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# Integration of Migrant Women in the EU and Norway: Policies and Measures – National Report Sweden



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Integration of Migrant Women in the EU and Norway: Policies and Measures  
**Report from EMN SE**  
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## Executive Summary

Migration and integration are topics in both public and policy debates in Sweden and has been since the large influx of migrants in 2015. Initially, the focus of the debates was on the reception of the asylum seekers highlighting the challenges for the Swedish society to receive that many asylum seekers in such a short time. The heart of the debate moved, however, towards integration when the number of asylum seekers decreased but the number with a residence status increased. The relatively large share of foreign-born women in the country, one tenth of the population, also explains the attention given in the debates to particular foreign-born women. The reason why it is a political priority is the weak position foreign-born women in general hold in the Swedish society and in particular on the labour market. A position that does not comply with the gender equality objectives in place, nor with the overarching aim of integration policies to provide all with the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities in all areas of life. This also explains the number of reports as well as the seminars that have been arranged during the period covered by the study, which, will be referred in this report. Foreign born women are however a wider category and a more heterogeneous group than the target group of the EMN study, including not only female third-country nationals but all women who were born in another country and who decided for different reasons to migrate to Sweden.

Integration policies in Sweden are horizontal and integrated in different policy areas such as labour market, education and health care. The policies are therefore diverse and labelled as labour market or education policies rather than integration policies. This means that there is not one authority responsible for implementing the integration policies but a number of different actors. Two key players are the Swedish Public Employment Service and the Swedish Gender Equality Agency as labour market integration and gender equality are politically prioritized. The number of different actors and the different levels responsible for integration policies makes cooperation and collaboration not only a challenge but also a necessity to achieve the objectives of integration policies to provide all with the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities in all areas of life. The authorities with coordinating responsibilities are therefore also playing an important role such as the County Administrative Boards and the Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants. They are both promoting cooperation between the relevant actors but also developing new forms of collaboration.

To find employment or to become self-sufficient is considered a priority in Swedish integration policies. This explains why the focus is on how to speed up labour market integration, through education or vocational training among newly arrived migrants. A problem is the current mismatch between the skills and the experiences of the foreign-born women and the demand on the Swedish labour market. The unemployment rate is subsequently higher among foreign-born women in comparison with both non-migrants and foreign-born men. To address this gap, the Swedish Public Employment Service was for example tasked to establish an action plan, which lead to a number of different measures such as to up- or reskill foreign-born women, to improve the matching service, to support employers in their efforts to widen their recruitment and to counteract discrimination. Research has also shown that foreign-born women have been treated differently in matters such as getting an appointment at the Swedish

Public Employment Service, women got fewer appointments for job counselling and later in the process than men. Another measure has therefore been to raise awareness among officers providing employment services to address the unequal treatment of women and men. Reports referred in this EMN study, show that unemployment can be reduced among foreign-born women. One lesson learnt is however that this takes time, which need to be taken into account when evaluating the measures in place.

In order to achieve the integration policy of providing migrant women the same opportunities and rights as the rest of the population, requires more policies and measures than those addressing labour market participation. Gender equality should in fact be integrated in all policy areas and at all levels such as education, language training, housing and health. One major challenge is that the socio-economic inequalities are not reduced; in fact they rather grow according to Statistics Sweden. A particularly vulnerable group is foreign born single mothers. Financial vulnerability varies however depending on country of birth and the time spent in Sweden, the shorter time the more vulnerable the person is. High unemployment rates, jobs with high level of social exposure in service and health sectors, living in socially deprived areas and overcrowding are all structural circumstances affecting health. The problem of socio-economic segregation of Swedish society became in particular visible during the pandemic, which exposed people with a weaker position in society to greater risk.

There is a large number of reports highlighting the situation of foreign-born women in Sweden. There are definitely challenges but factors have also been identified that might change the situation for a more encouraging development. Migrant women are above all a hugely underutilised resource, in particular in the light of the high retirement rates and the overall ageing population in Sweden which will likely lead to an increased demand for health and elderly care, a sector that has employed many migrants women in the last decade. Secondly, there is an increased demand for service, which can result in more jobs and opportunities for migrant women. However, to improve the situation, employers have to become more innovative to create a more inclusive labour market, recruitment methods have to be improved and migrant women have to be given possibilities to invest into their skills.

## Sammanfattning på svenska

Migration och integration debatteras alltjämt och har gjorts så sen 2015 då Sverige tog emot ett stort antal asylsökande historiskt sett. Inledningsvis fokuserades asylmottagningen, utmaningarna det svenska samhället ställdes inför när så många asylsökande togs emot på så kort tid och till dem ordna med boende, skola och vård. Debatten har dock med tiden kommit att handla mer om integration eftersom antalet asylsökande har minskat och utmaningarna har istället handlat om att integrera den grupp som har fått uppehållstillstånd i landet. Gruppen utrikesfödda kvinnor utgör en tiondel av befolkningen men förutom att det är en relativt stor grupp är det en prioriterad fråga på grund av kvinnornas generellt svaga ställning på den svenska arbetsmarknaden. Det är en ställning som inte är i linje med varken jämställdhetspolitiska mål eller det övergripande integrationspolitiska målet att alla ska ha samma möjligheter och rättigheter i livet. Det förklarar också antalet rapporter som har publicerats i ämnet och seminarier som har arrangerats, av vilka en del kommer refereras i den här studien. Utrikesfödda kvinnor är dock en mer omfattande kategori och en mer heterogen grupp än den som egentligen är studiens målgrupp. Det vill säga inte bara kvinnliga tredjelandsmedborgare utan alla kvinnor som är födda i ett annat land än Sverige och som av olika skäl har valt att emigrerat till landet.

Svensk integrationspolitik är horisontell och inkluderar olika områden såsom arbetsmarknad, utbildning och hälsa- och sjukvård och benämns således snarare arbetsmarknads- eller utbildningspolitik än integrationspolitik. Det betyder också att det inte finns en myndighet utan flera olika myndigheter som tillsammans utifrån sina ansvarsområden ansvarar för integrationspolitiken. Politiskt prioriterat är arbetsmarknadsintegration och jämställdhet. Viktiga aktörer är därför Arbetsförmedlingen och Jämställdhetsmyndigheten. Antalet aktörer gör också att det krävs samordning och samarbete aktörerna emellan men även på olika nivåer eftersom det finns ansvariga på både nationell, regional och lokal nivå. Myndigheter med samordningsansvar spelar därför också en viktig roll såsom Länsstyrelserna och Delegationen för Unga och Nyanlända till Arbete, vilka förutom att främja samverkan utvecklar nya former av samarbete.

En politisk prioritet är att öka sysselsättningsgraden bland utrikesfödda, att få fler att kunna försörja sig själva. Prioriterat är därför att snabba på arbetsmarknadsintegrationen genom utbildning eller praktik. Ett problem bland utrikesfödda kvinnor är att de saknar de kunskaper och erfarenheter som efterfrågas på den svenska arbetsmarknaden. Arbetslösheten är därför högre jämfört både med inrikesfödda kvinnor och män och med utrikesfödda män. Arbetsförmedlingen fick därför i uppdrag att öka sysselsättningsgraden bland utrikesfödda kvinnor vilket resulterade i en handlingsplan med ett antal åtgärder såsom vidareutbildning alternativt omskolning, att utveckla metoder för att bättre matcha kvinnor till arbete, att stötta arbetsgivare för en bredare rekrytering och att motverka diskriminering. Forskning har också visat att utrikesfödda kvinnor får ett annat bemötande jämfört med män. De fick till exempel vänta längre på ett första möte med en handläggare på Arbetsförmedlingen och totalt sett fick kvinnor färre möten. Ytterligare en åtgärd var därför att göra handläggarna medvetna om hur olika kvinnor och män bemöttes för att på så sätt åtgärda problemet. Rapporter som refereras i studien visar att det går att minska arbetslösheten bland utrikesfödda kvinnor. En lärdom är dock att det tar tid vilket behöver tas hänsyn till när olika åtgärder utvärderas.

Det krävs emellertid åtgärder på fler områden än arbetsmarknaden för att nå det övergripande integrationspolitiska målet, att ge alla samma möjligheter och rättigheter. Ett jämställdhetsperspektiv ska i själva verket beaktas i all politik som påverkar människors liv. En utmaning är att de socio-ekonomiska skillnaderna inte minskar utan snarare växer enligt Statistiska Centralbyrån. En utsatt grupp är utrikesfödda kvinnor som är ensamstående mödrar. Den ekonomiska utsattheten varierar dock beroende på födelseland och den tid som individen ifråga har vistats i Sverige, generellt är utsattheten större ju kortare tid i landet. Hög arbetslöshet, sämre anställningsvillkor, boende i socialt utsatta områden och trångboddhet är alla exempel på strukturella villkor som påverkar hälsan. Den socio-ekonomiska segregationen och den utsatthet och de risker den innebär för utrikesfödda kvinnor blev framförallt tydligt under pandemin vilket kommer speglas i studien.

Många rapporter har publicerats som belyser utrikesfödda kvinnors situation i Sverige. De visar inte minst vilka utmaningar som finns men en mer positiv utveckling har också identifierats. Utrikesfödda kvinnor är framförallt en outnyttjad resurs. Många arbetar inom äldreomsorgen, en sektor som med största sannolikhet kommer behöva anställa fler med tanke på att antalet pensionärer ökar liksom att befolkningen blir allt äldre i Sverige. Det finns dessutom en ökad efterfrågan på serviceyrken vilket också kan resultera i fler jobb för denna grupp. För en förändring krävs dock att arbetsgivare blir mer innovativa och skapar en mer inkluderande arbetsmarknad, rekryteringen måste dessutom utvecklas och breddas och sist men inte minst utrikesfödda kvinnor måste ges möjlighet att vidareutbilda eller omskola sig.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background and rationale for the study

This study focuses on the integration of migrant women in the main sectorial areas covered by the EU Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027<sup>1</sup> including education and training, employment and skills, health and housing as the base for societal integration. While the term 'integration' is contested<sup>2</sup> and other terms such as 'inclusion' are increasingly preferred in policy, in this study the term 'integration' is used deliberately to refer to integration and inclusion policies and measures addressing migrant women.

In the EU, women account for almost half of the migrants from third countries (10.6 million or 49% of the migrant stock on 1 January 2020).<sup>3</sup> Women, like men, migrate to Europe for a variety of reasons.<sup>4</sup> Women may arrive as family migrants, labour migrants, students, asylum applicants or belonging to another group of migrants. This is reflected in the diversity of legal statuses and rights among migrant women. Migrant women's integration challenges differ depending on their resident status or reason for migration.<sup>5 6</sup>

Recent studies show that migrant women face a so-called "double disadvantage", due to the intersection of being a woman and being a migrant.<sup>7</sup> For example, migrant women in the EU generally have a higher unemployment rate than both non-migrant women and migrant men. For those women with young children, the employment rate is significantly lower for migrant than non-migrant women.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, refugee women are worse off when it comes to education or employment compared to other migrant women, pointing to a

<sup>1</sup> European Commission, 'EU Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027', COM(2020) 758 final, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/?action=media.download&uuid=CDFE0088-C151-66D5-846F7C422DE2A423>, (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Schinkel, W. *Against 'immigrant integration: For an end to neocolonial knowledge production*, CMS, 6(31), (2018).

<sup>3</sup> Eurostat, 'Population on 1 January by age group, sex and citizenship', 2021, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/migr\\_pop1ctz](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/migr_pop1ctz), (last accessed on 21 July 2021) (without EL, HR, MT and PL).

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, '**Integration of migrant women – A key challenge with limited policy resources**', 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/feature/integration-of-migrant-women>, (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

<sup>5</sup> European Economic and Social Committee, 'Opinion on Inclusion of migrant women in the labour market', 2015, p.5, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/inclusion-of-migrant-women-in-the-labour-market?lang=en>, (last accessed on 9 July 2021); FRA, 'Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey – Migrant women – selected findings', 2019, p. 9–11, [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2019-eu-midis-ii-migrant-women\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-eu-midis-ii-migrant-women_en.pdf) (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

<sup>6</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), 'Gender and Migration', 2020, p. 4, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-and-migration>, (last accessed on 9 July 2020).

<sup>7</sup> European Commission – Joint Research Centre, 'Gaps in the EU Labour Market Participation Rates: an intersectional assessment of the role of gender and migrant status', 2020, <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC121425>, (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

<sup>8</sup> OECD, 'How to strengthen the integration of migrant women?', 2020, Migration Policy Debate No. 25, pp. 4 and 6, <https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/migration-policy-debates-25.pdf>, (last accessed on 9 July 2021).



“triple disadvantage”.<sup>9</sup> In addition, migrant women have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, e.g. through job loss, additional care and housework, domestic work or increased exposure when providing front-line services.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, there are also unique integration opportunities. Migrant women are – for example – equally likely to be as highly educated as non-migrant women and are more likely to be highly educated than migrant men.<sup>11</sup>

The above elements shows the importance of a gendered approach in migrant integration policies and measures.<sup>12</sup> However, a 2017 study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) found little evidence of a gendered approach in national action plans and integration strategies.<sup>13</sup> The European Court of Auditors in its 2018 report identified a lack of policies for addressing the specific integration challenges of migrant women.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, a recent study published by the European Network of Migrant Women in 2020 identified shortcomings in addressing the needs of migrant women in Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) projects.<sup>15</sup>

The 2021 EMN study on the ‘Integration of Migrant Women in the EU: Policies and Measures’ conducts a stock-taking exercise on where EMN Member States currently stand in terms of gender-sensitive integration policies and measures targeting migrant women.

## 1.2 Study aims and objectives

The aim of the 2021 EMN study on the ‘Integration of Migrant Women in the EU: Policies and Measures’ is to understand if and to what extent Member States and Norway consider the distinct situation of migrant women in their integration policies and measures. The aim is to provide information that will support policymakers developing integration policies and measures that better support migrant women in their integration process, taking their respective backgrounds into account. An overview will be provided of research and statistics available at

<sup>9</sup> OECD, ‘Triple Disadvantage? A first overview of the integration of refugee women’, 2018, pp. 16 and 19, [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/triple-disadvantage\\_3f3a9612-en;jsessionid=QdS1wA6MXnTSSOMYsBcF9L0j.ip-10-240-5-190](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/triple-disadvantage_3f3a9612-en;jsessionid=QdS1wA6MXnTSSOMYsBcF9L0j.ip-10-240-5-190), (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

<sup>10</sup> IOM, ‘COVID-19 and women migrant workers: Impacts and Implications’, 2020, <https://publications.iom.int/books/covid-19-and-women-migrant-workers-impacts-and-implications>, (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

<sup>11</sup> OECD, ‘How to strengthen the integration of migrant women?’, 2020, Migration Policy Debate No. 25, p. 4, <https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/migration-policy-debates-25.pdf>, (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

<sup>12</sup> OECD, ‘How to strengthen the integration of migrant women?’, 2020, Migration Policy Debate No. 25, p. 6, <https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/migration-policy-debates-25.pdf>, (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

<sup>13</sup> The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) ‘Together in the EU – Promoting the participation of migrants and their descendants’, 2017, p. 7, [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2017-together-in-the-eu\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2017-together-in-the-eu_en.pdf), (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

<sup>14</sup> European Court of Auditors, ‘The integration of migrants from outside the EU, Briefing Paper’, 2018, p. 23, [https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/Briefing\\_paper\\_Integration\\_migrants/Briefing\\_paper\\_Integration\\_migrants\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/Briefing_paper_Integration_migrants/Briefing_paper_Integration_migrants_EN.pdf), (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

<sup>15</sup> European Network of Migrant Women, ‘Follow the €€€ for Women and Girls’, 2020, <http://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/Follow-the-Money-for-Women-2020-AMIF.pdf>, (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

the national level on the integration opportunities and challenges of migrant women.

The study's main objectives are:

- To map current national integration policies in the EU Member States and Norway that specifically target women;
- To provide examples of good practices and lessons learnt from EU Member States and Norway on integration measures for migrant women at the national but also regional or local level;
- To provide an overview of special policies or measures that have been developed to counteract negative consequences of COVID-19 for migrant women's integration.

The study targets policymakers interested in addressing the specific situation of migrant women in their integration policy as well as researchers, who may use the findings as a starting point for more in-depth research of the integration of migrant women, such as at the local and regional level. Also, the study is of interest to the general public, raising awareness on gender-specific integration issues.

The study seeks to address four primary questions:

- What does the available data /research tell us about the migration channels, the level of integration of migrant women in the EU Member States and Norway, and their integration challenges and opportunities?
- To what extent are migrant women specifically addressed in national integration policies (e.g. strategies, action plans and government programmes)?
- To what extent are there targeted integration measures available in the EU Member States and Norway, specifically addressing migrant women at the national but also regional or local level, and what has been identified as a good practice in this area?
- Have special integration policies or measures been developed to counteract the negative consequences of COVID-19 for migrant women's integration, and if yes, what do these policies or measures look like?

### **1.3 Scope of the study**

This study defines a migrant woman as a third-country national female migrant (i.e. a regularly residing female migrant aged 18 and above) for the purpose of policy analysis; and as a female third-country national for the purpose of data analysis. However, the study also analyses those policies and measures that are not exclusively targeting third-country nationals, but which include them as part of a wider target group (e.g. women in general; or migrant women in general which may also include EU citizens with migrant background).

Integration policies refer to targeted integration strategies and action plans but also broader policy instruments relevant to the integration of migrant women such as sector specific governmental programmes (health, education,

employment, housing, etc.). Measures include systematic initiatives (multi-year / long term), projects (ad-hoc) and legislative (structural) measures that are used to implement the integration policies (including those funded by governments but implemented by NGOs on behalf of the governments).

Even though local communities are the places where integration happens and therefore regional and local authorities have their own integration policies and measures, the focus of this study is the national level for the simple reason that researching regional and local level policies and measures would require considerably more time and resources than available for an EMN study. However, questions on good practices have been incorporated to this study to allow for the provision of examples from the regional and local level.

The reporting period for this study ranges from 2016 to 2021.

## 1.4 Definitions

The following key terms are used in the Common Template. The definitions are taken from the EMN Glossary Version 6.0<sup>16</sup> unless specified otherwise in footnotes.

**Dual approach to gender equality:** complementarity between gender mainstreaming and specific gender equality policies and measures, including positive measures.<sup>17</sup>

**Gender:** The socially constructed attributes, roles, activities, responsibilities and needs predominantly connected to being male or female in given societies or communities at a given time.

**Gender mainstreaming:** Systematic consideration of the differences between the conditions, situations and needs of women and men in all policies and actions.<sup>18</sup>

**Gender-sensitive:** Policies and programmes that take into account the particularities pertaining to the lives of both women and men, while aiming to eliminate inequalities and promote gender equality, including an equal distribution of resources, therefore addressing and taking into account the gender dimension.<sup>19</sup>

**Integration:** In the *EU context*, a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of EU Member States.

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<sup>16</sup> EMN Glossary, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/glossary\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_en), (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

<sup>17</sup> EIGE, 'Glossary & Thesaurus – dual approach to gender equality', <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1092>, (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

<sup>18</sup> EIGE, 'Glossary & Thesaurus – gender mainstreaming', <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1185>, (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

<sup>19</sup> EIGE, 'Glossary & Thesaurus – gender sensitive', <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1211>, (last accessed on 9 July 2021).

**Integration indicators:** Benchmarks used to measure the integration of migrants in specific policy areas, such as employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship.

**Intersectionality:** Analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination.<sup>20</sup>

**Migrant:** In the EU/EFTA context, a person who establishes their usual residence in the territory of an EU/EFTA Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another EU/EFTA Member State or a third country.

**Third-country national:** Any person who is not a citizen of the European Union within the meaning of Art. 20(1) of TFEU and who is not a person enjoying the European Union right to free movement, as defined in Art. 2(5) of the Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code).

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<sup>20</sup> EIGE, 'Glossary & Thesaurus – intersectionality', <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1263>, last accessed on 9 July 2021.

## 2. National situation to integrate migrant women

### 2.1 Integration of migrant women a policy priority

The overarching aim of Swedish integration policy is equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all regardless ethnic and cultural background.<sup>21</sup> This includes gender equality and reintegration of people greatly distanced from the labour market. A written communication from the government in 2018 based on a report from the National Audit Office, addresses the need to continue developing gender mainstreaming in both integration- and labour market policies.<sup>22</sup> The government shares the view of the National Audit Office that foreign-born women have a weak position on the labour market that need to be addressed. This problem was highlighted as late as in September 2021 when the government commissioned the Gender Equality Agency to bring forward proposals to strengthen foreign-born women in order to facilitate their pathway to the labour market.<sup>23</sup>

The National Audit Office Report aforementioned identifies two main tracks in the current integration policy. The first one is targeted actions towards newly arrived migrants that is beneficiaries of international protection and their family members, excluding other forms of immigration such as students and labour migrants. The second main track is characterized by a more general approach based on the existing welfare system that is the needs of the foreign-born are addressed within the different areas such as labour market, education, health and medical care and housing.<sup>24</sup> This is also the policy that is criticised by the National Audit Office for not being sufficient to counteract the gender differences.

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<sup>21</sup> Government Offices website, information provided on Swedish integration policy, available at

<sup>22</sup> Government Written Communication, National Audit Office report on gender mainstreaming in integration policy, Riksrevisionens rapport om jämställdhetsintegrering av integrationpolitiken, Skr 2018/19:97, available at: [Riksrevisionens rapport om jämställdhetsintegrering av integrationspolitiken \(regeringen.se\)](https://www.regeringen.se/491319/publications/2018/10/16/491319) (last accessed 30 September 2021).

<sup>23</sup> Government decision tasking the Gender Equality Agency to bring forward proposals concerning foreign-born women's pathway to the labour market, Uppdrag till Jämställdhetsmyndigheten om utrikesfödda kvinnors inträde på arbetsmarknaden, A2021/016712, September 2021, available at: [Uppdrag till Jämställdhetsmyndigheten om utrikes födda kvinnors inträde på arbetsmarknaden \(regeringen.se\)](https://www.regeringen.se/491319/publications/2021/09/01/491319) (last accessed 29 September 2021).

<sup>24</sup> The National Audit Office (Riksrevisionen) on gender mainstreaming of integration policies, Jämställdhetsintegrering av integrationspolitiken: ett outnyttjat verktyg, p. 16, RIR 2018:33, 2018, available at: [Jämställdhetsintegrering av integrationspolitiken – ett outnyttjat verktyg \(RiR 2018:33\) \(riksrevisionen.se\)](https://www.regeringen.se/491319/publications/2018/09/01/491319) (last accessed 30 September 2021).



## **Gender equality – an objective in Swedish policy**

Gender mainstreaming has been the main strategy in Swedish policy since 1994 to achieve the gender equality objectives.<sup>25</sup> This means that gender equality should be integrated in all policy areas and at all levels included integration policies.

The overarching aim is that women and men should have the same possibilities to shape society and their own lives. The following six sub-targets are taken from the Swedish Gender Equality Agency and they are all covered in this report:

1. "Gender equal division of power and influence. Women and men are to have the same rights and opportunities to be active citizens and to shape the conditions for decision-making.
2. Economic gender equality. Women and men must have the same opportunities and conditions as regards paid work, which give economic independence throughout life.
3. Gender equal education. Women and men, girls and boys must have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to education, study options and personal development.
4. Gender equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care. Women and men must have the same responsibility for housework and have the opportunity to give and receive care on equal terms.
5. Gender equal health. Women and men, girls and boys must have the same conditions for a good health and be offered care on equal terms.
6. Men's violence against women must stop. Women and men, girls and boys, must have the same right and access to physical integrity".<sup>26</sup>

## **2.2 Overall organisational approach**

Integration policies in Sweden are horizontal and integrated in different policy areas such as labour market, education and health care. The policies are therefore diverse and labelled as labour market or education policies rather than integration policies. The focus of the integration policies has largely been to speed up the pathway to employment. The ministry of employment (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet) and the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) have for this reason been two main actors in Swedish integration policies. The latter is a government agency subject to a radical reform after the January agreement reached in 2019 between the Social Democratic Party, the Centre Party, the Liberal Party and the Green Party.<sup>27</sup> An

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<sup>25</sup> Swedish Gender Equality Agency (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten) website, information provided on the Sweden's gender equality policy, available at: [Sweden's gender equality policy – Jämställdhetsmyndigheten \(jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se\)](https://www.jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se) (last accessed 29 September 2021).

<sup>26</sup> The Swedish Gender Equality Agency (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten) website, information provided on the Sweden's gender equality policy, available at: [Sweden's gender equality policy – Jämställdhetsmyndigheten \(jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se\)](https://www.jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se) (last accessed at 22 September 2021).

<sup>27</sup> The Social Democratic Party providing information on the political agreement, the January agreement reached in 2019 between the Social Democratic Party, the Centre Party, the Liberal Party and the Green Party, a 73 pointsprogramme reached 11 January 2019, available at: [Microsoft Word - Utkast till sakpolitisk överenskommelse.docx \(socialdemokraterna.se\)](https://www.socialdemokraterna.se) (last accessed 21 November 2021).

agreement covering a number of different issues but relevant for this report are the sections on jobs and entrepreneurship and in particular integration. The 73 points programme resulted in a governmental decision in May 2019 to change the main task for the Swedish Public Employment Service, a shift from carrying out the active labour market measures itself to become responsible for the procurement of these measures. The change that is scheduled to take place in 2022 will give independent actors greater responsibility to carry out the services such as matching job seekers with employers and skills acquisition.<sup>28</sup>

Another important objective in Swedish policy is gender equality. To provide the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities in all areas of life is also an objective in integration policies. Responsible for the work against segregation and discrimination is likewise the Ministry for Gender Equality.<sup>29</sup> The Ministry which, is integrated in the Ministry of employment (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet) together with the Swedish Gender Equality Agency (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten) are subsequently other important actors with regard to integration policy. A new authority was established in 2018, the Delegation against segregation (Delmos) to focus more specifically on segregation, that is further action to counter the structural causes and to improve the conditions in areas with socioeconomic challenges.

The Ministry for education and research (Utbildningsdepartementet) which is divided between the Minister for Education and the Minister for Higher Education and Research, are responsible for education and training in labour market establishment.<sup>30</sup> Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och Högskolerådet) is responsible for recognition of foreign qualifications and evaluates foreign qualification, and a government agency that is important for those having foreign qualification and who want to continue their studies or who look for work in Sweden. The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) is the central administrative authority for the public school system and for adult education and as such developing the Swedish Tuition for immigrants and providing support for those working with it.

Responsible for public health and medical care is the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (Socialdepartementet). The government agency is the National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen) whose primary task is to provide regulations, statistics and knowledge for the Government and for those working in health- and medical care and social services. Health and medical care is another important element when looking at integration. The National Board of Health and Welfare was tasked by the government in 2016 to provide knowledge

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<sup>28</sup> Information provided by the Swedish Public Employment office about future changes, available at: [Vi förbereder en ny myndighet - Arbetsförmedlingen \(arbetsformedlingen.se\)](https://www.arbetsformedlingen.se) (last accessed 21 November 2021).

<sup>29</sup> Government Offices of Sweden (Regeringskansliet) website, the Ministry of Employment (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet) providing information on integration, available at: [Nyanländas etablering - Regeringen.se](https://www.regeringen.se), (last accessed 22 September 2021).

<sup>30</sup> Government Offices of Sweden (Regeringskansliet) website, the Ministry of Education and Research (Utbildningsdepartementet) providing information on integration, available at: [Education and research - Government.se](https://www.regeringen.se) (last accessed 22 September 2021).

support for the welfare authorities in their work to support newly arrived people (aged 18-24) in their pathway to employment and in particular young women.<sup>31</sup>

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) is a government agency under the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation (Näringsdepartementet). The main task is to ensure that funds are invested in projects that promote regional growth and employment and in doing so increasing the competitiveness in the country. This includes measures to better make use of the skills and the potential of foreign-born women. Projects are granted to facilitate for foreign-born women to enter the labour market such as vocational training or education that could lead to employment or to start a business.<sup>32</sup>

### Integration on a regional and a local level

Integration is also managed on a regional level. The County Administrative Boards (Länsstyrelsen) plays an important role in planning and organizing different integration activities but also in following up the different activities as well as providing financial contributions to municipalities. This work is done together with both national and local authorities and the civil society. The organisation that represents and advocates the local governments is the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges kommuner och regioner) and among other tasks, it provides support to the local governments in their measures to facilitate integration.

The municipalities are most likely the actors the migrants in particular meet. They are responsible for education, for both children and adults and supplementary maintenance support and social assistance if required. Education provided by the municipalities include Swedish tuition for Immigrants (SFI) and Civic Orientation Courses. The main actors on the local level besides municipalities are the local employment offices together with civil society.<sup>33</sup>

The role of the civil society is emphasized by the government to facilitate and to speed up the integration into the Swedish society.<sup>34</sup> Civil society carries out activities in many different areas such as health, employment, language and housing, creating meeting places to integrate foreign born. To strengthen this work, more than 50 organisations are invited to consultations with the

<sup>31</sup> Knowledge support for welfare authorities working with newly arrived, for young adults to improve their opportunities to provide for themselves (Att öka förutsättningarna för egen försörjning: Unga vuxna i verksamheten ekonomiskt bistånd), Socialstyrelsen, S2016/0023/FST, available at: [Att öka förutsättningar för egen försörjning \(socialstyrelsen.se\)](https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/Att-oka-forutsattningar-for-egen-forsorjning) (last accessed 23 September 2021).

<sup>32</sup> The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) providing information on their activities to shorten the path to the labour market for foreign born women, available at: [Vägar till jobb för utrikes födda kvinnor - Tillväxtverket \(tillvaxtverket.se\)](https://www.tillvaxtverket.se/vagar-till-jobb-for-utrikes-fodda-kvinnor) (last accessed 21 November 2021).

<sup>33</sup> An overview of the sharing of responsibilities with regard to integration is provided by the Swedish Associations of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner), available at: [Nyanlända i SKR](https://www.skr.se/nyanlanda-i-skr) (last accessed 24 September 2021).

<sup>34</sup> Pressrelease from the Ministry of Employment (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet) on the Minister of Employment consulting the civil society on integration, Ylva Johansson deltar i samråd med civilsamhället om integration och etablering, 22 May 2018, available at: [Ylva Johansson deltar i samråd med civilsamhället om integration och etablering - Regeringen.se](https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2018/05/ylva-johansson-deltar-i-samrad-med-civilsamhallet-om-integration-och-etablering) (last accessed 12 October 2021).

government once a year in order to improve integration but also to facilitate for the civil society. Added to this, the government has tasked the County Administrative Board to strengthen the role of the civil society and to promote cooperation between the civil society and the municipalities. The County Administrative Board is also responsible for providing financial compensations for those organising workshops, networking and social activities aiming to integrate third-country nationals into the Swedish society.<sup>35</sup>

National funding is available to municipalities and municipalities in collaboration with organizations/non-governmental organizations, which seek to strengthen and develop activities for mainly asylum seekers and newly arrived, such as easing integration, creating networks and supporting language training. Since 2018 extra funding has been allocated for activities specially focused on language training for migrant women with small children. The level of funds aimed at foreign-born women is estimated to at least ten percent in the Swedish Social Fund for the period 2014 -2020.

### Coordination – a key factor in Swedish integration policy

The number of different actors and the different levels responsible for integration policies makes cooperation and collaboration not only a challenge but also a necessity to achieve the integration policies objectives. The authorities with coordinating responsibilities are therefore playing an important role such as the County Administrative Boards supporting the municipalities and promoting regional coordination. The Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly arrived Migrants (Delegationen för unga och nyanlända till arbete) is another example, promoting cooperation between municipalities and the Swedish Public Employment Service but also tasked to develop new forms of collaboration.<sup>36</sup> The challenges that exist in coordinating the large number of integration actors were highlighted in the EMN national report "Labour market integration of third-country nationals in EU Member States" in 2018.<sup>37</sup>

### 2.3 Main public and policy debates

Migration is a topic in both public and policy debates and has been since the large influx of migrants in 2015. Initially, the focus of the debates was on the reception of the asylum seekers highlighting the challenges for the Swedish society to receive that many asylum seekers in such a short time. The heart of the debate moved, however towards integration when the number of asylum seekers decreased but the number of people with a residence status increased. Problems integrating foreign born, however, might have an impact on migration policy as they could be used as a reason for a more restricted migration. An

<sup>35</sup> Information provided in English by the County Administrative Board (Länsstyrelsen) on integration and activities organized by the civil society, available at: [Developing activities with refugee guides and family contacts | Länsstyrelsen Stockholm \(lansstyrelsen.se\)](https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/eng/developing-activities-with-refugee-guides-and-family-contacts) (last accessed 12 October 2021).

<sup>36</sup> Information provided in English on the missions of the Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants (Delegationen för unga och nyanlända), available at: [About us | Delegationen för unga och nyanlända till arbete \(dua.se\)](https://www.dua.se/en/about-us) (last accessed 22 November 2021).

<sup>37</sup> EMN National Report Labour market integration of third-country nationals in EU Member States. *EMN Sweden 2018:1*, available at: [Labour market integration of third-country nationals in EU Member States - Country Report Sweden \(emnsweden.se\)](https://www.emnsweden.se/en/labour-market-integration-of-third-country-nationals-in-eu-member-states-country-report-sweden) (last accessed 24 September 2021).

issue that is increasingly debated is the number of migrants to be admitted by Sweden in order to manage migration.<sup>38</sup> Integration also became highly debated in the run-up to the election in September 2018, although the polling station survey showed that it had fallen behind welfare.<sup>39</sup> The order of ranking is also confirmed in the run-up to the elections in 2022. A survey carried out by the daily newspaper 'Dagens Nyheter' shows that law and order is ranked higher than ever but it is followed by migration and integration.<sup>40</sup>

Another nation-wide daily newspaper 'Svenska Dagbladet' has published a series of articles on integration for the period 2016-2020.<sup>41</sup> The topics vary however from labour integration to citizenship, covering the problems as much as the possible solutions, which means that foreign-born women are highlighted but not to a greater extent than other issues. The same variation appears when reviewing the series of articles on integration published by 'Dagens Nyheter', also highlighting education in particular in language and exclusion.<sup>42</sup> An example of the media coverage and on good practices is the news item on successful job matching. In the run-up to the elections in 2018, the Swedish Public service television interviews a local housing company in Gothenburg about their experiences in employing long-term unemployed foreign-born women.<sup>43</sup>

The weak position foreign-born women have on the labour market and the differences in place in labour participation between foreign-born men and women, was highlighted in the Swedish Government Report already in 2012.<sup>44</sup> A number of shortcomings were identified that hinders foreign-born women to establish themselves at the labour market. The report has been followed by a large number of other reports highlighting the situation of foreign-born women and by a number of seminars and roundtable talks between politicians, scholars and practitioners discussing the issue. The Centre for Business and Policy Studies (Studieförbundet Näringsliv och Samhälle) for example arranged a webinar in March 2021 on parental leave, an opportunity or an obstacle for integration.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Dagens Nyheter (DN), a national daily newspaper, its searchengine presents a number of articles on the topic, showing the different approaches taken by the different political parties, researchers and journalists, available at: [Sök - DN.se](#) (last accessed 17 December 2021).

<sup>39</sup> Swedish public service television (Sveriges television) on the most highly ranked election issues in the polling station survey in 2018, SVT VALU: Viktigaste frågorna, available at: [VALU: Väljarnas viktigaste frågor - SVT Nyheter](#) (last accessed 12 October 2021).

<sup>40</sup> Dagens Nyheter (DN) is a national daily newspaper, publishing an article on Swedish Internal Affairs, based on a survey on election issues in 2021, *DN/Ipsos: Kriminalpolitik viktigare än någonsin för väljarna*, (8 May 2021).

<sup>41</sup> Svenska Dagbladet (SvD) a national daily newspaper, publishes a series of articles on integration, available at: [Integrationspolitik | SvD](#) (last accessed 30 November 2021).

<sup>42</sup> Dagens Nyheter (DN) a national daily newspaper, publishes a series of articles on integration, available at: [Integration - DN.SE](#) (last accessed 30 November 2021).

<sup>43</sup> Swedish public service television (Sveriges television) on successful jobmatching, *Bostadsbolag satsar på långtidsarbetslösa utrikesfödda kvinnor*, 17 April 2018, available at: [Bostadsbolag satsar på långtidsarbetslösa utrikesfödda kvinnor | SVT Nyheter](#) (last accessed 15 October 2021).

<sup>44</sup> Swedish Government Report (Statlig Offentlig Utredning) on the labour participation of foreign born women, *Med rätt att delta: Nyanlända kvinnor och anhöriginvandrare på arbetsmarknaden, SOU 2012:69*, (Stockholm 2012).

<sup>45</sup> Center for Business and Policy Studies (Studieförbundet Näringsliv och Samhälle), *Parental leave – opportunity for obstacle for integration?*, Ann-Zofie Duvander &



Fores, a think tank, arranges a conference on integration every year. In 2019, a seminar was arranged to discuss migration and gender equality objectives in the light of the cross-party commission of inquiry to examine Sweden's future migration policy, which was active at the time. Some of the topics discussed at the webinar were the effects of more restrictive rules for family migration and the introduction of temporary residence permits instead of permanent ones. Data presented in this study shows that a majority of migrant women are family migrants, which means that women often follow later when they can apply for a residence permits for family reasons. A more restrictive family migration policy with a maintenance requirement for family reunification therefore affects third-country national women and their opportunities to migrate. Another legal amendment that is considered to have a greater impact on migrant women than on men is the general rule to grant temporary residence permits instead of permanent ones and the job requirement for a later transition from temporary stay to a permanent permit, as migrant women in general need more time in Sweden to find employment. This implies that, with the new rules that entered into force in July 2021, the opportunities to qualify for a permanent residence permit deteriorate for migrant women.<sup>46</sup> To our knowledge, there is however no data or research showing the actual effect of the amendments.

The government holds regular dialogues with the civil society to inform and consult a number of organisations and associations, and in doing so demonstrating the key role they play in implementing integration policies and in counteracting segregation. The theme for the dialogue that was held in October 2020 was integration and segregation during the pandemic.<sup>47</sup> A problem that was highlighted during the meeting is the way media portrayed foreign-born people during the pandemic. In particular foreign-born women have told the organisations that were present, how they felt questioned and diminished when they according to the media did not act in line with the recommendations provided by the Swedish Public Health Agency. The foreign-born women have explained that their behaviour during the pandemic was not due to a misunderstanding or lack of information but to a socio-economic situation that hindered them to take further precautions. The problem according to the foreign-born women, is that it was not even considered in the media reports.

## 2.4 National situation based on available statistics

Foreign born is the category widely used in Sweden, including all individuals in Sweden who are born in another country and who decided for different reasons to migrate to Sweden, that is asylum seekers, refugees, quota refugees, family migrants, students, labour migrants but also EU citizens and citizens from Nordic countries who are not required an authorisation to settle in Sweden. One fifth of the population in Sweden is foreign born according to Statistics Sweden,

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Eleonora Mussino, more information available at: [Learnings from Integration - SNS](#) (last accessed 13 October 2021).

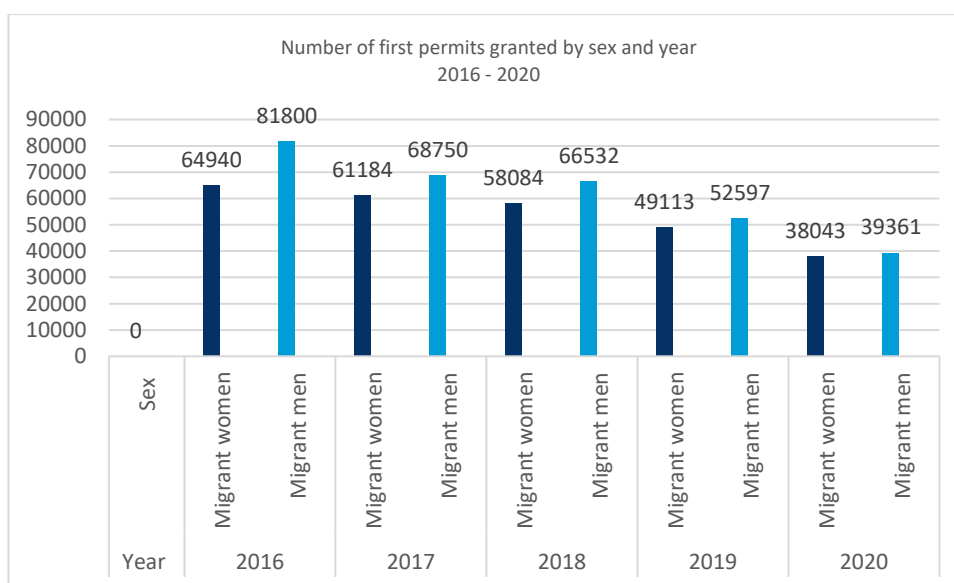
<sup>46</sup> Fores, a green and liberal think tank, arranging a seminar on migration and gender equality objectives in the light of the ongoing cross-party commission of inquiry to examine Sweden's future migration policy, De jämställdhetspolitiska målen vid en förändrad migrationslagstiftning, 9 October 2019, Stockholm.

<sup>47</sup> Government Offices, news from the ministry of employment on consultations with civil society concerning integration and segregation, Samråd med civilsamhället om integration, published 9 November 2020, available at: [Samråd med civilsamhället om integration - Regeringen.se](#) (last accessed 3 November 2021).

altogether 2 046 731 of which 1 016 425 are foreign-born women in 2020.<sup>48</sup> The relatively large share of foreign-born women in the country, one tenth of the population, explains the attention given and the political priority considering the weak position they hold on the labour market.

The share of third-country nationals is lower in proportion to the entire population and compared to the category foreign-born mentioned above. This category increases however during the period 2016-2020, from five per cent in 2018 to six per cent in 2019. The share of third-country national migrant men increases from two per cent in 2016 to three per cent in 2017, while the corresponding relationship for third-country national migrant women is from two per cent in 2018 to three per cent in 2019. The increase occurs later for migrant women than for migrant men. One conclusion that may be drawn from the data provided is that men to a larger extent arrive as asylum seekers and that women follow when they can apply for residence permits for family reasons, which confirms the pattern that has been in place for a while. In the years 2016-2020 a total of 271 364 permits were granted to migrant women, compared to 308 860 migrant men.

**Figure 1 Bar chart on number of first permits granted**



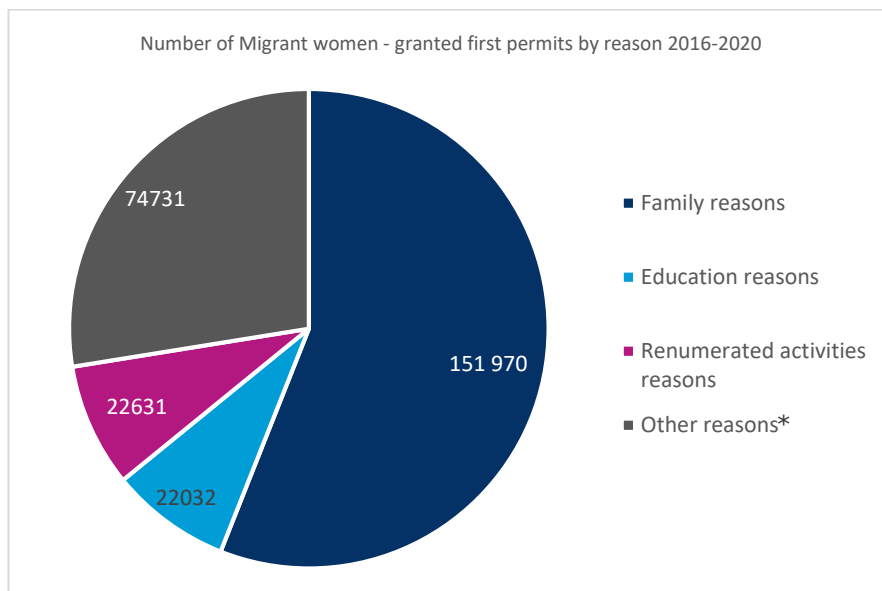
Source: Statistics from Eurostat, first permits by reason, age, sex and citizenship, extracted 23 September 2021.

The main forms of immigration based on first residence titles in total are family migration followed by migrants being granted international protection or refugee status and finally those with remunerated activities. 2016 was the year with the highest number of granted first residence permits which is in line with what has previously been reported concerning the large influx of migrants in the years

<sup>48</sup> Statistics Sweden (Statistiska Centralbyrån), statistics provided on foreign born women by country of birth in 2020, 14 September 2021, available at: [Utrikes födda i Sverige \(scb.se\)](https://www.scb.se/utrikes-fodda-i-sverige) (last accessed 17 November 2021).

2014 to 2016. There is a decrease looking at the number of first permits in 2020, to the same level as pre 2016, which most probably can be explained by Covid 19. The data shows that the majority of migrant women are family migrants followed by asylum seekers and students.

**Figure 2 Diamond chart on number of women granted first permits**

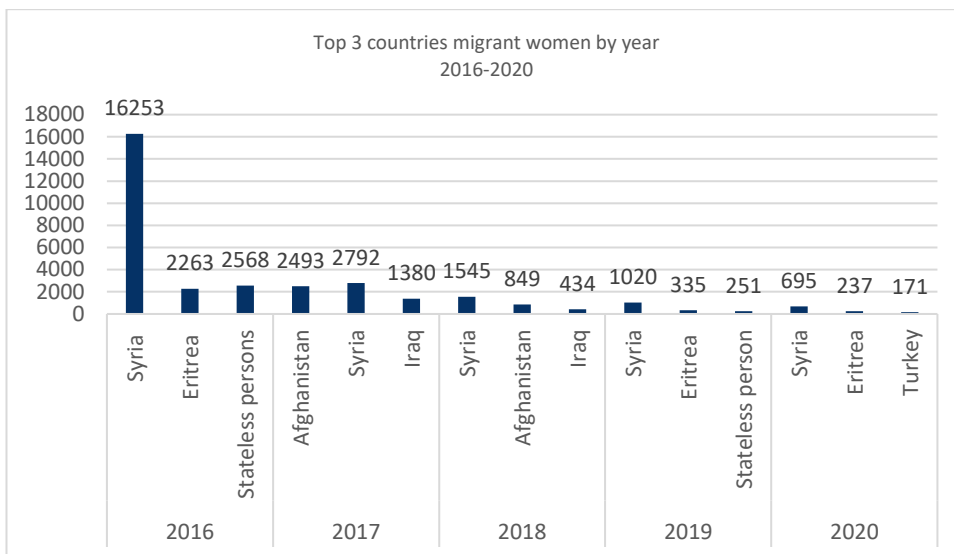


\* Other reasons covered by this data are: international protection status, refugee status and subsidiary protection, humanitarian reasons, residence only, other reasons not specified, unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking of human beings.

Source: Statistics from Eurostat, first permits by reason, age, sex and citizenship, extracted 23 September 2021.

Looking at the statistics on top three countries, there are three countries of origin that dominate during the period 2016-2020 namely Syria (57641 women) followed by Afghanistan (15982 women) and Eritrea (9692 women). This means that Syrians became the major group to be granted residence permits in Sweden during the relevant period.

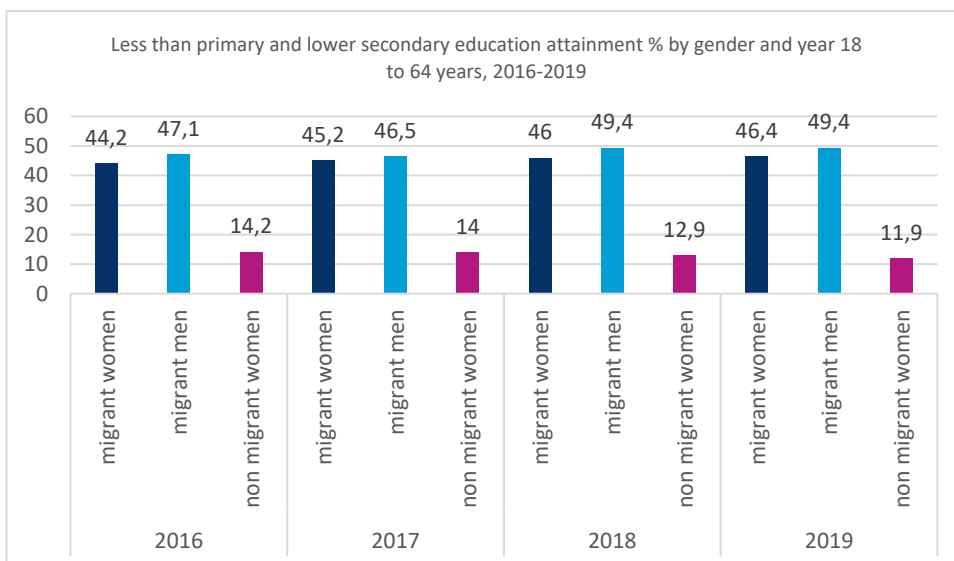
**Figure 3 Bar chart on top 3 countries**



Source: Statistics provided by the Swedish Migration Agency, first permits granted by gender and by year, extracted 6 April 2022.

The activity rates are lower for third-country national migrant women compared to both third-country national migrant men and non-migrant men. A major problem is the mismatch between the demands of the labour market and the skills and the experiences of the foreign-born women. The statistics provided from Eurostat show that the average is higher for migrant women holding a less than primary and lower secondary education compared to non-migrant women, as demonstrated in the figure below.

**Figure 4 Bar chart on education attainment**



Source: Statistics from Eurostat, less than primary and lower secondary education attainment by gender and year, extracted 23 September 2021.

The education attainment is however higher for migrant women compared to migrant men, not only when comparing the statistics for less than primary and lower secondary but also on tertiary education. The average is 38,2% for migrant women compared to 35,1% for migrant men. Interestingly, the existing gap between migrant-women and non-migrant women is not that wide when comparing tertiary education. The latter having an average on 45,2% in the period 2016-2019. The problem is subsequently not only a lack of education among migrant-women. The challenges migrant women face will be demonstrated in section three below.

## 2.5 National integration policies in different areas

The weak position foreign-born women in general hold in the Swedish society has led to a number of different national integration policies. The table below presents a summary of the main integration policies for the period 2016-2021 based on the following sectors: labour market, entrepreneurship, education and vocational training, language training, housing, health and civic integration.

**Figure 5 Table on main integration policies for the period 2016-2021**

Area	Measure name	Short description
Labour market	The government tasked the Swedish Public Employment Service in 2017 to reduce the level of unemployment among foreign-born women. <sup>49</sup>	Particular attention is paid to women with little or no educational background and with limited working experience and measures are taken to compensate for the lack of competence and skills that are needed to enter the labour market. The Swedish Public Employment Service presents an action plan for the period 2017-2018. Measures are also taken to raise awareness of and combating stereotypes on gender norms that have been identified by the Swedish Public Employment Service at the job centres. <sup>50</sup>
Labour market	An amendment of law, introducing education and	All newly arrived immigrants involved in the Swedish Public Employment Service's introduction measures and

<sup>49</sup> A government decision to task the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) to reduce the level of unemployment among foreign born women, A2017/00180/A, 26 January 2017, available at: [Uppdrag till Arbetsförmedlingen avseende åtgärder för att minska arbetslösheten bland utrikes födda kvinnor \(regeringen.se\)](https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2017/01/uppdrag-till-arbetsformedlingen-avseende-avgardar-for-att-minska-arbetslosheten-bland-utrikes-fodda-kvinnor) (last accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>50</sup> Working Paper, Maria Cheung, How to achieve gender equality in the labour market integration, Hur skapar vi en mer jämställd arbetsmarknadsetablering? En studie av Arbetsförmedlingens förmedlingsverksamhet och insatser ur ett jämställdhetsperspektiv, p. 3, the Swedish Public Employment Service, 2018:2, 16 February 2018, available at: [Hur skapar vi en mer jämställd arbetsmarknadsetablering+ En studie av Arbetsförmedlingens förmedlingsverksamhet och insatser ur ett jämställdhetsperspektiv \(arbetsformedlingen.se\)](https://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/rapporter-och-studier/2018-02-16-hur-skapar-vi-en-mer-jamstalld-arbetsmarknadsetablering-+en-studie-av-arbetsformedlingens-for-medlings-verksamhet-och-insatser-ur-ett-jamstalldhetsperspektiv) (last accessed 25 November 2021).



Area	Measure name	Short description
	training obligation to Act (2017:584) on the responsibility for establishment contributions for newly arrived immigrants <sup>51</sup> entered into force 1 January 2018.	who are considered in need of education and training to enter the labour market are obliged to take part in the measures provided.
Entrepreneurship	The government tasked the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth in 2018 to promote foreign-born women's entrepreneurship. <sup>52</sup>	Mentoring and networking actions and other activities that contribute to entrepreneurship and business development among foreign-born women are provided by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth. The agency also finances projects aimed to create new jobs and to strengthen foreign-born women on the labour market such as education and vocational training.
Education and vocational training	The Swedish National Agency for Education is in the appropriation directives in 2018 tasked by the government to interlink Swedish Tuition for Immigrants with vocational training. <sup>53</sup>	This change does not only affect foreign-born women but will have an impact on this group. In 2021, within the introduction programme an intensive introduction year for newly arrived migrants is introduced. A chain of language intensive measures and vocational oriented measures are provided at the same time or after each other in a relatively short period of time. <sup>54</sup>
Language training	Swedish tuition for immigrants is provided for all third-country	In the appropriation directives for the Swedish National Agency for education, the government tasked the Agency to develop and to improve the Swedish

<sup>51</sup> Lag (2017:584) om ansvar för etableringsinsatser för vissa nyanlända invandrare.

<sup>52</sup> Government decision to task the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxteverket) to promote foreign born women's entrepreneurship, Uppdrag att främja utrikes födda kvinnors företagande, N2018/00213/FF, 11 January 2018, available at: [uppdrag-att-framja-utrikes-fodda-kvinnors-foretagande \(regeringen.se\)](https://www.regeringen.se/uppdrag-att-framja-utrikes-fodda-kvinnors-foretagande) (last accessed 21 October 2021).

<sup>53</sup> Government decision on appropriation directives for the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) for 2018, U2018/04029/G.

<sup>54</sup> Press release Ministry of Employment (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet) on introducing an intensive introduction year for newly arrived migrants, Nu startar Intensivåret för nyanlända, 14 April 2021, available at: [Nu startar Intensivåret för nyanlända - Regeringen.se](https://www.regeringen.se/nu-startar-intensivaret-for-nyanlanda) (last accessed 17 January 2022).

Area	Measure name	Short description
	nationals lacking basic knowledge in Swedish, residing in Sweden and having reached the age of 16. <sup>55</sup>	tuition for immigrants during the period 2016-2021. For the year 2021, it was tasked to provide language training for those working in the area of health and care for elderly, a sector that is mainly employed by women.
Language training	The Swedish association of Local Authorities and Regions reached an agreement with the government in 2018 to investigate to what extent the nursery school that is available for both parents and children even if they are not enrolled, can shorten the labour market integration and further integrate foreign-born women into the Swedish society. <sup>56</sup>	The aim is not only to reach the children to foreign-born parents but also mothers on parental leave that are in need of learning and practicing Swedish. A final report by the Swedish association of Local Authorities and Regions shows the good experiences gained and recommended further municipalities to realise the opportunities the nursery school provide as a meeting point for foreign-born women. <sup>57</sup>
Housing	A national strategy has been developed to counteract segregation and to obtain more equal living and working conditions covering	Housing is one of the five priority areas; the others are education, labour market, democracy and civil society and crime. In the field of housing, this implies reduced segregation, improved living conditions and expanded community services. Policies that are not only addressing foreign-born women but significant for a group that

<sup>55</sup> The right to adult education and Swedish tuition for immigrants is specified in the Education Act, chap. 20, section 31-33 (Skollagen (2010:800)).

<sup>56</sup> Pressrelease Government Offices of Sweden, providing information on the agreement with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges kommuner och regioner) to investigate to what extent the nursery school (öppen förskolan) can shorten the labour market integration for foreign born women and further integrate them into the Swedish society, 16 March 2018, available at: [Regeringen vill samordna öppen förskola med språkinläring - Regeringen.se](#) (last accessed 23 November 2021).

<sup>57</sup> Final report by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges kommuner och regioner), Nursery school for languagetraining and integration, Öppen förskola för språk och integration 2018-2020: Slutredovisning av överenskommelse mellan regeringen och SKR, U2018/01282/S, (2020), available at: [slutrapport öppen förskola \(0000002\).pdf \(skr.se\)](#) (last accessed 23 November 2021).

Area	Measure name	Short description
	the period 2018-2028. <sup>58</sup>	is considered socio economic vulnerable.
Health	The Public Health Agency of Sweden is tasked in 2019 to develop a support structure to counteract the inequalities in health, life expectancy and in living conditions. Eight target actions are identified of which one is gender equality. <sup>59</sup>	Some of the measures taken by the Public Health Agency of Sweden is to address inequalities in sexual health. Girls and young women are considered more vulnerable to sexual-, gender-based or honour related violence as well as human rights violations such as early and forced marriages, sexual exploitation and genital mutilation. Different platforms have been developed for young people to inform about their rights but also about gender equality, health, sexuality, the body and mental health. <sup>60</sup>
Civic integration	The County Administrative Board in Jönköping is in 2018 through a government assignment tasked to follow up and develop the civic orientation course. <sup>61</sup>	The government is highlighting the need to increase civic information such as norms and values of the Swedish society, gender equality and individual rights and obligations. The civic orientation course is considered to play an important role for more equal opportunities and living conditions in general thus with indirect impact on the target group for this study.

<sup>58</sup> Government Offices, The national strategy to reduce and to counteract segregation, Nationell strategi för att minska och motverka segregation, Stockholm (2018), available at: [regeringens-langsigtika-strategi-for-att-minska-och-motverka-segregation.pdf](#) (last accessed 29 October 2021).

<sup>59</sup> Information provided by the Public Health Agency of Sweden (Folkhälsomyndigheten) on the national public policy health objectives, available at: [Nationella folkhälsomål och målområden – Folkhälsomyndigheten \(folkhalsomyndigheten.se\)](#) (last accessed 2 November 2021).

<sup>60</sup> Youmo.se is a platform for young people to inform them about their rights and obligations but also about gender equality, health, sexuality, the body and mental health. More information is available at: [Youmo](#) (last accessed 2 November 2021). Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex rights (RFSL) conducts the project Newcomers.youth, more information is available at: [Home - Newcomers Youth](#) (last accessed 2 November 2021).

<sup>61</sup> The County Administrative Board in Jönköping, a follow-up of civic introduction course, Länsstyrelsens återrapportering av uppdrag om översyn av samhällsorientering för nyanlända, Dnr 851-1645-2018, 30 May 2018, available at: [lansstyrelsens-aterrapportering-av-uppdrag-om-oversyn-av-samhallsorientering-for-nyanlanda.pdf \(regeringen.se\)](#) (last accessed 2 November 2021).

## 3. Challenges and good practices and responses to Covid 19

In this section, both challenges and signs of a more positive development will be highlighted. This also includes the impact of the pandemic and the response to mitigate the effects. To conclude this section, two integration measures that have been identified as good practices will be presented.

### 3.1 Key challenges for migrant women's integration

The main challenges that have been identified will be presented, mainly in the labour market but also poverty and inequality that affect migrant women.

#### Challenges on the labour market

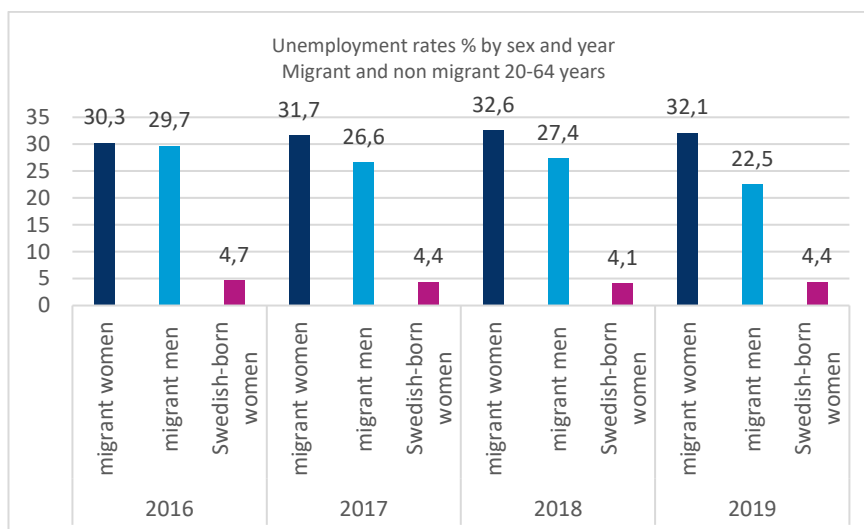
The major challenge is the weak position of foreign-born women on the labour market compared to foreign-born men and non-migrant women. This is confirmed in the final report by the Swedish Agency for Public Management in 2018, which also emphasizes the need for more research to understand the significance of different factors in relation to each other for increased employment.<sup>62</sup> The differences are however not that significant when compared to other countries as women in general in Sweden are working to a larger extent. Another significant factor is that the foreign-born women who are unemployed do originally come from countries with a lower employment rate for women.<sup>63</sup> Foreign-born women with paid work in Sweden are 53 per cent compared to 64 per cent for foreign-born men and 75 per cent for non-migrant women.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> The Swedish Agency for Public Management (Statskontoret) a compilation of knowledge on women born outside Europe and who are greatly distanced from the labour market, *Sammanställning av kunskap om utomeuropeiskt födda kvinnor som står utanför arbetskraften: Slutrapport, 2018:3*, 19 January 2018, available at: [Sammanställning av kunskap om utomeuropeiskt födda kvinnor som står utanför arbetskraften. Slutrapport \(statskontoret.se\)](https://www.statskontoret.se/rapporter-och-publiceringar/sammanstallning-av-kunskap-om-utomeuropeiskt-fodda-kvinnor-som-star-utanfor-arbetskraften-slutrapport) (last accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>63</sup> The Swedish Agency for Public Management (Statskontoret), a final report on women born outside Europe who are excluded from the labour market, *Sammanställning av kunskap om utomeuropeiskt födda kvinnor som står utanför arbetskraften*, p. 9, 19 January 2018, available at: [Sammanställning av kunskap om utomeuropeiskt födda kvinnor som står utanför arbetskraften. Slutrapport \(statskontoret.se\)](https://www.statskontoret.se/rapporter-och-publiceringar/sammanstallning-av-kunskap-om-utomeuropeiskt-fodda-kvinnor-som-star-utanfor-arbetskraften-slutrapport) (last accessed 12 November 2021).

<sup>64</sup> The Swedish Women's Lobby (Sveriges kvinnolobby), an umbrella organization for the Swedish women's movement, a report on gender equality against segregation, living conditions of foreign born women, power and influence, *Jämställdhet mot segregation! Utrikes födda kvinnors livsvillkor makt och inflytande* (2019), available at: [Jämställdhet mot segregation-1.pdf \(sverigeskvinnolobby.se\)](https://www.sverigeskvinnolobby.se/rapporter-och-publiceringar/jamstalldhet-mot-segregation-1) (last accessed 12 November 2021).

**Figure 6 Bar chart on unemployment rates**

Source: Statistics from Eurostat, unemployed rates by sex, age and citizenship, extracted 23 September 2021.

A part of the problem is that foreign-born women do not take part in the measures to strengthen their position on the labour market to the same extent as foreign-born men. A Working Paper published by the Swedish Public Employment Service shows that foreign-born men not only have more meetings with the employment agency but are also called to meet an officer earlier in the integration process, compared to foreign-born women.<sup>65</sup> The report by the Swedish National Agency for Education on the follow-up of activities after completing municipal adult education, shows that among those who have studied Swedish tuition for immigrants, men are active to a larger extent than women on the Swedish labour market.<sup>66</sup> Women on the other hand choose further education to a larger extent.

The problem is subsequently not only a question of lack of education, it is the mismatch between the demands of the labour market and the skills and the experiences of the foreign-born women. This is something that is highlighted in the report by the Swedish Public Management.<sup>67</sup> The mismatch is also a problem

<sup>65</sup> Working Paper, Maria Cheung, How to achieve gender equality in the labour market integration, Hur skapar vi en mer jämställd arbetsmarknadsetablering? En studie av Arbetsförmedlingens förmedlingsverksamhet och insatser ur ett jämställdhetsperspektiv, p. 3, the Swedish Public Employment Service, 2018:2, 16 February 2018, available at: [Hur skapar vi en mer jämställd arbetsmarknadsetablering+ En studie av Arbetsförmedlingens förmedlingsverksamhet och insatser ur ett jämställdhetsperspektiv \(arbetsformedlingen.se\)](https://arbetsformedlingen.se/arbetsmarknadsetablering+En+studie+av+Arbetsformedlingens+formedlingsverksamhet+och+insatser+ur+ett+jamstalldhetsperspektiv) (last accessed 25 November 2021).

<sup>66</sup> The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) submitting a report on the follow-up of activities after completing municipal adult education (Redovisning av uppdrag om uppföljning av sysselsättning efter avslutade studier inom kommunal vuxenutbildning), p. 3, Dnr. 210701587, available at: [getFile - Skolverket](https://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/utredningar-och-rapporter/2021/redovisning-av-uppdrag-om-uppfoljning-av-sysselsattning-efter-avslutade-studier-inom-kommunal-vuxenutbildning) (last accessed 29 October 2021).

<sup>67</sup> The Swedish Agency for Public Management (Statskontoret), a final report on women born outside Europe who are excluded from the labour market, *Sammanställning av kunskap om utomeuropeiskt födda kvinnor som står utanför arbetskraften*, p. 9, 19 January 2018, available at: [Sammanställning av kunskap om](https://www.statskontoret.se/om-oss/publikationer/sammanstallning-av-kunskap-om-utomeuropeiskt-fodda-kvinnor-som-star-utanfor-arbetskraften)

for employers as they cannot find the labour they need. Labour shortages exist in the following sectors/professions: health care (midwives, nurses, and doctors), education (pre-, primary- and teachers), IT sector (data and system developers) and civil engineers according to the Swedish Public Employment Services.<sup>68</sup> There are however also shortages regarding professions with lower education such as bus drivers, construction and electrical workers and painters.

Foreign-born women can thus be better educated but still be unemployed to a larger extent compared to foreign-born men. Further challenges to address are therefore discrimination and traditional family values. Foreign-born women are considered to take a larger responsibility for children and family, which implies that they are hindered from taking a more active part in the Swedish labour market. This is in particular seen as a problem during the initial period of stay in Sweden.<sup>69</sup> When it comes to discrimination, foreign-born women are at risk of discrimination based on both ethnicity and gender. Employers are consciously or unconsciously choosing applicants to fit their own preferences or those of their customers.<sup>70</sup> Discrimination is actually one of the factors that the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise points out when analysing the low labour market participation among foreign-born persons in Sweden.<sup>71</sup> The report's key finding is however that there is no "silver bullet", many different factors need to be improved to increase the labour market participation among foreign-born persons such as personalised measures as early as possible in the integration process, adult education, access to housing where there is opportunities to employment and finally language, the key to successful integration.

### Poverty and inequality a problem

A major concern is the inequalities in Sweden and that they are not reduced over time; in fact they rather grow according to Statistics Sweden.<sup>72</sup> Vulnerable groups are not only mothers bringing up children on their own but also foreign-born women residing in Sweden. This means that foreign-born single mothers to a larger extent risk vulnerability. The report of the Swedish Women's Lobby even points out that foreign-born women in general lack economic resources,

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[utomeuropeiskt födda kvinnor som står utanför arbetskraften. Slutrapport \(statskontoret.se\)](#) (last accessed 12 November 2021).

<sup>68</sup> Swedish Public Employment Service listing labour shortages, *Här är jobben att satsa på nu och om fem år*, 29 juni 2021, available at: [Här är jobben att satsa på nu och om fem år - Arbetsförmedlingen \(arbetsformedlingen.se\)](#) (last accessed 4 January 2022).

<sup>69</sup> The Swedish Agency for Public Management (Statskontoret), a final report on women born outside Europe who are excluded from the labour market, *Sammanställning av kunskap om utomeuropeiskt födda kvinnor som står utanför arbetskraften*, p. 9, 19 January 2018, available at: [Sammanställning av kunskap om utomeuropeiskt födda kvinnor som står utanför arbetskraften. Slutrapport \(statskontoret.se\)](#) (last accessed 12 November 2021).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

<sup>71</sup> The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (Svenskt Näringsliv), analysing the labour market participation among foreign-born, *En analys av utrikesföddas arbetsmarknadsdeltagande*, p. 2, January 2019, available at: [Utrikesföddas arbetsmarknadsdeltagande webb.pdf \(svensktnaringsliv.se\)](#) (last accessed 4 January 2022).

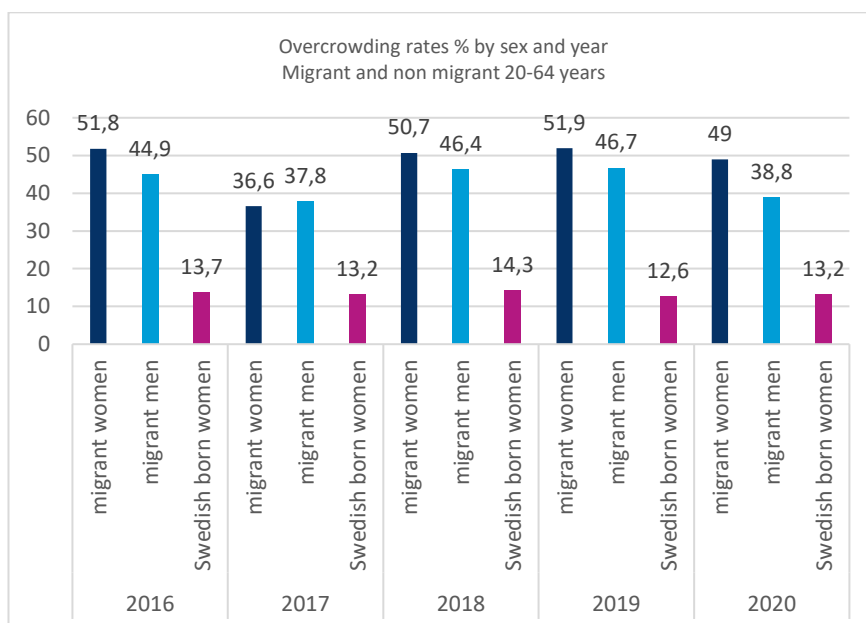
<sup>72</sup> Statistics Sweden (Statistiska centralbyrån) an update of the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Sweden, *Lämna ingen utanför: Statistisk lägesbild av genomförandet av Agenda 2030 i Sverige*, oktober 2020, p. 17, available at: [Lämna ingen utanför \(scb.se\)](#) (last accessed 20 October 2021).



which put them in a more vulnerable position.<sup>73</sup> Financial vulnerability varies however depending on country of birth.<sup>74</sup> Third-country nationals women born in Africa are considered more vulnerable followed by women born in Asia. There are also differences depending on the period of stay in Sweden, the shorter the more vulnerable according to the findings presented by Statistics Sweden.

Overcrowding is also defined as a broader problem among foreign born.<sup>75</sup> Related to this is the socio-economic segregation that mainly exists in urban areas and is a phenomenon that has increased since the 1990s.<sup>76</sup> Women living in these socially deprived areas express their deep concern, over insecurity and violence, which hinders them from living their lives the way they want.

**Figure 7 Bar chart on overcrowding rates**



Source: Statistics from Eurostat, overcrowding rates by age and broad group of citizenship, extracted 23 September 2021.

Health inequities are highlighted by the Public Health Agency of Sweden, in particular the sexual and reproductive health and rights of foreign-born young women (aged 16-29 years). They are identified as a target group as they are considered more vulnerable to sexual-, gender-based or honour- related violence as well as human rights violations such as early and forced marriages,

<sup>73</sup> The Swedish Women's Lobby (Sveriges kvinnolobby), an umbrella organization for the Swedish women's movement, a report on gender equality against segregation, living conditions of foreign born women, power and influence, *Jämställdhet mot segregation! Utrikes födda kvinnors livsvillkor makt och inflytande* (2019), available at: [Jämställdhet-mot-segregation-1.pdf \(sverigeskvinnolobby.se\)](https://www.sverigeskvinnolobby.se/medlemsmaterial/jamstalldhet-mot-segregation-1.pdf) (last accessed 12 November 2021).

<sup>74</sup> Statistics Sweden (Statistiska centralbyrån) an update of the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Sweden, *Lämna ingen utanför: Statistisk lägesbild av genomförandet av Agenda 2030 i Sverige*, oktober 2020, p. 83, available at: [Lämna ingen utanför \(scb.se\)](https://www.scb.se/medlemsmaterial/lamna-ingen-utanfor) (last accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p. 90.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p. 18.

sexual exploitation and genital mutilation.<sup>77</sup> Another problem highlighted in the same report is that foreign born people in general refrain from care services to a larger extent than non-migrants, mainly for economic reasons.<sup>78</sup> The health among foreign born is in general considered poorer compared to non-migrants. This is highlighted in a report based on doctoral dissertations on migrant's encounters with the Swedish Healthcare.<sup>79</sup> The ill-health can be due to factors both before and during migration but the report points out in particular the living conditions in Sweden and its negative impact on health. High unemployment rates, jobs with a high level of social exposure in service and health sectors and living in socially deprived areas are all structural circumstances affecting health. The factors behind maternal mortality among foreign-born women were explored in one of the doctoral dissertations in the aforementioned report. Language barriers were identified as a major problem as they can lead to delayed diagnoses and treatments. More professional interpreters were recommended to address this problem.

### 3.2 The impact of the pandemic and the responses to Covid 19

Pandemics affect entire populations but what was raised at a conference on migrants and the labour market in the shadow of the pandemic, is that some people are affected more than others are.<sup>80</sup> The unemployment for example, increased in particular for immigrants. A lesson learnt from the pandemic is that foreign-born are the first to lose their jobs and the last to re-enter the labour market. The long-term unemployment stands out in Sweden. This became clear in a Nordic comparison. The digitalisation that accelerated during the pandemic further increased the threshold for the long-term unemployed. They do not only need to reskill or to upskill but also to adapt to an evolving labour market. This is a type of aggravating factor that was highlighted and discussed at the conference organised by the Nordic Welfare Centre, mentioned above.

Statistics Sweden assessed the impact of the pandemic on groups that are considered vulnerable or excluded from the Swedish society.<sup>81</sup> The impact however varies depending on if the effects are direct, such as those infected from Covid 19, who become severely ill or even die, or indirect such as losing jobs or having to change lifestyles due to the pandemic. The indirect effects are often more extensive both in time and in space and subsequently the number of people affected. This means that they are more difficult to grasp and not all the effects of the pandemic have most likely been seen yet. What is clear is that the

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<sup>77</sup> Statistics Sweden (Statistiska centralbyrån) an update of the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Sweden, *Lämna ingen utanför: Statistisk lägesbild av genomförandet av Agenda 2030 i Sverige*, oktober 2020, p. 44, available at: [Lämna ingen utanför \(scb.se\)](https://www.scb.se/pressmeddelanden/2020/10/20201020_1001) (last accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> The Migration Studies Delegation (Delmi), Dissertation Series, publishing a report summarizing five doctoral dissertations on migrant's encounters with Swedish Healthcare, *Avhandlingsnytt 2020:7*, available at: [Migrants' encounters with Swedish health care - Delmi](https://www.delmi.se/rapporter/2020/20200701_1001) (last accessed 6 December 2021).

<sup>80</sup> Nordic Welfare Centre, *Integrating Immigrants into the Nordic Labour Markets: The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic*, a conference addressing researchers, policymakers and practitioners, 18 November 2021, Stockholm. More information available at: [Program November 18th ENG.pdf](https://www.nordicwelfarecentre.org/2021/11/18/program-november-18th-eng.pdf) (last accessed 13 October 2021).

<sup>81</sup> Statistics Sweden (Statistiska centralbyrån) an update of the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Sweden, *Lämna ingen utanför: Statistisk lägesbild av genomförandet av Agenda 2030 i Sverige* (October, 2020).

mortality during spring 2020 was higher among low-income earners and among third-country nationals from low-income countries.<sup>82</sup> To explain the excessive mortality among foreign born, factors related to country of birth were further analysed. Overcrowding was such a factor, which was proven more common among foreign born from outside Europe.<sup>83</sup> Further, many foreign-born women work in frontline jobs such as health care and elderly care, which implies a greater risk of becoming infected. Another risk is losing the employment as many foreign born work in sectors that have been particularly affected by the pandemic such as hotels and restaurants. These factors together demonstrate the significance of the socio-economic situation in regard to what extent individuals are affected, inequities that became more visible during the pandemic.<sup>84</sup>

There has not been any policies or measures taken to counteract the negative consequences of Covid-19 in particular for migrant women. The government holds however regular dialogues with the civil society and the theme in October 2020 was integration and segregation during the pandemic.<sup>85</sup> Resources are also allocated to organizations supporting the most vulnerable during the pandemic. Support exist but in form of more generic measures. To give a few examples of measures taken, adult education has for periods been provided as distance learning to reduce the spread of Covid-19. This has entailed challenges for those with limited technical equipment and insufficient internet connection but at the same time, distance learning has made it possible for certain groups, in particular foreign-born women to take part in the education to a greater extent. Overall, the challenges due to the pandemic, are however considered to delay the labour market integration.

### 3.3 Signs of positive development

Some key opportunities in the aftermath of the pandemic are identified in the report published by the Nordic Council of Ministers.<sup>86</sup> First of all, a positive trend among foreign-born women, the employment rate actually increased during the pandemic. An unexpected trend that is based on a selected sample of the population, which means that no far-fetching conclusions should be drawn according to the researchers.<sup>87</sup> A possible explanation given is that women felt obliged to step in when the main earner in the household was no longer able to support the family due to the pandemic. This is an opportunity that should be further explored according to the researchers; how to develop measures that encourage women to remain or to become a part of the labour force. Another

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<sup>82</sup> Statistics Sweden (Statistiska centralbyrån) an update of the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Sweden, *Lämna ingen utanför: Statistisk lägesbild av genomförandet av Agenda 2030 i Sverige* (October, 2020), p. 113.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 115.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p. 117.

<sup>85</sup> Government Offices, news from the ministry of employment on consultations with the civil society concerning integration and segregation, *Samråd med civilsamhället om integration*, published 9 November 2020, available at: [Samråd med civilsamhället om integration - Regeringen.se](https://www.regeringen.se/samrad-med-civilsamhallet-om-integration) (last accessed 3 November 2021).

<sup>86</sup> Nora Sánchez Gassen and Oskar Penje (eds.) *Integrating Immigrants into the Nordic Labour Markets: The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic*, a report published by the Nordic Council of Ministers, 23 September 2021, available at: [Integrating Immigrants into the Nordic Labour Markets The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic \(diva-portal.org\)](https://diva-portal.org/) (last accessed 1 December 2021).

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

positive trend, presented in the same report is that the unemployment rates started to decline among migrants after reaching a peak in the autumn of 2020.<sup>88</sup> The challenge remains however as aforementioned, for migrants with lower skills attainment.

Olof Åslund, a professor and a research leader within the field of immigration and labour market concludes the above-mentioned report by asking if there is any reason for optimism in the aftermath of the pandemic. Although the pandemic has not improved the situation for foreign-born people, he has identified a number of factors that might contribute to a more positive development.<sup>89</sup> Åslund highlights the high retirement rates and the overall ageing population in Sweden which will likely lead to an increased demand for labour in health and elderly care, a sector that has employed many women migrants in the last decades. This might as well reduce the gender equalities in employment. Secondly, the increased demand for services might also result in more jobs and opportunities for migrant women. More innovative employers are however required for an improved situation. Employers need to create a more inclusive labour market, broaden the recruitment and the services advertised. This means that the matching needs to improve for an improvement to occur but also the supply, to up- or re-skill migrants lacking upper secondary school.

### 3.4 Integration measures identified as good practices

A number of integrations measures have been taken to in particular speed up the access to the labour market for migrant women in Sweden. Two measures that have been identified as good practices will now be presented.

#### 1. Integration activities for parents at the open preschool in Rågsved, Stockholm<sup>90</sup>

The target group is foreign-born parents but the beneficiaries are primarily women. A problem that has been identified is that many foreign-born women become isolated during the parental leave. They also lack the integration activities provided as many foreign-born women have children around the same time they are granted residence permits or arrive in Sweden through family reunification. The main objective is therefore to provide integration activities and to prevent foreign-born parents from feeling isolated during the parental leave. The number of activities provided imply that many different needs are addressed. Social workers, family counsellors and educators are working at the preschool to provide language lessons, parental support measures and social prevention work and a study and vocational counsellor makes regular visits for those who need support in planning future work and studies. Visits are also arranged in order to strengthen the self-esteem among the foreign-born parents

<sup>88</sup> Nora Sánchez Gassen and Oskar Penje (eds.) Integrating Immigrants into the Nordic Labour Markets: The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, p. 41.

<sup>89</sup> Olof Åslund, COVID 19 and immigrant integration in the Nordic Labor markets, p. 76, in Nora Sánchez Gassen and Oskar Penje (eds.) Integrating Immigrants into the Nordic Labour Markets: The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic.

<sup>90</sup> Information about the project is provided by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, available at: [Öppna förskolan stärker etableringen av utrikes födda föräldrar | SKR](#) (last accessed 23 April 2022).

such as bicycling school and to museums, parks and art exhibitions. Activities are carried out with the children which facilitates the participation. Networks are also created with Swedish people that further helps the foreign-born to integrate into the Swedish society. The project started in 2014 but is still ongoing through the funding and support from the administration and of the district of Ensked-Årsta-Vantör in the City of Stockholm and the social services budget. Funds have also been allocated by the County Administration Board for a cultural project.

## **2. Equal entry (Jämställd etablering. Matchning från dag 1)**

This is a European Social Fund project on labour market integration. The project is part of the Action Plan that the Swedish Public Employment Service established in 2017 on how to increase the employment rate among foreign-born women. The objective of the project is to develop a job matching method that addresses the needs of women and of those who are distant from the labour market. Two challenges are in particular highlighted, the lack of knowledge concerning those who are distant from the labour market, the measures needed for labour market integration and secondly, the conditions common among newly arrived women such as family responsibilities limiting labour market participation or lack of labour market experience. The program starts with a broad mapping procedure of both formal and informal competences of the job-seeker and in a similar way of the employer focusing the different recruitment needs. The broad mapping enables job seekers that lack professional experience to be matched, which is less likely to occur in normal matching procedures. All jobseekers that are qualified for the project are available for matching no matter educational attainment or the number of integration activities carried out. This is done to address possible inequalities that is foreign-born women being perceived as less employable or the lack of labour market connection. Those carrying out the project are also given instructions to give priority to women. The project is carried out by the Swedish Public Employment Service as a randomised experimental study for the period 2018 - 2021. The evaluation carried out by the Swedish Public Employment Service finds that the program increases labour market participation compared to the support otherwise offered at the Swedish Public Employment Service. The intervention meets the anticipated objectives and a Cost-Benefit analysis also suggests that the program is cost efficient. A press release published by the Swedish Public Employment Service states that the project lead to employment for 36 % of the women that took part in the project compared to 40 % for men.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Press release Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) on the result of the European Social Fund project Jämställd etablering, Ny metod får utrikesfödda kvinnor snabbare i arbete, 9 June 2021, available at: [Ny metod får utrikesfödda kvinnor snabbare i arbete - Arbetsförmedlingen \(arbetsformedlingen.se\)](https://arbetsformedlingen.se/ny-metod-far-utrikesfodda-kvinnor-snabbare-i-arbete) (last accessed 12 January 2022).

## 4. Conclusions

A major challenge is the weak position of foreign-born women on the labour market compared to foreign-born men and non-migrant women. The mismatch between the demands of the labour market and the education or the skills of the foreign-born women is one reason behind this. There are however also educated foreign-born women who have difficulties to enter the labour market. Limited social networks is one problem as this is where many recruitments take place. Discrimination is another challenge, foreign-born women are discriminated on the grounds of both ethnicity and gender. Traditional family values are also considered as an obstacle for foreign-born women as they generally take a larger responsibility for children and family. A major concern is that the socio-economic inequalities in general have increased in Sweden the past decades. Foreign-born single mothers are considered to largely risk vulnerability. Financial vulnerability varies however depending on country of birth and the time spent in Sweden, a vulnerability that also affects health. The ill-health can be due to factors both before and during migration but reports referred to in this EMN study point out the living conditions in Sweden. Structural circumstances such as high unemployment rates, jobs with a high level of social exposure in service and health sectors and living in socially deprived areas affect health.

A lesson learnt from the pandemic is that foreign-born easily lose their jobs and have difficulties to re-enter the labour market. The problem is that they do not only need to reskill or to upskill but also to adapt to an evolving labour market. The digitalisation that accelerated during the pandemic is a contributing factor to changes at the labour market. This makes education increasingly significant for foreign-born women to be able to compete for jobs. Distance learning has been a way to continue education during the pandemic. Although it has facilitated participation for certain groups as for some foreign-born women, the pandemic is considered to in general have delayed the labour market integration. Additional time appears thus necessary for labour market integration.

Research shows that differences in employment between foreign-born men and women decreases over time. Measures that have proved successful for foreign-born women to enter the Swedish labour market are new forms of combining language training and vocational training and parental leave and language training. The civil society creates social venues that help foreign-born into the society, getting to know both Swedish people and the language. Employers are also involved to discover the potential of foreign-born women and the jobs that can be created. Two key words are innovation and education. The retirement rates and the overall ageing population in Sweden will likely lead to an increased demand for labour in health and elderly care. This is a sector that has employed many women migrants in the last decades and that might be seen as an opportunity for others. The increased demand for service might also result in more jobs and opportunities for migrant women. Early intervention is recommended, that is personalised measures as early as possible in the integration process and a combination of both tailored and generic measures. Main measures are training and qualification, enhancement of skills, language training combined with vocational training, job-matching services, employment training and introductory jobs.



Integration policies in Sweden are horizontal and integrated in different policy areas such as labour market, education and health care. A government reshuffle in December 2021 resulted however in a Minister for both migration and integration. It is however too early to say if this reshuffle will lead to a more centrally governed integration policy. The measures outlined in the State Budget for 2022, are to continue investing in language development measures for migrant women who have been on parental leave for longer periods, reinforcing the Swedish Public Employment Service and the job-matching services, employment training and introductory jobs.

### About the EMN

The European Migration Network (EMN) is an EU funded network, set up with the aim of providing up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum for institutions of the European Union, plus authorities and institutions of the Member States of the EU, in order to inform policymaking. The EMN also serves to provide the wider public with such information. The EMN was established by Council Decision 2008/381/EC adopted on 14 May 2008. The Swedish Migration Board is the Swedish National Contact Point (NCP) for the EMN.

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