



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

MANIFESTO ON AN INCLUSIVE UNIVERSITY

Presentation of the results of the
2023 survey addressed to forcibly
displaced university students



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UNHCR is particularly grateful to the students who took the time to complete the survey and whose responses informed the writing of the report thereby allowing for their voices to be heard.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report illustrates and analyses the results of a survey that UNHCR, together with Italian universities participating in the “Manifesto on an Inclusive University” project, promoted among forcibly displaced students enrolled in different universities. The survey, based on a voluntary and anonymous participation, was completed in the second half of 2023..

A total of 194 students from 35 Italian universities responded to the survey consisting of 88 questions. The unavailability of data on the overall population of students forced to flee from their country enrolled in Italian universities and academies prevents this report from being statistically representative. However, it still offers significant insights for future targeted analyses on the integration of students forced to flee from their country into the academic and social fabric.

The main results of the survey are summarised below.

General information

Slightly less than half of the participants (**44%**) are **refugees** followed by students who are **refugees in another country** with a study permit (**16%**) and **beneficiaries of temporary protection (14%)**. Other legal statuses are featured in smaller percentages. There is an almost equal distribution between **men (56%) and women (40%)**, with 4% of students not indicating their gender. The two most represented nationalities are **Afghan (24%) and Ukrainian (22%)**.

48% are enrolled in a Bachelor’s degree programme and 49% in a Master’s degree programme, mainly in Political Sciences, Economics, Computer Science and Linguistics. **89% claim to be in line with the course schedule.**

Enrollment

54% were exempted from paying university fees as beneficiaries of international protection; **71% received a scholarship**, 48% of which were provided by Universities, and 27% by Regional Institutions for the Right to Education. The answers, however, reveal the limitations in accessing the various forms of support due to **lack of knowledge** of the opportunities and the **complexity of procedures**.

It is clear that significant **barriers to accessing** tertiary education currently exist in connection with the autonomy universities have in the validation and recognition of refugee students’ qualifications; different universities require specific documentation rather than adopting the *credential evaluation*,¹ as set forth by the UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education.² **The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR)**, a tool developed to facilitate and speed up this process, was used in **only 2% of cases**.

Academic integration

Knowledge of **Italian language represents one of the main difficulties in integration processes**: 37% claim to

¹Evaluation and recognition of academic credentials under Law 148/02 ratifying the 1997 Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications - https://www.miur.it/0006menu_c/0012docume/0098normat/2547ratifi.htm

²This is due to the fact that Italy has not yet ratified the Convention - <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/global-convention-recognition-qualifications-concerning-higher-education?hub=66535#item-2>

have a basic knowledge and only 21% an advanced level. The advanced level of English is three times higher than Italian (62%).

The most problematic areas, including those where students ask for more support, are those related to **finances (30%)**, understanding and speaking **Italian (21%)**, difficulties in the administrative management of scholarships, and lack of tutoring. Problems related to the personal sphere also emerge, including **loneliness**, the difficulty of finding **accommodation and the absence of *ad hoc* support** for refugees.

55% of participants confirm that their universities offer **specific support services** for asylum seekers or beneficiaries of protection, and **72% say they use them**. 31% are “very” satisfied, while 5% are “not at all” satisfied.

Among the services defined as **most important**, although not guaranteed by all universities, are **administrative and bureaucratic support, tutoring and teaching support, linguistic mediation, and psychological counselling**. It is worth noting that some of these services correspond to the challenges stated by respondents.

Social integration

The support provided to students by **various actors present on the territory (universities, associations, social networks)**, who were involved since the moment they arrived in Italy (75% of participants were helped by associations, friends/family or UNHCR), emerges as fundamental. Similarly, 54% were supported by associations or universities in their search for accommodation, while 14% received some form of economic-material aid from associations.

Relationships among peers and with professors appear satisfactory and able to positively influence students' personal and intellectual growth. Nevertheless, it emerges that **35% found it difficult to meet and build new friendships with other students**. The level of recognition given to the professors' commitment and motivation to teach is high.

Discrimination emerges as an issue. While **46%** say they have **felt discriminated against**, only **a quarter** of them claim to have experienced it within the academic context. Overall, 6% claimed to have experienced **discrimination in their academic career**. Perception of discrimination by students from Asia and Africa is higher also on account of their physical appearance.

The **work dimension** remains critical and full of expectations. Two thirds of the students do not work and only a quarter have done so in the past.

55% say they socialise with Italians and people from other countries, but a significant **12% say they do not socialise with anyone**. **Student associations** attract the largest number of students (**30%** say they are members), while **participation in cultural events and activities** offered within the academic context **is very low**. The percentage of those who say they have never attended a concert, exhibition, show, or meeting of a student organisation ranges **between 42% and 53%**.

57% say they are satisfied with their academic experience overall and only 9% consider the possibility to drop out of university before graduating. With respect to future prospects, the course of study chosen has a positive influence in providing more clarity in choosing a job (85%), and the desire to **stay in Italy (73%) at the end of the studies** is evident.

MANIFESTO

The Manifesto on an Inclusive University project,³ which has been promoted by UNHCR since 2019, reached 59 member institutions by the end of 2023, marking a significant step towards building a welcoming and inclusive environment for refugee students.⁴

The activities carried out over the past year have contributed to the Manifesto's mission. Among them, two thematic meetings addressed to university staff: the first one focused on the principles and procedure of international protection and other complementary forms of protection, a second one on the reception system of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Italy, both considered relevant in light of the changes to the legal framework occurred in 2023.

Furthermore, based on the results of the working groups conducted in 2022, a survey was administered to refugee students, which gathered valuable information and whose results will be presented in this report.

Looking ahead to 2024, the aim is on the one hand to promote opportunities for UNHCR and tertiary education institutions supporting the Manifesto to meet the challenges emerged. On the other hand, expanding the network of institutions involved, seeking new members, and strengthening existing ties. The intent is to encourage initiatives aimed at filling the identified gaps, suggesting an ever deeper understanding of the needs of the student population composed of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international and temporary protection, promoting further meetings and synergies with key actors while supporting, at the same time, the students' active involvement, so that they can provide valuable input into the definition of interventions intended for them.



³ Hereinafter "Manifesto".

⁴ Below, the terms "refugee students" or "students forced to flee from their country" will be used more briefly with reference to all categories of students targeted by the survey, without making a distinction on the basis of the type of protection and without any gender discrimination.

The stages of the survey

This report shows the data obtained through the above-mentioned survey addressed to university students who are asylum seekers, holders of a residence permit for international protection or beneficiaries of another form of complementary protection, as well as students recognised as refugees in another country and holders, in Italy, of a residence permit for study purposes.⁵ The survey was developed between 2022 and 2023 in the framework of a working group involving the University of Bari Aldo Moro, University of Milan Bicocca, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, University of Rome La Sapienza, University of Verona, with the aim of acquiring data on the profiles of refugee students in Italy, as well as to encourage a broader and deeper understanding, nation-wide, of the strengths and weaknesses of the academic integration paths of people forced to flee from their country, thus contributing to the definition of the actions outlined in the Manifesto. The survey was distributed by Manifesto universities on 24 July 2023 and refugee students⁶ enrolled were able to participate until 10 October 2023.

Survey structure and methodological note

The students' participation was voluntary and anonymous, except the possibility to provide their name and contact details in order to be informed of UNHCR initiatives. The survey consisted of **88 questions**, divided into the following sections:

1. **General information**, to collect personal data, legal status and university career
2. **Migratory and cultural background**, concerning the way of arrival in Italy, family of origin, knowledge of languages
3. **University registration and enrolment**, referring to access to the academic curriculum chosen and scholarships
4. **Academic integration services**, related to the difficulties encountered and opinions on various aspects of the academic experience
5. **Social integration**, with questions related to social inclusion outside the academic context

The survey included questions with predefined multiple answers, to carry out a quantitative data collection, and open questions to collect a more structured, qualitative viewpoint. Open answers were categorised to make them valuable and contextualised in an overall reading. The survey was available for completion in both Italian and English. Most students chose to use the English version.

It should be clarified that the unavailability of data with reference to the overall population of students forced to flee from their country enrolled in Italian universities and academies makes it impossible to attribute statistical representativeness to the cross-section interviewed. Therefore, one must bear in mind that it is not possible to make generalisations on the results obtained, and this is due to the impossibility of defining the whole group and its significant sample.

The purpose of the survey and of this report is to gather the needs of refugee students by giving them a say; to suggest the development, from this experience, of increasingly accurate, systemic and replicable tools to know and monitor the evolution of the contexts; to encourage reflection on the main barriers to access to tertiary education highlighted by participants, knowing that, although their answers are not statistically representative, they may constitute excellent starting points for improving services offered by universities. This material can also be used for future in-depth studies and to enrich other projects and research. Its main value lies in providing a general overview of the lives and experiences of many students forced to flee from their country during their academic journey in Italy.

⁵ For ease of reading, the terms "refugee students" or "students forced to flee" will be used on the following pages to refer to all categories of students targeted by the survey.

⁶ In many cases, the survey was sent to international students; the first question was aimed at determining the legal status of the participant; only those who declared to have a residence permit among those of interest in the survey were allowed to complete the survey.

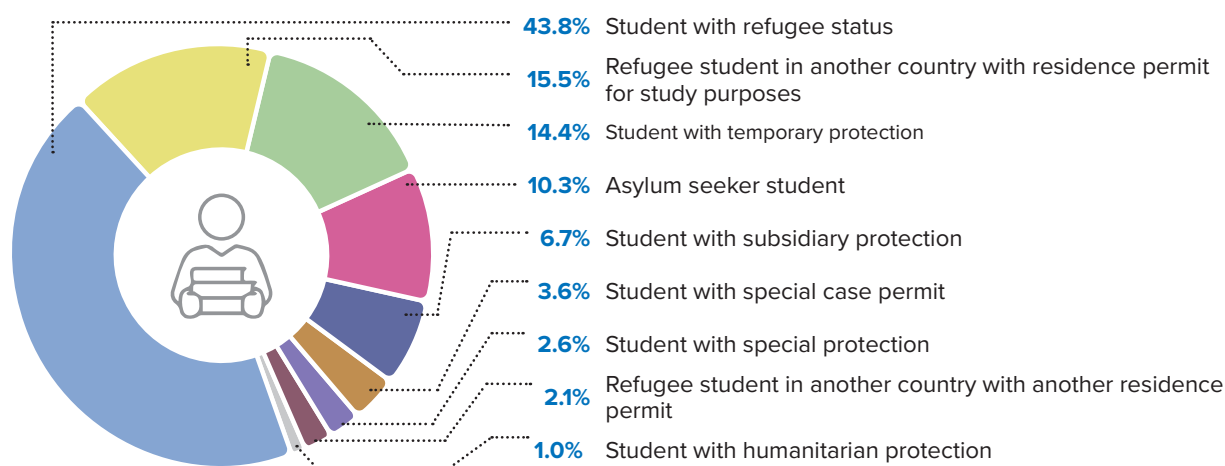
1. GENERAL INFORMATION

194 refugee students from 35 universities participated in the survey⁷ Participants were asked questions aimed at outlining key information on gender, nationality, legal and academic status to gain an overview of their profiles.

1.1 Current legal status of the international student

Participants stated that they had been granted refugee status in a higher percentage than other residence permits, around 44% (mainly from **Afghanistan and Ukraine**). On the other hand, 15.5% stated that they had been recognised as refugees in another country and were currently in Italy on a residence permit for study purposes. Approximately 14% of the total number of participants claimed to have a residence permit for temporary protection (Ukrainian, Tunisian, Bangladeshi, Afghan nationality), while only 6.7% claimed to have a residence permit for subsidiary protection (Afghan, Albanian, Colombian, Congolese, Iraqi, Libyan, Nigerian, and Venezuelan nationality).

F1. CURRENT LEGAL STATUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT



With reference to the above data, it should be recalled that temporary protection is granted to people of Ukrainian citizenship, or their family members, who left Ukraine on or after 24 February 2022, and may also be granted to people who, although of a different nationality or stateless, were living in Ukraine with a permanent permit or for reasons of international protection or equivalent national protection.⁸ In addition, people of Ukrainian citizenship may also have other forms of protection, including refugee status and subsidiary protection.

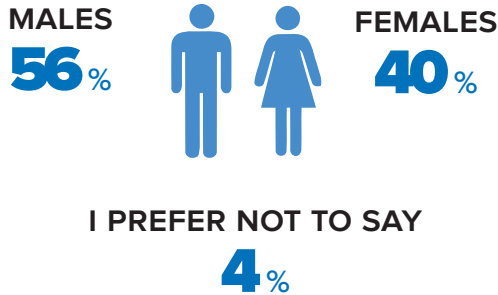
⁷ Università Politecnica delle Marche, Politecnico di Bari, Politecnico di Torino, Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza", Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia, Università per stranieri di Perugia, Università degli Studi della Tuscia - Viterbo, Università degli Studi del Piemonte Orientale "Amedeo Avogadro", Università degli Studi di Bari, Università degli Studi di Bergamo, Università degli Studi di Bologna, Università degli Studi di Brescia, Università degli Studi di Genova, Università degli Studi di Messina, Università degli Studi di Milano - La Statale, Università degli Studi di Milano - Bicocca, Università degli Studi di Padova, Università degli Studi di Parma, Università degli Studi di Perugia, Università di Pisa, Università degli Studi di Siena, Università degli Studi di Torino, Università degli Studi di Trento, Università degli Studi di Trieste, Università degli Studi di Udine, Università degli Studi di Verona, Università LUISS Guido Carli, Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale", Università degli Studi Roma Tre.

⁸ Prime Minister's Decree dated 28 March 2022 - <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2022/04/15/22A02488/sg> Decree Law 16/2023 extended the validity of residence permits for temporary protection to 31 December 2023.

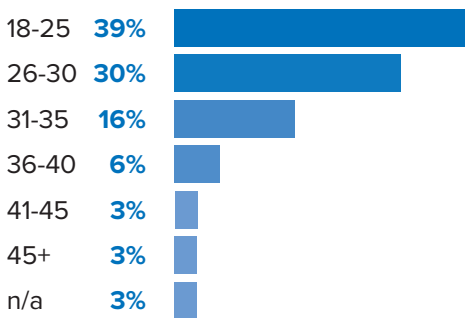
1.2 Gender, age, nationality

56% of participants were men, 40% women and 4% preferred not to declare a gender. Approximately 70% of the participants were aged between 21 and 31 (136 born between 1992 and 2002).

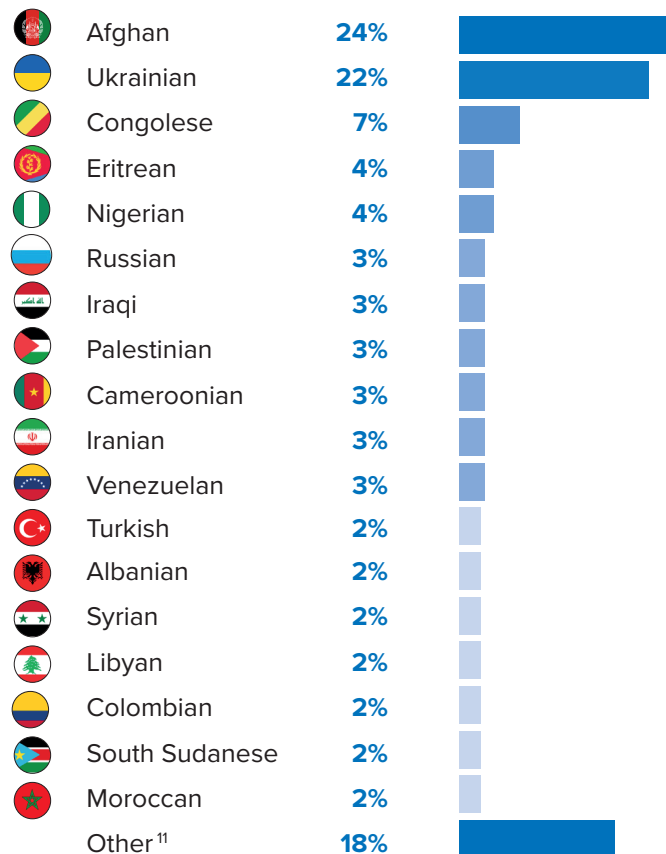
F2. GENDER



F3. AGE



F4. NATIONALITY



Among those who participated in the survey, the top two nationalities are **Afghan with 24% of the answers and Ukrainian with 22%**. The third nationality represented is Congolese with 7% of the answers. These data align with recent trends in migration in Italy, characterized by evacuation efforts and arrivals due to the political crisis in Afghanistan in August 2021 and the conflict in Ukraine, which has led millions of people to flee their country since February 2022.⁹ More than 180,000 Ukrainians have sought protection in Italy¹⁰. It is also interesting to note the composition of the population of **participants of Afghan and Ukrainian nationality, the majority being men (68%) in the former case and women (71%) in the latter**.

⁹ Refugees from Ukraine recorded globally: 6,319,700, last updated 28 November 2023 - Source: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

¹⁰ 185,090 applications for Temporary Protection have been filed in Italy as of 12/01/2024. Source: <https://mappe.protezionecivile.gov.it/it/mappe-e-dashboards-emergenze/mappe-e-dashboards-ucraina/ricieste-di-protezione-temporanea/>

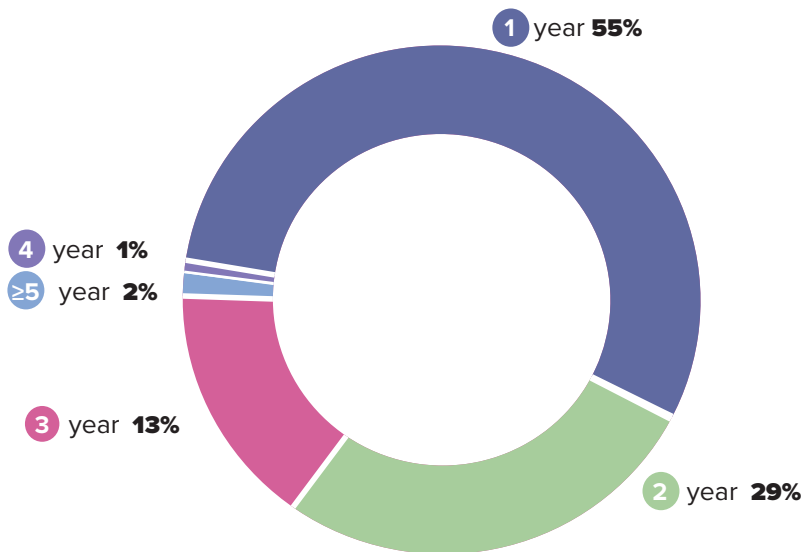
¹¹ One person from each of these nationalities: Bangladeshi, Gambian, Indian, Gabonese, Guinean, Salvadorian, Somali, Ethiopian, Rwandan, Tanzanian, Burundian, Tunisian, Belarusian, Kurdish, Pakistani, Chinese, Kosovar, Brazilian.

1.3 Academic programme

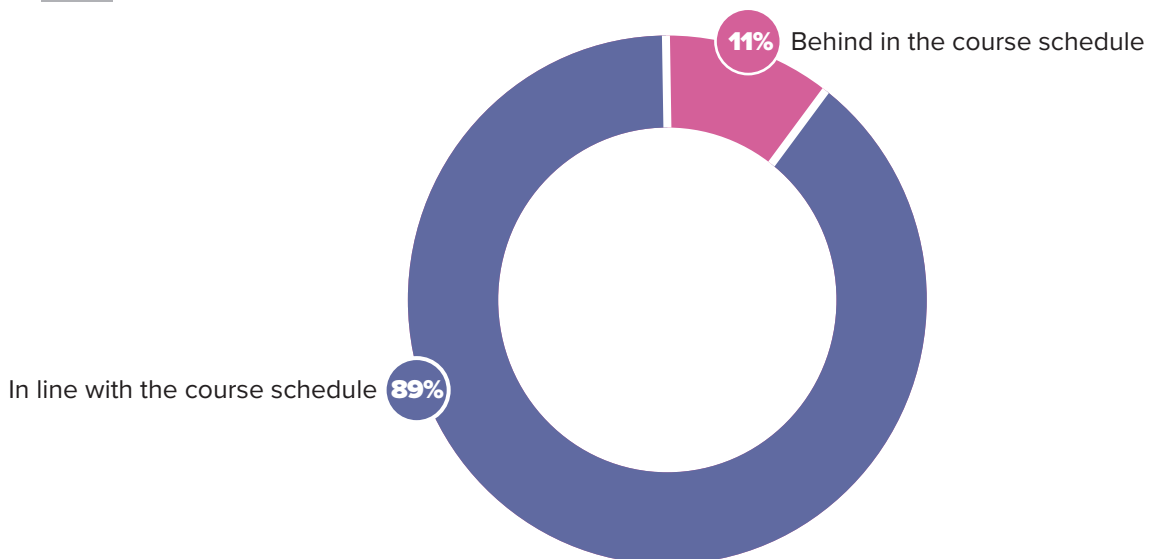
With respect to the academic programme, the percentage of participants **enrolled in a Bachelor’s degree programme amounts to 48%** (of whom 23% are Ukrainians and 19% Afghans); similarly, **49% are enrolled in a Master’s degree programme** (of whom 30% are Afghans and 21% Ukrainians); 2% in a postgraduate or doctoral programme.

55% of participants are in their first year of attendance, while less than a third (29%) are in their second year. Only 13% are in their third year. A significant majority (89%) of students claim to be in line with the course schedule, while only 11% claim to be behind in the course schedule.

F.5 YEAR OF ATTENDANCE

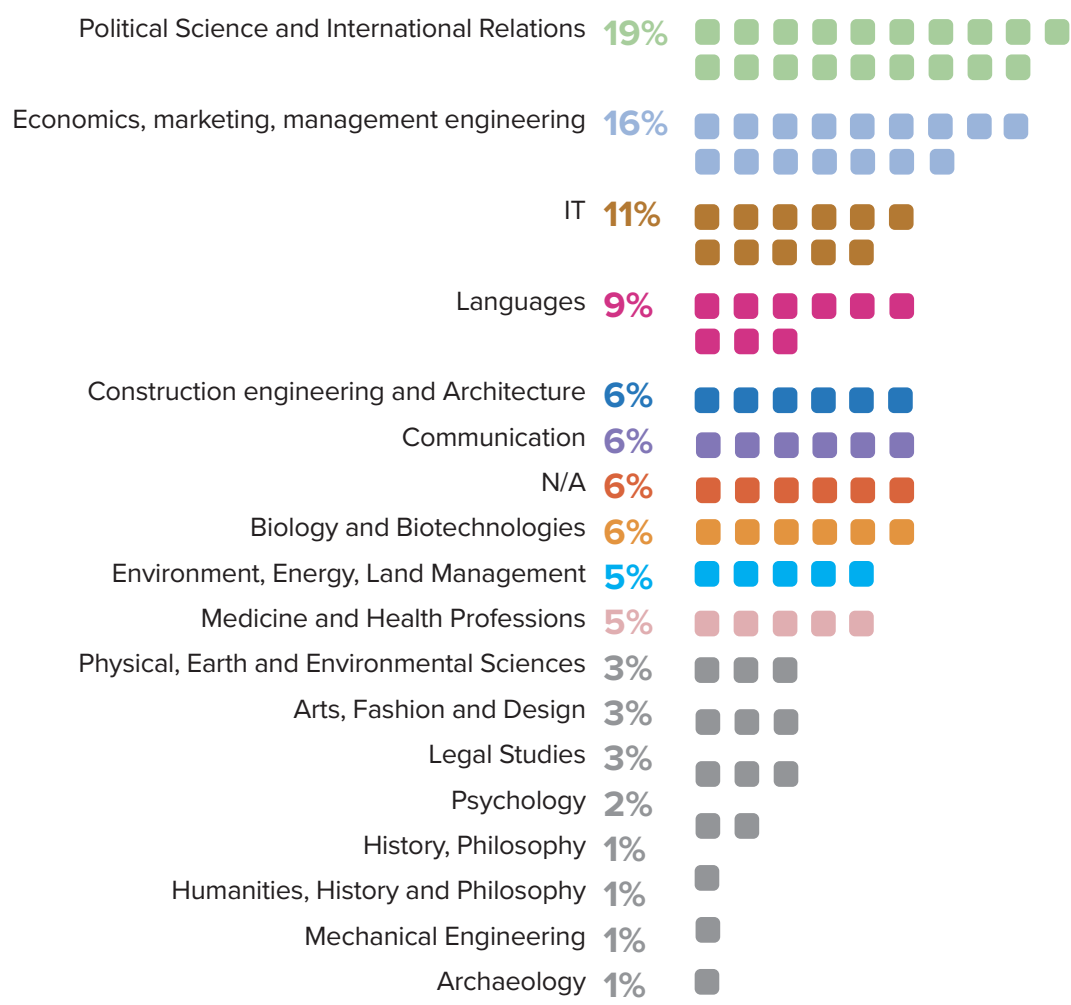


F.6 PROGRESS OF STUDIES



The table displays academic programs attended by participants, categorized based on specific curricula and relevant departments. For instance, Development Cooperation programs fall under **Political Science and International Relations**, while Management programs are categorized under **Economics, Marketing, and Management Engineering**. These two categories of programmes are also **the most attended**. They are followed by IT programs, ranging from Computer Science and Technology to Computer Engineering and Business Management.






F.7 NAME OF DEGREE'S/MASTER'S/DOCTORAL PROGRAMME ¹²



¹² The N/A category includes all answers indicating the type of programme instead of the name, e.g., Bachelor, Master, or more general "programme".

In the table below, you can find the percentages referring to qualifications obtained by participants prior to their current academic programme. **In the majority of cases, they had already obtained a Bachelor’s degree**, whereas around 7% had already obtained a Master’s degree. These responses, along with those related to their current academic programme, provide an insight into the likelihood of participants pursuing further studies by enrolling in a more advanced academic programme than the one they have already completed. It is worth noting that 86% of students with a three-year bachelor’s degree are currently enrolled in a Master’s degree, while among the 15 who already had a postgraduate certification, only 3 are pursuing a postgraduate specialisation, 9 are repeating the same level of studies, and 3 are attending a lower-level programme.

F.8 PRE-REGISTRATION QUALIFICATION¹³

	Bachelor’s Degrees	99	51%
	Bachelor’s degree	13	13%
	Master’s degree	85	86%
	Postgraduate/PhD	1	1%
	High School Diploma	71	36.6%
	Bachelor’s degree	69	97%
	Master’s degree	2	3%
	Master’s Degree e	15	7.7%
	Bachelor’s degree	3	20%
	Master’s degree	9	60%
	Postgraduate/PhD	3	20%
	Post-secondary education	6	3.1%
	Bachelor’s degree	6	100%
	Unclear	3	1.5%
	Bachelor’s degree	3	100%
Total		194	100%

- Pre-registration qualification
- Current programme attended

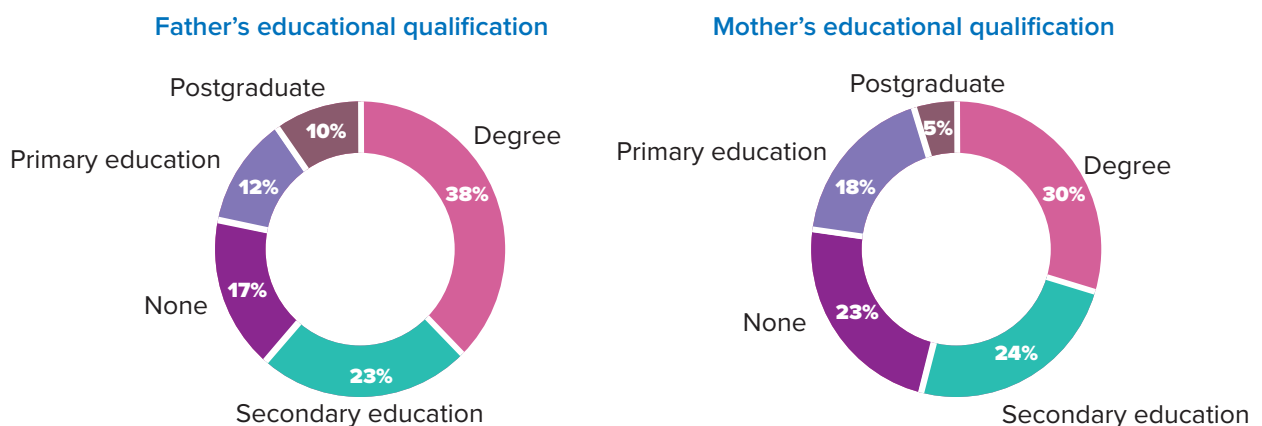
¹³ The category “Post-secondary education” includes answers indicating: college degree, diploma and foundation year course, 2 years of midwife; incomplete bachelor’s degree programme, while “unclear” includes answers indicating: certificates from university in Ukraine; computer science; special degree.

2. MIGRATION AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Family of origin

There are no major differences between the educational qualifications of the students' parents, in both cases there is a **prevalence of those holding a university degree** followed by a secondary school diploma. The percentage of parents with no qualifications is also significant (17% of fathers, 23% of mothers). The number of fathers holding a postgraduate degree is twice as high as the number of mothers.

F.9 PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS



Participants were asked questions about their parents' profession, providing them with a choice between four multiple answers (none; worker; employee; teacher) and one open answer. When analysing the results, it is important to consider that some participants mentioned only one profession or mentioned that the parent is retired, deceased, or not working, without specifying if they had worked previously. In cases where employment was mentioned, it was not always clear if it referred to their current situation or to their main occupation throughout their life. On the other hand, some participants provided two or three responses, listing multiple occupations or one job along with details on whether the parent is retired, deceased, or unemployed.

The responses concerning fathers' employment reveal that in 61 out of 194 cases (31%), participants mentioned that the parent is not working. In 50 of these instances (26%), no additional information was given, indicating that approximately **a quarter of the fathers are currently unemployed. 28% (55) are, or have been, workers** and out of these, 87% (48) did not indicate another profession. The most common job among the occupational categories mentioned by fathers is "worker," followed by "employee", which was reported in **12.89%** of the responses (25, with 22 not specifying any other occupations). This is followed by the categories of **teacher** and **manager**, albeit with less than 5% of the total (9 responses respectively). In 5 cases, the participants state that their parent is retired, while in 11 cases their parent is deceased. Many responses were classified as "other", showing a diverse range of occupations such as ship captain, laboratory scientist, tailor, and driver, among others.

In three cases concerning mothers, it is reported that the mother is deceased, in two cases retired, and in two other cases not working due to a disability. The **unemployment rate almost doubles (43%)**, reported in 95 cases out of a total of 194; of these, 81, or 41.75%, are without any indication of any other activity carried out, thus suggesting that, in the case of mothers, **one out of every two does not work**. Nine mothers are housewives, and only in two cases were they associated with further employment. Looking at the job categories, the worker category is the most frequently reported (36 times), and in 28 cases, it was the only job performed. This is followed by **clerk 12.89%** (25 answers) and teacher 4.64% (9). Also mothers

mention various other occupations, totaling 32 different roles reported. These include professions like nurse, midwife, doctor, tailor, and businesswoman, each mentioned between 1 and 4 times in the responses.

F.10 FATHER’S OCCUPATION ANSWERS INCLUDED UNDER “OTHER”



F.11 MOTHER’S OCCUPATION ANSWERS UNDER “OTHER”

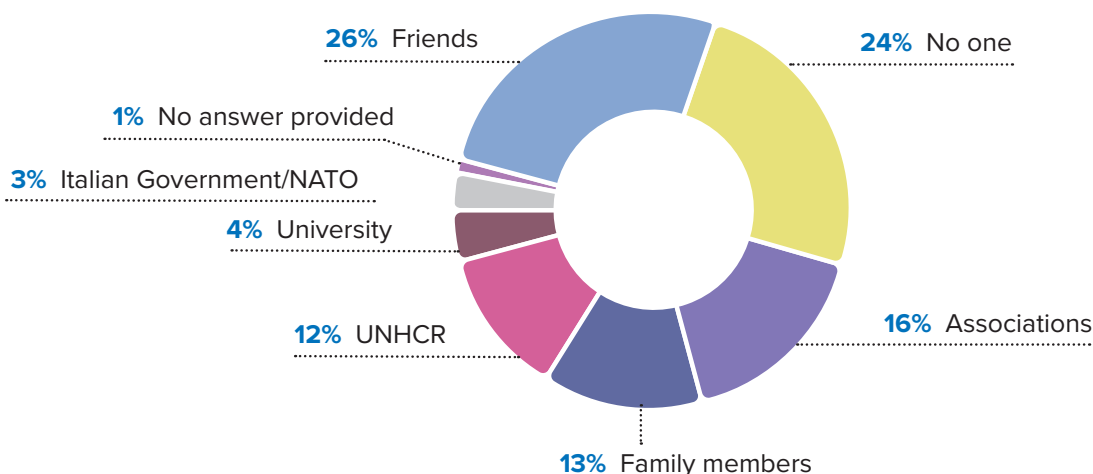


2.2. When and how did you arrive in Italy?

Most of the participants arrived in Italy between 2021 (22%) and 2022 (42%), a statistic that supports the information previously mentioned regarding the year of study. **77% of participants claim to have arrived by plane** (of which 30% are Afghans) while 16% arrived by land, mainly by bus (with a majority of Ukrainians reaching 90%) followed by train or car. **Only 7% of participants claim to have arrived by sea.**

The majority of participants (75%) claim to have arrived thanks to the help of someone who was already in Italy, while only 24% claim to have arrived autonomously and without any support.

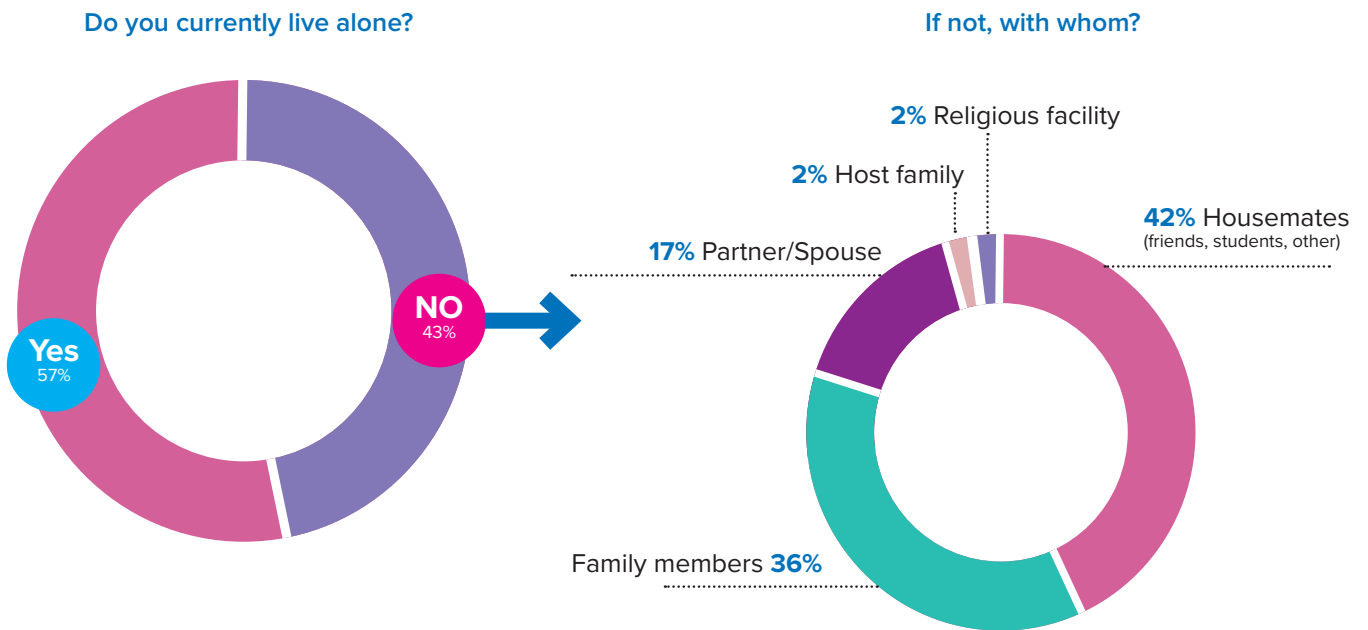
F.12 WAS THERE SOMEONE ALREADY IN ITALY WHO HELPED YOU ARRIVE?



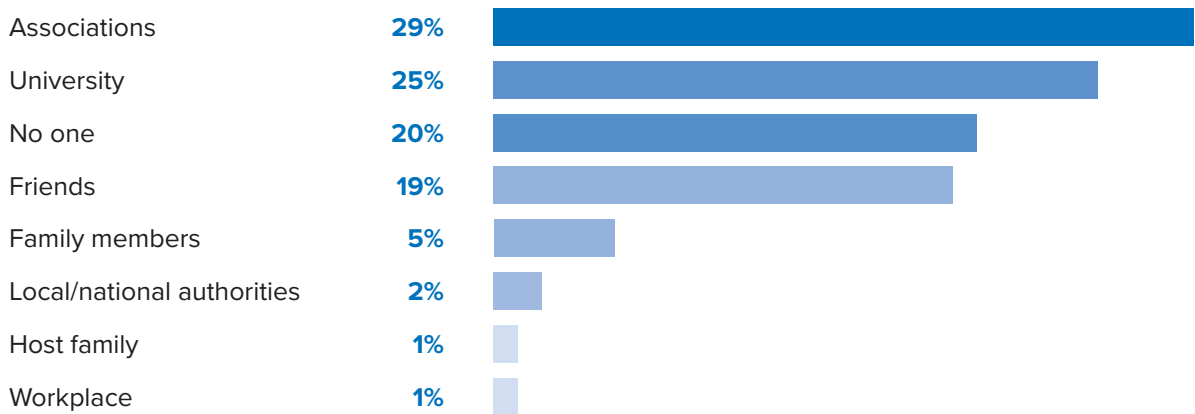
2.3. Life in Italy

The percentage of those who say they live alone (57%) is similar to those who do not. Those who do not live alone declare that they share their accommodation with other individuals, categorized as “housemates.” This group may consist of friends, other students, or family members. Associations and the university both play a key role in helping students find accommodation, while 20% claim to have received no support at all. Approximately **half of the participants claim to live in a private flat**, with 25% being Ukrainians followed by 19% Afghans, **while 35% live in a student residence**, with 34% being Afghans and 18% Ukrainians.

F.13 DO YOU CURRENTLY LIVE ALONE? IF NOT, WITH WHOM?



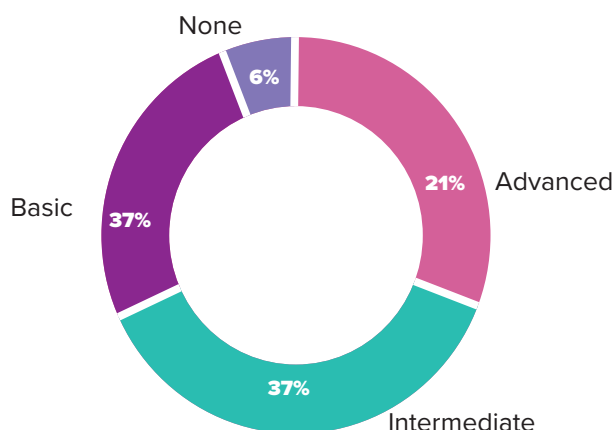
F.14 WHO HELPED YOU FIND ACCOMMODATION



LANGUAGE FOCUS

The Italian language component, as we will see later, represents one of the main difficulties in integration paths. The table shows the students' self-assessment of their knowledge of Italian.

F.15 LEVEL OF PROFICIENCY IN ITALIAN



Analysing the **183 positive answers**, we can observe the frequency of each method through which the participants learned Italian. It appears that courses offered by civil society organizations and self-study are crucial in the language learning process, while interactions with friends and fellow university students are mentioned less often in the responses. Nevertheless, those who claim to have learnt Italian with other students or friends rarely report low levels of language proficiency, demonstrating the importance of the relational context in integration processes. This suggests that **the development of peer-to-peer support and buddying programmes by universities could be an effective tool for both language learning and strengthening social relations**. For the purposes of this work, it is worth noting that the **university seems to play a passive role in this context**, with particular reference to the more advanced levels. While we lack precise and comprehensive information to thoroughly analyse these data, we believe it can prompt a reflection on how the students in question engage with the Italian language. This reflection may help identify key approaches and suggest potential corrective actions for the future.

F.16 WHERE DID YOU LEARN ITALIAN AND LEVEL OF PROFICIENCY IN ITALIAN

Where did you learn Italian?	Level of proficiency in Italian				Total	%
	Advanced	Intermediate	basic	No knowledge		
At university in Italy	7	13	28		48	26%
By myself	11	28	20		59	32%
Language courses organised by associations	9	20	20		49	27%
In the country of origin	7	5	3		15	8%
With other students or friends	6	5	1		12	7%

In the survey, students were asked to indicate their level of proficiency in four languages: English, Spanish, French and Arabic. About two thirds of the students claim to have an advanced knowledge of English. The other languages reveal much less advanced levels of proficiency. It should be noted that refugee students often attend university courses in English.

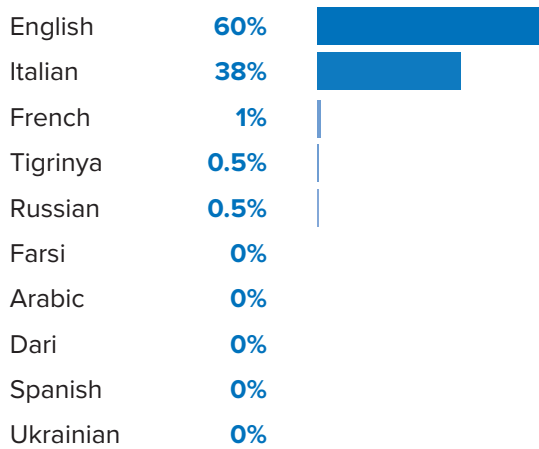
F.17 WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH?



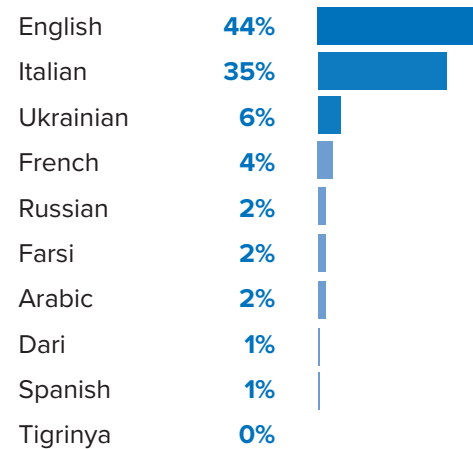
While English is the main language for communication in the university setting, followed by Italian, the usage of both languages slightly decreases when interacting with friends. However, they still remain the most commonly used languages, overshadowing mother tongues, even within the most prominent communities like the Afghan and Ukrainian ones.

F.18 MAIN LANGUAGES USED

In which language do you express yourself daily at university?



In which language do you express yourself daily with your friends?



3. UNIVERSITY ENROLMENT

In this study of the academic backgrounds and journeys of refugee students, we found it important to explore the administrative and bureaucratic challenges linked to enrolling in the courses. It is worth noting that asylum seekers, although not always having full access to university programmes, also answered all the questions in the survey, including the following ones. The first essential element to address is the formal documentation needed for registration.

Law 148/2002 grants university institutions the authority to recognise, **for academic purposes**,¹⁴ educational qualifications obtained abroad, which are essential for accessing and continuing studies. **Academic institutions, have the autonomy to establish rules and requirements** for this purpose. These may include documents issued by other entities to validate education completed abroad. Of particular relevance among these are the **Declaration of value in loco**, issued by Italian Embassies, describing the value of the title in the country where it was obtained, where available; and the **Statement of comparability issued by CIMEA**. However, some documents required for an assessment might be difficult to obtain for asylum seekers and refugees, who might not be able or willing to approach the authorities in their home country.

To overcome these difficulties, Art. 26 of Legislative Decree 251/2007 stipulates that competent institutions are required to establish suitable assessment, validation, and accreditation systems for recognizing the qualifications of beneficiaries of international protection. The General Directorate for Students, Development and Internationalisation of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR), highlighted the significance of having practical tools. They encouraged universities to establish **internal procedures and mechanisms to assess the qualifications of individuals with international protection, even when there are missing or incomplete documents proving qualifications**.

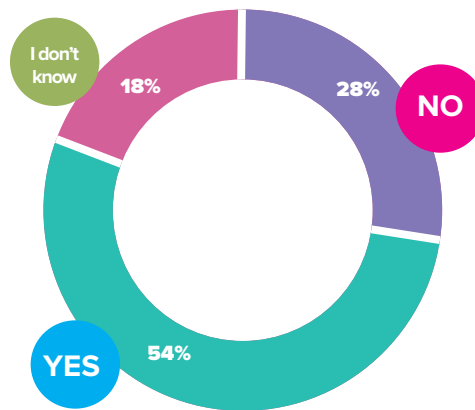
Where documentation is not sufficient, universities may resort to other tools and methods to support the evaluation process. The most widely adopted tool is the **European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR)** of the Council of Europe (COE), a document resulting from the analysis of available documentation and structured interviews, which provides an assessment of the candidate's competences. This tool can be used in situations where documentation is incomplete or missing, which require specialized expertise from the university to evaluate qualifications. When documentation is insufficient to confirm someone's qualifications, it might be essential to **evaluate the candidate's skills directly**. This can be done by **engaging academic staff and utilizing flexible and innovative assessment methods**.

¹⁴ The recognition of titles and qualifications for other purposes (e.g., for professional purposes) falls under the responsibility of other state bodies.

3.1. Registration: support and documents

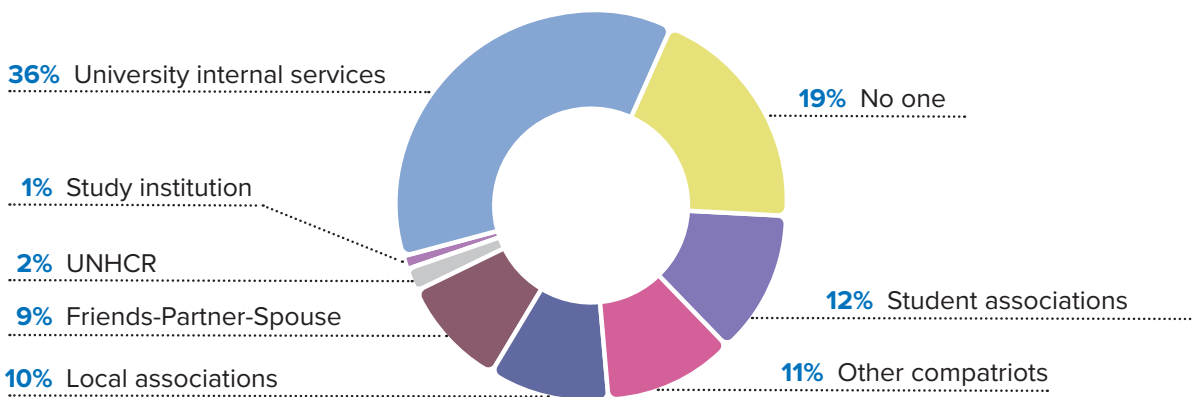
The legal status of students, meaning being a beneficiary of protection, appears to have been a determining factor in the exemption of tuition fees. More than half of the participants affirmed it, while 18% stated they were unsure if this was the reason.

F.19 EXEMPTION FROM PAYING TUITION FEES AS A BENEFICIARY OF PROTECTION



The table shows that over a third of the students received support from university internal services during the enrolment process. The involvement of associations, including student associations and local groups, was also notable, along with the assistance from acquaintances. A minority, 19%, said they were not helped by anyone.

F.20 WHO HELPED YOU GATHER INFORMATION TO ENROL AT THE UNIVERSITY?



FOCUS ON BARRIERS TO ACCESS: a reading across the territories

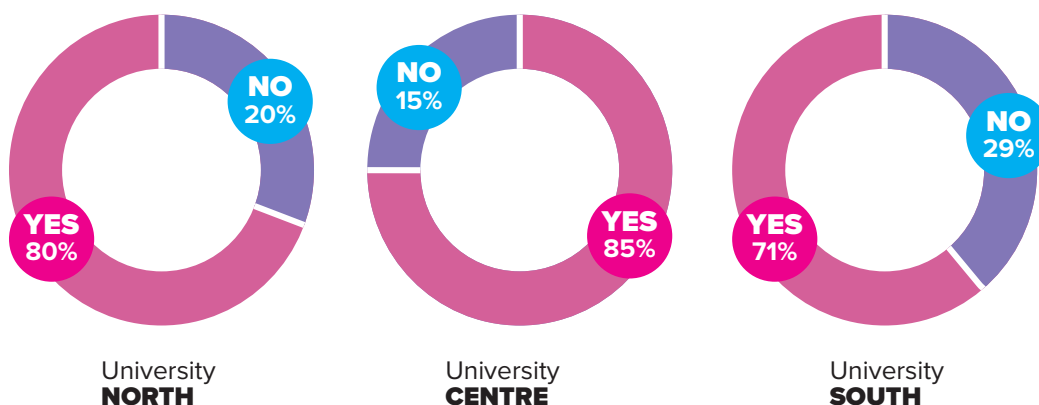
By Professor Anna Fausta Scardigno, University of Bari "Aldo Moro"

The results indicate that refugee access to higher education is significantly influenced by “context-dependent mechanisms”, from North to South, which could potentially impede their success. Each academic institution may independently validate and recognize qualifications for refugees to access academic programs. However, this mechanism, which could lead to positive outcomes aligning with the goals of the Manifesto on an Inclusive university, has not been effectively and widely implemented yet. Looking at the various geographic areas of our universities, unfortunately this observation remains unchanged.

In fact, the analysis shows that nearly all universities ask for particular documents from students during enrolment, instead of having processes to assess and acknowledge qualifications and skills within the academic system (*credential evaluation*), as mandated by international law and the global education strategy (*global recognition*). It can be seen that this practice is slightly less common in universities in the southern regions (29%), compared to those in the northern (20%) and central regions of Italy (15%).

F.21 DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR ENROLMENT

When registering for your academic programme, did your university request specific documents regarding your qualification(s)?



The documents most frequently requested by universities, unfortunately, remain the *Declaration of Value of the obtained qualification* (46%) and the *Statement of comparability* (35%). Self-certification documents were required to a lesser extent (10%). There is a greater demand for the *Declaration of Value of the obtained qualification* in the central region (50%) compared to the northern (46%) and southern (40%) regions. At the same time, the *Statement of comparability* is required to a similar extent in the three geographical areas (N. 36%; C. 35%; S. 33%).

F.22 DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR ENROLMENT



The demand for certificates such as a diploma or high school diploma occurs in only 2% and 3% of cases. In the South, there seems to be a slightly higher demand for a copy of the diploma (7%) than in universities in the Centre and North of Italy (1%; 1%). The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) is intended to simplify and expedite the validation of qualifications and support the educational integration of refugees. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of Italian universities (2%) request this document. Interestingly, there is notably higher interest from universities in the southern regions (7%) compared to those in the northern (1%) and central areas of the country (1%). This difference may be attributed to certain universities formally accepting the EQPR as an alternative to the Declaration of Value for enrolling beneficiaries of international protection in their academic programs. For those who have been granted protection status, the path to academic integration, though challenging to access, remains possible. However, for asylum seekers, the prolonged wait for asylum status significantly diminishes motivation. One student shared: *“I personally waited for almost 1.5 years before I received my refugee status. All this time I was not enrolled, I could not activate my career, could not register my grades. I even could not study properly because I had no access to materials and online assessments. It create unclerness, and it kills motivation.”* In the Italian academic system, only very few universities allow asylum seekers to enrol, often through options like taking individual courses or enrolling on a conditional basis.

F.23 GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS AND DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR ENROLMENT

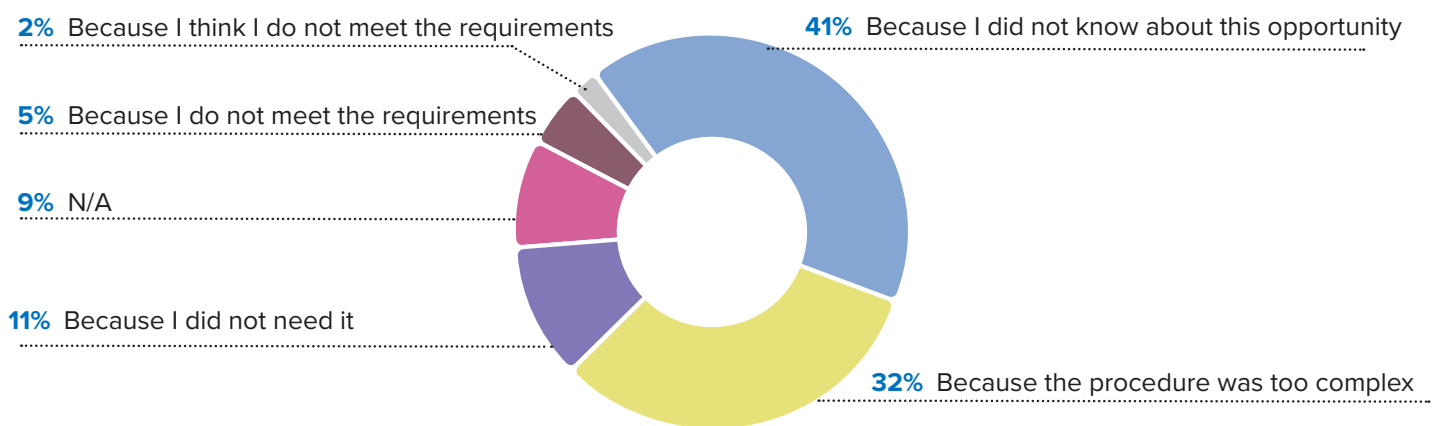
	NORTH	Centre	SOUTH
Declaration of Value of the obtained qualification	42%	50%	40%
Statement of comparability issued by CIMEA NARIC	36%	35%	33%
Self-certification	12%	7%	13%
High School Diploma	4%	1%	
Diploma	1%	1%	7%
Document issued by the Embassy		1%	
Declaration of Value of the degree/Statement of comparability issued by CIMEA NARIC		1%	
I don't remember	1%		
Previous qualification	1%		
EQPR	1%	1%	7%

4. ACADEMIC INTEGRATION SERVICES

4.1 Scholarships

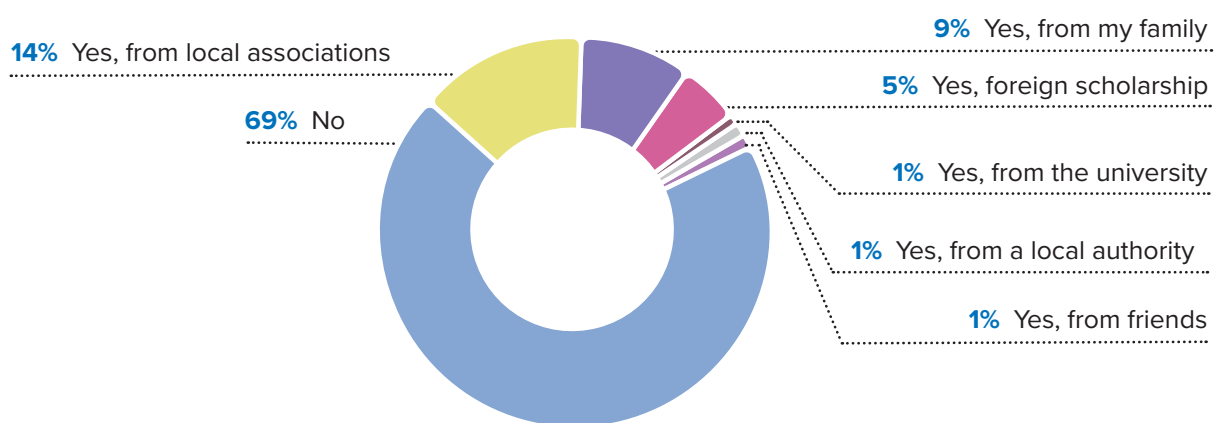
Most of the students (71%) received a scholarship. Among the reasons why participants did not avail themselves of a scholarship, **lack of awareness about this type of opportunity** is the most common reason (41%). Additionally, a significant portion (one third) mentioned that they did not utilize the scholarship due to the complexity of the application process.

F.24 REASONS FOR NOT APPLYING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS



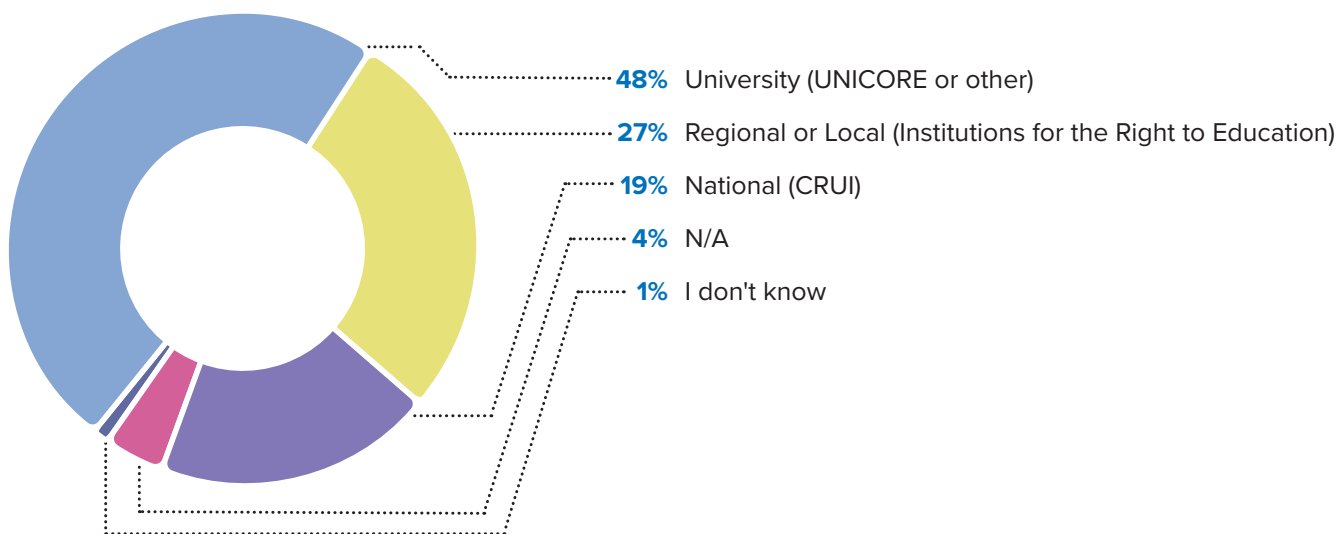
Approximately 70% report not receiving any other types of economic or material assistance, while local associations reappear as crucial contributors to the integration of students forced to flee from their country, providing economic and material support to 14% of them.

F.25 HAVE YOU RECEIVED OTHER FORMS OF FINANCIAL/MATERIAL ASSISTANCE?



As far as scholarships are concerned (of which 71% of the participants benefited), almost half were offered by universities, indicating a strong involvement of academic institutions in providing financial support. This category includes grants that are part of projects such as UNICORE and Mediterraneo, as well as some specific initiatives promoted by individual universities for Afghan and Ukrainian students. Scholarships at regional or local level (provided by Institutions for the Right to Education) account for 27%; those at the national level (provided by the Conference of Italian University Rectors - CRUI) account for 19%. These figures highlight the diversity of funding sources. The presence of answers as “Not specified” and “I don’t know” underlines the **need to strengthen students’ knowledge and awareness of the sources of financial support available to them.**

F.26 WHICH SCHOLARSHIP DID YOU BENEFIT FROM?



Scholarships can vary significantly in terms of the scope and benefits they offer. In some cases, scholarships cover the full tuition fees, while in other instances, they may also include expenses for board and lodging, or a subsidised bed in a university residence. Some scholarships also provide financial support to students; these resources are intended to meet a diverse range of needs, including the purchase of textbooks, transport costs, and other necessities.

Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI) grants, Mediterraneo project, UNICORE project

In accordance with the **memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of the Interior and the CRUI** signed in Rome on 20 July 2016, the Ministry of the Interior, in agreement with the CRUI and in collaboration with the National Association of Institutions for the Right to Education (Associazione Nazionale degli Organismi per il Diritto allo Studio Universitario, ANDISU), offers 100 scholarships each year to students with international protection (those with refugee status, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, and Ukrainian citizens under temporary protection). These are paid for by the host university and typically include free accommodation and meals for the entire academic year, along with extra services such as Italian language courses.¹⁵

The **Mediterraneo Project**¹⁶ is a collaborative effort between LUISS University of Rome and Fondazione Terzo Pilastro – Internazionale. It was established in 2017 to provide educational opportunities to refugees and underprivileged students from the Mediterranean area. The project offers scholarships for Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs in English at LUISS University, covering a range of subject areas. Thanks to the collaboration with UNHCR, in 2020 the project expanded to include refugees from UNHCR communities and refugee camps in Jordan and Morocco.

The **University Corridors for Refugees UNICORE project**¹⁷ aims to facilitate access to higher education in Italy for refugee students in first countries of asylum. The project includes granting study visas and *ad hoc* scholarships by Italian universities, enabling students to pursue their postgraduate studies. The beneficiaries of the project are students who have obtained a three-year degree - in the last five years - with a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and who want to continue their academic career in Italy. A rewarding aspect of the project is the central role of the participating universities. They are not only in charge of preparing a specific call for applications, but are also solely responsible for selecting candidates based on their academic achievements from previous studies and their motivation. In addition to universities and UNHCR, the UNICORE project involves several national partners, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Caritas Italiana, Diaconia Valdese, Centro Astalli per Rifugiati and Gandhi Charity. In addition, each university collaborates with local partners who offer specific support services to students, such as municipalities, NGOs, and voluntary associations. The UNICORE project aims not only to ensure the entry of refugee students in Italy, but also to promote their social and educational inclusion process. From 2019 to 2023, more than 40 universities provided over 170 study opportunities to refugee students from various countries.

4.2 Academic career and services at the university

The table shows the students' answers to questions concerning the most significant challenges they faced in their academic career, highlighting areas where additional resources and support might be needed.

The main issues are related to **economic difficulties** and challenges in **comprehending and utilizing the Italian language**, reported by approximately 30% and 20% of the students, respectively. A small percentage (12%) reported encountering difficulties in the bureaucratic management of the scholarship, while almost one in 10 participants pointed out that the absence of academic tutoring had a negative impact on their academic career. Another critical aspect is the difficulty in **obtaining information on the academic programme** (8%). Finally, **6% of**

¹⁵ <https://www.cruai.it/archivio-notizie/bando-100-borse-per-rifugiati-ministero-interno-cruai-a-a-2022-23.html>

¹⁶ LUISS University and Fondazione Terzo Pilastro - Internazionale Progetto Mediterraneo, <https://services.unhcr.org/opportunities/education-opportunities/progetto-mediterraneo>

¹⁷ University Corridors for Refugees UNICORE, <https://universitycorridors.unhcr.it/>

participants report having **experienced discrimination**. 5% of participants found mandatory course attendance to be an issue, while 4% reported no difficulties¹⁸.

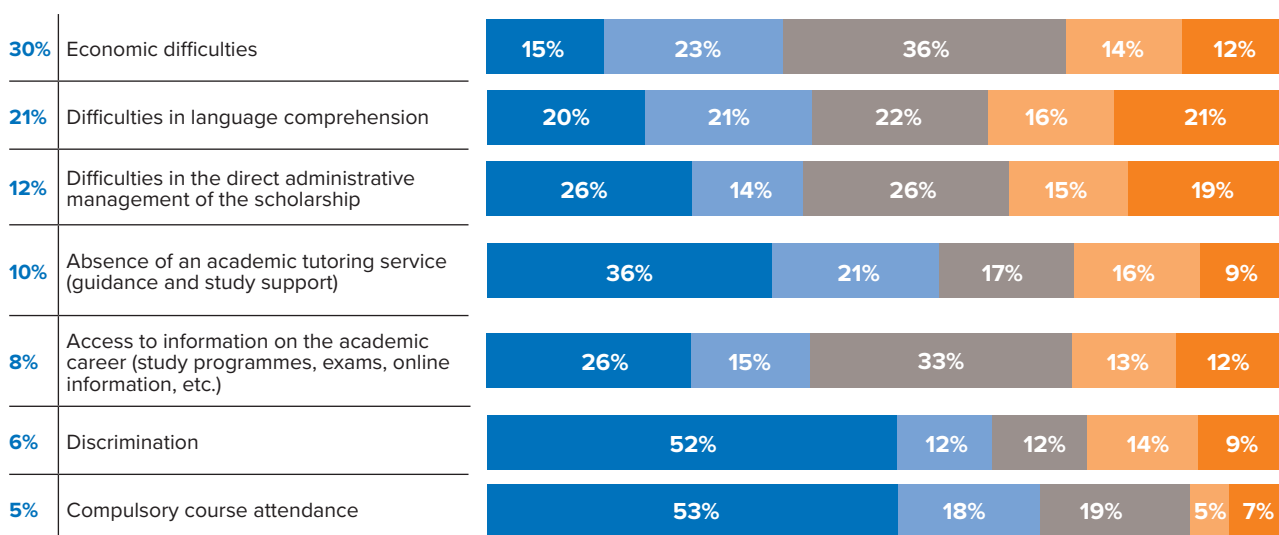
The students were also asked to rate, on a scale from 1 to 5, the level of importance of the difficulties mentioned. The most significant issue is that of financial difficulties (48% assigned a value of 4 or 5), followed by language barriers and the lack of linguistic mediation to which 37% assigned degrees 4-5.

34% of participants assigned degrees 4-5 to difficulties in the administrative management of the scholarship, while 27% attributed the same degrees of importance to the lack of tutoring services. The majority of participants (76%) attributed degrees of importance from 1 to 3 to discrimination. However, 24% assigned degrees 4-5, indicating that a minority but significant group of students consider discrimination a serious issue.

F.27 MOST RELEVANT ISSUES ENCOUNTERED SO FAR IN THE ACADEMIC CAREER

Importance

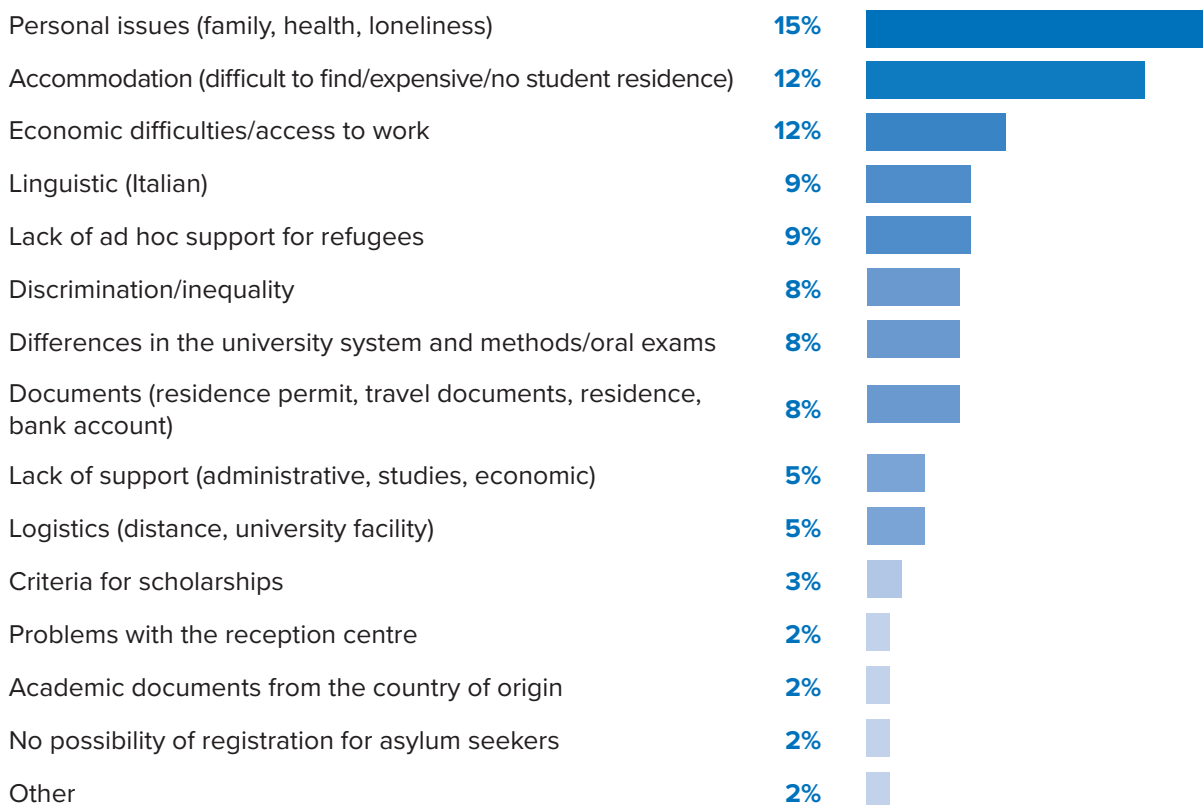
■ 1 (not at all important) ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 (very important)



¹⁸ In smaller numbers, the following other issues were mentioned: health and mental health problems; bureaucracy; difficulty in finding accommodation; housemates; closure of CIMEA until 2024; impossibility of enrolment for asylum seekers; different system; exams; non-recognition by UNHCR Italy unlike other UNICORE students; working and studying at the same time; lack of support when behind in the course schedule; long waiting time for recognition.

About one third of the participants then stated that they faced additional challenges beyond those mentioned. They outlined numerous and varied circumstances, which were grouped into categories for easier understanding. Difficulties emerged in 15% of the cases, which we categorised as personal issues, referring to suffering from being away from the family, a sense of loneliness, and health issues that negatively affected their studies. Financial difficulties resurfaced, with an additional 12% of respondents confirming that they have faced financial challenges. For some, this means a shortage of resources, while for others, it involves struggles in securing employment to sustain themselves.

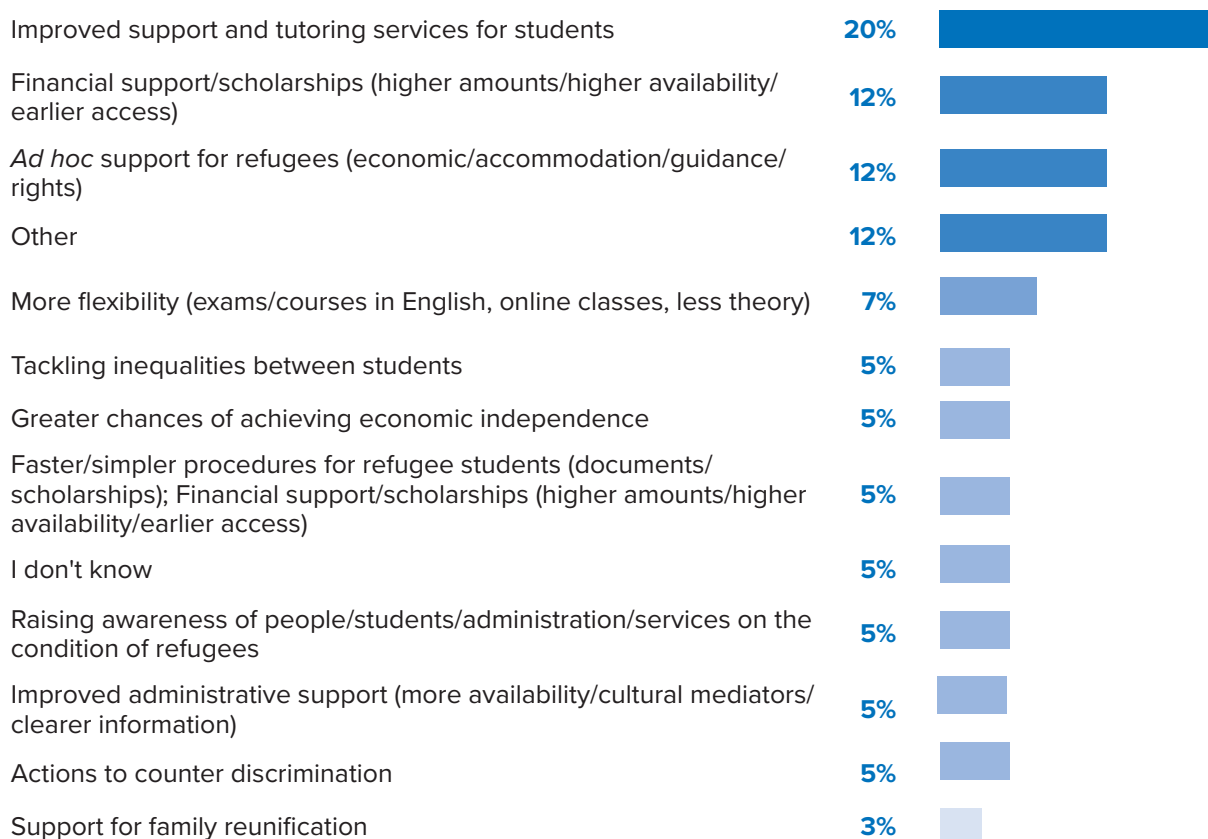
F.28 ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED



Finding accommodation is highlighted in this survey as one of the most significant concerns. This underscores the critical impact this issue, which afflicts many people (refugee and non-refugee), can have on the academic success of refugee students when they lack alternative options, such as access to student housing or the presence of family members or close contacts already established in the community. It is also interesting to note that, along with approximately 10% of participants who confirmed difficulties with the Italian language, another 10% specifically complained about the absence of **ad hoc** support services **for students forced to flee from their country**.

57 respondents made **proposals to solve or mitigate the problems they experienced**, where these had not been overcome. Again, the answers were grouped into categories. Reviewing the most commonly shared suggestions, it can be observed that 20% of respondents suggested improving the provision of tutoring and support activities for students in general, while about 12% expressed the need to develop specific support actions for refugee students, with reference to accommodation needs, material assistance, guidance and information on their rights. In 12% of responses, it was suggested that scholarship management should consider increasing the number of recipients, providing more financial support, and ensuring quicker and/or earlier disbursement.





























F.29 SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT



More than half of the survey participants (**106, or 55%**) confirmed the **existence of specialized support for university students who are asylum seekers or beneficiaries of protection**, tailored to their specific needs. Among these students, approximately 72% mentioned utilizing these services, with the majority (61%) using them throughout the entire academic year. Delving deeper into this aspect, the data suggest that there are no significant differences based on gender; in fact, women claimed to have used refugee student services offered by their university in 72.5% of cases, men in 73.4%.

The table below displays the percentage of students from different nationalities who were aware of specific support services provided by their university and utilized them. Looking specifically at the two main nationalities of the participants, Afghan and Ukrainian, it can be noted that Afghan refugee students used these services 84% of the time, while Ukrainian students used them 64% of the time.

F.30 STUDY SUPPORT SERVICES SPECIFIC TO OR AIMED ALSO AT ASYLUM SEEKERS AND BENEFICIARIES OF PROTECTION

	Are services available? YES	Did you use them? YES
 Afghan	25	21
 Albanian	1	
 Bangladeshi	1	1
 Belarusian	1	1
 Brazilian	1	
 Cameroonian	2	2
 Chinese	1	
 Colombian	1	
 Congolese	10	8
 Eritrean	2	2
 Ethiopian	1	
 Gambian	1	
 Guinean	1	1
 Indian	1	1
 Iranian	3	2
 Iraqi	3	3
 Kurdish	1	1
 Libyan	3	2
 Moroccan	2	
 Nigerian	6	4
 Palestinian	1	1
 Russian	2	2
 Somali	1	1
 South Sudanese	3	3
 Syrian	3	2
 Tanzanian	1	1
 Tunisian	1	
 Turkish	1	
 Ukrainian	25	16
 Venezuelan	1	1

Those who confirmed the availability of specific services for students forced to flee their country (106) then discussed this information, providing various responses across different categories of actions implemented. More than half of the students (58 out of 106) mentioned that their university provides specific tutoring services. Similarly, linguistic mediation services were present in approximately the same percentage of cases, followed by mentoring activities. **In contrast, services to enhance integration and provide psychological support were reported in only about one third of the cases.**

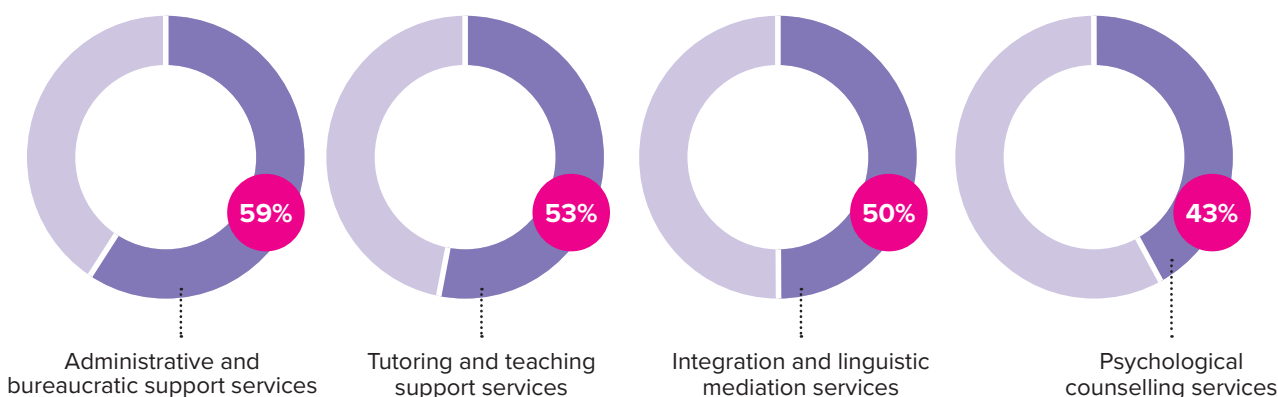
F.31 STUDY SUPPORT SERVICES SPECIFIC FOR OR AIMED TO ALSO AT ASYLUM SEEKERS AND BENEFICIARIES OF PROTECTION

Servizio	% su 106	Numero record
Tutoring services	54,72	58
Linguistic mediation	52,83	56
Mentoring	42,45	45
Integration services	37,74	40
Psychological counselling services	35,85	38
Specific scholarship	0,84	1

All respondents to the survey were asked to indicate how important they considered certain services typically offered by academic institutions, using a scale from 1 to 5. In addition, the participating students were able to express their level of satisfaction with the academic integration services provided by their universities and suggest additional services to enhance academic integration.

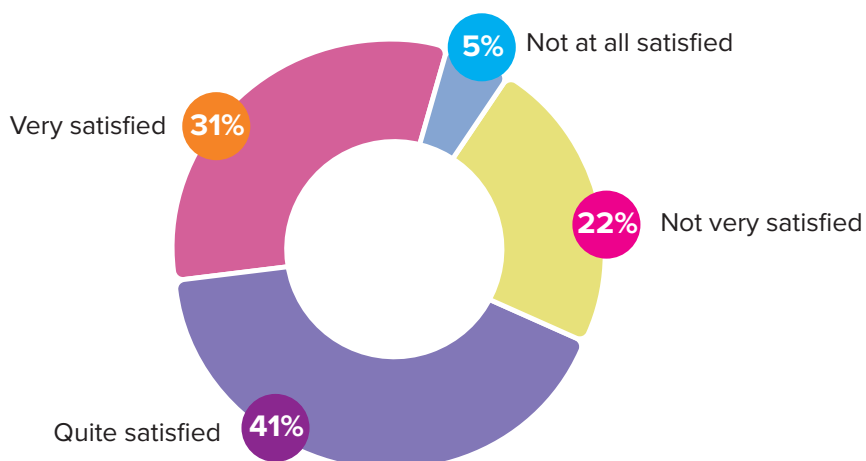
A high percentage of participants (59%) mentioned **the administrative and bureaucratic support services** offered by universities as **crucial**. When it comes to **tutoring and learning support services**, 53% of students assigned degrees 4-5, indicating that many consider these services fundamental to their academic career. 50% of students assigned degrees 4-5 of importance to **linguistic integration and mediation services**. Psychological counselling services are considered particularly important (rated 4 and 5 in terms of importance) by 43% of students.

F.32 IMPORTANCE (DEGREES 4 AND 5) ATTRIBUTED TO CERTAIN ACADEMIC INTEGRATION SERVICES OFFERED BY UNIVERSITIES



As can be seen in the chart below, the satisfaction level with the integration services offered appears to be high, receiving the highest score in 31% of cases, while only 5% of students express dissatisfaction. In contrast, **1 in 4 students do not consider themselves fully satisfied with the services available**. The overall data suggests that further efforts are needed to respond more adequately to the needs of students forced to flee.

F.33 LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH ACADEMIC INTEGRATION SERVICES OFFERED BY THE UNIVERSITY



Based on this feedback, 47 students provided suggestions for actions to better meet their needs. The answers have been categorised for ease of analysis.

F.34 PROPOSALS FOR SERVICES

Additional Italian language classes	9	19%
Guidance/employment support	6	13%
Economic support (from basic needs to opening a bank account)	6	13%
Other	6	13%
Psychological support	5	11%
Ad hoc support for refugee students (practical aspects/social/cultural integration)	4	9%
Support with accommodation (availability and expenses)	4	9%
Support with scholarships and recognition of foreign qualifications	4	9%
Tutoring services/more preparatory classes	3	6%

4.3 Academic experience

The following part of the survey was devoted to surveying the experience of relations with colleagues and professors. Students were asked to express their level of agreement towards a series of statements, on a scale from 1 to 5.

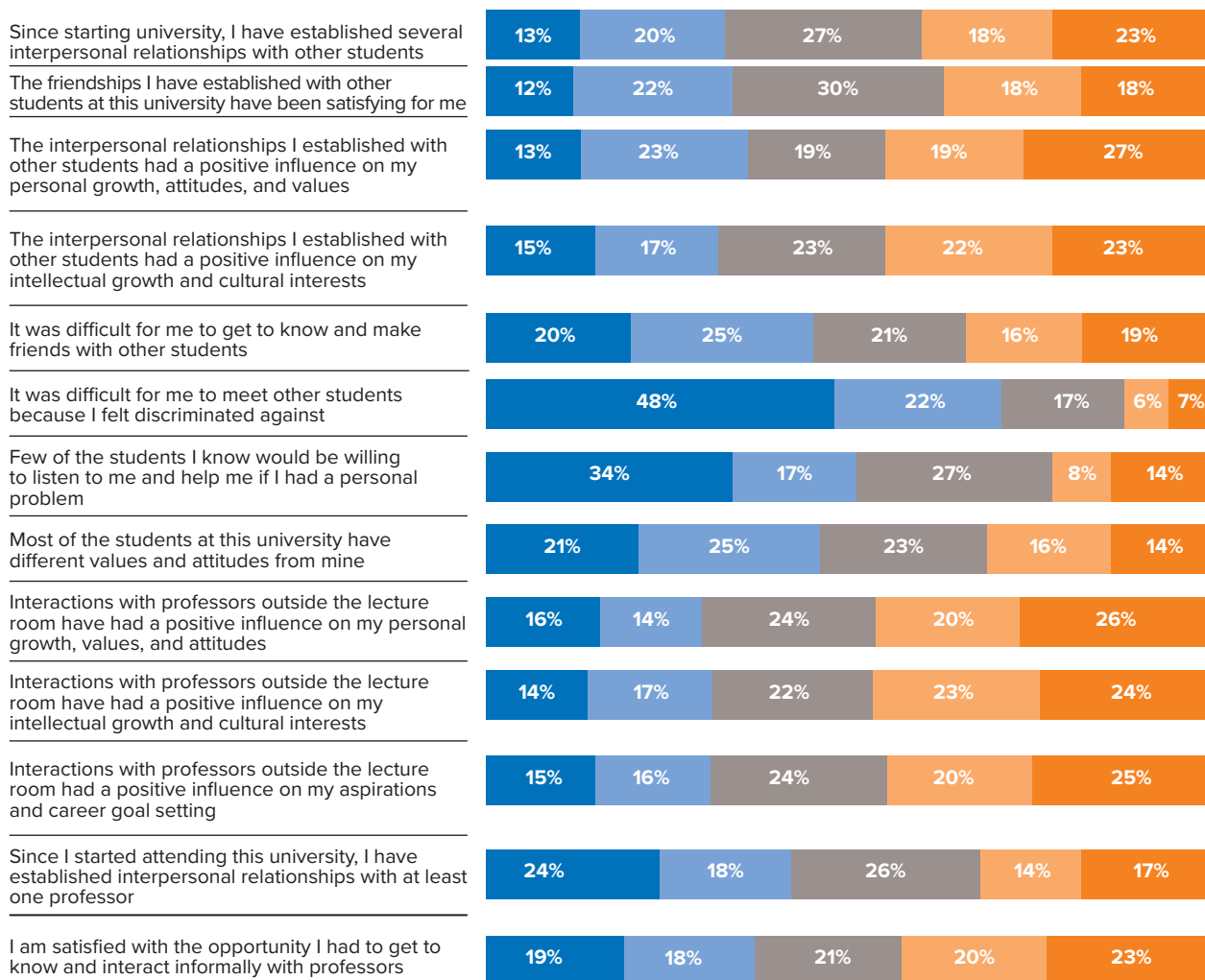
As far as interpersonal relations among peers are concerned, students' perceptions are varied. The responses suggest that **a large number of students (between 36% and 45%) rate their relationships with their peers positively**. They express a level of agreement between 4 and 5 towards statements about having established relationships with other students, built satisfying friendships, and cultivated interpersonal relationships that have positively influenced their personal and intellectual growth.

When it comes to the challenges in establishing relationships with other students, considering degrees 4 and 5 of agreement with the proposed statements, it emerges that **35% of participants experienced difficulties in getting to know and making friends with other students**. Equally relevant are the responses from **13% of students** who mentioned **feeling discriminated against** as a barrier to establishing relationships. Similarly, **22% of participants believe that only a few fellow students would be willing to listen and support them** in the event of a personal problem. Finally, it is noted that one in three participants perceives that most students at their university have **values and attitudes that differ from their own**.

F.35 THE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE: RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS AND PROFESSORS

Agreement

1 (strongly disagree) 2 3 4 5 (strongly agree)



A large portion of students (45-47%) expressed positive perceptions about interactions with professors. They rated statements about the benefits of relations with professors outside the lecture room, such as personal

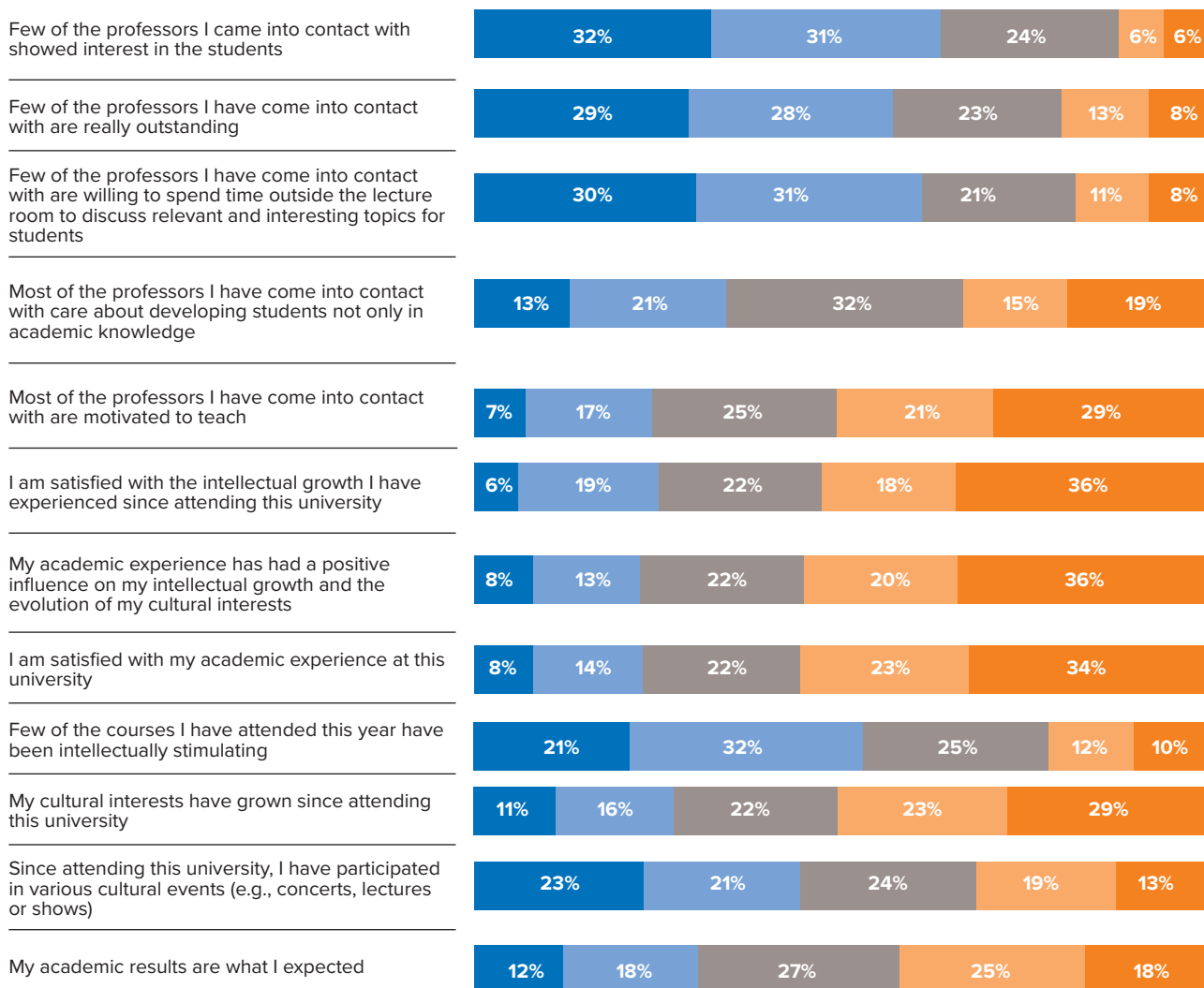
growth, development of cultural interests, setting aspirations, and career goals, with degrees 4-5. One in 3 students claims to have established interpersonal relationships with at least one professor, while **43% claim to have had the opportunity to develop a mutual acquaintance and informal relationship with professors.**

Some aspects, like the **professors' dedication to student development** and their **enthusiasm for teaching**, are rated with a **score of 4 or 5 by 34% and 50% of participants**, respectively. The table summarises participants' views on **how interested professors are in students** and their **willingness to devote time to them outside the lecture room**. It is possible to note, moreover, that when considering degrees 4 and 5 of agreement, more than half of the participants are generally satisfied with the **intellectual and cultural growth that comes from attending** their university and the overall university experience. However, **22% stated that only some of the courses they attended during the academic year were stimulating**, while 33% disagreed (selecting degrees 1 or 2) with this statement; this aligns with the positive responses of 52% of participants who acknowledge that their cultural interests grew as a result of attending university courses.

F.36 THE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE: TEACHING, LEARNING AND GROWTH

Agreement

1 (strongly disagree) 2 3 4 5 (strongly agree)



Some questions were designed to uncover the students' expectations concerning their university experience, in particular their plans for the future, along with any uncertainties or concerns they may have about their academic journey. **58% of students feel fairly confident that they will be enrolled in university in the following year,**

while 22% show less confidence (degrees 1-2). As is perhaps reasonable, uncertainty grows in the case of a longer time horizon, where 37% of participants are not certain they will still be enrolled in an academic program within one year (degrees 1-2). Only 9% of students, however, foresee the possibility to drop out of university before graduating (degrees 4-5), while **a significant majority show an intention or expectation of completing their academic career, with 68% of responses indicating a likelihood of dropping out at degree 1, rising to 86% if degree 2 of expectation is included.** Similarly, only 9% of students plan to temporarily suspend their studies (degrees 4-5), while the vast majority, 84%, consider this a remote possibility (degrees 1-2). Comparing these responses with an additional statement confirms that most participants believe they will successfully complete their academic journey. Specifically, 65% of students anticipate continuing their studies at university until graduation (degrees 4-5), with only 18% expressing a higher likelihood of not finishing their studies (degrees 1-2). The remaining 17% position themselves in a more ambiguous level of expectation (degree 3).

FOCUS ON DISCRIMINATION:

The academic integration of refugee students: subtle discrimination

By Professor Rita Bertozzi - University of Modena and Reggio Emilia

Refugee students interviewed perceive discrimination as a less significant issue in academic integration compared to other challenges. However, there is a minority group that considers discrimination a serious issue (24%) and/or claims to have experienced discrimination in their academic career (6%): the latter are predominantly male, from countries in Asia or Africa.

Looking at experiences beyond academia, a larger number of refugee students reported feeling discriminated against. Specifically, 46% of participants confirmed experiencing discrimination. Interestingly, the occurrence of such incidents is more prevalent outside the university environment, with 34% reporting discrimination outside the university and 12% within the university. Outside of university, individuals who feel discriminated against include 42% Asians, 27% Africans, and 21% Europeans. American students, on the other hand, seem to experience little discrimination.

If the percentage of males and females who felt discriminated against outside the university is the same, inside the university more males felt discriminated against (14% compared to 9% of female students). Half of those who felt discriminated against at university come from Asia.

The survey also sought to explore the main reasons why refugee students think they are discriminated against. Not being Italian and not knowing well the Italian language are the two main reasons. It is especially males who feel discriminated against because of differences in physical appearance (15% of males and 8% of females) and foresee the possibility from Asia and Africa. Generally, this kind of discrimination is perceived outside the university. However, two cases, who chose not to disclose their gender, mentioned that their physical appearance was a basis for discrimination at the university. Few respondents (7%) attribute the cause of discrimination to being protection beneficiaries or asylum seekers.

Another factor that two female students have identified as a cause of discrimination is people's closed-mindedness or racist attitudes. Although their number is small, their testimony emphasizes the impact of attitudes of rejection towards various affiliations and clothing styles, as well as a reluctance to engage with those perceived as different. One student shared: **"during my bachelor's degree programme, I was openly discriminated against by some professors because of my origins, my religion and my clothing"**. This perception of discrimination deserves special attention as it can hinder the development of

relationships and pathways to social and academic integration. This is the case for 13% of participants, mainly of Asian and African descent. In contrast, among European refugee students, almost all of whom are Ukrainian, discrimination is not perceived as a significant issue or particularly influential in relationships. The fact that the majority of the refugee students interviewed did not identify discrimination as a major issue can be read as a positive sign of welcoming academic environments, aware of their needs. However, some aspects emerge that are also worth recalling in order to reflect on future courses of action:

- experiences of discrimination also exist in universities, so one must be able to recognise them in order to counter them
- academic integration must occur alongside social integration. If students face discrimination outside the university, these challenges could impact their academic progress. Networking can help bring about a cultural shift in how these international students are represented by establishing greater consistency across different host environments.
- it is striking that Asian and African students perceive discrimination to a greater extent, especially due to their distinct physical appearance. This would be an important issue to investigate and monitor, to see how “the colour line” might also affect the academic integration of these students
- the data reveal the existence of a subtle discrimination, both contained in numerical terms and not always direct, which must nevertheless be considered. There are cases of direct discrimination, which one respondent describes as **“rejection and racism”** for example visible in the difficulties of finding accommodation, but also underlying everyday dynamics, such as the **“inability of office staff to work with people. They are rude and often disrespectful. Wrong approach towards foreigners”**. However, it is important to consider potential indirect, structural, or systemic discrimination linked to insufficient support or proper implementation of procedures for recognizing access qualifications. These factors can create additional challenges for these students pursuing an academic career.

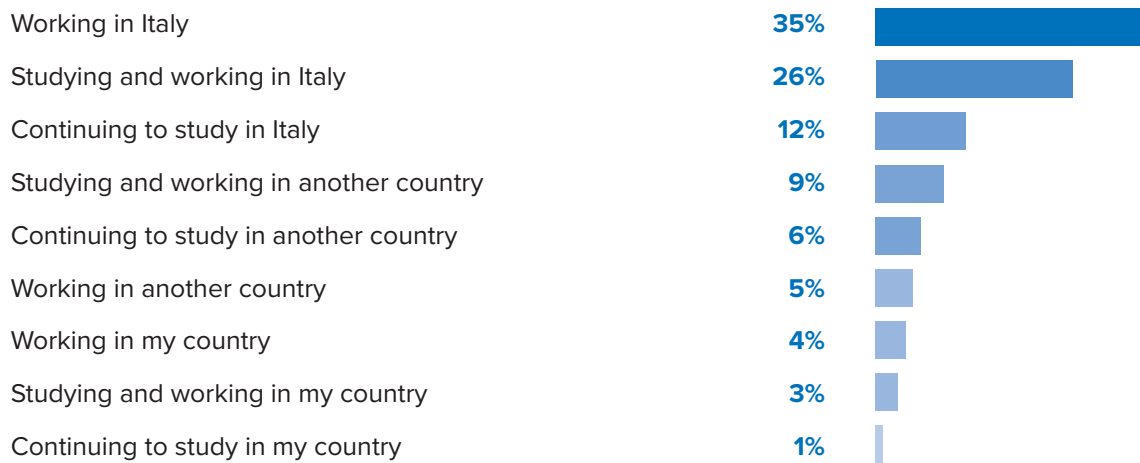
To conclude, in the survey one third of respondents also suggested improvement actions. Among them, 5% propose actions to counter discrimination, providing clear evidence of an undeniable need.

5. SOCIAL INTEGRATION

5.1 Perspectives on employment inclusion

85% of students say that **their academic journey has helped them to have more clarity about their future career.** Interestingly, among those who answered “very much”, almost all (82%) said they would stay in Italy after graduation rather than return to their country.

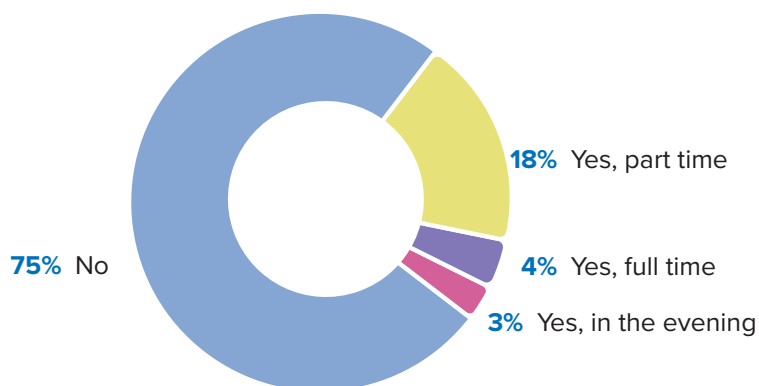
F.37 WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO AFTER GRADUATION?



The majority of students (35%) express a direct interest in working in Italy after graduation. There is a strong desire to combine study and work in Italy (26%), showing a willingness to balance professional and academic development. A considerable percentage of students intend to continue their studies, both in Italy and in other countries. Among those who express a desire to go to a third country to pursue their studies or work, destinations vary between European countries and the North American continent. Some students (8%) express the aspiration to contribute to the development of their home country, with the option of working, or studying and working.

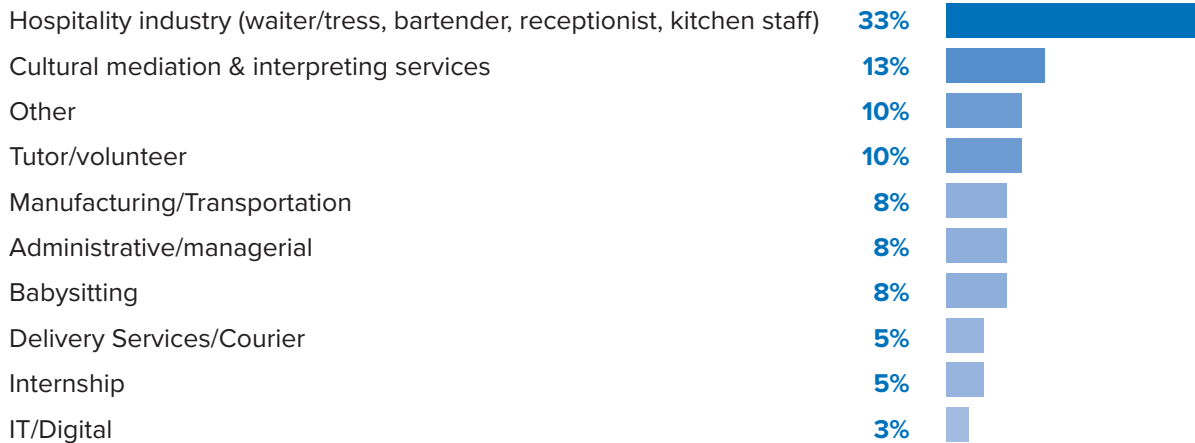
The vast majority of participants (**75%**) state that they are **not currently working.** It also emerges that, to date, it has not been possible to apply the experience gained at university to the world of work: two thirds of the students state that they have had little or no opportunity to do so.

F.38 ARE YOU CURRENTLY EMPLOYED?



About a quarter of students state that they have worked in Italy in the past, their answers have been grouped by the type of activity carried out. The majority have worked in the **restaurant industry**, which is likely to offer accessible job opportunities and flexibility of available roles, as well as opportunities for immediate earnings and social contacts. Language and mediation experiences may be connected to the language skills, but also to the academic programmes attended by refugee students. The occupations seem in many cases to make use of the students' language skills and practical abilities, contributing to their integration and personal and professional growth. The variety of sectors reflects the versatility of refugees in the world of work, emphasising their adaptability to different job requirements. However, in most cases, they do not reflect the academic programmes chosen.

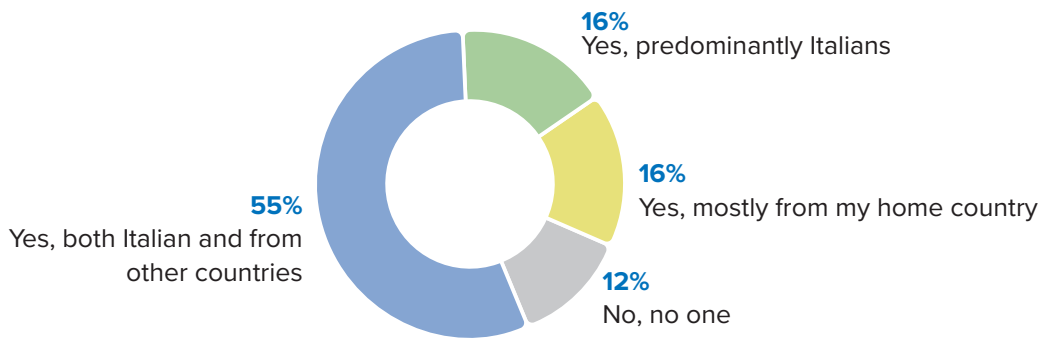
F.39 WORK EXPERIENCE IN ITALY



5.2 Social inclusion and participation

More than half of the participants claim to socialise with both Italians and people from their country of origin. The percentage of those who say they **do not socialise with anyone (12%)** should not be underestimated.

F.40 IN YOUR FREE TIME, DO YOU SOCIALIZE WITH YOUR PEERS?



Less than one-third of refugee students report being significantly engaged (degree 4-5) in cultural activities, such as concerts and performances, since beginning university. The scale from 1 to 5 is used to assess the frequency of activities, and generally, a low frequency is observed, with values mainly between 1 and 2. The exception is the use of a university room to relax or study, with 42% of students giving a score of 4 or more. One third of the students report using university facilities, such as libraries and sports facilities, with a frequency of 4 or more on a scale of 5.

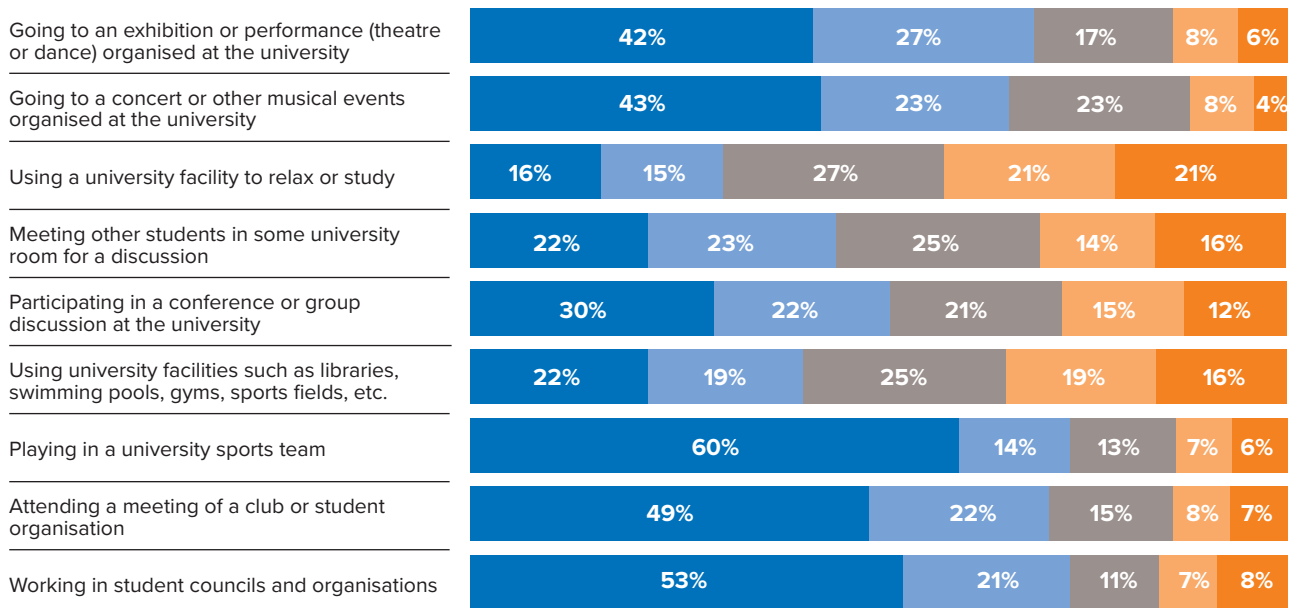
Approximately half of the students (52%) state that they **have never, or very rarely, participated in a conference** or group discussion at university; (45%) **never or rarely in simple meetings between students**. Half of the participants state that they **have never attended a meeting of a student organisation** or worked in such contexts.

Entertainment events organized by the university have low attendance rates, as 70% of participants rated their

attendance at 2 or lower for exhibitions, theater performances, or musical events. In general, the data would need further investigation to understand whether the low participation of refugee students in group and/or cultural activities represents a risk of marginalisation or lack of knowledge of the local context. It should be emphasised, however, that the figure refers to participation in social activities organised by the university and is therefore influenced by the actual offer and dissemination of such opportunities and their availability.

F.41 BELOW YOU WILL FIND A NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES THAT A STUDENT MAY CARRY OUT.

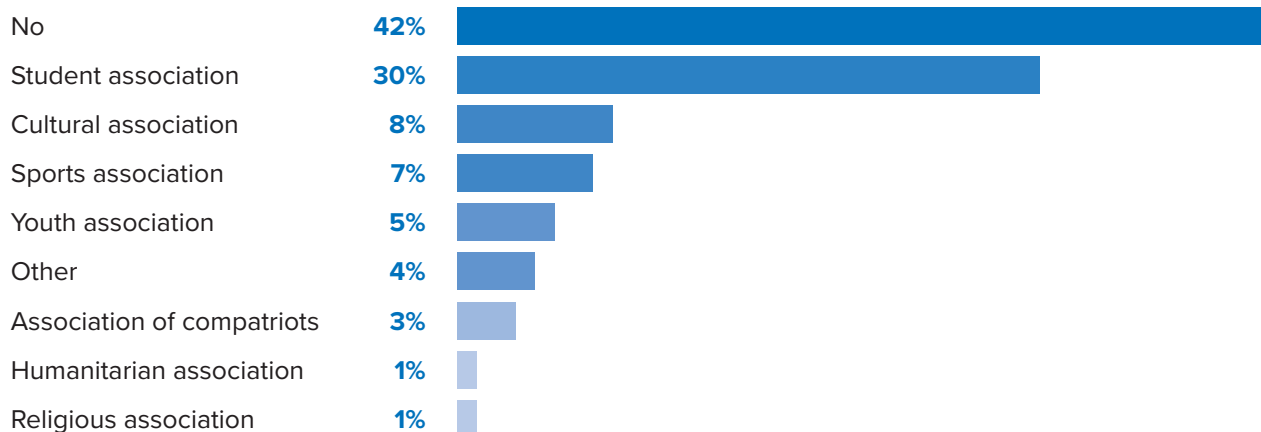
Frequency



When asked about being members of associations, the majority, 42%, answered negatively. About a third (30%) of students, however, claim to be members of a student association, but their attendance at meetings seems low, prompting inquiries about the level and quality of engagement within these associations.

A limited number of students participate in cultural (16 people) and sports associations (14 people), while other types of associations do not attract a significant percentage of participants.

F.42 DO YOU BELONG TO ANY ASSOCIATION?



FOCUS ON SOCIAL INTEGRATION: : a reading across the territories

By Professor Anna Fausta Scardigno, University of Bari "Aldo Moro"

The data show a reassuringly low perceived likelihood of participants dropping out of university: very low for both Northern (4%) and Central (4%) universities, and completely absent in the South. This element could indirectly represent the strength of the ties and social relations that students have built in the meantime in the territories, beyond the purely academic integration aspect and the obstacles that studies present to students.

Associative participation is valuable data for evaluating social integration processes. Research indicates that students engage in student associations across different regions: 43% in the South, 33% in the Centre, and 24% in the North.

Participation in associations is more diverse in the North and Centre, with individuals attending a variety of association types (7 types ranging from cultural to social), unlike the South, where student and sports associations are predominant. When it comes to leisure time, the percentage of individuals who primarily socialise with people from their own country is higher in universities in the North (22%) compared to those in the Centre (13%). Conversely, this percentage is notably lower in the South (5%). In the South, the percentage of individuals who mainly socialise with Italians (38%) is higher than in the North (14%) and the Centre (14%).

However, when it comes to enhancing social integration processes, students often suggest establishing refugee associations and dedicated offices at UNHCR and universities. This is particularly important for the administrative management of scholarships, which is seen as one of the most challenging aspects. Difficulties with managing scholarship bureaucracy are more noticeable in the northern (13%) and central (13%) regions, and somewhat less pronounced but still present in the southern regions (9%). Additionally, the absence of academic tutoring services, such as study support and guidance, is perceived more

strongly in the southern (15%) compared to the northern (6%) and central (12%) regions.

In fact, the analysis clearly shows that economic difficulties are the primary challenge for the social integration of refugees in all territories. The central region faces the highest peak at 33%, followed by the northern region at 29%, and the south at a still significant 24%. One student mentioned: ***“Financial stresses had effect on my studies. I have been dealing with problems of my family back home. They are also struggling financially. I need employment and an income source”***. On top of these difficulties, especially in the South, there are additional complexities related to adapting to the social context and language comprehension (30%), which is higher than in universities in the North (20%) and Centre (19%). In the South, one student states: ***“ I always have the difficulties to study in Italian because since primary school I have been studying in English, so I still find it very very difficult to study in Italian”***. Finally, among the students’ suggestions, the need for specific tutoring activities based on the curricula chosen emerges clearly and across all geographical areas: ***“They should give tutoring to the students because the curriculum is different from the one that we have studied”***.

<https://www.unhcr.org/it/manifesto-delluniversita-inclusiva/>



www.unhcr.org/it