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Working and living conditions among resident migrants from Poland and Lithuania



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Preface

This project was initiated by four participants in Fafo's forum known as *Fafo Østforum*, who wanted to work together on a survey of resident migrant workers from Poland and Lithuania: the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority, the United Federation of Trade Unions, the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions and the Norwegian Tax Administration. In doing so, they are also contributing to ground-breaking work, as this is the first survey of its type in Norway. These forum participants have also been part of a reference group for the project, and have provided useful and important input and comments. Our thanks therefore go to Marianne Nordtømme (Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority), Line Eldring (United Federation of Trade Unions), Jonas Bals (Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions), Terje Nordli and Tora Cornelia Löfgren (Norwegian Tax Administration).

The survey itself was conducted by Norstat's branches in Poland and the Baltics. Since proficiency in the Norwegian language varies among the migrant workers, we considered it most expedient to hold the interviews in the native language of the survey respondent. We extend our thanks to everyone who has answered our questions, and to Norstat, who organised and conducted the survey in the summer and autumn of 2020. Thanks also go to contributors in the Norwegian Tax Administration who provided background data.

The project has been delayed, primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were about to start conducting the interviews just as Norway went into lockdown in March 2020. The advantage of the delay was that we were able to include questions about the consequences of the pandemic. The questionnaire also included questions about proficiency in the Norwegian language. The answers to these have previously been used in a project for the Language Council of Norway, and published in December 2020 in the Fafo report 'Norwegian language proficiency of employees born outside Norway' (summary in English).

Our thanks also go to Fafo Research Director Sissel C. Trygstad, who quality assured the report, and to Fafo's information department for preparing the report for publishing.

Oslo, April 2021

Anne Mette Ødegård and Rolf K. Andersen

Summary

According to figures from Statistics Norway, almost 200 000 immigrants, family members and children from EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe were resident in Norway in 2020. This project is a survey of the working and living conditions among the two largest immigrant populations in Norway, namely those from Poland and Lithuania. These populations total almost 145 000, including children and family members.

Migrant workers from these two countries have settled throughout Norway. The geographical spread has helped to ensure access to labour in shipbuilding, the fishing industry and agriculture. However, construction is the industry with the highest proportion of migrant workers.

This survey encompasses 1000 people of working age - 500 from Poland and 500 from Lithuania. Of these, 69 per cent are men and 31 per cent are women. The majority are between 30 and 50 years old, and around 70 per cent have lived in Norway for at least ten years.

Why Norway – and will they stay?

Higher earnings than in their native country was, the main motivation for moving to Norway. A large number also reported being recruited to work in Norway by family and friends.

Poland has topped the statistics on family reunifications for many years. In our sample, a large proportion are living with their family, and about half live in rented accommodation.

Experience has shown that migrant workers' temporary stays often become permanent. More than 60 per cent of the resident Polish and Lithuanian migrant workers will remain in Norway as long as they have a job. When asked to look five years ahead, 24 per cent of Lithuanians and 18 per cent of Poles would consider returning, and a further 10 per cent are unsure. Being well treated at work and having satisfactory living conditions are the two main reasons for remaining in Norway.

Pay and working conditions

Migrant workers are often regarded as a flexible buffer, with fewer contractual attachments to the workplace, and are widely employed in industries with large fluctuations in the demand for labour. According to our figures, however, the picture is different for those who are resident: eight out of ten Poles and almost nine out of ten Lithuanians have full-time permanent jobs, and most have written employment contracts.

One interesting issue is whether the migrant workers are paid in line with generally applicable collective wage agreements. In our sample, it is possible to take a closer look at the construction workers. Generally applicable minimum wage agreements are in place in the construction industry, and there are clear indications that the majority in our sample earn more than this minimum wage.

Despite this, 37 per cent of the workers from Poland and 24 per cent of the Lithuanians in construction believe that they earn less than their Norwegian counterparts in the same job. Those with an annual income of less than NOK 300 000 also feel more discriminated in terms of pay than others do.

The vast majority (nine out of ten) have never been subjected to 'wage theft', which is defined as not being paid for work or being paid less than what was agreed. Construction workers, in addition to the lowest paid, have been particularly exposed to this practice. For example, 18 per cent of Lithuanians earning less than NOK 300 000 have experienced not being paid for their work, and in a small number of cases, workers have had to repay part of their wages. Almost one in ten have had to perform dangerous work against their will.

The employer is the main source of information for pay and working conditions for migrant workers. The results also show that social media plays a major role in how knowledge is spread. The migrant workers themselves believe that they have a good understanding of the main labour regulations, in relation to working hours, HSE and wage setting.

Trade union membership

The surveyed migrant workers have a lower unionisation rate than the general labour force in Norway. Country background does not seem to be connected to whether a worker is a member of a trade union, and women have a higher unionisation rate than men. The proportion who reported that there is no trade union representation at their workplace was particularly high for the Poles, with 33 per cent.

However, there is no doubt that the trade union movement could benefit from contacting migrant workers, since as many as 37 per cent of the Poles and 34 per cent of the Lithuanians said that no one had asked if they wanted to join a union. The corresponding proportion with a shop steward in the workplace is 28 per cent.

Tax and welfare benefits

Twelve per cent of the Polish workers indicated that they do not pay tax, either in Norway or in Poland. In the age group 31–40 years, 17 per cent reported that they do not pay tax. The proportion of Polish migrant workers who do not declare their earnings is therefore significantly higher than indicated in the total population surveys conducted by the Norwegian Tax Administration. Only 1 per cent of the Lithuanians reported not paying tax.

The proportions that receive unemployment benefit are quite high – 10 and 11 per cent – which is probably related to layoffs and unemployment as a result of the ongoing pandemic.

The migrant workers were also asked about their attitude towards tax evasion and abuse of the welfare benefits system. In general, there was little acceptance for such practices. However, 17 per cent of the Lithuanians believed that receiving benefits whilst in employment and not entitled to them could be acceptable in certain circumstances.

Eight per cent of the Poles and 7 per cent of the Lithuanians believe there is widespread non-compliance with the rules on layoffs and unemployment benefit in connection with the pandemic.

Proficiency in Norwegian

Proficiency in the Norwegian language often depends on length of residence, access to language courses, requirements imposed by the employer, personal motivation, etc. Norwegian is the working language of less than half of the migrant workers. In general, 30 per cent indicated that they seldom speak Norwegian and 8 per cent said that they do not speak any Norwegian. The Lithuanians are more eager to take Norwegian courses than the Poles. Women who had received maternity allowance were also more likely to have attended a Norwegian language course.

Ramifications of the pandemic

The migrant workers in our survey have mostly stayed in Norway during the pandemic, and have not therefore been affected by the travel restrictions for arrivals to Norway. A total of 26 per cent of the Polish workers in our sample have either been laid off or had their working hours reduced, and a further 5 per cent have been made redundant. Among Lithuanians, the corresponding figures are 20 per cent and 2 per cent respectively.

According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS), unemployment was 4.8 per cent in Norway in the fourth quarter of 2020, and 9.2 per cent among migrant workers from EU countries in Eastern Europe. Unemployment in this group saw a sharp increase between November 2019 and November 2020, from 7458 to 13 438. According to Statistics Norway, the fall in employment and rise in unemployment is due to the fact that the industries hardest hit by the pandemic are those employing a large proportion of migrant workers.

1 Introduction and background

According to figures from Statistics Norway, around 200 000 immigrants, family members and children from EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe¹ were resident in Norway in 2020, which is just slightly less than the population of Trondheim. These immigrants have made up a large part of the labour market and Norwegian society for almost two decades. In comparison, the corresponding figure in 2003 was 6371.

This project is a survey of the working and living conditions among the two largest diasporas in Norway, namely those from Poland and Lithuania. These immigrant populations total almost 145 000, including children and family members.

Experiences as a migrant worker in Norway will vary according to length of residence, which part of the labour market they belong to and where in the country they live. The aim of the survey is to generate more knowledge about the working and living conditions of migrant workers and their degree of integration in Norwegian society. Our questions cover subjects such as pay and working conditions, living conditions, family, proficiency in the Norwegian language and future plans.

Since 2011, net immigration has shown a declining trend. In 2018, there was still a small net immigration, but the figures for in-migration were approaching those for out-migration. For the first time since 2011, labour migration increased again in 2018, and this continued into 2019.

2020 was an exceptional year in many ways due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will also apply to much of 2021. For workers who commute from their home country to Norway, the pandemic presents major challenges due to closed borders, quarantine rules and problems with receiving unemployment benefit in their home country. The survey shows that most of the migrant workers who are resident in Norway have remained here during the pandemic. They will not therefore have experience with the cross-border obstacles, except for the difficulties involved in friends and family visiting them.

The migrant workers are spread throughout Norway, but the main concentration is in central Eastern Norway. There are also many in the counties in Western Norway. However, if we look at migrant workers as a proportion of the total population, the picture is a little different, with the highest shares in the counties of Møre og Romsdal, Troms and Innlandet. In other words, labour migration has helped secure access to labour and development in outlying districts. Shipbuilding, the fishing industry and agriculture are key industries for migrant workers, which partly explains the geographical spread.

Construction is the most important industry for migrant workers, followed by manufacturing, health and social care services, retail, hotels and restaurants, transportation and storage, and cleaning. Many migrant workers also work for employment agencies in all types of industries, with construction being the most dominant. This means that in addition to those who are employed directly by the construction industry, there are also many construction workers employed by agencies.

¹ These countries are Poland, Lithuania, Romania, Latvia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Croatia.

According to figures from Statistics Norway, the employment rate among migrant workers from countries in Central and Eastern Europe was 71.4 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2020. The corresponding figure for the population as a whole was 75.5 per cent. The greatest reduction in the proportion of employees from November 2019 to November 2020 was among immigrants from eastern EU countries, at 3.6 percentage points.²

According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS), total unemployment in Norway was 4.8 per cent³ in the fourth quarter of 2020. Among migrant workers from EU countries in Eastern Europe, the figure was 9.2 per cent.⁴ There was a sharp increase in unemployment in this group between November 2019 and November 2020, from 7458 people who were 100% unemployed in 2019, to 13 438 a year later. According to Statistics Norway, the lower employment and higher unemployment rates are related to the fact that the industries hardest hit by the pandemic tend to employ large numbers of migrant workers.

There is widespread agreement that labour migration has mainly had a positive effect on the Norwegian economy, not least because it has helped meet the high demand for labour (Dølvik et al. 2014). The epidemic has shown without any doubt how dependent parts of the Norwegian labour market are on migrant workers. The uncertainty about access to labour has also increased as a result of improved living conditions in Poland (lower unemployment, higher wages and better welfare schemes), which may mean that fewer Poles will be tempted to move to Norway in the years ahead. It is also uncertain what impact the epidemic will have on future labour migration.

There is no public policy to integrate migrant workers in the form of language training or other measures. EEA citizens basically have to fend for themselves. This is in stark contrast to the comprehensive integration policy aimed at those arriving from outside the EEA. Employment therefore remains the main arena for migrant workers to integrate.

About the participants in the survey

At the time of the survey, 100 per cent of the Lithuanian and 95 per cent of the Polish respondents were in Norway. Construction is the most important industry for these workers. The vast majority work for a Norwegian employer.

Of 1000 respondents (both countries), 685 are men and 315 women. Among the Polish resident migrant workers, 74 per cent are men, while the corresponding figure for the Lithuanians is 63 per cent. The majority are between 30 and 50 years old. Among Poles, 36 per cent are between 31 and 40 years old and 32 per cent are between the ages of 41 and 50. Among Lithuanians, 48 per cent are between 31 and 40 years old, while 28 per cent are between the ages of 41 and 50.

Polish and Lithuanian migrant workers are scattered throughout Norway. Among our respondents, 11 per cent live in Oslo, 43 per cent in the rest of Eastern Norway, 34 per cent in Southern and Western Norway, 6 per cent in Central Norway and 7 per cent in Northern Norway.

In terms of length of residence, our figures from the Norwegian Tax Administration up to 2018 show when the migrant workers first came to Norway. We do not know if they have lived in

² <https://www.ssb.no/arbeid-og-lonn/artikler-og-publikasjoner/nedgang-i-sysselsettingen-blant-innvandrere>.

³ Workers laid off for a maximum of three months are counted as employed in these statistics.

⁴ <https://www.ssb.no/innvarbl>

the country continuously since they were first registered. The Poles as a group have the longest period of residence.

Among Poles, 43 per cent arrived in 2009 or earlier, 27 per cent came in the period 2010–2012 and 30 per cent in the period 2012–2018. Among Lithuanians, 26 per cent arrived in 2009 or earlier, 47 per cent in the period 2010–2012 and 28 per cent in the years between 2012 and 2018. In other words, around 70 per cent have spent at least a decade in Norway.

Resident – non-resident

Rules apply to the different ways that migrants can come to Norway to work, including the rules on free movement of persons and services in the EEA Agreement. People who come to Norway to work can be divided into three groups:

- Individual workers
- Posted workers in connection with assignments, tenders, contract work etc. (services)
- Self-employed with their own business (services)

In the discussion on labour migration, it is important to distinguish between resident and non-resident immigrants. To be considered a resident, they must have stayed in Norway for at least six months, and many workers do not do this. According to Statistics Norway, almost 50 000 workers from EU countries in Eastern Europe were not resident in Norway in the fourth quarter of 2020. These workers either commute between Norway and their home country, or are posted workers, which means they are carrying out work in Norway for their employer in their home country.

A limitation with this survey is that we had no contact with those who live in their home country, such as commuters or posted workers. Like other surveys of this type, we were unable to reach workers who mainly operate outside the regular labour market, such as those who do not declare some or all of their earnings.

1.1 Brief history

Norway is not a member of the EU, but through the EEA Agreement from 1994 is part of the EU's internal market, with the free movement of labour, capital, goods and services. In 2004, ten new member states joined the EU, eight of which were from Central and Eastern Europe. Three years later, Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU, and Croatia followed in 2013.

The debate before and after 2004 has mainly revolved around the following main points:

- The need for workers from these countries to cover the shortage of labour in some parts of the Norwegian labour market.
- The fear that labour migration and migrants working for a foreign employer from the newest EU countries will undermine Norwegian pay and working conditions and create unfair competition for Norwegian companies.
- Concern about poor pay and working conditions for migrant workers.
- The introduction of regulations and measures to avoid underpayment, poor working conditions and major disruptions to the Norwegian labour market.

The high demand for labour, especially in the very first years, was associated with a strong economic upswing in Norway, and the subsequent boom in construction. The

global financial crisis in the autumn of 2008 also hit the Norwegian labour market, particularly in construction and the export industry. Norway was nevertheless one of the countries that coped well with the financial crisis. A new economic downturn then took place in 2015 due to a sharp fall in oil prices. Both of these periods led to a temporary increase in unemployment among migrant workers.

A survey of business leaders in construction, manufacturing and hotels and restaurants in 2017 showed that 65 per cent considered labour shortages to be the main reason for recruiting workers from the new EU countries. In 2009, the corresponding proportion was 79 per cent (Andersen & Ødegård 2017). In 2017, only 3 per cent thought that lower wage costs was the main reason, while 10 per cent emphasised flexibility with regard to working hours (*ibid.*). During these years, migrant workers have also been referred to as 'skilled craftspeople' and 'eager to work' (see, for example, Andersen & Ødegård 2017).

There has been a trend of migrant workers gaining a firmer foothold over the years. In the aforementioned survey from 2017, half of the business leaders reported that labour from Central and Eastern Europe had become a standard part of their operations. This was an increase from 28 per cent in 2006 (Andersen & Ødegård 2017).

The labour from the new EU countries covers different needs in the Norwegian labour market. There are strong indications that fluctuations in production are a common characteristic of the industries that use a lot of Eastern European labour. Traditionally, the fluctuating need for labour in Norwegian companies has been addressed by laying off permanent employees during quiet periods, temporary seasonal employment, on-call work and the use of temporary agency workers. Following the EU enlargement, labour migration and migrants working for a foreign employer have significantly increased the supply of flexible labour.

Several of Fafo's projects have identified risk factors that increase the probability of poor pay and working conditions, which can be summarised as follows (Ødegård & Eldring 2016):

- Large number of unskilled workers.
- High proportion of foreign labour.
- The workers are on short-term stays in Norway.
- The workers are employed in foreign companies.
- The workers have atypical forms of employment (not permanent employees).
- Long contract chains.
- Low start-up costs in the industry.
- Few requirements for formal competence to start/run a business in the industry.
- The work is carried out in companies with low rates of unionisation and membership in employers' associations.
- The work is carried out in companies with no collective wage agreement/generally applicable collective wage agreement.
- The work is carried out in private homes.

Studies show that labour migration has suppressed wage growth and productivity and exacerbated wage disparities in some sectors (Bjørnstad et al. 2015; Friberg & Haakestad 2015). The widened wage disparities are due to the fact that many migrant workers are only paid the minimum wage stipulated in the collective wage agreements, while Norwegian workers are climbing the wage ladder. Labour migration has probably also curbed wage developments in the wage scales used for most Norwegian workers.

A survey of Polish construction workers in Oslo conducted in 2010 showed that one in five earned *less* than the minimum wage in the collective wage agreement. In total, almost 30 per cent were considered to be working illegally, i.e. they did not pay income tax and had no employment contract (Friberg & Eldring 2011).

The use of East European labour has also been considered a challenge in terms of health, safety and the environment (HSE), particularly in construction. Lack of HSE training, language problems and cultural differences have proven to be recurring and long-term issues (Bråten & Andersen 2017). Housing provided by the employer has also been an important topic over the years. The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority has documented stories of workers sleeping in the workplace, living in tents and in cars – even in the winter.

The regulation and supervision of migrant workers' pay and working conditions has therefore been a key issue since 2004, and has been called for by *bona fide* companies trying to comply with regulations and ensure that the work is performed within a legal and proper framework in order to avoid distortions of competition.

Social dumping and work-related crime have become two well-known concepts in relation to labour migration. In 2006, the Stoltenberg government launched its first action plan to combat social dumping, and this was later followed up with new action plans in 2008 and 2013. Following the arrival of a new government in 2013, a number of strategies were devised to combat work-related crime (in 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2021).

Social dumping can be interpreted in various ways, but a common understanding is that defined in the white paper Meld St. 2 (2005–2006), which states that social dumping is when:

‘foreign workers are exposed to violations of health, environment and safety rules, including rules on working hours and housing standards, and when they are paid wages and other benefits that are unacceptably low compared to those typical of Norwegian workers or that are not in line with current general regulations.’

One question that immediately springs to mind is ‘what is unacceptably low pay?’. Opinions will differ here. A low wage in Norway can, for example, be a good wage in Poland. Social dumping in terms of wages can be both legal and illegal due to the fact that Norway does not have national minimum wage legislation. In industries without a generally applicable collective wage agreement, paying low wages is not necessarily a breach of any regulation.

In recent years, the government has used the term ‘work-related crime’, which is defined as follows:

‘Acts that violate Norwegian laws on pay and working conditions, national insurance contributions and taxes, often carried out in an organised manner, which exploit employees or distort competition and undermine the structure of society’ (the government’s strategy to combat work-related crime).⁵

One of the most important instruments for protecting wages under Norwegian conditions has been the general application of collective wage agreements. The Act relating to general application of collective agreements etc. was passed by the Storting

⁵ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/strategi-mot-arbeidslivskriminalitet-2021/id2831867/>

in 1993, and its purpose is to ensure that migrant workers' pay and working conditions are equal to those of Norwegian workers, and to prevent distortions of competition to the detriment of the Norwegian labour market.

General application of a collective wage agreement must be proposed by a party to the collective agreement that has the right of nomination, i.e. a union with at least 10 000 members. The government-appointed Collective Bargaining Board makes the decisions on general application, and proposals can only be approved where it is documented that migrant workers have demonstrably poorer pay and working conditions than Norwegian workers. The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions submitted its first request for general application of a collective agreement in the autumn of 2003. The first decision entered into force on 1 December 2004 and encompassed seven onshore petroleum facilities.

As of 2021, the following sectors are covered by a generally applicable collective wage agreement: construction, shipbuilding and ship repairs, agriculture and horticulture, cleaning, fishing, electrical, freight transport and road passenger transport and the hospitality sector. New regulations have also been introduced for the industries with a generally applicable collective wage agreement. These cover joint and several liability for the payment of wages⁶ (2010) and the duty to provide information and ensure compliance, and the right of inspection by employee representatives (2008).⁷

Other regulations include a requirement for HSE cards at construction sites (2008)⁸ and a requirement for an HSE card and an approval scheme in cleaning companies (2012),⁹ as well as a requirement for employment agencies to be registered (2009).¹⁰

Over the past decade, a number of local authorities have established their own models to safeguard good pay and working conditions through their role as purchasers. The Skien and Oslo models are two of the most well-known. The method entails setting requirements for the suppliers that will contribute to proper practices, for example restrictions in the subcontractor chain, and a requirement to hire skilled workers and apprentices.

As a result of new regulations, the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority has expanded its areas of supervision to include, for example, ensuring that employees' wages are in line with generally applicable collective wage agreements and overseeing compliance with regulations on contract working. The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority has also been tasked with providing information and guidance to migrant workers.

Seven so-called 'a-crime centres' have been established in Norway in a cooperation between the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority, the Norwegian Tax Administration, the police and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration. Other agencies participate as needed. Local 'a-crime' efforts have also been established at some locations where there are no a-crime centres. The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority has also entered into international cooperation agreements with its 'sister' authorities in several countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

⁶ The General Application Act, Section 13.

⁷ FOR-2008-02-22-166

⁸ FOR-2007-03-30-366

⁹ FOR-2012-05-08-408

¹⁰ FOR-2008-12-19-1475

The social partners have played an important role in combating poor conditions for migrant workers, particularly in the construction industry. One example of formalised cooperation is the Cooperation against the Black Economy (SMSØ), and the most recent contribution is the establishment of Fair Play in Construction in Norway.

In many ways, the high level of labour migration has revitalised the discussion on how to best ensure basic wage and working conditions in the most vulnerable industries. Issues concerning countermeasures and compliance will continue to be relevant in the years to come. However, as this study will help to demonstrate, it is also important to include more long-term integration challenges, such as language and living conditions, and the migrant workers' own experiences of being an equal member of Norwegian society.

1.2 Structure of the report

Chapter 2 (implementation and method) explains how the survey of Polish and Lithuanian migrant workers was conducted. We also present an assessment of the sample's representativeness. In Chapter 3, reasons for coming to Norway, housing, family and future plans are covered. The next chapter (4) is devoted to pay and working conditions. Here we also look at potential discrimination in wage rates and whether the participants have experienced not receiving the pay they were entitled to. We then present results from questions about hazardous working practices and about the migrant workers' perceptions of their knowledge about Norwegian pay and working conditions. Chapter 5 examines taxes and national insurance contributions, including attitudes to evasion and abuse. Proficiency in the Norwegian language is important for resident migrant workers, and this is covered in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 examines the relationship with the trade union movement, including questions about trade union membership among migrant workers. Finally, in Chapter 8, we present some results on the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as lay-offs and unemployment. We then conclude with a general assessment of the results.

2 Implementation and method

The data material in this report is based on a survey of Polish and Lithuanian migrant workers conducted in the second half of 2020. Only migrant workers registered as residents in Norway are included in the sample. The sample was selected by the Norwegian Tax Administration and linked to a set of background variables. These variables are gender, year of birth, date of initial registration in Norway, county of residence and income. At the time the sample was selected, 2018 was the last year with registered income in the register. Being registered with income this year was one of the inclusion criteria for the sample. In addition, home addresses were used to find respondents' telephone numbers. A lower and upper limit was set for year of birth; from 1954 to 1999 inclusive, in order to cover the economically active population. In total, we included 4933 Lithuanians and 4749 Poles, and a target number of 500 interviewers was set for both country groups, i.e. 1000 interviews in total.

Norstat was responsible for carrying out the survey, which was conducted by telephone. The questionnaire was translated into Polish and Lithuanian to enable the respondents to respond in their native language. Norstat has branches in Lithuania and Poland, and interviewers from these countries conducted the survey.

All surveys entail some degree of non-response. In total, we found the telephone numbers of 6089 respondents. These constituted the net sample of respondents who were called. Among the Poles, we were unable to contact 2428, i.e. they did not answer the phone. A total of 279 said they did not want to participate in the survey. For the Lithuanians, we were unable to contact 1637, and a total of 596 said they did not want to participate in the survey. Based on the number who refused to take part or that we were unable to contact, the response rate is 16 per cent for the Poles and 19 per cent for the Lithuanians. The response rate based on those we did manage to contact is 67 per cent for the Poles and 48 per cent for the Lithuanians.

Selection bias was examined by comparing the sample of respondents with the gross sample selected by the Norwegian Tax Administration.¹¹ This was done by checking the extent to which our sample differs from the gross sample in relation to the variables gender, age and region they live in. This is shown in Table 2.1.

If we look at gender first, we find a slight under-representation of Polish women in the final sample. There are 5 per cent fewer women in the survey than in the gross sample. In terms of age, there are slightly fewer younger people among the Poles in the survey than in the gross sample. For Lithuanians, there are only marginal age differences between the gross sample and the survey. In terms of region of residence, there are no major differences between the gross sample and the survey. There is a slight overrepresentation of Lithuanians living in 'Eastern Norway', and an under-representation for Southern and Western Norway among those in the survey. The table also shows an overrepresentation of migrant workers who earned more than NOK 450 000 in 2018. Among the Poles, 42 per cent in the survey have an income in

¹¹ There may also be a selection bias in the gross sample, but given that it includes almost 10 000 respondents, this is a reasonably robust sample.

excess of NOK 450 000, while in the gross sample the figure is 32 per cent. For Lithuanians, the corresponding figures are 30 and 37 per cent respectively. Correspondingly, we have an under-representation of migrant workers with low registered income in 2018. There may be several reasons for this bias. One possible explanation is that those who arrived in 2018 are registered with low income in 2018 because they did not stay in Norway for the whole year. It may be that length of residence is correlated with the willingness to respond, i.e. the longer they have lived in Norway the more inclined they are to participate in the survey. It is also possible that we have included more of those who are well established in secure jobs with good pay than those who have a more precarious life in Norway and low-paid jobs. It is not possible to determine with any certainty the extent of such effects, but there is reason to assume that those who are least established and have the worst working conditions are least likely to respond to this type of survey.

Tabell 2.1 Non-response analysis between the gross sample and the sample of respondents drawn by the Norwegian Tax Administration by gender, age, region, and registered income in 2018. Per cent.

	Gross sample		Survey	
	Poland (n = 4933)	Lithuania (n = 4749)	Poland (n = 500)	Lithuania (n = 500)
Women	31	38	26	37
Men	69	62	74	63
30 years or younger	14	16	11	11
31–40 years	38	46	36	48
51–50 years	31	26	32	28
50+ years	17	12	21	13
Oslo	15	7	14	7
Eastern Norway	42	42	40	46
Southern and Western Norway	33	37	34	33
Central Norway	6	7	6	5
Northern Norway	5	8	6	8
Below NOK 300 000	32	33	25	26
NOK 300 000–450 000	36	37	33	37
More than NOK 450 000	32	30	42	37

We performed regression analyses (linear regression) for part of the analysis. The detailed regression analyses are presented in the appendix. The independent variables in the regressions are essentially the same in all models:

- Gender
- Age
- Region
- Whether the respondent has children resident in Norway
- Industry
- First registration in Norway
- Income
- Country of origin
- Whether the respondent pays tax in Norway
- Trade union membership
- Whether the respondent mainly speaks Norwegian at work

We also performed bivariate analyses for some of the variables. This was done for the Polish and Lithuanian migrant workers separately. When we present findings in figures, these are also presented separately for the Polish and the Lithuanian workers. All differences that are commented on directly in the text (the difference between countries, background variables or in the regression), are statistically significant at a minimum level of 5 per cent.

The Polonia in Oslo surveys

Some places in the report refer to surveys conducted among Polish migrant workers in the Oslo area in 2007 and 2010. The results from these surveys are not directly comparable with the results from our survey. First, as the title indicates, the survey was limited to Polish migrant workers in the Oslo area. Second, it included both resident and non-resident migrant workers. Third, the methodology was different. However, the reason we refer to these surveys is because there are no other surveys that cover working and living conditions among migrant workers in Norway. The comparisons can give an indication of developments, but these must be interpreted with caution.

3 Norway – a destination for permanent residence?

Since the EU/EEA enlargements in 2004 and 2007, Norway has experienced its largest wave of immigrants ever. The enlargements coincided with a sharp growth in demand for labour in the Norwegian labour market. Coupled with the high wage level, this demand gave rise to a large influx of migrants. There is agreement that labour migration – at least in the short term – has made a positive contribution to the Norwegian economy. Mobile companies and employees have taken advantage of the opportunity to deliver services and provide labour across national borders, and Norwegian companies have had greater opportunities to adopt different labour force strategies.

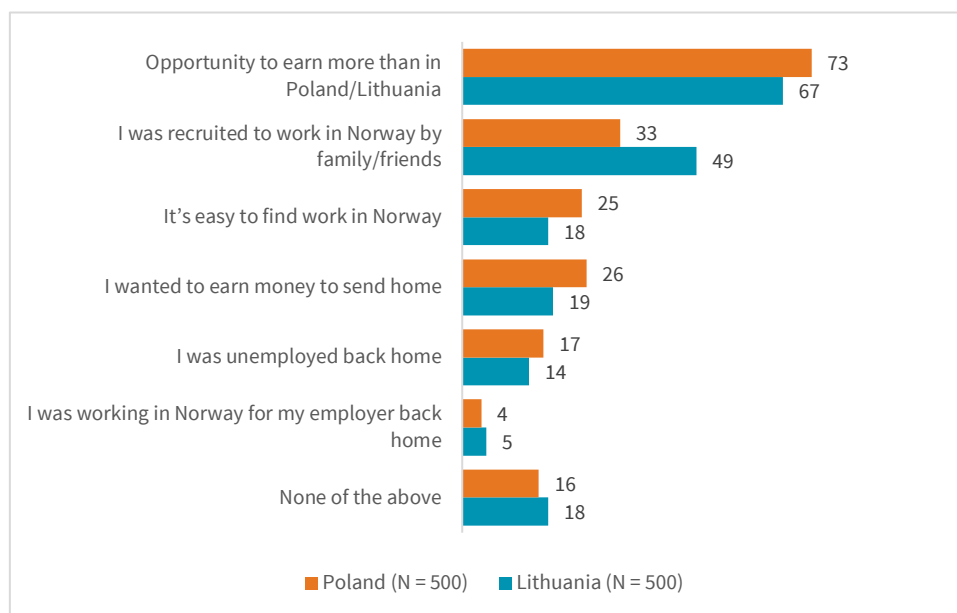
There are a total of just over 165 000 Polish and Lithuanian inhabitants in Norway, which also includes children and family members who do not work. Children tend to make settling in a new country that bit more permanent, as does buying your own home.

This chapter presents the motivations for going to Norway, family and housing conditions, and whether the migrant workers envisage staying in this country in the years ahead.

3.1 Why Norway?

Why do migrant workers choose Norway? Not unexpectedly, the opportunity to earn more money than in their home country is the main motivation.

Figure 3.1 Reasons for going to Norway. Select all that apply.



Earning more money than at home was an important motivating factor for both groups. Some also went to Norway at the invitation of others. Among the Lithuanians, almost half said they were recruited to work in Norway through family and friends. This is much more common among the Lithuanians than the Poles (33 per cent). Nevertheless, it is telling that so many were recruited through their own private network and not through more typical channels for recruiting labour. Earlier research has also shown that social networks across national borders are a crucial factor in explaining why migration flows increase and are maintained over time. Recruitment often takes place through informal channels and networks (Friberg & Eldring 2011).

The fact that it was easy to find work in Norway is not as crucial as one might think. Twenty-five per cent of the Polish and 18 per cent of the Lithuanian migrant workers give this as a reason. A similar proportion report that their reason for going to Norway was to earn money to send home. Seventeen per cent of the Polish migrant workers cite unemployment in their home county as the reason for going to Norway. For the Lithuanians, the corresponding proportion is 14 per cent. Some were recruited after working in Norway for their employer back home, but this only applied to a small proportion: 5 per cent of the Poles and 4 per cent of the Lithuanians.

A fairly large proportion answered 'None of the above'; 16 per cent of the Poles and 18 per cent of the Lithuanians. Their reasons for choosing this are unknown. It may be that they came to Norway to study or to be reunited with a partner who was already in the country.

Within construction, a larger proportion of Poles state that they were unemployed back home (22 per cent) and that it is easy to find work in Norway (33 per cent). Many of the Polish construction workers were also drawn to the opportunity to earn more money than in their own country (79 per cent) and to earn money that could be sent home (37 per cent). There were no such distinctions among the Lithuanians.

The motivation to move away can vary between the sexes. Earning more money than back home is more important for men than for women. A much larger proportion of women than men opted for 'None of the above', which may be an indication that many of the women came to Norway because their husbands were already in the country.

The main motivating factor is the same as in the Polonia in Oslo survey from 2010; economic migration. In 2010, over 70 per cent responded that the main reason for going to Norway was to find work and/or earn more money (Friberg & Eldring 2011).

3.2 Housing and family

'My dreams have come true. In a month's time, my family will move into our own home. Our children feel Norwegian and want to live here when they grow up' (Ausra Nareckaite from Lithuania).¹²

This quote is from an article by the broadcaster NRK about a family from Lithuania who have settled on the island of Averøya in the county of Møre og Romsdal, where the mum, Ausra, works in the fishing industry. Migrant workers from Central and Eastern Europe have settled throughout the country. Many of them have also settled in Norway with children and as a family. In several local communities, migrant workers have been welcomed with a view to meeting the desperate demand for labour and

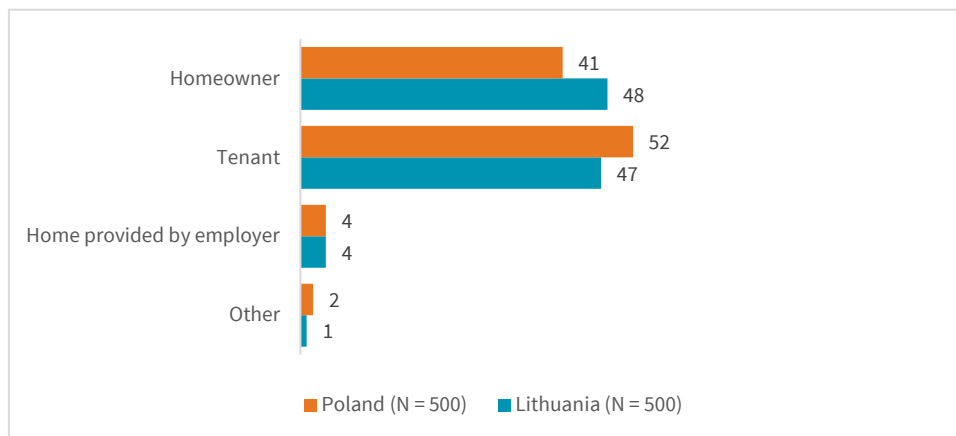
¹² <https://www.nrk.no/mr/de-aller-fleste-utenlandske-arbeidere-bor-i-norge.-forskere-vil-ha-kunnskap-om-livene-deres-1.15380109>

filling the empty houses and schools. According to Statistics Norway, almost 30 000 children make up the population of resident migrants from Central and Eastern Europe in Norway.

Poland has topped the statistics on family reunifications for many years. In our sample, the majority of migrant workers have lived in Norway for several years, and a large proportion have settled as a family. Among Lithuanians, more than half have children in Norway (267 people). In the Polish group, the figure is approximately 40 per cent (201 out of 500 people).

Settling down with a family often involves buying a home. As shown in Figure 3.2, 41 per cent of the Polish migrant workers are homeowners. Among those with children, the figure is 73 per cent. In the Lithuanian group, a total of 48 per cent own their own home, and for those with children, the proportion is 64 per cent. This is probably also related to the fact that being a woman increases the likelihood of being a homeowner.

Figure 3.2 'What is your housing status in Norway?' Per cent.



In total, about half of all migrant workers rent their home, but there are large geographical variations. Getting on the housing ladder is difficult in Oslo. For Lithuanians in Oslo, the proportion of homeowners is 28 per cent, and the corresponding figure for the Poles is 24 per cent. An earlier study showed that the rental market has been more important for migrant workers than for the general population. This is because they often face various obstacles to buying their own home: it may be unclear how long they will stay in Norway, and saving enough for a deposit or securing a mortgage can be problematic. Poor Norwegian language skills can also play a role in this context (Søholt et al. 2012).

How long a migrant worker has lived in Norway also plays a role in whether they own or rent their home. Among the Poles who came to Norway in 2009 or earlier, 51 per cent own their own home, while the proportion among those who came after 2012 is 30 per cent. This pattern is also found among Lithuanians, with 64 and 33 per cent respectively.

According to Statistics Norway, 76.4 per cent of all inhabitants in Norway own their own home, which is a significantly higher proportion than for the migrant workers.

Earlier studies show that the migrant workers' housing situation is impacted by the uncertainty of how long they will stay in Norway, which means that they are more likely to rent than buy. In addition, low-standard housing seems to be more common among single men, who often live with other single men (Båtevik et al. 2017).

3.3 Future plans

You could ask what we have left in Poland after so many years in Norway? Our children have grown up here. Maybe we should instead buy a house in Spain when we retire (Polish worker).

This quote is taken from an interview in connection with a Fafo project on language proficiency, and reflects how workers' plans to return to their home country can change over time.

Previous experience with labour migration to Norway and other Western European countries has shown that migration flows that were initially assumed to be temporary often lead to permanent settlement – contrary to both the authorities' expectations and the migrant workers' intentions (Castles & Miller 2009; Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2008 cited in Friberg & Eldring 2011). Most people will have a relatively short-term perspective on their stay in the beginning, but their plans can change along the way.

In the Polonia in Oslo survey of Polish workers conducted in 2010, more than 80 per cent planned to move back home at some point (Friberg & Eldring 2011).

A decade later, it is interesting to see if the picture has changed. As mentioned, many of the participants in our survey are well settled into Norwegian life, but asking about their future plans is still relevant.

Figure 3.3 'Which of the following future plans are most applicable to you?' Per cent.



The majority of resident Polish and Lithuanian migrant workers will continue to live in Norway if they have a job. Only a small proportion (4–5 per cent) plan to return to their home country soon or within one year. However, they like to leave the door open for a possible return. When asked to look five years ahead, 24 per cent of Lithuanians and 18 per cent of Poles are considering returning home, and a further 10 per cent are unsure.

Polish women are more interested in remaining in Norway than the men (78 vs. 60 per cent). Poles with children are also more likely to want to stay in Norway than those without children (79 vs. 56 per cent). The same pattern applies to the Lithuanians.

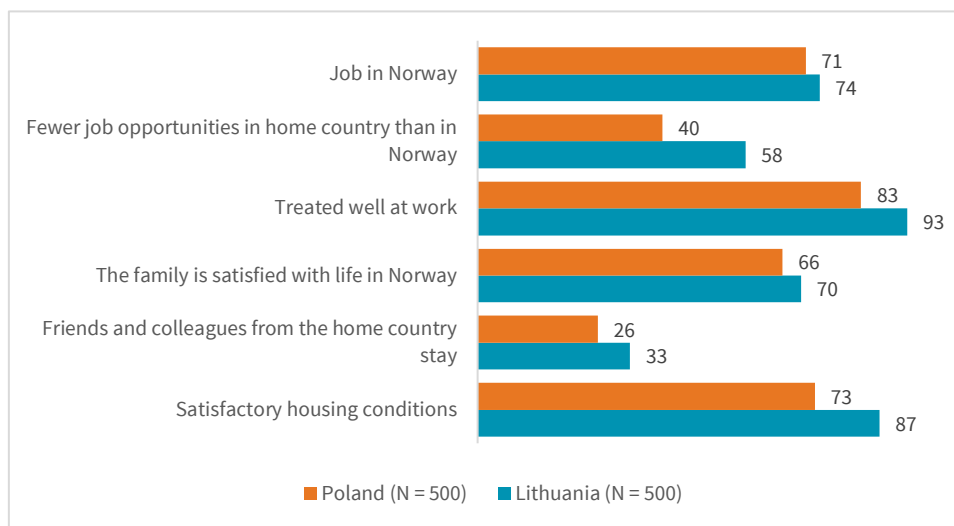
Conditions in the migrant workers' native country can also influence their decisions. The largest sending country, Poland, has experienced economic growth in recent years, with the average disposable income increasing by 32 per cent from 2008 to 2018, according to Eurostat. Wage differentials between Poland and other EU

countries are therefore decreasing. In addition, Poland has a persistently low unemployment rate.

Extensive register analyses conducted by Bratsberg et al. (2015) revealed that labour migration after 2004 has been very sensitive to fluctuations in wage levels in sending and receiving countries. With open borders, a 10 per cent wage increase in the country of origin will trigger a 23 per cent fall in work-related emigration to Norway. Higher unemployment rates at home also increase emigration to Norway.

The participants in the survey were asked what conditions will have a bearing on whether they remain in Norway in the years ahead. Having a job is, not surprisingly, important for most people. Seventy-one per cent of Poles and 74 per cent of Lithuanians said that having a job in Norway is important for their future plans (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 'How important will the following conditions be in relation to whether you remain in Norway in the next few years?' The proportions answering 'Very important' and 'Quite important'. Per cent.



Being well treated at work and having satisfactory living conditions are the two most important factors for remaining in Norway in the years ahead. As many as 93 per cent of the Lithuanians and 83 per cent of the Poles said that being treated well at work is important. The well-being of their family is also considered crucial for future plans. Forty per cent of Poles and 58 per cent of Lithuanians responded that poorer job opportunities in their home country are very or quite important in their decision on whether to remain in Norway. Whether friends and colleagues from their home country stayed was not so important.

A closer look at the results also reveals some gender disparities. Among Polish women, 85 per cent place an emphasis on the family's satisfaction with life in Norway, compared with 59 per cent of the men. The women also think that satisfactory living conditions are more important than the men, and slightly more women than men are influenced by whether family and friends from their home country remain in Norway.

Lithuanian women are more concerned than the men about having a job in Norway. Eighty-four per cent of women and 69 per cent of men responded that this is very or quite important. Like their Polish counterparts, Lithuanian women place more importance on the family's satisfaction with Norwegian life than the men, with 80 per cent of women and 63 per cent of men considering this to be very or quite important.

3.4 Summary

- Earning more money than at home is the most important motivating factor for going to Norway, both for the Polish and the Lithuanian migrant workers.
- Recruitment to work in Norway through family and friends was a more important motivation for Lithuanians than for Poles.
- Seventeen per cent of Polish and 14 per cent of Lithuanian migrant workers went to Norway because they were unemployed in their home country.
- In our sample, the majority of migrant workers have lived in Norway for many years, and a large proportion have settled with family.
- About half live in rented accommodation. Among those who have children in Norway, it is more common to own a home.
- The majority will continue to live in this country if they have a job.
- 24 per cent of Lithuanians and 18 per cent of Poles are considering returning to their home country within the next five years.
- Women and migrant workers with children are the most interested in staying in Norway.
- Being treated well at work and having satisfactory living conditions are the two most important factors for remaining in Norway in the years ahead.
- The family's satisfaction with Norwegian life is more important to the women than the men when deciding whether to stay in Norway.

4 Pay and working conditions

In 2004, the Norwegian labour market experienced what can be described as a supply shock, where large numbers of migrant workers began arriving in Norway and were willing to work for lower wages than the domestic labour force. Without a national minimum wage and a labour market in which just over half of private sector employees are covered by a collective wage agreement, this created problems. The wage and working conditions of migrant workers have therefore been a hot topic of debate since 2004.

An overview is given below of the industries in which the respondents to this survey are employed.

4.1 Where do they work?

Since the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007, construction has been the leading industry for migrant workers. As shown in Figure 4.1, construction¹⁵ is the predominant industry for settled migrant workers, particularly the Poles. However, there are more Lithuanians than Poles working in the fishing industry and in cleaning.

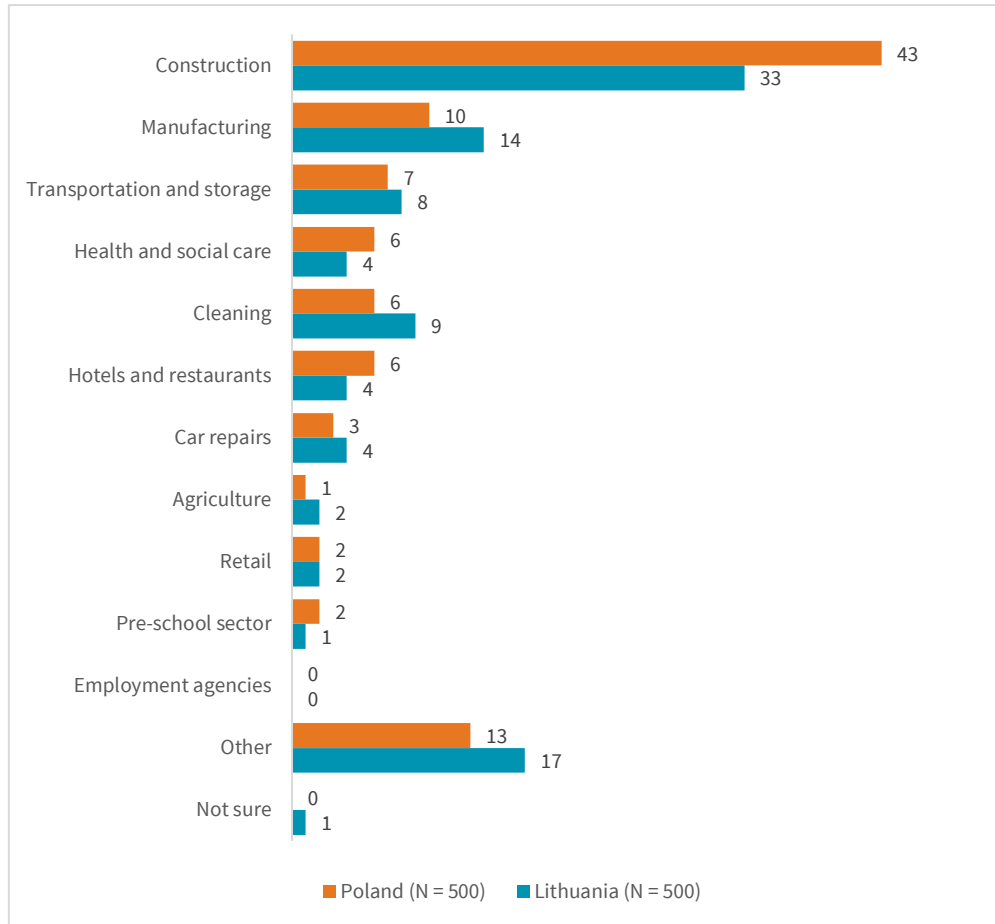
There is also a spread of migrant workers in other industries in addition to construction, i.e. resident migrant workers are found in most areas of the Norwegian labour market. The shipbuilding, fishing and manufacturing industries combined employ 10 per cent of the Polish migrant workers and 14 per cent of the Lithuanians. A total of 7–8 per cent work in transportation and storage, and 3–4 per cent in car repairs. Six per cent of Poles and 4 per cent of Lithuanians work in hotels and restaurants, and these proportions are the same for health and social care. In line with gender segregation elsewhere in the labour market, there are also far more men than women in our survey working in construction. The women are largely employed in the private services sector and health and social care. However, just as many women as men work in manufacturing. This is probably due to the fact that parts of the food industry, such as the fishing industry, largely recruit female migrant workers.

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¹⁵ Construction encompasses building works and civil engineering works. However, it is important to remember that there are more migrant workers employed in building than in civil engineering works. In addition, building works are covered by a generally applicable collective wage agreement, unlike civil engineering works.

as men work in manufacturing. This is probably due to the fact that parts of the food industry, such as the fishing industry, largely recruit female migrant workers.

Figure 4.1 'What industry do you work in? If you have more than one job, you should relate your answer to your main job.' Per cent.



The use of agency workers has been a contentious issue for many years, particularly in the construction industry. In our sample, none of the respondents appear to be working for an employment agency. This probably does not reflect the true picture. We assume that the respondents relate their responses to the industry in which they actually carry out the work, i.e. those hired through an employment agency to carry out work for a construction company will report their industry as 'Construction'. Some may also have chosen 'Other', and we have no information on which industries the respondents in this category work in.

These responses may also be partly due to the fact that resident migrant workers are less likely than the non-residents to be working for an employment agency. The latter group is not covered by this study.

4.2 Types of employment relationships and employment contracts

In connection with the large influx of migrant workers, the different types of employment relationships have been the subject of much debate. For example, employment agencies have a large proportion of migrant workers, including those on short-term

stays in Norway. Much of the growth in the employment agency industry from 2006 onwards has stemmed from the construction industry (Nergaard 2018).

Migrant workers have been regarded as a flexible buffer in several contexts, with fewer contractual attachments to the workplace, and are widely employed in industries with large fluctuations in the demand for labour (Ødegård 2014). However, there have been increasingly clearer signs over the years that the labour force from Eastern Europe ‘has come to stay’, giving them a more robust attachment to the labour market (Andersen & Ødegård 2017). The latter probably applies mostly to those who are resident, as is reflected in our survey.

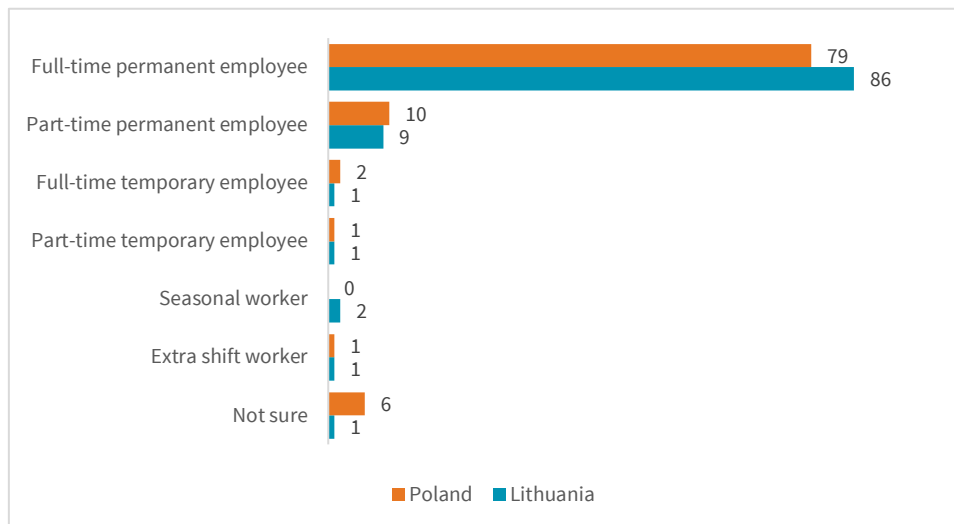
In our sample of Polish and Lithuanian migrant workers, the vast majority are employees. We will return to the forms of employment in the next section.

- 84 per cent of Poles and 85 per cent of Lithuanians are employees
- 7 per cent of Poles and 8 per cent of Lithuanians are self-employed
- 5 per cent of Poles and 4 per cent of Lithuanians are unemployed/job seekers
- 1 per cent do not work and are not seeking work (both nationalities)
- 1 per cent are receiving disability benefit (both nationalities)

A somewhat larger proportion are self-employed in construction than in other industries (14 per cent of Lithuanians and 11 per cent of Poles).

Furthermore, the respondents were asked about their form of labour market attachment. It transpires that the vast majority of those who participated in our survey are full-time employees in permanent jobs.

Figure 4.2 ‘What is the form of employment in your main job?’ (n = 958).



Eight out of ten Poles and almost nine out of ten Lithuanians are full-time permanent employees. Twelve per cent of Poles and 10 per cent of Lithuanians work part-time (permanent or temporary). Our sample only includes resident migrant workers, and a large proportion of these have lived in Norway for many years. Being a resident increases the probability of having a more permanent attachment to the labour market.

In the Norwegian labour market as a whole, 89 per cent of respondents in the Living Conditions Survey from 2019 reported having a permanent job. In other words, the migrant workers from Poland and Lithuania do not differ much from the rest of the working population.

Among the Poles, as many as 6 per cent in our survey gave the response ‘Not sure’. This may relate to respondents who work for an employment agency, as well as those who were not sure how to respond.

Women have a greater tendency to work part time than men: 19 per cent of Lithuanians and 22 per cent of Poles are part-time permanent employees. Including those in temporary jobs, 27 per cent of Polish and 20 per cent of Lithuanian women work part-time. Their part-time jobs are mainly in the private services sector and health and social care. In comparison, 94 per cent of Lithuanian men and 85 per cent of Polish men are full-time permanent employees.

The proportion of part-time workers in Norway’s working population as a whole in 2019 was 25 per cent; 14.9 per cent among men and 36.3 per cent among women (NOU 2021: 2). The fact that the Polish and Lithuanian populations in Norway are less likely to work part time than the working population as a whole may be due to several reasons, such as age composition and industry, as well as the fact that many young Norwegians combine part-time work with education.

In our sample, there is no correlation between working part time and having children or not. However, the proportion of Poles working part time in Oslo is higher than in the rest of the country.

Within manufacturing, 4 per cent of Lithuanians are in seasonal employment, and many of these live in Northern Norway. The fishing industry is assumed to be the main employer here.

Using linear regression, we have looked at the factors that can help explain whether the migrant workers from Poland and Lithuania hold a full-time position or not. This is shown in Table 4.1.¹⁴

Table 4.1 ‘What is the form of employment in your main job?’: full-time permanent. Linear regression. The green and red shading indicate a positive and negative effect respectively.

Variable	Effect
Male	
31–40 years	
41–50 years	
50+ years	
Eastern Norway	
Southern and Western Norway	
Central Norway	
Northern Norway	
Children in Norway	
Manufacturing	
Private services sector	
Health care and kindergartens	
Other industry	
First registered in Norway 2010–2012	
First registered in Norway 2013–2018	
Country background: Poland	
Pays income tax	
Trade union member	

¹⁴ Income is excluded from the analysis since this is strongly correlated with a permanent full-time position. The regression is shown in its entirety in the appendix.

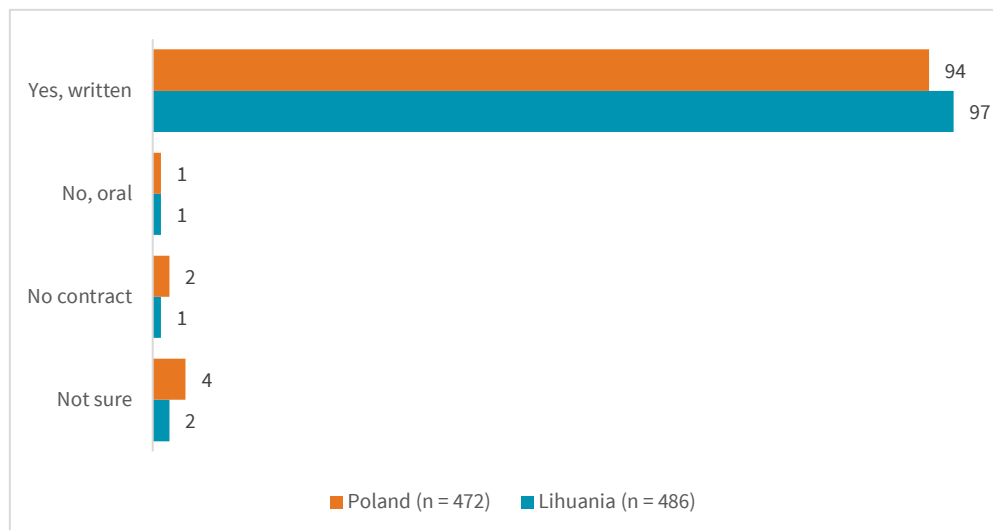
The regression shows that men aged 31–40 are more likely to be in a permanent full-time position. The same goes for working in Eastern Norway (outside Oslo). Trade union membership also increases the likelihood of having a permanent full-time position. However, Polish workers who were first registered as employees in Norway in the period 2013–2018 are less likely to hold such a position. In contrast, industry was found to have no effect in terms of the probability of working in a permanent full-time position.

Written employment contract

Respondents who described themselves as employees were also asked whether they had an employment contract. All employees, without exception, must have a written employment contract. The Working Environment Act (Section 14-6) sets minimum requirements for the contract, such as details of the employee and employer, place of work, description of the duties/title, start date, notice periods, pay and working hours.

The vast majority, 94 per cent of Poles and 97 per cent of Lithuanians, have a written employment contract. A relatively large proportion (3–4 per cent) of those working in construction do *not* have an employment contract. This lack of contract is also more prevalent among the lowest paid; 9 per cent of Polish workers earning less than NOK 300 000 a year do not have an employment contract, and 13 per cent gave the response ‘Not sure’. This means that a total of 22 per cent probably do not have a written employment contract or are not aware of such a contract.¹⁵ Among those with an income in excess of NOK 450 000 a year, the corresponding proportion is zero.

Figure 4.3 ‘Do you have a written employment contract?’ If you have more than one job, you should relate your answer to your main job. (n = 958).



In 2018, the Norwegian Tax Administration carried out checks on companies’ compliance with the regulations in selected areas, including the requirement for a written employment contract. The target group consisted of small and medium-sized enterprises in labour-intensive industries with a high proportion of foreign workers. The

¹⁵ The survey among Polish construction workers in the Oslo area in 2010 (the Polonia in Oslo survey) showed that 27 per cent were working without a written employment contract (Friberg & Eldring 2011)

resulting report states that 18 per cent of the employees did not have an employment contract.¹⁶

Although most of our respondents report having a contract, it is not possible to ascertain from our data whether the contracts meet the minimum requirements imposed in the Working Environment Act (Section 14-6). According to the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority, which supervises such matters, the requirements for the content of an employment contract are regularly breached.

We also asked about the prevalence of fake employment contracts. Among Poles, 97 per cent reported that they have never experienced this, while 3 per cent said it had happened to them once. Among Lithuanians, the corresponding figures were 99 and 1 per cent respectively. For Lithuanians employed in manufacturing, 3 per cent responded that they had experienced this once.

4.3 Pay conditions

Concerns about low-wage competition in which foreign workers are paid significantly less than their Norwegian counterparts have been a recurring theme in the debate on labour migration. There is no national minimum wage regulation in Norway; wages are the responsibility of the social partners, and the government does not get involved.

Since the large-scale labour migration following the EU enlargements, a number of collective wage agreements have been generally applied.¹⁷ General application of a collective wage agreement means that parts of a nationwide collective agreement are applied universally across the industry covered by the agreement, thereby setting mandatory minimum conditions.

For the sample, data on income from 2018 were obtained from the Norwegian Tax Administration (see Table 4.2). In the table, the income levels are broken down into annual income of ‘less than NOK 300 000’, ‘between NOK 300 000 and NOK 450 000’ and ‘over NOK 450 000’.

Table 4.2 Migrant workers distributed according to annual income in 2018. (n = 996). Per cent.

	Less than NOK 300 000	NOK 300 000–450 000	Over NOK 450 000
Poland	25	33	42
Lithuania	26	36	38

About one in four of the resident migrant workers earned less than NOK 300 000 in 2018, and unsurprisingly, a large proportion of these are part-time employees, seasonal employees and extra shift workers. Among the Lithuanians, 26 per cent fall into one of these categories. We also find that there are significantly more women than men earning less than NOK 300 000. Given that we do not know whether everyone has been working in Norway throughout the whole of 2018, it is difficult to compare the wage level with the generally applied minimum wage in the industries where this is relevant. For construction, however, we can give some indications (see the text box below).

¹⁶ https://www.skatteetaten.no/globalassets/om-skatteetaten/analyse-og-rapporter/analysenytt/analysenytt-1_2019v2.pdf

¹⁷ Act relating to general application of collective agreements, etc. (the General Application Act).

Above or below the generally applicable minimum wage?

As described in Chapter 1, some industries have decided to generally apply some of the provisions of the collective agreement, such as the minimum wage. Construction is one such industry. Many of the respondents in our survey work in construction, so it is interesting to see how these rank in terms of income in relation to the generally applicable minimum wage for unskilled workers in construction, based on wage statistics from 2018. The civil engineering part of the construction industry is not covered by generally applicable agreements, but no distinction is made between civil engineering and other parts of the construction industry in this survey. Construction is by far the largest industry in terms of numbers of migrant workers.

The generally applicable minimum wage in construction in 2018 was just under NOK 178 per hour. Converted to a full-time equivalent, this gives a minimum annual salary of NOK 347 100. For construction workers in our survey, the average salary in 2018 was NOK 421 198 for the Poles and NOK 418 600 for the Lithuanians. The median salary (the mid-value in the pay range) was NOK 435 871 for the Poles and NOK 434 045 for the Lithuanians. For both groups, both the average salary and the median salary were higher than the generally applicable salary for unskilled construction workers.

Twenty-two per cent of Poles and 20 per cent of Lithuanians are registered with an income *below* the generally applicable minimum rate. However, it must be emphasised here that we do not know how many months those earning below the minimum wage worked in 2018. Jordfald (2018) estimates that in 2016, approximately 10 per cent of construction workers earned less than the generally applicable rate.

Although a comparison of gross income in 2018 with the generally applicable minimum wage in construction entails a degree of uncertainty in relation to, for example, whether they have worked all year and whether the earned income includes supplements, there are clear indications that the majority in our sample earn more than the generally applicable minimum wage in the construction industry.

In the Polish group, 22 per cent of the lowest paid were not sure what form of employment they have (6 per cent of the total are unsure, see Figure 4.3). Furthermore, a total of 32 per cent are either part-time, seasonal or extra shift workers.

If we combine the two lowest wage groups, we see that six out of ten migrant workers from Poland and Lithuania earned less than NOK 450 000 in 2018.

The vast majority of employees have a Norwegian employer. This applies to 82 per cent of the Lithuanians and 85 per cent of the Poles. Among those with an annual income below NOK 300 000, 18 per cent of Poles and 25 per cent of Lithuanians had a foreign employer. Among those with an annual income in excess of NOK 450 000, 7 per cent of Poles and 10 per cent of Lithuanians had a foreign employer. In other words, there is a correlation between low wages and working for a foreign employer.

Table 4.3 Annual income broken down into Norwegian and foreign employers. Proportion of workers. Per cent.

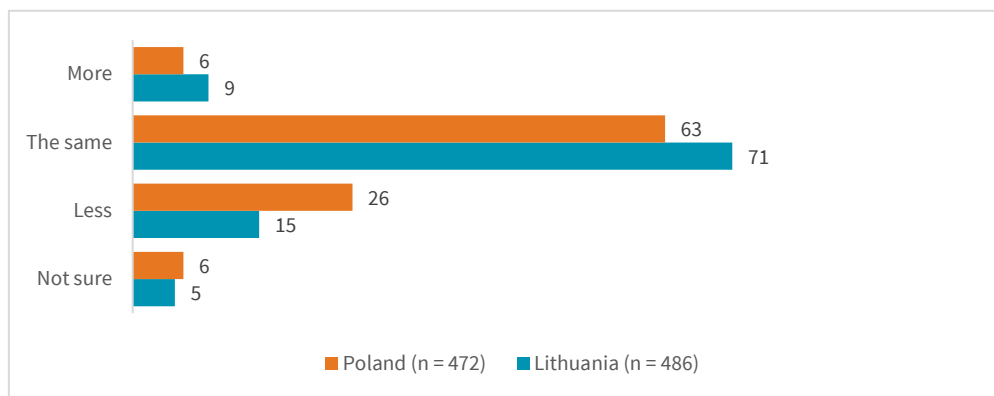
	Under NOK 300 000	NOK 300 000–450 000	Over NOK 450 000
Polish/Lithuanian employer	17	7	2
Norwegian employer	73	84	90
Other nationality	4	6	5
Not applicable/not sure	6	3	2

Wage discrimination perceptions

As shown above, about six out of ten Polish and Lithuanian migrant workers earned less than NOK 450 000 in 2018. However, there are indications that construction workers in our sample earn more than the generally applicable minimum wage (see the text box above). As described, generally applicable collective wage agreements ensure a minimum wage, and most Norwegian employees earn far more than the minimum rates. Previous surveys have shown that migrant workers from Eastern Europe tend to hover around the generally applicable minimum rates, while Norwegian and Western European workers are more often found in the higher wage brackets (Friberg 2016).

It is therefore relevant to raise the issue of wage discrimination, i.e. whether the Polish and Lithuanian workers think they earn less than Norwegians in the same job.

Figure 4.4 'Do you think you earn more than, the same as, or less than a Norwegian person in the same job?' n = 958.



The majority of migrant workers believe that they earn the same as a Norwegian person in the same job. This applies to 63 per cent of Poles and 71 per cent of Lithuanians. Six per cent of Poles and 9 per cent of Lithuanians think they earn more. Meanwhile, a fairly large proportion of Poles (26 per cent) believe that they earn less than a Norwegian person in the same job. The corresponding proportion among Lithuanians is 15 per cent.

It should be borne in mind that lower earnings may be related to length of service and qualifications.

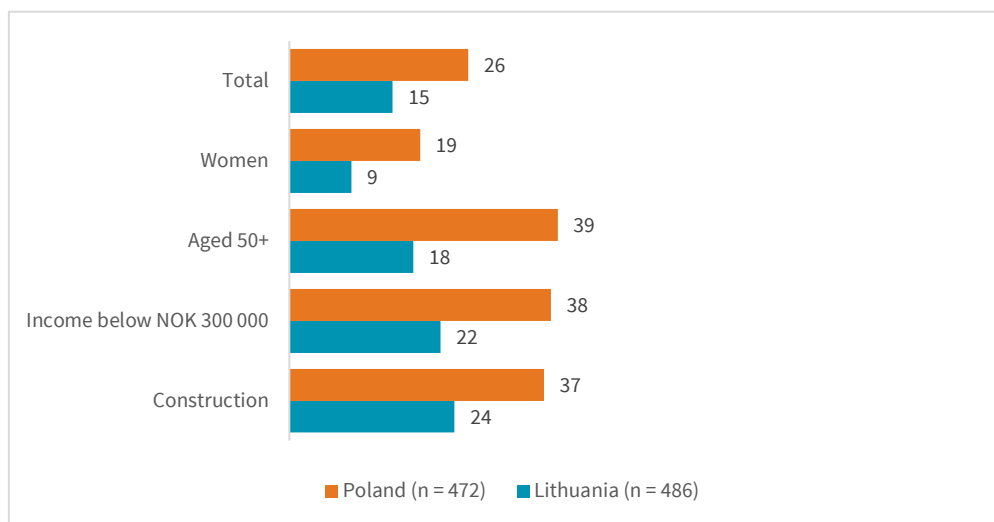
Recognition of education and training completed abroad

As part of the wage settlement in 2014, a scheme was established for the recognition of vocational education and training completed abroad. Many migrant workers without a recognised education are assumed to have been working for several years as unskilled labour in Norway. The recognition scheme involves an assessment of whether trade certificates for industrial and service trades and journeyman's certificates for traditional crafts are on a par with such qualifications in Norway. The scheme was initially aimed at German and Polish workers with the following occupations: plumbers, joiners, concrete workers, hairdressers and meat cutters. In 2021, the scheme covers 19 qualifications from Poland, Germany, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. To date, only 0.5 per cent of resident migrant workers have had their qualifications recognised. The scheme is administered by NOKUT (the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education). Source: Andersen, Bråten & Bøckmann 2021

Construction workers are more inclined to think that they are being paid less than Norwegians: 37 per cent of the Poles and 24 per cent of the Lithuanians. This also applies to the lowest paid. More of the men than the women believe they are being discriminated against, which may be related to the different industries they are employed in. Among the older Polish workers (aged 50+), 39 per cent report that they earn less than Norwegians in the same job.

Length of residence in Norway has no impact in this context, other than the slightly lower proportions among those who came to the country after 2012 who believe that they earn *more* than a Norwegian person in the same job. Region also has no impact on perceived wage disparities. See the summary for those who believe that they earn less than Norwegians in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 Proportion who believe that they earn less than a Norwegian person in the same job, in total and for women, employees aged 50+, employees with an income of less than NOK 300 000 and construction workers. Per cent.



The responses from the Poles and Lithuanians differ considerably when it comes to perceptions of wage discrimination. The Polish workers believe to a far greater extent than the Lithuanians that they are paid less than a Norwegian person in the same job. We have not found any good explanation for this. As a group, the Poles have the longest period of residence and are somewhat older. As mentioned, length of residence has no significance in this context, and it is unlikely that the difference can be explained by age alone. The degree to which workers feel included and valued in the workplace probably has a large impact on how they answer such questions. It is also impossible to ignore the fact that the massive public focus on ‘underpaid Eastern Europeans’ can influence their perceptions of their own situation and position.

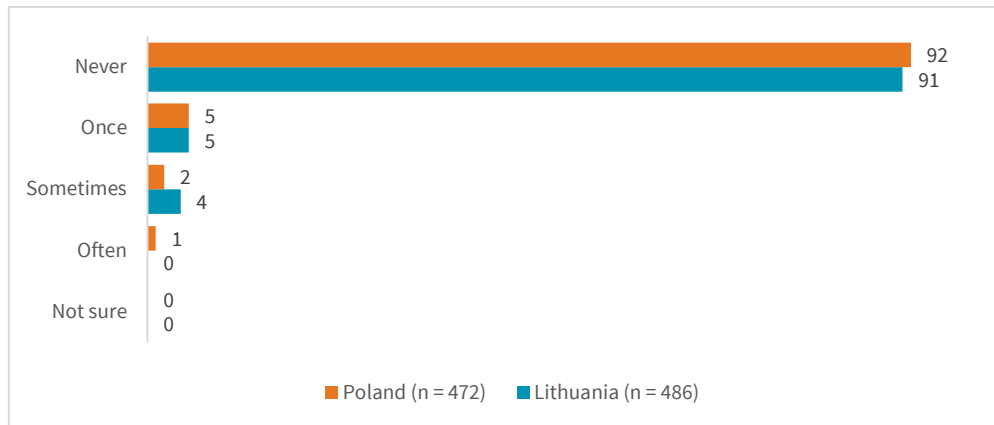
Cheated out of pay?

Not receiving the pay they are entitled to, or even having to repay some of their wages, has become a well-known problem. This has now been put on the political agenda in the form of a proposal to include a new provision in the Working Environment Act that will provide a basis for punishing ‘wage theft’. This term encompasses

situations where, for example, workers are not paid or where their pay is below mandatory and generally applicable rates.¹⁸

In our sample, this problem is not widespread (see Figures 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8). The vast majority have never been exposed to wage theft.

Figure 4.6 'Has it ever happened that you have not been paid for your work?' (n = 958). Per cent.

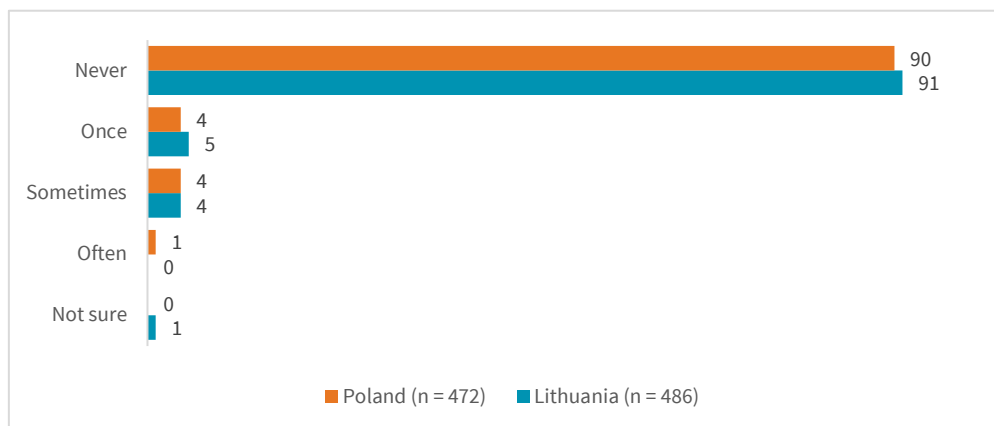


Although the total figures must be considered positive, experiences vary in some respects. For example, 12 per cent of the Lithuanians in Oslo report to have not been paid 'sometimes'. Those with the lowest incomes also appear to be more exposed to this: 18 per cent of the Lithuanians who earn less than NOK 300 000 per year have been exposed to this once or more often. Lithuanian construction workers have also been exposed to this to a greater extent than what the totals would indicate (15 per cent report that this has happened to them once or more often).

In the survey of Polish migrant workers in the Oslo area in 2010 (Polonia), 27 per cent reported to not have been paid for work. These were employees in the construction and cleaning sectors (Friberg & Eldring 2011).

The next question concerned being paid less than agreed, i.e. less dramatic than not being paid at all. However, the answers do not differ all that much from those to the previous question.

Figure 4.7 'Has it ever happened that you were paid less than what was agreed?' (n = 958). Per cent.

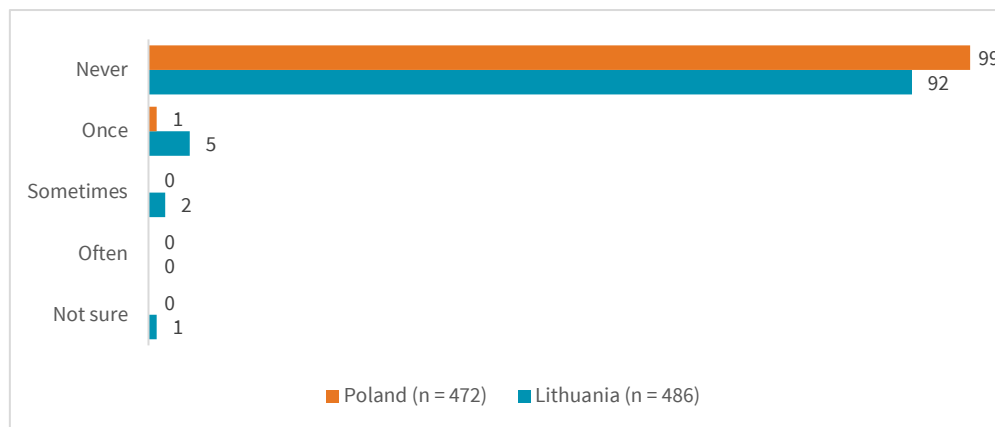


¹⁸ <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/01ac50bc97f94958b42d405bddb24a2e/horingsnotat-1-straaffansvar-for-lonnstyper-og-okt-strafferamme.pdf>

Nine out of ten have never been paid less than what was agreed. For the migrant workers with the lowest income (less than NOK 300 000) the picture is a little different. Here, 80 per cent of the Poles and 85 per cent of the Lithuanians report that this has never happened to them.

In the survey of Polish migrant workers in the Oslo area in 2010, a total of 24 per cent reported to have been paid less than the agreed wages. This survey included employees in the construction and cleaning sectors (Friberg & Eldring 2011).

Figure 4.8 ‘Has it ever happened that you have had to repay part of the wages you received in Norway?’ (n = 958). Per cent.



Nearly 100 per cent of the Polish workers report never having had to repay their wages, partly or in full, and 92 per cent of the Lithuanians report the same. The youngest Lithuanians appear to be most frequently exposed to this: in this group, 15 per cent report having been forced to repay part of their wages ‘once’ or ‘often’.

In summary, there are indications that wage theft in some form mainly affects migrant workers who are not resident in Norway.

How has the general application of collective agreements worked out?

The effects of the general application of collective agreements have been investigated in various industries. The objective of the general application is to ensure ‘wage conditions equal to those of Norwegian employees’. In general, we can ascertain that the goal of equality has not been achieved. Wage statistics show a clear tendency for foreign workers to earn wages close to the minimum rate (Jordfald & Nymoen 2019).

An evaluation of measures to combat social dumping, made in 2011, highlighted general application of collective agreements and the subsequent measures enacted in the areas subject to general application as key instruments for combatting low-wage competition (Eldring et al. 2011).

Bjørnstad et al. (2015) found that general application of the collective agreements in the ship-building, construction and cleaning industries dampened the effect of low-wage competition and raised some of the lowest-earning workers up to the minimum rates in the collective agreements. Bratsberg & Holden (2015) found that such general application had a significantly positive effect on the average wages of construction workers, and reduced the proportion earning less than the collective agreement’s minimum rate for unskilled workers. The effect was greatest for migrant workers from new EU member countries. After five years of experience with general application of collective agreements in the cleaning industry (in 2016), statistics showed that the wage level for the lowest-earning workers had increased by

nearly 40 per cent. Moreover, the general application had a compressive effect, meaning that the lowest paid workers earned more, while the highest paid employees were paid relatively less (Jordfald & Svarstad 2020). In the hospitality sector, the proportion earning less than the minimum rate saw a marked fall in the period 2016–2018 – from 25 to 11 per cent – as a result of the general application of the 2018 collective agreement (Ødegård et al. 2020). In agriculture and the horticultural industry, where the collective agreement has been made generally applicable since 2010, there was still a significant number of foreign workers who were earning less than the minimum rates in 2018. This applied to 18 per cent of the workers from non-EEA countries and 39 per cent of the employees who had a temporary ID number (Jordfald 2021).

4.4 Hazardous work

Foreign workers have been a vulnerable group when it comes to injuries and deaths in the workplace. In 2020, a total of 28 workplace accidents had a fatal outcome, and the construction industry has the worst record in this regard. Ten of these 28 fatalities involved foreign workers, four of whom were from Poland.¹⁹ The estimated risk of a fatal workplace accident is 3.2 times higher for foreign workers from EU countries in Eastern Europe than for Norwegians in onshore industries. The greatest difference in risk is found in transportation/storage and agriculture, forestry and fishery (Arbeidstilsynet 2018).

High-risk workplaces, language barriers and safety cultures are issues that can help explain these figures. The construction industry is also well above average in terms of reported injuries per employee, with 12 reported injuries per 1000 employees in 2015. The average for all Norwegian employees is 8.9 injuries per 1000 employees (Moestue et al. 2016). In a more detailed analysis of the accidents in the construction industry, the Norwegian Labour Inspection found that employees who were foreign nationals accounted for 27 per cent of the injuries (Arbeidstilsynet 2020). The majority of these were Poles and Lithuanians. Furthermore, previous studies show that agency workers and employees with little work experience are especially vulnerable to workplace injuries (Bråten & Andersen 2017).

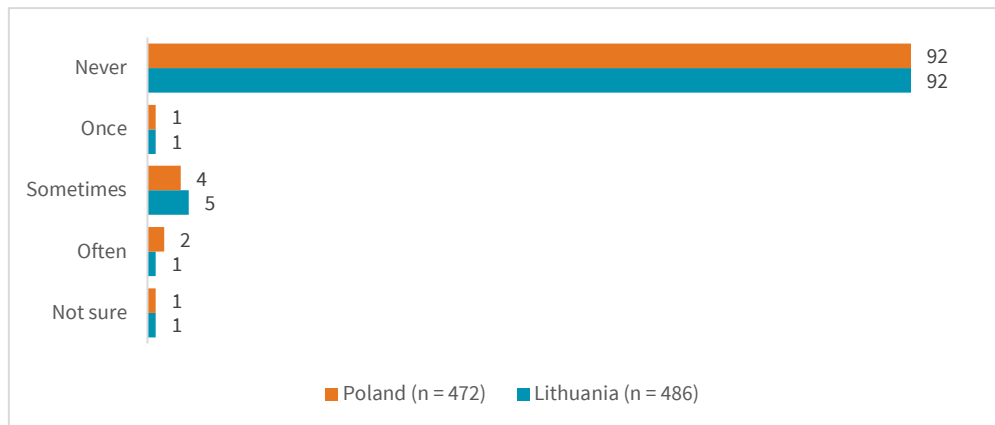
In this survey, we asked workers whether they have been forced to perform hazardous work against their will. This does not appear to be a common problem among our respondents.

Nine out of ten have never felt pressured into performing hazardous work. However, to change the perspective: one in ten have been forced to perform hazardous work against their will, a situation which must be deemed to be serious. This applies to both Poles and Lithuanians: 2 per cent of the Polish and 1 per cent of the Lithuanian workers report having experienced this often. Furthermore, 4 per cent of the Polish and 5 per cent of the Lithuanian employees have been exposed to this occasionally, and one per cent report that this has happened once.

Men and women give different answers to this question. Among the Lithuanians, 89 per cent of the men and 97 per cent of the women have never been pressured into performing hazardous work against their will. Among the Poles, the corresponding figures are 91 and 97 per cent respectively.

¹⁹ <https://www.arbeidstilsynet.no/nyheter/28-arbeidsskadedodsfall-i-2020>

Figure 4.9 'Have you ever been forced to perform hazardous work, even if you did not want to?' (n = 958). Per cent.



When looking at the figures by industry, the variations are not as wide as we might think. In the construction industry, four per cent of the Poles report that they often have to perform hazardous work against their will, and another five per cent have had this happen to them once or sometimes. Among Lithuanians with a low annual income (less than NOK 300 000), nine per cent report having experienced this 'sometimes'.

4.5 Knowledge about pay and working conditions in Norway

In the EEA/EU, labour regulations are mainly a matter for each member country. The labour market models in Poland and Lithuania differ from the Norwegian one. In these countries, labour legislation plays a significantly larger role than collective agreements, the bargaining system is highly decentralised, and the rates of unionisation and membership in employers' organisation are low. It can therefore be assumed that employed and self-employed immigrants in general tend to have limited knowledge of Norwegian regulations and the collective bargaining system, especially those who have arrived only recently.

The inspectorates confirm that many workers who come to Norway have little knowledge of the regulations in the labour market they are entering, and that this increases the risk of being exposed to poor working conditions. There can be a number of channels for sharing information, such as personal networks, Norwegian colleagues or Norwegian/foreign websites/social media. After having lived and worked in Norway for some time, this knowledge is likely to increase. However, this also depends on the employees' Norwegian language skills (see Chapter 6).

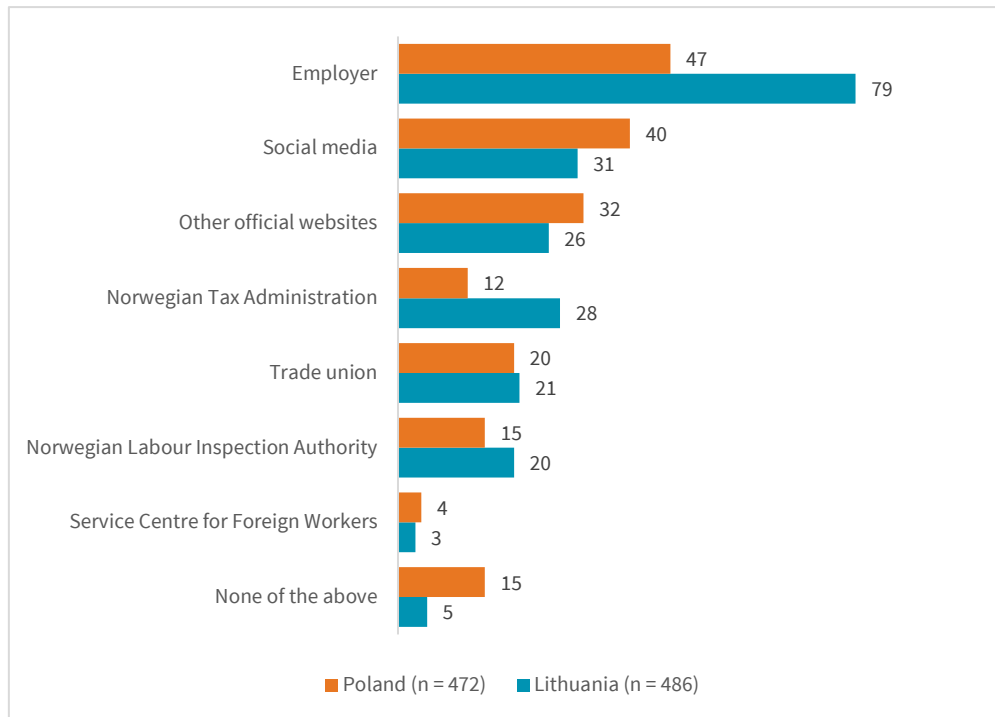
The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority has signed bilateral agreements with the inspectorates in Estonia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Romania. One of the aims is to make it easier for people from these countries to make the right choices when they are going to Norway to work or run a business, and thereby prevent illegal activity.

The collaboration between the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority and these four countries has resulted in the information campaign 'Know your rights'.²⁰ Lithuania is one of the partner countries in this campaign.

We have asked the respondents to identify their sources of information about Norwegian pay and working conditions. We then asked how familiar they are with various Norwegian employment regulations.

²⁰ <https://www.arbeidstilsynet.no/en/knowyourrights/>

Figure 4.10 ‘There are many possible sources of information about pay and working conditions in Norway. Have you received information from any of these?’ Select all that apply. Per cent.



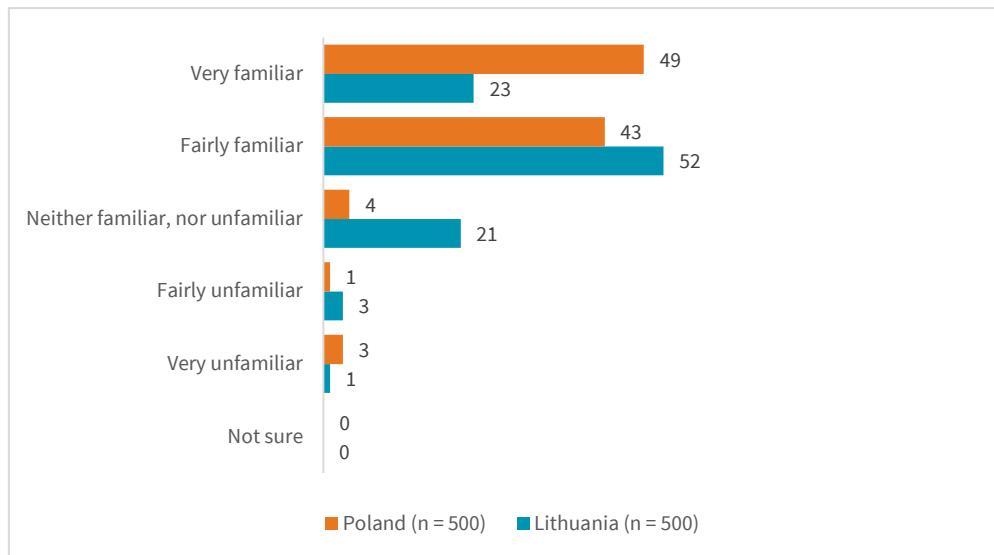
A wide range of information sources are used, and unsurprisingly, the employers are the most important source of information on pay and working conditions for the migrant workers. Forty-seven per cent of the Polish and 79 per cent of the Lithuanian respondents report having received information from their employer. Thirty per cent of the Lithuanians received information exclusively from their employer, whereas 16 per cent of the Poles say the same. We cannot find any good explanation for the difference in the responses from the two nationalities. The youngest Poles (30 years or younger) more frequently receive information from their employer (67 per cent). A total of 85 per cent of the Lithuanian women and 75 per cent of the men report having received information from their employer.

The answers also testify to the role of social media in spreading such information: 40 per cent of the Polish and 31 per cent of the Lithuanian respondents have used social media to find information on Norwegian pay and working conditions.

Women receive information through the trade unions more frequently than the men. The same applies to those who earn the highest incomes. Manufacturing employees also receive information from the trade unions more frequently than construction workers. In the health and social care sector, nearly half of the employees report having received information from their trade union (low N).

The respondents were further asked how well they feel that they know the regulations for health, safety and environment, working hours and Norwegian wage conditions.

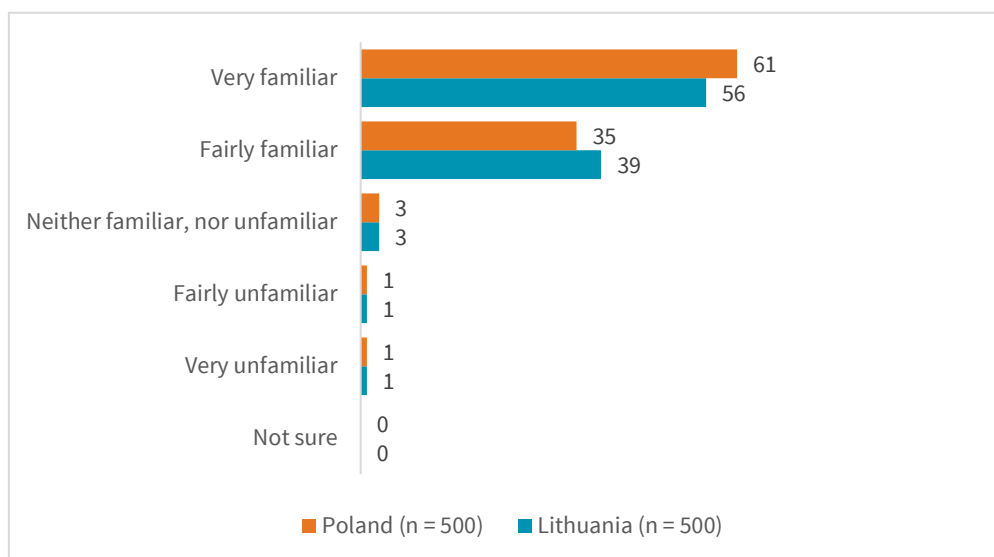
Figure 4.11 Familiarity with rules for health, safety and environment (HSE). Per cent.



Among the Polish workers, 92 per cent report that they are very or fairly familiar with these regulations, and 85 per cent of the Lithuanians answer the same. Two out of ten Lithuanians answer ‘neither familiar nor unfamiliar’, while only a very small proportion report that they are somewhat familiar or very unfamiliar with the regulations.

Different employee characteristics produce somewhat varying effects: for example, among the Lithuanians with the shortest periods of residence (2012–2018), 15 per cent report that they are ‘very familiar’ with the regulations, compared to 39 per cent of the Poles. A total of 39 per cent of the Polish women report that they are very familiar with the regulations (compared to 52 per cent of the men). Polish workers who earn less than NOK 300 000 are less familiar with the regulations than those in the highest income group, i.e. more than NOK 450 000 (40 vs. 55 per cent).

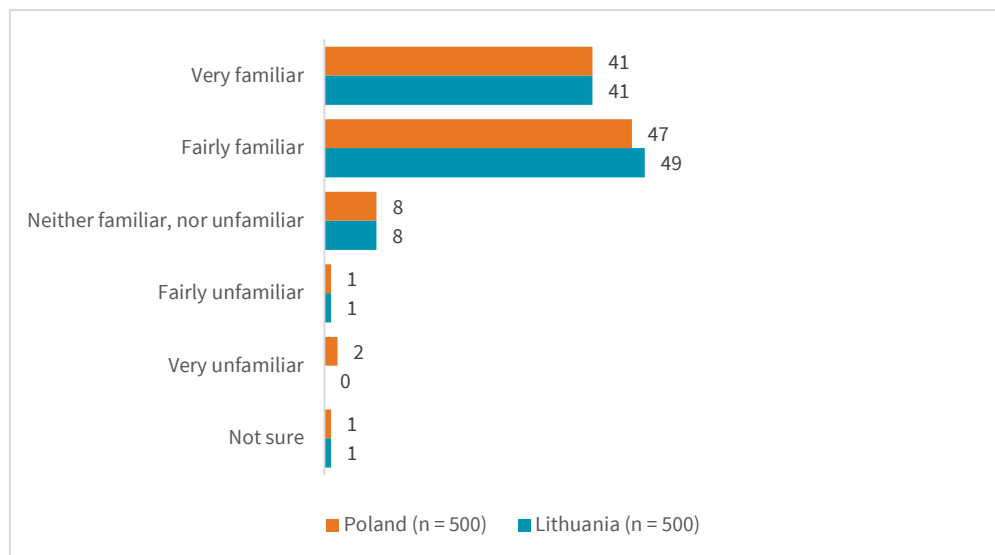
Figure 4.12 Familiarity with the regulations on working hours. Per cent.



A full 96 per cent of the Polish employees report to be very or fairly familiar with the regulations on working hours. The corresponding proportion among the Lithuanians is 95 per cent. No major differences can be found in terms of the various background variables. Among Polish workers, the working hour regulations are most widely known in the manufacturing industry and least known in the private services sector. Polish workers who earn less than NOK 300 000 also tend to be less knowledgeable about this area.

As noted above, wage levels have been a key issue in the public discourse on labour migration. This applies not least to the need for collective agreements and their general application. The minimum rates in such agreements are easy to communicate.

Figure 4.13 Familiarity with regulations on Norwegian wage conditions. Per cent.



Nine out of ten, Poles and Lithuanians alike, report to be very or fairly familiar with the regulations on Norwegian wage conditions. There are few differences between the groups in terms of gender, industry, age etc. Lithuanians with the shortest period of residence (2012–2018) and Polish workers over the age of 50 tend to be least familiar with wage conditions.

Self-reported assessments of knowledge can be difficult to interpret, since we cannot know whether this knowledge is adequate in objective terms. For example, it can be hard to tell what is meant by ‘fairly familiar’ with various regulations. If we assume that knowledge about regulations and wage conditions is associated with Norwegian language skills, a certain amount of overestimation is likely (see Chapter 6). On the other hand, many of the respondents have lived in Norway for many years and have thus had plenty opportunity to familiarise themselves with the regulations.

4.6 Summary

- A large proportion of our sample is employed in the construction industry. Many of the female migrant workers are employed in the private services sector and health and social care.
- Eight out of ten Poles and close to nine out of ten Lithuanians are permanently employed in full-time positions. The migrant workers from Poland and Lithuania do not differ much from the rest of the labour force in Norway in this respect.

- The vast majority of the employees have a Norwegian employer.
- Six out of ten migrant workers from Poland and Lithuania earned less than NOK 450 000 in 2018.
- There are clear indications that the majority of construction workers in our sample earn more than the generally applied minimum wage (wage information for 2018).
- A total of 26 per cent of the Polish and 15 per cent of the Lithuanian migrant workers believe that they earn less than a Norwegian person in the same job. Among the construction workers and the lowest paid groups, close to four in every ten Poles feel that they are exposed to wage discrimination.
- One in every ten workers report having performed hazardous work against their will.
- The vast majority report that they are very familiar with Norwegian regulations and wage conditions, meaning knowledge about wages, working hours and HSE.
- Employers are the main providers of information about Norwegian pay and working conditions. In addition, it appears that social media is a key source of information in this area.
- The vast majority has never been exposed to so-called wage theft, i.e. being paid less than agreed or having to repay part of their wages. Those who are the lowest paid (less than NOK 300 000) and the youngest workers are more exposed to wage theft than others.

5 Tax and welfare benefits

Undeclared work and benefits fraud are key elements of what is referred to as ‘work-related crime’. Tax evasion and non-payment of national insurance contributions are some of the most common forms (NTAES 2020).

In this chapter we show the results from questions pertaining to whether the migrant workers pay tax or receive welfare benefits, and their attitudes to tax evasion and benefits fraud. In Chapter 8 below we have included questions about violations of the rules on lay-offs and unemployment benefit in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on its own monitoring data and a number of surveys of businesses and consumers, the Norwegian Tax Administration has estimated that approximately 15 per cent of all businesses are involved in work-related crime. However, this estimate is fraught with uncertainty. The reported proportion was highest in parts of the construction industry and road haulage.²¹

The prevalence of undeclared work in Norway has been mapped out on various occasions. In a study of undeclared work in the construction industry, Andersen et al. (2014) reviewed various estimates of the extent of the black economy in Norway as a whole. They concluded that none of the estimates are reliable, but in the studies that have been made, the estimates range from 1.1 per cent to 14 per cent of GDP.

The Norwegian Tax Administration has mapped out households’ use of services in the black economy since 2006.²² With the exception of 2009 and 2011, when 23 and 20 per cent of households respectively reported having paid for services in the black economy in the last two years, the proportion has remained between 8 and 13 per cent. In the most recent survey, in 2020, the proportion was 8 per cent. The survey by the Norwegian Tax Administration also shows that 4 per cent of the population report that they have engaged in undeclared work. Moreover, it emerges that undeclared work is most common in cleaning, various services related to childcare, domestic services, clearance and gardening, as well as various forms of building works in the home. Joiners are the most likely occupational group to carry out undeclared work.

Assessing answers to questions that involve abetting criminal behaviour – such as undeclared work and benefits fraud – is extremely difficult, and the results should therefore be interpreted with caution.

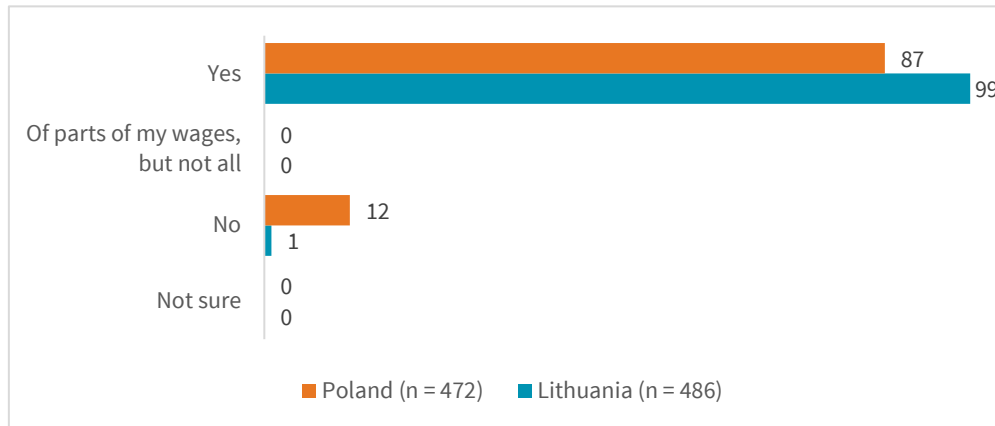
Among the Lithuanians, 99 per cent report that they pay tax. The most astounding aspect of these responses, however, is that 12 per cent of the Polish employees do not pay tax, either in Norway or in Poland. In the age group 31–40 years, 17 per cent report that they do not pay tax. Another reason why this is astounding is that this survey includes resident and supposedly well-integrated immigrants. In other words,

²¹ <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/01ac50bc97f94958b42d405bddb24a2e/horingsnotat-1-straffeansvar-for-lonnstyveri-og-okt-strafferamme.pdf>

²² https://www.samarbeidmotsvartokonomi.no/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/undersokelse_-om_-svart_arbeid-2020_final_oppdatert-24-juni.pdf

a significantly higher proportion of the migrant workers from Poland engage in undeclared work than is reported by the Norwegian Tax Administration for the population as a whole.

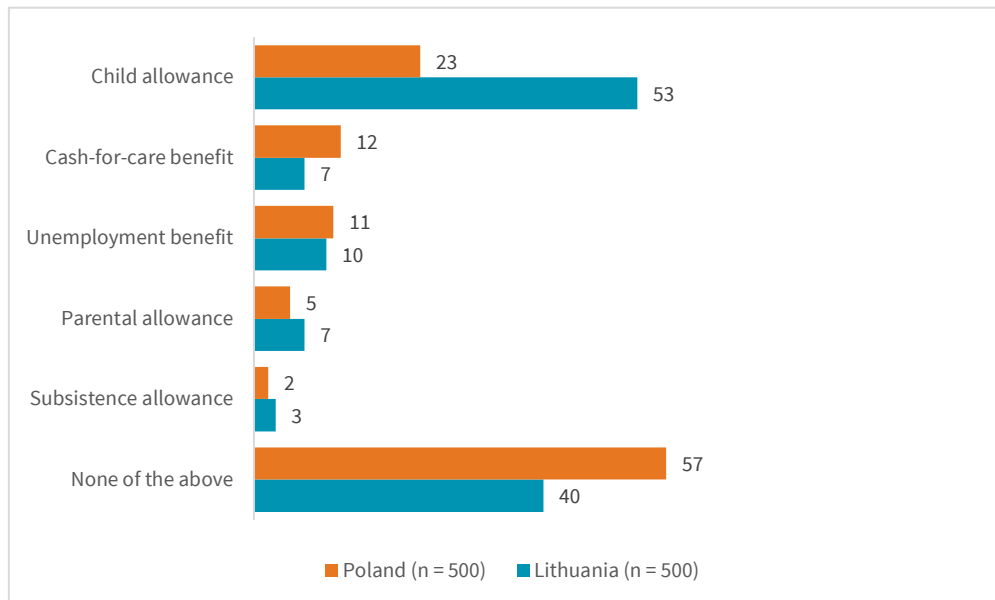
Figure 5.1 'Do you pay income tax in Norway or Poland/Lithuania on your earnings in Norway?' Per cent.



We have no explanation for the large difference in the answers from the Polish and Lithuanian workers respectively.

We have also investigated whether the Poles and Lithuanians receive various welfare benefits. Most of these benefits are related to children, but also include unemployment benefit and subsistence allowance.

Figure 5.2 'Do you receive any of the following Norwegian welfare benefits and grants?' Select all that apply. Per cent.



As shown in the figure, many receive various welfare benefits related to children. One in four Poles report that they receive child benefit, while half of the Lithuanians say the same. The proportion that receives the cash-for-care benefit is somewhat higher among the Poles than among the Lithuanians. Some also receive the parental benefit, but the difference between the two nationalities is not statistically significant.

The proportion receiving unemployment benefit is fairly high – 10 and 11 per cent – and most likely related to lay-offs and redundancies caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Subsistence allowance is referred to as ‘the final safety net’ of the welfare state, and is granted to those who are unable to find other regular sources of income, such as wages or welfare benefits. In our sample, 2 per cent of the Polish and 3 per cent of the Lithuanian migrant workers receive a subsistence allowance. This allowance is means tested. This proportion is approximately on a par with Norwegian-born recipients of subsistence allowance in 2019.

5.1 Attitudes to tax evasion and benefits fraud

Our survey also included investigating the extent to which migrant workers found it acceptable to evade taxes or receive welfare benefits they were not entitled to. We asked the respondents to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with two statements. The answers were given on a scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree), as well as a sixth alternative of ‘Uncertain’. The statements were:

- In some cases, it can be acceptable for an employee to deliberately evade taxes.
- In some cases, it can be acceptable for an employee to deliberately receive welfare benefits they are not entitled to.

Table 5.1 Answers to statements about tax evasion and benefits fraud. Per cent.

		1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree	Un-certain
In some cases, it can be acceptable for an employee to deliberately evade taxes	Poles (n = 330)*	71	7	7	4	5	6
	Lithuanians (n = 500)	64	9	12	4	7	4
In some cases, it can be acceptable for an employee to deliberately receive welfare benefits they are not entitled to	Poles (n = 500)	50	3	4	1	3	38
	Lithuanians (n = 500)	51	12	16	7	10	3

* As a result of a coding error, the Polish respondents were not asked this question. Norstat therefore contacted the respondents by telephone to ask it. The interviewers succeeded in contacting 330 of the 500 who had completed the questionnaire.

In general, there is little acceptance of tax evasion and benefits fraud among both Polish and Lithuanian migrant workers. We can see, however, that the Lithuanian respondents tend to have a higher acceptance of benefits fraud. Seventeen per cent of the Lithuanian respondents answer that in some cases it can be acceptable for employees to receive welfare benefits they are not entitled to. Moreover, an astoundingly high proportion of 38 per cent of the Polish respondents are ‘Uncertain’ in relation to the question on benefits fraud, which may well be an indication that they were reluctant to answer this question.

We have investigated possible correlations with the background variables in a regression analysis, but few of the correlations are statistically significant. What we did find, however, is that with regard to the question on receiving welfare benefits they are not entitled to, the likelihood of acceptance is lower for personnel in the healthcare sector and in kindergartens.

6 Proficiency in Norwegian²³

Language challenges in the workplace include the employees themselves, their employers and colleagues. This also impacts on daily life, such as the relationship with neighbours, healthcare institutions and schools. Language problems have been a recurrent topic ever since the EU enlargement in 2004. Pursuant to the EEA Agreement, migrant workers from Central and Eastern Europe are not entitled to any language training courses, nor are they obliged to learn Norwegian. However, for the current year (2021), NOK 25 million of the national budget has been allocated to Norwegian language training for migrant workers. The target group includes adult immigrants who need to learn more Norwegian, irrespective of how long they have lived in Norway and their reason for immigrating. This is therefore something that migrant workers from the EEA area can benefit from.²⁴ This initiative is part of the Government's revised strategy to combat work-related crime.

Communication problems in a workplace can give rise to a whole range of difficulties: at worst, misunderstandings may pose a risk to life and health, foreign workers with little knowledge of their own rights can become more vulnerable to exploitation because they do not understand the information provided, and collaboration with colleagues can be hindered by the inability to communicate (Ødegård & Andersen 2020). Language skills have been shown to be important for employment status and type of employment relationship (Kraft 2017). Friberg (2016) writes that barriers in the form of insufficient Norwegian language skills and unfamiliarity with cultural codes and national certification schemes often prevent people from making full use of their qualifications and experience in a new country.

The first survey of Polish migrant workers in the Oslo area also revealed that many immigrants failed to contact a doctor because of their poor Norwegian language skills (Friberg & Tyldum 2007). Furthermore, lack of Norwegian language skills and limited familiarity with Norwegian regulations can represent obstacles to buying a home and to communicating with lenders and landlords. It has been claimed that those who do not speak the language are met with less openness than ethnic Norwegians (Søholt et al. 2012). Problems can also arise in contact with public authorities such as the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration or the Norwegian Tax Administration.

In this survey, we have investigated whether the employees speak Norwegian at work, their self-assessment of their Norwegian language skills and whether they have attended Norwegian language classes.

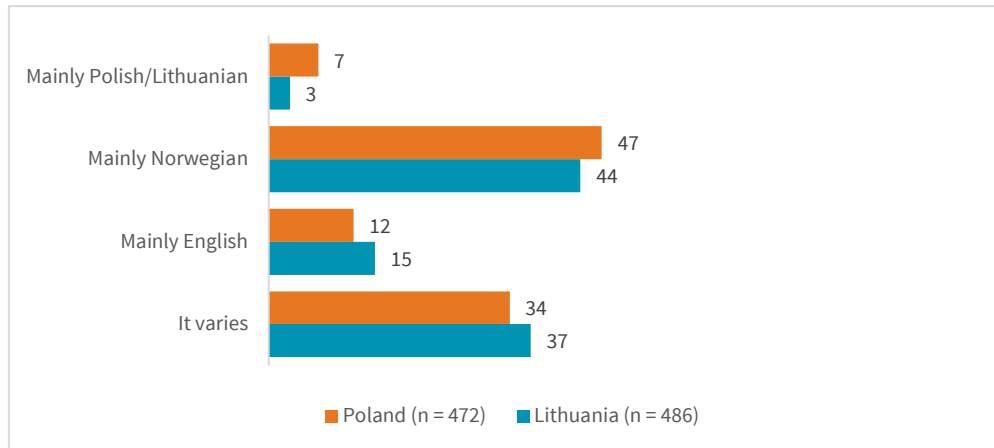
²³ Parts of the text in this chapter are taken from Ødegård & Andersen 2020.

²⁴ https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/strategi-mot-arbeidslivskriminalitet-2021/id2831867/?q=norskoppl%c3%a6ring&ch=4#match_0

6.1 Is Norwegian spoken at work?

Previous studies have shown that in order to overcome language problems in the workplace, work teams are often formed based on nationality. This applies to construction sites in particular. Each work team includes someone – often the team leader – who speaks Norwegian or English and functions as an interpreter.

Figure 6.1 ‘What languages do you speak at work?’ (n = 958). Per cent.



Although only a small minority speak their mother tongue at work, less than half speak mainly Norwegian. A total of 47 per cent of the Poles and 44 per cent of the Lithuanians speak mainly Norwegian at work. It is common to vary the language depending on whom one is speaking to; 34 per cent of the Polish and 37 per cent of the Lithuanian respondents selected this response category. English is used by 12 per cent of the Poles and 15 per cent of the Lithuanians. We have performed a regression analysis to see what factors affect whether the respondents mainly use Norwegian or another language. The results are shown in Table 6.1.

As can be seen in Table 6.1, being a man and in the age group 31–40 years have a negative effect on the likelihood of speaking Norwegian as a main language in the workplace. The same also applies to the group whose first registered period of residence in Norway was after 2013. Those who work in Eastern Norway (except Oslo) have a higher likelihood of speaking Norwegian at work. We can also see various industry-specific effects. Employees in industries such as private services, health care and kindergartens have a higher likelihood of speaking Norwegian at work. These are typical industries where the staff need to speak Norwegian to be able to communicate with customers, users etc. However, as noted above, if your colleagues mainly hail from the same country as yourself and you do not need to speak with other groups, such as customers or users, the simplest solution is to speak your mother tongue. In the manufacturing and construction industries, for example, a smaller proportion speak Norwegian at work. We find that being a member of a trade union increases the likelihood of speaking Norwegian at work, as does having children. It is reasonable to assume that having children, especially of school age, increases the need to speak Norwegian when it comes to school-related matters and leisure activities.

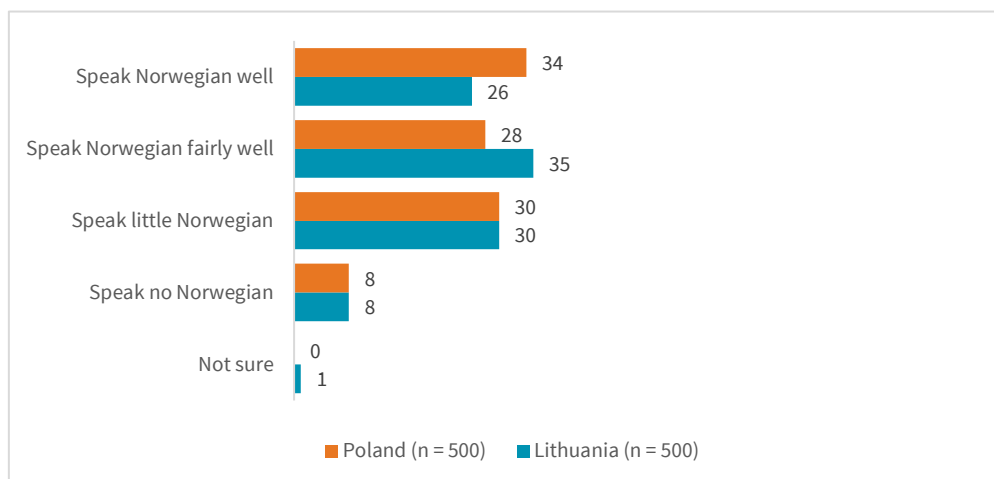
Table 6.1 Factors that have an impact on whether Norwegian is spoken as the main language in the workplace. Linear regression. Green indicates a positive effect, red a negative effect.

Indicator	Effect
Male	
31–40 years	
41–50 years	
50+ years	
Eastern Norway	
Southern and Western Norway	
Central Norway	
Northern Norway	
Children in Norway	
Manufacturing	
Private services	
Health care and kindergartens	
Other industry	
First registered in Norway 2010–2012	
First registered in Norway 2013–2018	
Income 2018: NOK 301 000–450 000	
Income: More than NOK 450 000	
Country background: Poland	
Pays income tax	
Trade union member	

6.2 Self-assessment of Norwegian language skills

The respondents were asked to assess their own Norwegian language skills. This subjective opinion may not necessarily coincide with a more objective assessment of these skills, but the responses nevertheless provide a picture of the situation.

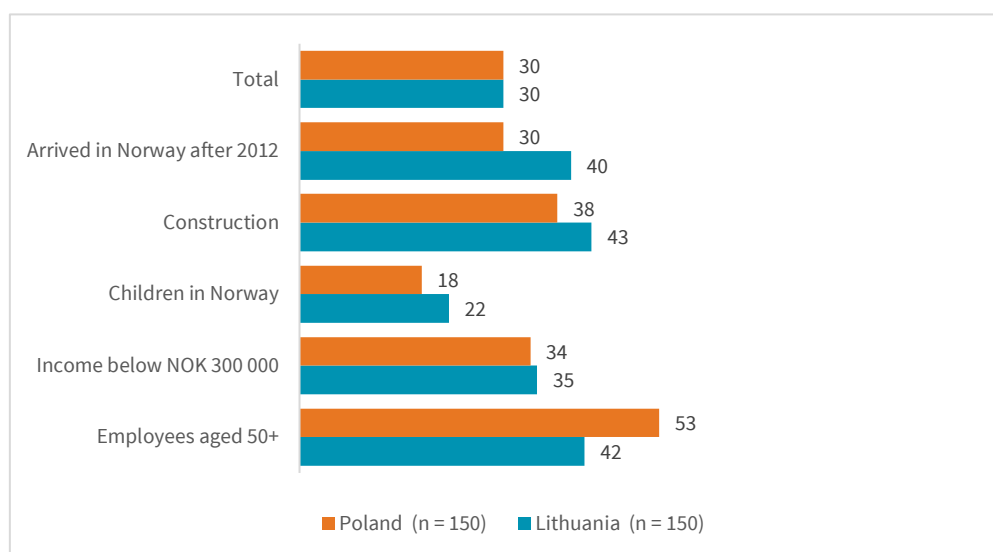
Figure 6.2 Subjective assessment of Norwegian language skills by resident migrant workers, by nationality. Per cent.



A little more than one in every three Polish and just over one in every four Lithuanian migrant workers claim to speak Norwegian well. When the two top response categories – ‘speak Norwegian well’ and ‘speak Norwegian fairly well’ – are merged, there is no significant difference between the two groups. The proportions reporting that they speak little or no Norwegian are also fairly similar among Poles and Lithuanians resident in Norway.

It is worth noting that 8 per cent of these employees, who live and work in Norway, speak *no* Norwegian, and that as many as 30 per cent report that they speak little Norwegian. Among Lithuanians who arrived in Norway after 2012, 40 per cent report that they speak little Norwegian. Among Polish employees over the age of 50, this proportion is 53 per cent, and another 10 per cent of this group report that they speak no Norwegian. Those who have children in Norway also have better Norwegian language skills. A more detailed analysis of the migrants who speak *little Norwegian* is shown in Figure 6.3. The number of respondents who speak no Norwegian is so small – 40 persons – that the differences are not shown in the graph.

Figure 6.3 Proportion who speak little Norwegian by total, arrival in Norway after 2012, the construction industry, children in Norway, income less than NOK 300 000 and age over 50 years. Per cent.



But what about those who claim to speak Norwegian well? The proficiency level can depend on length of residence, access to Norwegian lessons, requirements imposed by employers, personal motivation etc.

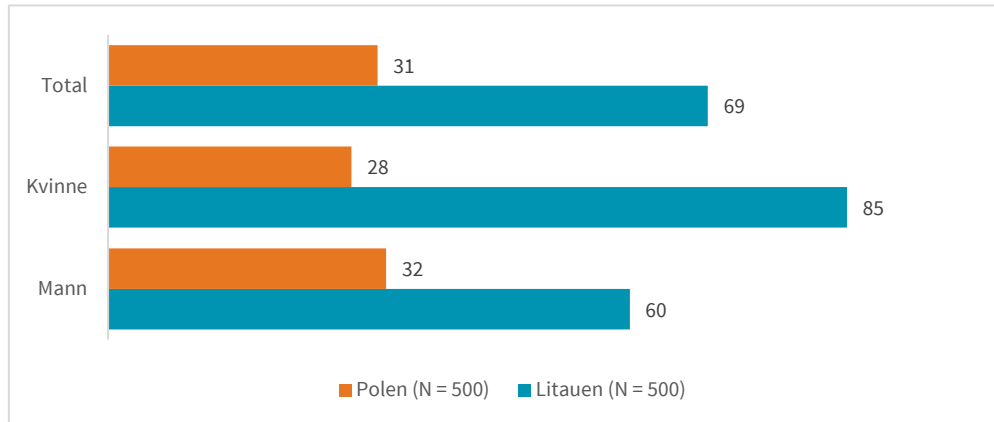
Women rate their own Norwegian skills higher than what the men do. Age also has an effect, in the sense that more respondents in the younger age groups rate their own Norwegian skills as good or fairly good than those in the older generations. Having children in Norway has a positive effect on the Norwegian proficiency level. Previous studies have also shown that those who arrived in Norway with a family and children have also been more motivated to learn the language and are more proficient speakers (Wasilkiewicz 2014; Ødegård & Andersen 2011). A long period of residence in Norway has no significant effect in the Polish group, but appears to increase the Norwegian language skills of the Lithuanians.

A survey of Polish migrant workers in the Oslo region in 2010 (Friberg & Eldring 2011) showed that as many as 34 per cent reported that they speak no Norwegian. Although these studies are not directly comparable, this still gives a clear indication that Norwegian language skills have improved considerably over these ten years.

6.3 Norwegian language training

Three in every ten Polish migrant workers report that they have taken Norwegian lessons. The Lithuanians have been more eager to attend, with a corresponding proportion of seven in ten. The reasons for this marked difference are uncertain.

Figure 6.4 Proportion that has been provided with Norwegian language training in the form of a course or similar. Per cent. (n = 1000).



The Lithuanian women stand out in that 85 per cent of them have undergone Norwegian language training. We can see that being a woman and having received the maternity grant increased the likelihood of having attended language classes. Age, industry and place of residence have no effect. However, Lithuanian women do not stand out when it comes to their self-assessment of speaking Norwegian well.

Among the Poles, those with the highest incomes (more than NOK 450 000) stand out in that 41 per cent have attended a Norwegian language course or similar. In comparison, 21 per cent of those who earn between NOK 350 000 and NOK 450 000 have attended language training. However, in our material we find no indication that those who have attended language classes rate their proficiency level higher than others.

We did not ask the respondents who held these training courses. In a survey from 2017, approximately 36 per cent of business managers in the construction industry and 49 per cent in the manufacturing industry reported that they had provided Norwegian language training (Andersen & Ødegård 2017).

In 2006, approximately one in every three Poles in the Oslo region reported that they had attended some form of Norwegian language classes, and in 2010 the proportion was just under four in every ten (Friberg & Eldring 2011). In other words, the proportion of Poles who have attended Norwegian language training has remained fairly stable in the period from 2006 to 2020.

6.4 Summary

- Less than half of the respondents speak mainly Norwegian at work. As expected, there are large variations across the industries.
- Eight per cent speak no Norwegian and 30 per cent speak little Norwegian.
- Those who have children in Norway have better Norwegian language skills than others.
- The oldest employees (over 50 years) and construction workers rate their Norwegian language skills as poorest.

- A long period of residence in Norway has no significant effect in the Polish group, but appears to increase the Norwegian language skills among the Lithuanians.
- Three in every ten Polish and seven in every ten Lithuanian migrant workers report that they have attended Norwegian language training.
- Those who have attended language training do not rate their own Norwegian language skills any higher than others.

7 Trade union membership

Low unionisation rates among migrant workers has been a recurrent topic and a concern in the trade union movement since 2004. Many of the foreign workers are recruited into businesses that are outside the ‘organised’ labour market, i.e. companies that do not have a collective agreement or an active trade union.

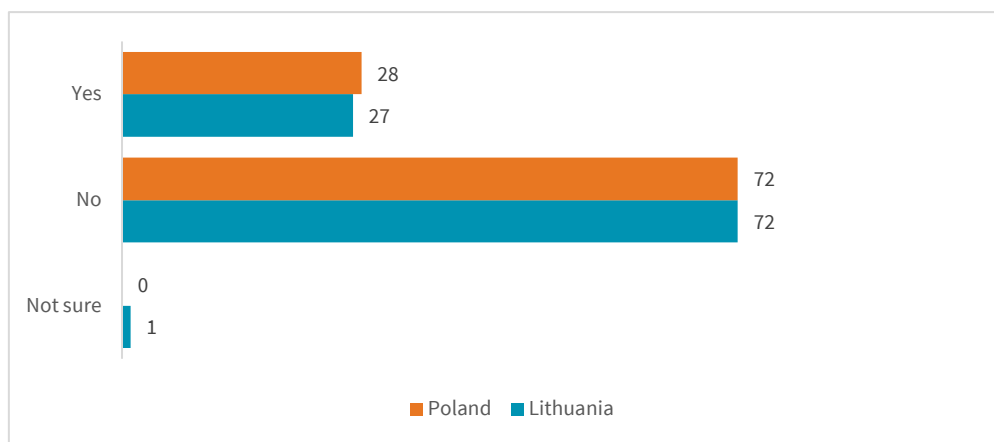
The United Federation of Trade Unions is one of the labour unions that have actively sought to recruit migrant workers, especially since many of their member industries are so-called ‘immigrant-heavy’. These include construction, parts of the manufacturing sector and the hospitality sector. For example, the Oslo Construction Workers Association was one of the first to unionise migrant workers.

7.1 Unionisation rate

A previous survey has shown that immigrants as a whole tend to have lower unionisation rates than employees with no immigrant background, and immigrants from the new EU countries in Central and Eastern Europe have the lowest rates. However, this changes with length of residence. After ten years in Norway, their unionisation rate is fairly similar to those of the native population (Neergaard et al. 2015).

We first examine the proportion of the immigrants from Poland and Lithuania who are trade union members.

Figure 7.1 ‘Are you a member of a trade union?’ (n = 958). Per cent.



Country background appears to have little effect on whether the employees are trade union members. Women are unionised to a greater extent than men. Among the Polish women, 40 per cent give an affirmative answer, and 37 per cent of the Lithuanian women are union members. We have taken a more detailed look at the factors that might influence unionisation. These are shown in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Trade union membership. Linear regression. Red means a negative effect, green a positive.

Variables	Effect
Male	
31–40 years	
41–50 years	
50+ years	
Eastern Norway	
Southern and Western Norway	
Central Norway	
Northern Norway	
Children in Norway	
Manufacturing	
Private services	
Health care and kindergartens	
Other industry	
First registered in Norway 2010–2012	
First registered in Norway 2013–2018	
Income 2018: NOK 301 000–450 000	
Income: More than NOK 450 000	
Country background: Poland	
Pays income tax	
Speaks mainly Norwegian at work	

As shown in the table, the unionisation rate is higher for women than men, and this difference remains even when controlling for other possible explanatory variables. There is a certain amount of regional variation: those who live in Central and Northern Norway have a higher likelihood of being unionised. Working in healthcare institutions and kindergartens also increases the likelihood of union membership, as does a higher income. The same applies to those who speak Norwegian at work. In contrast, the time of initial arrival in Norway does not appear to have an effect on the inclination to join a union.

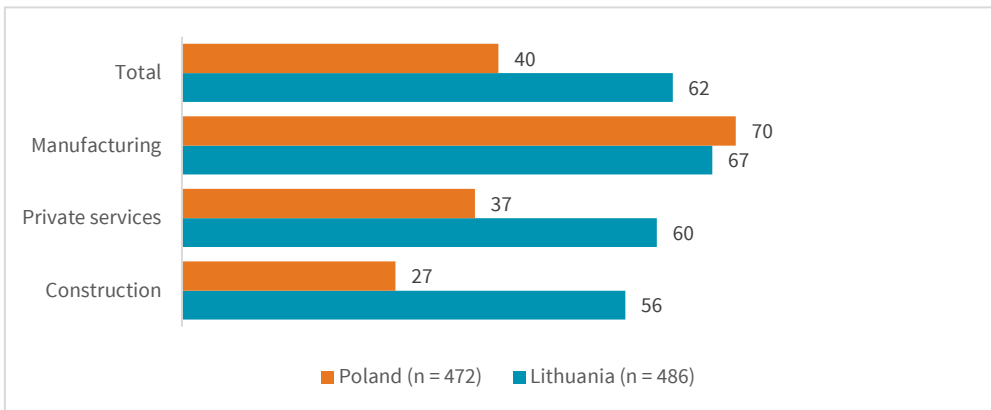
The unionisation rate among employees in Norway in general is approximately 50 per cent. This means that there is a substantial gap between this and the unionisation rate of 27–28 per cent among the Poles and Lithuanians. If we look at the private sector separately, the total unionisation rate is 36 per cent (2018 figures) (Neergaard 2020a). The explanation is that the unionisation rate in the public sector amounts to approximately 80 per cent. In manufacturing the rate is 50 per cent, and 30 per cent in the construction industry (ibid.).

The migrant workers were also asked whether there was a trade union representative in their workplace.

The differences in the answers indicate compared to the Poles, the Lithuanians tend to work in businesses that have better organised partnership relations, especially in the construction and private service industries. In total, 40 per cent of the Poles and 62 per cent of the Lithuanians report that they work in a business where there is a trade union representative.

More women than men tend to work in businesses with a trade union representative. In Oslo, the proportion with a trade union representative in their workplace amounts to 29 per cent for the Poles, which is significantly lower than in the rest of the country. Among those with the lowest incomes (less than NOK 300 000), it is also less common to have a trade union representative in the workplace. This applies to both the Poles and the Lithuanians.

Figure 7.2 'Is there a trade union representative in the business where you work?' Affirmative responses by industry*. Per cent.



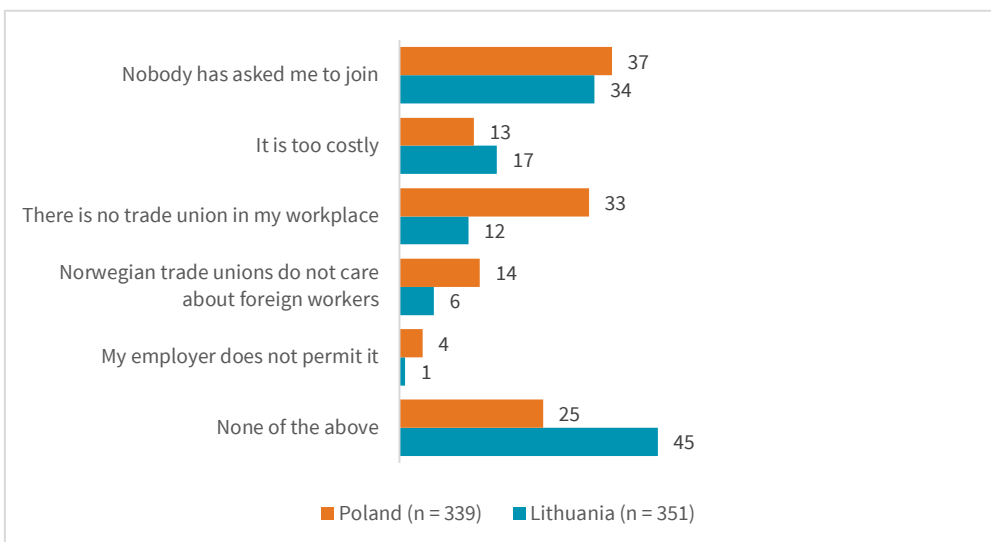
* Health, care and kindergartens are omitted because of a low number of respondents (N).

7.2 Why not unionised?

The most common reason for an employee joining a trade union is because they want to be able to get help and support if they are faced with problems in the workplace (Neergaard 2020b). The main reason for not joining a union is because they want to negotiate wages for themselves, or because they enjoy the same benefits even without joining (*ibid.*).

In this survey, the migrant workers were asked to identify their main reasons for not joining a trade union.

Figure 7.3 'People can have many reasons for not joining a trade union. Which of these apply to you?' Select all that apply. Per cent.



Since so many have answered 'None of the above' – 25 per cent of the Poles and 45 per cent of the Lithuanians – the reason may well be that our response alternatives were not adequately targeted. There is a possibility that the same reasons that were mentioned above – i.e. preferring to negotiate one's own wages or that union membership does not provide any tangible benefits – also apply to the migrant workers. Another reason for the high proportion of 'None of the above' answers could be that the respondents did not want to divulge the reasons for their choice.

There is nevertheless no doubt that the trade union movement has an unexploited potential for recruiting migrant workers, since 37 per cent of Poles and 34 per cent of Lithuanians answer that nobody has asked them to join. In the private services sector, 49 per cent of the Poles answered 'Nobody has asked me'. Among those who have a trade union representative in their workplace, the total proportion of 'Nobody has asked me to join' responses falls to 28 per cent.

The employers do not appear to represent a barrier, since only one per cent of the Lithuanians and 4 per cent of the Poles answer that their employer does not permit union membership.

Thirteen per cent of the Poles and 17 per cent of the Lithuanians find trade union membership to be too costly. In comparison, in a survey of employees in Norway as a whole, 30 per cent of the non-unionised workers felt that the membership was too costly (Neergaard 2020b).

A total of 33 per cent of the Poles and 12 per cent of the Lithuanians report that there is no trade union in their workplace. Among Poles in the construction industry, 39 per cent report that this is the case.

Furthermore, 14 per cent of the Poles and 6 per cent of the Lithuanians believe that Norwegian trade unions do not care about foreign workers. Five per cent of the Polish women are of this opinion, and 16 per cent of the men. However, there is no such gender difference among the Lithuanians.

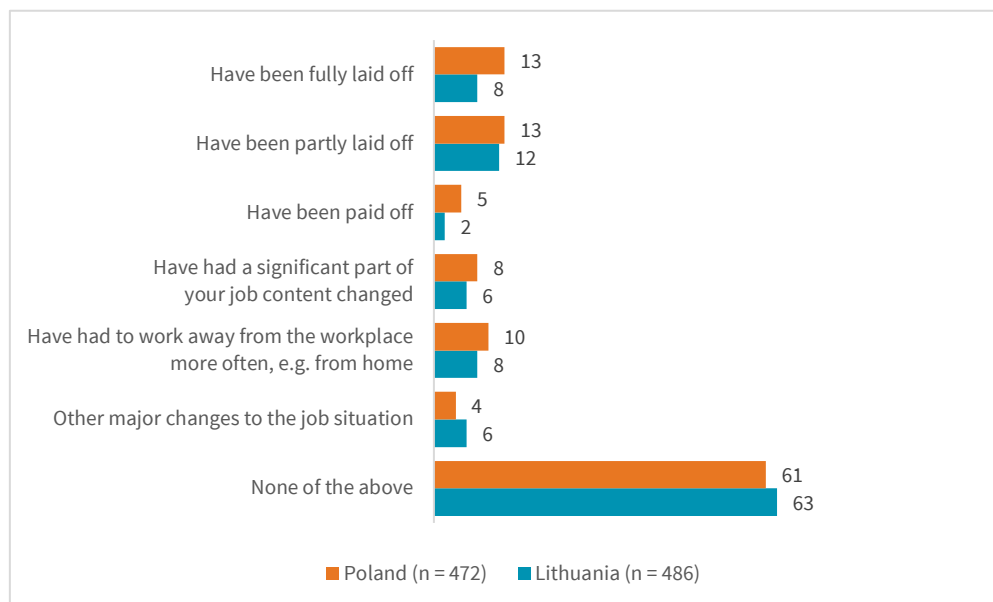
Among the highest paid Poles (over NOK 450 000), a somewhat larger proportion think that Norwegian trade unions do not care about foreign workers (19 per cent), and that membership is too costly (18 per cent). The highest paid Lithuanians do not share this opinion.

8 Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how dependent the Norwegian labour market has become on migrant workers. Closed borders and problems with receiving unemployment benefit from their home country has placed many of these workers in a difficult situation. The consequences were most serious for those who travel back and forth from their home country, such as commuters. The respondents in this survey are resident in Norway, and 95 per cent of the Poles and 100 per cent of the Lithuanians were in Norway when the survey was conducted.

As shown in Figure 8.1, there are nevertheless some whose work situation has changed as a result of the pandemic.

Figure 8.1 'In the context of the ongoing COVID-19 situation, has any of the following happened to you?' Select all that apply. Per cent.



The Polish migrant workers have been hardest hit by lay-offs and unemployment caused by the pandemic.²⁵ A total of 26 per cent of them have been partly or fully laid off, and another 5 per cent are now unemployed. Among the Lithuanians, the corresponding figures are 20 and 2 per cent respectively.

A total of 22 per cent of the Poles have had their work situation changed in other ways. The corresponding proportion among the Lithuanians is 20 per cent.

Statistics from the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) show that 9.6 per cent of the Norwegian workforce was laid off in April 2020, and 3 per cent

²⁵ This survey was conducted in the second half of 2020. Now, more than six months later, the situation may have changed.

were fully unemployed. This was the highest rate of lay-offs in 2020; the proportion declined throughout the year and reached 2.2 per cent in December.²⁶

Although our figures are not directly comparable with the figures for a specific month, it appears as though Polish and Lithuanian workers have been affected more severely than what we see in the labour market in general. This applies to the proportion of lay-offs in particular.

Lithuanians with the lowest incomes (less than NOK 300 000) have been those most affected by lay-offs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the Poles, the lowest income group has a higher proportion who are now unemployed or have had their work tasks significantly changed as a result of the pandemic.

We used regression analysis to take a more detailed look at what can explain the likelihood of having been laid off (partly or fully) or being unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 ‘In the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, have you ever been partly or fully laid off or unemployed?’ Linear regression. Red means a negative effect, green a positive.

Variables	Effect
Man	Red
31–40 years	
41–50 years	
Over 50 years	
Eastern Norway	Red
South and West Norway	Red
Central Norway	Red
Northern Norway	
Children in Norway	
Manufacturing	Red
Private services	Green
Health care and kindergartens	Red
Other industry	
First registered In Norway 2010–2012	
First registered In Norway 2013–2018	
Income 2018: NOK 301 000–450 000	
Income: More than NOK 450 000	Red
Country background: Poland	
Pays income tax	
Trade union member	
Speaks mainly Norwegian at work	Red

As for the workforce in general, industry affiliation is the main determinant of lay-offs and unemployment. We know that of all sectors of the Norwegian economy, the private services industry is the one to be hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, and this result is thus hardly surprising. In particular, restaurants and hotels have needed to remain closed for various periods through the pandemic. The risk of being laid off

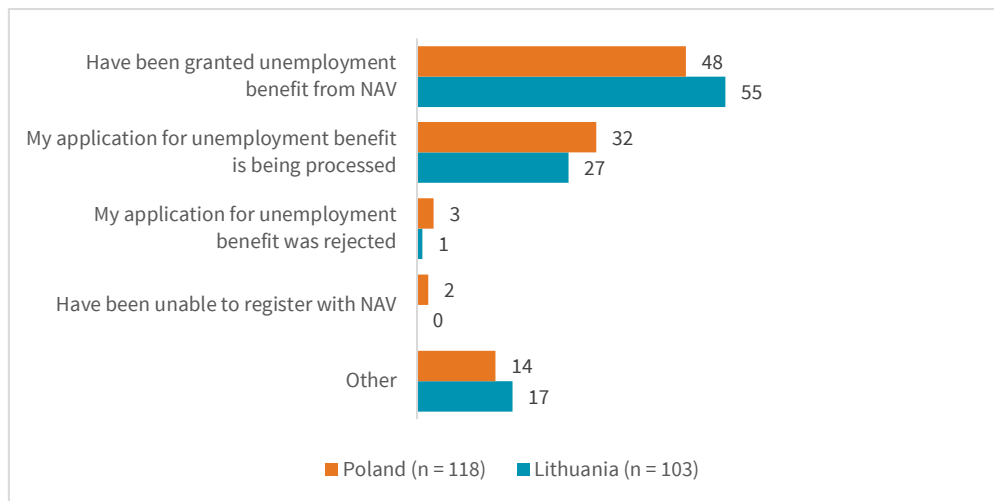
²⁶ Laid-off workers include registered job seekers who have been granted unemployment benefit during lay-offs or whose application for unemployment benefit has not been rejected.

or paid off is lower for workers in the manufacturing industry, the healthcare sector and kindergartens. In general, the risk is lower for men than for women.

Income also plays a role, whereby those who earn more than NOK 450 000 are at a lower risk. Speaking Norwegian in the workplace also reduces the risk of being laid off or paid off.

Those who had been laid off or paid off were asked whether they had applied for and been granted unemployment benefit.

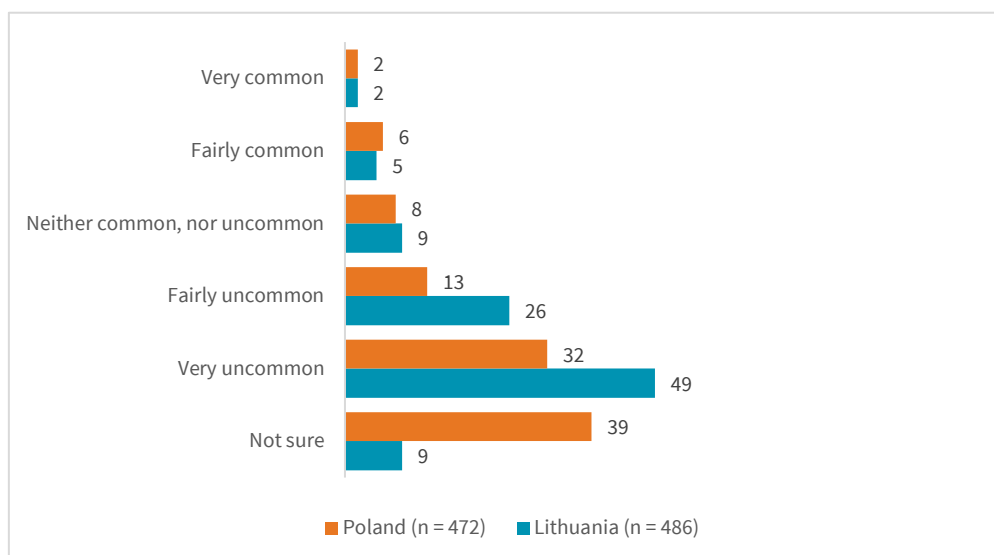
Figure 8.2 Proportion who have applied for, been granted or denied unemployment benefit. Per cent.



The vast majority has applied for and been granted unemployment benefit from NAV, or their application was being processed. Very few reported being refused unemployment benefit. The difference between the Polish and Lithuanian respondents is not statistically significant.

We also asked the respondents whether they thought that abuse of the unemployment benefit scheme was common or uncommon in their industry. The responses are shown in Figure 8.3.

Figure 8.3 'In light of the COVID-19 situation, how common do you think abuse of the unemployment benefit scheme is in your industry?' Per cent.



Eight per cent of the Polish and 7 per cent of the Lithuanian respondents believe that abuse of the unemployment scheme is common. At the other end of the scale, 75 per cent of the Lithuanians and 45 per cent of the Polish respondents believe that it is uncommon. A high proportion of the Polish respondents – 39 per cent – answered ‘Uncertain’.

Thirteen per cent of the youngest Poles (under 30 years) believe that this is common. Among the Polish women, 40 per cent think that this is very uncommon. Poles who live in Oslo believe that this is common to a greater extent than their counterparts in other regions – here, 6 per cent answer ‘Very common’ and 11 per cent ‘Fairly common’. Lithuanians who work in the construction industry answer ‘Very uncommon’ somewhat less frequently than the Lithuanian group as a whole (42 vs. 49 per cent).

9 Conclusion

Around 17 years after the first EU enlargement towards Eastern Europe we are now in a position to discuss the pay and working conditions of migrant workers in a more long-term perspective. The enlargements of the EU and the EEA have been referred to as a social experiment: never before have countries with such wide disparities in income and cost levels been merged into a free market. In Norway, it resulted in an immigration wave of historic proportions.

The results in this report can form the basis for a discussion on long-term effects, and they also raise the question of whether resident immigrants from the two main sending countries, Poland and Lithuania, have been integrated into Norwegian working and social life. The majority of the respondents in this survey have lived in Norway for many years, have permanent jobs and are rarely exposed to unfair treatment in the workplace. They are all in economically productive age groups and tend to work full time. So can we conclude that all is well?

In essence, these results give an indication of the significance of residence status. In other words, the worst abuses in the form of low pay and unfair treatment mainly affect migrant workers who work in Norway but are not resident here.

This notwithstanding, the results show that the majority of the Polish and Lithuanian immigrants are concentrated in specific segments of the labour market, the majority earn less than the average among Norwegian workers, and fewer of them own their own home compared to Norwegians in general. Does this mean that migrant workers continue to be regarded as a labour reserve that can be shoved in and out as needed? Or does it reflect a trend towards a more permanent division of the labour force into an A team and B team?

This is a group of immigrants who have largely been left to their own devices. There is no official integration policy for migrant workers, in contrast to the comprehensive integration policies that target other immigrant groups. It may appear as though the authorities lack a deliberate policy to treat migrant workers as something other than temporary and mobile resources (Båtevik et al. 2017). The workplace has been left as the key arena for integration. A natural follow-up question would be to ask what it really means to be integrated. We will not go into this discussion here, but integration could include being employed, having an understanding of laws and regulations and of how society functions, opportunities to make use of the educational system, reasonable Norwegian language proficiency and home of their own. If geographical spread is also seen as a sign of integration, this most definitely applies to immigrants from Poland and Lithuania, who have settled in every region of the country.

In the early 2000s, the trade unions took the position that migrant workers were welcome, but on Norwegian terms. Labour migration has enabled Norway to implement major projects that otherwise would have been both costly and complicated. For example, Kristin Halvorsen, then Minister of Finance, said in 2006 that the Government relied on migrant workers in order to build sufficient kindergartens as part of the pre-school reform. A survey undertaken by Fafo in 2019 showed that a majority

of the Norwegian population believed that labour migration was necessary to secure an adequate supply of labour in all industries.

In the years after 2004, public discourse has tended to concentrate on the prevention of social dumping and work-related crime, i.e. avoiding unwanted consequences of labour migration. Less attention has been paid to the issue of equality. For example, Friberg (2016) concluded that measures to strengthen the migrant workers' competitiveness and position in the labour market have *not* been prioritised in the years following the EU enlargements. Friberg highlighted areas such as language training, competence enhancement and recognition of qualifications obtained abroad.

Experience from the generally applied collective agreements indicates that increasingly few employees are paid less than the minimum rates. On the other hand, hardly any Norwegians earn as little as the minimum rate. The results from this survey show that the main motivation for travelling to Norway is financial, i.e. the opportunity to earn more than at home. After spending more than a decade working and living in this country, other issues will naturally increase in importance. Most likely, so will also the perception of not being valued as highly as Norwegian-born colleagues. Among the Polish construction workers, approximately four in ten believe that they earn less than a Norwegian person in the same job. Among migrant workers in general, one in four believe the same. In other words, a considerable proportion feel that they are discriminated against in terms of pay. This can perhaps be explained by using a term coined by the French historian Alexis de Tocqueville, 'the revolution of rising expectations'. This means that as one's own situation improves, expectations rise, along with the realisation that others have an even better life.

How can such perceptions of unequal treatment be remedied? Many factors can obviously play a role, such as recognition of competencies and collegial relations in the workplace. In a study of experiences related to the scheme for the recognition of education and training completed abroad, it was shown that such recognition often resulted in better job security and more responsibilities (Andersen et al. 2021). As yet, however, this scheme is used to such a limited extent that it has barely had any effect for the resident migrant workers.

Based on the results of our survey, it is relevant to mention unionisation and Norwegian language proficiency as two further important 'reinforcements'.

In most cases, trade union membership will help safeguard an employee's position. Moreover, the Norwegian working life model depends on a high unionisation rate. In the years that have passed since 2004, recruitment of migrant workers to trade unions has proven difficult. This could be due to culture, traditions, costs, lack of knowledge and the initial assumption that the stay in Norway will not last all that long. This survey shows that the unionisation rate among migrant workers is lower than for the Norwegian population as a whole; somewhat less than 30 per cent of the Polish and Lithuanian migrant workers are trade union members, compared to approximately half of all Norwegian employees (Neergaard 2020a). Industry, age and workplace size partly explain the variations in the unionisation rate. If we look at unionisation rates within industries and sectors, the gap between migrant workers and the general Norwegian population shrinks considerably. Nevertheless, given that this survey includes the most established migrant workers, there is undoubtedly potential to increase the unionisation rate in this group. For example, one-third of our respondents report that they have never been asked to join a trade union.

Our survey has also shown a positive association between the likelihood of being a trade union member and mainly speaking Norwegian at work. Norwegian language

proficiency will also make it easier to explain existing qualifications, access information in the workplace and assert one's rights. Most likely, the importance of language skills is underestimated in large segments of working life, and there is a need to raise awareness in this area, including with a view to the organisation of the work and the working environment (Ødegård & Andersen 2020). Our findings on language proficiency give grounds for concern. Nearly four in ten resident migrant workers report having poor Norwegian language skills, which makes for a poor basis for integration. When it comes to language proficiency, the notion of free movement in the internal market and of EEA citizens being able to thrive does not seem to have been realised.

As mentioned above, the debate on labour migration has tended to focus on measures to combat low-wage competition and unfair treatment in the workplace. These issues have been important, and we can assume that in the absence of regulations and intensified monitoring by the inspectorates, the conditions would have been quite different.

In recent years, however, the concern for poor wages and labour conditions has been mixed with fears that too few will choose to come, or that those who are here will leave. Our survey shows that fair treatment at work and adequate housing are the main factors for the migrant workers remaining in Norway. These are basic needs for most of us, and continued efforts are required to ensure that migrant workers have adequate working and living conditions.

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic may also have had an effect on the reasons for staying. It is still too early to draw any conclusions about the effect of the pandemic on the employment and future plans of the migrant workers. Preliminary studies have shown that the lowest paid have been hardest hit by lay-offs and redundancies (Bratsberg et al. 2020). This group will also include a number of migrant workers. In addition, many of the resident migrant workers have felt stigmatised because of the widely reported 'imported infection'.²⁷

As observed in some quarters, we import labour, but it is people who come here. Many of those who have lived in Norway for a long time are unlikely to recognise themselves in the public discourse on and examples of social dumping and work-related crime. They will have other needs, such as language training, career guidance or advice on how to apply for a mortgage. Perhaps the continuing debate on migrant workers should be more differentiated, and a clearer distinction be made between those who are resident and those who are only here for a short stay. Most likely, this would help better target the efforts towards the various groups.

²⁷ <https://bystemmer.no/2021/01/samfunnet-svikter-oss/>

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Appendix: Regressions

Table 4.1 'What is the form of employment in your main job?': Permanent full-time. Linear regression. (n=955)

	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.649		7.743	0.000
Gender	0.187	0.230	5.958	0.000
Age: 31–40 years	0.084	0.111	2.091	0.037
Age: 41–50 years	0.025	0.030	0.573	0.567
Age: 50 year or older	-0.018	-0.018	-0.373	0.709
Eastern Norway	0.082	0.108	2.045	0.041
South and West Norway	0.048	0.060	1.146	0.252
Central Norway	0.018	0.011	0.295	0.768
Northern Norway	0.059	0.040	1.028	0.304
Children in Norway	0.030	0.040	1.110	0.267
Manufacturing	0.017	0.015	0.422	0.673
Private services	-0.057	-0.067	-1.736	0.083
Health care and kindergartens	-0.062	-0.042	-1.096	0.273
Other industry	-0.001	-0.001	-0.016	0.987
First registered in Norway 2010–2012	-0.018	-0.023	-0.632	0.528
First registered in Norway 2013–2018	-0.075	-0.091	-2.322	0.020
Nationality	-0.077	-0.103	-3.072	0.002
Do you pay income tax in Norway or Poland/Lithuania on your earnings in Norway?	0.011	0.007	0.235	0.814
Member of a trade union	0.084	0.100	3.107	0.002
What language do you mainly speak at work?	-0.021	-0.028	-0.835	0.404
Adjusted R2 .099				

Constant: Woman, 30 years or younger, Oslo, no children in Norway, construction industry, first registered in Norway before 2010, Lithuanian citizenship, pays no income tax in Norway or Poland/Lithuania, not a member of a trade union, speaks mainly no Norwegian at work

Table 6.1 What affects the likelihood of speaking mainly Norwegian in the workplace. Linear regression. (n=951)

	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.530		4.953	0.000
Gender	-0.186	-0.173	-4.490	0.000
Age: 31–40 years	-0.108	-0.107	-2.088	0.037
Age: 41–50 years	-0.061	-0.056	-1.111	0.267
Age: 50 years or older	-0.059	-0.044	-0.948	0.343
Eastern Norway	0.102	0.101	1.977	0.048
South and West Norway	0.060	0.057	1.133	0.257
Central Norway	0.039	0.018	0.497	0.620
Northern Norway	0.028	0.014	0.383	0.702
Children in Norway	0.123	0.123	3.583	0.000
Manufacturing	-0.087	-0.057	-1.696	0.090
Private services	0.095	0.083	2.249	0.025
Health care and kindergartens	0.363	0.184	5.042	0.000
Other industry	0.148	0.112	3.132	0.002
First registered in Norway 2010–2012	-0.063	-0.061	-1.718	0.086
First registered in Norway 2013–2018	-0.150	-0.137	-3.621	0.000
Income 2018: NOK 300 000–450 000	-0.012	-0.011	-0.289	0.773
Income 2018: More than NOK 450 000	0.010	0.010	0.232	0.817
Nationality	0.051	0.051	1.591	0.112
Do you pay income tax in Norway or Poland/Lithuania on your earnings in Norway?	-0.047	-0.024	-0.793	0.428
Member of a trade union	0.101	0.091	2.883	0.004

Adjusted R2 .162

Constant: Woman, 30 years or younger, Oslo, no children in Norway, construction industry, first registered in Norway before 2010, income 2018: less than NOK 300 000, Lithuanian citizenship, pays no income tax in Norway or Poland/Lithuania, not a member of a trade union

Table 7.1 Trade union membership. Linear regression. (n=951)

	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.132		1.310	0.191
Gender	-0.118	-0.122	-3.044	0.002
Age: 31–40 years	0.014	0.015	0.289	0.772
Age: 41–50 years	0.032	0.033	0.626	0.531
Age: 50 years or older	0.052	0.043	0.902	0.368
Eastern Norway	0.055	0.060	1.139	0.255
South and West Norway	0.062	0.065	1.253	0.211
Central Norway	0.203	0.103	2.777	0.006
Northern Norway	0.181	0.104	2.669	0.008
Children in Norway	-0.027	-0.030	-0.832	0.405
Manufacturing	0.089	0.065	1.867	0.062
Private services	0.054	0.052	1.363	0.173
Health care and kindergartens	0.267	0.151	3.969	0.000
Other industry	0.069	0.059	1.576	0.115
First registered in Norway 2010–2012	-0.032	-0.035	-0.935	0.350
First registered in Norway 2013–2018	-0.036	-0.037	-0.935	0.350
Income 2018: NOK 300 000–450 000	0.120	0.128	3.243	0.001
Income 2018: More than NOK 450 000	0.221	0.243	5.824	0.000
Nationality	0.006	0.006	0.186	0.853
Do you pay income tax in Norway or Poland/Lithuania on your earnings in Norway?	-0.066	-0.038	-1.201	0.230
What language do you mainly speak at work?	0.087	0.097	2.883	0.004
Adjusted R2 .100				

Constant: Woman, 30 years or younger, Oslo, no children in Norway, construction industry, first registered in Norway before 2010, income 2018: less than NOK 300 000, Lithuanian citizenship, pays no income tax in Norway or Poland/Lithuania, speaks mainly no Norwegian at work

Table 8.1 In association with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, have you ever been fully or partly laid off or made redundant? (n=951)

	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.097		4.994	0.000
Gender	0.037	-0.108	-2.650	0.008
Age: 31–40 years	0.046	0.074	1.363	0.173
Age: 41–50 years	0.049	-0.052	-0.973	0.331
Age: 50 years or older	0.056	-0.028	-0.581	0.561
Eastern Norway	0.046	-0.112	-2.081	0.038
South and West Norway	0.047	-0.129	-2.433	0.015
Central Norway	0.070	-0.084	-2.233	0.026
Northern Norway	0.065	0.009	0.223	0.823
Children in Norway	0.031	-0.021	-0.565	0.572
Manufacturing	0.046	-0.084	-2.356	0.019
Private services	0.038	0.124	3.166	0.002
Health care and kindergartens	0.065	-0.099	-2.551	0.011
Other Industry	0.042	-0.024	-0.629	0.530
First registered in Norway 2010–2012	0.033	-0.041	-1.086	0.278
First registered in Norway 2013–2018	0.037	-0.017	-0.435	0.664
Income 2018: NOK 300 000–450 000	0.036	-0.046	-1.137	0.256
Income 2018: More than NOK 450 000	0.037	-0.087	-2.021	0.044
Nationality	0.029	0.060	1.762	0.078
Do you pay income tax in Norway or Poland/Lithuania on your earnings in Norway?	0.053	-0.015	-0.467	0.641
Member of a trade union	0.031	-0.028	-0.831	0.406
What language do you mainly speak at work?	0.029	-0.070	-2.023	0.043
Adjusted R2 .074				

Constant: Woman, 30 years or younger, Oslo, no children in Norway, construction industry, first registered in Norway before 2010, income 2018: less than NOK 300 000, Lithuanian citizenship, pays no income tax in Norway or Poland/Lithuania, not a member of a trade union, speaks mainly no Norwegian at work

Working and living conditions among resident migrants from Poland and Lithuania

This is the first survey ever to have been undertaken among resident migrants in Norway. A total of 1000 Polish and Lithuanian workers were asked about their working and living conditions. The majority of them have lived in Norway for many years, are permanently employed and rarely exposed to unfair treatment at work. However, they are concentrated in specific parts of the labour market, earn less than the Norwegian average and fewer of them are homeowners.



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