

# *The Refugee Review*

*Part 1 of 2*

*The results from a study's survey with 319 persons that have applied for asylum in Sweden  
August 2016 (Initially published in Swedish in June 2016)*

# Summary

The Refugee Review is a study that has been conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. This report accounts for the quantitative part of the study – a survey investigation with 319 respondents that have applied for asylum in Sweden.

## ***To live in Sweden***

- ✓ The main reason the refugees stated that they chose to come to Sweden is that the country has been at peace for a long time, and that it is a good country for children to grow up in.
- ✓ The respondents least stated reason to choose Sweden (around 6 percent) is due to the country's generous economic subsidy to refugees.
- ✓ 87 percent of the informants are not aware of how the economic subsidy functions for those with a residence permit.
- ✓ Every fourth respondent believes that their expectations in Sweden have been exceeded, and as many believe they have not been fulfilled.
- ✓ 95 percent in the study state that they plan on remaining in Sweden once they obtain their residence permit.
- ✓ Half of the informants want to continue living where they are now, and half want to move to another part of Sweden whenever they get an opportunity.
- ✓ The refugees state that access to jobs is the most important thing about their future neighborhood.
- ✓ They also state that the least important thing about their future neighborhood is the environment, what the neighborhood looks like, or whether there are other inhabitants that share the same origins as themselves.
- ✓ Two thirds of the informants feel that they are able to access the Swedish community as well as Swedish social contexts.
- ✓ Every fifth respondent claims that they have been exposed to racism from staff at the asylum accommodations and other public institutions, or civilians in Sweden.

- ✓ The informants state that they have gotten the best reception from the staff at the Swedish Migration Agency and at their children's school.
- ✓ They also state that they have received the worst treatment from the staff at the asylum accommodation and the public employment office, that in Sweden is also responsible for accommodation and introduction services if and after having received a residence permit.
- ✓ When asked to grade the democracy in Sweden, four out of ten give it the highest mark, and one out of ten grade it as non-sufficient.

### ***Employment and studies***

- ✓ Seven percent of the informants are employed.
- ✓ Three out of four have started to plan for how to find a job once they receive their residence permit.
- ✓ Three out of four want to complete their studies or continue studying more in Sweden.
- ✓ One out of four believe that their current education will be enough to find employment.

### ***Health and family***

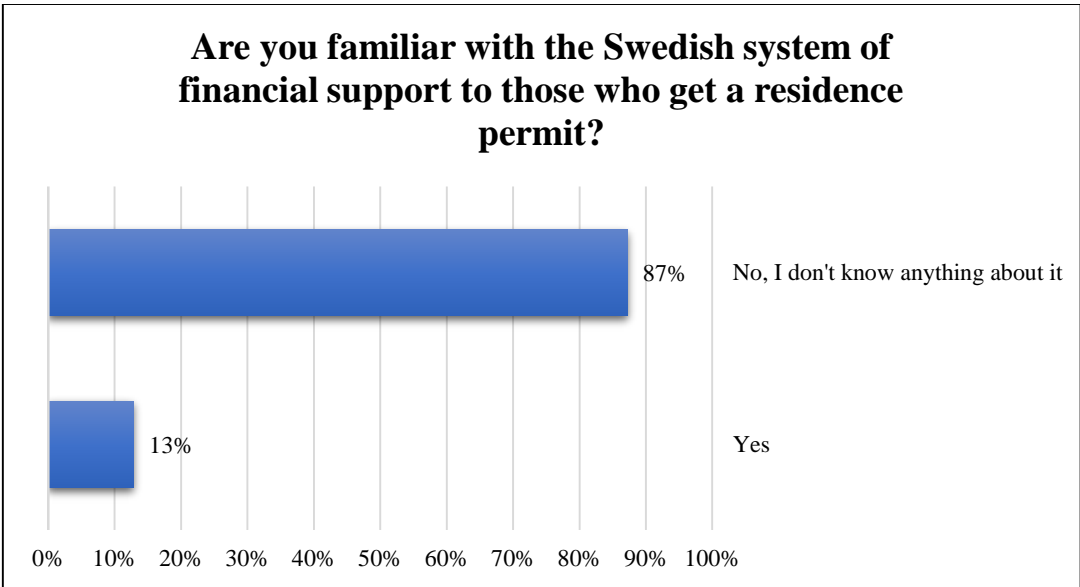
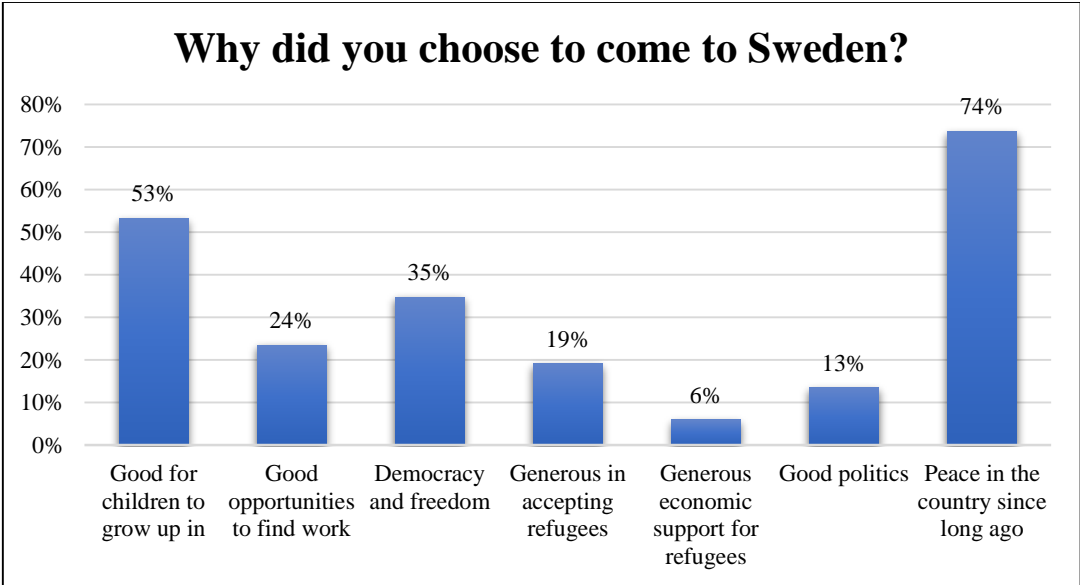
- ✓ Every third informant wants to see a psychologist, but almost no one gets the opportunity.
- ✓ Every other refugee has had problems with their physical health. In turn, every other of these have received treatment for their conditions.
- ✓ Every third respondent has left their family in their home country, and plans on reuniting with them in the future.
- ✓ The informants who state that they strive for a family reunion want to bring, on average, 1.5 adults and 1.5 children per person to Sweden.
- ✓ Of those who have children in schools, 9 out of 10 are content with their children's' schooling.

The respondents come from amongst other places Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, and Libya. The interviews have been conducted in the Swedish municipalities of Örebro, Mora, Eskilstuna, Nacka, Knivsta, Huddinge, Stockholm, Österåker, Svalöv, Trelleborg, Oskarshamn, Haparanda, Kiruna, Jokkmokk, Gällivare, and Vindeln.

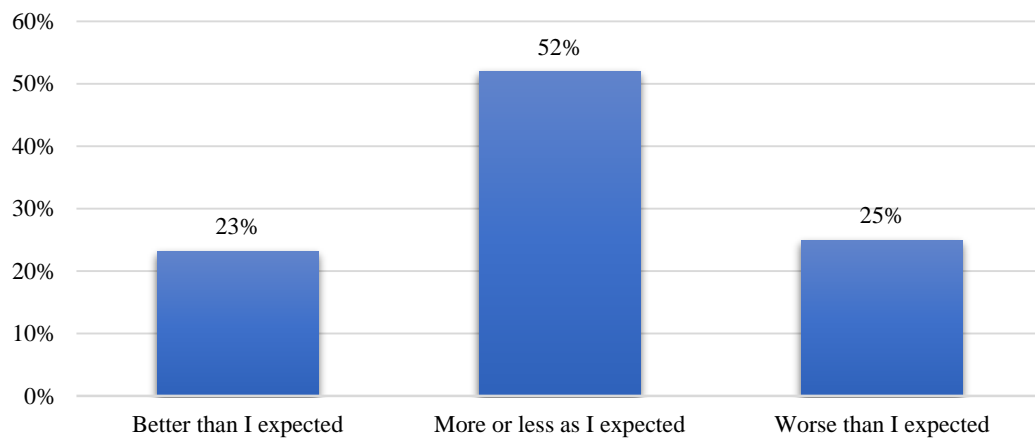
Amongst those who have stated gender in the survey 26 percent are women and 74 percent men. Thirteen of the informants have been relocated and gotten a municipality placement. These respondents had, as such, obtained their residence permit previous to being interviewed. Otherwise the interviews have been conducted with people living in an asylum accommodation of some sort, waiting for the decision from the Migration board on their requested residence permit.

The qualitative part of the study consists of interviews in focus groups with the same respondents who completed the survey plus additionally 137 persons. These interviews are not accounted for in this report, but will be available when they have been compiled and analyzed towards the end of 2016. You can read more about the study's methodological and ethical considerations at the back of the report after the diagrams.

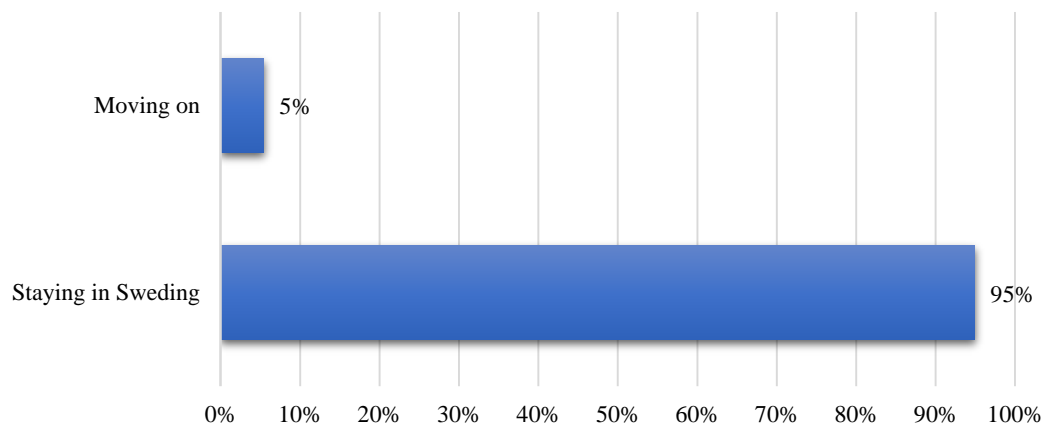
# To live in Sweden

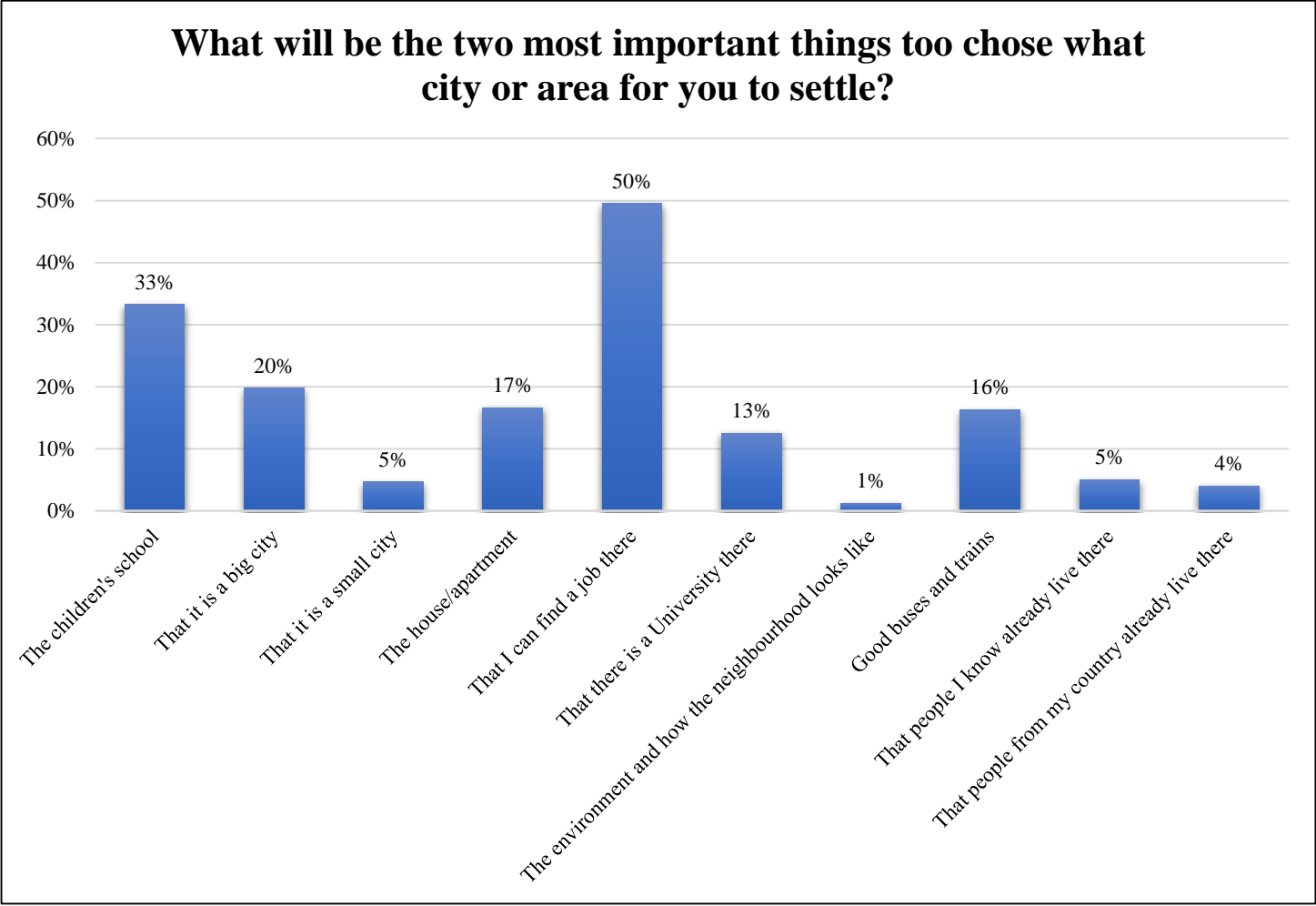
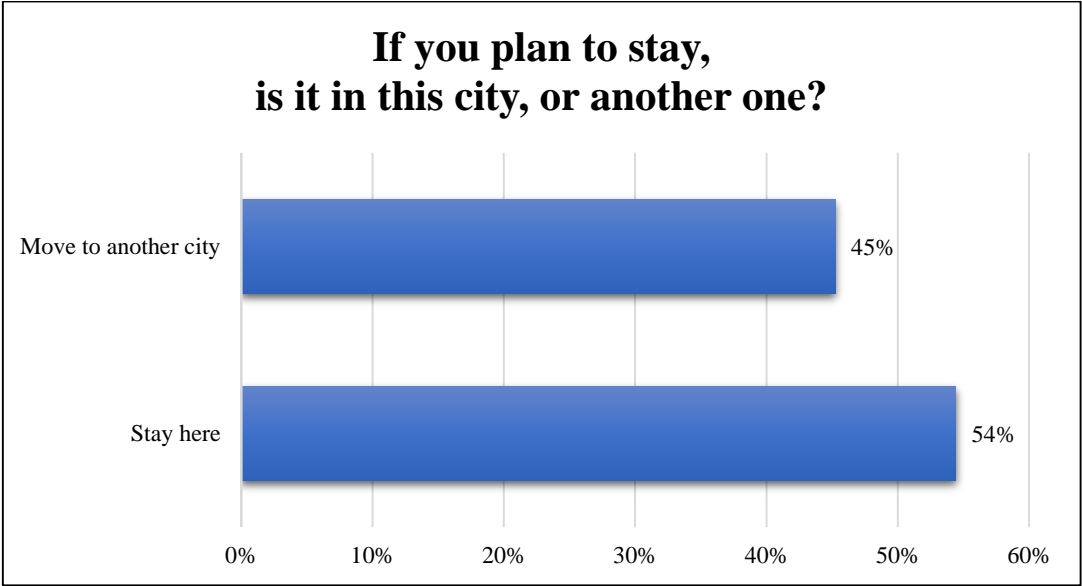


### Have things turned out the way you expected in Sweden?

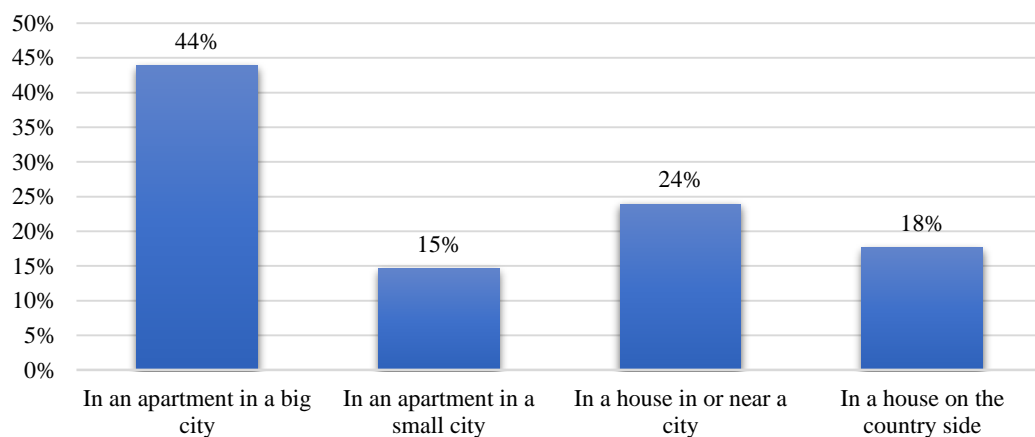


### Are you staying in Sweden if you get the residence permit, or moving on?

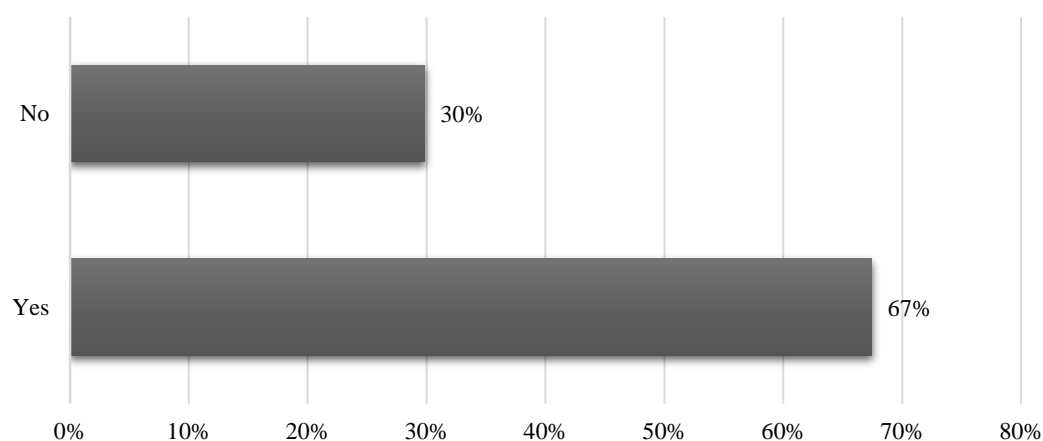




### Where did you live before you came to Sweden?

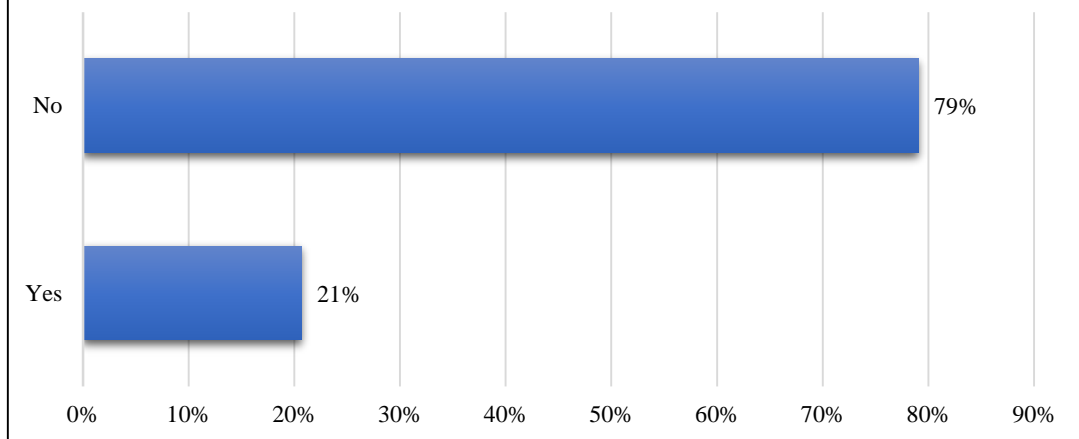


### Do you feel that you are able to get into the Swedish community as well as Swedish social contexts?

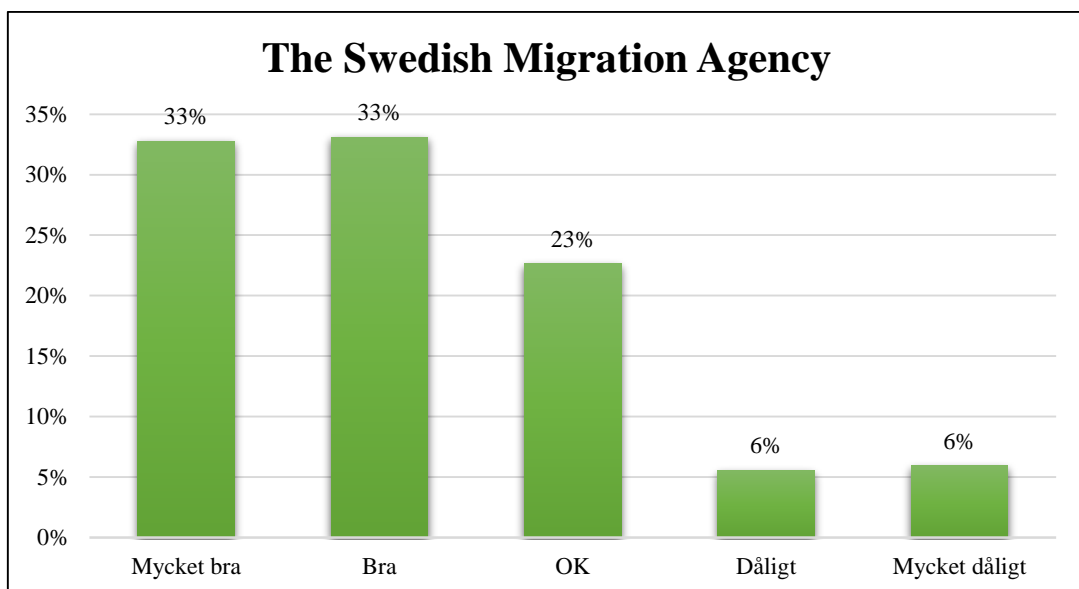


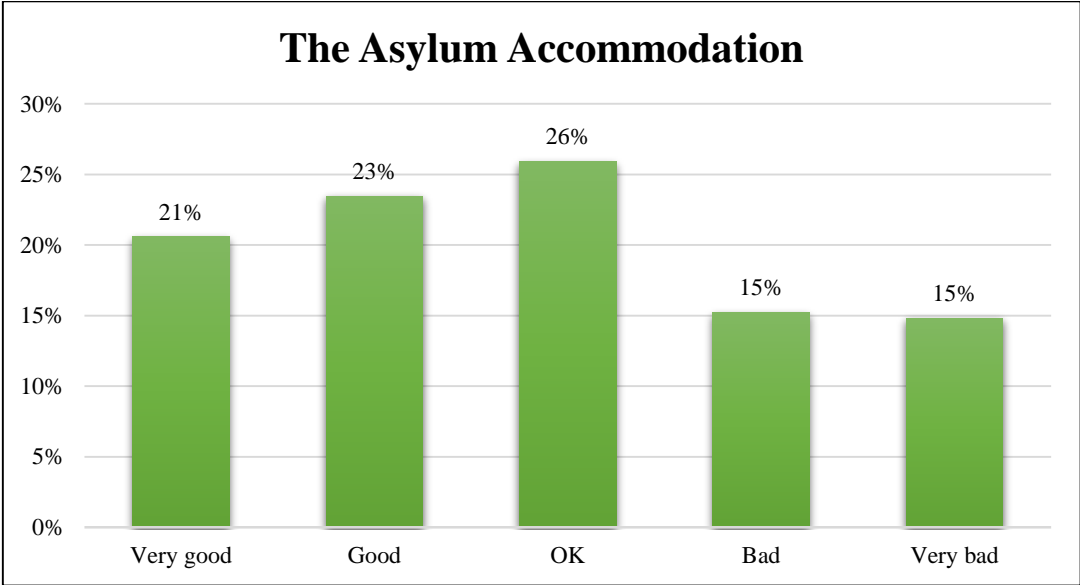
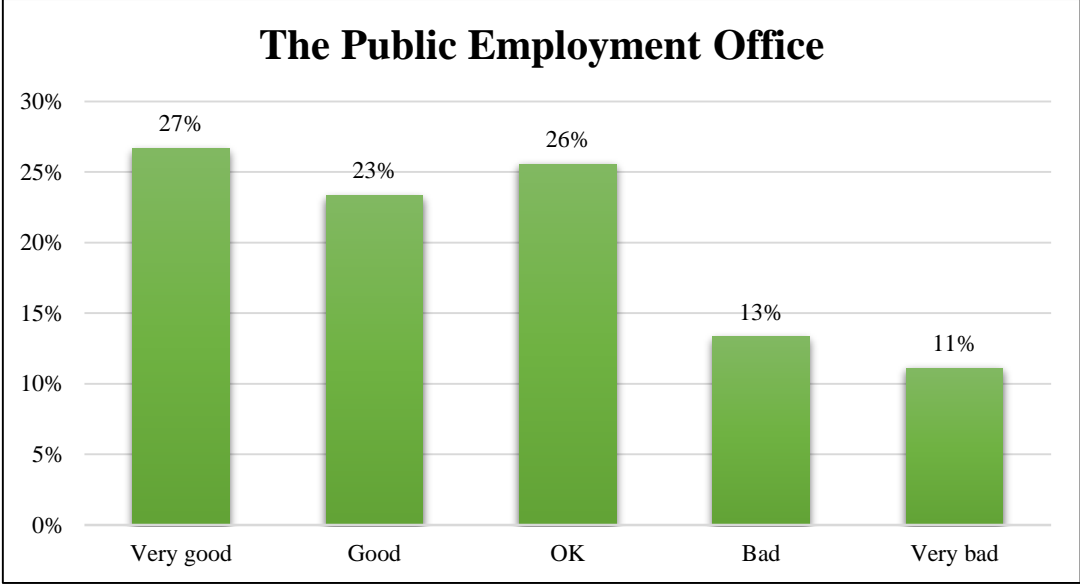


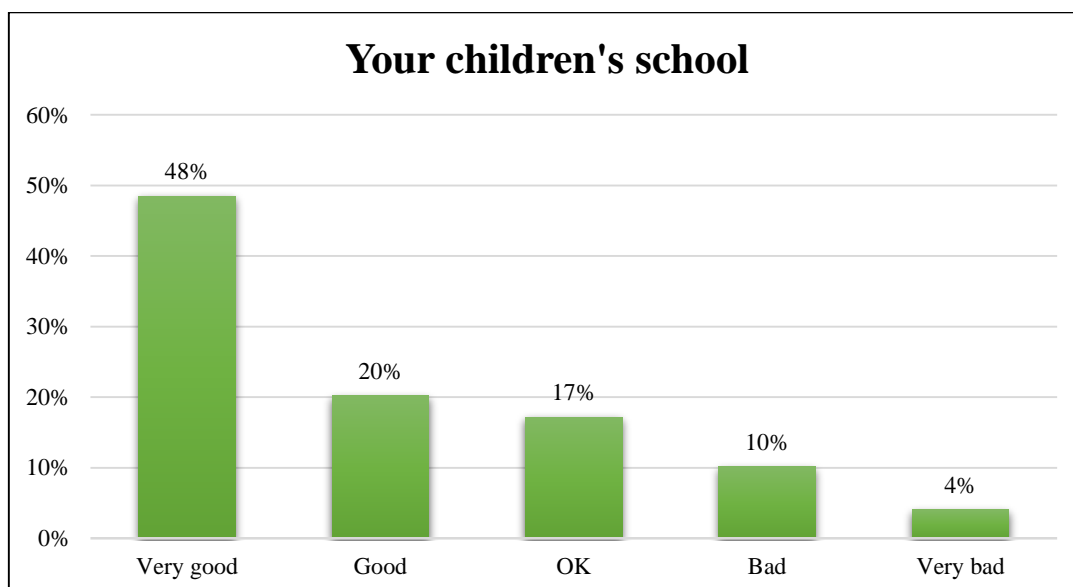
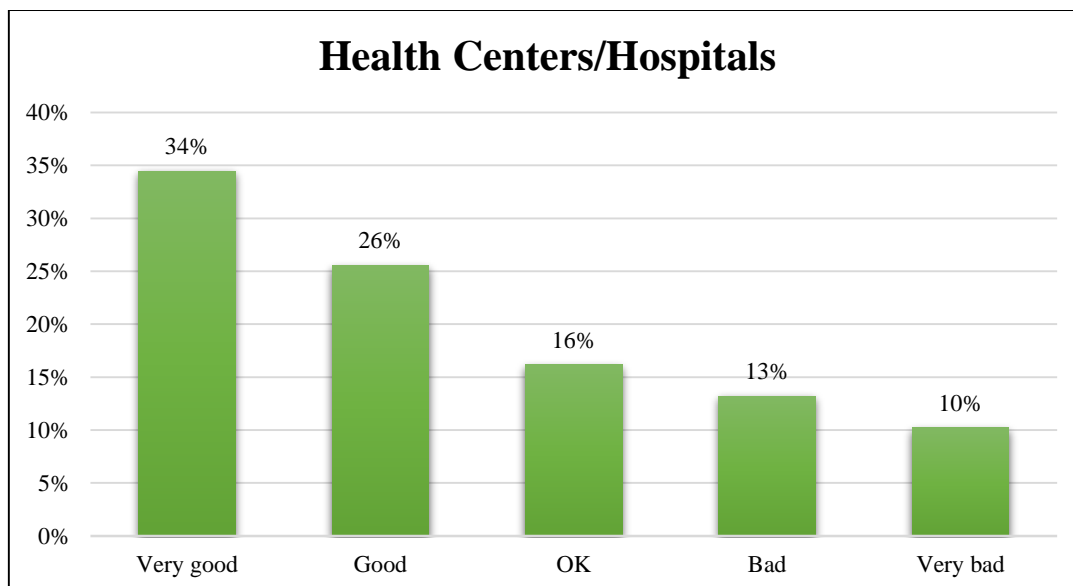
**Have you personally been exposed to racism?  
By staff or other people in Sweden?**



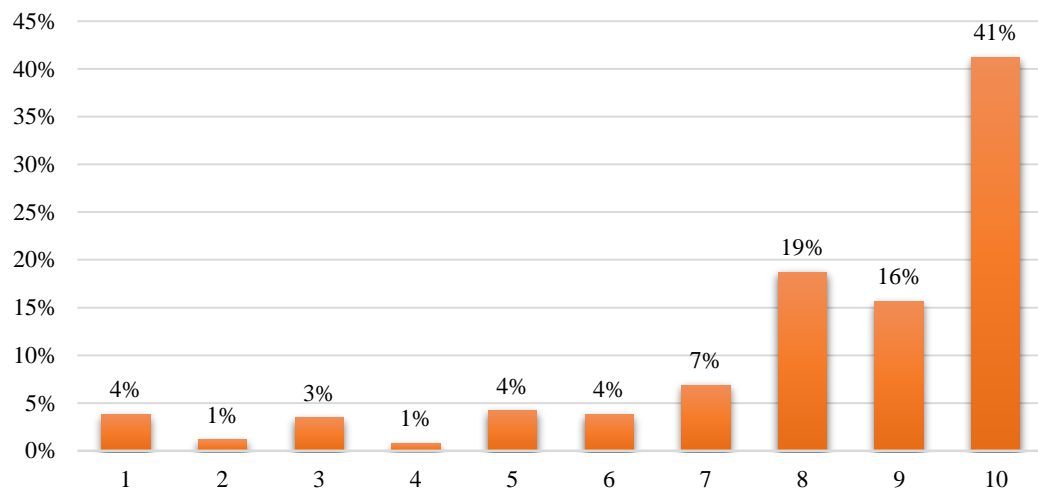
**How have you been treated by the staff at the following  
places and institutions?**



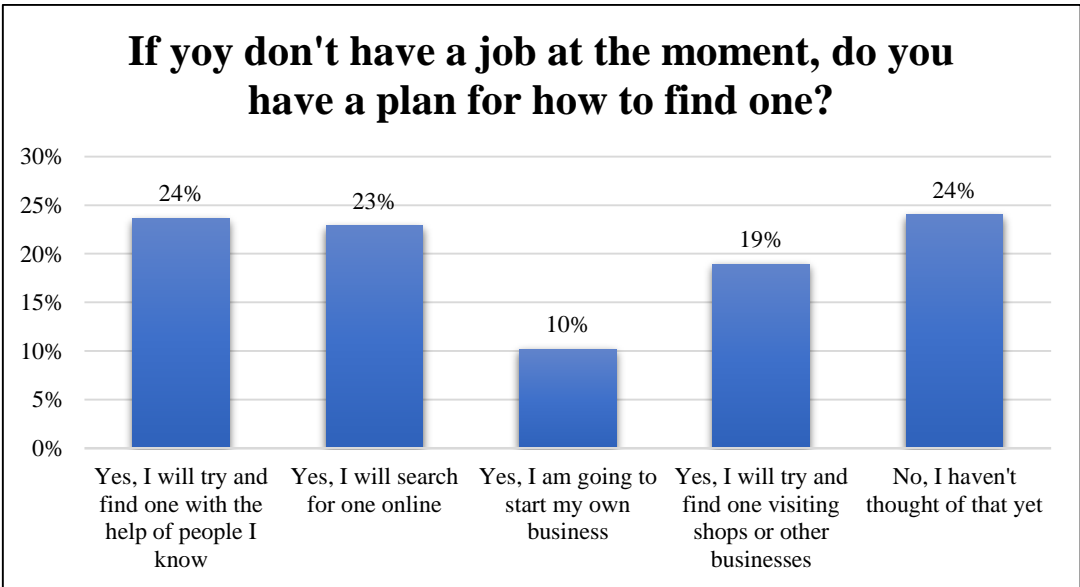
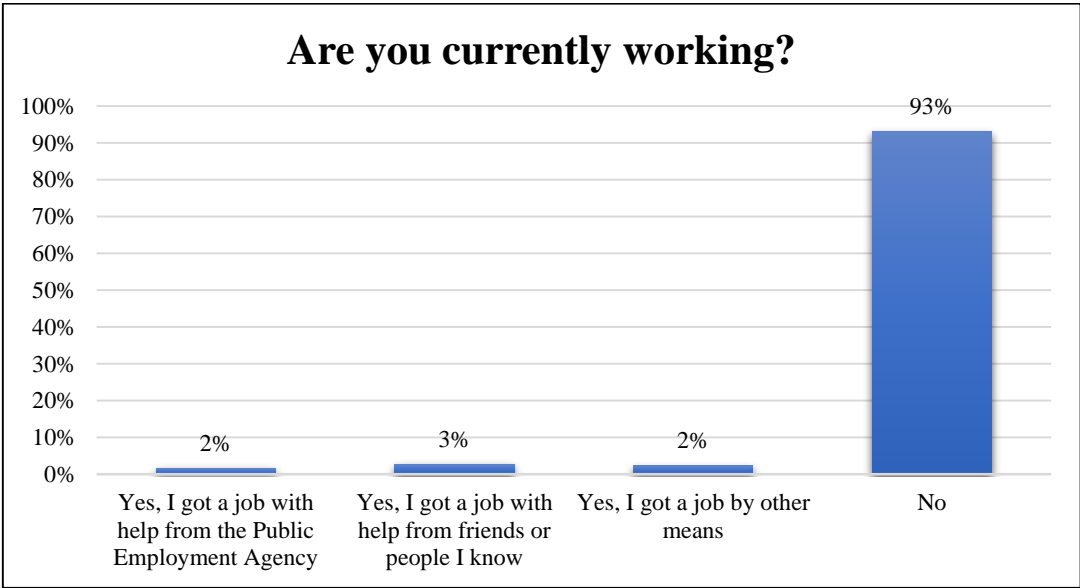




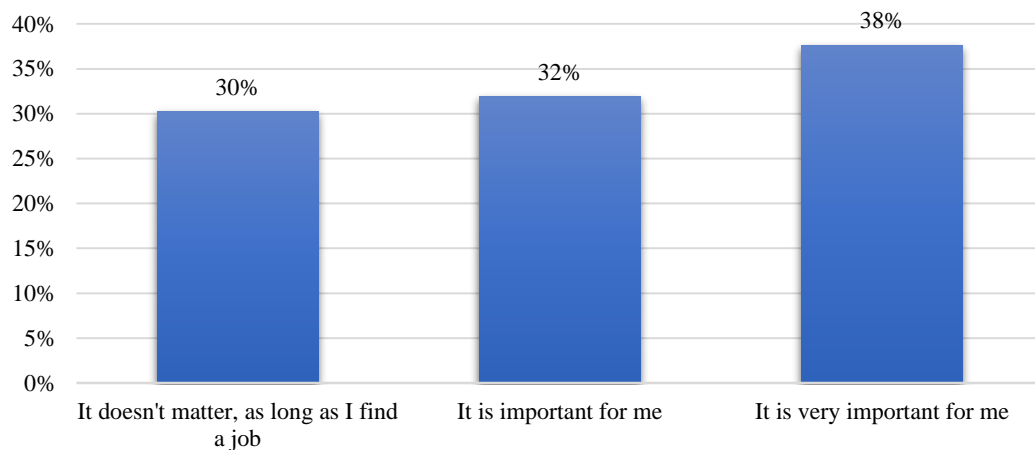
### How would you grade the democracy in Sweden?



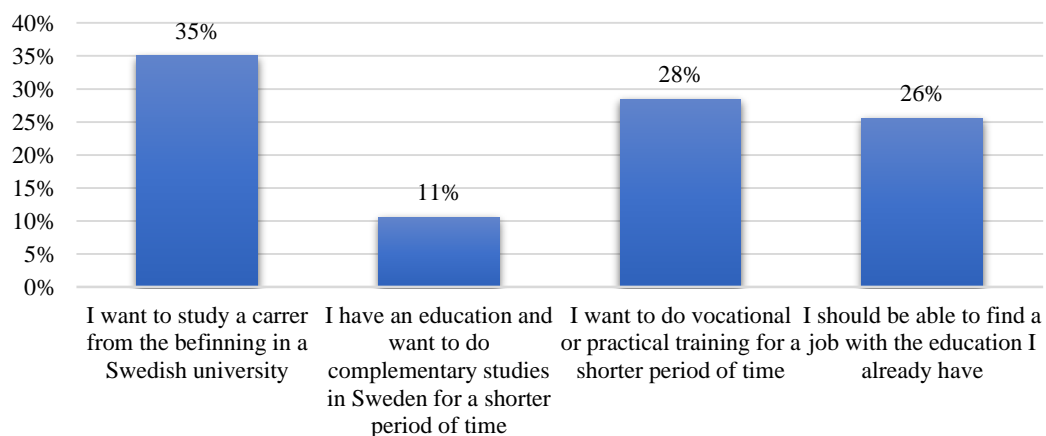
# Work and studies



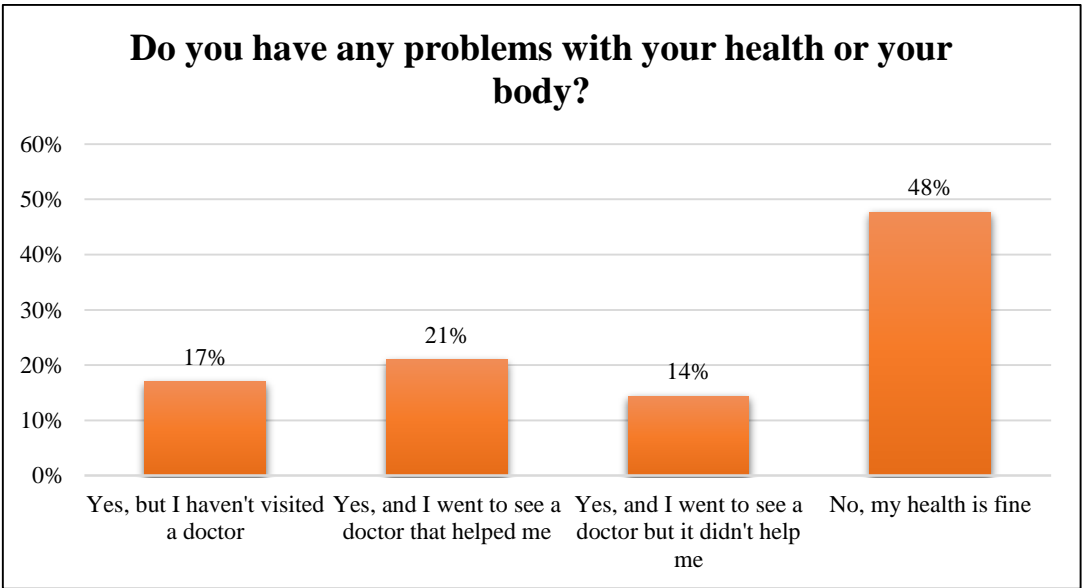
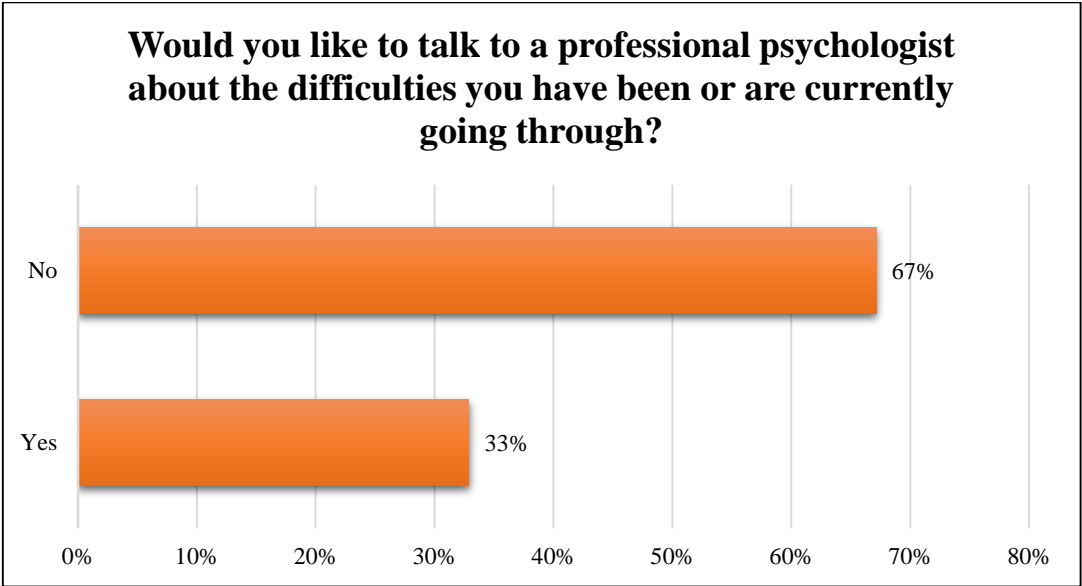
### How important is it for you to find a job that corresponds to your profession, further on?

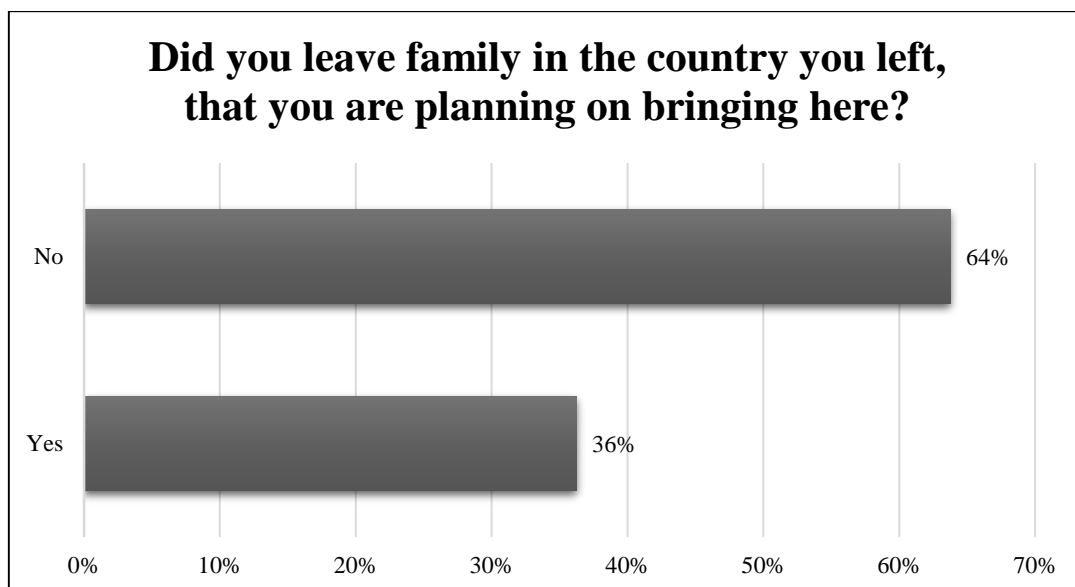


### Do you have a plan for how to develop your studies in the future?

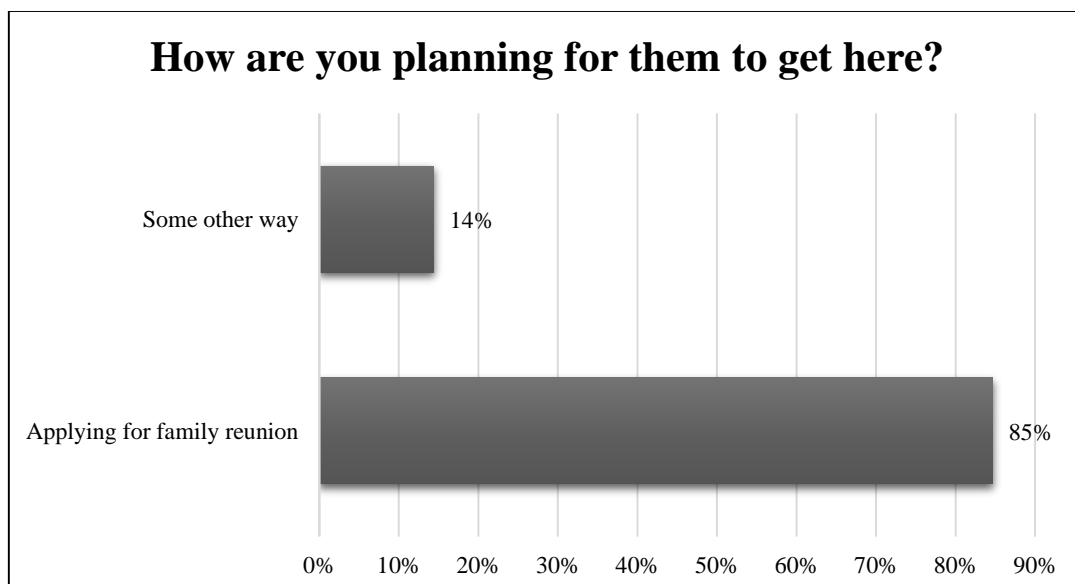


# Health and family



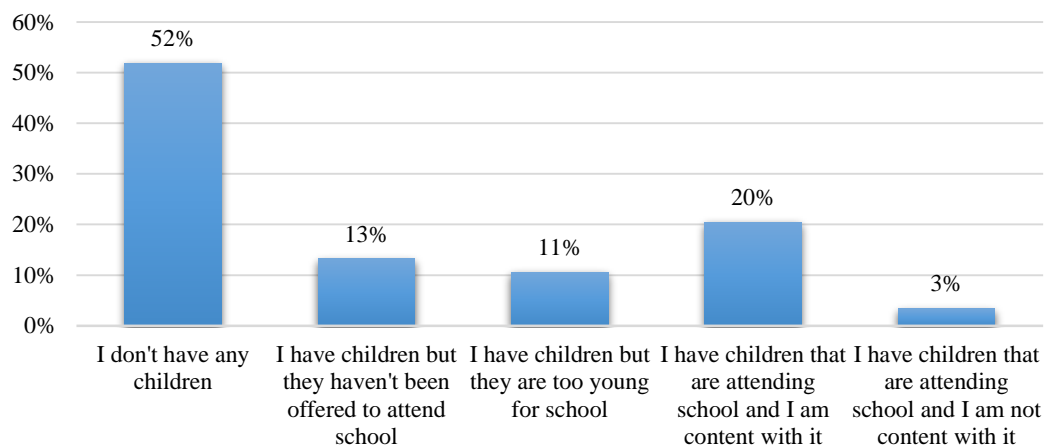


*The informants who state that they strive for a family reunion want to bring, on average, 1.5 adults and 1.5 children per person to Sweden.*

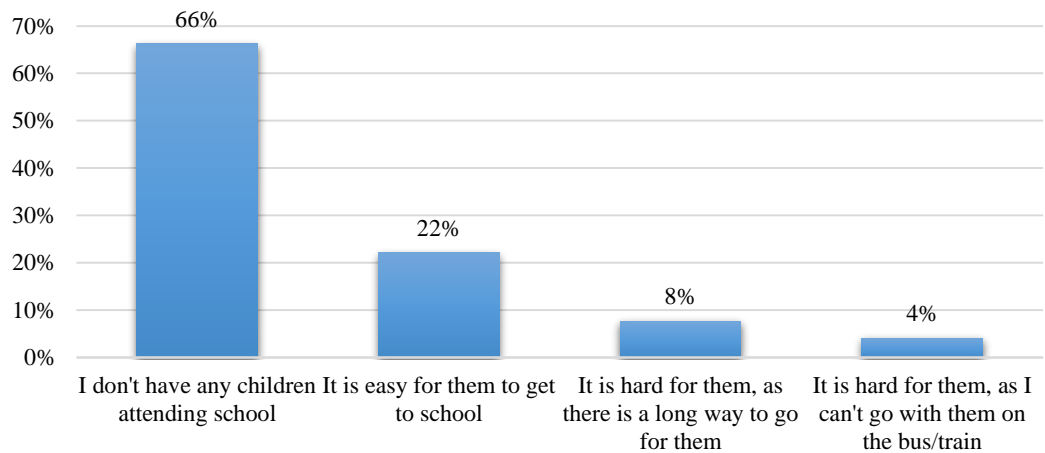




### How satisfied are you with the schooling of your children - if you have any?



### Is it easy or difficult for your children to get to school?



## The study's methodological and ethical considerations

In order to compensate for the inherent weaknesses within both quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods, the Refugee Review has used a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods. In total 456 respondents have participated in structured interviews that have mainly been carried out in the format of focus groups. 319 of these informants have completed a paper-survey before the interview in focus groups. These surveys have been available in Swedish, Farsi/Dari, and Arabic. The reason why not all informants filled in this particular printed form survey is that we added it as part of the study after the first 120 interviews. During two different interview occasions with focus groups we also found that surveys were missing.

The interviews in the focus groups have been conducted in the mother tongue of the participants. The staff at Sweden Research have taken notes in Arabic, and/or Farsi/Dari, or simultaneously translated to Swedish. When the notes have been written in Arabic, and/or Farsi/Dari, they have always been translated afterwards. The exceptions have been one interview that was conducted with an interpreter, one interview that was conducted in Spanish, and two in English with participants from different countries that spoke these languages.

The interviews have been conducted with respondents living in asylum housings. Above all the informants have lived in facilities run by the private sector, but also in housings rented by the Swedish Migration Agency, which in those cases have consisted of public accommodations with self-catering. Two interviews have also been made in residential care homes for children and young persons (HVB-homes, in Swedish). Thirteen of the informants have gotten their municipality placement and obtained their residence permit. Otherwise the interviews have been conducted with people who at the time were waiting for a decision concerning their application for asylum.

The informant selection was made by contacting all 290 Swedish municipalities requesting to get information about available asylum accommodations as well as possible contact details. The Swedish Migration Agency was also contacted simultaneously, asked to provide information about procured facilities for asylum seekers and where in Sweden these were located, which they did provide. The selection was subsequently made partially through a geographical cluster sampling, in order to spread it out in Sweden. The selection of asylum accommodations

within each geographical cluster was then divided into three steps: first the accommodations that had available contact details, then the accommodations that we could get hold of from the available contact information, and in the last phase the asylum housings that, after having been contacted, allowed staff from Sweden Research to go there and conduct the study.

Once at the asylum accommodation the staff from Sweden Research either informed the tenants about the study directly, or tenants had alternatively received information about the study in advance. The staff at Sweden Research has at every given moment dedicated time and effort in speaking with the asylum seekers to make sure they understood the nature and the aims of the study, consequently building up a trust between them. This facilitated the inclusion of respondents that initially did not want to participate, mostly due to initial concerns about anonymity, weariness about the risk of their participation having negative influence on the handling of their application or worries about their experiences and thoughts not being relevant for the study.

The UNHCR has presented methodological and ethical considerations that become more important when studies are performed where refugees are the main subjects for the interviews. One of these is of course the difficulty in making a selection that strives to be as representative as possible, from a group that is so large and diverse. In Sweden there were 141 869 inscribed in The Swedish Migration Agency's reception system on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November of 2015 at the time when the work with the study began, and 164 842 on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2016, three days after our last interview. Apart from pointing out the amount of asylum seekers in the selection in relation to the total number of them, it also reminds us of another challenge that the UNHCR brings up: the group categorized as refugees, is, apart from being a heterogeneous group, also a group whose composition, proportions, and character, undergo constant changes, many times often sudden and considerable.

The Refugee Review provides a collected and summarized picture of what the 456 interviewed persons expressed that they thought, knew, felt, and planned at the time they were interviewed. This interim report specifically accounts for the replies of the 319 persons that filled in the written survey in conjunction with the interview they provided.

The UNHCR underlines the importance of continued studies of and with refugees, not in the least qualitative studies. They view these kinds of studies as central in order to "transform an unknown 'mass' into something human and graspable in the eyes of the decision-makers", to quote the UNHCR-representative Kimberly Roberson's words during a lecture on this particular theme on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2016 at the EU-seminar during the International Conference on Asylum-Related Migration Research.

There are more ethical considerations involved when it comes to humans in a vulnerable situation that function as the subject for a study. In this case our interviewers have had to balance their consideration and respect. For instance, on one hand they have had to show consideration for an asylum seeker who is invited but does not want to participate in an interview. On the other hand, they have also had to ask follow up questions about their aversion and have tried to give information that could calm that persons uneasiness. This procedure was followed in order to get a sample of respondents that did not solely contain asylum seekers that without hesitation were willing to participate, as such sampling would have conveyed a risk of bias in the results.

We believe that our study approach has resulted in a wider range and representation of persons in different situations and with several different kinds of experiences. One of the key factors in gaining the trust of those who were asked to participate was, as we see it, that the staff at Sweden Research spoke the same language as the informants. Several of the interviewers were also themselves refugees or had a similar background, either recent or further back in life.

Everyone's anonymity has been preserved and when the informants have stated name or contact information this has been made on a voluntary basis. Additionally, when a person that we have interviewed has expressed that he or she is considering committing suicide we have contacted relevant authorities in the municipality without exposing the person's anonymity. ■

---

Sweden Research conducts studies and analysis in issues concerning social sustainability and urban development for authorities, municipalities, and other publicly financed organizations. This study is compiled by Carlos Rojas and conducted by Farhan Alatrash as head of research with collaboration of Khaldoun Agha, Sanna Verner-Carlsson, Menna Elsalhy, Asmaa Sherif, Sohrab Fadaei, Roya Ghalandarpour, Mohammad Vojdani, Muna Mohammad, Nadia Louis, Jonya Demir, Rita Hindy, Imen Ayeb and four other assistants still waiting for their decision on their residence permit, not wanting to appear with their names. The report was initially published in Swedish and was translated to English by Victoria Gomez.

Sweden Research underwent a change of name in august 2016, thus during the work with the study between November 2015 and June 2016, the name of the research center was the previous, Miklo. This means that every contact with asylum accommodations, municipalities, agencies and informants were made using the name of Miklo.

You reach us at +46 8 53 33 23 63 or [contact@swedenresearch.com](mailto:contact@swedenresearch.com)  
[www.swedenresearch.com](http://www.swedenresearch.com)