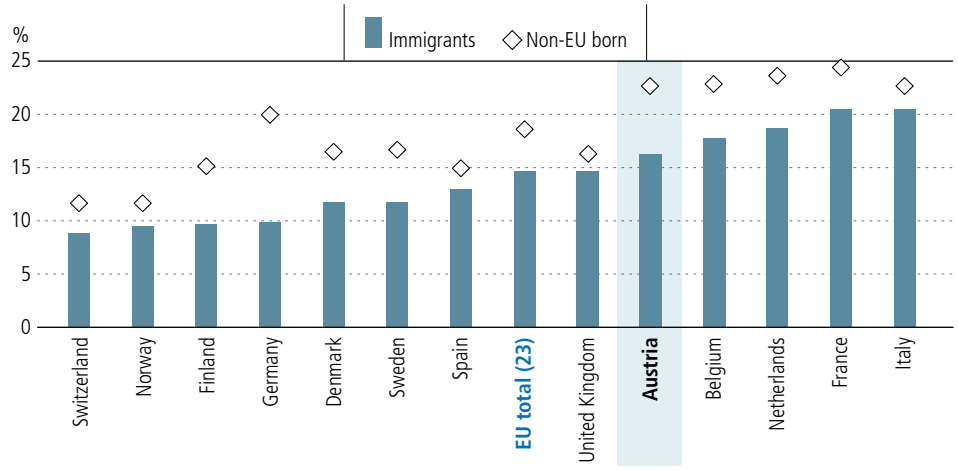
20. A home is considered overcrowded if the number of rooms is fewer than the sum of one living room, plus one room for each single person or the couple responsible for the household, plus one room for every two additional adults, plus one room for every two children.

This share is similar to Belgium, the Netherlands and France but significantly higher than in the Nordic countries and in Switzerland (see **Figure 28**). That notwithstanding, perceived discrimination among immigrants in Austria, especially non-EU born immigrants, has declined over the past decade. The share of non-EU born immigrants that identifies as part of a discriminated group dropped by 14 percentage points between the periods of 2002-2010 and 2012-2020.

Figure 28

More than one in five non-EU born immigrants in Austria reports belonging to a discriminated group

Immigrants' self-reported discrimination, ages 15–64, 2012-2020



Source: European Social Survey (ESS) 2012-2020.

Perceptions of discrimination often vary across generations. In many countries, young native-born individuals with two immigrant parents report experiencing discrimination more often than their immigrant parents. This may be attributable to the native-born and younger generations' heightened expectations of equal treatment and increased sensitivity to discriminatory practices (OECD, 2024[28]). In Austria, around 19% of native-born young people (aged 15 to 34) with two immigrant parents feel they belong to a discriminated group, which is a similar proportion to the total immigrant population.

Data from the EU-LFS 2021 show that almost one in ten employed non-EU born immigrants in Austria feels discriminated against in the workplace. This proportion is similar to Germany, Switzerland and Denmark but lower than in the Netherlands and Sweden.

Despite comparatively high levels of self-reported discrimination, awareness of the issue and its consequences remain relatively low in Austria. According to data from the 2021 Eurobarometer, less than 60% of EU citizens in Austria consider discrimination to be a significant barrier to the integration of non-EU born immigrants.[21] This is the lowest rate among major EU destinations.

IV.3 Political and social participation

By 2022, less than half of all immigrants living in Austria for over a decade had obtained Austrian citizenship, a lower share than in most other major destinations (see **Figure 29**). This leaves over 600 000 long-standing immigrants without the right to vote in national elections, among other citizens' rights. The low naturalisation rate may be related to the fact that Austrian citizenship law does not generally allow dual or multiple citizenship. Furthermore, some eligibility requirements for naturalisation that go beyond length of residence, such as sufficient financial means, German B1 language skills and knowledge of Austrian values and history, may be difficult for certain immigrant groups to meet. Indeed, the naturalisation rate of highly educated non-EU born

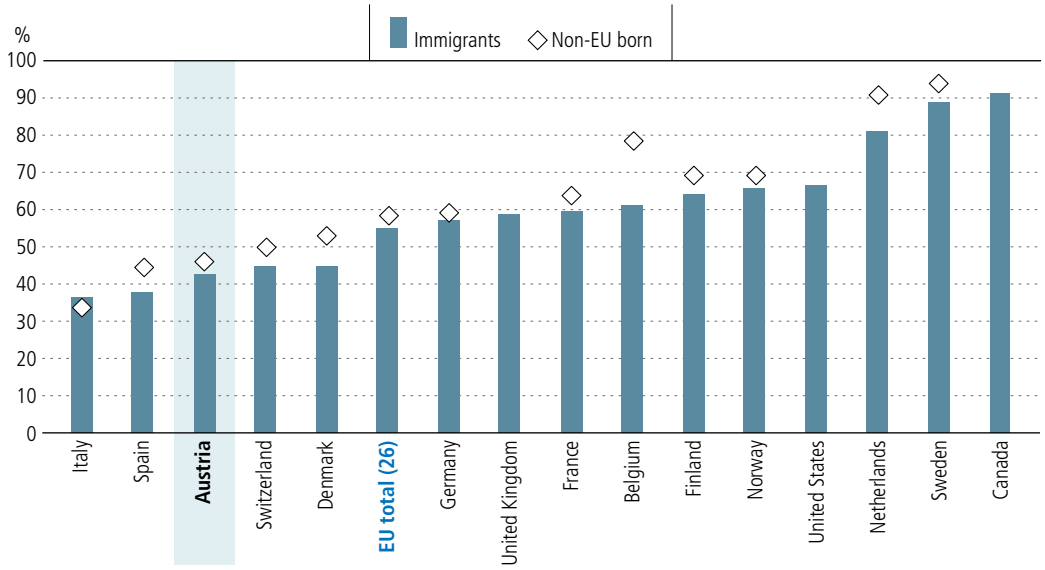
21. The respondents surveyed include Austrian nationals and nationals of other EU countries.

immigrants, who are more likely to meet these requirements, is 16 percentage points higher than that of their low-educated counterparts. However, there are much greater differences based on region of origin, 62% of immigrants born in African countries and 55% of those born in Asian countries hold Austrian citizenship, while just 42% of immigrants born in European countries outside of the EU do.

Figure 29

Less than half of immigrants with more than 10 years of residence are Austrian nationals

Host-country nationals among immigrants with at least 10 years of residence, ages 15 and above, 2022 or most recent year available



Source: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2022 (2019 for the United Kingdom). Canada: Census 2016. United States: American Community Survey (ACS) 2019.

As is the case in many countries, naturalised immigrants in Austria are less likely to vote in national elections than native-born citizens. ESS data for 2012-2020 show that three out of four immigrants with Austrian citizenship voted in the most recent national election preceding the survey, compared to almost nine out of ten native-born. These participation rates are similar to those in Germany, but lower than in the Scandinavian countries and Belgium, where voting is compulsory. Austria's gap in turnout is most pronounced among native-born young people (aged 18-34) with immigrant parents, of whom only 61% voted in the election preceding the survey, as compared to 79% of their peers with native-born parents.

In Austria, immigrants are also underrepresented in voluntary organisations, with a membership rate of 57%, compared with 64% of the native-born population.[22] However, this gap is even greater in the Nordic countries, Switzerland and Germany. While this gap is evident in various organisations, such as political groups and professional associations, it is particularly marked in sports and recreational groups, where it amounts to almost ten percentage points. Language barriers, lack of information or a preference for informal forms of social participation within immigrant communities may contribute to this underrepresentation.

Over the last decade, rates of membership in voluntary organisations in Austria have increased by more than 20 percentage points for both immigrants and native-born. Other than in Germany, this has been the largest increase among major destination countries. Despite this increase, overall rates of membership among immigrants in Austria remain low in international comparison.

22. This indicator refers to the share of people aged 15 and above who reported membership to a voluntary organisation (religious organisations, cultural activities, trade unions, political parties or groups, conservation, environment, ecology, animal rights, professional associations, sports, recreation, consumer groups, or other groups) at the time of the survey.

The social integration of immigrants is also influenced by the attitudes and actions of the host society. Data from the 2021 Eurobarometer show that interactions between EU citizens and non-EU immigrants are widespread in Austria. Around half of people aged 15 and over report interacting socially with non-EU immigrants at least once per week. This ranges from brief conversations to joint activities. Only Sweden and Spain report higher rates of interaction, but these countries also have larger non-EU born immigrant populations than Austria. These interactions between immigrants and the native-born population can reduce prejudice and increase social cohesion.

Attitudes towards immigrants in Austria remain mixed, as shown by ESS data from 2020. While 32% of the native-born population has a positive perception of the economic impact of immigrants and only 23% has a negative view, perceptions on whether immigrants make the country a better place to live are generally negative.[23] Only 15% of the native-born responded positively, while 36% responded negatively.[24] Attitudes are more positive in most other major destinations, in particular in Germany, Switzerland and the Nordic countries. Nevertheless, as in most peer countries, attitudes in Austria became slightly more positive in the 2010s, partly due to a more positive attitude toward immigration among young Austrians.



23. Respondents with a score from 7 to 10 (on a scale from 0 bad to 10 good) to the question: "Would you say it is generally bad or good for Austria's economy that people come to live here from other countries?" are considered to have a positive view, while those with a score from 0 to 3 are considered to have a negative view.

24. Respondents with a score from 7 to 10 (on a scale from 0 worse to 10 better) to the question: "Is Austria made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?" are considered to have a positive view, while those with a score from 0 to 3 are considered to have a negative view.

V Conclusion

Immigrants make up about one-fifth of the total population in Austria and about one-fourth of the working-age population. While free mobility has been the largest driver of immigration to Austria, both humanitarian and family migration each accounted for one-sixth of all permanent flows to Austria over the last decade. As a result, immigrants from various countries of origin with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds come to Austria with different integration needs.

Integration outcomes are favourable on several fronts, reflecting Austria's significant investment in integration measures. Participation in language courses among non-EU born immigrants who arrived in the last decade is high in international comparison. What is more, EU-born women have strong German language skills, with 70% reporting fluency. Nonetheless, EU-born immigrants report lower rates of participation in language courses, and they progress more slowly than their peers in most other major destinations.

In recent years, the employment rate of immigrants in Austria has reached record highs, slightly surpassing the remainder of the EU. Moreover, refugees who have been in Austria for over ten years are experiencing high employment rates as well, although this is not the case among recent arrivals. On top of this, the prevalence of severe material and social deprivation among migrants is lower than in almost all other major European destinations.

While measures to support the integration of immigrants to the country along with favourable labour market conditions have contributed to these developments, several challenges remain. The unemployment rate of low-educated immigrants born both in EU and in non-EU countries sits at about 18%, which is one of the highest rates across major European destinations. Additionally, immigrants tend to be concentrated in elementary occupations and experience skills mismatch, struggling to find positions that reflect their formal qualifications. Although the recognition of foreign qualifications helps immigrants access high-skilled occupations, many are unaware of these benefits and do not apply for the process, despite Austria's considerable efforts in this area.

The low socioeconomic status of migrants tends to have consequences for their children as well. Native-born pupils with immigrant parents face large learning gaps compared to their peers with native-born parents. This can partly be attributed to their lower socioeconomic status and their overrepresentation in schools where low socioeconomic status is concentrated. Comparatively few of these students succeed in surpassing the educational attainment of their immigrant parents later in life. In fact, intergenerational mobility in education among this group is lowest in Austria among major destination countries.

As immigrants and their children are a large and growing group in Austria, continuing to address these challenges is of high importance.

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