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## The Labour Market Participation of Humanitarian Migrants in Sweden: An Overview

This paper provides an overview of the socio-demographic characteristics and labour market participation of humanitarian migrants in Sweden.<sup>1</sup> Based on a statistical analysis of register data, we compare the employment rates to those of labour migrants, family reunion migrants and natives. We also look at the labour market performance by country or origin. In line with previous studies, we establish that humanitarian migrants and family reunion migrants' outcomes are lower when compared to labour migrants and natives. However, our cohort analysis shows that the employment rates of male and female humanitarian migrants who have been in Sweden for over ten years reach 70 and 65 per cent, respectively. Humanitarian migrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iran and Ethiopia have higher education and better outcomes than refugees from other major source countries.

Mainly as a result of the large migration flows of humanitarian migrants (or refugees) to Europe since the beginning of the Syrian war, the reception and integration of refugees has become a priority issue in the agendas of scholars and policy makers in host countries, including Sweden. Sweden is one of the three European countries, along with Germany and Austria, that has received the most asylum applications since 2014. Between 2014 and 2017, Sweden received 273,117 asylum applications (87,380 of which were submitted by Syrian citizens) and granted 143,858 residency permits to refugees.<sup>2</sup> However, this is not the first time in history that Sweden received

large numbers of asylum seekers. Sweden has welcomed refugees on a large scale since the 1970s, and while it is still too early to assess the labour market integration of post-2014 humanitarian migrants, both academics and policy makers could learn from the experience of those who migrated in previous years.

While asylum seekers have relatively high chances of gaining permanent residency in Sweden in comparison to other EU countries, their prospects for finding employment are less promising than in other refugee-receiving countries. According to a European Parliament report,<sup>3</sup> between 1997 and 2010, the employment rates of refugees in Sweden ten years after arrival were nine percentage points lower than in Germany (53% and 62%, respectively). Eurostat provides a slightly more positive picture of the employment of immigrants who entered Sweden seeking international protection or asylum: over 58% of them were employed in 2014, six percentage points higher than in Germany and over 1.5 percentage points higher than the EU average.<sup>4</sup> In order to facilitate a faster and higher degree of labour market integration of immigrants and refugees in particular, public support has been available for housing, general socio-cultural knowledge and language training since the early 1970s. In 2010 the responsibility for the integration of refugees was transferred from the municipalities to the Public Employment Service at the state level, and a more focused programme on labour market integration was introduced. This new introduction programme received greater funding and was able to increase the economic incentives for participating in programmes to find employment. It also improved access to labour market services. However, no significant improvement in the short-term overall labour market integration for the group as a whole was observed in connection to this change.

This paper provides an overview of humanitarian migrants' labour market integration in Sweden. We use STATIV register data from 2012 to describe the employment of refugee men and women who moved to Sweden between

1 Note that the terms "humanitarian migrants", "asylum migrants" and "refugees" will be used interchangeably in this paper, and no distinction will be made among different types of humanitarian migrants.

2 Migrationsverket (Swedish Migration Agency): Statistics Sweden: Overview and time series, 2017, available at <https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Facts-and-statistics-/Statistics/Overview-and-time-series.html>.

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3 European Parliament: Labour Market Integration of Refugees: Strategies and Good Practices, 2016.

4 Eurostat: Employment rate of first generation of immigrants by sex, age, years of residence and reason for migration, 2014, available at [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfso\\_1411e\\_mpr&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfso_1411e_mpr&lang=en).

1998 and 2012. We then compare these results with those of other migrants and native-born Swedes.

The rest of this paper is organised as follows: after a brief review of the literature on immigrants' participation in host labour markets, we then present the latest developments of migration policies in Sweden. Next we present our data and some statistics describing the socio-demographic profile and employment rates of humanitarian migrants relative to other immigrants and natives. We then plot and discuss the employment coefficients for immigrant groups relative to natives obtained from our regression analysis. The last section concludes.

### Literature on immigrant labour market integration

Barry Chiswick's seminal 1978 paper served as the trigger for numerous studies on the labour market integration of immigrants in host countries.<sup>5</sup> Over the following decades, research on this topic has grown massively, spurred on by increased global migration and better and more available statistical information. The majority of studies on immigrant economic integration are still conducted in line with Becker's human capital model,<sup>6</sup> but in recent decades, social capital propositions, as well as institutional factors like admission status and discrimination, have been included in explanatory models of immigrant labour market integration.<sup>7</sup>

In standard labour market supply studies, it is hypothesised that the probability of employment, higher earnings and job match is determined by the level of human capital accumulated by the individual worker.<sup>8</sup> This includes formal education, labour market experience and skills acquired at work. However, when it comes to migration, education and skills may not be perfectly transferable between countries. These skills could be labour market information, destination-language proficiency and occupational licences, certifications or credentials, as well as

more narrowly defined task-specific skills.<sup>9</sup> Humanitarian migrants often have particular difficulties with the transferability of their credentials.

Non-economic migrants like refugees and family-reunion migrants base their decision to migrate, in part, on a different set of intentions and are therefore less positively selected for labour market inclusion.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Aydemir argues that there are many unobservables that make up the quality and relevance of immigrants' human capital and may result in skill transferability problems or a mismatch between demand and supply.<sup>11</sup> One would thus expect highly skilled immigrants to be more easily integrated into labour markets, and indeed, previous studies conducted in Sweden indicate that labour migrants are better educated and have better labour market outcomes than refugees and family reunion migrants, most of whom are relatives of refugees.<sup>12</sup> Bevelander suggests that the "type of migration" of the total immigrant group is an important factor that can explain the native-immigrant employment gap in Sweden.<sup>13</sup>

### Labour market integration policies in Sweden

Migration flows to Sweden have responded to changes in migration policies and can be classified into three periods. Until the mid-1970s, immigrants were attracted by the high demand for foreign labour, a trend that was enhanced by the gradual liberalisation of immigration policies. People who migrated to Sweden during this period came primarily from neighbouring countries such as Finland, Norway, Denmark and Germany, and to a lesser extent from Mediterranean countries. In the subsequent period, the oil crisis and the lower demand for labour prompted Sweden to shift towards a more restrictive labour migration policy. As a result, from the mid-1970s un-

5 B.R. Chiswick: The effects of Americanization on the earnings of foreign-born men, in: *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 86, No. 5, 1978, pp. 897-921.

6 G.S. Becker: Human capital and the economy, in: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 136, No. 1, 1992, pp. 85-92.

7 See, among others, A. Behtoui: The distribution and return on social capital: evidence from Sweden, in: *European Societies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2007, pp. 383-407; P. Bevelander: The employment integration of resettled refugees, asylum claimants, and family reunion migrants in Sweden, in: *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2011, pp. 22-43; M. Carlsson, D. Rooth: Evidence of ethnic discrimination in the Swedish labour market using experimental data, in: *Labour Economics*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2007, pp. 716-729.

8 G.S. Becker: *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*, Second Edition, Cambridge 1975, National Bureau of Economic Research, available at <http://EconPapers.repec.org/RePEc:nbr:nerbk:beck75-1>.

9 P. Bevelander: Immigrant Employment Integration and Structural Change in Sweden, 1970-1995, *Lund Studies in Economic History* 15, Södertälje 2000, Almqvist and Wiksell International; B. Chiswick, Y. Liang Lee, P.W. Miller: A longitudinal analysis of immigrant occupational mobility: a test of the immigrant assimilation hypothesis, in: *International Migration Review*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2005, pp. 332-353.

10 G.J. Borjas: The economics of immigration, in: *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1993, pp. 1667-1717; B.R. Chiswick: Are immigrants favorably self-selected? An economic analysis, in: C. Brettell, J.F. Hollifield (eds.): *Migration theory: Talking across disciplines*, New York 2000, Routledge, pp. 61-76.

11 A. Aydemir: Immigrant selection and short-term labor market outcomes by visa category, in: *Journal of Population Economics*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2011, pp. 451-475.

12 N. Irastorza, P. Bevelander: The Labour-Market Participation of Highly Skilled Immigrants In Sweden: An Overview, *MIM Working Paper Series No. 17:5*, Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (MIM), 2017; P. Bevelander, N. Irastorza: *Catching Up: The Labor Market Outcomes of New Immigrants in Sweden*, Migration Policy Institute and International Labour Office, 2014.

13 P. Bevelander: Integrating Refugees into Labour Markets, *IZA World of Labour*, 2016.

til the mid-1990s, immigration flows primarily consisted of refugees and family reunion migrants from inside and outside Europe, including former Yugoslavian countries, Chile and the Middle East. Finally, Sweden's entry into the EU in 1995 increased migration flows from other EU countries.

Since the early 1970s, Sweden has implemented an active labour market policy with the aim of increasing employment levels for all residents of the country, particularly those of traditionally more disadvantaged groups such as women and immigrants. The 2010 introduction programme reform mentioned above aimed at strengthening the focus on labour market integration. While the main elements in the programme remain the same as before – language training, civic orientation and labour market activities – the basic content and scope of the programme were for the first time laid down in law. The target groups for the introduction programme are refugees and their reunited families. While participation in the programme is not mandatory, those who choose not to participate have no right to receive any economic support. The programme lasts for a maximum of 24 months.

### The 2010 reform

As explained by Bevelander and Emilsson, the reform introduced two new instruments designed to speed labour market integration: new economic compensation and the support of “introduction guides”.<sup>14</sup> The first tool, called the introduction benefit, provides stronger economic incentives to participate in the integration programme. The economic support offered is slightly higher than the social assistance level and is not affected by the income of other household members. Thus, when a refugee and his or her spouse both participate in the programme, their household income doubles. Furthermore, if participants find employment, they are allowed to continue receiving the introduction benefit, on top of their job income, for the full two years. The motivation behind these measures was to increase the participation of refugees and their relatives in the programme and subsequently in the labour market.

Introduction guides constitute the second new instrument of the 2010 reform. These guides are independent actors hired to help refugees and their families find employment. Migrants can choose their own guides from a list of or-

14 P. Bevelander, H. Emilsson: Case study Sweden: Mapping Labour market integration support measures – Sweden, in: I. Martin et al.: From Refugees to Workers: Mapping Labour-Market support measures for Asylum seekers and Refugees in EU Member States, Volume II: Literature Review and Case Studies, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016.

ganisations, and the compensation to the guides is partly based on their success.

Preliminary evaluations of the programme show limited positive effects of these ambitious introduction programmes.<sup>15</sup> According to a very preliminary evaluation of the reform made by the Employment Service 90 days after the end of the first programme, about half of the men and women were still in some form of labour market programme organised by the Employment Service.<sup>16</sup> The employment rates for those who participated in the programmes (5,872 in 2013 and 6,736 in 2014) were 12% for women and 24% for men in 2013, and 11% and 28% in 2014. About seven per cent were enrolled in education.

In addition, the Swedish National Audit Office conducted three separate audits of the programmes, and has been quite critical of their effectiveness.<sup>17</sup> While recognising that the Employment Service's mission is complicated partly because there are few suitable jobs available, the audits highlight the significant flaws in the content, scope and quality of the services provided as part of the programme. Some of the issues mentioned in these reports are as follows:

- Much time and many resources are devoted to ensuring that service suppliers actually provide the services that the state has paid for.
- The matching of refugees' training with a municipality where their skills are needed does not guarantee their future employment. This is because most refugees and their families have educational and professional backgrounds that are not specific enough to work in a similar position in Sweden.
- The shortage of housing in municipalities with good labour market conditions makes it difficult to prioritise labour market prospects in the settlement process.
- Finally, while formal evaluations by the Employment Service suggest that introduction guides fulfil a role in

15 For a more extensive overview, see *Ibid.*

16 Arbetsförmedlingen (Sweden's Public Employment Agency): Arbetsförmedlingens Årsredovisning 2014, 2015, available at <https://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/Om-oss/Statistik-och-publikationer/Rapporter/Årsredovisningar/2015-02-20-Arbetsformedlingens-arsredovisning-2014.html>.

17 Riksrevisionen (Swedish National Audit Office): Att tillvarata och utveckla nyanländas kompetens – Rätt insats i rätt tid?, RiR 2014:11, Stockholm 2014, Riksrevisionen; Riksrevisionen (Swedish National Audit Office): Nyanländ i Sverige – Effektiva insatser för ett snabbt mottagande?, RiR 2014:15, Stockholm 2014, Riksrevisionen; Riksrevisionen (Swedish National Audit Office): Etableringslotsar, fungerar länken mellan individen och arbetsmarknaden?, RiR 2014:14, Stockholm 2014, Riksrevisionen.

providing social support and that refugees and their families are satisfied with the services they receive from the guides,<sup>18</sup> there is much room for improvement in this area.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the free-choice model has been questioned due to newcomers' limited ability to make informed decisions about their potential guides and the organisations behind them. They conclude that the guides have not been as successful in facilitating immigrants' transition to work as had been hoped. For example, while 21,763 people participated in introduction programmes from December 2010 to March 2013, only 991 payments were made for initial employment and just 84 payments were made for one year of un-subsidised employment.

While it may be too early to make conclusions about the long-term effects of introduction programmes on the labour market participation of refugees and their families, the short-term perspective suggests that the programmes were at best only partially successful in reaching their objectives. On the positive side, these programmes have ensured that employment services contacted and provided services to refugees much earlier than municipalities had done prior to the 2010 reform.<sup>20</sup> However, the numbers provided above show that the successful transition of refugees into the labour market remains sluggish.

As far as we know, there has only been one academic evaluation of the new introduction programme.<sup>21</sup> That study looks at the effects on employment, income and transition to regular education for participants who enrolled in the programme in 2011 and compares those results with the results from participants who started the previous year under the old system. The authors conclude that there is no difference between these two groups in terms of the probability of being employed, income level or participation in regular education after one to two

years in the programme. Only about 27% of those who had started the programme in either 2010 or 2011 were employed at some point in 2011 or 2012. More research based on up-to-date data and different cohorts is needed to make robust conclusions on the effect of the 2010 reform.

### Humanitarian migrants in Sweden: who are they?

Register data from 2012 from the STATIV database provided by Statistics Sweden was used to write an overview of the labour market integration of humanitarian migrants in Sweden. STATIV is a longitudinal database for integration studies that contains information on all individuals registered in Sweden and is updated every year.

Our sample includes 3,484,308 natives and 389,653 foreign-born individuals who moved to Sweden between 1998 and 2012 as refugees, family reunion migrants or labour migrants. This time period was selected because Sweden first started systematically classifying immigrants by type of migration in 1997. All members of the sample were 25 to 60 years old in 2012.

The foreign-born represent ten per cent of the sample, of which 56.5% are refugees, 26.1% are family reunion migrants and 17.5% moved to Sweden as labour migrants. The mean age for the humanitarian migrants included in the sample is 38, while for labour migrants and family reunion migrants the mean age is 36. The average age of the natives in the sample is 43 years old. The major source countries for humanitarian migrants during this period were Iraq (23.6%), Somalia (7.8%), Iran (4.9%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (3.4%), Syria (3.2%), Afghanistan (3.2%) and Eritrea (2.6%).

Figure 1 shows the average level of education of male and female immigrants who entered Sweden between 1998 and 2012, sorted by their reasons for migration, and compared with the education level of natives. Humanitarian migrants have a lower average level of schooling than other migrants and natives. Despite the fact that the relative number of university graduates is similar for refugees and natives, the percentage of people with primary education is twice as large among the former. Those who moved to Sweden for work have the highest level of education among the four groups included in the analysis, followed by family reunion migrants. While women have a higher level of education among all the groups, the gender gap among humanitarian migrants is small.

Far from being a socio-demographically homogeneous group, humanitarian migrants have different educational backgrounds, and their country of origin appears to be

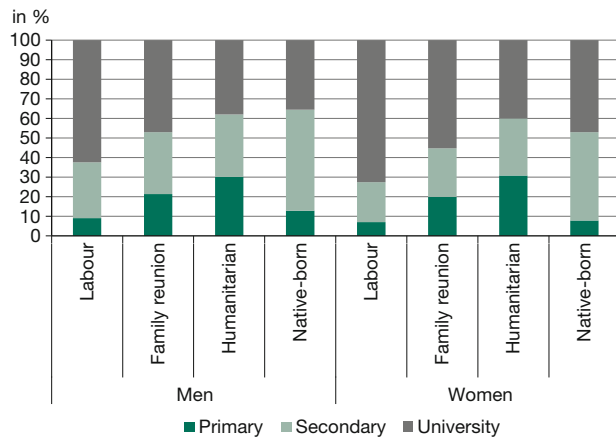
18 Arbetsförmedlingen (Swedish Public Employment Agency): Arbetsförmedlingens Återrapportering 2013: Etablering av vissa nyanlända - statistisk kring etableringsuppdraget, Dnr AF-2012/445712, November 2013.

19 Riksrevisionen (Swedish National Audit Office): Etableringslotsar..., op. cit.

20 Statskontoret (The Swedish Agency for Public Management): Etableringen av nyanlända: En uppföljning av myndigheternas genomförande av etableringsreformen, 2012, available at [www.statskontoret.se/upload/Publikationer/2012/201222.pdf](http://www.statskontoret.se/upload/Publikationer/2012/201222.pdf); Statskontoret (The Swedish Agency for Public Management): Kartläggning och bedömning av valideringsinsatser för utrikes födda, 2013, available at [www.statskontoret.se/upload/Publikationer/2013/201306.pdf](http://www.statskontoret.se/upload/Publikationer/2013/201306.pdf); L. Liljeberg, K. Sibbmark: Uppföljning av etableringssamtal, Institute for Evaluation of Labor Market and Education Policy (IFAU), 2011, available at [www.ifau.se/Upload/pdf/se/2011/r-11-28-Uppfoljning-av-etableringssamtal.pdf](http://www.ifau.se/Upload/pdf/se/2011/r-11-28-Uppfoljning-av-etableringssamtal.pdf).

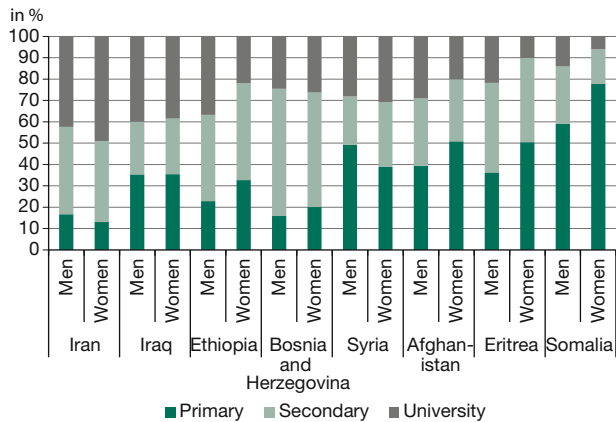
21 P. Andersson Joona, A. Wennemo Lanninger, M. Sundström: Etableringsreformens första år - en första utvärdering, stencil, Institutet för social forskning (SOFI), Stockholm University, 2015.

**Figure 1**  
**Education level of immigrants in Sweden, by reason for migration and gender, 2012**



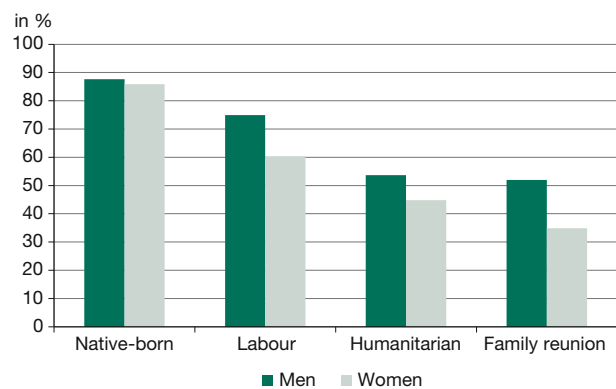
Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from Statistics Sweden's STATIV database.

**Figure 2**  
**Education level of humanitarian migrants in Sweden, by country of origin and gender, 2012**



Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from Statistics Sweden's STATIV database.

**Figure 3**  
**Employment rates of immigrants in Sweden, by reason for migration and gender, 2012**



Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from Statistics Sweden's STATIV database.

one of the major factors of influence. In order to disentangle the characteristics of this group, Figure 2 shows the average level of schooling for humanitarian migrants from the main source countries since 1998.

The educational level of humanitarian migrants from Iran is the highest among the eight groups being compared – they have both the highest percentage of people with university education and the lowest percentage with only primary education. While Iraqis have the second highest relative number of university graduates, the percentage of Iraqi refugees with only primary education is also quite large (above 35%). Between 50% and 60% of immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina have completed secondary education, and the number of humanitarian migrants from Eritrea and Ethiopia with secondary education is also quite large, at around 40-45%. Refugees from Somalia have the lowest level of education – almost 60% of men and 80% of women have only completed primary education – followed by migrants from Eritrea, Afghanistan and Syria.

There is almost no difference in educational levels between men and women among asylum migrants from Iraq, and this gap is also low for Iranian and Bosnian migrants. The educational gender gap is largest among those coming from Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia.

**Humanitarian migrants' access to employment: who gets in?**

The literature on the economic integration of immigrants shows that not only their human capital but also their reasons for migration or their route of entry into the host country influence their employment opportunities.<sup>22</sup> Labour migrants are found to have better employment opportunities and outcomes than refugees and family migrants.<sup>23</sup>

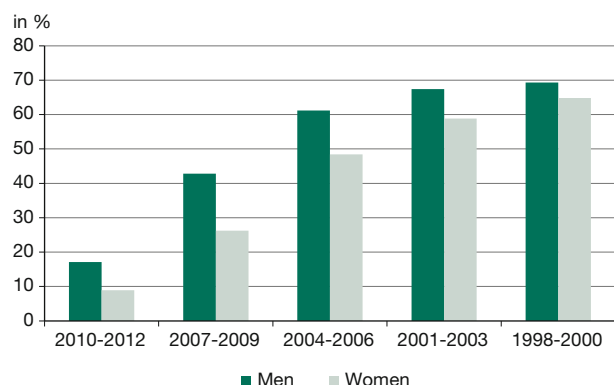
Figure 3 confirms this pattern. The employment rates of male humanitarian migrants and family reunion migrants who moved to Sweden after 1997 are more than 20 percentage points lower than those of male labour migrants and about 35 percentage points lower than natives. Women show a similar pattern. However, the difference between the employment levels of female humanitarian migrants and family reunion migrants is larger, as is the difference between these two categories and the native-

22 P. Bevelander, R. Pendakur: The labour market integration of refugee and family reunion immigrants: a comparison of outcomes in Canada and Sweden, in: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 5, 2014, pp. 689-709.

23 N. Irastorza, P. Bevelander, op. cit.; P. Bevelander: The employment..., op. cit.



**Figure 4**  
**Employment rates of humanitarian immigrants in Sweden, by period of arrival and gender, 2012**



Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from Statistics Sweden's STATIV database.

born rate. The gender gap in employment between native men and women is minor, while it is more pronounced among immigrants, especially among family reunion migrants, for whom the gap is nearly 20 percentage points.

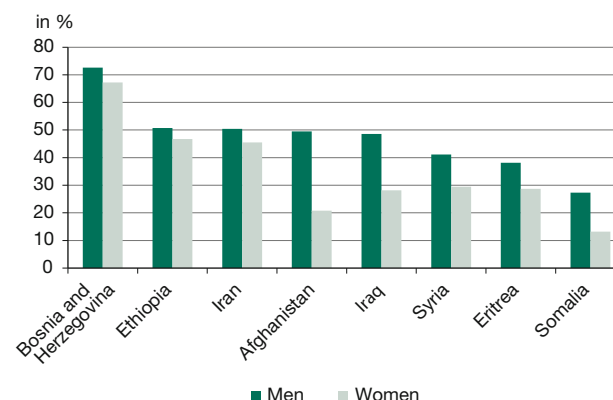
The rather negative picture for humanitarian migrants presented in Figure 3 improves if we classify them by years since migration. According to assimilation theory, immigrants' employment and earnings tend to converge with those of natives as they accumulate country-specific human capital over time.<sup>24</sup> Figure 4 shows the employment rates of humanitarian migrants by year of arrival, and this convergence is clearly visible. However, while the numbers increase cohort by cohort – especially within the first ten years – they never catch up with natives.

Next we present the employment rates of humanitarian migrants classified by country of origin. According to our data, presented in Figure 5, male and female refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina have the highest employment rates. They are followed by immigrants from Ethiopia and Iran, although these are more than 20 percentage points below their Bosnian counterparts. The gender gap is also the smallest among humanitarian migrants from these three countries. As shown previously in Figure 2, the educational levels of refugees from these three countries are among the highest of the eight groups being compared.

Somalian refugees have the lowest employment rates, both among men and women, with rates of 27% and 13%,

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, B.R. Chiswick: *The effects...*, op. cit.

**Figure 5**  
**Employment rates of humanitarian migrants in Sweden, by country of origin and gender, 2012**



Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from Statistics Sweden's STATIV database.

respectively. Among male immigrants, those from Eritrea and Syria have the next lowest employment rates, while the same is true of female immigrants from Afghanistan and Iraq. According to the data presented in Figure 2, these are the immigrant groups with the lowest levels of education.

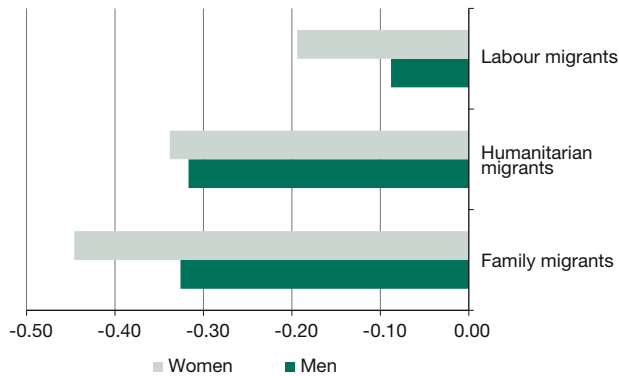
Afghani refugees have by far the largest employment gender gap, with a difference in employment between men and women of close to 30 percentage points. Those coming from Iraq (20 percentage points) and Somalia (14 percentage points) also have considerable gender gaps.

In sum, our data confirms previous studies in Sweden: humanitarian and family reunion migrants have lower employment rates than labour migrants and natives. Humanitarian and family reunion migrants have, on average, the greatest relative number of people with only primary schooling, and this likely contributes to explaining the employment gap between them and other groups. Likewise, there seems to be a correlation between the employment rates of refugees from the various countries analysed and their level of schooling.

### Factors explaining employment for immigrants in Sweden

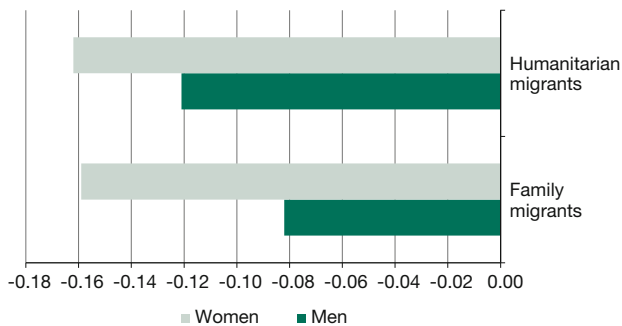
In this section we plot the coefficients obtained for immigrants – by type of migration – relative to natives from a series of OLS regressions on factors predicting employment after controlling for human capital and socio-demographic factors as follows: years since migration, age and age squared, being married or not, education, and place of residence (i.e. Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö or other

**Figure 6**  
**Employment coefficients for immigrants, by gender and type of migration, relative to natives**



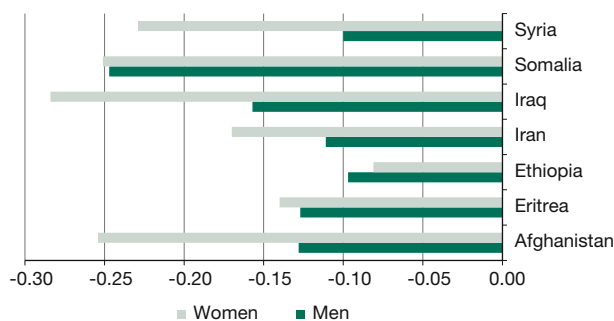
Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from Statistics Sweden's STATIV database.

**Figure 7**  
**Employment coefficients for immigrants, by gender and type of migration, relative to labour migrants**



Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from Statistics Sweden's STATIV database.

**Figure 8**  
**Employment coefficients for humanitarian migrants, by gender and country of origin**



Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from Statistics Sweden's STATIV database.

municipalities).<sup>25</sup> The same models were run for men and women, and additional models were also run on a subsample of humanitarian migrants from eight major source countries.

Figure 6 shows the coefficients on the probability of employment of immigrants broken down by type of migration and gender versus natives. It is based on the total population of male and female natives and immigrants (who moved to Sweden after 1997) who were 25-60 years old in 2012. Zero represents the reference group (in this case natives), and coefficients are the differential percentage points of each immigrant group relative to natives. The coefficients confirm the descriptive statistics presented in the previous sections: the probability of employment is lower for the three groups of immigrants than for natives as well as for female versus male immigrants. The biggest gap is found between women who entered Sweden as family migrants and native women, and the smallest is between male labour migrants and natives. There is almost no difference in the likelihood of employment between male and female humanitarian migrants, while the most evident gender gap is found among family migrants.

Figure 7 is built on almost identical regressions but run only on the foreign-born population, using labour migrants as the reference group and including the years since migration as a control variable. Labour migrants are still the group with the best employment outcomes, but the gap between them and the other two groups – especially that of family migrants – is lower than the gap shown in Figure 6, in which we also included natives and did not control for years since migration. Interestingly, family migrants do better than humanitarian migrants when we control for years since migration, but the gender gap remains much larger than it is for humanitarian migrants.

Finally, the coefficients shown in Figure 8 are obtained from identical regressions run on the population of humanitarian migrants who moved to Sweden after 1997 from eight major source countries: Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina (reference group), Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Syria. Immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina have the highest probability of employment among all groups included in the regression, followed by Ethiopians, Iranians and Syrians in the case of men and Ethiopians and Eritreans in the case of women. The gender gap is substantially larger among refugees from the Middle East than among those from Africa.

<sup>25</sup> Regression tables are available from the authors upon request.

## Conclusions

The aim of this article was twofold: first, to provide an overview of immigration and integration policies in Sweden, and second, to analyse the labour market integration of humanitarian migrants who arrived in Sweden between 1998 and 2012 relative to other migrants and natives. We first focused on the 2010 reform of the introduction programme, whose goal was to strengthen the focus on labour market integration. While preliminary evaluations of the programme suggest that the programmes were partially successful in reaching their objectives, we conclude that further research based on more recent data and different cohorts is needed to make robust conclusions on the impact of the 2010 reform.

Our empirical analysis of the employment of humanitarian migrants confirms previous studies that refugees and family reunion migrants – who are often relatives of the former – have lower employment levels than labour migrants and natives. While our cohort analysis of the employment of humanitarian migrants shows a positive, converging trend over time, not even the earliest cohort (1998-2000) had caught up with natives in 2012. We also found that refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iran and Ethiopia have better employment outcomes than refugees from other major source countries. According

to our descriptive statistics, the average educational level of these groups is also relatively high. While we control for education in our cross-sectional regressions, perhaps migrants from these countries have other associated human capital characteristics such as their knowledge of English or other languages that improve their employment outcomes.

The main limitation of this study is the cross-sectional use of register data. As pointed out by Borjas, cross-sectional data is not as suitable as longitudinal data in the study of immigrants' labour market integration over time.<sup>26</sup> However, the purpose of this paper was to give an overview of the labour market situation of humanitarian migrants to Sweden, for which register data is a useful source of information. Longitudinal cohort analysis and qualitative studies are needed for a deeper understanding of the role of other factors affecting the labour market integration of humanitarian immigrants to Sweden, such as the potentially harmful consequences of difficult migration journeys, living conditions or long asylum processes; the importance of language acquisition, gender roles and social capital; and the impact of discrimination.

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26 G.J. Borjas: Assimilation, changes in cohort quality, and the earnings of immigrants, in: *Journal of Labor Economics*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1985, pp. 463-489.