

DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES

IZA DP No. 15642

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## ABSTRACT

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# Migrants from Ukraine and Belarus Living in Sweden before the War

The Russian war in Ukraine has led to many fleeing the country. The Temporary Protection Directive applies to those from Ukraine but also those who received a residence permit in Ukraine as a refugee before 24 February 2022, as those who have fled from Belarus to Ukraine in recent years. We can therefore expect that many refugees will come to Sweden from Ukraine, but also to a lesser extent indirectly from Belarus. For refugees originating in these two countries, reception may be facilitated by that people from the same countries have arrived before. Whether those who came earlier can be of help to refugees who come now in terms of finding employment depends, among other things, on the labor market position of the former migrants in Sweden. Do they have work and if so what kind of work? In which parts of Sweden do they live? In this paper, we try to answer these questions.

**JEL Classification:** F22, F51, J15, J21, J61

**Keywords:** Ukraine, Belarus, Swedish labor market, employment, migrants

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# Migrants from Ukraine and Belarus living in Sweden before the war

Fredrik W. Andersson and Eskil Wadensjö

The refugee flows within Europe are now completely different from previous years, both in terms of extent and of direction between countries. The Russian war in Ukraine has led to many fleeing the country. In a European context, Ukraine is a very large country both in terms of area and population, and the flow of refugees is very large. UNHCR estimates that more than 14 million are refugees, and of those, more than 7 million have made their way abroad. (See UNHCRa and UNHCRc).

The number of refugees from Ukraine is very high in the countries bordering Ukraine as in the EU countries Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania and also in Moldova. The greatest numbers have come to Poland (6,432,000 have come and of them 4,466,000 have returned), but the number is also high in several other countries in Europe. According to information from UNHCR (2022) regarding the end of September 2022, for example, the number of refugees was 998,000 in Germany, 439,000 in the Czech Republic, 171,000 in Italy, 145,000 in Spain, 105,000 in France and 82,000 in Austria. In Sweden, the number was 46,000 according to this source. A total of 3,043,000 had fled Ukraine to countries in Europe that are not neighboring countries.<sup>1</sup>

Already before, there had been migrants from Ukraine to other countries in Europe. In Germany, the total number who migrated from Ukraine was 1,112,904 at the end of August 2022, while the number was 153,252 in the same month in 2021 (before the war), see *Zuwanderungsmonitor* (September 2022) and (Gleiser et al. 2022) for more detailed information.

The majority of Ukrainians who applied for asylum in Sweden in accordance with the Temporary Protection Directive are women: 28,911 compared to 17,406 men according to data from the Swedish Migration Agency for the end of September. If we limit the comparison to those aged 18 and over, the difference is even greater. The differences can be explained by the rules introduced by the Ukrainian government that men between the ages of

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<sup>1</sup> See Dadush and Weil (2022) and Parusel and Varfolomieiva (2022) for detailed information and a discussion of what will happen in the near future regarding refugee migration and return migration. See also UNHCR (2022b) for an interview survey regarding plans to return to Ukraine among refugees in Europe.

18 and 60 are not allowed to leave the country. Of other asylum seekers from Ukraine in January–September 2022, 860 were women and 1040 men.

In the refugee wave, there may also be Belarusians who previously fled to Ukraine and who are now fleeing further. They too are covered by the Temporary Protection Directive.

A residence permit according to the Temporary Protection Directive applies to those who:

- are Ukrainian citizens and were residents of Ukraine before February 24, 2022, or
- has a residence permit as a refugee or alternatively in need of protection in Ukraine, or
- is a family member of someone belonging to the two above groups.

The Temporary Protection Directive therefore also applies to those who received a residence permit in Ukraine as a refugee before 24 February, which should apply to many of those who fled from Belarus to Ukraine in recent years.<sup>2</sup>

We can therefore expect that many refugees will come to Sweden from Ukraine, but also to a lesser extent (indirectly) from Belarus. However, few Belarusian citizens have so far applied for asylum in Sweden with reference to the Temporary Protection Directive. For refugees originating in these two countries, reception can be facilitated by the fact that people from the same countries have arrived before. Those who came earlier in the majority of cases did not come as refugees but to work, to pursue studies or for family reasons, and they may therefore have had good opportunities to establish themselves in Sweden. Whether those who came earlier can be of help to those who come now in terms of finding employment depends, among other things, on the labor market position of the former migrants in Sweden. Do they have work and if so what kind of work? In which parts of Sweden do they live? In this paper, we try to briefly answer these questions. Compatriots can also provide other types of support, for example social and psychological support (Rolf and Schubert 2022), but also help with arranging housing and providing various types of information about Sweden.

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<sup>2</sup> Many are now also leaving Russia as a result of the war. A few of them may come to Sweden. They are not covered by the mass displacement directive. However, some Russian citizens have come to EU from Ukraine and applied for asylum with reference to the Temporary Employment Directive.

### *How many from Ukraine and Belarus had come to Sweden until 2020?*

We will first look at the development of individuals aged 16–74 in the years up to 2020. The data is taken from the Register-based labor market statistics (RAMS) at Statistics Sweden, apart from the information on individuals' basis for residence which comes from the Longitudinal register for integration studies (STATIV) also at Statistics Sweden. The time period 2004–2020 is chosen considering that the definition of employed was revised in RAMS between 2003 and 2004. 2020 is the latest year with available information.

Figure 1 shows the development of the number of individuals born in Ukraine and Belarus residing in Sweden during the period 2004–2020. In the figure, there is also an index series that illustrates what the development would have looked like if the development had instead corresponded to the development for all foreign-born in the population register. In 2004, 0.21 and 0.07 percent of the foreign-born were from Ukraine and Belarus, respectively. In 2020, the corresponding shares were 0.61 and 0.20 percent, respectively. Both groups have increased by approximately 430 percent during the time period, which can be contrasted with 83 percent for all foreign born. Despite the rapid increase in numbers, it is a matter of small groups even at the end of the period we are dealing with here. The largest groups of foreign-born people registered in Sweden in 2020 were the following: Syria (194,000), Iraq (146,000) and Finland (140,000). Ukraine and Belarus come first in 38th and 79th place, respectively. It does not prevent those who previously came from these countries to be a great support for those who now come from these countries.

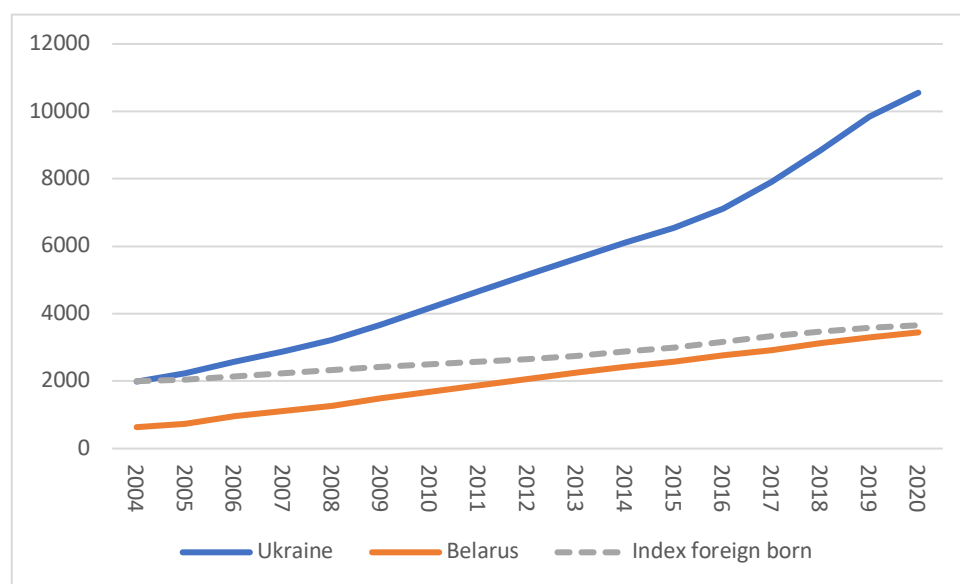


Figure 1. Foreign born from Ukraine and Belarus in Sweden 2004–2020  
Source: RAMS, own calculations

An important question is how many of those who previously came from the two countries who are employed and what type of employment they have. This may have an impact on their opportunities to help those who are now coming to Sweden as refugees, among other things with finding work. Below we show figures of the employment rate for those from Ukraine and Belarus. A division is made into two groups: 1) the three metropolitan counties (Stockholms, Västra Götaland and Skåne counties) and 2) other counties. Figure 2 and Figure 3 show that the percentage of employed people has increased significantly during the survey period for those who come from both countries. This applies to men and women as well as to those in metropolitan counties and those in other counties. If we compare the levels for the different groups, we see that the percentage of employed is slightly higher for men than for women and slightly higher for those who live in metropolitan counties than for those who live in other counties. For those born in Belarus, however, the difference between women's and men's employment rate is very small.

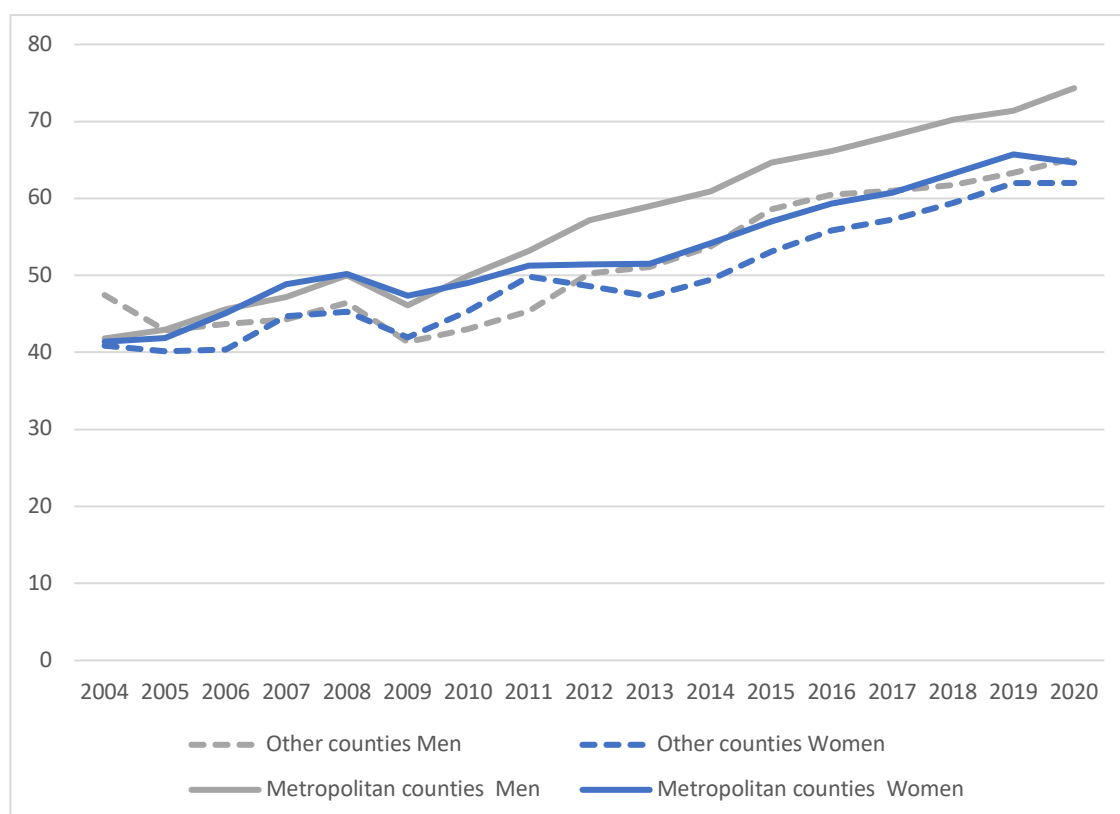


Figure 2. The employment rate among those aged 16–74 years born in Ukraine, percent  
Source: RAMS, own calculations

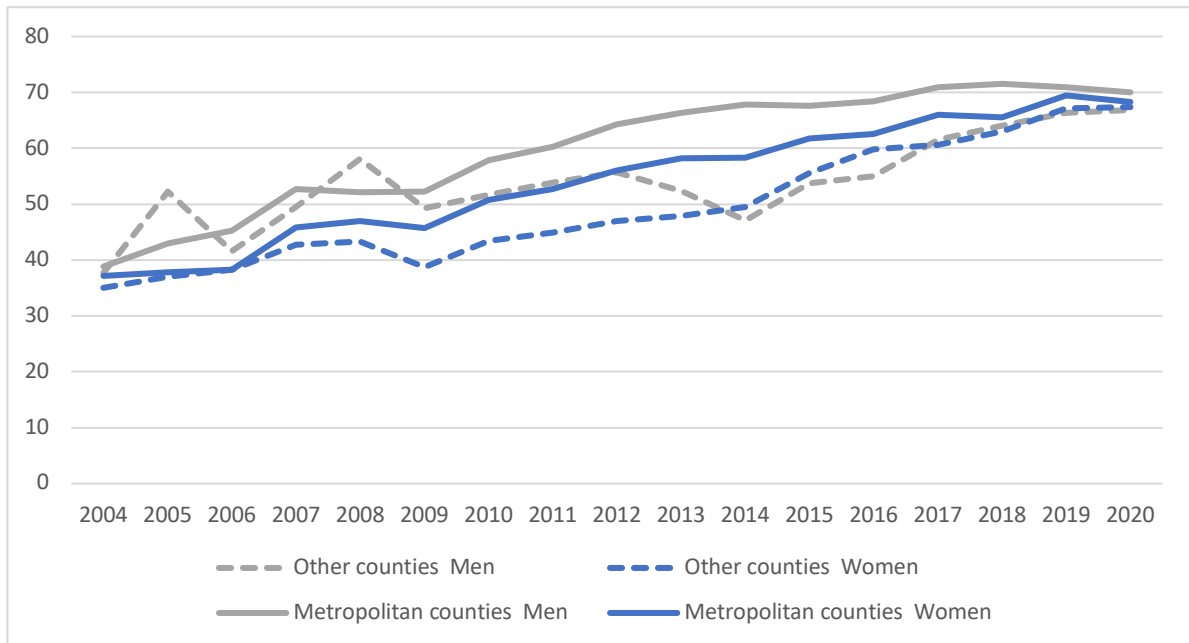


Figure 3. The employment rate among those aged 16–74 years born in Belarus, percent  
 Source: RAMS, own calculations

An opportunity to get work for those who are coming now is to get it from a self-employed person who previously came from the same country. We have examined the proportion of self-employed in the two groups regardless of the legal form in which the company is operated. See Figure 4 for those born in Ukraine and Figure 5 for those born in Belarus.



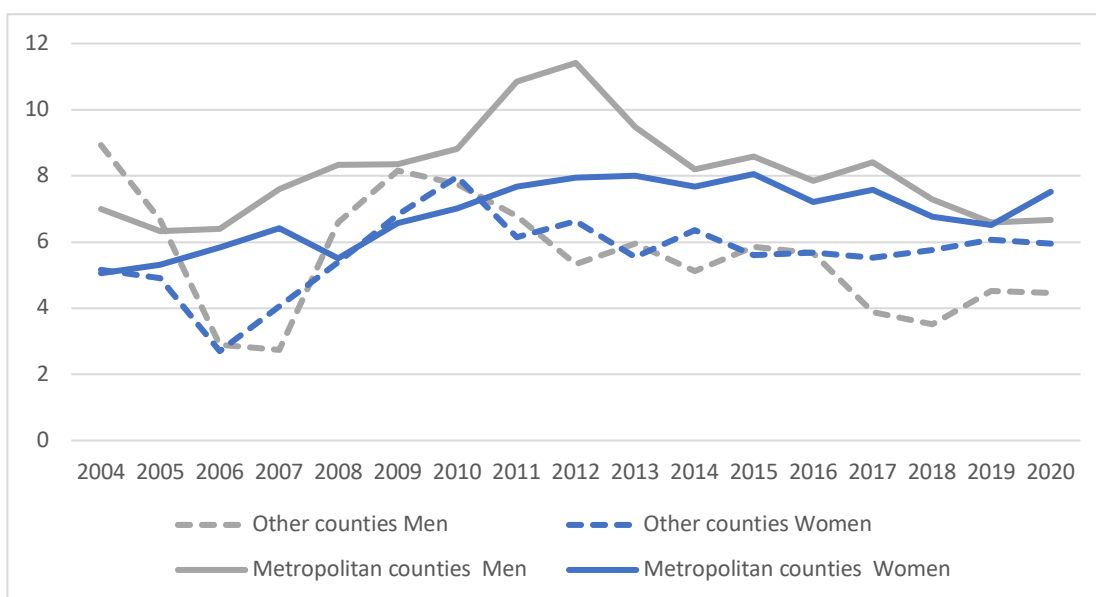


Figure 4. Share self-employed of those aged 16–74 years among those born in Ukraine, percent  
 Source: RAMS, own calculations

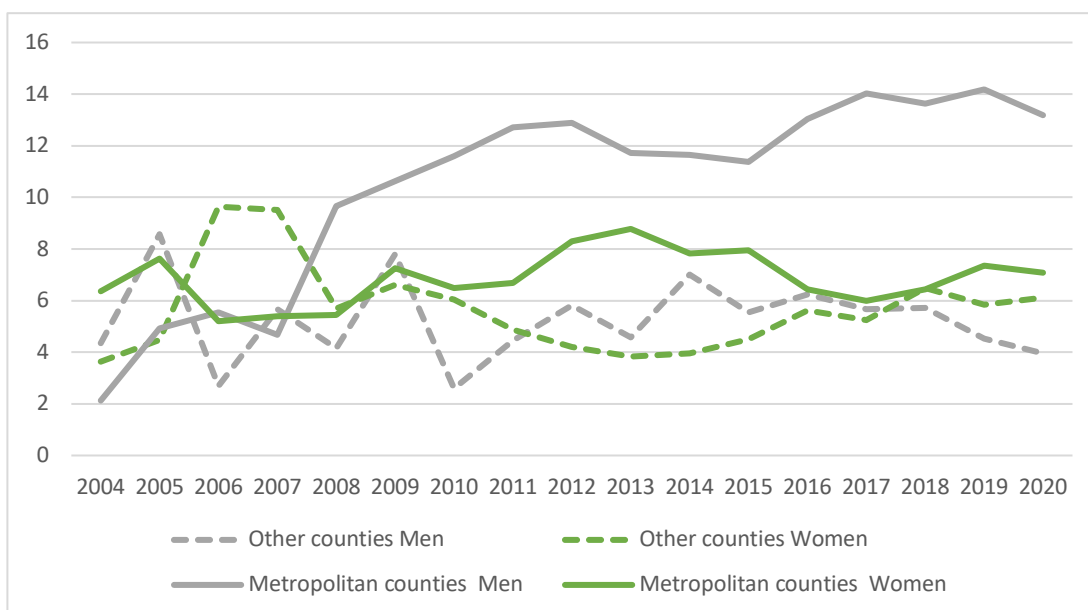


Figure 5. Share self-employed of those aged 16–74 years among those born in Belarus, percent  
 Source: RAMS, own calculations

We see that there are significant variations over time, which can be explained by the fact that these are small groups whose composition changed over time as new ones were added. The percentage varies broadly between 4 and 10 percent for the various groups. It is more

common to be self-employed among those who live in metropolitan counties than among those who live in other counties.

The self-employed are spread across various industries. They have a slightly different composition than that of all self-employed in Sweden. To a greater extent, they start different types of service companies and to a lesser extent companies in agriculture and manufacturing. For those who come from Ukraine, in 2020 it is somewhat more common for women than men to be self-employed.

### *Living in Sweden in 2020 but born in Ukraine and Belarus*

It is the employment rate at the end of the period studied, i.e. 2020, that is of greatest interest regarding those who are likely to be able help the refugees to find work. We will therefore take a closer look at the group born in Ukraine or Belarus who were registered in Sweden in 2020. Both among those from Ukraine and those from Belarus approximately three out of four are 34–64 years old and there are more women than men.<sup>3</sup> Among the children (0–15 years) and the young (16–24 years), the number of boys and girls is about the same among those from both countries. Only a few percent of the groups are 65 or older.

Those who came from Ukraine can be found in all 21 counties, but most, 71 percent, are in metropolitan counties; 46 percent in Stockholm County, 13 percent in Skåne County and 12 percent in Västra Götaland County. For those from Belarus, 72 percent are in metropolitan counties with a slightly higher concentration in Stockholm County (54 percent) than for those from Ukraine, and with 9 percent in Skåne County and 10 percent in Västra Götaland County.

The next step is to study the composition by education and by place of residence. Education is an important factor for the possibility of getting work and not least for which jobs people can get. Figure 6 shows that many have secondary or post-secondary education (three years or more) among those who previously immigrated from Ukraine and Belarus. This applies especially to the women, where a majority have post-secondary education. Among the men from Ukraine and Belarus, however, those with pre-secondary education are also overrepresented.

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<sup>3</sup> Also, in Germany, women outnumber men among those who previously came from Ukraine, 90,000 compared to 50,000 in 2020.

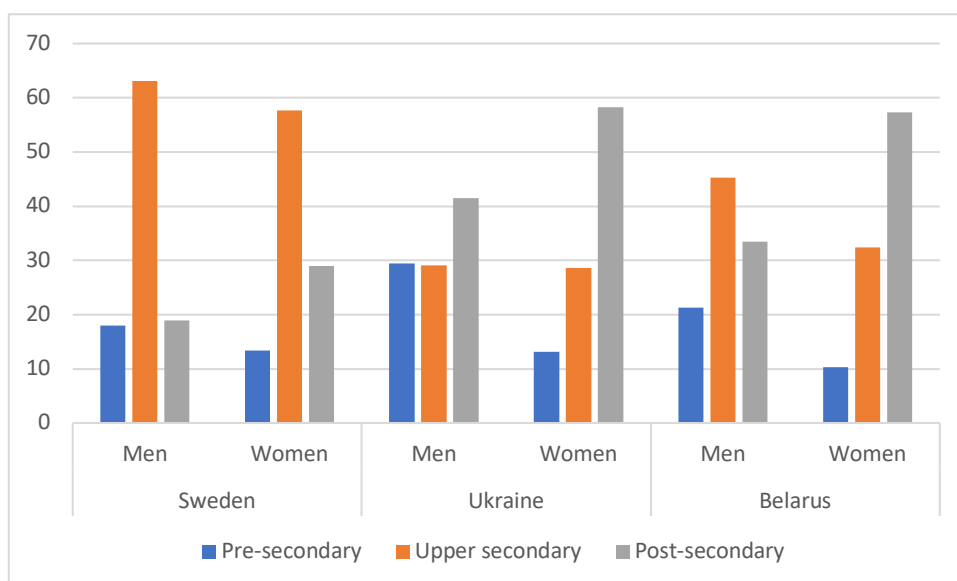


Figure 6. Educational level in 2020 being 16–74 years for those from Ukraine and Belarus and as a comparison those born in Sweden

Note: Post-secondary education stands for 3 years or more.

Source: RAMS, own calculations

The percentage of employed varies with the basis of granted residence permit, see table 1.

The table also shows that regardless of the basis of residence, the percentage of employed is clearly higher among those from Ukraine and Belarus than among those who were not born in Sweden or another EU/EEA country.

Table 1. Employment rate according to basis for residence permit among those 16–74 years

Basis for residence permit	Born in Ukraine		Born in Belarus		Not born in Sweden or other EU/EES-country
	Rate (%)	Number	Rate (%)	Number	Rate (%)
Family reunification	57,3	4509	60,2	1428	53,8
Studies or work	81,0	2405	80,8	548	68,2
Asylum	71,5	2554	74,7	1080	59,4
EU/EES	65,7	583	69,2	188	68,0
Permanent*	89,3	28	85,7	21	77,4

\* An EU/EEA citizen who have lived in Sweden with right of residence for at least five years gain right of permanent residence.

Source: RAMS and STATIV, own calculations

There are significant differences in composition by basis of residence between women and men. Women have more often than men come because of family reunification, from another EU/EEA country or as a refugee. Men have more often than women come for studies or work.

It is not possible to find any uniform pattern in the proportion of employed women and men by basis of residence for those born in Ukraine and Belarus residing in Sweden in 2020. For some grounds of residence, men have a higher employment rate than women, but among those who came as refugees, women have a higher proportion of employed than men.

Table 2. Basis for granted residence permit for men and women aged 16–74 born in Ukraine or Belarus living in Sweden in 2020

Basis for settlement	Ukraine		Belarus	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Family reunification	905	3604	457	971
EU/EES	182	401	73	115
Asylum	686	1868	385	695
Information missing	241	233	84	97
Permanent*	13	15	10	11
Studies or work	1696	709	360	188
All	3723	6830	1369	2077

\* An EU/EEA citizen who have lived in Sweden with right of residence for at least five years gain right of permanent residence.

Source: RAMS and STATIV, own calculations

### *What factors affect employment?*

We have also investigated how the probability of being employed varies with education, gender, age, age squared, length of stay, region of residence and basis of residence permit using regression analysis. We report estimation results for three groups separately; for those born in Ukraine, those born in Belarus and, for comparison, those born in Sweden. We also report an estimate where all three groups are included, see table 2. The econometric evaluation is based on a logistic regression approach, where the individuals are either: employed (1) or not employed (0). The model is evaluated at the median values of the groups, which is reflected in the table by the coefficients showing the marginal change in the probability of being employed given that the independent variables are set to the median value.

Table 3. Marginal effects of a number of factors on the probability to be employed

Variables	Sweden	Ukraine	Belarus	All three groups
Post-secondary education	0,101*** (0,00)	0,144*** (0,01)	0,144*** (0,03)	0,104*** (0,00)
Secondary education	0,066*** (0,00)	0,094*** (0,01)	0,097*** (0,03)	0,068*** (0,00)
Woman	-0,012*** (0,00)	-0,124*** (0,01)	-0,056** (0,02)	-0,012*** (0,00)
Age	-0,002*** (0,00)	0,005*** (0,00)	0,008*** (0,00)	-0,002*** (0,00)
Years in Sweden	0,009*** (0,00)	0,010*** (0,00)	0,014*** (0,00)	0,009*** (0,00)
Metropolitan area	-0,006*** (0,00)	0,035*** (0,01)	0,001 (0,02)	-0,004*** (0,00)
Family reunification		-0,067*** (0,01)	-0,090*** (0,02)	-0,051*** (0,006)
Asylum		-0,040** (0,01)	-0,031 (0,03)	-0,0576*** (0,006)
Studies/work		0,132*** (0,02)	0,135*** (0,04)	0,060*** (0,007)
Ukraine				0,003*** (0,00)
Belarus				0,003*** (0,00)

Notes. We use three dummy variables to capture basis of residence where the omitted group is those belonging to categories other than these three. The number of years for those born in Ukraine and Belarus refers to the number of years registered in Sweden from and including 2004 and for individuals born in Sweden corresponds to the number of years resident in Sweden from 2004.

\*\*\*  $p < 0,01$ , \*\*  $p < 0,05$ , \*  $p < 0,10$ .

Source: RAMS and STATIV, own calculations

The estimates indicate that education level is of great importance for all three groups, but that it is even more important for those from Ukraine and Belarus than for the Swedish comparison group. Length of stay not unexpectedly has a positive effect – the longer the length of stay in Sweden, the higher the employment. At the same time, a lower probability of being employed is seen for those who did not come to Sweden for work or studies but on other grounds. For those from Ukraine, the percentage employed is higher for those living in metropolitan counties than for those living in other counties. Another interesting result is that after taking into account different individual characteristics, women from both Ukraine and

Belarus have lower employment compared to men than women born in Sweden have compared to men born in Sweden. But at the same time, the women from Ukraine and Belarus often have higher education than the men from the same countries and higher education means higher employment.

It is noteworthy that, given the model specification, the results indicate that individuals from Ukraine and Belarus have a marginally higher probability of being employed than individuals born in Sweden with similar characteristics have. See the last two rows of column 4 of Table 3.

### *Conclusions*

Our survey indicates that those who previously came from Ukraine and Belarus are well integrated in the Swedish labor market. It is not unique to Sweden. Surveys regarding Germany also show that those who previously came from Ukraine have a high employment rate there (Brücker 2022; Brücker et al. 2022).

The fact that those who previously came from the two countries are established in the Swedish labor market can contribute to that those who are now coming have better opportunities to find work and otherwise become established in Sweden.

As shown, women make up a majority of those who previously came from Ukraine and Belarus, and this is the case to an even greater extent among those who now come as refugees. Something that has been noticed in several countries is that it occurs that some of the women who are now coming have been exploited in various respects, see e.g. Moaveni (2022). It shows the importance of following how those who now come as refugees are doing for the authorities but also in research.

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