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# Exploring Departures: Perceptions of Emigration from Norway in Online Discourses

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Abstract: This working paper analyses experiences and opinions related to the factors motivating emigration from Norway. The data was primarily collected from responses to an online article that introduced the EXIT Norway project and inquired about the reasons why individuals and families choose to leave Norway. Additional data was obtained from emails sent directly to the project leader. The paper identifies and illustrates, through examples and citations from the text corpus, eight overarching themes that encompass these reasons. Among these themes, economic factors and specific aspects of Norwegian culture and way of living are the most frequently highlighted in the texts.

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# Preface

This working paper has been written by Aadne Aasland, senior researcher at the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) at OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University. It forms part of the research project EXITNORWAY: Emigration from today's Norway, a four-year international project funded by the Research Council of Norway.

Senior researcher Marianne Tønnessen at NIBR is the project leader of the EXITNORWAY project and has been responsible for quality assurance of the paper.

The working paper analyses the vivid reactions to an EXITNORWAY project article, which was published on Norway's main website for research news, Forskning.no, and a related Facebook post. It further examines emails sent to the EXITNORWAY project leader, and a blog post with a comments section on why people emigrate from Norway.

We would like to thank all those who have shared opinions and own experiences on the topic.

Oslo, September 2023

Kristian Tronstad  
Research Director

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# 1 Introduction

An article published (in Norwegian) on forskning.no<sup>1</sup>, the primary Norwegian website for research news, on June 5, 2021, introduced the EXITNORWAY project: Emigration from today's Norway.<sup>2</sup> At the time, the project was in its initial phase. The article primarily highlighted one of the project's key objectives, namely, understanding the reasons behind the annual emigration of approximately 30,000 individuals from Norway. This aspect was portrayed as a paradox in the article, considering that Norway is widely regarded as 'one of the happiest countries in the world'.

The article generated significant engagement from its readers, sparking numerous reactions. Firstly, the article collected 343 individual comments on forskning.no's Facebook page, which had shared a link to the article.<sup>3</sup> These comments, written in mostly in Norwegian, primarily consisted of suggestions and insights into the possible reasons behind people emigrating from Norway. Additionally, a reader of the article, writer Lorelou Desjardins, wrote a blogpost in English on her blog "A Frog in the Fjord", outlining nine specific reasons why immigrants in particular might choose not to continue residing in Norway.<sup>4</sup> This blog post, in turn, prompted another round of reactions and discussions, resulting in an additional 44 comments, mostly in English. Furthermore, the project leader of EXITNORWAY received several emails from individuals, detailing their personal motivations for either contemplating or actually leaving Norway, as well as expressing their opinions on the subject of emigration. A total of 12 such emails contained relevant information that was subsequently coded and formed part of the text corpus analysed in this working paper.

In the EXITNORWAY project, researchers employ a multi-faceted approach to investigate emigration-related issues. This mainly involves analysing register data, and conducting qualitative interviews. Through these methods, the project aims to provide insights into various aspects concerning emigration from Norway, including the characteristics of emigrants, the reasons behind their decision to leave, the impact of emigration on Norwegian society, and the personal narratives of different groups of emigrants. By examining these dimensions, the project seeks to shed light on the complex dynamics and implications associated with emigration from Norway.

Acknowledging the substantial volume of feedback received in response to the forskning.no article, it became evident that these reactions serve as an invaluable supplementary source of information regarding perceptions and personal experiences related to emigration from Norway, as well as the underlying reasons behind individuals' decision to leave. While it is important to note the inherent limitations and recognize that these responses do not claim to provide a comprehensive representation of the motives behind emigration (as stated in the methodology section), they do offer unique perspectives and insights that may not be easily captured through other data sources. Consequently, a decision was made by project participants to systematically organize and analyse these texts,

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<sup>1</sup> The article is included as an appendix at the end of the working paper. See <https://forskning.no/befolkningshistorie-innvandring-oslomet/30-000-utvandre-fra-norge-hvert-ar/1868004> .

<sup>2</sup> The project's webpage: <https://uni.oslomet.no/exitnorway/> .

<sup>3</sup> The comments can be downloaded here: <https://www.facebook.com/forskning.no/posts/4370671146291032> .

<sup>4</sup> <https://afroginthefjord.com/2022/08/02/9-reasons-not-to-live-in-norway/> . Desjardins is French and is also a columnist in Norway's most read newspaper Verdens Gang.

with the objective of obtaining additional valuable insights into the dynamics of emigration from Norway.

Despite not being representative of why people emigrate from Norway, internet discussions on the topic can be useful in that they may shed light on public opinion and perceptions about the phenomenon.

Comments sections on internet sites can reveal viewpoints on the topic that would not readily appear in other project data sources, including those that would not so easily be shared with project researchers in individual or group interviews due to social desirability bias. It must be said, however, that forskning.no is not likely to attract the most radical or extremist opinions which are more likely to be found in more fringe online sites.

Data from Statistics Norway reveals that around 70% of emigrants from Norway are former immigrants. Despite their significant representation, immigrant groups in Norway have been found to be underrepresented in Norwegian media debates. As a result, their motivation for leaving has been little explored. Our text corpus analysis, therefore, offers a distinct perspective as many of the comments analysed are made by individuals who are immigrants themselves. This presents an opportunity to explore the perceptions and experiences related to aspects of Norwegian society that influence immigrants' considerations of leaving.

Perhaps surprising to many Norwegians, in a recent report by InterNations, Norway ranks very poorly (at 52nd place out of 53 countries) in terms of expat satisfaction.<sup>5</sup> The report, which has surveyed nearly 12,000 expats worldwide for the 10th consecutive year on their experiences in the countries they work in, defines an 'expat' as a person residing in a country other than their country of origin, usually for work purposes. It is worth noting that the study only includes countries with more than 50 respondents in their tables, and the exact number of respondents from Norway and the selection process are not accounted for.

The study measures quality of life in Norway among expats based on several subjectively based indices, which are then compiled into a compound index. Norway performs particularly poorly in areas such as local costs of living and disposable household income. Expats also find it challenging to make local friends, are more dissatisfied with their social life, and a higher percentage do not feel at home compared to other countries. Other areas where Norway fares poorly include affordability of public transportation, culinary variety, and dining options. Thus, the report indirectly highlights reasons why people choose not to live in Norway.

By including numerous examples and testimonies from our text corpus, the current working paper can also provide qualitative insights and nuance that helps explain why Norway is far from considered an ideal place of living for foreign expats.

It should be noted that the forskning.no article was written in Norwegian, and a majority of the commentators to this specific article appears to have majority Norwegian backgrounds, many of whom have themselves emigrated or considered emigration. Thus, it should be borne in mind that our report contains perspectives both of immigrants and of native-born Norwegians. As we are unable to ascertain the backgrounds of many of the commentators (immigrants may write in fluent Norwegian and Norwegian-born may engage in threads

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<sup>5</sup> <https://cms.in-cdn.net/cdn/file/cms-media/public/2023-07/Expat-Insider-2023-Survey.pdf>

started in the English language), the country origin and current residence are not factors that we emphasise in our analysis.

Another crucial consideration for readers of the paper is the presence of numerous claims put forth by commentators that are often questionable and could even outright false. While some of these claims might arise from a lack of awareness, others could be intentionally fabricated to cast Norway in a negative light. We abstain from attempting to rectify such claims and instead allow them to remain unaddressed within the text. Our intention in presenting such, in our opinion, inaccurate information is to highlight the arguments circulating on social media regarding reasons for leaving Norway, without explicitly verifying the accuracy of the claims. Thus, the current paper should far from be read as an objective description of life in Norway!

In this working paper, we have undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the aforementioned online discussions and email sources. The following chapter provides a detailed description of the data (text corpus) and the methodology employed for conducting the analysis, while also acknowledging the limitations of the study. Moving forward, the subsequent chapter presents the key findings, organized thematically to present the various reasons behind emigration highlighted in the text corpus. Lastly, in the concluding chapter, we summarize the findings and briefly discuss their contribution to a more nuanced understanding of emigration from present-day Norway.

## 2 Data and methods

In this chapter we first describe the text corpus and the coding scheme, followed by a brief discussion on the limitations of the study.

### 2.1 The text corpus and coding

The text corpus utilized in this working paper comprises four distinct components, which were briefly outlined in the introduction chapter:

1. Comments from the comments section of the forskning.no article, specifically on forskning.no's Facebook page, amounting to a total of 343 comments.
2. A comprehensive blog post (written by 'a frog in the fjord' providing commentary on the article, titled 'Nine reasons for not living in Norway.')
3. Comments made in response to the aforementioned blog post, totaling 44 comments.
4. Emails sent directly to the project leader of EXITNORWAY, sharing personal accounts, perceptions, and reasons for emigration from Norway. The collection consists of 12 emails of varying lengths.

The collected texts were imported into Nvivo (Release 1.7.1) after being captured from the indicated sources. Once compiled, the corpus underwent a coding process. During an initial exploration of the data, various major themes emerged. To account for text items that did not align with these major themes, an additional 'other' category was included. As a result, we ended up with nine codes after an iterative process in which codes had been created, renamed or merged, to represent the reasons why people leave Norway. It is worth noting that not all text items could be neatly categorized according to these nine codes. For example, some of the text items were coded under two different headings as they were cross-cutting and touched upon aspects of both or several themes. Actually, most of the full texts contained elements from several of the themes or codes. In total, 300 text items were coded under the following headings (codes):

- Living standards, prices, economic reasons 50 items
- Norwegians' way of living, culture, behaviour 49 items
- Form of government, politicians, illegitimate networks, corruption 36 items
- Direct comparisons with other countries 27 items
- Climate, weather, darkness 23 items
- Work and education: opportunities and culture 21 items
- Bureaucracy, lack of freedom, restrictions 19 items
- Social welfare, health system, child protection 17 items
- Other reasons 34 items

In the next chapter, we will provide a more detailed description of the arguments highlighted under each of the major codes. It is important to note that when referring to the various reasons for emigration, we do not distinguish between or compare the four sources, as no specific patterns could be identified in the text materials. Neither did we find large differences in the highlighted reasons for emigration by those commenting in English or Norwegian language. Still, when using direct citations, we always indicate the source and the language used.



The citations are marked by the following symbols:

"f.no" for comments from the website forskning.no

"frog-blog" for citations from the a-frog-in-the-fjord blog

"frog-blog comment" for comments on the a-frog-in-the-fjord blog

"email" for citations from emails to the EXITNORWAY project leader

Translations of the citations are often provided from Norwegian into English, and in such cases, they are marked with a "T." Some obvious spelling or grammar errors in the citations have been corrected without noting them.

The designs of both the EXIT Norway project and this particular study have been subject to reviews by SIKT, the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research. SIKT did not express any objections to the analysis of and citations from non-sensitive, but personal data from the open Facebook groups and blog used in this study. We have anonymized the email texts sent to the project leader so that it is not possible to trace their origin or identify the sender.

## 2.2 The study's limitations

This study should not be regarded as a comprehensive and representative account of the reasons behind individuals' decisions to leave Norway. It is important to note that we have no control over, nor possess information about, the readership of the article on the EXITNORWAY project published in forskning.no nor the blog post that serve as the foundation for the comments in the text corpus. Neither do we know exactly who decided to write a comment. Our sources are entirely based on self-recruitment.

Research has consistently demonstrated that individuals who participate in online comment sections differ in various ways from the general population. Furthermore, one can expect that people tend to behave differently on an internet platform compared to in a face-to-face interview setting.

Several studies have revealed that comment sections often exhibit more negativity and aggression than traditional media outlets, and they frequently contain more extremist and polarizing viewpoints.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, when discussing the reasons why people leave Norway, it is reasonable to expect that individuals with particularly negative experiences or viewpoints might be overrepresented in the discussion. On the other hand, Facebook adheres to a real-name policy, which may make commentators more inclined to follow norms of honest self-presentation.<sup>7</sup>

Another caveat is that our analysis to a large extent ignores the discussions that took place in the comment sections that also included positive statements about life in Norway. Sometimes people with negative comments were confronted by opposite or alternative views. Such counterarguments are poorly represented in our analysis as our main aim is to illuminate arguments speaking in favour of emigration. Thus, our study may give a rather gloomy picture of life in Norway which is not fully representative of the debates in the comments sections studied. This should be kept in mind when reading the working paper.

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<sup>6</sup> Sunstein, C. (2018). # Republic: Divided democracy in the age of social media. Princeton university press.

<sup>7</sup> Su, L. Y. F., M. A. Xenos, K. M. Rose, C. Wirz, D. A. Scheufele, and D. Brossard. 2018. "Uncivil and Personal? Comparing Patterns of Incivility in Comments on the Facebook Pages of News Outlets." *New Media & Society* 20 (10): 3678–3699. doi:10.1177/1461444818757205.

Instead of regarding the texts as representative viewpoints encompassing the pros and cons of living in Norway, and assuming they provide a comprehensive understanding of why people leave the country, we contend that these texts offer a reasonably comprehensive overview of various push factors considered when making decisions regarding staying or leaving. However, determining how individuals and their families weigh different arguments in their decision-making process is beyond the scope of this study.

We observed a significant level of correspondence among the viewpoints represented in the four categories of sources analysed for this study, which indicates that saturation has been achieved and that the main reasons for leaving are addressed. While broader categories of reasons for leaving, such as educational pursuits, job opportunities, family establishment or reunification, or the desire for adventure, often serve as core motivations for leaving a country, in real-life situations, also other push and pull factors for both staying and leaving often come into play. The forskning.no article focused on the reasons why people leave Norway, a country often depicted as one of the happiest in the world. This perspective likely influenced the comments to emphasize the challenges of living in Norway while downplaying pull factors (the attraction of other countries) and individual factors (such as love, career pursuits, etc.) as motives for departure. It should therefore be born in mind that this study primarily sheds light on potential push factors that could tilt the decision towards emigration instead of staying, a decision currently made by approximately 30,000 people in Norway each year.

### 3 Reasons for leaving Norway

In the previous chapter, which focused on data and methodology, we categorized the text items containing reasons for emigration into nine distinct themes or codes. In this chapter, we will explore the arguments that were emphasized within each of these themes. It is important to note that the order of the themes is based on the number of text items coded, which could provide some indication, though not necessarily an accurate reflection, of the perceived significance of each theme in emigration decisions.

#### 3.1 Living standards, prices, economic reasons

The texts provide a comprehensive range of perspectives on the financial aspects of living in Norway, shedding light on the challenges and considerations individuals experience. Several sub-themes emerge from the analysis, reflecting the complex interplay between personal finances, perceived opportunities, and individual priorities.

Firstly, the texts emphasize the high cost of living in Norway. In the texts the country is widely acknowledged as an expensive place to reside, with elevated prices for various aspects of daily life such as eating out, housing, and general expenses. This poses financial challenges for many individuals, particularly those with lower incomes or specific circumstances such as pensioners or individuals on disability benefits. The substantial expenses can strain budgets and make it difficult for many to meet their financial obligations comfortably.

Some quotes from the coded texts illustrate this viewpoint:

[A]ccommodation, car and daily expenses will eat all of your income. (email)

On disability benefits and minimum pension, it is cheaper to travel and live in low-cost countries. (email, T)

The perceived high cost of living can impact social activities and opportunities for individuals in Norway. It is argued that participating in cultural events, dining out, or engaging in recreational activities may be limited due to the financial constraints imposed by the cost of living. This can create a sense of exclusion or frustration for individuals who desire a more active social life but find it difficult to afford the associated expenses:

The price of eating out is pretty outrageous even for people earning a decent salary. You might be able to do it if you don't have kids, but otherwise count 250 NOK for a meal for one person, that is not counting the drinks, desserts or alcohol – which has insane prices compared to anywhere. Drinking a glass of wine out in a bar can cost around 80 NOK and there is no beer under 70 NOK either. (frog-blog)

Secondly, the tax system in Norway is highlighted as a significant factor impacting individuals' financial situations. While some appreciate that the tax system is rooted in the principle of solidarity and aims to provide social welfare benefits, in some texts the high taxes are considered a major drawback. Particularly for some higher earners, the burden of taxation is perceived to be substantial, leading them to consider countries with lower tax rates as more financially attractive. This perspective reflects the desire for greater financial

autonomy and the belief that keeping a larger portion of their earnings would improve their overall financial well-being:

I moved because of the wealth tax (frog-blog comment, T)

The tax system is based on a solidarity principle, which means the more you earn the more you pay. For some people that might not be ideal. Collected taxes are used for schools, roads and hospitals. I have met many people along the years who think it is outrageous to pay so much tax, whether one uses those services or not. (frog-blog)

Furthermore, less favourable exchange rates of the Norwegian kroner are mentioned as a significant concern. Currency rates affect the purchasing power of salaries and savings, making it challenging for individuals, especially immigrants, to maintain a stable financial position. The fluctuation in currency value adds an additional layer of uncertainty and can influence decisions regarding long-term financial stability:

[T]he kroner has lost a lot of value over the last 12 years or so - from 5.5 to 8.5 or 9 kroner to the dollar. While this change has boosted the Norwegian trust fund in kroner [...], it means that a salary of 750,000 kroner (very good in Norway for a single income) has gone from \$136,000 down to \$86,000 for people looking at things with a world view[...]. This is a VERY big deal if one is trying to get ahead in life. Plus it's not easy to put money into a retirement account outside of Norway while living in Norway. (email)

Moreover, according to some of the commentators limited opportunities and perceived lack of recognition for talents as reflected in alleged relatively modest salaries of highly skilled people in Norway, play a significant role in individuals' considerations to leave the country. Some educated individuals express dissatisfaction with their financial prospects or opportunities in fields in which they have expertise. They believe that other countries offer better opportunities for career growth and higher salaries, prompting them to explore options abroad:

In the USA, I can expect a starting salary of 1-2 million NOK per year after completing my Computer Science master's degree. In Norway, my starting salary would likely be around 600,000 NOK. Taxes are lower in the USA, and the chances of promotion are higher. (email, T)

Highly skilled engineers in the industry earn more and receive lower taxes if they move abroad. I have experienced such a relocation myself due to my husband's internationally sought-after high expertise. (f.no, T)

Most Norwegians believe people earn a lot there – once I explained to a Norwegian how much university professors earn in Switzerland, and he didn't believe it (2 or 2 1/2 times what they earn in Norway). (frog-blog comment)

Lastly, the perception of value for money is a recurring theme in the texts. The high prices for goods and services in Norway, coupled with a perceived lack of value for money, is by some experienced to be demotivating. The cost of living is viewed as a significant drawback, potentially outweighing other positive aspects of residing in Norway. Many of the texts argue that individuals consider or decide

to relocate to countries where they believe they can achieve a better standard of living or where their financial resources can be utilized more effectively:

It's about getting the most value for your money, and one gets more for one's money abroad (f.no, T).

To sum up, the texts reveal an intricate dynamic surrounding the financial considerations of living in Norway. High cost of living, high taxes, limited opportunities for higher incomes, concerns about financial stability, and the perception of value for money are all seen as contributing factors for individuals' decisions to explore better economic prospects elsewhere.

### 3.2 Norwegians' way of living, culture, behaviour

A significant number of texts focus on Norwegian lifestyle and culture, describing characteristics of Norwegian people that can pose challenges for newcomers trying to adapt and thrive in the country.

One of the reasons mentioned for emigration from Norway is the difficulty among immigrants of making local friends. 'A frog in the fjord', for example, explains how Norwegians tend to have established social networks from childhood. She contends how these longstanding friendships make it harder for individuals from outside the country to break into existing social circles. The tight-knit nature of Norwegian communities can create a sense of exclusivity and make it difficult for newcomers to feel accepted or find their place within the social fabric.

The blog text by 'Frog in the fjord' also referred to a survey (which spurred to subsequent debate) showing that most Norwegians believe their own culture is superior to others, with a significantly larger percentage sharing this opinion than what was found in any of the other countries surveyed. This sense of national pride and a belief in the superiority of one's culture can impact the social dynamics within the country. It may, for example, create an environment that is less receptive to cultural diversity and integration and to see the value of other cultures. This can, according to many of the texts, make it challenging for immigrants or individuals from different cultural backgrounds to feel fully accepted and integrated into Norwegian society:

There's a systemic denial in the Norwegian culture that stops Norwegians from seeing all the negative aspects of the Norwegian society. They'll simply and unobjectively pretend that it's better than anywhere else. The world and reality as the overall people see it here is distorted by their judgements, feelings and ignorance more than in other countries I've lived in. (frog-blog comment)

Some texts express dissatisfaction with the social life in Norway, particularly for teenagers and young adults. They mention, for example, that the cost of social activities (see previous sub-chapter), such as going out for dinner or participating in recreational events, can be prohibitively high:

[There's n]o life for teenagers and people in their 20s - let's face it, party, having a social life is too expensive for younger people. [F]or example in Spain they can count on 1600 euro per month and that will cover apartment, food daily expenses and entertainment a few times per week, here 25-30k NOK will not get them near close of having as vibrant life as they will have in EU countries. (email)

Several of the texts find life in Norway too serious, boring, and unadventurous, 'lacking spice', with an absence of social interaction between people, for example:

In my opinion, one point which is really missing, and which is probably hard for a lot of foreigners, is the lack of joy in the everyday life in Norway, especially when you come from a lively country from the South. Living in Norway feels more serious and "boring", it's sometimes hard to find joy. The main reasons are in my opinion less interactions between people, people staying a lot at home, few events/gatherings and the limited sense of humour of people. (frog-blog comment)

As regards the social interactions in Norway, some texts express the lack of common courtesy. People not greeting each other or making eye contact is mentioned, which can be perceived as unfriendly or distant. There are also mentions of line-cutting and a perceived lack of respect for others. These differences in social norms and expectations may lead to misunderstandings and difficulties in forming connections, particularly for those coming from cultures where different social norms prevail:

People don't say hello when they see you and they ignore you. You start feeling that there is something very wrong with yourself, and you begin to feel ashamed and don't want to engage with anyone at all. (email, T)

Think of the last time someone wasn't staring at their shoes and they didn't even look before crossing the street, nor waved thank you for stopping for them just because it's friendly to do so. I stopped for this very old Norwegian lady a while back and it absolutely made my day when I actually got a big smile and wave from her. That doesn't happen even once a year here. Another example is when I was pushing the babies into the gym, back when they were little babies. A lady kind of jumped in front of me and I thought she was opening the door for me. No, she just wanted in first and let the door slam on the stroller. (email)

There were also texts concerned with family dynamics and children's independence. Such texts argued that the Norwegian society encourages independence among children and teenagers, fostering self-reliance and autonomy from an early age. While this promotes individual growth and personal development, it can also lead to a disconnect from the family unit. In contrast to cultures where families have close-knit ties and strong intergenerational bonds, Norwegian families are perceived to inhabit more independence and give individuals more freedom to make their own choices. It was pointed out that this divergence in family values and expectations can create conflicts and even serve as a reason for emigration, especially for individuals who prioritize strong familial connections:

Another reason is the way the Norwegian society treats their kids and teenagers. They have a lot of rights and freedom, which is great, but then they are not responsabilized for their actions. They are encouraged by the society to be independent which is great, but at the same time they are also encouraged to disconnect completely from their family.[...] The concept of family in southern countries [...] is really different from Norway

and this takes to big conflicts in the family, and a good reason to leave. (email)

A few texts also refer to the so-called Law of Jante (*Janteloven*) having an impact in Norwegian society. This is a social norm or mindset characterized by conformity and the discouragement of individual achievement or standing out from the crowd:

There are probably many who won't admit it, but the Law of Jante is not dead, and Norway is strongly influenced by herd mentality/group mentality. (frog in the fjord comment, T)

To conclude, a recurring theme in many of the texts focusing on Norwegian ways of living and culture is feelings of exclusion and difficulty integrating into Norwegian society. Such texts mention experiences of not being included by Norwegians or feeling overlooked in social interactions. Language barriers, cultural differences, and a perceived lack of interest from Norwegians in making new friends are also cited as challenges. Integration into a new society can be a complex process, and the sense of feeling excluded or not fully accepted, it is argued, can influence individuals' decisions to seek opportunities elsewhere.

### 3.3 Form of government, politicians, illegitimate networks, corruption

A number of texts expressed perceptions and concerns regarding governance, politicians, and illegitimate networks in Norway. It should be mentioned that these statements often reflect disregard of politicians and the political system commonly found in comments sections of social media and should not necessarily be interpreted as main causes for leaving the country. Nevertheless, one cannot rule out that dissatisfaction with the political system in a country may impact on persons' motivation to stay or leave.

One recurring theme is the perception that well-qualified individuals are often overlooked for positions of influence and power due to corruption and favouritism within established networks. It is suggested that these networks, often comprised of friends and acquaintances, manipulate the system to their advantage, bypassing rules and regulations. This practice is perceived in some texts as detrimental to society, as it leads to the exclusion of competent individuals and hinders progress and development:

Highly qualified individuals are being overlooked for positions because cliques or friends who hold positions of power are corrupt and bypass regulations. Such practices can poison and undermine society. They scare away talented people, harm the economy, and engage in negligence and mismanagement without consequences. (f.no, T)

Furthermore, there is mention of "small kings" who are believed to violate rules without facing consequences. This phenomenon is allegedly particularly observed in small communities where there may be fewer individuals able to challenge their authority or hold them accountable. This lack of accountability, it is argued, contributes to a perception of injustice and a sense of powerlessness among the general population.

Several of the texts hint at poor quality of political leaders in Norway who enjoy 'luxury positions' in society, such as:

The problem is that being a politician has become an isolated career path, regardless of party affiliation. Hardly anyone in the party leadership has experienced the need to have a paid job. They live in a world of privileges. (f.no, T)

Additionally, one statement criticizes the practice of spending money abroad to establish connections and secure luxury jobs for politicians. Some texts point at specific political parties, especially one of the ruling parties in government *Arbeiderpartiet*, or red-green parties in general, suggesting they make life in Norway more miserable, with their tax policies being emphasised as the largest problem.

There are a few texts that touch upon the issue of corruption in politics, with political corruption and camaraderie being described as 'an everyday occurrence'. It suggests a belief that unethical practices and favouritism are deeply rooted in the political landscape of Norway. This perception of political corruption may, according to such texts, undermine public trust in the political system and lead to disillusionment among citizens. Norway's former reputation as a country with clean politics is now collapsing, according to one of the texts:

The pristine image of Norway has long crumbled throughout Europe and other countries in the world. Norway is no longer a democracy; what has developed is an oligarchy. (f.no, T)

### 3.4 Direct comparisons with other countries

Some of the texts provide insights into people's comparisons between life in Norway and life in other countries, as has already been shown in some of the previous sub-chapters. The comparisons touch upon different aspects that the authors of the texts consider to be better elsewhere than in Norway, such as job opportunities, social life, education, infrastructure, taxes, and quality of public services. The texts to some extent provide examples of pull factors for emigration to other countries, although equally often they are used simply to underline the poorer state of affairs in Norway, both in regard to specific themes and to life in general.

In several instances, individuals express dissatisfaction with the job market in Norway. In particular the USA comes out with better job opportunities in some of these texts:

Even though Norway is a wealthy country, the opportunities are much, and I mean MUCH, worse than in the USA. Personally, I cannot understand why anyone with a strong work ethic and talent would choose to live in Norway. (email, T)

Some compare the social life of young people in Norway unfavourably to those in other countries (here both Romania and Spain are specifically mentioned), suggesting that social interactions and opportunities may be limited in Norway.

There are also comparisons made to other European countries that come out better than Norway in various aspects. The Netherlands is for example mentioned as an example where government policies are more responsive to citizen expectations, resulting in better economic conditions. The quality of infrastructure (including road and direction signs), is also highlighted as an area where Norway could learn from the Dutch:



[The Norwegian] government should learn from the Dutch, or at least people who do road signs and direction signs should be sent to NL for mandatory training. (email)

The discussion extends to other Nordic countries as well. Sweden is mentioned as a preferable place to live by some text authors, citing reasons such as better job prospects, lower cost of living, and higher pensions. Finland is praised for its functional society and higher average IQ than in Norway, which is believed to contribute to its ranking as the happiest country in the world.

The texts comparing Norway with other specific countries also touch upon the cost of living, taxation, and public services. For example, some of the texts highlight the high quality of public schools and services in countries like France and Finland.

[M]y son has been in private school for 7 of 8 years (started when he was 3) and [is] now in Public. I'm so surprised of the extremely high quality of everything in the public school in France. Canteen, equipment, "SFO"-like things... and all for free.. and yes also iPads/tablets. (frog-blog comment).

One statement of a person that compares life in Norway with life in Spain gives a handful of reasons why quality of life is better in the country this person now lives in:

My pension is at least 35% stronger, no toll booths, no freezing temperatures, no snow, plenty of free parking spaces, functioning healthcare, great food, much less stress and hassle compared to Norway. I visited Norway last summer and I was looking forward to coming home to Spain after just two months to see my relatives, family, and friends - it was more than enough. I was shocked at how expensive everything had become, especially the food. (f.no, T)

As shown in the citation above, climate and weather appear among the reasons why some consider life to be better outside Norway. This is far from the only text on this specific topic, as will be seen in the next sub-chapter.

### 3.5 Climate, weather, darkness

Several of the texts in the corpus highlight climate, weather, and winter darkness as significant factors influencing people's decision to leave Norway. The analysis of these quotes reveals several key points:

The *weather* in Norway is in some of the corpus texts described as terrible, with frequent rain and increasing rainfall due to climate change. It is held that some areas experience 2100 mm of precipitation annually. The frequency of rainy days, along with limited sunshine, can contribute to a perceived lack of pleasant weather and dampen the overall experience for individuals who prefer a sunnier climate:

The weather is also not something you'd stay in Norway for. It rains a lot in this country, and with climate change it will rain even more. (frog-blog).

The *summer* weather can vary greatly, with 'temperatures ranging from 25 degrees and sunny to rainy and as low as 8 degrees'. Some argue that such

unpredictability makes it difficult to plan outdoor activities or enjoy a consistent summer climate.

The *winters* in Norway are in some of the texts described as extremely long:

The winter hell that lasts for eleven months, approximately.  
Every single year. Sometimes twelve months if the summer  
weather goes on strike. It's unpleasant, to say the least. (email)

Many complain about the lack of sunlight during the darkest months of the year. The absence of sunlight for extended periods is held to have a significant impact on people's mental well-being and overall quality of life. Furthermore, the combination of long winters, snow, and low temperatures can restrict outdoor activities. The presence of snow for a significant portion of the year can limit recreational options as described in the following citation:

[B]asically lack of everything makes half a year simply a  
vegetation because it's nothing to do but removing snow.  
(email)

The challenging climate, including long winters, lack of sunlight, and cold temperatures, and winter darkness are all cited as reasons for emigration from Norway. Many have a preference for countries with what in their view are more favourable climates, including warmer temperatures and less extreme weather conditions.

It should be noted, however, that individual perspectives and preferences play a significant role in shaping these perceptions, and what is considered undesirable weather conditions for some is appealing to others, as shown by a vivid debate on the Facebook platform on pros and cons of Norwegian weather, climate and seasonal change.

### 3.6 Education and work

Many texts in the corpus give reasons for relocating to foreign countries for educational and employment purposes. Several emphasize education and employment as their own motivations for leaving Norway. However, within the text corpus, it is not primarily the appeal of educational and employment opportunities in other countries that receives the most attention. Instead, the focus is more often on the limited educational and job prospects or the work culture within Norway.

Several of the texts are critical of the Norwegian education system, for example that it does not give marks or grades to children until they turn 13. There is a perception that students are not encouraged to improve their knowledge or strive for better outcomes, that students are not corrected, and education is not taken seriously, and some express concerns about the future qualifications and options for children:

What we observed and conclude after 7 years of their presence  
in the country is that their level of education is not what we  
have expected but far worse. We got the impression that in  
Norway students are not encouraged to improve their  
knowledge, or to be better every day, or to try hard to pursue

an objective (*Janteloven*<sup>8</sup> remains?). [...] For us this would be a reason for leaving the country, the fact that your kids are not "pushed up" by the system, and end-up with less qualifications and with less options in the future. (email)

Others were concerned with costs in connection with education. They argued that while school is technically free from the age of 6 to 12, after-school activities are often necessary for working parents, leading to additional expenses. Day care for children up to the age of 6 is not free, requiring parents to pay an estimated 3500 NOK per month per child:

From 6 to 12 years old school is technically free, but unless you are not a working parent, there is no way you can pick them up at 1pm when they are done, so you'll need to pay after school activities until you finish your own job. (frog-blog)

Some stated that they moved to other countries because the education they desired was not available in Norway. This includes pursuing degrees or programs that were not offered within a country with what they considered a limited range of educational opportunities.

Of the work-related factors mentioned as reasons for leaving Norway, difficulty finding (appropriate or relevant) jobs was the most prominent. Some argue that finding a job in Norway is challenging, especially in fields where language skills, local networks, and Norwegian university studies are preferred. Foreigners allegedly compete with well-connected Norwegians who understand the social codes of interviews and have established networks.

Job opportunities of spouses or partners were also highlighted as a major challenge. In cases where one partner has secured a job in Norway, the accompanying spouse often faces challenges in finding suitable employment. This imbalance could affect the overall financial stability and quality of life for the family:

[O]ftentimes the spouse of the employee is not able to find a GOOD job. That's exactly what happened to us. Norway is designed around two people working in a family in order to buy a nice house and to have a safe, reliable car to drive the family around in, at the quality level we are used to. We have had to go from a single family home to [...] a tiny little apartment. (email)

In some of the texts people expressed dissatisfaction with their jobs in Norway and the lack of opportunities for professional growth. The perceived lack of recognition of talents, feeling undervalued, and limited prospects for advancement contribute to their decision to explore other options:

But the work-related reasons [for leaving] have always had to do with recognition of their talents, feeling valued, opportunities to do more exciting work, or opportunities to actually work in their preferred field, not about money. (email)

There was also concern with the Norwegian work culture. In one text the author had perception that Norway has a "don't give a fuck attitude" towards work, with a lack of urgency and commitment to professional obligations. In this and several

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<sup>8</sup> The law of Jante (*Janteloven*) is, as previously stated, a social norm or mindset characterized by conformity and the discouragement of individual achievement or standing out from the crowd.

other texts the authors find the Norwegian work culture frustrating and a reason to seek more fulfilling employment elsewhere.

### 3.7 Bureaucracy, lack of freedom, restrictions

Another bulk of texts suggested tedious bureaucracy, lack of individual freedoms and excessive restrictions and intrusive laws as reasons why people decide to leave Norway.

In some of the texts Norwegian laws and regulations are perceived as overly intrusive, encroaching on individual freedom and privacy. The expansion of bureaucracy and increasing control may lead to a disregard for rules and a rise in non-law-abiding citizens:

Provocation on population will in my opinion lead to more, and severe, non law-abiding citizens and ignoration of rules. An example is the "building law" where it is practically forbidden for private person to use hammer and nails for construction purposes. (frog-blog comment)

Norway is, according to corpus texts, seen as one of the least friendly countries to set up a company, with high costs for establishing a business, and cumbersome administrative procedures:

Opening a company costs 4 times more than in the Netherlands and 20x more than i Germany, why I don't know; administrative procedure is more or less the same, officials get paid the same, electricity and paper is cheaper here so why is it so much more expensive here? (email)

Furthermore, it is argued that tax regulations in Norway, including a requirement to pay taxes on forecasted income even if it is not earned, is burdensome for entrepreneurs and individuals.

But the worst part is that here I have to pay taxes from my forecasted income even if I do not earn them, of course tax department will return it to me with an annual statement but still it is wrong and prevents companies to simply exist. (email)

Restrictions in various other aspects of life in Norway are also highlighted, including limitations on driving, fuel options, and consuming alcohol in public places. Furthermore, digital and other types of state control over citizens is raised as a concern. Some persons perceive these restrictions as excessive and question the impact on individual freedoms:

Give you an example: pay many times by card in *Vinmonopolet* [state monopoly on sale of wine and strong liquor] and you will receive information from government that you might have a problem with alcohol. Some call it a concern, but in my opinion, it is sick and in most of countries that kind of things is illegal. (email)

Other challenges with Norwegian rules and regulations specifically affect immigrants to the country. For example, the income requirement for family reunification in Norway is in some of the texts experienced as challenging, especially for students or individuals (artists, etc.) with fluctuating income. The requirement of proving income from the previous year and the limited consideration of the spouse's income contribute to these difficulties.

A different type of problem in relation to Norwegian bureaucracy that is mentioned, is alleged inconsistent information from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI). It is argued that individuals seeking advice from UDI often encounter incorrect or misleading information from the UDI helpline. This can lead to misunderstandings and potential application rejections:

One of the biggest things that I hope you'll find that is alienating to us foreigners is that, although the UDI has a duty to advise, when you call them, they give you false or incorrect information. It seems like the people who answer the phones have no training or idea what the UDI rules actually are. A lot of people probably rely on this false information and then have their applications rejected. (email)

Another area of concern to some commentators is delays and difficulties in obtaining essential documents like a Bank ID or personal number. The process of changing immigration status, particularly for non-EU/Nordic individuals, is also perceived to be lengthy and complicated.

### 3.8 Social welfare, health system, child protection

The topic of emigration from Norway, as discussed in the corpus texts, is also tied to the Norway's healthcare and social welfare system. In the texts citing various reasons for leaving Norway, a recurring theme is the cost and accessibility of healthcare services.

Many express concerns about the high expenses associated with medical treatments and medications in Norway. Some highlight significantly lower costs and better coverage they experienced in the United States, which they consider to be a paradox given the Norwegian universal healthcare system. They explain it by health insurance being covered by many jobs in the US.

Others mention long waiting times and bureaucracy within the Norwegian healthcare system, leading to delays in receiving essential medical procedures:

The healthcare system makes patients wait 12 to even 18 months for a simple surgery, either it is cancer or a chronic disease, the waiting hours are too long! (frog-blog comment)

Dental care is also mentioned, with several people commenting on the lack of comprehensive dental insurance in Norway. Some share personal experiences of costly dental procedures that would have been financially crippling if done in Norway. They compare the dental health situation in Norway unfavorably to that of for example central European countries:

I broke a front tooth when I was 10 and had an implant, this year this implant needed to be redone (after 47 years) – the operation, implant and crown was 85 000 NOK, I paid the fee of 1500 NOK. This would have ruined me in Norway, and this is why Norwegians have in general bad dental health, at least if you compare to central European countries. (frog-blog comment)

Another point raised is the perceived lack of proactive healthcare advice in Norway, with the system seemingly addressing only severe cases rather than promoting preventive measures.

Moreover, in some of the texts dissatisfaction with the level of expertise and treatment options available in Norway for certain medical conditions is expressed. It is claimed that some illnesses or diseases may not receive adequate attention, necessitating travel to other countries for medical assistance:

Many doctors have a hard time to help patients with illnesses or diseases that has not yet been discovered in Norway, so the best solution is to either make them travel to France or Germany to get medical help, that they need! (frog-blog comment)

Criticism is also directed towards decisions made by authorities to cut staff or recruit lower-wage nursing assistants, potentially impacting the quality of care provided:

Authorities have made a decision by cutting staff members or nurses from their job, they are recruiting nursing assistants for lowering the wages, when the system is required by law that it shall always remain 2 on the job. (frog-blog comment)

The Norwegian Child Protection Services (Barnevernet) is another central focus in the corpus texts regarding reasons for emigration. It is noted that in Norway, the state holds a significant responsibility for safeguarding children living within the country and, according to commentators, any complaint or concern reported to Barnevernet requires investigation and home visits by the authorities. This emphasis on child protection is perceived by some commentators as the state assuming a higher authority towards children compared to their own parents. One commentator describes how unlike in some other countries where mild physical discipline is still legally permitted under certain circumstances, the use of corporal punishment is entirely illegal in Norway. This topic is raised to point to restrictions on alleged personal freedoms of parents.

Several texts in the corpus express a widespread lack of trust in Barnevernet and raise concerns regarding its practices. It is argued that it is not uncommon to opt to leave Norway due to apprehensions surrounding Barnevernet. Such texts point to questions that have been raised with worries regarding false allegations leading to children being taken away from their parents by Barnevernet. It is argued that since a child can be removed from their parents, this puts many foreigners in Norway, who come from different cultures and parenting practices, under constant pressure, fearing that their children could be taken away from them.

One of the texts brings up that the Norwegian Barnevernet has faced significant international criticism, being accused of removing children from their parents without sufficient evidence. It is also held that even if parents in Norway do not engage in any illegal activities, raising children in the country is governed by numerous written and unwritten rules that can be challenging for foreign parents to be aware of and follow.

### 3.9 Other reasons for emigration

In this final sub-chapter we present reasons for emigration mentioned in the text corpus that are worth noting, albeit not being widespread enough to warrant a separate heading of their own.

## **Discrimination, racism and prejudice**

Several texts indicate instances of offensive comments, racism, and prejudice experienced by immigrants in Norway. Immigrants from African countries, Muslim individuals, and people of different ethnic backgrounds may face discrimination based on stereotypes, assumptions, or appearances. Some point to this contributing to a sense of alienation and an unwelcoming environment for immigrants:

The leader of NAV was happy to see me when she met me. I could see how her face changed when she heard that I have an accent. (email, T)

I am a black American who recently visited Norway and I hated it. I felt like they were racist. First off, the passport control was very rude towards me and made me feel unwelcome. Then, I went to Burger King in Storgata and I was waiting behind these two young Norwegians for about three minutes. Then two older Norwegian men came and lined up behind me, the two young Norwegian people in front of me told the two older Norwegian men behind me that they weren't in line and that they could get in front of them (in Norwegian). They ignored me and didn't address me to say they weren't in line because I was black and not Norwegian. (frog-blog comment)

## **Immigrants exploiting a generous Norwegian welfare system**

In the corpus it was also suggested in several of the texts that immigrants exploit the Norwegian system and transfer significant resources from Norway to other countries:

Immigrants who emigrate have received both disability benefits and old-age pensions. Over the years, they have built luxurious homes in their country of origin and started businesses. They have been exempted from taxes that others must pay, sent money back home, and amassed significant wealth. Are Norwegians foolish and naive for allowing this? (email, T)

Norway not being Norway anymore due to inflow of immigrants

The text corpus is not entirely free from negative stereotypes about immigrants and unfavourable attitudes towards Norwegian immigration policy, which are commonly encountered in various social media platforms. One comment, among several others, implied that Norway is no longer authentically Norwegian, leading some Norwegians to consider emigrating from their own country:

Norwegians think they have settled in an Arab country, so they emigrate to other countries; countries that have many Norwegians from before. They feel more at home there. (f.no, T)

## **Food and food culture**

Several of the texts in the corpus discuss the (lack of a proper) food culture in Norway, making it a less attractive country to live in. The rise of fast food culture and the availability of processed foods are highlighted as concerns. The perception is that many Norwegians prioritize convenience over cooking homemade meals, leading to an increase in the consumption of ultra-processed foods. The prevalence of sugar consumption, including the tradition of Saturday

candy culture, is also mentioned. According to such texts, the consequences of these dietary habits include an alleged higher prevalence of overweight, obesity, and diabetes.

A perceived high cost of food in Norway, including taxes on food imports and the focus on Norwegian producers, is seen as limiting choices and making certain staple products expensive. Some newcomers feel priced out of consuming the way they would prefer or participating in the visible urban culture, leading to a sense of otherness and estrangement.

The absence of a widely recognized Norwegian national dish is also mentioned, indicating a perceived lack of culinary identity or cultural representation in Norwegian food culture.

Finally, some other reasons that were mentioned by individual commentators for emigration from Norway (citations or part of citations), in bullet point form, are the following:

- Lack of support for good English-language schools
- Lack of equal rights of fathers (T)
- Alcohol and liquor policy reminiscent of a Sharia state (T)
- The 'beauty industry' (*skjønnhetsbransjen*) is not developed enough and is incredibly expensive (T)
- The Sex purchase ban (T)<sup>9</sup>
- The toll road policy (T)
- Cuts in elderly care (T)
- School closures (T)

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<sup>9</sup> Referring to the legislation in Norway that criminalises the purchase of sexual services.



## 4 Concluding discussion

The current working paper analyses experiences and opinions regarding the reasons why people emigrate from Norway. These experiences and opinions were mainly collected through texts reacting to an article on the EXITNORWAY project, which was published on forskning.no, the primary Norwegian website for research news.

It is important to remind the readers of the paper that we have analysed the texts without making any judgements about their factual accuracy or the likelihood that the various reasons for leaving Norway that have been discussed are the main factors that induce people to emigrate.

Eight major themes were identified and coded into a text corpus: i) living standards, prices, economic reasons; ii) Norwegians' way of living, culture, behaviour; iii) form of government, politicians, illegitimate networks, corruption; iv) direct comparisons with other countries where Norway comes out poorly; v) climate, weather, darkness; vi) work and education: opportunities and culture; vii) bureaucracy, lack of freedom, restrictions; viii) social welfare, health system, child protection. In addition, a ninth category included other reasons for emigration. Systematic analyses of each of these themes was conducted.

It is also important to note that the paper has focused on analysing reasons for departure from Norway and almost excluded all references made in the text corpus concerning why people decide to arrive in or continue to stay in Norway. Furthermore, the analysis should not be regarded as a representative account of the actual reasons why people decide to leave but rather as factors that people may take into account when deciding in which country to reside.

What, then, can our study bring to a better understanding of reasons for emigration from Norway? A number of conclusions can be derived from the analyses:

First, Norway's status as a high-cost country with a relatively compressed income system stands out in the analysis. Highly skilled migrants and native-born Norwegians with higher education express that they can attain a higher living standard by moving to countries with lower taxes and greater income differentiations. While this could prompt some individuals and households to leave Norway, others may view the Norwegian welfare system and relatively small income disparities, with its associated stability and social security, as attractive reasons to stay. Thus, the exact effect on emigration numbers is hard to assess and not something one can read out of our analysis.

Second, our study reveals that not everybody shares the self-image that many Norwegians have of their own country and culture. This discrepancy in self-perception can pose challenges for immigrants when adapting to life in Norway. Statements in social media show that they often experience a sense of Norwegians' lack of interest in understanding other cultures and ways of living, an inward-looking attitude and limited engagement with newcomers to the country. Consequently, this hinders the process of learning about and understanding different ways of living and doing things, a vital aspect that especially many immigrants miss in their interactions with Norwegians, and which may, ultimately, prompt them to leave.

Third, a significant number of texts in the corpus focus on frustration with politicians, the political system, bureaucracy, and lack of freedoms as reasons for emigration. Our impression is that such views were mainly expressed by native Norwegians (they were mostly written in Norwegian). Although we should not

dismiss these statements as reasons for emigration entirely, they might represent views commonly shared in media comment sections by individuals generally discontented with social developments, expressing more general frustrations that are not necessarily related to the emigration theme.

Fourth, the majority of comments suggest that a combination of various factors, rather than a single cause, influence people's decisions to leave Norway. This finding aligns with migration research, which emphasises that migration decisions are typically based on multiple considerations. While emigration analysis often focuses on easily measurable factors like economic data, our study offers more nuance by highlighting several additional factors that individuals might take into account, sometimes even being decisive, when deciding whether to stay or move. Considering the emphasis within the forskning.no article placed on which facets of Norwegian society that could influence people's decisions to relocate, the primary focal point of the paper has revolved around different push factors, rather than pull factors (the appeal of other countries) or individual motivations (such as love or career opportunities) for departing. Taking also these factors into account would be essential to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the motivations behind people's decision to emigrate.

Fifth, the text corpus also reflects another observation from migration research: decisions on migration consider the entire household, where opportunities for both spouses and children (sometimes also those left behind) play an essential role. Several texts emphasize opportunities for children, particularly the quality of schools, and job opportunities for spouses as crucial factors influencing decisions about their future country of residence.

The current analysis could inform policy-makers who aim to reduce outflows of people needed for the Norwegian economy to flourish. While Norway does not have a specific emigration policy<sup>10</sup>, policy-makers might consider measures to make living and working in Norway more attractive (ref. also the report on expats' life in Norway presented in the introduction chapter) based on findings in our study. For instance, addressing bureaucratic hindrances could be a more feasible task compared to making significant changes to Norwegian culture to be more welcoming for immigrants (and possibly also natives).

The overwhelming response to the EXITNORWAY article in Forskning.no demonstrated a great interest in the topic. Nevertheless, the topic has been scarcely covered not only in research but also in mainstream Norwegian media. A better representation of the various aspects covered in this working paper of minorities' life in Norway on TV, in newspapers, and online media could highlight minorities' aspects of life in Norway that Norwegians may not be well aware of, thereby enhancing the dialogue between the Norwegian majority population and expats and other immigrants in Norway.

The findings in this working paper can also serve as a valuable resource for researchers studying emigration from Norway. The analysis has indicated some under-explored aspects that might influence migration decisions. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the current analysis is neither representative nor provides an accurate picture of the extent to which the various factors mentioned affect actual emigration decisions. More rigorous research is required to delve deeper into these findings. In the continuation of the EXITNORWAY project, researchers will undoubtedly take these insights into account and further explore

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<sup>10</sup> FN/United Nations (2019): *World Population Policies 2019*, pages 202 and 203.  
[https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Oct/un\\_2019\\_world\\_population\\_policies\\_2019.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Oct/un_2019_world_population_policies_2019.pdf)

them when conducting interviews with native Norwegians and immigrants who have made the decision to leave Norway.

Overall, it is our hope that the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex reasons behind emigration from Norway, offering insights for various stakeholders, policymakers, and for future research.

## Appendix: The forskning.no article

# 30 000 utvandrer fra Norge hvert år

Hvem er de og hvorfor forlater de ett av verdens lykkeligste land? Nå skal forskerne finne svar på den økte utvandringen.

[Heidi Ertzeid](#) KOMMUNIKASJONSRAÐGIVER

OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet

Lørdag 05. juni 2021 – 04:30

Det er mye oppmerksomhet rundt innvandringen til Norge, men når hørte du sist noen snakke om utvandringen fra landet?

– De fleste tenker nok at folk heller vil komme til Norge enn å reise fra Norge. Men så viser tallene at rundt 30 000 personer velger å forlate landet hvert år. Dette er på størrelse med en middels norsk by, sier forsker Marianne Tønnessen ved By- og regionforskningsinstituttet NIBR på OsloMet.

Tønnessen og flere forskerkolleger fra NIBR og SSB skal finne ut hvem som forlater Norge, hvorfor de reiser og hvilke konsekvenser det har for Norge.

De skal bruke data fra norske registre for å svare på disse spørsmålene, i tillegg til intervjuer med personer som har utvandret fra Norge og nå bor utenlands.

### Dette vet forskerne nå:

- Årlig utvandrer omtrent 30 000 personer fra Norge.
- Utvandringen har økt tydelig de siste tiårene.
- Omtrent 80 prosent av utvandrerne er personer som tidligere har innvandret til Norge.
- Sannsynligheten for å utvandre er høyere for arbeids- og utdanningsinnvandrere enn for flyktninger og familieinnvandrere.
- Sannsynligheten er også høyere for menn, for unge voksne i 20- og 30-årene og for innvandrere med kort botid i Norge.

## **Flere enn under utvandringene til Amerika**

Årlig utvandrer faktisk flere fra Norge nå enn under de store utvandringsbølgene til Amerika på 1800-tallet.

– Vi vet ganske mye om utvandringene til Amerika, men utvandringen fra Norge i moderne tid er det forsket lite på, sier Tønnessen.

### **Dette håper forskerne å finne svar på:**

- Hva er det som gjør at folk flytter fra Norge?
- Hva slags kompetanse tar de med seg?
- Hvilken betydning har politiske vedtak for utvandringen?
- Hvordan har kjennetegn ved utvandrerne endret seg over tid?
- Hva er det som avgjør om folk flytter til utlandet eller til en annen del av Norge?
- Hvem utvandrer tilbake til landet de kommer fra, og hvem flytter videre til et tredje land?
- Hvordan påvirker utvandringen det norske samfunnet, aldringen i Norge og økonomiske og regionale forskjeller?
- Hva er utvandrerens egne historier – hvorfor flyttet de fra Norge, hvordan ser de på sin tid i Norge og hvordan har tiden i Norge påvirket livet deres senere?

### **Hvem er de?**

Fra tidligere forskning vet forskerne litt om hvilke grupper som utvandrer.

– Veldig mange som utvandrer er innvandrere som bare har vært i Norge i noen år. De har kanskje sterk tilknytning til et annet land og er her kun i noen år for å jobbe, forteller Tønnessen.

Det kan for eksempel være snakk om svensker eller østeuropeere.

Forskerne har også en hypotese om at det kan være en del unge, høykvalifiserte nordmenn som drar.

– Selv om Norge er et høylønnsland, har vi ikke så store lønnsforskjeller i Norge. Så de best kvalifiserte kan få høyere lønn i en del andre land, sier hun.

## Hvorfor drar de?

Det store spørsmålet er hvorfor nordmennene velger å dra.

– Norge er et politisk trygt sted, vi har høye lønninger og det er lett å få jobb. I tillegg har vi en velutviklet velferdsstat. Det blir derfor veldig interessant å undersøke hva det er som gjør at folk vil utvandre fra Norge. Kanskje kaster det nytt lys over hvordan det er å bo her? spør Marianne Tønnessen.

Hun er særlig spent på intervjuene med nordmennene som allerede har utvandret fra Norge.

– Vi skal oppsøke folk som har flyttet fra Norge og spørre dem om hvorfor de dro og hva de tenker om tiden sin i Norge.

## Hvordan påvirker utvandringen Norge?

Forskerne planlegger også å undersøke hvilken kompetanse utvandrerne tar med seg ut av landet, hva slags inntekt og yrke de hadde i Norge, og hvor i landet de bodde.

– Denne kunnskapen kan vi bruke til å finne ut hvordan dette påvirker det norske samfunnet, som for eksempel aldring, kompetanse og regionale og økonomiske forskjeller, avslutter forskeren.

## Utvandring fra Norge , et forskningsprosjektet

Prosjektet [Utvandring fra Norge](#) er i gang og varer til desember 2025. Forskere skal se på utflytting fra Norge og konsekvensene av utvandringen.

De skal undersøke hva som kjennetegner utvandrerne, hvorfor de drar og hvordan utvandringen påvirker det norske samfunnet.

Forskerne bruker data fra norske registre og kvalitative intervjuer med utvandrerne for å kartlegge hvorfor de drar, hvilken kompetanse de tar med seg, hvilken inntekt og sysselsetting de har hatt i Norge, og hvor i landet de har bodd.

I tillegg skal de finne ut hvordan utvandringen påvirker ulike forhold ved det norske samfunnet, som aldring, kompetansebehov og regionale og økonomiske ulikheter.