



Student experience of adult education and guidance in Iceland: Inclusive and differentiated

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Svo lengi lærir sem lifir

What have we learned about student interaction with the adult education system

1. Experiences of adult learners in the life-long learning system
2. Support: Career counseling and guidance
3. Life-long learning and guidance for all in Iceland?

Strategies and progress

- Governmental strategy 2005
 - Over 30% of adults without formal education
 - Aim: 10% in 2020
 - 2023 22%
- Lifelong learning opportunities (state, unions, employers' association)
 - Símenntunarstöðvar - lifelong learning centers
e.g. Mímir, Miðstöð símenntunar, Fræðslunet, Framsýn..
14 in total, located all over Iceland

Inclusion through education in the changing labour market

Adult education system

Laws on adult education – three pillars

1. Validation of prior learning – for curriculum, competence and encouragement
2. Educational programs - formal upper secondary education credits
3. Career guidance and counseling

Laws limiting access of adults to upper secondary schools

- 18 and younger have priority
- Evening courses and distance options are fee based

Adult education act 27/2010; Rules for adult education 1163/2011; University act, 63/2006, Regulation 835/2019 regulation 1150/2008, 614/2009, fiscal budge 1/2014-15

Effectiveness - validation of prior learning

Validation for skilled trades at Iðan 2007-2013 (N = 1251)

36% of those going through validation completed formal degree - US vocational

56% of those that enrolled completed a degree

55% finished a degree in the same field as validation of prior learning

37% did not enrol in formal education

Sólveig Indriðadóttir, 2017

- Validation for office work - 80% continue education
- Course for early education assistants - 50% continue education

Effectiveness - educational program

Grunnmenntaskólinn — none or few upper secondary credits completed

Students 2003 – 2010 (N = 427)

54% enrolled in education, 30% within the first year of completion

- Upper secondary school vocational 19%
- Upper secondary school academic 15%
- Life-long learning centers 23%
- University preparation programs 4%

16% had their continuing education credits evaluated in US schools,
7% tried to enter US school and were declined.



Experiences of adult learners in the system

Characteristics and prior experiences of adult learners

- Difficult life and school experiences in youth
 - Learning problems – lack of needed support
 - Difficulties with peers – bullying
 - Lack of support and encouragement at home and school
 - Challenging family and social circumstances
- Resulting in
 - Psychological and physical problems
 - Lack of confidence
 - Fear of learning and reentering education
 - Vulnerability in labor market, low income

Auður Jónsdóttir, 2012; Auður Sigurðardóttir, 2010; Hróbjartur Árnason, Guðrún Ósk Gunnlaugsdóttir, 2016; Halla Valgeirsdóttir og Svava Guðrún Sigurðardóttir, 2010; Rakel Steinvör Hallgrímsdóttir, 2008; Þóra Asgeirsdóttir, 2009. Björk Erlendsdóttir, 2013; Gestur Guðmundsson og Hulda Karen Ólafsdóttir, 2013; Guðrún Jóna Magnúsdóttir, 2012; Sigrún Aðalbjarnardóttir og Kristjana Stella Blöndal, 2005; Hróbjartur Árnason o.fl., 2010 - see skemman.is (English abstracts)

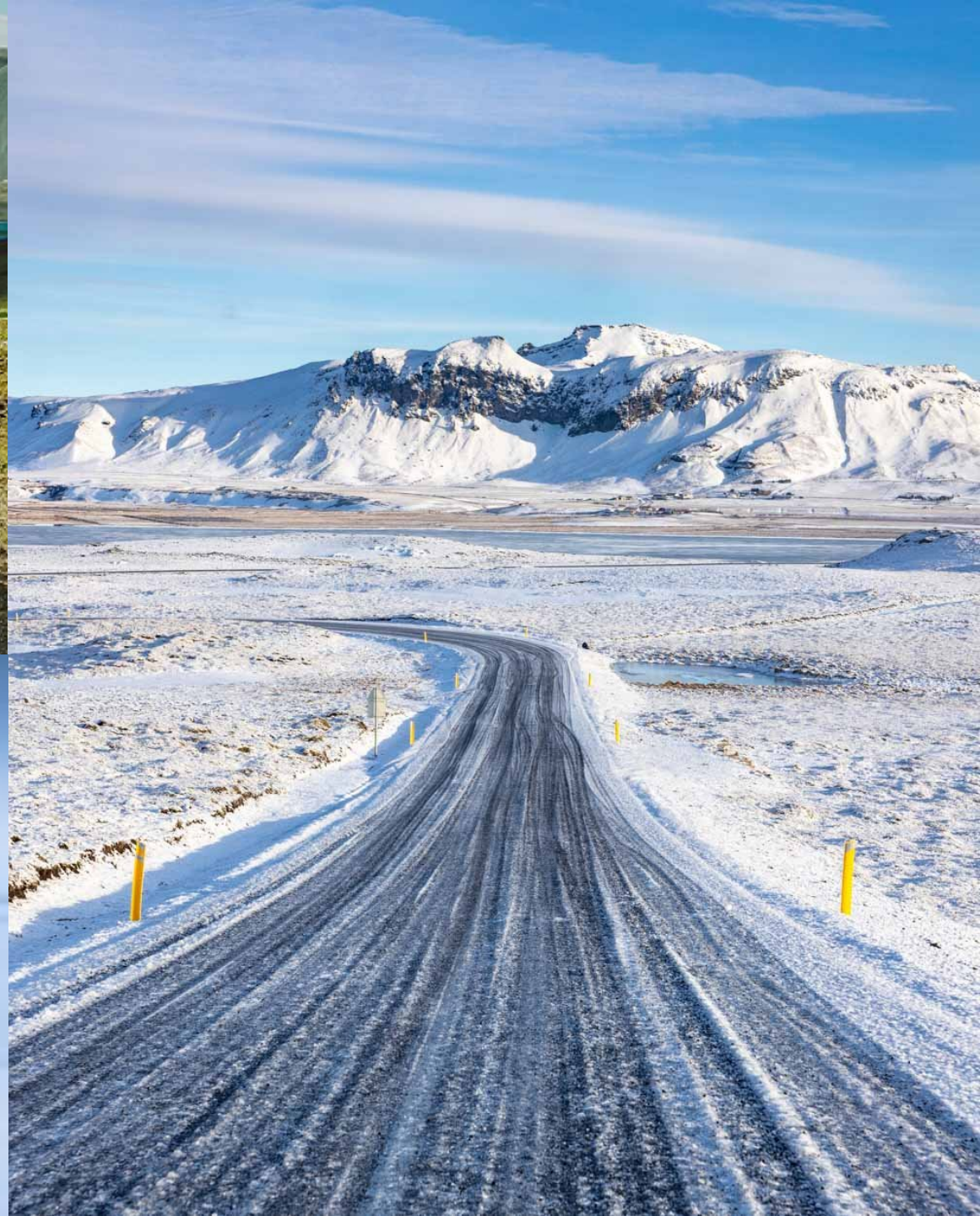
In their own words – difficult life and school experiences

I was constantly picked on and badly bullied... especially the first five years of school, they were... they were seriously hard for me. The last year of school, I did go to class for the required core subjects ...but didn't show my face at school otherwise.

I wasn't doing too well in school because I had a sick mother at home and such. She had been ill as long as I could remember. I did not find learning difficult at school. I just needed to work (at age 16)... I had three jobs, in a hotel, in a bakery and at a convenience store

I went abroad as an exchange student after compulsory education. When I came back, I suffered from anxiety that caused difficulty at upper secondary school. Attempts were made to get me back to school.

I left school when I became pregnant.



Adult learners experiences within continuing education

- Warmly welcomed with personal support and encouragement
- Meet the needs of students, small learning groups
- Confidence increases in learning
- Improvement in personal life, self-concept
- Complete programs
- Enjoy learning without fear, find their strengths as learners
- Want to continue education – into formal education system

(Björk Erlendsdóttir, 2013; Eydís Katla Guðmundsdóttir, 2012; Guðrún Jóna Magnúsdóttir, 2012; Halla Valgeirsdóttir, 2011; Rake! Steinvör Hallgrímsdóttir, 2008).

In their own words – gaining confidence through validation

Well, yes, the validation was very difficult for me... There were different parts, and the part where you need to look inward, all this self-exploration was toughest.

...then I saw the results and the results told me... that I was just a better person than I thought, you know, just that. In fact, I had more experience than I had courage to admit, and I had a lot to offer. I did not see that at this point in my life. It just opened so many things for me.

... a lot of things surprised me or... well, you've been depressed and somehow, just ill or something, then only a negative view... I was surprised by how much I could do. I'm not as closed... I no longer feel like I can hardly do anything.... I'm just not as stuck in that place.

“Keen is the guest's eye (glöggst er gests augað). You do get stuck, hmm... in your own idea or self-concept and somewhat underestimate yourself, or yes, your strengths.

Barriers to life-long learning

Dispositional barriers

- Fear – insecurity in relation to schools
- Feel rejected and discriminated against in access to formal education
- Guilt towards family

Situational barriers

- Lack of time, fatigue due to work and family obligations
- Support from family – encouragement, but not practical (women especially)
- Financial resources – saving, family, work, loans, low income

Institutional barriers

- Application rejected in US schools
- Lack of information on options and rights - continuing education system fragmented
- Cost, fees for US education in adult education system!
- Financial support scattered - unions, student loan fund, employment office etc.
- Program organization – evening - day, on-line/distance options and location

In their own words - experiencing barriers

I have seen information about continuing education centers and Grunnmenntaskólinn but I did not know it could lead to somewhere.. I thought it offered just some informal courses.

Now I have a family to support, mortgage to pay and children to take care of.. and then I am struggling to attend school, this is hard a lot of stress...

What scares me of going to school full time is not having enough money for food at the end of the month

In their own words - experiencing barriers

I had saved to pay the school fees, it was hard to find information about financial support, it is not in one place (loans, unions, employer, municipality)

I do not want to take out student loans on top of others

My son is very tired of me, I am often exhausted luckily, he sees his dad regularly and gets some attention

I just try to make it work, it was hard at first.. and there are harder periods and I just wanted to lie on the floor and cry...but I had to remind me it will all be worth it in the end

Overcoming barriers

Dispositions and social support (bounded agency)

- Willing and interested in completing education
- Want to overcome low income and vulnerable position in work
- Resilience in face of situational and institutional barriers
- Social support vital from family, friends and staff



Support: Career counseling and guidance

Career guidance counselors (CGC) role

Solicitation and referrals

- Prospective students - information about options and rights
- Refer from social services, employment office, rehabilitation

During learning

- First contact, career planning and choice of programs
- Employment search skills and support
- Study skills, confidence, resources
- Defined role in the validation process by regulation

Future planning

- Career development support across systems and at all stages in the process

Validation of prior learning— role of CGC

Example: validation of transferable skills

1. Screening interview with participant at start of the validation process
2. Group sessions creating the competency portfolio
3. Support in relating the competences to previous work and life experiences
4. Accompanies the participant in the formal evaluation session
5. Interview after validation – next step in career development

In their own words – career counselor support in validation

Sigrún describes how the long evaluation lists “caused her anxiety” and she felt like she was “taking a test.” Therefore, the career and guidance counsellor was vital for me, both to give examples for clarification and to encourage me to continue.

I find it [support] utterly important... She was totally there for us, and if we called, she came running. Well, if she hadn't helped so much, I might have stopped, just because I'm just, I'm just like that... this was sometimes a tough period... yes, that's how it is, the counsellor does a lot, I think.

In their own words – career counselor support in validation

Now you beat me. Hmm... well, maybe the process is a bit difficult when going through the evaluation on your own. Maybe you needed something, because you weren't doing much on your own, then you felt that sometimes an understanding of some of the questions was needed or what they meant or what they wanted. They looked quite similar, some of them.

the process was “an emotional rollercoaster” and I needed a lot of help to evaluate my competences. I was surprised by how difficult it was to look inward, and the counsellor played a key role in keeping me on track.



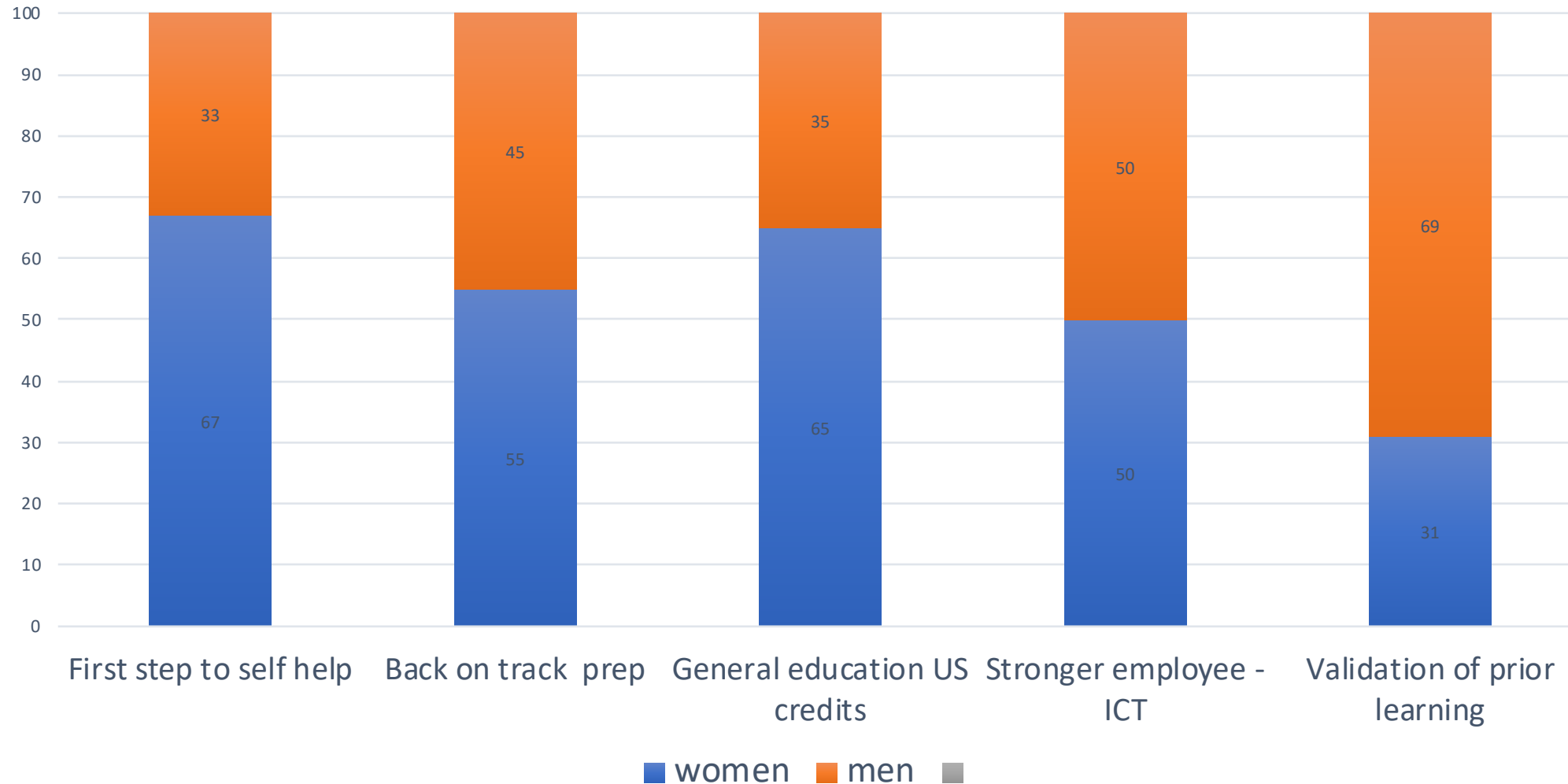


Adult education for all in Iceland?

Gendered history, education system and labor market

- Women are 70% of students in **Educational programs**
 - Women more likely to complete higher education
- Men are 70% of participants in **Validation of prior learning**
 - First and mainly offered for the legally formalizes skilled trades
 - Increasingly for other vocational education curriculum, less formalized
- Gendered labor market in the Nordic countries
- Gendered educational choice and system
- Gendered tradition and history of vocational education

Women and men – different paths and services



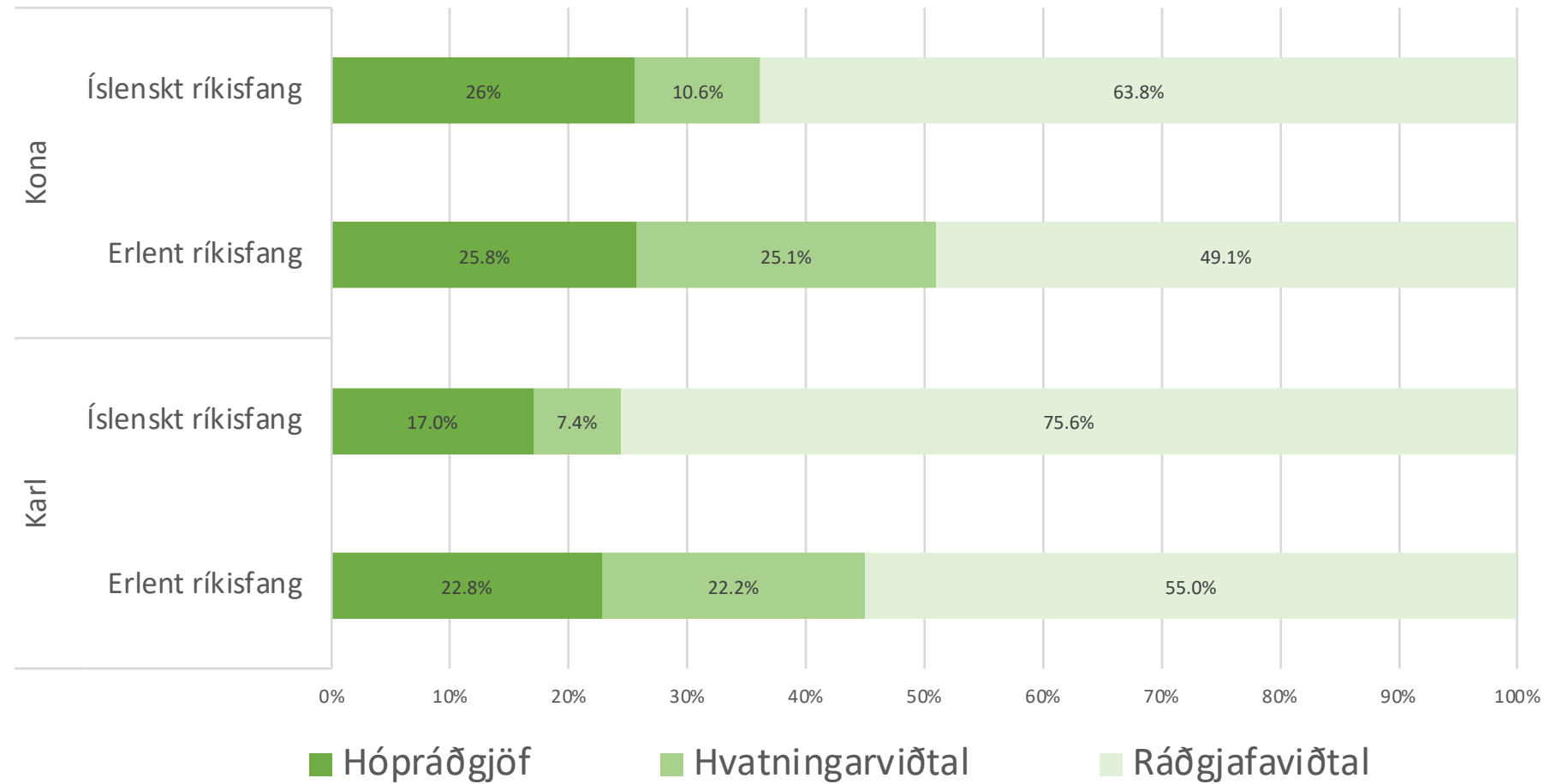
Types of services by origin – foreign and Iceland born

- Foreign born 19% of learners in AE centers
 - Similar to proportion of foreign born in the labor market
 - Both women and men
 - Older and have less education than people born in Iceland
 - More likely to be unemployed

Reasons for seeking services by origin



Types of interviews by gender and origin



Supportive and flexible services - limited access and differentiation

Access – institutional and situational barriers

- 40% of target group not yet served
- Visibility LLL system
- Financing – low income pay fees!
- Financial support
- Organization of programs

Maintains gendered labor market and education system

- Legal framing and status of male dominated trades and validation
- Women university

Discriminant services for immigrants and native born or different needs?

- New programs have been emerging
- Larger proportion of target group – need specific attention
- Laws and regulation being revised

Takk fyrir fögru Færeyjar!

