

Chapter 4

Undocumented Migrants' Everyday Lives in Finland



4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we delve into undocumented migrants' everyday lives in Finland, which (unsurprisingly) share many similarities with the lives of undocumented migrants in other European countries (see, for instance, the ground-breaking work by Bloch et al. (2009) and their account of the lives of young undocumented migrants in Britain; or Bendixsen (2018a, b) for Norway; De Genova (2002) for the US; Khosravi (2010) for Sweden; and Menin (2017) for Italy, to cite only a few). As for anyone else, their lives consist of a variety of needs: finding and retaining a place to live; seeking employment and money for living expenses; and keeping in contact with families and friends, often through social media. Undocumented migrants need to constantly come up with new survival strategies (Tervonen et al. 2018). The lives of these migrants fluctuate between the monotony of living in the limbo between legality and illegality (from which the 'feeling of being stuck' in their current situation emerges, as the survey showed) and unpredictable changes of condition. This unpredictability (Hörschelmann 2011) is brought about by the continuous challenges they have to face, as well as by sudden changes linked with their undecided legal status when they try to settle in a place.

The participant observations we conducted, as well as the results of the survey, corresponded well with findings for many other European countries, which have been widely described in the academic international literature: the lives of undocumented migrants are challenging. As Collins (2018) highlighted, migration is not about rationality and clear and linear decisions (see Tedeschi 2021a). Thorough ethnographic studies have highlighted, in particular, the non-linearity of undocumented migrants' lives, such as the dramatic story of being and becoming an undocumented migrant across borders told by Khosravi (2010). In their everyday lives, undocumented migrants relentlessly create semi-legal spaces by using specific, creative, always-new tactics (see De Certeau 1984)—survival strategies that enable them to make ends meet: 'Tactics produce space by constant manoeuvring,

transforming spaces into chances or opportunities' (Bendixsen 2018a: 168). In this way, they clearly show their 'agency in contesting, undermining or overcoming the legal restrictions, administrative barriers and everyday risks they face as a result of their status' (Schweitzer 2017: 318). In these roundabout ways, they go on to actively construct their subjecthood (Grønseth 2013; Strange et al. 2017).

Overall, whether for finding accommodation, or a temporary job, or just to provide a listening ear and comfort, relatives and friends often constitute a safety net for undocumented migrants, who experience precariousness, uncertainty, and rejection on a daily basis. At the same time, their ability to create everyday spaces for themselves in-between legality and illegality means that many undocumented migrants' 'everyday (inter)actions, claims and decisions—from making friends to accessing public services—are premised on, as well as reflect, their being (at least partially) recognised not only as *de facto* members of society but often also as subjects of politics' (Schweitzer 2017: 320). Undocumented migrants (at least some of them) are thus able to participate in society and, to a certain extent, integrate into local neighbourhoods and labour markets (Hellgren 2014: 1177). While this is the case in other European countries, it is less the case in Finland, especially for the main group we refer to in this book—rejected asylum seekers. Their active participation in society is very limited, and the fear of deportation, or of being apprehended by the police, worsens their situation. Still, we will show how they nevertheless manage to be active and find roundabout ways to survive—especially in the capital, Helsinki, where it is possible for them to be 'invisible'.

In this chapter, we focus mainly on undocumented migrants' everyday necessities, such as accommodation, employment, communication with family and friends, and their ultimate migration aspirations. We discuss their activities on the border between legality and illegality, some of which semi-legal activities, such as employment in specific places and certain jobs, are crucial for their survival. For reasons of confidentiality and ethics, we cannot reveal details about them. In general, the lives of undocumented migrants involve dramatic events, sudden decisions, and unresolved psychological traumas (Bustamante et al. 2018; Carswell et al. 2011; Crawley and Skleparis 2018; Feldman 2011; Silove et al. 1997). These aspects of the lives of undocumented migrants in Finland are not unique, but are common to undocumented migrants living in other countries. In addition, these experiences resemble the ones lived by other individuals going through trauma, loss, violence, and illness.

In Sect. 4.2, we discuss the general demographic and educational backgrounds of undocumented migrants in Finland, mostly relying on our survey data and ethnographic observations. In Sect. 4.3, we illustrate how undocumented migrants find more or less secure accommodation. This is followed by Sect. 4.4, in which we show how some undocumented migrants manage to find jobs, despite not legally being entitled to work. In Sect. 4.5, we illustrate what their everyday social lives are like, including their relationships with their families and friends. In Sect. 4.6, we write about their future aspirations, which many try to maintain and nurture despite the hardships they experience on a daily basis. In Sect. 4.7, our theme is migration—to Finland, within Finland, and potential on-migration from Finland, including return

migration. In Sect. 4.8, we focus on the aid they receive: who they turn to when they need something in their everyday lives. In Sect. 4.9, we present our conclusions about the everyday lives of undocumented migrants in Finland.

4.2 Demographic and Educational Backgrounds

The demographic and educational backgrounds of undocumented migrants in Finland, as well as their countries of origin, vary. As discussed at length in Sect. 3.2, the authorities in Finland do not have detailed information about undocumented migrants in Finland, and they are not able to provide accurate estimates about their numbers, demographics, or other factors.

Based on our survey, ethnographic research, and other background information, we estimated the number of undocumented migrants who remained in Finland after failing the asylum process. We also included those asylum-related migrants who came to Finland for similar reasons, but never started the asylum process. The main focus of our study was particularly on rejected asylum seekers. This necessarily excluded from our sample many other kinds of irregular situations, such as former non-EU students and employees whose residence permits had expired, tourists whose visas had expired, or visitors from other EU countries who had remained in Finland for more than 3 months without registering their residence. Rejected asylum seekers constitute the majority of undocumented migrants in Finland (see also Könönen 2020). As discussed in Sect. 2.3.2 at length, our estimate of the number of undocumented migrants in early 2019 was 4000–4500, of which 3000–4000 were rejected asylum seekers.

The potential to become an undocumented migrant in Finland is particularly high among the nationalities of asylum seekers who come to Finland in large numbers, especially when their applications do not lead to asylum or residence permits. In 2015–2018, of the 48,000 asylum applications in Finland, 52% were from Iraq, 14% from Afghanistan, 6% from Somalia, 5% from Syria, and 25% from people from other countries, totalling over 100 nations (Migri 2019a). The proportion of decisions granting asylum, subsidiary protection, or protection granted for humanitarian reasons in 2015–2018 differed substantially for the citizens of these countries (although there was a time lag between applications and decisions). Of the rate of positive decisions in 2015–2018 varied from 25% from Iraq to 49% from Afghanistan, 48% from Somalia, and 85% from Syria.

As discussed in Sect. 2.3.2, our estimates of the countries of origin of undocumented migrants in Finland indicated that 62–70% came from Iraq (by far the largest group of asylum seekers and rejected asylum seekers who came to Finland in 2015); 8–15% from the Maghreb countries (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, including proportionally more irregular migrants who entered Finland without starting the asylum process); 5–10% from Afghanistan (usually the second or third most common origin of asylum seekers); 5–10% from Somalia (usually the second or third most common origin of asylum seekers); 3–8% from Syria; and 5–15% from the

Table 4.1 Characteristics of undocumented migrant respondents (%)

	<17 years	18–29 years	30–49 years	50–59 years	60+ years	N
Men	16	42	39	2	1	91
Women	0	44	44	11	0	9
Total	14	42	40	3	1	100

remaining countries (many from Sub-Saharan Africa). In general, about 50% were 18–39-year-old men from Iraq, who constituted the largest group of asylum seekers entering Finland in 2015 and also of rejected asylum seekers in 2015–2018.

Having said this, we present the demographic and educational backgrounds of the people we studied, more precisely, based on our survey. Nine out of ten respondents (91%) were male and one out of ten (9%) were female. Furthermore, one out of seven (14%) were less than 18 years old (usually 17 years old), over two out of five (42%) were 18–29 years old, two out of five (40%) were 30–49 years old, and a few (1%) were 50–59 years old or (3%) 60 years or older (Table 4.1). The high number of men among the respondents was explained by the arrival in Finland of over 20,000 Iraqi men who requested asylum in 2015. This group, with a specific ethnic and gender background, comprised about 65% of all asylum seekers who came to Finland in that year (Jauhiainen 2017; Migri 2016). The majority of them did not receive asylum or residence permits in Finland and, as explained in Sect. 3.3, the Finnish authorities have often been unable to remove them from Finland. Regarding the largest group of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants in Finland, and also of our respondents, the majority (54%) were Iraqi men (61% of all male respondents), as already mentioned in Sect. 2.3.2. Of these, 90% arrived in 2015 (or earlier), and hence belonged to the large group of male Iraqi former asylum seekers. In fact, of Iraqi male respondents, almost all (at least 93%) applied for asylum in Finland (5% did not know about it; 2% had not applied for it). This difference was statistically significant ($p = 0.002$) compared to other undocumented migrant male respondents.

The education levels of the respondents varied. The group was rather polarised: one-third (34%) had as their highest education level uncompleted or completed elementary school (up to 6 years), another third (33%) had finished the ninth grade (14%) or finished high school with 12 years of education (19%), while the remaining third (34%) had at least entered university. One out of five undocumented migrants (20%) had completed a university degree. Our respondents represented many kinds of people with very diverse educational backgrounds; there thus seemed to be substantial numbers of migrants at the both ends of the educational spectrum. Compared with the same-aged populations of Finland, the proportion of low education holders was more than double and the proportion of those with the highest education levels was slightly lower. Among the largest group (the Iraqi men), 20% had uncompleted or completed elementary school, 29% had finished the ninth grade, 20% had finished high school, and 31% had at least entered a university. They were closer to the average level of education in Finland, though still slightly below it (Statistics Finland 2020).

Three out of four respondents (76%) had lived for most of their lives in a town or a city, and one out of four (24%) had lived in the countryside or a village. Most of our undocumented migrant respondents were young or middle-aged male adults from towns and cities outside Europe. An urban background was typical for the majority of undocumented migrants, partly explainable by the rapid urbanisation that has taken place in many sending countries, as well as their demographic and economic burdens (i.e. challenges in finding employment in the cities of sending countries).

4.3 Housing and Everyday Life

The first point relating to undocumented migrants' housing is that, 'when access to formal housing is limited, informal and personal networks need to be utilised. Those who lack these networks or are excluded from them may face difficulty in finding a place to live' (Diatlova and Näre 2018: 155). This is true for Finland, as well as for other EU countries. As Bloch recognised: 'Work and housing represent two of the main and intersecting sites where illegality is produced and the effects are acutely felt' (Bloch 2014: 1513). We may add that the resourceful, 'creative', and unexpected ways in which these people managed to find places to stay is once again a clear sign of the importance of their agency and their capacity to build semi-legal spaces for themselves. In most cases, the undocumented migrants we met had found 'their own' places, such as a rented room or apartment shared with peers; a room in a relative's, friend's, or acquaintance's residence; and, in a few cases, a place on their own. They had found accommodation through their networks and contacts, advertisements in online social media channels, or word-of-mouth. The ones who did not have such networks, or were still building them, were more likely to sleep in emergency shelters while awaiting better accommodation.

When we asked where the respondents usually slept, one out of five (19%) mentioned sleeping in an apartment they rented themselves, more than one out of three (36%) at a friend's place, a few (6%) in an emergency shelter, and one out of six (17%) in another place, such as with family members, at a church, or in a camp. Of the respondents, 10% mentioned that they did not have a regular place to sleep and 12% did not answer this question. Our survey of the municipalities in Finland showed that, of the municipalities that reported having undocumented migrants, 70% provided some kind of accommodation services for them, either through the local authorities or NGOs (Jauhiainen et al. 2018). Those undocumented migrants without a permanent place to live were in the most difficult situations—even though, as we will show, staying with friends and family can also have its challenges (Bloch 2014). An undocumented migrant who had not found a place for himself said the following about his experience in an emergency shelter:

In the emergency shelter, there are many people, and there is always noise. Moreover, I need to pay attention to my belongings; they need to be very close to me. I cannot trust people

there. I sleep probably three or four hours, but it might be less if I get anxious because of my current condition.

Emergency shelters usually have fixed opening and closing times: for example, the opening time can be at around 9 p.m., and the closing time around 6 a.m. This means that the user can stay there between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m., but has to stay elsewhere outside those hours. Since emergency shelters have limited places, people who want to sleep there might have to arrive well before the opening time and queue to gain a place. Not having a fixed place to sleep has very practical consequences; for example, as one undocumented migrant highlighted, the need to carry all one's belongings at all times. We noticed that they normally used rucksacks, in which they placed the essentials for the night. Emergency shelters are provided in Helsinki and other large towns in Finland and, sometimes, located within normal housing districts. Often the municipalities cover the costs of these shelters from their budgets, but such spending of local public revenues has attracted criticism, especially from the anti-immigrant political parties (Welling 2018).

In the morning, when they needed to leave the shelters, some undocumented migrants simply waited for a few hours somewhere until the day centres opened. These day centres, often run by NGOs or churches, are places where they can spend a few hours during the day and professionals (community workers or NGO volunteers) are available to give them help and advice. They can also provide food and clothing, as well as other facilities such as washing machines and showers. Sometimes they provide other services, such as language training or legal advice. Unfortunately, these day centres normally open at 10 a.m., if not later; therefore, undocumented migrants who have nowhere else to stay in the early morning need to find alternative places to wait in the meantime. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, many day centres had to reduce or even close their facilities temporarily, or limit the number of visitors substantially (Koivisto 2020). Furthermore, many usually open public sites, such as libraries, remained entirely closed or greatly reduced their opening hours; thus, undocumented migrants could not use these sites, which they often frequented before the pandemic. Such restrictions hit female undocumented migrants especially seriously in Finland. In general, there are rather few of them in Finland and their staying in places with unknown males is often disapproved of. Some NGOs provide services exclusively for female undocumented migrants, but these services were locked down for some periods in 2020.

The winter in Finland could be very challenging for the undocumented migrants, because it very cold (often with freezing temperatures below zero degrees Celsius) and dark outside, and few places are open early in the morning. In such circumstances, they normally tried to go to the few cafeterias that were already open at that time. Some used the subway stations, although the CCTV cameras there made them feel insecure. One undocumented migrant said that he especially liked to go to libraries, because he could stay warm and read there; however, these are not open in the early morning. He always ended up walking. He liked open spaces, such as parks, riversides, or the seaside, because he found them relaxing; for a short time, he

could forget his stressful condition by walking or doing some other physical activity (such as running):

I prefer to be alone. I don't want to hear anything from anyone; I am desperate. The only thing that might help me is some sport, running probably. I used to play football back in my country, but here I can't. When I cannot sleep, I just walk. Moving my body makes me feel better. It gives me energy and strength, and in this way I don't overthink. My nervous system is very tense.

In general, however, our research showed that undocumented migrants who remained longer in Finland tended to visit NGOs and day centres less frequently as time went by. They visited these sites and organisations more often in the beginning, when they had to build their own connections. Later, if they managed to establish their own support networks, they no longer relied on the centres. Similarly, the emergency shelters were available as a temporary housing solution for the young adults who came to Finland alone, but only a few used them. While using the emergency shelters, they tried to find better solutions and find a proper place of residence as soon as possible. Better solutions could include a room or flat to share, even in turns, with peers they came to know in Finland. Sometimes such a place was rented on the grey market. Others, who had friends and relatives in Finland, tended to find temporary accommodation with them; however, this option was not without drawbacks. Our findings were similar to those of Waite and Lewis (2017: 970), who reported: 'Whether the sharing of accommodation is relatively fleeting or longer term, many individuals in our study mentioned being cautious of intruding on their hosts' privacy through overstaying their welcome and abusing their generosity'. Similarly, Bloch (2014: 1516) noted:

While the data suggests that refused asylum seekers living as undocumented migrants certainly access and use the social capital derived from micro co-ethnic networks of individuals and organisations, it is also clear that these relations can be complex and can be variable.

Indeed, there were cases in our research in which the relatives refused to accommodate undocumented migrants, because they were afraid of losing their own residence permits:

After all the negative decisions and the termination of the reception centre services, I went to my uncle and asked him if I could at least stay there, with him, but he said, 'No, no way; you are illegal now. You need to go to Helsinki and find a place for yourself!' My uncle was afraid that the police would come to his home; that he might then lose his residence permit because he was giving shelter to someone, like me, who is here illegally. This is why I ended up in Helsinki.

Even if the hosts were not afraid of being caught by the police, it might be that the undocumented migrants themselves did not feel like staying in the same place for too long, for fear of being spotted by neighbours and denounced to the police. Such people often changed accommodation, sleeping in different houses with different friends (Tedeschi and Gadd 2021).

The nights were troubled for the undocumented migrants—and not only for the ones who slept in emergency shelters. The majority of undocumented migrants we

met could not sleep well (see also Heikkurinen 2019). They became very anxious and stressed, had unpleasant flashbacks from their countries of origin, or were afraid of being caught by the police and later removed. Bloch paralleled our research findings: 'Panic attacks, recurrent nightmares and the inability to sleep because of possible Border Agency visits were mentioned and some were almost immobilised by these anxieties' (2014: 1520). As a consequence, the quality of their sleep was very poor, wherever they were. One undocumented migrant said: 'Every time I fall asleep, I get something like a heavy pressure on my chest, and I then wake up and am so scared'. The few who stayed in emergency shelters had early fixed wake-up times and had to leave the places very early, no matter how badly they had passed the night. For others who had different accommodation, after a sleepless night, it was sometimes easier to sleep in the morning and wake up later in the day or afternoon. This is the reason why, during our field observations, it was more common to meet people in the afternoon or very late in the morning.

Some undocumented migrants also learned to stay awake late into the night and sleep until the afternoon during the long months in the reception centres when they were asylum seekers. There was not much to do, so it became very common for many to stay awake during the nights there and sleep through the mornings (Honkasalo et al. 2017). If an undocumented migrant has no regular duties in the morning or day, then his/her timetable can become very different from that of ordinary citizens who wake up early in the morning, spend the day working, rest in the evening, and go to sleep at night.

The situation for undocumented migrant families with children was slightly different and, despite the hardships, their situations were usually more stable. We cannot generalise or provide a complete account of the living conditions of undocumented families; however, the few families we met had been given one room (per family) with a shared bathroom and kitchen. The rooms were in one of the day centres, where undocumented migrants met, and which we also visited during our fieldwork. The families, but also men coming from other places (emergency shelters or private accommodation) and staying there during the day, all cared in a very special way about that particular place. Some of them said, 'This is my home, my place, and I want it to be beautiful and clean'. This clearly indicated their strong need to have a place to 'own' and to take care of; for instance, one day we found them painting the walls. This was done with extra care:

You know, this white colour on the walls improves the mood, and gives light to the place. It makes the place look brighter, it is more beautiful! I do not like the place to be empty . . . but not full either . . . something in the middle, not many people . . . but it is nice to have people around, who talk, not loudly, and warm the atmosphere.

This was the opinion of an undocumented migrant who used to visit the day centre every day and who was very active there. In general, the common shared areas (kitchen, bathroom, and conservatory) were always tidy, since the guests very neatly cleaned up after themselves. Cooking was also done in an organised and shared way, so as to give space to everyone—especially to mothers who cooked for their children and needed their own fixed times and spaces. This was one of those rare occasions

when we were able to observe the everyday lives of undocumented migrant women in their temporary homes on a daily basis. They went out less than the men, so they usually stayed either in their rooms with the children or in the common shared areas, especially when they needed to cook for the whole family. For two of them, it was acceptable to cook when men were around; however, a third woman whom we observed was not allowed to remain in a room with other men for religious and cultural reasons. She had different cooking times than the others and generally stayed in her room. When she knew that there were no men around, she would show up in the common area and start cooking for her husband and child. She rarely went out (except to the mosque to pray), and was always accompanied by her husband and child.

In general, the families we observed tried to live normal lives as far as possible (although mostly inside the house) and treated that place as their own home, so as to provide a sense of stability for themselves and their children. In reality, however, their living conditions were only apparently stable and, despite the efforts of the parents, this could not prevent negative consequences for the children's wellbeing: 'Sporadic and unstable housing situations primarily affect children, whose social connections and networks are locally formed' (Khosravi 2010: 104–105). Indeed, the parents, like the majority of undocumented migrants without families, had very high levels of stress and anxiety. They were sometimes too tired (from the sleepless nights, for instance) to provide their children with the psychological stability and sense of home they needed. This was also reported in the academic international literature, which highlighted that various elements, including poor and precarious housing conditions, had a negative influence on individuals and increased their stress levels (Bustamante et al. 2018). This is especially true for children.

4.4 Employment

In Finland, undocumented migrants are not entitled to work; however, in general, 'undocumented migrants have no access to statutory welfare support and so work is the only way of obtaining money when alternative informal support structures are not available' (Bloch 2014: 1513–1514). As discussed in Sect. 1.3, undocumented migrants have a legal right to social benefit support in Finland, but it is difficult to access it due to the complex bureaucracy of the process.

Of the undocumented migrants who responded to the survey, one out of four (26%) had been employed in Finland and, at the time of the survey (between October 2018 and January 2019), one out of four (24%) were employed. Of the employed, almost two out of five (38%) had a more or less permanent job, one out of four (24%) had a part-time job, and almost two out of five (38%) worked randomly. A few of the respondents (5%) had been employed in Finland for over a year. Such numbers corresponded with the general situation in Finland, in which participation in the labour force is lower among the foreign background population. In Helsinki, where a large number of undocumented migrants live, the unemployment rate among the

20–64 years old Iraqis (with residence permits) in 2017 was 53%; among Somalis of the same age, it was 45%; and among Afghans, 41%; whereas among Finns it was less than 10% (City of Helsinki 2019).

The issue of employed undocumented migrants has generated political discussion in Finland. During the election campaign in the spring of 2019, Mr. Antti Rinne, the leader of the Social Democratic Party (and from the summer until the end of 2019, the prime minister of Finland), suggested that undocumented migrants (paperless migrants, as he defined them) should work in Finland in specific jobs for local authorities (although without fixed work contracts). Later in 2019, in a Government of Finland (2019) programme it was mentioned that the possibility of providing work-based resident permits for undocumented migrants would be investigated; however, by the autumn of 2020, no such investigation had been initiated.

Previous work experience in the country of origin increased the likelihood of a person being employed later, as an asylum seeker or undocumented migrant, along the asylum-related journey or in the destination country (see, for example, Jauhiainen 2017; Jauhiainen and Vorobeva 2018). Those respondents who were employed in their country of origin were more likely to be employed as undocumented migrants in Finland ($p = 0.003$). Almost three out of four respondents (71%) worked in their country of origin and, of those, almost two out of five (38%) were employed in Finland. Of those respondents who had worked in their country of origin, four out of five (79%) asserted that it was more important to move within Finland to secure a job than to live with people of the same ethnic origin ($p = 0.000$).

In general, studies found that, among asylum seekers and refugees, men were both absolutely and relatively more often employed than women (Brücker et al. 2019). Such a situation was very evident among specific ethnic refugee groups, such as Afghans, prior to their arrival in Finland (Jauhiainen and Eyvazlu 2020), but also true in Finland, at least for the undocumented migrants we were studying (mainly rejected asylum seekers). According to our survey data, employment was more common for men, with roughly one out of three respondents (31%) working. Employed Iraqi male respondents were slightly less likely to be employed. Of those, one out of four (25%) were working in autumn 2018, and one out of three (31%) had worked in Iraq. None of the female respondents (0%; from four countries) worked; however, our data on women was too limited to draw broader conclusions about female employment, although employment among undocumented migrant women was clearly very rare. Language skills also mattered: if the respondents were proficient in Finnish, they were almost twice as likely (40%) to be employed than those who knew little or no Finnish (24%).

In the international context, undocumented migrants are employed in many sectors—cleaning, food service, car cleaning, barbering, mechanical work, and construction (Brücker et al. 2019; Cohen 2006; Pajnik 2016). Our employed respondents had a variety of jobs, usually in positions that did not require special training or skills. Of the employed respondents, 33% were employed in a company, 3% were self-employed, 3% had mixed employment, and 60% had other types of employment. These different jobs included restaurant worker, volunteer, and teacher, for example. There were some differences regarding people's backgrounds: those who

had not completed secondary education, who had gained work experience in their countries of origin, and who had family in Finland were more often self-employed than other respondents.

Undocumented migrants were employed in various enterprises run by Finnish people and people with non-Finnish backgrounds. In some cases, undocumented migrants found jobs in businesses run by people who initially came from the same country as themselves, but who were now regular migrants in Finland. This phenomenon was noted in earlier research: 'Irregular migrant workers tend to concentrate in low-paid employment, which they access through intermediaries, often from the same country of origin or ethnic group' (Sigona 2012: 56); 'They were working in low paid precarious jobs either in co-ethnic businesses or the domestic sphere, where documents were not required or requested' (Bloch 2014: 1513).

Many of the undocumented migrants' jobs were regular, legal jobs: everyday jobs in which the native population and other immigrants are employed. In their current jobs, 62% had Finnish co-workers and 64% had co-workers of their own nationalities; however, the ways in which the enterprises operated (regarding wages, insurance, taxation, and similar) were to some extent illegal or on the border between legality and illegality. The media (see, for example, Manner and Teittinen 2017; Mäntymaa et al. 2017) revealed that, in Finland (as elsewhere), some private employers exploit the legal systems so that they can hire asylum seekers as trainees, whom they do not have to pay a salary. Such exploitation can become more serious when people lose the status of asylum seeker and become undocumented migrants: 'Some employers use power over their non-authorized workers to pay lower wages and extract longer hours' (Bloch 2014: 1514). Regardless of the informality of their jobs, over two out of three (70%) of our responding employed undocumented migrants had written work contracts, and half (52%) received their salaries via a bank account. One out of four employed peoples (24%) received their salaries in cash, and another one out of four (24%) claimed that they were not paid for their work.

Likic-Brboric et al. (2013: 678) mentioned that undocumented migrants' jobs can be:

such illegal economic activities as being involved in the illegal production and distribution of goods and services that are by law defined as illicit. Informal economic enterprises deal with licit (i.e. legal) goods and services, while the way of operating the business in which such goods and services are provided is to a varying extent illicit.

Pajnik (2016: 161) discussed employed undocumented migrants as follows:

'Helots', the category that includes irregular migrants and asylum seekers, suffer the most, and even more so when their work is unskilled and tied to specific projects. Compared to the groups of citizens that include nationals as well as regular and established migrants, recognised asylum applicants and special entrants, helots as the lower 'subgroup' of citizens are the worst off. The guarantee of their labour and wider human rights is a practical impossibility for them.

For the sake of confidentiality and security, we do not reveal details about the specific sites and sectors of such 'non-legal' employment in Finland; however, it is

not difficult to find them if one is interested in knowing where the undocumented migrants work and which jobs they have. The Finnish media discussed their employment and identified jobs such as restaurant worker or cleaner, mostly in the capital (Yle.fi 2017). Undocumented migrants tend to work for a rather small group of employers in Finland, and the total number of employed undocumented migrants is perhaps slightly more than 1000 people in total; nevertheless, they are involved in business activities that generate millions of euros per month.

Thus, undocumented migrants happen to be involved in employment activities that to some extent circumvent the law. As the academic international literature highlighted, undocumented migrants also risk being lured into more unlawful activities (see, for instance, Chan 2018). This may start in their countries of origin or the transit countries, where they are often lured into smuggling or human trafficking (the research has clearly shown the involvement of migrants in the smuggling process. See, for instance, Van Liempt and Doornik 2006). If they want to leave their home countries in the first place, and reach Europe, 'those who have little choice but to engage the services of smugglers/traffickers, as a result of restrictive immigration and asylum policies, are subject to further exclusion from Europe by the measures put in place to prevent smuggling/trafficking' (Grewcock 2003: 115). This becomes a vicious circle: undocumented migrants illegally engage smugglers to reach Europe, but once they have reached it, they are further excluded from legitimacy, because they have used those smugglers' services. This does not necessarily mean that they are 'criminals' themselves; on the contrary, they can be seen as 'good illegals', whereby "illegality" does not function 'as an absolute marker of illegitimacy, but rather as a handicap within a continuum of probationary citizenship' (Chauvin and Garcés-Masareñas 2012: 241). Indeed, as a study of registered crimes conducted in Norway by Mohn and Ellingsen (2016) showed, the percentages of undocumented migrants engaging in illegal activities nationally were rather low. They argued that asylum seekers and irregular migrants, as a group, are overrepresented in media reporting about crimes, often for political reasons. Bendixsen (2020) also showed that the Norwegian government sends these people back to their countries of origin to prevent them from committing crimes, in this way linking the return of these migrants with a clear policy of crime prevention. In Finland, involvement in semi-legal or illegal activities is a necessity for some undocumented migrants' survival in harsh conditions: 'Refused asylum seekers were aware of the risks of working and the ways in which they needed to work pushed them into additional modes of illegality, beyond immigration status just to survive' (Bloch 2014: 1514). The situation is similar to the one that Engbersen and co-workers highlighted in the Netherlands: the 'exclusion of illegal immigrants from public services and the formal labour market' (2007: 391), pushing these migrants towards alternative ways of making ends meet. According to our field research, even though there was a risk of being involved in illegal activities, many of the undocumented migrants avoided them, especially those for whom violating the law went against their natures and moral values, as these research participants highlighted:

I don't want to become a bad guy. I am a good guy, have never harmed anyone, or done anything bad . . . so I don't understand why the government is persecuting me here. However, I understand that it is very easy to become a criminal in these conditions, where you cannot work and you are basically not allowed to exist. It is easy to start: maybe you steal a mobile phone, then you go on and on in this direction until you become an actual criminal and there is no way back anymore.

When the first negative decision arrived, my physical and psychological situation started worsening. After the second negative decision, they started telling me that I should leave, that I am not allowed to stay in the country anymore, but I didn't want to, so I kept applying against the negative decisions, even if I was under pressure. Now I have given up. There is nothing else that I can do, and I don't want to break the law and become a criminal, but I don't want to remain here and do nothing either: I want to be active and to work!

It is so sad to see so many of my peers use drugs and alcohol. I don't want to become like them. I am a religious person; however, when you have nothing left, every possibility is denied to you and you are desperate, it is easier to get involved in those things.

These quotations from undocumented migrants (Tedeschi 2021a) show that commonly widespread rumours in society, such as that being an undocumented migrant always means he/she conducts illegal activities, in reality hide complex and varied situations: some individuals are lured into them, but others are not and thus explicitly show the powerfulness of their agency, despite the hardships, and their capacity to fight back. Many try to find 'legal' jobs with semi-legal or illegal payments. Despite their current conditions, some do not work if the work is not legal.

To find a job in the grey market, an undocumented migrant may use his/her own networks (word-of-mouth or online social media channels) and/or rely upon various unofficial intermediaries between job seekers and job providers. Such social relationships are important, as Ambrosini (2017: 1813) noted:

Because unauthorised immigrants are officially excluded from formal labour markets, housing markets and most welfare provisions, they can settle if they find other sources of work, income, housing, and social protection. In this regard, a crucial role is played by various intermediaries.

Many undocumented migrants want to work, and they have different motivations for doing so. Obviously, many desperately need money, because they have fallen outside the institutional 'safety nets' in Finland by remaining illegally in the country. The majority of our studied undocumented migrants were very happy when they managed to find jobs, to support themselves and, in some cases, their families (either in Finland or in their countries of origin). In addition, four out of five (79%) of the employed respondents mentioned that their current work helped them to integrate into Finland, 13% did not know, and 8% believed that their current work did not help them integrate into Finland. For many, being employed was a means to become better acquainted with Finnish society—despite the employment not being properly legal.

Money is an important motivation for working. The salaries undocumented migrants received varied greatly, depending on the working hours and types of jobs. The median salary the respondents mentioned was 10 EUR per hour for a full-time job and 7 EUR per hour for part-time or random work. Multiplying the hourly salary according to the standard working hours in Finland (8 h per workday

and 22 workdays per month) would result in 1760 EUR per month for full-time employees and 1232 EUR per month for part-time employees—or 58% and 41% of the median monthly salary in Finland (3018 EUR per month), respectively; however, they rarely worked such fixed hours. Earlier research found that the salaries of undocumented migrants were often well below the official minimum wage and that their work involved long work hours (Bloch 2014; Sigona 2012). In fact, the Finnish media revealed that some undocumented migrants in Finland are paid as little as 2 EUR per hour (Manner and Teittinen 2017; Mäntymaa et al. 2017), corresponding to a monthly salary of 352–660 EUR, or 12–22% of the median monthly salary in Finland. Most of the full-time-employed undocumented migrants we studied received salaries that were typical for low-paid jobs in Finland. Nevertheless, some respondents (24%) hardly earned any salary, but needed to work to pay for living expenses, such as food or accommodation, or they worked because it gave them something to do during the day. The best things that the respondents mentioned about their employment were the pleasure of being able to work, the social relationships they formed through work, the psychological comfort resulting from work, and the feeling of being useful to others. The worst things about their employment were the insecurity of their employment, the injustice they felt in the workplace, and the mental and psychological burden they experienced at work.

As explained previously, having paid employment was never the only motivation for an undocumented migrant to work. For many, employment was a way to gain focus in their lives. We observed that not being entitled to work often worsened their psychological condition. Working and being able to support themselves or their families could give undocumented migrants temporary relief from stress, help them to build social relationships, and also provide them with a measure of dignity. In general, doing nothing all day undermined their wellbeing and health. Moreover, since the majority of them had had traumatic experiences, ‘the days that pass with nothing happening’ (as one undocumented migrant said) might easily lead to flashbacks of distressing past events or sleepless nights:

I don't like to be like a beggar. I miss my country, even if I would like to learn the language and settle down here: with study, work, or marriage. As for the work, I am ready to do anything. I feel that I am wasting my time here, just waiting for something to happen, but I feel safe here; you don't see people assaulted here. However, I am a little bit afraid of the police and of deportation. I feel sad. Nothing can make me happy, and I miss my country, even if I cannot go back there. I feel bad because I don't want to be a beggar, but the situation is such that I am [a beggar]. I don't know what to do. I would feel much better if I could get asylum. I could do things. Now I cannot do anything, because I don't have the residence [permit]. I studied before, but when I received the negative decision, I couldn't study anymore. I was kicked out of the reception centre two months ago. I am attending a Finnish course. I come here [to the day centre] every day, and I go to sleep at the emergency shelter. I only sleep four hours per night. I have nightmares and keep overthinking. I am a religious person, so I believe that He will decide when the time is right for me to get the things that I need.

The majority of undocumented migrants would do more or less anything to get rid of their feelings of fear (coming from the past and uncertainty about the future), uselessness, and loneliness, and to not be considered ‘beggars’. Apart from the

unemployment itself, this feeling of being considered ‘beggars’ negatively influenced many of the undocumented migrants we met: ‘I don’t need Finland’s money. I am a strong man and can work and earn my own money!’ It also influenced their access to the basic services offered to them by the municipalities or NGOs, as a social worker from a small municipality in Southern Finland explained:

There is an issue with humiliation: for some of these people, it is actually humiliating to ask for public services, or to ask for coupons . . . to get food! Social workers try to explain to them that it is their right . . . and that Finnish people also have to go and get money for food when they are unemployed, but it must be a cultural thing; they don’t understand this . . . They also don’t understand that it is not the municipality’s ‘personal choice’ to give them food or not . . . it is how the actual system works, and the human rights laws are respected! They don’t want to appear to be beggars; it is an undignified thing, in their opinion, so they might prefer to seek help from their community. Better this, for them, than ‘begging’ for food. In addition, since this is a small town, they feel ‘too visible’ . . . in the sense that everyone might see that they are going to that certain place to get money for food. Maybe in a bigger city they would be more invisible, and in that sense, they might feel this ‘humiliation’ of being unemployed less.

Being proudly independent and not having to rely on anyone were therefore very important for many undocumented migrants and their wellbeing. In another study (Wettergren 2015: 241), an interviewee revealed: ‘Happiness will be like when I get that paper, when I get time with myself as well [and] when I do whatever I want without relying on anyone else, so that’s my ideal. I hope it will come one day’.

A third main reason to work, besides money and the possibility of doing something productive, was to try to obtain a residence permit by being employed. Employment in Finland is one reason for a visa or a residence permit to be granted; however, so far, it has not been possible for a person who is illegally in Finland to obtain a residence permit by being (illegally) employed. People can take jobs during the asylum process, and instead of receiving asylum, can apply for a residence permit for work purposes. Khosravi (2010: 103) reported in an earlier study that:

My informants never missed the chance to show their pride in working hard. They frequently mentioned their desire to be able to work in the formal labour market and pay taxes. They generally believed that hard work would increase their chances of eventual legalisation.

In Finland, obtaining a residence permit for work purposes is not easy since, by law, specific requirements exist in terms of the length of the contract, income, number of working hours, and the possibility of supporting one’s family. Migri (2019b) stated:

If you apply for a residence permit in order to work in Finland, you must get an appropriate salary for your work. This salary must be enough to support you for the entire time your residence permit is valid.

As stated previously, the jobs of undocumented migrants are normally underpaid: hence, they are not paid highly enough to support one person, let alone a family. Moreover, if the national migration service, Migri, finds that the migrant is working to some extent illegally (even if the job is *per se* legal), this can compromise future asylum applications or residence permit requests, as the person can be then accused of exploiting the system. Nevertheless, exploitative situations occur when migrants

want to legalise their stay and therefore start working. Employers may exploit the situation by making them work longer hours for low wages (Khosravi 2010), with the false promise that they can obtain a residence permit thereby. All this happens despite the fact that, according to Ambrosini (2013: 13):

The governments of receiving countries have stepped up efforts to eliminate ambiguities and grey areas in regulation; to make the sites where irregular immigrants find refuge, resources, and services more transparent and controllable; and to impose more severe sanctions on those who provide irregular immigrants with hospitality and support. But these efforts have resulted in the greater immersion of immigrants in more hidden and less controllable areas, in more irregular work, and in a stronger commitment to becoming unidentifiable, sometimes even with entry into networks more closely intertwined with illegal organisations and behaviours.

4.5 Family and Friends

As Putnam stated:

'Social capital' refers to features of social organisation such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. For a variety of reasons, life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital (1995: 67).

In this sense, undocumented migrants are like anybody else: they have their own networks, which they trust and can rely on (creating bonding social capital, and reinforcing identity, ethnicity, and homogeneity; Putnam 2000). Some have a family, many have sisters and brothers, and some have children and many other relatives and close friends as well. This constitutes their social support:

A resource that is usually created in the strong social ties between family members, close friends, and members of ethnic groups. These strong ties are a major source of emotional and material support, allowing individuals who can mobilise it to "get by" and "cope" (van Meeteren et al. 2009: 885).

Using Granovetter's words, they are undocumented migrants' strong ties (1973); however, being undocumented means that they cannot communicate easily with their family and friends, who often live in other places. Almost all of the respondents (92%) mentioned that they had family or friends in their country of origin. Of those, one out of six (16%) kept in touch with them daily, almost one out of four (23%) weekly, one out of ten (10%) monthly, and one out of three (32%) less frequently. One in five respondents (20%) no longer had contact with their family and/or friends in their country of origin. During the COVID-19 pandemic, having or not having these contacts with family and friends assumed greater importance. Those who had no contact were often extremely anxious about not knowing the COVID-19 situation in their former home countries for their family and friends. Likewise, those who maintained contact with their families and friends felt obliged to say that they were fine, despite the pandemic situation being severe in many European countries, including in neighbouring Sweden.

Creating and maintaining social relationships are not only important for life fulfilment, but also for finding the resources to survive (bridging social capital, crossing ethnic groups and differences; Putnam 2000): they constitute what is called, after Granovetter (1973), ‘weak social ties between individuals, such as friends of friends or indirect acquaintances. This form of social capital helps migrants to “get ahead,” to change their opportunity structure through access to resources in other social circles than their own’ (van Meeteren et al. 2009: 885). Five out of six respondents (83%) had made friends in Finland. Since many of them had already been in Finland for some years, it was rather natural that they would have made friends in the country. The respondents regularly met with their friends in the morning or daytime when it was light outside (80%) or in the evening or at night (77%) when it was dark outside. In the winter, it is already dark outside in Finland at 5 p.m. The female respondents met their friends outside at night slightly less frequently than the men did.

Overall, the undocumented migrants had made a variety of friends with different backgrounds. Almost three out of five respondents (58%) had friends who originated from Finland, one out of four (24%) had friends from other European countries, and half (49%) had friends from their former home countries. In addition, three out of five (59%) mentioned that they had made friends with asylum seekers (although the asylum-seeker category tended to be rather unclear for the respondents). Since most undocumented migrants we studied came to Finland as asylum seekers, many made friends when they were asylum seekers and not yet undocumented migrants. Undocumented migrants who had made friends in Finland kept in touch with at least some of them at various intervals: two out of five (39%) daily, over one out of four (28%) weekly, and one out of six (17%) at least monthly. Very few (6%) lived with these friends, and only a few (10%) were never in contact with them. Those who had made friends with Finnish people most often originated from Afghanistan, Iraq, or Morocco.

Many of the studied undocumented migrants had made friends in Finland or had relatives and family in Finland or outside of Finland. Nevertheless, half (49%) of the respondents agreed that they often felt lonely in Finland (17% did not know; 34% disagreed). Of those who often felt lonely, six out of seven (85%) did not have any family with them in Finland, one out of four (26%) were rarely in contact with friends in Finland, and one out of nine (11%) had not made any friends in Finland. In our research, loneliness was thus strongly connected to not having close family in Finland; however, it could be said that, in general, migration itself causes loneliness:

When moving to another country, migrants leave behind their networks of family and friends. Despite increased options to maintain contact across borders (with new technologies), social bonds are most likely transformed over time . . . This disruptive and transformative effect of migration on existing networks . . . may contribute to feelings of social loneliness, especially when new ties in the country of residence still have to be developed (Koelet and de Valk 2016: 611).

Regarding the closest people to the undocumented migrants (strong ties), slightly over a third of our respondents (35%) had a spouse, a third (32%) had children, and two out of five (39%) had other relatives, but one out of three (32%) mentioned that

they did not have any of these. One out of six respondents (17%) mentioned that someone from their family was in Finland; thus, the majority (83%) did not have anyone from their family in Finland. Of the largest group of respondents (the Iraqi men), one out of seven (13%) mentioned that someone from their family was in Finland. Of the responding undocumented migrants who had family in Finland, but did not live in the same locality as them, one out of four (25%) planned to move to their family's location. Having family in Finland could also be a reason for a residence permit to be granted, either through family reunification schemes (usually, a spouse, children, or a parent being a refugee in Finland) or by having permanent relationships in Finland (e.g. having a spouse and/or children who are Finnish citizens or who have a permanent residence permit in Finland). It is not enough, however, to have such family members; a person must have frequent interaction with them and they must depend on each other. Our respondents were not able to show this (yet), because they were undocumented migrants. The authorities have become cautious about granting residence permits on family grounds, fearing that one family member with a residence permit in Finland could become an 'anchor' who will then attract and tie many other family members to Finland. They also fear fake marriages, whereby a migrant marries a Finnish citizen simply to obtain a residence permit, only to abandon him/her thereafter.

The large number of single undocumented migrants without family in Finland derives from the situation in Finland (which is not dissimilar to that in other European countries): many of them are young adults from Iraq who did not marry before leaving on their asylum-related journeys in 2015. Of our respondents, less than one out of five (18%) lived with a family member, or vice versa, while over four out of five (82%) had no family living with them in their current residence. Some came to Finland with their families, but others left their families in their home countries and came to Finland alone, and some had no family in Finland or elsewhere. Two out of three (66%) respondents made friends during their asylum-related journeys to Finland. Many (85%) still kept in contact with their family and friends while in Finland, often through social media (see Chap. 6).

Children living in Finland are, by law (the Constitution and the Basic Education Act), entitled to go to school. Local authorities have an obligation to arrange basic education for children of compulsory school age residing in their areas, as well as pre-primary education preceding the year of starting compulsory education when the child turns six. Compulsory education ends when the basic nine-year education syllabus has been completed or 10 years after the beginning of compulsory schooling (Basic Education Act 2010). The education is free of charge and is governed by a unified national core curriculum. Technically, however, it is not obligatory to attend a school; it is compulsory only to follow the school curriculum and obtain knowledge corresponding to the basic education syllabus. If a child of compulsory school age does not participate in education, the local authority of the pupil's place of residence must supervise his/her progress (Basic Education Act 2010).

The Constitution and the Basic Education Act provide the opportunity for 16–17-year-old children of undocumented migrants to attend school in Finland—a right confirmed by the Deputy Ombudsman of the Parliament in 2013 and followed by the

national and local authorities (Eduskunnan oikeusasiamies 2014: 100). As stated in the law, however, the national or local authorities cannot force children of undocumented migrants to attend school in Finland. In fact, not all of these children go to school, for various reasons. Some parents do not allow their children to go to school if they are afraid of being traced, caught by the police, and potentially removed (see also Khosravi 2010). In some cases, there are cultural barriers to allowing female children to attend mixed-gender classes. Sometimes, the family has to move from one place to another, which causes practical problems in knowing which school is appropriate. In addition, the family might not have sufficient resources to cover a child's use of public transport to travel to school, despite schools in Finland providing free daily lunches for the children.

Although children are by law entitled to go to school, younger children (the ones below the pre-primary education age; i.e. 6 years old) are generally not entitled to go to day care. They are thus more vulnerable and at greater risk of becoming isolated, especially if the parents are suffering great stress and do not have enough stamina to care for them properly. These small children might have to stay in precarious housing conditions for a long time. During our fieldwork, more than once, children highlighted their desire to have 'a normal life' and 'a house of their own'. Overall, undocumented migrant children suffer greatly from the unstable conditions their own parents are experiencing.

Even when they are far away, families (parents and relatives) constitute a very important dimension of many undocumented migrants' everyday lives (strong ties). They are a 'safety net' and a secure refuge in a precarious and insecure life. In that sense, one young undocumented migrant said that he could not let a day pass without contacting his parents, who lived in another country. We observed how much time undocumented migrants spent talking with their families—a practice of "doing the family" across borders' (Shinozaki 2015: 104). They loved to receive pictures of the family's children and to see them growing up. Over the years, some started to practice a specific transnationalism by sharing features of their countries of origin and of their current countries of residence (Mügge 2016). On the other hand, Bendixsen (2018b: 232) reported on transnational practices among undocumented migrants in Norway and explained how 'some avoided explaining their living conditions to family at home, because they were too ashamed or were afraid that their family would dismiss them as lazy or failures' and how 'sometimes, family members were difficult to locate due to political persecution or war, while others were afraid that contact would put family members in danger'. Family relationships greatly depended on each migrant's personal situation and might change over time.

The majority of undocumented migrants wanted to make friends so as not feel alone. As mentioned, friends and acquaintances (weak ties) were important elements of survival strategies, such as finding accommodation and temporary jobs (van Meeteren et al. 2009). Making friends in the receiving country—in this case, Finland—could be very difficult: 'Literature demonstrates how social networks not only include individuals, but implicitly exclude as well' (van Meeteren et al. 2009: 885). Undocumented migrants know that they are being rejected by the receiving country and are afraid to start conversations with local people. A language barrier

also exists. Nevertheless, 83% of our respondents had friends in Finland and 58% had Finnish friends. Many undocumented migrants tended to socialise with peers from their home countries, with whom they shared a language: 'Most interviewees find support and friendship in their fellow nationals, towards whom they feel "naturally" drawn' (Sigona 2012: 54); however, some prefer to live alone and not build any social contacts with their peers or the country's citizens. As academic research has shown, some of them are ashamed of their current status and situation, 'having to lie to new acquaintances about their irregularity out of shame or of fear that the new friends [will] stop seeing them' (Bendixsen 2018b: 233). In fact, some of the undocumented migrants we met preferred to say that they were still asylum seekers or even refugees or regular migrants.

Others, upon reaching Finland, no longer wanted to have anything to do with their ethnic group, as one undocumented migrant made clear to us: 'I chose Finland because I thought I wouldn't find people from my home country here'. In his study of undocumented migrants in another Nordic country, Norway, Bendixsen (2018b: 234) added: 'Consciously avoiding members of their ethnic group, some sought a different social environment, such as a church community'. In our research, those who purposefully sought a different social environment especially included migrants who changed their religion from Islam to Christianity (or claimed to be gay), either genuinely or in an attempt to obtain asylum. In these cases, they might no longer be able to stay in touch with their families. If they came from Islamic countries, changing their religion would have been illegal and offensive to the family of origin; thus, those who changed their religions preferred to spend time with their new peers at church. They also tried to hide from their peers the fact that they had changed their religion. In general, they felt uncomfortable when they talked with others from their ethnic group:

I do not want anyone to know that I became Christian. I am telling you now only because you are a foreigner—you do not belong to my community. It must remain a private thing that I am Christian, because I keep getting many negative reactions from people about this. I feel betrayed because I trusted some friends with this very private and sensitive matter, but these people started spreading the rumour, in a bad way . . . and this private matter is not private anymore, and I am getting a lot of trouble because of this.

I have become Christian . . . but here, I meet so many of my peers from my home country . . . Now, I am attending these groups organised by the church where I get to speak only Finnish. I don't want to go back to my home country; I want to become part of this country!

My family stopped talking to me one year and seven months ago, when they came to know that I decided to become Christian.

This need to hide one's religious change from one's community of peers contradicts Migri's requirements. Rejected asylum seekers who want to demonstrate that they have changed religion and have become Christian (and that they therefore could be prosecuted in their country of origin, if they were sent back) are required to give material, visible proof of this to Migri, if they want to reenter the asylum process. They must demonstrate that they are going to church, attending religious services, being active in the religious community, reading the Bible, and so on; therefore, they must be fully visible in the Christian community with Christian peers. At the same

time, such migrants need to hide this from their peers from their country of origin or from the same religious background, since disclosure can be risky. This produces stressful and unsettling situations, with the person's movements and behaviour radically changing depending on the space that he/she is in. Many of the undocumented migrants we saw during the field research had lived in this limbo between two religious communities while they were asylum seekers, and they did not manage to demonstrate to Migri that they had truly converted to the Christian faith. They failed the asylum interview with Migri (and the following appeals) and became undocumented migrants (see Tessieri 2017). For them, as converted Christians, it would be very difficult and dangerous to return to their countries of origin; however, their relationships with their peers were compromised by their change of religion. They had to set up new social networks, because they were often rejected by their family of origin and needed to hide their situation from their old friends (or acquaintances) or new friends (or acquaintances) from the same religious background.

4.6 Aspirations for the Future

Future aspirations are fully part of the everyday lives of undocumented migrants and shape their daily activities and decisions (Carling 2014; Carling and Collins 2018; Carling and Schewel 2018). Van Meeteren et al. (2009) divided the migrants into three groups, according to their three types of aspirations: investment migrants, legalisation migrants, and settlement migrants. The first are those who wish to earn money to invest in their home countries; the second are those who want to legalise their residence; whereas the third are those who wish to settle permanently, regardless of whether their 'settlement' is legal or not. In our empirical work, we mainly found a mix of the second and third type of migrants: people who aspired to settle, legally.

In general, we found that many struggled to keep their aspirations alive. Their precarious lives and uncertain futures made many think that there was no future for them. Others, who were more proactive and had built stronger networks and relationships, tried to plan their future and take simple actions towards that end, such as attending school and trying to learn Finnish (and/or English). In general, they tried to look after themselves and not forget that they were human beings who needed to be respected:

I am a human being, and I am not and I don't want to become a criminal, and I keep repeating that to myself so that I won't forget it, even if people here treat me as an object, as a number without a soul.

This migrant was learning Finnish and attending courses to give himself dignity, so that he could build the future he deserves—even though this future had been denied to him so far (Tedeschi 2021a).

Slightly less than half of the respondents (45%) agreed that they saw their futures positively, slightly less than half (46%) did not know what to think about this, and only one out of 11 (9%) did not see their futures positively. Those who were most optimistic about the future were those who still hoped to obtain a residence permit and employment, and had a rural background. Those who did not see their future positively were usually without family in Finland, had received several negative decisions on their asylum applications, and were between 30 and 49 years old and from Iraq:

Researcher: Do you feel safe here?

Undocumented woman: Yes, here, somehow, but generally speaking, I don't feel safe. I am undocumented. How could I?

Researcher: What do you do during the day?

Undocumented woman: I just sit here, with my husband.

Researcher: Why did you come to Finland?

Undocumented woman: We just came; no particular reason.

Researcher: What is the most difficult thing now?

Undocumented woman: The fact that I don't see any future ahead of us. We cannot go back, because we don't want to be killed.

Researcher: Do you have anywhere else to go?

Undocumented woman: Just the street. We just don't have anywhere else to go.

This undocumented woman saw no future for herself. There was no country for her to go back to, because she was afraid of being killed there; therefore, she lived in limbo, in an in-between space where she had been rejected by both her country of origin and the destination country. Still, she wanted to stay in Finland because she felt safe there—not completely, she maintained, because she was undocumented, but because nobody would kill her in Finland. Many shared this psychological condition of not belonging anywhere; however, like this woman, they tolerated the situation because their lives were not threatened in Finland. They considered living as undocumented migrants to be safer than returning home (Bendixsen 2018b). Since they could not visualise a better future, they focused their attention on the present, such as how to make ends meet or where to sleep. These were very basic, simple, and material everyday needs over which they felt they had some sort of control, through which they could exercise their agency. However, in his research, Bloch (2014: 1522) mentioned that 'there was little decision-making over and above surviving and staying hidden, and for some this mundane day-to-day existence was almost interminable—a state of on-going limbo'.

Many undocumented migrants had no energy to think about the future, because the future remained so uncertain for them. This also had consequences in their everyday lives, as another undocumented migrant mentioned:

In this precarious situation, I cannot plan my future. I cannot do or think of anything. I started a Finnish course, but how am I supposed to attend it? How am I supposed to learn the language? I cannot concentrate, I cannot think of anything but my current condition. I have a family, you know.

Planning the future is very difficult in precarious conditions, in which one needs to deal daily with the risk of being deported. In fact, over two out of five (43%)

respondents agreed that they felt insecure when they saw a police officer (17% did not know; 41% disagreed). Some would have liked to actively plan their future but, given their irregular status, were unable to do so. One undocumented migrant mentioned: 'I am highly educated. I would like to continue my studies, but here I cannot. The fact that I am highly educated should give me hope but, in fact, it doesn't. It's just an additional burden'.

Some looked for people they could trust and rely upon; others felt that there was no hope, but that perhaps 'hope' would show up one day and they would finally find a way forward. One mentioned that he needed to keep fighting for his future. Another said that it was important to recognise that he was of some value as a person, as his family taught him: 'I see only darkness in front of me. Only the values that my family gave me are keeping me alive'. Yet another said that it was important to 'steer clear' of wrongdoing, because this could adversely affect the future. The majority greatly hoped to find a way to settle and legalise their stay in Finland, be it through asylum, a residence permit for work purposes, or a residence permit based on family ties (in their talks, they did not really distinguish between the different 'permitted' stays). Such aspects were also found in earlier studies outside of Finland: 'You simply don't have any rights if you don't have your papers ... so my only hope is to get legal status ... Only then can I start to feel good and try to actively participate in this society' (van Meeteren 2012: 320). During our field research, one undocumented migrant said: 'I will go out and walk on the streets only when I get my residence here'. Another one mentioned: 'At the end of the day, I need to stay here; I just cannot go back' (Tedeschi 2021a). A few managed to study the Finnish language and could speak it fluently. Those were often the ones who found the mental strength to motivate themselves and fight back despite the hardships. They were able to visualise their future in Finland, and to dream about getting a job and being integrated into society:

I want to become a truck driver and move to the countryside. I don't want to stay in a big city. In the countryside, everyone speaks Finnish. I won't go back to my home country, no matter what. They will kill me there.

Others found strength through religion: 'I pray here much more than in my home country. It gives me strength to go on, when I have nothing left' (Tedeschi and Gadd 2021). Another one said: 'I need to pray that one day this situation will change; that I won't remain like this forever'.

Two out of three respondents (65%) agreed that they knew about their rights and responsibilities (whatever they might be) in Finland (25% were not sure; 9% did not agree). Almost three out of four respondents (72%) mentioned their most important life goals on the survey. By answering this question, an undocumented migrant (at least indirectly) indicated that he/she still had something to look forward to in the future. The most commonly mentioned goals were to have a generally good life (32% of the respondents); to be employed (17%); to gain education, knowledge, and/or skills (11%); and to start a family (10%). These goals were in general rather similar among all the undocumented migrants, regardless of their demographic, educational, and ethnic backgrounds; however, those with a family (in Finland or elsewhere) more often mentioned topics related to their strong ties with children or

parents than did those who had no family. Those who were employed in Finland more often mentioned work-related goals. Younger and not-yet-married undocumented migrants also mentioned their wish to start a family. Very few mentioned anything about a possible return to their country of origin. When asked about the most significant constraints impeding their achievement of their most important goal, the respondents often mentioned their lack of a residence permit (33% of respondents), their poor financial situation (6%), and bureaucracy and issues with the national welfare institute Kela (6%).

4.7 Migration to, Within, and from Finland

4.7.1 Migration to Finland

The respondents mentioned many reasons for leaving their countries of origin. The most common reason was escaping war and insecurity, as mentioned by half (48%) of the respondents. The next most frequently mentioned reasons were specific political reasons (19%), followed by social security benefits in Finland (18%), and poverty in their countries of origin (18%), indicating pulling and pushing economic reasons for migrating. For many undocumented migrants, migration to Finland was less about rationality and clear decisions and more about grasping opportunities and following their desires and aspirations: 'Migration intersects . . . with drives for going elsewhere or being otherwise, for achieving or avoiding (un)desirable futures, that are often not the result of calculative rationality as it is so often conceived in migration research' (Collins 2018: 977). People left their countries of origin, crossed borders to the neighbouring countries, and then continued their travels. Some had a clear destination country in mind; others simply continued their travels and, through various circumstances, ended up in Finland:

We conceive 'the journey' broadly. The journey, as an experience with indeterminate beginnings and ends, transcends easy conceptual borders, as well as physical ones. Thus, for us, the concept encompasses imagined journeys before migration, journeys from countries of origin through countries of transit to destination, as well as deportation journeys (Mainwaring and Brigden 2016: 244).

As discussed in Sect. 4.2, all our respondents came from outside the EU, and almost all (99–100%) from outside Europe. This meant that they had to cross many borders and countries to reach Finland (if they did not travel by air, which was rare). Crossing borders (illegally) highlighted these migrants' agency and ability to 'negotiate their mobility and contest migration controls, sometimes circumventing or even subverting them; in the aggregate, these flows of people are politically powerful' (Mainwaring 2016: 19). In addition to clandestine border crossings, unauthorised entry can be achieved with counterfeit travel documents or documents using false information, or due to ineffective entry bans (Könönen 2020); however, requesting asylum gives the authorities the right to inspect asylum seekers and the

otherwise-clandestine and unauthorised entry may become legally acceptable. This was the case for most, but not all, the respondents in this study.

Due to its geographic location, Finland is primarily an end destination because, in practice, it is not possible to continue any further north or east in the EU. Sweden is in the west, and the majority of the undocumented migrants arrived from there, because they could cross the land border rather easily into Finland (and, if necessary, back into Sweden). Estonia is in the south and is a substantially poorer EU member state (average income about 45% that of Finland), which is known for its hostility towards non-European migrants. Russia is in the east: a non-EU country where many non-European migrants can hide, but where social benefits for undocumented migrants are very limited. Finally, in the north, there is an easily crossable border to Norway, another non-EU member state that is also a Dublin Regulation country, although wealthier than Finland. Only in exceptional circumstances are regular border control checks implemented for all people crossing the border. Such a case occurred for periods in 2020, when Finland to reduce the spreading of the COVID-19 pandemic established a lockdown that prevented free mobility across its borders, making it much more difficult for asylum seekers and undocumented migrants to reach Finland (see Sect. 3.4).

The journeys from their countries of origin to Europe took different lengths of time for different people. For our respondents, the fastest trip was less than a week, the longest took over 6 years, and the median was 1 month. One out of ten respondents (10%) arrived in Europe before 2015, more than three out of four (77%) in 2015, and a few later (8% in 2016, 4% in 2017, and 1% in 2018). Most people thus arrived in 2015; in particular, the Iraqi men. To calculate exactly how much time it took to reach Finland after arriving in Europe was not necessarily straightforward. A few perforce stayed in reception centres or refugee camps, and others remained in other European countries, but the majority travelled quickly to Finland. The arrival years indicated that five out of six (87%) had been in Finland for at least 3 years. The data for detained rejected asylum seekers from 2016 indicated that only a few had stayed in Finland for longer after receiving an enforceable removal order. However, Könönen (2020) noted that, because of the difficulty of enforcing removals to Afghanistan and Iraq, this situation might be changing, and it actually has already changed. In this sense, the authorities have then tried to encourage voluntary returns to those countries.

The journey was very challenging and rough for the majority of the undocumented migrants we met. They hid and slept in the woods, were often treated badly, had to pay a great deal of money to smugglers, and had their money stolen during the trip. Half (48%) of the respondents crossed the Mediterranean and reached Greece (33%) or Italy (13%) first; however, very few (1%) came to Europe through Russia. One out of ten (10%) mentioned that the first country they reached was Finland; this meant that they could have travelled by air. Either this was true, or these people did not exactly remember the first country they entered in Europe. Nevertheless, many had frightening experiences crossing the Mediterranean. A community worker told us what happened to a family they knew: ‘when the parents left their home country,

their kid was less than one year old . . . and when they crossed the Mediterranean the kid nearly drowned'. The following are accounts of some of those experiences:

I am not feeling very well, have received my fifth negative decision, and soon have an appointment with the police—and I am scared. I don't know what will happen to me. I just want to be heard as a human being. I have a wife and kids back in my home country. During my journey here, I lost a lot of money; for example, when I ended up in Hungary, this person took 167 euros out of my pockets . . . just to get me to Budapest. I didn't want to leave my fingerprints in Hungary, so I had to hide. I left my fingerprints here in Finland, but why can't I remove my fingerprints from here and just go away? They should remove the Schengen area!

I came here from Egypt. I crossed the Mediterranean, and the trip was absolutely awful. Terrible! I was on a fishing boat, and I arrived in Catania. From Catania, they organised a car for some of us, and we arrived in Rome. From Rome, I bought a train ticket to Milan, then from Milan, I somehow managed to arrive here.

Ultimately, all of the undocumented migrants reached Finland, but this country was not everyone's initial goal in terms of where they were planning to travel. For two out of three respondents (64%), Finland was the country where they originally wanted to stay and live in Europe, followed by Germany (12%), and Sweden (5%). The majority of respondents (58%) had received information about Finland before coming to Europe, and two out of three (64%) before coming to Finland. Of those who originally wanted to come to Finland (and obviously did so, because they were already in Finland), almost three out of four (71%) had received information about Finland before coming to Europe and, in Europe, two out of three (66%) had received information before coming to Finland.

Some did not plan to go to Finland—they simply ended up there; however, as mentioned previously, for two out of three respondents, Finland was the initial destination country. Half (52%) mentioned that their reason for coming to Finland was that they considered Finland to be a safe country, which was a priority for people fleeing from conflict, war, and other life-threatening situations; however, a considerable number also looked for possibilities to get through the asylum process. More than two out of five thought they could receive asylum more easily in Finland than they could elsewhere (43%), and a third (31%) believed that, in Finland, asylum seekers would receive money more easily. Having friends and relatives during their travels or in Finland was motivation only for a few: one out of six (17%) came with a friend or relative, and one out of eight (12%) already had a friend or relative in Finland. Very few (5%) did not decide to come to Finland or did not have other options available in Europe. The respondents also mentioned other reasons for choosing to come to Finland, as shown in Table 4.2.

An undocumented migrant told us how he drifted to Finland with a large group of people, for several thousands of kilometres from Southern Italy to the northernmost areas of Europe, and regretted it:

You know, I was in Italy . . . in Catania. I remember the market in Catania; it is like the markets in the Middle East! I felt at home there, but I didn't leave my fingerprints in Italy. Italy is a poor country; everyone knows that. I already had this image in my mind; I wanted to be in Finland. I wanted to go as far as possible. I was looking for a peaceful and safe place (and Finland was that place to me, in my mind). Then I heard that many people were going to

Table 4.2 Reasons for choosing to come to Finland

In Finland I am safe	52%
In Finland I would be granted asylum easier than elsewhere	43%
In Finland an asylum seeker receives money easily	31%
Finland offers good quality of life	29%
A friend or a relative of mine also came to Finland	17%
I already had friends or relatives in Finland	12%
I could not stay in any other European country	5%
I did not personally choose to come to Finland	5%
I had another reason to come (social reasons, human rights, personal development, etc.)	15%

Sweden, Germany, and Greece . . . I wanted to be away from everyone, from my peers; this is also why I chose Finland. Then I found out that everyone thought exactly like me . . . I wasn't going to Finland alone. Now that I am in Finland, I wish I had remained in Italy, as they do not want me here.

Other reasons for coming to Finland were mentioned by seven undocumented migrants:

Finland is not like Germany, or Australia . . . or the US, where people are used to having migrants. Finland is like a virgin country in that sense; this is why I chose it.

I don't have any family or children. I am not in touch with anyone; I don't have any friends. I am basically alone. Still, I like Finland. I don't have anywhere else to go, so I will stay here and do my best.

I had a Finnish friend . . . and the friend told me to go to Finland. There, it is easier to find a job, she said. So off I went. However, as soon as I arrived here, I realised that it is not as easy as my friend told me it was.

Someone told me that Finland is the first country for human rights; this is why I decided to come here. I just wanted to be safe.

In Finland, it is very clear what is right and wrong . . . and if you respect all the rules and the law—that is enough. You do not get killed here.

Finland is a difficult country because of the weather and because of the cold . . . but it is a neutral country; it doesn't get involved in fights. It is a safe country, and safety comes first!

I decided to come here because I heard that here you get asylum, and people are nice, but I found the total opposite. My situation here is very unstable. There are nice people here, but not friends.

Some undocumented migrants stated that they had received information about good work or asylum opportunities in Finland, another had heard that the country was safe, another thought that he would have better opportunities in Finland because there were fewer migrants, and another came to Finland for no specific reason. In fact, four out of five respondents (82%) felt safe in Finland, 12% did not know, and very few (6%) felt unsafe in the country.

4.7.2 *Migration Within Finland*

It is very difficult to exactly determine the mobility and migration of undocumented migrants inside Finland. Many have lived in several places in Finland because, during the asylum process, asylum seekers are sent to different reception centres and might also change centres. These centres can be located in any region of Finland, from large urban conglomerations to remote rural areas. It can be difficult for undocumented migrants to remember the names of all the places in which they have lived in Finland, especially if they have spent several years in Finland; first in the asylum process and thereafter as an undocumented migrant. As we discussed in Sect. 3.4, at the end of 2017, the local authorities in 42 Finnish municipalities (14%) were aware of the presence of undocumented migrants, mostly in larger urban areas in the southern part of the country. There were undocumented migrants in all Finnish cities with at least 100,000 inhabitants (Jauhiainen et al. 2018) but very few in smaller and peripheral rural municipalities in the east and north. In general, the proportion of the foreign-born population in the latter municipalities is usually less than 2% (Heino and Jauhiainen 2020).

The respondents mentioned, in total, 22 municipalities in which they had lived in Finland. Over two out of five respondents (44%) mentioned that they had lived in the capital, Helsinki, and one out of four (25%) mentioned other towns and municipalities near the capital. In total, more than two out of three (69%) lived or had lived in the capital region. Some respondents were not able to precisely give the names of the municipalities, because they were not necessarily obvious in the urban landscape of the capital region. Helsinki is the municipality with the largest number of undocumented migrants, but it is also the largest city in Finland (almost 700,000 inhabitants). The majority of undocumented migrants in Finland live in and around the Helsinki area, which has, in total, 1.4 million inhabitants. Almost half (45%) of the respondents mentioned that the Helsinki area was where they had lived longest during their time in Finland; however, some had lived in small towns in Lapland, the northernmost area of Finland, 1000 km north of Helsinki. This was due to their periods as asylum seekers in Finland. In 2015–2016, asylum seekers were distributed to over 200 reception centres throughout Finland (Jauhiainen 2017).

Living in Helsinki is attractive for various reasons. One important aspect is that an undocumented migrant can find ethnic peer groups there, among both the regular and undocumented migrants. In general, the number of people born outside Finland is also highest there, at around 15% at the end of the 2010s, but estimated to grow to over 25% in the coming 10–20 years (Vuori 2019). This also provides an opportunity to 'hide in the masses' (i.e. the ordinary foreign-born population), and the police do not pay particular attention if they see a person who does not look like an ethnic Finn. Undocumented migrants can thus find empowering in-between spaces where they do not risk being singled out, where they can pretend to be an invisible part of the urban landscape, like the usual passers-by. This is why, when they walk, they often go to lakes, parks, gardens, and the seaside: places into which they can be absorbed and disappear (Tedeschi 2021b). A Helsinki city report (City of Helsinki

2018) explicitly highlighted that undocumented migrants come to the city, not because of the services—although, in Helsinki, there are more services for undocumented migrants compared to other cities in Finland—but because they can easily invisibilise themselves there. By contrast, in rural areas and smaller towns, the number of people born outside Finland is often less than 100 people (Heino and Jauhiainen 2020). People therefore recognise easily if a newcomer appears in a public space. This does not mean that, in general, people in the countryside are more hostile towards undocumented migrants; in fact, there are cases in which local populations in small municipalities have actively supported and hidden undocumented migrants when they have come to know them and found them to be friendly people, willing and able to work (Tedeschi and Gadd 2021). Nevertheless, overall, towns and cities in Finland have more undocumented migrants than rural municipalities ($p = 0.000$).

Our survey of local authorities in 2017–2018 indicated some changes in the migration of undocumented migrants (Jauhiainen and Gadd 2019; Jauhiainen et al. 2018). A few towns with small numbers of undocumented migrants (10–30 people) in 2017 mentioned that, in 2018, they had no signs of more undocumented migrants in their municipalities. The authorities explained that, in terms of the provision of services and help for them in the municipalities, there had been no changes, but that these undocumented migrants wanted to move to a larger town, usually to Helsinki or its neighbouring areas. In Helsinki undocumented migrants can find both public and NGO services that meet many kinds of needs. There are emergency shelters and day centres, as well as many more opportunities to find employment in the grey economy, compared with other municipalities in Finland, especially outside the core of the capital. Despite being a large city in the Finnish context, Helsinki still offers green areas, sports facilities, and many open air facilities for leisure time. In addition, as already mentioned, it is much easier to be ‘invisible’ in the capital area than in smaller Finnish town and villages (Tedeschi 2021b). In the survey, undocumented migrants mentioned many places they enjoyed, but for the sake of security and ethics, we cannot mention the place names here. As discussed in Sect. 3.4, the City Council of Helsinki decided to extend health services to undocumented migrants; however, migrating within Finland to receive better public healthcare services did not appear as a reason among our studied undocumented migrants. Slightly wider public services for undocumented migrants, in Helsinki, does not equate to the administration wishing to receive and agglomerate undocumented migrants. In fact, later, the local authorities in Helsinki narrowed the target group of undocumented migrants, mandating that such health services would be offered only to those who had clear residence ties with Helsinki. In addition, opinions in Helsinki often oppose taking in large numbers of asylum seekers, because rejected asylum seekers could remain in the city as undocumented migrants.

In the survey, we asked if the respondents thought they would be able to go wherever they wanted in Finland. Six out of seven respondents (85%) agreed, 13% did not know how to answer, and very few (2%) disagreed. This indicated that the majority of undocumented migrants (at least among our respondents) felt that they could move rather freely in Finland; however, ‘going’ could mean different things,

from particular places to different towns. Many wanted to frequent public places (like libraries, the seaside, and parks) where they could make themselves less visible and try to be like the other (Finnish) people:

Going to a church, a community centre or walking in a park are considered safe places for social activities by most interviewees. These are situations and moments when most interviewees feel they are not different from the others because of their status (Sigona, 2012: 58).

Being in Finland, undocumented migrants need to share the same space with native Finns, regular migrants, and their peer community in different ways. One out of four respondents (23%) agreed that they felt insecure when they were in the same space as native Finns whom they did not know, 22% were unsure, and the majority (55%) disagreed. Those who felt insecure were often young adults (under 30 years old) who had arrived in Finland less than 2 years ago.

4.7.3 *Migration from Finland*

All of our respondents lived in Finland, so their potential decision to leave Finland had not yet materialised; however, in general, very few undocumented migrants have left Finland voluntarily and informed the authorities of their departure. Some have been forcibly removed to their country of origin, and some have left informally and moved to another country—usually Sweden. For informal outmigration from Finland, Sweden can be an attractive option, because there are over ten times more undocumented migrants and over one million non-Swedish migrant background population there. Sweden is very easy to reach from Finland across the land border without travel documents and without the local population or authorities paying particular attention. It is much more difficult to travel to other countries if one does not have fake travel documents, because airline and shipping companies require a personal identification document such as a passport or identification card.

Six out of seven respondents (85%) mentioned that they would like to live in Finland, a few said maybe (9%), and very few (2%) did not want to live in Finland or were uncertain whether they would like to live in Finland (7%). Those who would like to live in Finland most often mentioned safety, peace, freedom, and social stability as the best aspects of Finland, as well as being with their families or having social relationships and financial stability. Each survey respondent mentioned the best and the worst aspects of life in Finland (see Table 4.3). To learn more about their stay or on-migration wishes, we also asked the survey respondents where they would like to be in 3 years' time (after responding to the survey; i.e. in the autumn of 2021). Three out of five respondents (59%) mentioned Finland, thus indicating their firm wish to stay in the country. Of those wishing to be in Finland in 3 years' time, in practice, all (98%) mentioned that they would like to live in Finland. Those who clearly wished to stay in Finland had most often arrived before 2016, were currently employed, and had made friends in Finland.

Table 4.3 The best and worst aspects of life in Finland for undocumented migrants

Best aspects of life	Worst aspects of life
Safety, freedom, and stability (36%)	Fear of refusal of entry or deportation (21%)
Family and other social relations (15%)	Discrimination or racism (11%)
Financial stability (10%)	Climate (11%)
Starting a family (6%)	Waiting for a decision (7%)
Everything (5%)	Financial issues (4%)

From the answers, we deduced that rather few (2–11%) of the undocumented migrants in our study would consider moving out of Finland, because they did not want to, or were unsure whether they wanted to live in Finland. There are many reasons why undocumented migrants might not wish to remain in Finland (i.e. there are push factors in Finland as well as pull factors from other countries; see Table 4.3). Regarding push factors, some are individual (i.e. how a person has been treated in Finland and how he/she sees his/her likelihood of living a meaningful life in Finland, now or in the future). Of those respondents who did not mention that they would like to live in Finland, one out of seven (15%) mentioned another country in which they would like to be in 3 years' time; Sweden and Germany were most frequently mentioned.

Two out of three (68%) respondents mentioned that they were usually treated well by people in Finland (17% did not know; 15% disagreed). They did not define what kind of people treated them well (e.g. ordinary Finns, Finnish authorities, immigrants in Finland, or members of their peer groups). Those who disagreed with the statement that they were usually treated well by people were most often 18–49 years old, unemployed, and had not made any Finnish friends. Two out of five respondents (40%) mentioned that they had been physically or mentally harassed in Finland. The definition of harassment varied, so there was no objective measure of it; it was a subjective feeling. About the same number of respondents (i.e. two out of five; 42%) disagreed that they had been harassed in Finland, and almost one out of five (18%) were unsure how to answer. Those who had been harassed were most often in the same age group as those who had not been harassed (i.e. 18–49 years old); however, the difference was that those who felt they had been harassed were more often employed males. Harassment could be, for example, verbal abuse or no one wanting to talk to them. There have also been cases of physical violence against undocumented migrants. In Finland, as in many other EU member states, there are extreme right-wing groups that are hostile towards all immigrants, whether undocumented or not.

We also asked about the respondents' specific wishes regarding return migration. Only a few respondents (8%) mentioned that they would like to return to their countries of origin, one out of seven (14%) stated maybe, and four out of five (78%) definitely did not want to return to their countries of origin. Of those who arrived in 2015 or earlier, very few (3%) wanted to return to their countries of origin, but 12% might consider it. This shows that long-term undocumented migrants are very reluctant to return. Of those respondents, who came in 2016 or later, one out of

three (36%) indicated that they would like (yes or maybe) to return (however, the number of respondents was too small to draw firm conclusions). The conditions that would make them likely to return their countries of origin were not specified, so the answer merely indicated an overall willingness to return. Nevertheless, only a minority of undocumented migrants in Finland wish to return, so it is not likely that they will do so through voluntary return mechanisms. Those who wished to return were most often from rural backgrounds, female, older adults (i.e. 30 years or older), and employed. Two out of five respondents (40%) mentioned that they missed their former home region (18% did not know; 42% did not miss it). Of those who missed their former home region, three out of four (75%) also wished to return to their country of origin. On the other hand of those, who did not miss their former home region, one out of five (25%) still wished to return.

4.8 Undocumented Migrants Needing, Asking for, and Receiving Help

Undocumented migrants need many kinds of help to survive everyday life in Finland. As Ambrosini stated, the role of intermediaries in the destination countries is of the utmost importance for the creation of semi-legal survival spaces: 'They are people or institutions who favour the entrance of immigrants, their entry into the labour market, accommodation, response to their social needs, and possibly regularisation' (Ambrosini 2017: 2). According to Ambrosini, there are five types of activities concerning intermediation: connection, provision of certain services, help, tolerance, and political pressure. In this section, we will list specific activities (Table 4.4) which can be attributed to the first three types of intermediation: the provision of useful connections to find job or accommodation opportunities; the provision of services that undocumented migrants cannot receive from formal

Table 4.4 Undocumented migrants (or their families) receiving help in Finland (%)

	Yes	No	Need no help	No answer
With the asylum process	40	13	13	34
With other legal issues	35	18	10	37
With health issues	35	15	12	38
Obtaining money	33	20	11	36
Finding leisure activities	29	18	15	38
Finding accommodation	26	21	21	32
Obtaining food	29	23	15	39
Obtaining clothes	23	23	15	34
With mental issues	22	23	16	39
Finding employment	18	20	24	38
With other issues	1	1	0	98

institutions (such as legal advice); and ‘concrete first-hand support in meeting actual needs’ (Ambrosini 2017: 4), such as finding food or clothing.

Not all undocumented migrants need and want the same kind of help, and some try to manage without any external help, especially from ordinary Finns, NGOs, and the authorities. The reasons for not wanting any help can be personal characteristics (like the negative feeling of being considered ‘beggars’, see Sect. 4.4), mistrust of potential helpers, or the fear of being exposed if help is sought. Three out of five respondents (61%) agreed that they trusted people (whether Finns, authorities, friends, or others) who wanted to help them (19% did not know; 20% disagreed). Those who did not trust others to help them were often either young or older (50 years or more), or unemployed men. In addition, half of the respondents (51%) agreed that they trusted their lawyer (26% did not know; 23% disagreed).

In the survey, we asked whether the undocumented migrants, or their families in Finland (if they had them), had received any help regarding several issues that are usually important in everyday life (Table 4.4). Overall, almost two out of three respondents (63%) mentioned that they had received some help. Almost half (43%) did not mention any area in which they had received help, 14% mentioned one to two issues, and almost half (43%) mentioned three or more issues. Most often, the respondents (or their families in Finland) had received help with the asylum process. More than two out of five respondents (44%) mentioned that nothing prevented them from asking for help, one out of three (32%) did not know, and one out of four (24%) mentioned that there was a reason or many reasons for not seeking help. The most common reasons preventing the respondents from asking for help were the fear of deportation or negative asylum decisions, not receiving help despite asking for it, experiences of racism, and/or religious and cultural barriers. The respondents could receive help from various sources, but in practice, many of them could not distinguish the help provider; for example, an individual Finn, an NGO, another organisation, a local or national authority, or another migrant with or without a residence permit. We therefore decided not ask for details about the help providers.

4.9 Conclusions

In this chapter, we have highlighted several aspects of undocumented migrants’ everyday lives. As indicated, in some respects, all the undocumented migrants shared commonalities, but they were also an internally diverse group consisting of individuals with individual trajectories and wishes; hence:

Migration theory needs to account for the multiplex componentry of migration, the way it is situated in imaginative geographies, emotional valences, social relations and obligations and politics and power relations, as well as in economic imperatives and the brute realities of displacement (Carling and Collins 2018: 3).

We have also sketched the feelings and thoughts that they experience on a daily basis. These often involve anxiety, largely provoked by an intertwining of

conditions, such as precarious, always temporary housing; illegal or unauthorised work, which might lead to exploitative situations, or no work at all, which was an undignified condition for many; the positive and negative sides of being in contact with family and friends; the difficulty of finding the strength to maintain aspirations for the future when the country of destination rejects them and the country of origin is often a place they miss, but also fear.

The majority of undocumented migrants do not want to be spotted or recognised as 'undocumented'; hence, they try, as far as possible, to invisibilise themselves and live normal lives (Tervonen et al. 2018). Some learn Finnish or English to integrate better into the surrounding society and be able to function in public places (such as libraries, the seaside, and parks), where they can be less visible and try to be like the other (Finnish) people. Others want to forget everything about their country of origin and try their best to 'become Finnish', despite the negative decisions received on their asylum applications. The situation is therefore multifaceted, and the reactions are different for each person; however, what is common to the majority of those who want to stay is their willingness to legalise their stay, work, integrate into Finnish society (van Meeteren et al. 2009), and live normal lives.

References

- Ambrosini, M. (2013). *Irregular migration and invisible welfare*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ambrosini, M. (2017). Why irregular migrants arrive and remain: The role of intermediaries. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 43(11), 1813–1830.
- Bendixsen, S. (2018a). The politicised biology of irregular migrants: Micropractices of control, tactics of everyday life and access to healthcare. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 8(3), 167–174.
- Bendixsen, S. (2018b). Transnational practices of irregular migrants and nation-state management in Norway. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 8(4), 229–236.
- Bendixsen, S. (2020). The care/security nexus of the humanitarian border: Assisted return in Norway. *International Migration*, 58, 108–122.
- Bloch, A. (2014). Living in fear: Rejected asylum seekers living as irregular migrants in England. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 40(10), 1507–1525.
- Bloch, A., Sigona, N., & Zetter, R. (2009). 'No right to dream': *The social and economic lives of young undocumented migrants in Britain*. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Available at: <https://www.phf.org.uk/reader/right-dream/foreword/>. Accessed 16 Sept 2019.
- Brücker, H., Croisier, J., Kröger, H., Pietrantuono, G., Rother, N., & Schupp, J. (2019). Language skills and employment rate of refugees in Germany improving with time. *Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW) Weekly Report*, 9(4/6), 49–61.
- Bustamante, L., Cerqueira, R., Leclerc, E., & Brietzke, E. (2018). Stress, trauma, and posttraumatic stress disorder in migrants: A comprehensive review. *Revista Brasileira de Psiquiatria*, 40(2), 220–225.
- Carling, J. (2014). *The role of aspirations in migration*. Paper presented at determinants of international migration. International Migration Institute, University of Oxford, Oxford, September 23–25. Available at: http://www.academia.edu/download/34771461/Carling_2014_The_role_of_aspirations_in_migration_2014-07.pdf. Accessed 6 Mar 2019.
- Carling, J., & Collins, F. (2018). Aspiration, desire and drivers of migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(6), 909–926.

- Carling, J., & Schewel, K. (2018). Revisiting aspiration and ability in international migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(6), 945–963.
- Carswell, K., Blackburn, P., & Barker, C. (2011). The relationship between trauma, post-migration problems and the psychological well-being of refugees and asylum seekers. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 57(2), 107–119.
- Chan, S. (2018). Deprivation of citizenship, undocumented labour and human trafficking. *Regions and Cohesion*, 8(2), 82–106.
- Chauvin, S., & Garcés-Mascareñas, B. (2012). Beyond informal citizenship: The new moral economy of migrant illegality. *International Political Sociology*, 6(3), 241–259.
- City of Helsinki. (2018). *Paperittomiin henkilöihin liittyvät haasteet, palvelutarpeet ja toimenpiteet -selvitys* [In Finnish, Report on challenges, service needs and measures for undocumented people]. Helsinki: City of Helsinki.
- City of Helsinki. (2019). *Helsingin tila ja kehitys* [In Finnish, Helsinki state of art and development]. Helsinki: Helsingin kaupunki. Available at: https://tilajakehitys.hel.fi/ulkomaalaistaustaisten_tyollisyys. Accessed 9 Aug 2020.
- Cohen, R. (2006). *Migration and its enemies: Global capital, migrant labour and the nation-state*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Collins, F. (2018). Desire as a theory for migration studies: Temporality, assemblage and becoming in the narratives of migrants. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(6), 964–980.
- Crawley, H., & Skleparis, D. (2018). Refugees, migrants, neither, both: Categorical fetishism and the politics of bounding in Europe's 'migration crisis'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(1), 48–64.
- De Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- De Genova, N. (2002). Migrant 'illegality' and deportability in everyday life. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31(1), 419–447.
- Diatlova, A., & Näre, L. (2018). Living the perpetual border: Bordering practices in the lives of Russian-speaking women engaged in commercial sex in Finland. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 8(3), 151–158.
- Eduskunnan oikeusasiamies. (2014). *Eduskunnan oikeusasiamiehen kertomus vuodelta 2013* [In Finnish, Report of the Parliamentary Ombudsman for 2013] K2/2014 vp. Helsinki.
- Engbersen, G., Van der Leun, J., & De Boom, J. (2007). The fragmentation of migration and crime in the Netherlands. *Crime and Justice*, 35(1), 389–452.
- Feldman, G. (2011). *The migration apparatus: Security, labour, and policymaking in the European Union*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Granovetter, M. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360–1380.
- Grewcock, M. (2003). Irregular migration, identity and the state—The challenge for criminology. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 15(2), 114–135.
- Grønseth, A. (Ed.). (2013). *Being human, being migrant: senses of self and well-being*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Heikkurinen, M. (2019). *Mental health of irregular migrants. A scoping review*. Master thesis of Healthcare at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. Available at: <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/160087>. Accessed 15 May 2019.
- Heino, H., & Jauhiainen, J. (2020). Foreign immigration in the strategies and practices of municipalities in Finland. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 10(3), 73–89.
- Hellgren, Z. (2014). Negotiating the boundaries of social membership: Undocumented migrant claims-making in Sweden and Spain. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 40(8), 1175–1191.
- Honkasalo, V., Maiche, K., Onodera, H., Peltola, M., & Suurpää, L. (Eds.). (2017). *Young people in reception centres*. Helsinki: The Finnish Youth Research Society.
- Hörschelmann, K. (2011). Theorising life transitions: Geographical perspectives. *Area*, 43, 378–383.

- Jauhiainen, J. (2017). Asylum in Finland? The 2015 asylum seekers and the asylum processes in Finland. In J. Jauhiainen (Ed.), *Turvapaikka Suomesta? Vuoden 2015 turvapaikanhakijat ja turvapaikkaprosessit Suomessa* (Vol. 5, pp. 157–172). Turku: Publications of the Department of Geography and Geology of the University of Turku.
- Jauhiainen, J., & Eyvazlu, D. (2020). Entrepreneurialism through self-management in Afghan guest towns in Iran. *Urban Science*, 4(4), 51.
- Jauhiainen, J., & Gadd, K. (2019). *Paperittomat Suomessa vuoden 2018 alussa* [In Finnish, Undocumented migrants in the beginning of 2018]. URMI Kaupunkianalyseja III. Available at: <https://urmi.fi/portfolio/paperittomat-suomessa-vuoden-2018-alussa/>. Accessed 6 Sept 2019.
- Jauhiainen, J., & Vorobeva, E. (2018). *Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Jordan*, 2017. Turku: Publications of the Department of Geography and Geology at the University of Turku 10.
- Jauhiainen, J., Gadd, K., & Jokela, J. (2018). *Paperittomat Suomessa 2017* [In Finnish, Undocumented migrants in 2017] (vol. 8). Turku: Publications of the Department of Geography and Geology of the University of Turku.
- Khosravi, S. (2010). An ethnography of migrant 'illegality' in Sweden: Included yet excepted? *Journal of International Political Theory*, 6(1), 95–116.
- Koelet, S., & de Valk, H. (2016). Social networks and feelings of social loneliness after migration: The case of European migrants with a native partner in Belgium. *Ethnicities*, 16(4), 610–630.
- Koivisto, J. (2020). *Koronakriisi koettelee kodittomia – HU pääsi harvinaiselle vierailulle arabiankielisten paperittomien päiväkeskukseen* [In Finnish, Corona crisis plagues the homeless – HU gets rare visit to Arabic-speaking paperless daycare center]. Helsingin Uutiset 13 May 2020. Available at: <https://www.helsinginuutiset.fi/paikalliset/1798769>. Accessed 13 Oct 2020.
- Könönen, J. (2020). Legal geographies of irregular migration: An outlook on immigration detention. *Population, Space and Place*, 26, e2340.
- Likic-Brboric, B., Slavnic, Z., & Woolfson, C. (2013). Labour migration and informalisation: East meets west. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 33(11/12), 677–692.
- Mainwaring, C. (2016). Migrant agency: Negotiating borders and migration controls. *Migration Studies*, 4(3), 289–308.
- Mainwaring, C., & Brigden, N. (2016). Beyond the border: Clandestine migration journeys. *Geopolitics*, 21(2), 243–262.
- Manner, M., & Teittinen, P. (2017). *Ali tiskaa ja laittaa ruokaa parin euron tuntipalkalla – Suomeen on syntyvässä harmaa talous, joka pyörii siirtolaisten hyväksikäytöllä* [In Finnish, Ali washes and cooks for a couple of euros an hourly wage – A gray economy is emerging in Finland, which revolves around the exploitation of immigrants]. *Helsingin Sanomat* 14.4.2017.
- Mäntymaa, E., Rissanen, J., & Sauli, M. (2017). *Työtunteja 60 viikossa, palkka 30 euroa päivässä – näin Suomessa riistetään paperitonta työvoimaa* [In Finnish, 60 hours per week, salary 30 euros per day – This is how paperless labor force is deprived in Finland]. Yle uutiset 17.7.2017. Available at: <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9722098>. Accessed 16 Sept 2019.
- Menin, L. (2017). Suspended lives: Undocumented migrants' everyday worlds and the making of 'illegality' between Morocco and Italy. In P. Gaibazzi, S. Dünnwald, & A. Bellagamba (Eds.), *EurAfrican borders and migration management* (pp. 263–282). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Migri. (2016). *Asylum decisions for Iraqis: The share of negative decisions has increased*. Available at: https://migri.fi/en/press-release/-/asset_publisher/irakilaisten-turvapaikkapaatokset-kielteisten-osuus-kasvanut. Accessed 13 Sept 2019.
- Migri. (2019a). *Statistics*. Available at: <https://tilastot.migri.fi/index.html#decisions?!=en>. Accessed 10 Sept 2019.
- Migri. (2019b). *Working in Finland*. Available at: <https://migri.fi/en/working-in-finland>. Accessed 15 May 2019.
- Mohn, S., & Ellingsen, D. (2016). Unregistered residents and registered crime: An estimate for asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Norway. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 17(2), 166–176.

- Mügge, L. (2016). Transnationalism as a research paradigm and its relevance for integration. In B. Garcés-Mascareñas & R. Penninx (Eds.), *Integration processes and policies in Europe* (IMISCOE research series) (pp. 109–125). Cham: Springer.
- Pajnik, M. (2016). ‘Wasted precariat’: Migrant work in European societies. *Progress in Development Studies*, 16(2), 159–172.
- Putnam, R. (1995). Bowling alone: America’s declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy*, 6(1), 65–78.
- Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon Schuster.
- Schweitzer, R. (2017). Integration against the state: Irregular migrants’ agency between deportation and regularisation in the United Kingdom. *Politics*, 37(3), 317–331.
- Shinozaki, K. (2015). *Migrant citizenship from below: Family, domestic work and social activism in irregular migration*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sigona, N. (2012). ‘I have too much baggage’: The impacts of legal status on the social worlds of irregular migrants. *Social Anthropology*, 20, 50–65.
- Silove, D., Sinnerbrink, I., Field, A., Manicavasagar, V., & Steel, Z. (1997). Anxiety, depression and PTSD in asylum-seekers: Associations with pre-migration trauma and post-migration stressors. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 170(4), 351–357.
- Statistics Finland. (2020). *Education levels of 20–49 years old population in Finland*. Available at: http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/fi/StatFin/StatFin__kou__vkour/statfin_vkour_pxt_12bs.px/table/tableViewLayout1/. Accessed 9 Aug 2020.
- Strange, M., Squire, V., & Lundberg, A. (2017). Irregular migration struggles and active subjects of trans-border politics: New research strategies for interrogating the agency of the marginalised. *Politics*, 37(3), 243–253.
- Tedeschi, M. (2021a). On the ethical dimension of irregular migrants’ lives: Affect, becoming and information. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 11(1), 44–63.
- Tedeschi, M. (2021b). *Negotiating survival needs with ontological in/visibility: An ethnographic exploration of irregular migrants’ lawscapes in Finland*. Submitted manuscript.
- Tedeschi, M., & Gadd, K. (2021). On multiple spacetimes in the everyday lives of irregular migrants in Finland. *The Geographical Journal* (online first).
- Tervonen, M., Pellander, S., & Yuval-Davis, N. (2018). Everyday bordering in the Nordic countries. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 8(3), 139–142.
- Tessieri, E. (2017). *Iraqi asylum seeker in detention cell 406: ‘Migri doesn’t believe I’m a Christian’*. Available at: <http://www.migranttales.net/iraqi-asylum-seeker-detention-cell-406-migri-doesnt-believe-im-christian/>. Accessed 5 April 2019.
- Van Liempt, I., & Doomernik, J. (2006). Migrant’s agency in the smuggling process: The perspectives of smuggled migrants in the Netherlands. *International Migration*, 44, 165–190.
- van Meeteren, M. (2012). Transnational activities and aspirations of irregular migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands. *Global Networks*, 12(3), 314–332.
- van Meeteren, M., Engbersen, G., & van San, M. (2009). Striving for a better position: Aspirations and the role of cultural, economic, and social capital for irregular migrants in Belgium. *International Migration Review*, 43(4), 881–907.
- Vuori, P. (2019). Helsinki Region continues to draw people in. *Helsinki Quarterly* 26/06/2019. Available at: <https://www.kvartti.fi/en/articlehes/helsinki-region-continues-draw-people>. Accessed 16 Sept 2019.
- Waite, L., & Lewis, H. (2017). Precarious irregular migrants and their sharing economies: A spectrum of transactional labouring experiences. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 107(4), 964–978.
- Welling, A. (2018). *Turkulaiskansanedustaja pöyristyi laittomasti maassa olevien majoituksesta kerrostaloasunnossa – SPR:n mukaan ongelmia ei ole ollut* [In Finnish, A member of parliament from Turku was outraged by the accommodation of illegally staying people in the apartment building – According to the FCC the have not been any problems]. Yle uutiset 9 July 2018. Available at: <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10295900>. Accessed 13 Sept 2020.

- Wettergren, Å. (2015). Protecting the self against shame and humiliation: Unwanted migrants' emotional careers. In J. Kleres & Y. Albrecht (Eds.), *Die Ambivalenz der Gefühle* (pp. 221–245). Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Yle.fi. (2017). *Undocumented: Rejected asylum seekers caught between workplace exploitation and deportation*. Available at: https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/undocumented_rejected_asylum_seekers_caught_between_workplace_exploitation_and_deportation/9728917. Accessed 13 Sept 2019.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

