

Svein Blom

## 6. Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration

*Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration appear to be affected by fluctuations in economic cycles. This is especially the case in the labour market domain. In spite of this, attitudes towards immigrants in Norway have nonetheless changed very little in the wake of the financial crisis. However, the financial crisis only hit Norway to a limited degree. High numbers of asylum seekers leads to increased support for more restrictive attitudes regarding access to residence permits in the country. The long-term tendency in many indicators of attitudes is nevertheless stability or a certain liberalisation over time.*

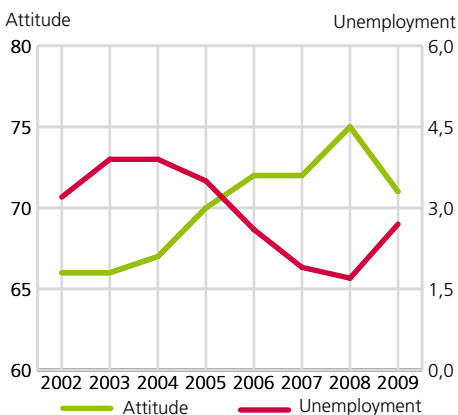
- Seven out of 10 appreciate immigrants' culture and labour efforts and believe that labour immigration from non-Nordic countries makes a positive contribution to Norwegian economy.
- Nine out of 10 also think that immigrants should have the same job opportunities as Norwegians.
- Nine out of 10 do not mind having immigrants as neighbours or domestic helps, but 1 out of 4 would feel uncomfortable having an immigrant as a son-in-law or daughter-in-law.
- Three out of 10 suspect that immigrants abuse the social welfare system, and
- 1 out of 3 believe immigrants represent a source of insecurity.
- The attitude towards new asylum seekers is less positive than towards already established immigrants.
- Five out of 10 believe that refugees and asylum seekers' access to obtaining a residence permit should be made more difficult. Scarcely 1 out of 10 believe that it should be made easier.
- Highly educated persons below the age of 45 who live in the most urbanised areas and have contact with immigrants, are generally among the most positive towards immigrants and immigration.

For a number of years, Statistics Norway has been mapping the attitudes of the Norwegian population towards immigrants and immigration through questions in its annual interview surveys on behalf of the ministry in charge, which is currently the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion. The first interviews were conducted in 1993 and were repeated each year until 2000. After partially changing the questions, the practice was resumed in 2002. Originally hosted in Statistics Norway's omnibus survey, the questions were transferred to the travel and holiday survey in 2005. However, this did not entail any serious change in the framework of the mapping.

### 6.1. Immigrants' labour efforts and cultural contributions are appreciated ...

There is widespread agreement on the benefit of immigrants' labour efforts. From 2005 and onwards, no less than 7 out of 10 have agreed strongly or on the whole that «Most immigrants make an important contribution to Norwegian working life». When the economic optimism was at its peak during the first half of 2008; a few months before the financial crisis hit the world economy, 75 per cent supported this statement. The share disagreeing was as low as 9 per cent. Norway had received a considerable influx of foreign workers from the new EU countries in Eastern Europe beforehand. Many of them were employed in the expanding Norwegian manufacturing and construction industry. In summer 2009, after 9 months of economic crisis, the attitude towards immigrants' labour efforts had returned to roughly the same level as before the crisis (table 6.1, upper panel).

Figure 6.1. **Attitudes towards immigrants' labour effort<sup>1</sup> and the share of registered unemployed<sup>2</sup>. 2002-2009. Per cent**



<sup>1</sup> Share agreeing strongly or on the whole that «Most immigrants make an important contribution to Norwegian working life».

<sup>2</sup> Fully unemployed as a percentage of the labour force, year average.

Source: Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Blom 2009) and NAV (2010).

#### What are attitudes?

An attitude is a judgement that reflects our response to a particular phenomenon. Attitudes simplify the assessment of new phenomena by activating existing likes and dislikes. Attitudes affect both the emotional and cognitive aspects of our consciousness. They also, to varying degrees, form the basis for actions.

A graphic presentation of the share agreeing with the statement about the benefit of immigrants' contribution to working life, together with the share of officially registered unemployed, is given in figure 6.1. The figure shows a reverse correlation between the two factors. When the unemployment rises (during slumps in the economy), the share agreeing with the statement falls, and when the unemployment falls (during economic booms), the share appreciating immigrants' labour efforts rises. It should be noted, however, that the variation in attitudes remains within an interval of 10 percentage points. Although the figure as such does not prove that there is any causal relation between the unemployment rate and the attitude towards immigrants' contribution to working life, it is very easy to believe that there is.

The attitude towards the statement «Most immigrants enrich the cultural life in Norway» has also fluctuated, but not in the same systematic way as with the aforementioned statement. In the first opinion poll in 2002, about 6 out of 10 agreed that immigrants enrich the cultural life of the country. Later, the respective share has varied between 66 and 71 per cent. All in all, the long-term trend has been one of increasing acceptance. Both in 2008 and 2009, 7 out of 10 agreed strongly or on the whole that immigrants enrich the culture (table 6.1, lower panel).

Table 6.1. Attitudes to two statements on immigrants' labour effort and cultural contribution. 2002-2009. Per cent

<b>«Most immigrants make an important contribution to Norwegian working life»</b>						
Year	All	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know	Number of persons that answered
2002	100	66	12	20	2	1 410
2003	100	66	9	24	1	1 385
2004	100	67	10	21	2	1 320
2005	100	70	10	17	2	1 289
2006	100	72	10	17	1	1 288
2007	100	72	16	11	1	1 269
2008	100	75	15	9	1	1 113
2009	100	71	15	13	1	1 104
<b>«Most immigrants enrich the cultural life in Norway»</b>						
Year	All	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know	Number of persons that answered
2002	100	63	12	22	2	1 409
2003	100	70	9	21	1	1 381
2004	100	66	10	22	1	1 318
2005	100	71	8	18	3	1 289
2006	100	68	11	20	1	1 289
2007	100	67	14	18	1	1 270
2008	100	71	12	15	2	1 111
2009	100	70	14	15	1	1 105

Source: Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Blom 2009).

## 6.2. ...and 9 out of 10 support equal job opportunities for immigrants

Nine out of 10 agreed strongly or on the whole during the years 2007-2009 that «All immigrants in Norway should have the same job opportunities as Norwegians»

(table 6.2). Also here it is convenient to relate the development in attitudes to the changes in the economic cycles. Despite the financial crisis, the average registered unemployment rate in Norway in 2009 did not exceed 2.7 per cent. At the same time, the share supporting the principle

Table 6.2. Attitudes towards a statement on immigrants' job opportunities. 2002-2009. Per cent

<b>«All immigrants in Norway should have the same job opportunities as Norwegians»</b>						
Year	All	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know	Number of persons that answered
2002	100	85	4	10	1	1 410
2003	100	83	3	13	1	1 384
2004	100	87	3	10	0	1 319
2005	100	89	3	7	1	1 287
2006	100	86	4	9	1	1 288
2007	100	90	5	5	1	1 272
2008	100	90	5	5	0	1 113
2009	100	89	4	6	1	1 104

Source: Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Blom 2009).

of equal job opportunities amounted to approximately 90 per cent; the same as during the economic boom at the end of the 1990s when the unemployment rate was at the same low level as 10 years later. A couple of years into the millennium, the unemployment rate was higher and the support for the statement about equal job opportunities for immigrants was lower (85 and 83 per cent in 2002 and 2003 respectively).

The statement on equal opportunities for immigrants in the labour market is one of the few statements that Statistics Norway did not change at the start of the new millennium. We therefore have a series of indicators of this statement dating all the way back to 1993. In 2001, no survey was conducted, but we have taken the liberty of entering the average of the results from the 2000 and 2002 surveys. Figure 6.2 shows the correlation between the share agreeing with the principle of equal

opportunities for immigrants in the labour market and the respective unemployment figures.

As we can see, the support for the statement was considerably lower in the early 1990s than it is today. In 1993, when the question was asked for the first time, only 3 out of 4 agreed with the statement. The slump caused by the stock market crash in 1987 was also at its worst in 1993. Registered unemployment at that point was 5.5 per cent. Unemployment then fell gradually throughout the remainder of the decade, as shown in the figure, simultaneous to an increasingly greater share supporting the statement on equal opportunities for immigrants. In 1998, the share agreeing with the statement peaked at 92 per cent. The figure reinforces the impression from figure 6.1: the goodwill in society towards immigrants in the labour market is related to developments in economic cycles and unemployment.

Figure 6.2. Attitudes towards equal job opportunities for immigrants<sup>1</sup> and the share of registered unemployed<sup>2</sup>. 1993-2009. Per cent



<sup>1</sup> Share agreeing strongly or on the whole that «All immigrants in Norway should have the same job opportunities as Norwegians». The value for 2001 is interpolated.

<sup>2</sup> Fully unemployed as a percentage of the labour force, year average.

Sources: Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Blom 2007, 2009) and unemployment statistics (Aetat 2001, NAV 2010).

### 6.3. ...but some fear abuse of welfare system and greater insecurity

In 2009, 3 out of 10 feared that «Most immigrants abuse the social welfare system» (table 6.3, upper panel). This is 12 percentage points lower than in 2002 when the question was included in the survey for the first time. Half of the population disagreed with the statement in both 2008 and 2009. The share who disagreed with the statement is therefore 20 percentage points higher than the share who agreed with it in 2009. In 2002, the share for these two groups was roughly equal.

The respondents were also asked their opinion on the statement «Most immigrants represent a source of insecurity in society». In 2008 and 2009, 1 out of 3 agreed strongly or on the whole with this statement, while half disagreed strongly or on the whole. As for the statement on abuse

Table 6.3. Attitudes towards two statements on immigrants' abuse of the social welfare system and their contribution to insecurity in society, 2002-2009. Per cent

«Most immigrants abuse the social welfare system»						
Year	All	Neither agree Agree nor disagree		Disagree	Don't know	Number of persons that answered
		2002	100			
2003	100	40	10	48	2	1 384
2004	100	40	12	46	2	1 318
2005	100	36	10	50	4	1 289
2006	100	36	13	49	2	1 289
2007	100	31	21	46	3	1 269
2008	100	27	19	51	3	1 113
2009	100	29	19	50	2	1 103

«Most immigrants represent a source of insecurity in society»						
Year	All	Neither agree Agree nor disagree		Disagree	Don't know	Number of persons that answered
		2002	100			
2003	100	45	10	44	1	1 385
2004	100	41	10	48	1	1 317
2005	100	41	10	48	2	1 286
2006	100	40	13	46	1	1 288
2007	100	35	19	46	1	1 272
2008	100	32	18	49	1	1 110
2009	100	33	15	51	1	1 103

Source: Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Blom 2009).

of the social welfare system, the share agreeing dropped by 12 percentage points from 2002 (table 6.3, lower panel).

The question on immigrants being a «source of insecurity» probably reflects the fear of crime to a large extent. The European Social Survey (ESS) 2002 included a question on crime among immigrants. The Norwegian population proved to be more sceptical here than the population of most other countries in Europe who took part in the survey. Only the population in two other countries; Greece and the Czech Republic, were more sceptical in relation to the degree to which immigrants are law-abiding (Blom 2005a). The question has not been repeated in subsequent European Social Surveys.

#### 6.4. The majority prefer immigrants to assimilate with the majority population

One of the questions in Statistics Norway's survey of attitudes towards immigrants and immigration shows that almost half (47 per cent) in 2009 think that «Immigrants in Norway should endeavour to become as similar to Norwegians as possible» (table 6.4). Almost 4 out of 10 (39 per cent) disagree with this, while 1 out of 10 neither agreed nor disagreed. The share who disagreed with the statement has remained the same since 2003, but the share who agrees has fallen somewhat (7 percentage points). The fall in the share who agreed with the statement is offset by an increase in the share who neither agreed nor disagreed.

Table 6.4. **Attitudes towards a statement on immigrants in Norway endeavouring to become as similar to Norwegians as possible. 2003-2009. Per cent**

Year	All	«Immigrants in Norway should endeavour to become as similar to Norwegians as possible»				Number of persons that answered
		Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know	
2003	100	54	7	39	1	1 381
2004	100	53	8	39	0	1 318
2005	100	54	7	38	1	1 286
2006	100	49	10	40	1	1 288
2007	100	45	18	36	0	1 273
2008	100	46	15	40	0	1 110
2009	100	47	13	39	1	1 103

Source: Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Blom 2009).

The leading policy in this field has been that immigrants should retain key parts of their culture, while simultaneously learning skills, gaining knowledge and forming attitudes that are necessary to live and take part in Norwegian society. This mixture of elements from two cultures, which goes under the term «multi-culturalism», has been interpreted as an essential component in the concept of «integration». Earlier attempts by the Norwegian authorities to «Norwegianise» Samis and other ethnic minorities in Norway have in retrospect been branded as an injustice. A policy that is aimed at obliterating the minorities' original culture has been regarded as an unwanted «assimilation

policy» (from *assimilare*; Latin for «to make similar»).

In recent years, however, the idea of «multi-culturalism» has been subject to criticism, as its supporters have been accused of yielding to male-dominated and anti-democratic features of some immigrants' actions and values. The critics believe it is imperative that such trends are prevented from developing in our society. Immigrant women's use of headscarf has also been debated in recent times. The degree of tolerance towards such cultural expression varies within Europe. Norway has so far only rejected the use of scarves among employees in the police and in the courts. In the event there is no longer a fall in the

Table 6.5. **Attitudes towards a statement on refugees' access to residence permits in Norway. 2002-2009. Per cent**

Year	All	«Compared to today, should it be easier for refugees and asylum seekers to obtain a residence permit in Norway, should it be more difficult or should access to permits remain the same as today? »				Number of persons that answered
		Easier	As today	More difficult	Don't know	
2002	100	5	39	53	2	1 408
2003	100	5	37	56	3	1 381
2004	100	6	44	47	2	1 317
2005	100	9	49	39	4	1 287
2006	100	7	46	45	2	1 288
2007	100	8	50	39	3	1 270
2008	100	7	51	38	4	1 108
2009	100	7	41	49	3	1 101

Source: Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Blom 2009).

share who wants immigrants in Norway to assimilate to the majority population, this may be due to debates of this type.

### **6.5. Five out of 10 want to reduce refugee immigration**

In answer to a question on refugees' access to residence permits in Norway, half of the respondents in 2009 thought that it should be more difficult to obtain a permit, while 4 out of 10 were of the opinion that the access to residence permits should remain the same as it is today. One out of 10 held the view that it should be easier for refugees and asylum seekers to obtain a residence permit in Norway. The reaction to this question has fluctuated since 2002 (table 6.5). For the first two years, more than half of the population was in favour of a more restrictive policy aimed at refugees and asylum seekers obtaining a residence permit, and the corresponding figure in 2003 was 56 per cent. The share then sank to less than 40 per cent in the years that followed (with a slight increase again in 2006) until 2008, when only 38 per cent wanted to have tighter controls on immigrants' opportunities to gain asylum or a residence permit on humanitarian grounds in Norway. In 2009, there was a major increase of 11 percentage points in the share who wanted to make it more difficult to obtain a residence permit. The share in 2009 who believed that the access to permits should not be changed had returned to roughly the same level as in 2002.

The question of how many refugees and asylum seekers Norway should accept is the other question we can measure dating all the way back to 1993. However, at that time the question was worded differently. From 1993-2000, the respondents were asked their opinion on the statement «Norway should give residence to refugees

and asylum seekers to at least the same extent as today». The response alternatives were: strongly agree, agree on the whole, neither agree nor disagree, disagree on the whole and strongly disagree. One of the reasons the question was changed was that the construction «at least» did not make it possible to distinguish between those who actually wanted to increase the intake and those who wanted to keep it at the same level «as today». The new question on the other hand, which was introduced in 2002, does allow such a differentiation to be made.

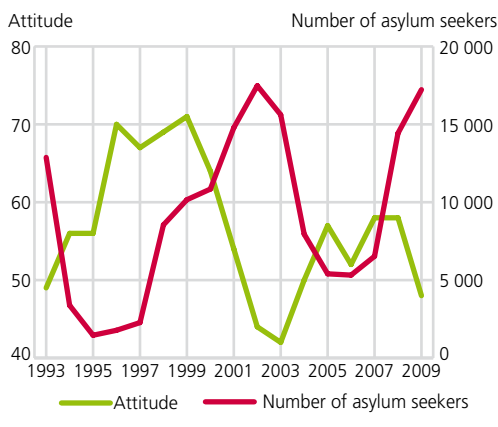
Logically, it should also therefore be possible to «translate» the results from the new question to fit in with the structure from the old question. By summarising, for each year, the share who believe it should be easier to gain a residence permit, and the share who think the access to obtaining a permit should be as today, we can estimate the share who think that refugees and asylum seekers should be given residence to at least the same extent as today. In order to test this hypothesis, we conducted experiments in 2004 and 2005 for both of the question formulations and compared the results. The hypothesis that new data can fit into the series of figures from the old question was clearly strengthened (Blom 2004, 2005b).

Thus we have an annual estimate of the share agreeing that «Norway should give residence to refugees and asylum seekers to at least the same extent as today» for the period 1993 to 2009. For the year 2001, the average for the indicators in 2000 and 2002 has been used.

The aforementioned statement includes an explicit reference to the scope of refugees and asylum seekers who obtain residence permits «today». It is therefore conveni-

ent to see the outcome of the indicators of attitudes in light of this. Figures on residence permits granted are published every year in the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration's (UDI) annual report, but get relatively little coverage in the media. Far greater media attention is directed towards the number who seek asylum, and there is reason to believe that it is this figure that the respondents have in mind when they answer the question on residence permits for refugees and asylum seekers. Further analyses show that there is a reverse correlation between the share with a positive view on granting residence permits to refugees and asylum seekers, and the number of asylum seekers. Thus, the tendency is for attitudes to be more benevolent when the flow of asylum seekers diminishes and vice versa.

Figure 6.3. **Attitudes towards receiving refugees and asylum seekers («to at least the same extent as today»)<sup>1</sup> and number of asylum seekers arrived in Norway. 1993-2009. Per cent**



<sup>1</sup> For the years 1993-2000: The share agreeing strongly or on the whole that «Norway should give residence to refugees and asylum seekers to at least the same extent as today». For the years 2002-2009: The share answering «easier» or «as today» to the question: «Compared with today, should it be easier for refugees and asylum seekers to obtain a residence permit should it be more difficult, or should access to permits remain the same as today?» The value for the year 2001 is interpolated.

Source: Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Blom 2007, 2009), asylum seekers arrived in Norway (UDI 2001, 2010).

Additionally, we should not forget that the wording of the actual question put to the respondents calls on the answer to be related to actual or perceived figures on how many are granted a residence permit (or who applies for a residence permit). It is not, therefore, completely surprising that a pattern of the kind shown in figure 6.3 can be observed.

Upon further examination of the illustration, examples can of course be found of years when the «reverse logic» between the two series of figures is broken. The year 2006 is one example of this (Blom 2006). The goodwill towards receiving refugees and asylum seekers at that time was at a relatively low level, while the asylum seeker figures were also low. Sometimes the explanation may be that the population takes time to notice changes in the asylum seeker figures, but it may also be the case that major events during the year have influenced opinion. Around the time of the data collection in 2006, there was considerable media attention surrounding the criticism of the UDI for having acted «kindly» and granting asylum to 200 Iraqi «MUFs» (persons with a temporary residence permit with no right to family reunification) when there was allegedly no basis for this in the Immigration Act. Also in 2006, a group of asylum seekers from Afghanistan, whose asylum applications were rejected, resisted compulsory return and went on hunger strike outside Oslo Cathedral. Events of this nature may have diminished the population's goodwill towards asylum seekers.

## 6.6. Seven out of 10 positive to labour immigration

The expansion of the EEA area in 2004 and 2007 combined with a thriving Norwegian economy resulted in an increase in labour immigration from 2004-2005. The largest immigrant groups were

Table 6.6. Attitudes towards labour immigration. 2009. Per cent

Year	«Labour immigration from non-Nordic countries makes a mainly positive contribution to Norwegian economy»					Number of persons that answered
	All	Easier	As today	More difficult	Don't know	
2009	100	68	17	14	2	1 101

Source: Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Blom 2009).

gradually arriving from European countries such as Poland, Germany, Sweden and Lithuania. In 2008, immigrants from Poland all of a sudden became our largest immigrant group. After many years of measuring attitudes towards refugee immigration, it eventually became relevant to direct the attention towards the new labour immigration. Our hypothesis is that labour immigrants will be made especially welcome because they will take part in the Norwegian labour market almost as soon as they arrive, and will help address the shortage of labour within expanding sectors. Their European backgrounds will also mean that they are less culturally different from the majority population than many refugees.

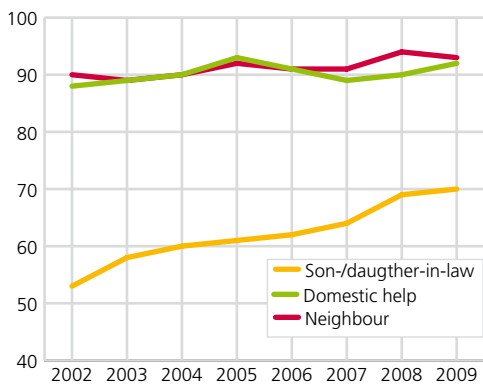
The statement we arrived at in order to capture the mood of the population with regard to labour immigration was «Labour immigration from non-Nordic countries makes a mainly positive contribution to Norwegian economy. Do you agree strongly, agree on the whole, disagree on the whole or disagree strongly about this?» We found it appropriate to distinguish between labour immigration from the Nordic countries and those outside the Nordic region since the Nordic countries have had a common labour market since 1954,

and immigrants from these countries can hardly be conceived as immigrants.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, we were not prepared to ask the new question until 2009, by which time the financial crisis had manifested itself and had been throwing a shadow on the Norwegian and foreign economy for nine months. We do not know, therefore, what attitudes would have been previously, when all indicators for the economy were still positive. We assume that the appreciation of labour immigration would have been even higher then. However, in 2009, almost 7 out of 10 believed that labour immigration from non-Nordic countries would have a positive effect on the Norwegian economy. Fourteen per cent disagreed with this, and almost 2 out of 10 neither agreed nor disagreed (table 6.6). This distribution of responses is roughly the same as for the statement «Most immigrants make an important contribution to Norwegian working life» (cf. table 1). When compared with the result showing that 5 out of 10 think it should be more

<sup>1</sup> The word "immigrant" is mentioned in most of the questions without being defined. Thus, it is up to the respondent to answer based on his own perceptions of the word. We assume that many are thinking of someone from Asia, Africa, Latin America or Eastern Europe when giving their answer, without this being mentioned in the question. The interviewers' instructions, however, state that such a definition may be given *if the respondent asks for it*. The new question on labour immigration enables the inclusion of western countries outside the Nordic region. In order that this does not affect the understanding of the other questions, the question on labour immigration is placed at the end of the interview.

Figure 6.4. Share refusing that they would feel uncomfortable having an immigrant as a domestic help, neighbour or son/daughter-in-law. 2002-2009. Per cent



Source: Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Blom 2009).

difficult for refugees and asylum seekers to obtain a residence permit in Norway, the data indicate – as expected – that attitudes towards labour immigration are more benevolent than towards refugee immigration. The wording of the two questions, however, differs to the point that it can be difficult to draw comparisons.

### 6.7. Nine out of 10 would not mind having immigrants as neighbours or domestic helps

Approximately 9 out of 10 would have no objections to an immigrant working as a domestic help for themselves or a close family member. The introduction to the question defines the immigrant as being able to communicate well in Norwegian. Nine out of 10 also have no objections to having an immigrant as a new neighbour. The share with these points of view varies somewhat every year. In 2008, for example, 94 per cent of respondents denied that having an immigrant as a neighbour would make them feel uncomfortable, while «only» 88 per cent would not mind having an immigrant as a home help. The variation in the answers from year to year

does not follow any apparent systematic pattern.

However, there is less tolerance for a son or daughter wanting to marry an immigrant, with 1 out of 4 stating in 2009 that they would not be comfortable with this. Seven out of 10 refute this opinion. A clear tendency for change over time can be traced in relation to this question. From 2002-2009, the share accepting the idea of having an immigrant as a son-in-law or daughter-in-law increased by 17 percentage points (figure 6.4).

### 6.8. Three out of 4 have contact with immigrants

Three out of 4 of the adult population have contact with immigrants (appendix table 6.1, upper panel). The share has steadily increased from 67 to 75 per cent during the years when the question has been asked (2002-2009). During this period, the share of immigrants in the population has also increased; from 5.7 per cent to 8.8 per cent. If we include Norwegian-born with immigrant parents, the increase has been from 6.9 to 10.6 per cent (Statistics Norway 2010). Part of the increase in the share who has contact with immigrants may be related to the fact that the share of immigrants has increased, but it is also likely to be due to the expansion of social interaction arenas.

As regards the follow-up question regarding the context of the contact, half now respond that it is at work (appendix table 6.1, middle panel). A further 4 out of 10 also have contact with immigrants through friends and acquaintances, and 3 out of 10 have contact in their neighbourhood.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, 14 per cent have contact with immigrants in their immediate

<sup>2</sup> More than one response alternative could be selected.

family. Contact at work, among friends/acquaintances and in the neighbourhood has increased 10 percentage points since 2002. The increase has been smaller for contact in the family, at just 5 percentage points.

If we count up the number of arenas where respondents report meeting immigrants, we find – including the quarter who do not have contact with any immigrants – a third with one arena where they have contact with immigrants and a quarter who have contact with immigrants in two arenas (appendix table 6.1, lower panel). Twelve per cent have contact with immigrants in three arenas, and the remaining 6 per cent have four or five arenas. The trend over time here – in addition to the fall in the share that does not have any contact with immigrants – is that the share that has contact with immigrants in just one arena is falling. In its place, there has been an increase of 14 percentage points since 2002 in the share that has contact with immigrants in two or more arenas.

Of the respondents who have contact with immigrants, it is fairly unusual for the contact only to relate to one person; only 6 per cent (appendix table 6.2, upper panel). It is more common for the contact to relate to two to four people. One out of 3 respondents who have contact with immigrants have contact with 2-4 immigrants, and roughly as many report having contact with 5-10 immigrants. An increase in the scope of contact over time can also be traced here. In 2003, half of all respondents who had contact with immigrants had contact with four or fewer people.

In recent years, we have also asked how frequent the contact with immigrants is, and how it is perceived. Among respondents who have contact, weekly contact

and daily contact are the most common (appendix table 6.2, middle panel), with 4 out of 10 having weekly contact, and just as many having daily contact. In 2003, when the question was asked for the first time, daily contact was the most common. With regard to personal experience of the contact, 3 out of 4 report it as mainly positive (appendix table 6.2, lower panel). One out of 4 have mixed experiences, while almost no one considered the contact to be mainly negative.

### **6.9. Social conditions influence attitudes ...**

It goes without saying that various social conditions affect the population's attitudes to immigrants and immigration over time. We have already discussed some such factors. Economic booms appear to play a role in the relaxing of attitudes, particularly towards immigrants in the labour market. Economic growth leads to a need for more labour and paves the way for both new and more established immigrants to find work. Other European studies (Semyonov, Rajzman and Gorodzeisky 2006) support this finding. High asylum seeker figures also appear to influence attitudes. The more asylum seekers there are, the greater the demand for the authorities to regulate and limit the influx of immigrants. The majority of the population seem to have a fundamental fear of major and uncontrolled immigration.

The formulation of the authorities' refugee policy also appears to have an effect on opinion. Whilst immigration should be kept under control, the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers must not be regarded as unreasonable or inhumane. Otherwise, this could trigger a demand for a policy with a more «human» face. This is probably what happened in the mid-1990s in connection with the media's frequent

reports on «heartless» decisions in asylum cases, innocent asylum children camped out in churches and brutal deportations. A more «immigrant-friendly» attitude was clearly in evidence from 1995 to 1996, which may have been related to this (Blom 1996).

On the other hand, all crime committed by immigrants contributes to the undermining of «immigrant-friendly» attitudes (Blom 1999). This applies to terrorist threats, gang fights, «honour killings», forced marriages, economic crimes, drug trafficking and human trafficking. Crime of this nature that are committed by immigrants, can lead to the stigmatisation of all immigrants. In particular, persons with no personal contact with immigrants, but who are influenced by reports in the media, could easily form a one-dimensional view of immigrants from this.

### **6.10. ...as do personal characteristics**

Macro conditions in society, combined with social and demographic characteristics of individuals, help form attitudes towards immigrants and immigration.

Person-related factors that have proven to have a bearing on attitudes are education, age, place of residence, contact with immigrants and political beliefs. Unless otherwise specified, the figures referred to below are from 2009.

Level of education is one of the most determining person-related factors. Highly educated people, without exception, have a more positive attitude towards immigrants and immigration than those with a medium or low level of education. While 44 per cent of the population educated to lower secondary level believe that most immigrants are a source of insecurity in society, 38 per cent of persons with an upper

secondary education share this opinion, and 17 per cent of those with an extended education (over 4 years) at university/university college. Furthermore, 8 per cent of the respondents educated to lower secondary level would feel uncomfortable with an immigrant domestic help, compared with 2 per cent of the highly educated.

The most significant tendency in connection with age is that the most elderly have the least positive attitudes. For example, 46 per cent of the oldest age group (67-79 years) believe that most immigrants abuse the social welfare system, compared with 25 per cent of the youngest group (16-24 years). We also find that 12 per cent of the oldest group dislikes having an immigrant as a neighbour, compared with 4 per cent of the youngest.

Notwithstanding, the second youngest group (25-44 years) are found to be more liberal than the youngest in relation to several questions. This is probably related to the fact that they haven't yet achieved the same level of education as their elders. For instance, 36 per cent of the 16-24 year-olds agree that «most immigrants represent a source of insecurity in society», compared with 28 per cent of the 25-44 year-olds. However, more than half of the oldest group shares this view.

Nevertheless, the youngest group is more liberal than the second youngest group in some questions, such as the question on whether immigrants should endeavour to become as similar to Norwegians as possible.

### **6.11. Less scepticism in the cities and larger towns**

A person's area of residency also appears to have a bearing on his/her attitude. Residents of built-up areas with more than 100 000 inhabitants, i.e. the cities and

largest towns and their surrounding area, generally have more liberal or «immigrant-friendly» attitudes than persons in smaller urban areas. For example, 11 per cent in built-up areas with more than 100 000 inhabitants would like to make it easier for refugees and asylum seekers to be granted a residence permit in Norway, compared with only 1 per cent in built-up areas with less than 2 000 residents, and 4 per cent in sparsely populated areas. We also find less resistance to marriages between immigrants and family members in the cities and largest towns, and to a certain extent also in sparsely populated areas, than is otherwise the case in Norway.

The goodwill towards immigrants and immigration by geographic region is normally greatest in Akershus and Oslo. However, this was less evident in the 2009 data than in previous surveys. The clearest example is that 12 per cent of the population in Akershus and Oslo would like it to be easier for refugees and asylum seekers to be granted residence permits, while a maximum of 6 per cent in the remaining parts of the country shared this view. The share that has daily contact with immigrants is furthermore higher in Akershus and Oslo than other parts of the country, and the share that has contact with many (more than 10) immigrants is also higher here. The share of immigrants is admittedly higher in Akershus and Oslo as well. Surprisingly, the inhabitants of North Norway were in 2009 however least likely to think that most immigrants abuse the social welfare system.

Which part of the country is the least positive towards immigrants and immigration varies from question to question. Possible «candidates» can be Hedmark/Oppland, the remainder of Østlandet (i.e. Østfold, Buskerud, Vestfold and Telemark)

or Agder/Rogaland. The tendency is not particularly clear, and can vary from year to year.

The effect of geographic region and area of residency is diminished or eliminated for some questions when differences in education level or degree of contact with immigrants are included in the analysis.

### **6.12. Does limited contact lead to less goodwill?**

Persons who have contact with immigrants generally have more «immigrant-friendly» attitudes than persons without such contact. The more arenas in which the contact is made, the greater the goodwill. For example, the share believing that most immigrants abuse the social welfare system drops from 40 to 18 per cent from persons with no contact with immigrants to persons who have contact with immigrants in three or more arenas. Correspondingly, the share who believe that most immigrants make an important contribution to working life increases from 60 per cent among persons with no contact with immigrants to 83 per cent of persons with contact in three or more arenas. Similar tendencies can be observed with regard to the significance of the number of immigrants that persons have contact with as well as the frequency of the contact. Generally speaking, attitudes are more positive among respondents who know a large number of immigrants, and who have frequent contact with them (daily). Whether it is the contact with immigrants that generates positive attitudes, or whether it is the positive attitudes that generate contact is unclear. It is most likely to be both.

Since our question on attitudes was moved to the travel and holiday survey in 2005, political affiliation has not been inclu-

ded in background variables. However, voting data is available for the last general election in the Norwegian section of the European Social Survey 2008. This can be combined with one or more questions on attitudes towards immigrants. We have chosen to use a question on whether immigrants from poor non-European countries should be allowed to come to Norway and settle here, and a question on whether living in Norway has improved or worsened as a result of immigration. Based on the answers to these two questions, it is clear that voters who voted for Red (Rødt), formerly the Red Electoral Alliance (Rød Valgallianse), or the Socialist Left Party (Sosialistisk Venstreparti) are the most «immigrant-friendly», followed by voters of the Liberal Party (Venstre) and the Norwegian Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet). On the question of immigration's bearing on living in Norway, the Liberal Party voters had an even more positive attitude than the Socialist Left Party voters. Next were the Centre Party (Senterpartiet), Conservative Party (Høyre) and Christian Democratic Party (Kristelig Folkeparti). The answers here were also varied depending on which question was asked. The aforementioned order relates to the attitude towards accepting immigrants from poor countries. For the other question, the Conservative Party voters took a more «immigrant-friendly» view than both the Centre party and Christian Democratic Party voters. The Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet) voters had the least positive attitudes towards immigrants and immigration.

Gender is generally of little significance to attitudes towards immigrants and immigration, but it does play a part in questions that relate to immigrants' cultural significance and whether they should try to be as similar to Norwegians as possible. Women have a greater appreciation than men of

the immigrants' cultural contribution, and believe to a lesser extent that they need to be as similar to the majority population as possible. They are also less interested in limiting refugees and asylum seekers' opportunities to obtain a residence permit in Norway. On the other hand, men are more disposed than women to appreciate the economic significance of labour immigration.

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Appendix table 6.1. **Share with contact with immigrants, type of arena and number of arenas. 2002-2009. Per cent**

Year	<b>Do you have contact with immigrants who live in Norway, for instance at work, in the neighbourhood, among friends, family etc?»</b>			
	All	Yes	No	Number of persons that answered
2002	100	67	33	1 408
2003	100	64	36	1 384
2004	100	67	33	1 318
2005	100	66	34	1 286
2006	100	68	32	1 288
2007	100	70	30	1 274
2008	100	74	26	1 111
2009	100	75	25	1 103

Year	<b>«In what connections do you have contact with immigrants who live in Norway?»</b>								
	All	At work		Among friends/acquaintances		In the neighbourhood		In immediate family	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
2002	100	41	59	27	73	22	78	9	91
2003	100	40	60	29	71	23	77	9	91
2004	100	39	61	29	71	24	76	9	91
2005	100	42	58	28	72	20	80	9	91
2006	100	41	59	31	69	24	76	10	90
2007	100	45	55	32	68	24	76	11	89
2008	100	48	52	32	68	26	74	13	87
2009	100	50	50	37	63	30	70	14	86

Year	<b>Number of arenas where contact with immigrants takes place</b>							
	All	Number of arenas						Number of persons that answered
		0	1	2	3	4	5	
2002	100	33	38	19	6	2	1	1 408
2003	100	36	35	18	8	3	1	1 382
2004	100	33	37	20	7	3	0	1 318
2005	100	34	37	19	6	2	0	1 286
2006	100	32	36	21	7	3	1	1 288
2007	100	30	36	22	8	3	1	1 271
2008	100	26	38	23	8	4	1	1 111
2009	100	25	33	24	12	5	1	1 103

Source: Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Blom 2009).

Appendix table 6.2. **Contact with number of immigrants, contact frequency and perception of the contact. 2003-2009. Per cent**

Year	«How many immigrants have you contact with?»							Number of persons that answered
	All	Number of persons					Don't know	
	0	1	2-4	5-10	More than 10			
2003	100	36	6	26	19	14	0	1 382
2003 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	9	41	29	22	0	890
2004	100	33	6	27	19	15	0	1 317
2004 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	9	40	29	22	0	886
2005	100	34	6	24	20	15	0	1 286
2005 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	10	37	30	23	0	844
2006	100	32	4	28	21	15	0	1 287
2006 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	5	41	31	22	0	886
2007	100	30	4	27	23	15	0	1 271
2007 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	6	38	33	22	0	894
2008	100	26	5	26	26	18	0	1 111
2008 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	6	35	35	24	0	819
2009	100	25	5	25	27	19	0	1 103
2009 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	6	33	36	25	0	831

Year	«How frequent is your contact with immigrants generally?»						Number of persons that answered
	All	Never	Seldom	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	
2003	100	36	3	9	23	29	1 382
2003 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	5	14	36	45	890
2007	100	30	4	11	28	28	1 271
2007 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	5	15	40	39	894
2008	100	26	4	10	29	32	1 111
2008 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	5	13	39	43	819
2009	100	25	3	10	31	30	1 103
2009 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	4	14	41	40	831

Year	«What is your personal experience of this contact?»					Number of persons that answered
	All	No contact	Mainly positive	Positive/negative	Mainly negative	
2003	100	36	44	20	0	1 381
2003 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	69	31	1	889
2007	100	30	51	19	1	1 271
2007 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	72	27	1	894
2008	100	26	58	15	0	1 111
2008 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	78	21	1	819
2009	100	25	56	19	1	1 103
2009 <sup>1</sup>	100	.	74	25	1	831

<sup>1</sup> Only persons who have contact with immigrants.

Source: Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Blom 2009).