

# NEW IN THE CITY



How newly arrived refugees experience reception  
and integration activities in the City of Gothenburg, 2015-2017

Kristin Franke Björkman & Andrea Spehar  
University of Gothenburg, Centre on Global Migration (CGM)



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UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

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[www.cgm.gu.se](http://www.cgm.gu.se)

ISBN: 978-91-639-9836-2 (PDF)

Layout: Repro Lorensberg,  
University of Gothenburg

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The city is often one of the first points of contact for newly arrived refugees and migrants, meaning that an effective integration policy can be highly significant – not least for sustainable urban development (Glick Schiller and Caglar 2016). Cities must work to ensure the long-term integration of new citizens, who otherwise risk being excluded from society as they do not have access to the labour market, housing, healthcare or education (OECD 2018b). Our multicultural society also puts immense pressure on cities to deliver social services in such a way that the needs of all citizens are met. A number of operations at city level are affected by cities' work with refugee reception and integration. In many cases, this can be seen as part of basic operational assignments aimed at all citizens. At the same time, the local level also has a specific state undertaking in connection with the reception of new arrivals. In Sweden, municipalities are responsible for most of the tasks concerning refugee reception, this involves providing housing, education in Swedish for immigrants (SFI) and civic orientation, social services, and the reception of unaccompanied children. Integration at local level also involves guaranteeing equal access to services in a multicultural context. In many cases, the increasing diversity of the population leads to the emergence of densely populated urban areas where the socioeconomic composition places specific requirements on public services. For example, healthcare service needs are different in a multicultural, densely populated area compared to a more ethnically homogeneous area (Niessen and Schibel 2007).

The growing stream of refugees – adults, families and unaccompanied children – coming to Sweden, particularly during 2015, has brought new challenges for the Swedish municipalities in their work relating to reception and integration. Table 1 shows the changes in the City of Gothenburg's reception between 2011 and 2017.

**Table 1.** Number received with residence permits, City of Gothenburg, 2011-2017

Year	Quota refugees	Allocated (ABOs) <sup>1</sup>	Living in their own accommodations (EBOs)	Relatives/ next of kin	Others <sup>2</sup>	Total	Of which unaccompanied children
2011	2	128	465	79	10	684	65
2012	2	130	598	363	19	1 176	64
2013	3	107	1 260	853	15	2 238	111
2014	7	114	1 564	823	33	2 541	179
2015		146	1 187	765	21	2 119	203
2016	20	968	1 617	661	55	3 321	445
2017	92	1 206	865	818	29	3 010	350

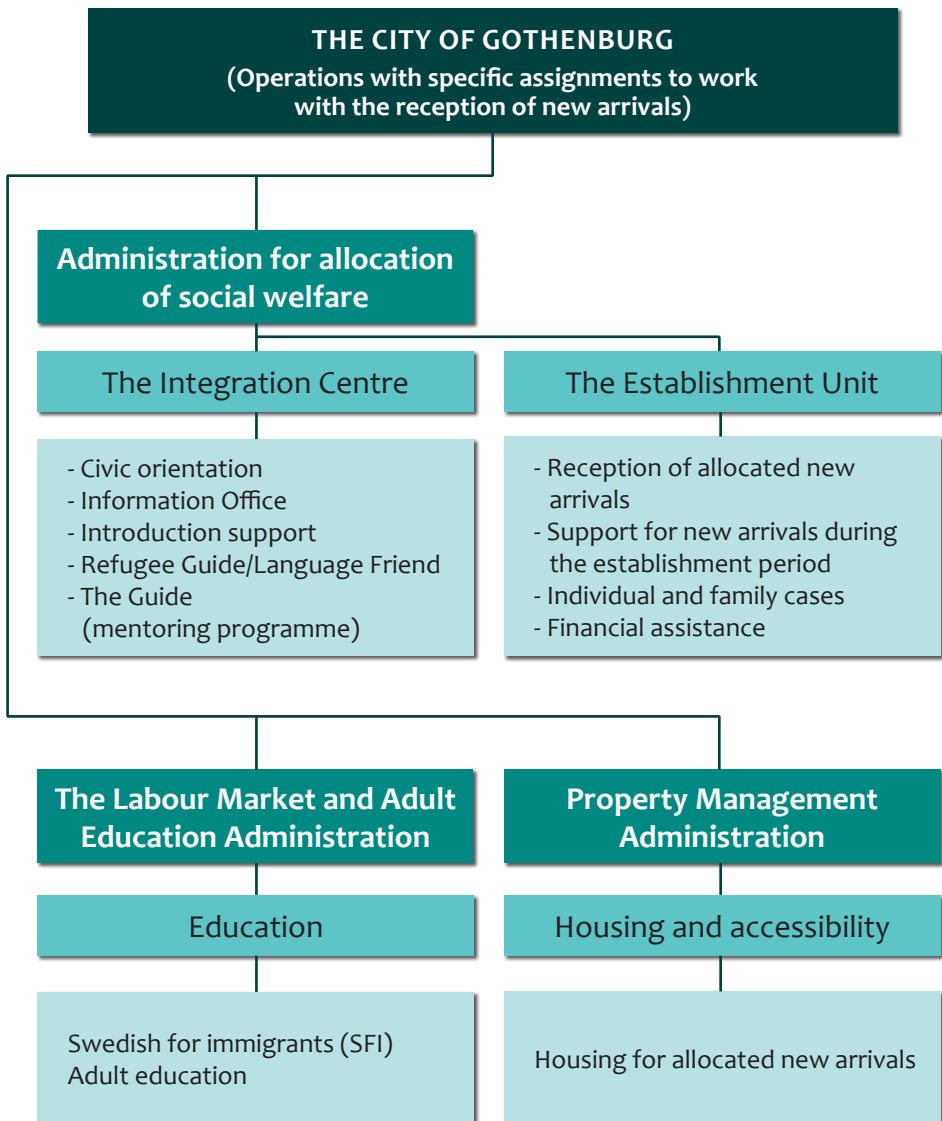
Source: The Swedish Migration Agency's statistics of new arrivals received by municipalities

Against this background, the Municipal Executive Board commissioned the City of Gothenburg's City Executive Office to carry out a comprehensive investigation during 2018 of the reception of refugees between 2015 and 2017. The investigation should describe and analyse the sequence of events and how the city has coped with its reception assignment, and should submit forward-looking recommendations and proposed actions that aim to achieve long-term sustainable reception in Gothenburg. As part of this investigation, the University of Gothenburg's Centre on Global Migration (CGM) has been tasked with carrying out a qualitative study of how the new arrivals themselves experienced the reception process. The target group for the study was adult men and women with residence permits, both those allocated to the municipality and those living in their own accommodation, of various ages and with different educational backgrounds and family situations. The starting point for the study was those aspects of reception for which the City of Gothenburg is responsible, including housing, education in Swedish for immigrants (SFI) and civic orientation, adult education and the Establishment Unit's care for individuals and families.<sup>3</sup> Since the municipality's core assignment, which is aimed at all the inhabitants of the municipality, includes preschool,

- 1 According to the Swedish Migration Agency's statistics, an ABO is defined as a former asylum seeker who has been granted a residence permit, and – having been allocated by the Swedish Public Employment Service or the Swedish Migration Agency – has settled in a municipality. An EBO is defined as a former asylum seeker who has been granted a residence permit and has arranged accommodation independently, either while seeking asylum or in connection with being granted a residence permit.
- 2 According to the Swedish Migration Agency's statistics, 'Others' are primarily defined as people who have not sought asylum but have still received a residence permit, rarely as a refugee or a person in need of protection, but more often due to particularly distressing circumstances.
- 3 The Establishment Unit is aimed at newly arrived refugees in Gothenburg who have been granted residence permits during the last two years and are participating in establishment activities via the Swedish Public Employment Service. The unit ensures that new arrivals receive the support they are entitled to during the establishment period in relation to individual and family cases. After the end of the establishment period, the district councils assume responsibility for individual and family cases.

primary and secondary school, school for the intellectually disabled and care for individuals and families (social services) – which come under the responsibility of the district councils – these areas are also included in the study. Although the municipal areas of responsibility are the main focus of the study, it is hard to isolate individual initiatives without seeing them within the broader context of reception and integration and the establishment period as a whole. Therefore, labour market initiatives and contact with other public institutions, has also been included in the study.

**Figure 1.** Units within the City of Gothenburg with specific assignments to work with the reception and integration of new arrivals.



## 2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Migration is an important aspect of our times. Today, more people in more parts of the world are migrating than ever before. People's movements between countries and regions create different challenges for the societies that receive them. Most of the world's countries can be described as multicultural to varying degrees, in that their citizens (and non-citizens) have many different cultural backgrounds in terms of factors such as language, religion and ethnicity. If we look at European experiences, however, current research shows that today's multicultural societies are largely characterised by segregation and social marginalisation, and this is particularly evident in large European cities (Marcinićzak et al. 2016). Many people with foreign backgrounds lack the same opportunities as those born in the country. They have lower employment rates and higher levels of unemployment, lower income and pensions, insecure working conditions, poorer health, lower levels of voter participation and less confidence in political institutions (OECD 2015). To date, the integration policy initiatives in various European countries have turned out not to be effective enough to create equal conditions for different groups of migrants. This is also true of Sweden, a country that is viewed as a world leader in terms of integration policy.<sup>4</sup> When discussing and comparing integration policy initiatives and outcomes in different countries, it is important to take a number of complex aspects into consideration. Firstly, comparing countries' integration policies can be problematic as different countries have different conditions in terms of migration, labour market, welfare policy, etc. Secondly, it can be important to view the integration of new arrivals as a process and not as a measurable condition. It takes different lengths of time for different groups of immigrants to become integrated into the new society. For instance, the longer a person spends in a country, the better the conditions for entering the labour market (Aldén and Hammarstedt 2014). Thirdly, there are significant differences in the degree of integration between immigrants with different levels of education, different countries of origin and different immigration statuses, between different age groups and between men and women.

As a consequence of the increased streams of refugees in recent years, the role played by cities in the reception and integration of new arrivals has been placed high on the political agenda, both internationally and at EU level. Refugees and migrants often come to metropolitan areas in order to gain better access to public services, social networks and work, leading to increased demands on the ability of large cities to not only receive but also integrate new groups of inhabitants. The European Commission and the OECD (2018b) recently published a joint report, *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees*, based on data about how 72 European cities of different sizes have structured their integration efforts at local level. The report includes eight in-depth case studies of large European cities, one of which is Gothenburg. Within the framework of these case studies, politicians, municipal civil servants and representatives from organisations within civil society, among others, were interviewed. The study's final report, "Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants

<sup>4</sup> See [MIPEX](#) (Migrant Integration Policy Index).

and Refugees in Gothenburg”, was published in March 2018. This included a detailed description of the City of Gothenburg’s current organisation for the reception and integration of new arrivals, as well as a number of identified challenges and areas for development. It also highlighted the current shortage of housing and the city’s housing segregation as key barriers to integration, and called for more public meeting places to attract different groups of people (OECD 2018a).

As mentioned above, the report focused mainly on what is usually referred to in research contexts as ‘elite’ perceptions, in other words how civil servants, politicians and other public figures in the recipient country view the design and implementation of integration policy. This tendency is also seen in many similar reports, and in research in general. So-called ‘elite interviews’ and document studies are common methods for examining and evaluating national and local integration policies, while the voices of migrants themselves are often conspicuous by their absence. One exception in the Swedish context is the Immigration Index.<sup>5</sup> The Immigration Index was launched in 2016 as an annual national study in which newly arrived immigrants<sup>6</sup> carry out an online survey, answering questions about the reception process, health, work, education, housing and so on. The online survey is carried out during SFI lessons, with 2,524 respondents in 2017 – 238 of whom lived in Gothenburg. The Immigration Index thus has the advantage of including data from a large proportion of the newly arrived population. However, the survey does not succeed particularly well in covering new arrivals’ perceptions of the various receiving institutions, such as how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with SFI education, civic orientation and the treatment they receive from civil servants.

In order to get a more nuanced and in-depth picture of the institutions that exist to support the reception and integration of new arrivals, this study therefore uses interviews which focus on newly arrived refugees’ own experiences of their initial period in Gothenburg.

5 <http://www.invandrarindex.se/>

6 As the survey is carried out at SFI classes, it covers a heterogeneous group of new arrivals, including refugees, family migrants and migrant workers



## 3. METHOD

### 3.1 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND GROUP INTERVIEWS

The majority of the study's informants were interviewed in groups, mainly to allow more people to take part and put their views across. The terms 'group interview' and 'focus group' are often used synonymously. However, in contrast to the focus group method, group interviews do not attach as much importance to the interaction between the participants, and in most cases they also involve more questions than focus groups (Bryman 2018:603).

As well as the opportunity to include more participants when time is limited, group interviews also have other advantages. For example, individual participants can modify and develop their answers after having listened to other participants' views, and to agree with or counter aspects that they would not have thought about if these issues had not been raised by others. In this way, the group interview method can offer a broader range of opinions and views than would normally be possible with individual interviews. Because the group leader or researcher must hand over 'control' to the participants to some extent in the interview situation, it is also easier for those issues that mean the most to the participants to come to the surface (Bryman 2018:603-605).

Also carrying out a small number of individual interviews made it possible to get a fuller picture of how various factors interact to form the individual's experience of the reception process.

### 3.2 SELECTION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The interview participants for the study were mainly recruited from the civic orientation classes arranged at the Integration Centre,<sup>7</sup> part of the City of Gothenburg's Administration for Allocation of Social Welfare. A small number of informants were also recruited through organisations within civil society that carry out various activities for new arrivals. The majority of the informants had received their residence permits sometime between 2015 and 2017.<sup>8</sup>

A total of 48 people were included in the study. Of these, 43 participated in one of the six group interviews carried out in Arabic, Somali and Persian/Dari (see Table 2). The remaining

7 The Integration Centre in Gothenburg is a meeting place for new arrivals, other immigrants and Swedes. The unit provides teaching, meetings and integration in many different ways, and is responsible for civic orientation classes.

8 With the exception of three informants who received their residence permits in 2013 and 2014, and three informants who received their residence permits at the beginning of 2018.

five informants were interviewed individually. All individual interviews were carried out with Arabic-speaking informants.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 2.** Group interviews carried out

Language	<i>Number of participants</i>
Arabic	8
Arabic	5
Arabic	5
Somali	9
Somali	10
Persian/Dari	6

Previous research has shown that factors such as age, gender, education level, family situation and country of origin have a significant effect on the individual integration process.<sup>10</sup> In view of this, it has been important to include an intersectional perspective – which takes into account how these different factors affect the new arrival’s experiences – in this study. When recruiting interview participants, we have therefore striven to include as varied a selection as possible to allow more experiences and perspectives to be included. The demographic make-up of the participants is shown in Tables 3-6. We have also taken care in the analysis and the reporting of results to reflect the many different perspectives that arose in the collected interview material.

**Table 3.** Informants divided up by gender and interview language

Gender	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>Somali</i>	<i>Persian/Dari</i>	<i>Total</i>
Women	9	15	3	27
Men	14	4	3	21
Total	23	19	6	48

9 A large proportion of the new arrivals who came to Gothenburg between 2015 and 2017 were fleeing the war in Syria, and in 2017 the largest course language for the municipality’s civic orientation classes was Arabic (62%), followed by Somali (11%). As a consequence, almost half the informants in this study were Arabic speakers.

10 See e.g. Bucken-Knapp, Fakh and Spehar 2018; Riaño and Baghdadi 2007; The European Commission 2016; Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore 2018.

**Table 4.** Informants divided up by age and interview language

Age	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>Somali</i>	<i>Persian/Dari</i>	<i>Total</i>
–25	2	4		6
26–35	10	1	3	14
36–45	10	6	1	17
46–55	1	4	2	7
56–		4		4
Total	23	19	6	48

**Table 5.** Informants divided up by size of family and interview language

Number of children	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>Somali</i>	<i>Persian/Dari</i>	<i>Total</i>
0	6	7	2	15
1–2	7	4	3	14
3–4	8	4		12
5–	2	4	1	7
Total	23	19	6	48

**Table 6.** Informants divided up by number of years of school before coming to Sweden and interview language

Number of years of school	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>Somali</i>	<i>Persian/Dari</i>	<i>Total</i>
0	2	7	1	10
1–5		7		7
6–9	8	4		12
10–12	3	1	2	6
13–	10		2	12
Total	23	19	5*	47*

\*Lower total due to one participant not providing education details.

### 3.3 IMPLEMENTATION

All the group interviews and two of the individual interviews were carried out with the help of authorised interpreters. The other three individual interviews were carried out without an interpreter, in either English or Swedish.

To ‘warm up’ the participants, each group interview began by going round and asking each participant to reflect briefly on their initial period in Gothenburg. What did they find worked well, and what worked less well? In this way, all the participants were able to make

their voices heard early on. We were also given an indication of which areas were particularly important to discuss in greater depth later on in the interview. Questions were then asked based on an interview guide, relating to the key aspects of the reception and integration system:

- ✦ housing
- ✦ SFI education
- ✦ civic orientation
- ✦ social contact/leisure
- ✦ treatment and access to information
- ✦ the labour market/the establishment programme.

Certain questions were asked in a relatively open manner, while others were of a specific nature. For example: What do you think about the SFI education? What works well/badly? Can you describe how your contact with civil servants from the City of Gothenburg has worked? What are your thoughts about participating in the Swedish labour market in the future?

The group interviews concluded with the question of whether there was anything else the participants thought it was important to raise in connection with the reception process in Gothenburg. The individual interviews were based on the same interview guide, but were adapted to a certain degree according to the informant's living situation and the issues that were most important to him or her. All the informants were also asked to complete a short survey about background information (gender, age, education and number of children).

As mentioned above, the interview participants were mainly recruited with the help of civil servants and social communicators at the City of Gothenburg's Integration Centre. Five of the six group interviews were therefore also carried out at the centre's premises. Naturally, both recruiting using social communicators and carrying out the interviews at the premises where civic orientation lessons are held involve a risk that the participants will be less likely to raise critical opinions regarding civic orientation. However, the positive image of civic orientation that emerged during these group interviews was also shared by the informants who were interviewed away from the Integration Centre's premises.

In the interview study "Att avkoda systemets regler – Nyanlända invandrades berättelser om mötet med etableringen" ("Decoding the system's rules – Newly arrived immigrants' narratives of their encounters with the establishment programme"), Tovatt (2013) discusses how both worries and politeness can lead to newly arrived informants not being completely open and honest with the interviewer. Worries relate to a fear that criticism will be passed on to the institutions in question, such as the municipality or the Swedish Public Employment Service, thus leading to negative consequences for the person who has voiced criticism. Since many people have fled from countries with no functioning state apparatus, it is possible that such worries will also influence new arrivals' willingness to criticise public institutions, such as the municipality and other authorities, in Sweden. Politeness may also mean that newly arrived informants are unwilling to criticise the Swedish system due to a sense of gratitude at having been accepted and having received help with issues such as housing, childcare and language learning.

In order to overcome these potential barriers as far as possible, each interview began with us clearly explaining the purpose of the interview and of the study as a whole. In particular, we pointed out that critical opinions were extremely valuable, as the City of Gothenburg's primary aim with this study was to find out which aspects of the reception system can be improved. It was also important to explain that we, the interviewers, worked not for the municipality but for the University of Gothenburg, even though we were at the municipality's premises. The group interview method further helped to reduce potential worries. Once an interview participant had raised an initial critical view, the other participants seemed to feel more comfortable about also sharing their own critical opinions.

Politeness was shown by the majority of the informants describing that they had been received well and that they were grateful to Sweden. Thanks to the more specific questions relating to individual aspects of reception and introduction processes, such as housing and SFI education, it was nevertheless possible to also obtain more critical comments, even though in some cases the informants almost apologised for their criticisms:

*It's not that we're sitting here criticising, because there's a lot that's good, but we must also highlight certain... (...) Otherwise we're all, I can speak about us all, we're very grateful and we've been looked after extremely well and we're thankful to the authorities and the state, and everyone has been nice and pleasant.*

(Male, Arabic)

Since the main aim of the study was to investigate the City of Gothenburg's reception based on the new arrivals' own perspectives, their voices – through illustrative quotations – will also be given prominence in the following report of our results.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Since the majority of the participants were interviewed in groups, it has not been possible to determine which specific person said what in the recorded interview material. Therefore, only the respondent's gender and the interview language are stated after the quotations.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 HOUSING

*So the hardest feeling you can experience is that you feel homeless, you don't have anywhere you can feel secure (...). (Female, Arabic)*

As described in the method section, each group interview began by going round and asking each participant to reflect on their initial period in Gothenburg. Here, no views were raised about the initial dealings with the municipality, but the shortage of housing was the biggest individual problem encountered by the informants after arriving in Gothenburg. Difficulties experienced in finding suitable housing were depicted by the majority of the informants, regardless of their country of birth, education background and family situation. Even those who felt happy with their accommodation were aware of the difficult housing situation, as several of them expressed that they had “been lucky” compared with many of their fellow countrymen, relatives and other acquaintances.

However, it is important to make a distinction here between the new arrivals who had been allocated to the municipality (ABOs) and those who had chosen to settle there of their own accord (EBOs). According to the Swedish Reception for Settlement Act (SFS 2016:38) introduced in March 2016, a municipality is obliged after allocation to receive a new arrival for settlement in the municipality (SFS 2016:38, §5). The aim of the new act is to improve new arrivals' establishment in the labour market and in society through a more even distribution of new arrivals between municipalities (Government Bill 2015/16:54). The act only covers new arrivals who are registered and have stayed at the Swedish Migration Agency's accommodation centres, and quota refugees. The act does not apply to those new arrivals who have chosen to find their own accommodation during their time as asylum seekers.

Since the introduction of the act, reception has gradually been evened out between Sweden's municipalities, and the proportion settling independently has decreased (Västra Götaland County Administrative Board 2018). The statistics on reception in the City of Gothenburg during 2015-2017 also clearly show that the proportion allocated to the municipality has risen significantly since the implementation of the Reception for Settlement Act in 2016. Since the City of Gothenburg did not previously have an agreement with the Swedish Migration Agency on receiving ABOs, those allocated during 2011-2015 mainly consisted of unaccompanied children and individual quota refugees in need of specialist care, i.e. few other adults and families.

**Table 7.** Number of ABOs and EBOs with residence permits, including unaccompanied children, in the City of Gothenburg 2011-2017.

	<i>Allocated (ABOs)<sup>12</sup></i>	<i>Living in their own accommodation (EDOs)</i>
2011	128	465
2012	130	598
2013	107	1 260
2014	114	1 564
2015	146	1 187
2016	968	1 617
2017	1 206	865

Source: The Swedish Migration Agency's statistics of new arrivals received by municipalities.

### ALLOCATED

Those new arrivals who are allocated to Gothenburg first come to what is known as interim accommodation,<sup>13</sup> where they generally live for between two and six months, before moving to a 'transition apartment'. These transition apartments are sublet by the municipality, and new arrivals can live there for a maximum of four years. According to the 2018 status report on the provision of housing in the City of Gothenburg, the coverage of needs for allocated households is deemed to be good, although problems do arise in terms of crowded conditions when the relatives of ABOs subsequently join them (Property Management Administration 2018). Opinions on the accommodation situation also differed among the allocated informants. They had all been assigned housing by the municipality relatively quickly, but while some were happy and satisfied, others expressed dissatisfaction due to overcrowding and the temporary nature of their housing:

*... We also have problems, but due to overcrowding. Because I have a 13-year-old and a 14-year-old, and we have two rooms and a kitchen, one bedroom and one living room. So at that age they're very sensitive, you know. So they suffer.* (Female, Arabic)

*We have problems with housing. I have two children, but we only got one room. (...) The municipality has been very good to us, but the problem is that we have cramped accommodation.* (Female, Arabic)

*... After we received residence permits, Gothenburg Municipality wanted to accept new refugees and they did so. And it would have been good if they had*

<sup>12</sup> In addition, there are also quota refugees. Between 2011 and 2015 the City of Gothenburg received a total of 14 allocated quota refugees, and since the introduction of the Reception for Settlement Act (SFS 2016:38), a total of 112 quota refugees have been allocated to the municipality.

<sup>13</sup> Interim accommodation may, for example, be a hostel or a room on a shared corridor.

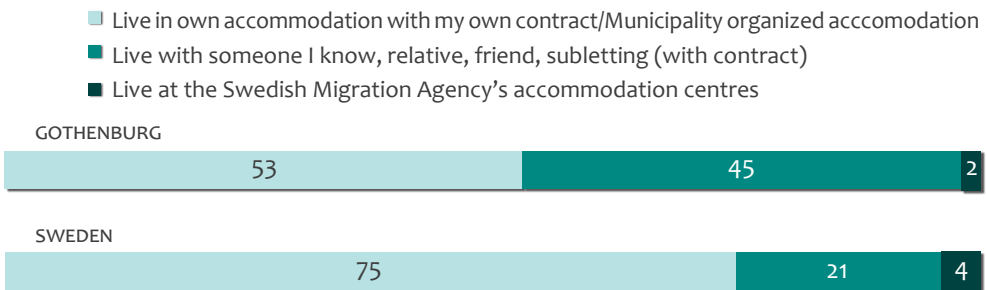
*thought about where they would put us. Now we are only living in temporary housing.* (Female, Somali)

*I have a home, but it's temporary. Every time they send letters and say look for your own accommodation, you'll be moving soon, it's like that. But I have a home, but on the other hand I don't have a home.* (Female, Somali)

## LIVING IN THEIR OWN ACCOMMODATION

Although the proportion of ABOs has risen as a result of the Reception for Settlement Act, as illustrated above, a larger proportion of new arrivals have also made the choice to settle in the City of Gothenburg during the period 2015-2017. According to the results of the 2017 Immigration Index, a significantly higher proportion of the new arrivals in Gothenburg also state that they are renting rooms or subleasing compared with the Swedish average (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** The Immigration Index 2017. New arrivals' self-reported housing situation.



During the group interviews, the housing situation also emerged as being significantly more problematic for those living in their own accommodation. The experiences of single mother Ayah<sup>14</sup> show how a long-term uncertain living situation risks having highly negative consequences in terms of the chances of becoming established in Swedish society. She came to Sweden a couple of years earlier than most of the other informants, in 2013, but has still not found stable accommodation. After receiving their residence permits, Ayah and her daughter (who is now six years old) initially lived with an acquaintance for a short period of time, but have since been moved around in temporary accommodation by social services. She feels that the temporary accommodation she has moved between – mainly hotels and rooms on shared corridors – has been substandard and has not felt safe for her and her daughter:

*How much do you think people should put up with? My soul is tired. I'm a human being, and so is my daughter. I ended up in one place that wasn't even fit for a dog to live in.*

14 For reasons of anonymity, all names have been changed.



*And sharing a toilet is actually very, very hard. (...) At three or four o'clock in the morning, my daughter might need the toilet but I don't dare to go out. So that's when I decided OK, a potty, I had a little potty, although it wasn't actually a potty, it was a wastepaper bin. To be honest, I felt like a bit of a coward – I didn't dare to go out, so I made her pee in a wastepaper bin at night.*

Having to move frequently also created problems with childcare for her daughter:

*... I had to apply for childcare for her. And there, too, I experienced huge problems, because I didn't have permanent accommodation, I was moving every other month, every three months, so it was hard for me to enrol her at a preschool.*

Although Ayah spent 12 years studying in her home country of Syria, her uncertain accommodation situation affected her language learning and her opportunities to participate in Swedish society. For example, she described only her body – and not her head – as attending SFI lessons:

*I was there in body, but my thoughts were elsewhere. There was all that stress, I had to be here in the morning and take my girl to school in Hammarkullen. And living in a state of constant stress was very demanding. Thinking OK, I have to drop her off at preschool, then I have to come home and prepare food. And then OK, I have to think about learning the language, OK, I don't have a home, what will I do, my contract is running out, where will I go?*

*So there are 20 different families sharing our accommodation. Children crying. It's not any kind of a life. And you can't carry on living like that, and you can't achieve anything, you can't participate in society in any way. Because it's not my place, it's not my life. And I'm not happy if I can't be at ease, it's hard.*

At the time of the interview, in August 2018, Ayah and her daughter had about one month left before the contract on their current temporary accommodation was due to run out. After that, she didn't know where they would end up yet again. Just like Ayah, another informant described the insecure living situation that arises without safe housing:

*Yes, so you're insecure in that situation because you can be evicted at any moment, and you don't know where you'll go. (Female, Arabic)*

## PARALLEL HOUSING MARKET

The National Swedish Board of Housing, Building and Planning's "Boendesituationen för nyanlända" ("The housing situation for new arrivals") report (2015) notes that new arrivals who apply independently to municipalities where there is a shortage of housing

often encounter a parallel housing market where it is possible to purchase rental contracts and where there is a large selection of unlawful subleasing contracts and c/o addresses. Several interviewees also spoke about the widespread black housing market in Gothenburg:

*... Based on my contacts, my network, I hear lots of stories about how people still, they move maybe five times just from apartment to apartment, and they're like, I can see that most of them are now victims of the black housing market.* (Male, Arabic)

*Almost 60 percent of refugees have black market apartments, 'black contracts' you could say.* (Male, Arabic)

*... Now they want 30,000-40,000 kronor, even 80,000 kronor just for you to live in an apartment for a period of time.* (Female, Arabic)

A married couple who had chosen to live in Gothenburg themselves with their four children explained that they had rented an apartment on the black market for a while, but that the landlord had now started to demand more money than they could afford:

*... Right now we're paying 15,000 kronor, but he wants 22,000 kronor if I want to renew the contract. (...) I said that I need to rent until the end of this month, and he said: "I'm not a hotel, if you want it you'll have to pay 22,000 kronor."* (Male, Arabic)

As a whole, the informants' narratives and experiences confirm the picture of the housing situation presented in the abovementioned status report on the provision of housing in the City of Gothenburg. The report notes that the housing situation for new arrivals is strongly characterised by the current housing shortage, and that the problems of crowded conditions, uncertain living situations and temporary solutions are widespread (The Property Management Administration 2018). The same conclusions are drawn in Västra Götaland County Administrative Board's Housing Market Analysis 2018. This report points out that relatively many municipalities in the region have succeeded in providing more or less permanent housing solutions for those new arrivals who have been allocated in accordance with the Reception for Settlement Act, while those who choose to settle in the municipality themselves have more difficulties finding accommodation. This in turn leads to insecure, poor housing solutions for many new arrivals, making it harder for them to become established in society (The County Administrative Board 2018). As mentioned previously, the OECD report Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Gothenburg (2018) also highlights the shortage of housing and spatial segregation as the main obstacles for the integration of new arrivals in the city.

## 4.2 SFI EDUCATION

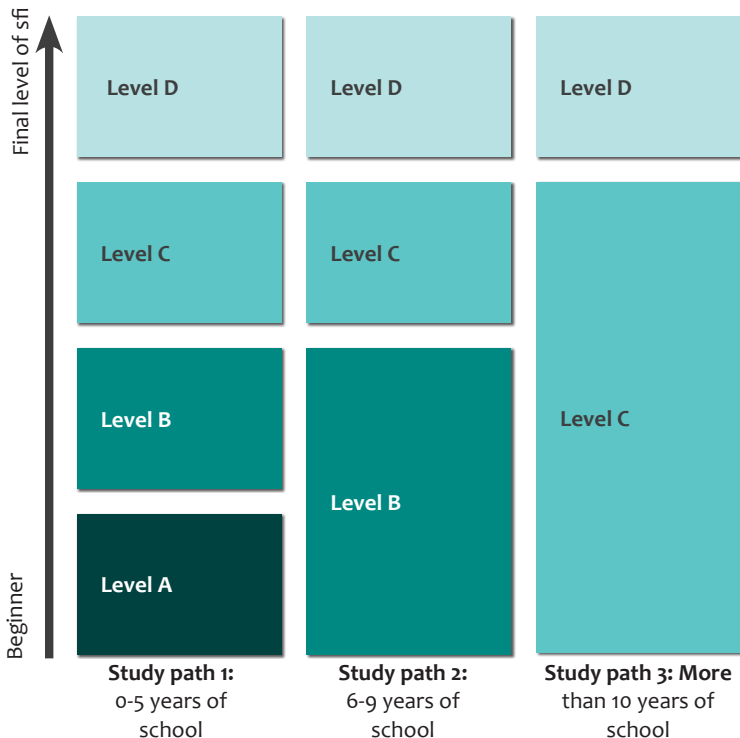
*There's nothing good about it, you just get these hand-outs and then you have to cope on your own.* (Male, Arabic)

The municipality is responsible for SFI (Swedish for immigrants) education within the framework of municipal adult education, and this education can be arranged by the municipality under its own management or by an external training provider under a subcontracting agreement.<sup>15</sup> Like the housing situation, SFI education was a subject that the majority of the interviewees had views and opinions on. Here, however, there was a clear distinction between those informants who had studied intensive courses at Folkuniversitetet and ABF (both adult educational associations), most of whom were highly educated, and those who had studied 'ordinary' SFI courses at other schools. On the whole, opinions about the intensive courses were positive, and those who had studied these courses had been able to complete their language studies relatively quickly, for both SFI and Swedish as a second language (SAS). Other informants took a more critical view of the SFI education, and two central themes appeared. The first concerned study paths and teaching groups, and the second concerned the pedagogical structure of the lessons.

### STUDY PATHS AND TEACHING GROUPS

As illustrated in Figure 3, there are currently three study paths within SFI education, based on the new arrival's school background in their home country:

**Figure 3.** Study paths within SFI education.



<sup>15</sup> e.g. various private players, folk high schools or study associations.

However, several informants felt that they were initially placed at an SFI level that was too high, and that it was therefore hard to keep up and learn properly:

*But they need to base it on your background and not put someone who has done six years of school at level B already – you need to start at the beginning. Because if you don't start at the beginning in a good way, like a good start, then it'll be wrong throughout.* (Male, Arabic)

*... They base it on your education background from your home country. For example, they asked me how many years I'd attended at school, so I said I'd done six years of compulsory school, but in today's Syria, my home country, what I studied during those six years is what you study at preschool. (...) So when they heard I'd done six years of compulsory school, they put me at level B, which might be a bit too high. You don't start the course from the beginning, from zero – you start at a slightly more advanced level. So you can't catch up.* (Male, Arabic)

*When it comes to SFI, you start straight at level C, and that's hard for us, it's a new language. Even though we've had an education in our home countries, it's still hard because we only learnt Arabic and English.* (Female, Arabic)

*Personally, the course doesn't suit me. I think it's at too high a level and I can't keep up. But they say: "These are our rules, you have to adapt. We've based it on your educational background, and according to your educational background you should be at this level."* (Male, Arabic)

Related to this, a problem was also described with teaching groups where study paths and courses at different levels are combined:

*When I started SFI, straight at level C, I started with a group who had already started earlier and they knew a lot, building sentences and so on, but I hardly knew a word. So this mix doesn't work. As a complete beginner you start with an experienced group, and that doesn't work.* (Male, Arabic)

*There's also another problem with SFI, that at the beginning you're sent to something called 'intro in five weeks', then from this group that's been together on intro you get divided up into different groups and can end up with people who might have been doing SFI for a year. So there are different levels. You start in such a group where many others know a lot more, and first you feel frustrated, and then you can't keep up because they can, like, build sentences and you haven't started...* (Female, Arabic)

*... I'm at level C, so they've brought in people from levels A and B with me. I think it's boring waiting for others who haven't learnt anything. I've learnt these*

*things, while those who are new to my class don't know anything and I have to sit and wait, so it's boring and frustrating.* (Female, Arabic)

This problem is also raised in the quality review of SFI education published by the Swedish National Agency for Education in 2018. The review shows that the teaching at certain centres is carried out in groups with students from different courses and study paths, which means that students at very different levels of their language development are placed in the same teaching situation. As illustrated by the quotations above, this risks leading to the teaching being at too high a level for those students who have not come as far with their language learning, while for those who have made more progress the teaching is at too low a level (The Swedish National Agency for Education 2018).

### PEDAGOGICAL STRUCTURE

In addition to the level classification and the mixed teaching groups, many informants also had critical opinions about the pedagogical structure and design of the teaching. Several of them said that the lessons mainly consisted of doing their own work with hand-outs, while teacher-led instruction and teacher support were lacking:

*... Here you get a book and you get paper, in other words hand-outs, a sheaf of papers, and then you have to cope by yourself. So you use Google as a translator; Google isn't... You can't rely on everything you find with Google, and to begin with you get things wrong. Most people aren't really happy with how the teaching is carried out.* (Male, Somali)

*The teaching isn't good at all. You get hand-outs, and they tell you you'll have to manage... They don't follow up, you don't sit and read together. You might as well have stayed at home and read.* (Male, Arabic)

*So there's no good teaching, the teacher writes a sentence on the board and you have to sit there and, like, learn for yourself. The teacher isn't active.* (Male, Arabic)

In relation to a perceived lack of teacher-led instruction, one informant also problematised the lack of counter demands in SFI teaching:

*... I know that the teacher won't check whether or not I've done my homework, so without any counter demands you become a bit slack and don't bother to study, and maybe prioritise other things. Instead, it would be better if there were teacher-led lessons, with the teacher actively leading and actively seeking the students' attention and their performance.* (Male, Somali)

Several informants also felt that the teaching progressed too quickly and did not always follow the pedagogical order that they would have liked:

*I spent five months at level C at one school, but I didn't learn a single word. (...) They don't go step by step, first the letters, then words, then sentences – they go straight in with sentences. (Female, Arabic)*

*The problem is that they see us as adults. Obviously we are adults, but they see us as adult Swedes. When you say “I haven't been able to learn this”, they reply “But you're an adult, you're a grown-up”. This is a problem, it's a new language for us, we need to be seen as six-year-olds when it comes to the language. (Male, Arabic)*

*You have to learn the words, and then the grammar, and sentences, and so on. They don't do that – they tell you straight away that you have to start building sentences. My wife goes to SFI classes, she's been going for about four months. She started straight at level C, because she's an academic from Syria. After three months, they wanted her to write a text about politics, some party or another. How can she write that? (Male, Arabic)*

Finally, a handful of the informants who completely lacked previous education wanted language teaching in their native language.

*... I would have liked it in my native language. Because I haven't studied my own language, I think it's very important to be able to read in both languages at the same time. (Female, Somali)*

These opinions largely reflect the criticism of SFI education raised in Bucken-Knapp, Fakh and Spehar's (2018) study of how newly arrived Syrian refugees view the Swedish establishment programme. Here, too, there was criticism of the pedagogical structure of the teaching, which according to the informants in the study focused primarily on independent study and writing exercises, with a lack of teacher-led instruction. Linked to this, the Swedish National Agency for Education also found in the abovementioned review that the degree of individual adaptation in the design of SFI education was generally low, despite the curriculum for adult education establishing that the teaching should be adapted according to the needs and circumstances of the individual (The Swedish National Agency for Education 2018). In summary, it is not unlikely that the lack of individual adaptation is connected to the problems associated with mixed teaching groups, where students at different levels are given the same teaching.

### 4.3 CIVIC ORIENTATION

*... Overall, this course is very good, very useful for all refugees from different backgrounds. (...) Whether I was a doctor or a carpenter in Syria, we're all at*

*the same level, and need this information to integrate into society.*  
(Male, Arabic)

Since 2010, Swedish municipalities have had a statutory responsibility to offer newly arrived refugees civic orientation in order to facilitate their establishment and participation in Swedish society. Civic orientation should provide information about topics such as the individual's rights and obligations, how society is organised, and issues relating to practical everyday life, such as work, education and healthcare. The course should include at least 60 hours of lessons, and where possible should be in the newly arrived participant's native language or another language that he or she understands.

On the whole, the informants saw civic orientation as a very important and useful initiative in order to be able to integrate more easily into Swedish society:

*... Every Thursday, our hearts would race with joy because we would come here and take part in civic orientation. I've learnt so much about Sweden, about the people here, the rules and everything else.* (Male, Persian)

*Civic orientation is very important for everyone who comes to Sweden now. For example, it's very important to know, you learn that when you look for a job you should join a trade union, because the union protects my rights in the labour market and so on. During civic orientation, you learn a lot about how to bring up children, and about the labour market, you learn everything during this course and it's very good.* (Male, Arabic)

Most respondents also had very positive opinions of the social communicators who carried out the teaching:

*Civic orientation is good. My teachers are very knowledgeable and give very good, pedagogical explanations. There's been a change in my home, you see the new culture, so for example what rights children and parents have.*  
(Female, Somali)

*The social communicator is very happy and positive when she explains things. She's happy and smiles all the time, so you feel at ease with her.* (Female, Arabic)

Most of them were also happy with the course content, and did not feel that any specific areas were lacking in the education. However, a small number of informants said that they would have liked more practical information about issues such as healthcare and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency:

*... Perhaps they need to explain a little about the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the system. You don't get much information, so when you try to start a job or start paying tax and all that, you feel that you don't know anything.*  
(Male, Arabic)

*I think perhaps there should be more of a focus on health and education. (...) Why have two lessons about Swedish geography and history? Those who are interested can go, it's good to know about history, but I swear that most people will forget the information straight after the lesson. People focus more on their needs, their day-to-day needs. (Male, Arabic)*

A couple of other informants also felt that the structure of the course, consisting of 20 three-hour lessons, is not optimal:

*The course is very long... even the actual lessons are three hours. That's too long. I believe it could be compressed into one hour a week for ten weeks. (...) But for three hours, people just get bored and want to get it over with. (Male, Arabic)*

*It was like three hours, and they just talked and talked and talked and talked and talked... So there's nothing practical. (...) For example, I know lots of people who have gone to civic orientation just to be able to get the certificate. Not to get information and things, because they found it very boring. (Female, Arabic)*

Finally, several informants also wanted to have civic orientation during the asylum process, before being granted a residence permit:<sup>16</sup>

*... Sometimes, it might take up to two years to get a residence permit. And during those two years, you might have behaved badly or stupidly. You don't know what the rules are. (Male, Arabic)*

*... I think you should do this course, civic orientation, immediately on coming to Sweden, because it's good to learn these things as soon as you arrive. (Female, Arabic)*

*After a year and a half of waiting for a residence permit, you get the chance to start this civic orientation, and then you get to learn how to pay a bill or how to talk to the police, or contact the police. But you've already learnt these things. (Male, Arabic)*

In 2018, Jönköping County Administrative Board carried out a review of civic orientation on behalf of the Government, with the main aim of showing how norms, values and value-loaded issues could be given more attention within the course. As part of this review, a focus group interview was carried out with seven students who had attended at least 17 of the 20 civic orientation lessons. The focus group highlighted the competence of the social communicator

<sup>16</sup> In relation to this, it should be mentioned that the City of Gothenburg was working at the time this report was compiled on method development for civic orientation for asylum seekers. This is being financed via a government grant that the county administrative boards can issue in connection with early initiatives for asylum seekers.



as the most important factor for good civic orientation, and pointed out that the discussion exercises and the interactive elements of the teaching are useful tools for being able to learn important knowledge about Sweden. They therefore wanted more workshop-like elements and in particular more films as part of the teaching. They also wanted more everyday tips and practical tools in connection with bringing up children and looking for jobs in Sweden (Jönköping County Administrative Board 2018). This agrees to some extent with what emerged during the interviews in this study, where the majority of the informants were very satisfied with the social communicators and the teaching as a whole, although some of them also wanted more practical everyday information.

#### 4.4 SOCIAL CONTACT AND LEISURE

*We only go to school and attend our activities, and then go home. We don't do anything else. We don't manage to do anything else.* (Female, Arabic)

When it comes to social activities, Gothenburg's Integration Centre uses the Language Friend/Refugee Guide programme to help newly arrived and 'old' Swedes to meet individually, as families and in groups. This involves activities such as personal matching, group activities and study circles. The Integration Centre also arranges open themed evenings. A small number of informants had participated in and were very happy with Language Friend/Refugee Guide, but several others said that they had not heard about the programme or the other social activities at the Integration Centre before:

*I didn't know that you could come back and take part in activities here. Of course I could come, I only live in Frölunda, not far from here. If I have, if I can, like, learn something.* (Female, Somali)

The majority of the interviewees described their contact with the Swedish-born population as relatively limited, but said that they would like to have more contact. For example, when asked whether it is easy to meet and talk to Swedes, one informant replied:

*It's very difficult. We would like to, but we don't know how to.* (Male, Arabic)

Language barriers in particular were highlighted as a barrier to interaction with the Swedish-born population:

*The teacher also mentioned, and it says in the book, that there's a Language Friend /Refugee Guide website. But because I don't speak Swedish, I think it would be hard and boring for the other person.* (Female, Persian)

While the language was often described as a barrier, a couple of informants explained that this contact with Swedish-born people can also make language learning easier:

*I have one of these friends, a language friend, or two, and so I go to language cafés and that's where I've learnt the most Swedish, not at school.* (Male, Arabic)

*But I think that you have to fight, just fight, you have to use different ways to learn the language. (...) Talk with people, go to shops and try to ask where the*

*fitting room is, where I can find my size, you just have to make contact. Without making contact, you can't learn, not ever.* (Male, Arabic)

Several informants also said that they had limited free time because the establishment programme activities took up all their time, so it was hard to find time for social activities:

*This is a comical question. (...) The activities take all day – we leave home at six o'clock and we don't get home until five o'clock in the evening. And you're very tired, you just go and lie down. It's very stressful, life is very stressful so you don't think about leisure activities.* (Male, Arabic)

*No, you don't have time because you're away all week and so you have to do all the housework at the weekend. So there isn't time.* (Female, Arabic)

Finally, as previously mentioned, the OECD report Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Gothenburg highlighted the city's housing segregation as a key barrier to integration, and one informant also explained that there were no 'Swedes' in the area where he lived:

*I would just like to see more Swedes where I live. For there are no neighbours, no Swedes. There aren't even any Swedes on the trams.* (Male, Arabic)

## 4.5 TREATMENT AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

*Whatever their job here in Sweden, we've noticed that everyone is nice and everyone is friendly, whether they're a bus driver or a case manager at the social services office – everyone has been nice and friendly.* (Male, Arabic)

When it comes to how they are treated by civil servants within the City of Gothenburg and other public institutions, such as the Swedish Public Employment Service, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and healthcare, the informants were generally very satisfied:

*... It's great here, you don't feel discriminated against in Sweden, and everyone is, like, treated the same way.* (Female, Arabic)

*So you can't say anything negative about the way you're treated. That's the best aspect from a humanitarian point of view.* (Male, Arabic)

*... Everyone wanted to help, and we felt very well looked after.* (Male, Arabic)

However, a smaller number of individual narratives bore witnesses to poorer treatment:

*For me, things have been very bad. Can you imagine going to social services to ask for help, and then leaving in tears? If you aren't entitled to get help, what is she doing there, the civil servant? It's not her who's paying my fees out of her own pocket.* (Female, Arabic)

... *I'm also a hairdresser, and I wasn't trusted by my case manager at social services. And for example, even though I've provided documentation about which periods I was employed, the employment contract had expired, but the case manager still didn't trust me. The worst thing was that I couldn't even express myself and have my say.* (Female, Persian)

... *If sometimes I visit the hospital, the hospital staff can be a bit hostile.* (Female, Somali)

Despite this, their treatment has generally been seen as being very good, but as one male Somali-speaking informant vividly put it: "Not all fingers are equally long. In the same way, not all inhabitants are equally nice and receptive." Several interviewees also said that despite being treated well, they had experienced some difficulties getting accurate information and adequate help from the municipality and other public institutions. This was due to a number of factors, such as a lack of interpreting support, insufficient cooperation between the institutions involved, and individual civil servants within the same organisation giving different replies:<sup>17</sup>

*I have problems with the Swedish Social Insurance Agency because I don't speak the language. They tell us: "You need to get an interpreter, we don't have any interpreters."* (Male, Arabic)

*So the problem I encountered was actually with the Swedish Public Employment Service and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. During my establishment period I had six different, five or six different case managers, and each case manager told me different things in different ways.* (Male, Arabic)

*Sometimes you go to the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and they tell you "No, we can't help you", and you go to the social welfare office and they say "No, we can't help you". Sometimes you don't know where to turn.* (Female, Arabic)

... *My case has now been completed by social services, but I've been told that I need to come and submit my documents. Then, twice now I've gone there to submit them, but they won't take them, they say that my case has been completed there.* (Female, Persian)

... *You get told different things on different occasions by different members of staff.* (Male, Persian)

When it came to who the informants contacted to get information about practical matters, such as childcare, healthcare and education, the answers varied widely. Some mainly turned to their fellow countrymen or other people who had recently arrived in Sweden themselves,

17 It should be added here that most informants also experienced some difficulties distinguishing between case managers from different institutions, such as the Establishment Unit, the Swedish Public Employment Service and the district councils' social services. It was therefore sometimes hard to get more specific views during the interviews on the support from the individual institutions, particularly in relation to the Establishment Unit.

while others turned to case managers at the municipality or the Swedish Public Employment Service, and still others looked for information online:

*... When you come to Sweden you feel a bit lost, so you don't know where to find the right information. So we new arrivals who come here, we normally just ask each other, so we don't have any correct information.* (Male, Arabic)

*... Actually everyone who has been, immigrants who have been here before you, it could just as easily be some other nationality, you can ask for help.*  
(Male, Somali)

*I would contact my case manager, it's the municipality who should point me in the right direction and tell me who to ask for information, so I would do that.*  
(Female, Somali)

*You can find information about everything online.* (Female, Somali)

Naturally, language barriers were often a barrier to getting information:

*... When you don't understand Swedish, it doesn't matter if there's an audio file or whether there are both audio and image files, or whether it's on paper – I still don't understand, so it doesn't matter what information you give me because I don't understand.* (Female, Somali)

*We want to learn the language so we can deal with this contact with the authorities, because when they contact us we don't know, we don't understand what they're saying or what they're writing. Sometimes we miss out on important information because of a lack of language skills.* (Female, Arabic)

The Information Office at the Integration Centre and the districts' Citizens' Offices therefore played important roles for several informants by offering support and advice in their native language:

*The Information Office can provide all the information you need. They can even call your case manager, make minor preparations before your next meeting, and so on.* (Male, Somali)

*The Citizens' Office is a very important place, because they help people a lot. With finding preschools, schools or healthcare. They teach people a lot. They can also help us to fill in forms, such as Swedish Social Insurance Agency forms, any day of the week.* (Male, Arabic)

In conclusion, the majority of the interviewees said that their contact with childcare providers had worked well, and that their children had been given preschool and school places relatively quickly.

*I have very good contact with my children's school.* (Female, Somali)

*As soon as we came, they accepted my children without asking for papers or anything, because they wanted them to go to school whether or not we had papers, so they were enrolled immediately. So that was fantastic, because we had expected bureaucracy and so on, but it went extremely smoothly. (Male, Arabic)*

However, as in the case of Ayah's story in section 4.1, a small number of informants had experienced difficulties with childcare due to their housing situation, as moving home sometimes led to preschools and schools being a long way away.

*I've needed help with my social services case manager to move my children from Tuve to Kortedala or something, because we live in Kortedala and they go to school in Tuve. (...) But she hasn't helped me, and I haven't been able to do it myself because of language problems and so on. (Male, Arabic)*

## 4.6 THE LABOUR MARKET

*We hear that Swedes can't find work, so what chance do we have if we don't speak Swedish? (Male, Arabic)*

Since the 2010 implementation of the Establishment Reform (SFS 2010:197), main responsibility for the introduction of new arrivals has been centralised and now lies with the Swedish Public Employment Service. This means that new arrivals who have been granted temporary or permanent residence permits as refugees, people in need of subsidiary protection or as relatives, have been able to participate in the Swedish Public Employment Service's establishment programme<sup>18</sup> for a maximum of two years. During the time of the establishment programme, an individual action plan is drawn up with the aim of increasing the new arrival's chances of progressing to studies or work. As a general rule, this action plan includes SFI education, civic orientation and initiatives to prepare for work (such as work placements, supplementary training and validation). The municipalities are responsible for adult education, and can also offer labour market initiatives for refugees following the establishment programme. The City of Gothenburg also works with The Pathfinder (Vägvisaren), a mentoring programme whereby new arrivals who have their own ideas about how they want to support themselves in the future are matched with mentors who have knowledge and experience within their field of interest.

Naturally, the conditions for finding employment in Sweden differed significantly between the informants in the study, depending on their backgrounds. Some had both university degrees and many years of professional experience from their home countries, while others had neither been to school nor had jobs in the past. However, most of them expressed a desire and a wish to be able to support themselves in the future. At the time of the interviews, the

<sup>18</sup> With effect from 1 January 2018, the establishment programme is a labour market policy programme in which each participant receives an individual action plan.

majority of the participants were mainly focusing on their language learning, but work was still a central issue and was often closely linked to language:

*It's the language that's a limiting factor. I think that if you know the language, there's work available. (Female, Somali)*

*If we learn to speak Swedish, we won't have difficulties finding jobs. (Female, Arabic)*

*I'm a carpenter, a concrete carpenter, or a construction carpenter you might say. And there are plenty of jobs here. But they want you to be able to talk and write, and I'm illiterate. Will I be unable to work all my life? (Male, Arabic)*

While some, as illustrated in a couple of the quotations above, were convinced that they would be able to find work as soon as they had learnt Swedish, others were more worried about the future. Informants with a longer educational background in particular were critical of the support that the Swedish Public Employment Service had been able to offer:

*The Swedish Public Employment Service, or the authorities, must review what happens when you've finished learning Swedish and have a chance to work. Because if you see that this doesn't lead to a job, you lose hope and don't want to study. (Male, Arabic)*

*... When it comes to work, for instance, I think each of us has our own specialisation and our own professional background. For example, say someone's an electrical engineer and comes to the Swedish Public Employment Service. Instead of them being placed within their profession and their area of training and experience, they're invited to work at, say, a restaurant. (Male, Persian)*

Jamal, a young agronomist from Syria, explained that during his initial period in Sweden he had been highly motivated to study Swedish and enter the labour market, but that it was hard to find work that matched his qualifications:

*... Before, I had a lot of energy to work hard on improving my language, to learn all the knowledge that suits Sweden. But after two and a half years, I feel a little less positive, that I haven't been able to find anything. And as you know all the authorities, or all the positions, you need more contacts, more than just a good CV.*

He is also critical of the labour market initiatives he was referred to during a period within the establishment programme, and he also feels that the Swedish Public Employment Service does not help people to find the 'right' job:

*... I don't know why I went there. (...) I was forced to sit there for eight hours while we did nothing. We just sat and chatted together in Arabic, drinking coffee and so on. But it was compulsory. They say that they'll help us to write a CV or apply for a job or something, but we didn't, not seriously.*

*The Swedish Public Employment Service might offer lots of jobs, but not in your dream job. So they're like, all jobs are good, it's great if you can find a job, start with something, OK. But, like, personally I've studied for almost eight years, not to work at McDonald's or as a carpenter or a painter or whatever, so why study? Plus I've studied and had my studies validated, so I think I have a chance of finding a better job. But the Swedish Public Employment Service can't offer one, they only send you to McDonald's or something...*

Like Jamal, there were also other informants who expressed dissatisfaction with the labour market initiatives they were referred to within the establishment programme:

*I just sit there. I'm there between one and four, and I've gone there for two weeks, but I just sit there. The idea was that I would converse with someone, but nothing happens. (Male, Arabic)*

*... You're referred to lots of activities that are a waste of time. The case manager asks if you're happy with this activity, but I think it's a waste of time, most of the activities. (Male, Arabic)*

*This other activity isn't as rewarding as SFI so I think it's better if you go home a little earlier and concentrate on your homework. (Female, Arabic)*

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

As a consequence of the increased heterogeneity of the migration population in terms of personal resources and experience, the municipalities' reception systems are subjected to various tests. The aim of this study has been to investigate how the new arrivals have perceived their reception in the City of Gothenburg during the period 2015-2017. The results show that their needs and experiences in connection with reception and their expectations of what the system should provide differ widely, depending on their educational and professional experience, and on their age and gender. Those with a higher level of education and more work experience want more individually adapted and effective programmes within the reception system, in order to become established more quickly in the labour market. For example, newly arrived academics want to receive support and advice early on, in order to be able to work in a profession that corresponds to their education. Those with a shorter educational background often need more information in their native language to be able to navigate Sweden's institutional system.

One important aspect for the municipality to include in its future work with reception and integration of newly arrived refugees is the role that civil society can play. The OECD report *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Gothenburg* emphasised the need for more formalised dialogue and cooperation with various players within civil society, such as ethnic organisations, to ensure – among other things – that newly arrived refugees can obtain the social services to which they are entitled (OECD 2018a). As emphasised in section 4.5, it is not always easy to navigate through the Swedish institutional system, particularly for those who have not yet mastered the language. The Information Office and the Citizens' Office therefore play an important role by offering new arrivals support in their native language, but more highly developed cooperation with voluntary organisations with knowledge of the needs of new arrivals would complement these activities. A handful of informants also studied an introductory course in Swedish with a voluntary association, which they found significantly more beneficial for their language development than the regular SFI education.

Organising housing for new arrivals became a highly topical issue following the large inward flow of refugees to Sweden during 2015 and 2016. The interviews clearly showed that the shortage of housing was the biggest problem encountered by the interviewees in the municipality. The informants referred to problems with overcrowding, uncertain living situations, segregation and temporary solutions. Just as highlighted in the abovementioned OECD report, the shortage of housing can present a major barrier to integration in both the short and long terms, with aspects such as language learning and labour market participation being made more difficult as a result of an uncertain living situation.



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