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Dissemination and use of migration statistics for policymaking

Register for mapping circular migration (Draft)

Note by Statistics Sweden, Tomas Johansson*

Abstract

In the budget bill for 2016 the Swedish government have allocated funds to Statistics Sweden to produce yearly statistics on circular migration. The background to this task is that the government in 2014 gave Statistics Sweden and the Swedish Migration Agency the task to undertake a mapping study of available statistical data on migration.

One proposal of the study was to establish a new migration register, which would include all migrants and migratory events with durations of three months or longer. This register would fill a gap in Swedish migration statistics. An alternative solution is a limited register, including only migration involving registration (and de-registration) in the existing population register. Such a database would only include data that is already available.

In 2016 will Statistics Sweden begin the process of creating the alternative register that will be used to produce statistics on circular migration. This will probably be the first register in the world focusing on circular migration, and we have several challenges ahead of us. Firstly there is at the moment no generally accepted definition on circular migration, even though the UNECE Task Force on Circular Migration recently has proposed a statistical definition. Furthermore, we need to decide what information is of interest to connect to the migrants.

Our previous study shows that more than 200 000 migrants have at least three international migrations involving Sweden between the years 1969 and 2014. Until the 1990: s the Nordic circular migration dominated but today Asia has the highest share of circular migrations by foreign-borns.

This presentation will focus on the work of developing register statistics on circular migration.

*Prepared by Mr Tomas Johansson.

I. Summary

1. In the budget bill for 2016, the Swedish Government allocated funds to Statistics Sweden to produce yearly statistics on circular migration.
2. In 2016 will Statistics Sweden begin the process of creating a register based on persons that has been registered in the population register to produce statistics on circular migration. This will probably be the first register in the world focusing on circular migration, and we have several challenges ahead of us. Firstly there is at the moment no generally accepted definition on circular migration, even though the UNECE Task Force on Circular Migration recently has proposed a statistical definition. Furthermore, we need to decide what information is of interest to connect to the migrants.

II. Introduction

3. Circular migration is often seen as a win-win-win proposition, providing gains to countries of both origin and destination, as well as to the migrants themselves.
4. In July 2009 the Swedish Government decided to appoint a Parliamentary Committee to examine the links between circular migration and development. The Committee was tasked with mapping out circular migration and identifying the factors that influence migrants' opportunities to migrate between Sweden and their countries of origin. The Government's intention was that the Committee's proposals later would form the basis for a future Swedish migration policy that would support development and be adapted to a world increasingly characterized by increased mobility across borders.
5. In June 2014, the Swedish Parliament decided to adopt the government bill, Circular migration and development that are largely based on the committee's proposal. The government bill related in particular to rules about residence permits and citizenship.
6. However, circular migration is not well captured by official statistics and in 2014 the Government gave Statistics Sweden and the Swedish Migration Agency the task to undertake a new mapping study of available statistical data on migration. This study suggested among other thing that a new migration register should be established.
7. In the budget bill for 2016, the Swedish Government allocated funds to Statistics Sweden to produce yearly statistics on circular migration.

III. The Swedish register system

8. At Statistics Sweden, a large amount of historical data on the population and changes within the population is stored within the framework of the Total Population Register (TPR) and other registers. The breakthrough came when the Swedish Tax Agency in the late 1960s digitized Population and income registers and made them available for computer processing.
9. All persons registered as living in Sweden is assigned a number as identifier, personal identification number (PIN). An important exception are asylum-seekers. They are not considered being a part of the Swedish population and do not get a PIN. It is only after they have been granted asylum as they get a PIN. Anyone who have ever received a PIN will keep the same number for life, unless it needs to be corrected. The PIN does not change when a person migrate from Sweden or back to Sweden.

10. The PIN-system in Sweden was introduced in 1947 as a system of birth numbers consisting of date of birth plus a three-digit birth number. In 1967 there was a fourth digit introduced as a check digit.
11. The PIN as the identifier has been widespread use not only in the population register but also in other prefectures, for example in taxation, in the general insurance, the registration of cars, driving license and passport records and within teaching field. The PIN is also widely used outside the public sector, including the company's accounting practices and insurance and bank records.
12. Personal identity is therefore used as a search term in registers on individuals and link variable when joining different registers.
13. Even a person not registered as living in Sweden can in some cases get a individual coordination number (samordningsnummer). It's mostly used for foreigners that have to pay taxes in Sweden. But there are plans to widen the group of people that shall have individual coordination numbers, for example asylum seekers.
14. Since 1968, Statistics Sweden has carried out a wide range of tasks relating to the population and changes in the population in the form of births, deaths, regional migrations, immigrations and emigrations and changes in civil status.

IV. Migration statistics in Sweden – state of play, future needs and proposals for improvements

15. In March 2014, the Swedish government gave Statistics Sweden (Statistiska Centralbyrån) and the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket) the task to undertake a mapping study of available statistical data on migration in Sweden. The study was finalized and submitted in early December 2014.
16. During the drafting of the study, it became clear that solid statistical data on longer-term migration (in the sense that foreign nationals take residence in Sweden) is already available, while there is a lack of data on foreigners coming to Sweden for shorter periods of time. While the Swedish Migration Board does have certain information on short-term migrations, such as data on temporary residence permits or visas, this information is not passed on to Statistics Sweden since people who stay for shorter periods than one year are normally not considered residents. Thus, they will normally not be covered by the Swedish population register, which is the main base of Swedish population statistics.
17. Current migration statistics are mainly based on the population register, which is run by the Swedish Tax Agency (Skatteverket). Sweden applies a 12-month criterion, which means that persons who stay in Sweden or abroad for shorter time spans than one year will normally not be covered in migration statistics. Thus, they are not included in official migration statistics either. The Tax Agency may, however, issue individual coordination numbers for persons who are not registered as living in Sweden. This is mainly done for individuals who pay taxes in Sweden without being residents in the country. In order to be able to statistically capture individuals with short stays, the study proposed to widen the practice of issuing coordination numbers.
18. Further to this, the study outcomes also suggested that a new migration register be established, which would include all migrants or migratory events with durations of three months or longer.
19. But since there isn't yet a wide spread use of the individual coordination numbers in the Swedish society there were another suggested solution, a simpler register, including only

migration involving registration in (and de-registration from) the existing population register, i.e. longer-term stays. The register would for example contain information on education, income, grounds for settlement and profession.

20. In late 2015 the Swedish government decided to provide Statistics Sweden commissioned to produce and compile statistics on circular migration to and from Sweden. The main objective is to improve statistics on migration patterns as well as to improve access to cohort statistics in the area.

V. Some preliminary statistics

21. The Parliamentary Committee which was appointed in 2009 had the task to investigate the links between circular migration and development. They had also the mission to identify statistics in the area. They contacted Statistics Sweden to assist them with statistics about circular migrants.

22. Statistics Sweden took out a population consisting of all persons who had at least two registered migrations over Sweden's border over the period 1969 - 2009 based on data from Statistics Sweden's Historic population Register (HPR). The population was then divided into two groups. The first group focused on migrations over the period and the second group focused on circular migrants that were registered as living in Sweden on 31 December 2009. The major difference between these was that in the first, it was possible to track an individual's migration history, while in the second table group focused on information about occupation, education and more on the migrants. One problem with the statistics was that it mostly consisted of return migrants. About three quarters of the population had only two registered migrations.

23. In connection with the second mapping study in 2014, there was a minor update. This time was the population limited to individuals who had at least three registered migrations to and from Swedish over the period 1969 - 2014. There were also some new variables added.

24. Results from the new study shows that over the period 1969 - 2014 migrated a total of 237 000 people of which 151 000 people were born in Sweden or in one of the other Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway. All together 902 000 migrations were registered during the period of which Sweden and the Nordic countries accounted for two thirds of all migrations. Men were more often circular migrants than women. About 55 percent of the circular migrants were men.

Table 1 Number of circular migrants and migrations by sex and continent of birth 1969-2014

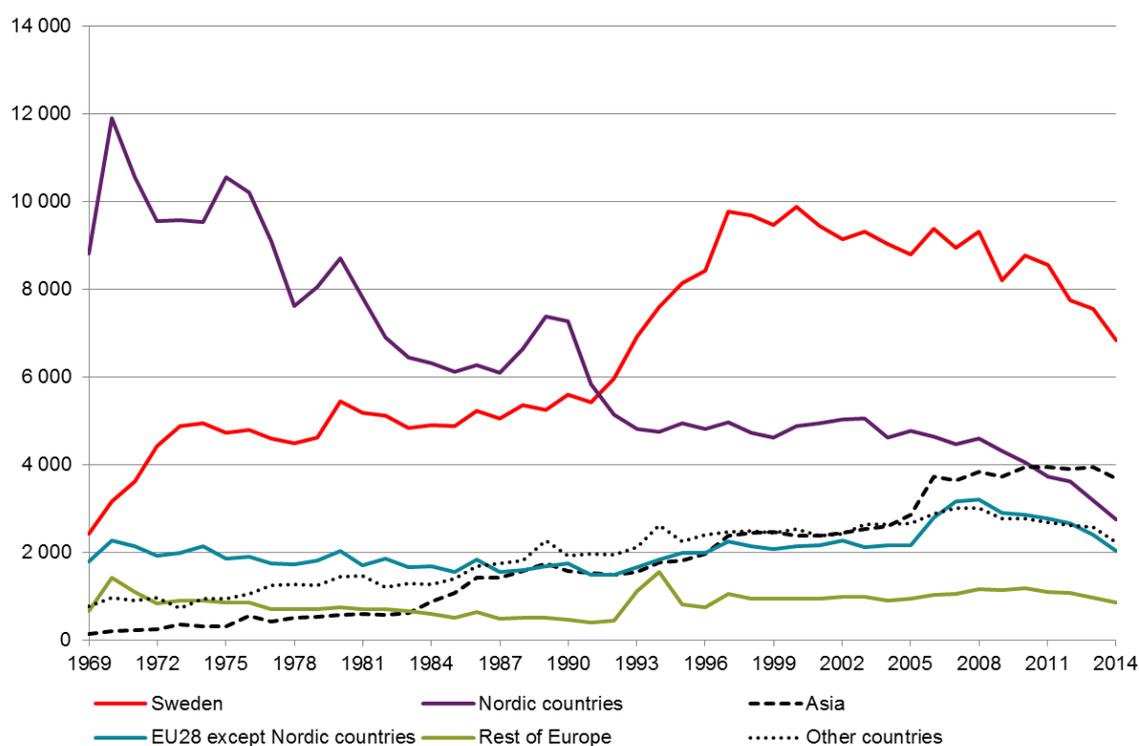
Region of birth	Number of persons		Number of migrations		Number of persons total	Number of migrations total
	Men	Women	Men	Women		
Africa	5 469	3 250	19 822	11 393	8 719	31 215
Asia	12 773	10 854	45 140	37 537	23 627	82 677
EU28 except nordic	15 597	10 794	56 504	38 256	26 391	94 760
North America	2 951	2 463	10 782	8 998	5 414	19 780
Nordic countries	40 920	30 391	169 544	121 198	71 311	290 742
Oceania	634	406	2 320	1 529	1 040	3 849
Rest of Europe	6 374	4 931	22 295	16 926	11 305	39 221
Sweden	40 107	39 137	157 002	148 964	79 244	305 966
South America	4 335	4 186	15 638	14 917	8 521	30 555
Other	514	486	1 856	1 686	1 000	3 542

Region of birth	Number of persons		Number of migrations		Number of persons total	Number of migrations total
	Men	Women	Men	Women		
Total	129 674	106 898	500 903	401 404	236 572	902 307

25. In the 1970s it was mainly people born in Sweden's Nordic neighbors, which accounted for the circular migrations. Of these were persons born in Finland by far the largest group. Between 1969 and 1978, 54 percent of all circular migrations were done by people born in the Nordic countries. The Nordic countries were the largest group until the early 1990s, when people born in Sweden became the group accounted for the highest number of circular migrations. The large increase in Sweden-born circular migrants started a few years before Sweden joined the EU, and has since remained at a high level.

26. Throughout the period, people born outside the Nordic region increased their share of circular migrations. Since 2006, when immigration to Sweden sharply increased, people born outside the Nordic region have been the largest foreign-group. In recent years, circular migrants from Asia have accounted for more migrations than people born in Nordic countries excluding Sweden. Of the circular migrants from Asia are persons born in Iraq and Iran the largest groups.

Graph 1 Number of circular migrations by year and continent of birth 1969-2014

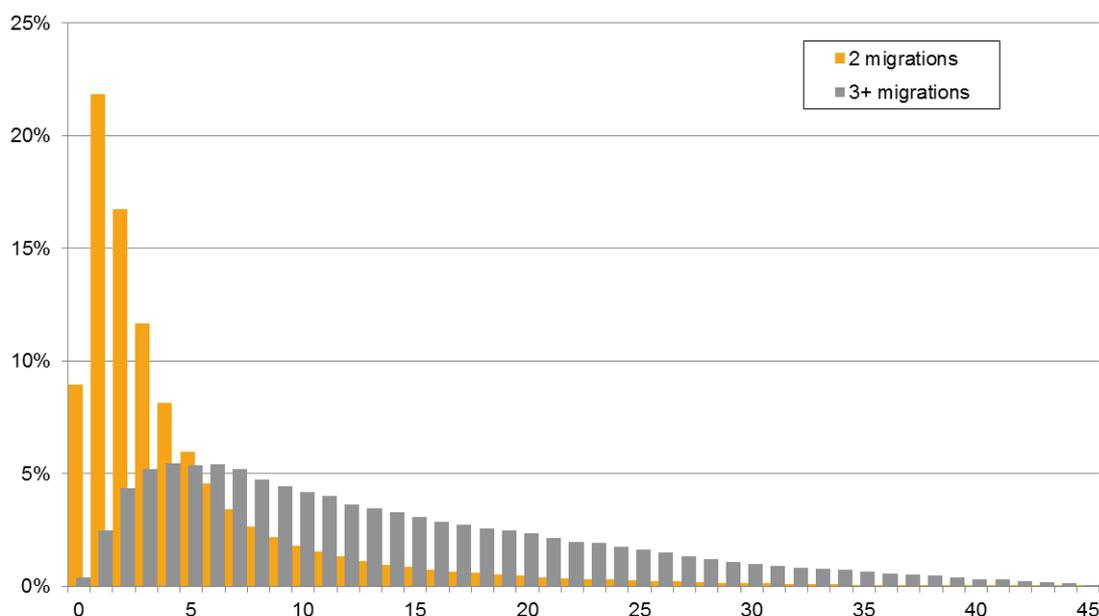


27. A migration career can be defined as the time between the first cross-border migration and the last cross-border migration. But as long as a person lives, there is still the opportunity to make a migration. This means that in this context we consider the period between the first cross-border migration and the most recent cross-border migration. If you only have made one migration, you cannot with the help of statistical information say anything about the migration career. Thus, it is only after the second registered migration that a "migration career" begins and

only after the third cross-border migration that a person meets the requirement as a circular migrant.

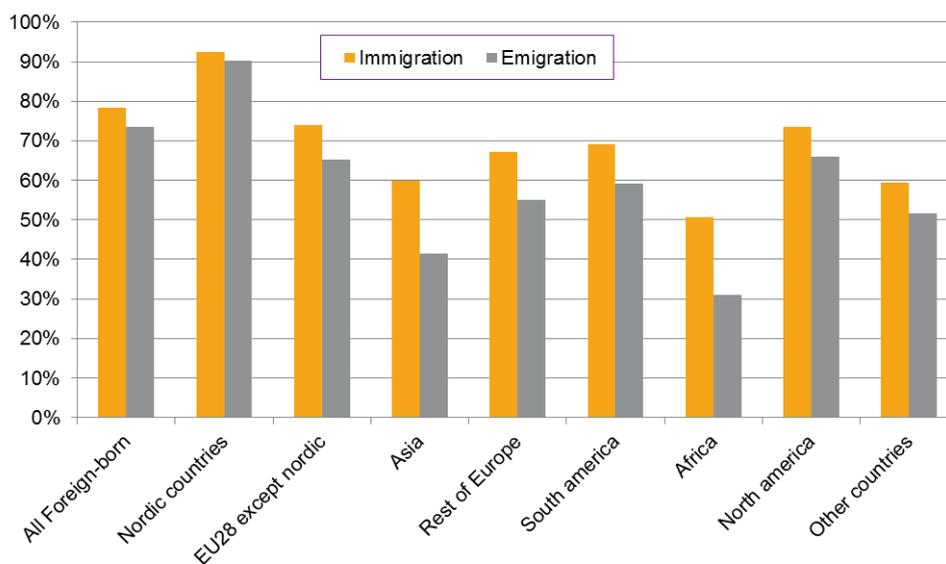
28. When comparing migration careers of people with only two cross-border migrations, with those who have done three migrations or more, one can see major differences. For those with only two migrations are about two-thirds done within five years. For people with at least three cross-border migrations is the time between first and last move usually considerably longer.

Graph 2 Migrants by years between first and last migration, per cent



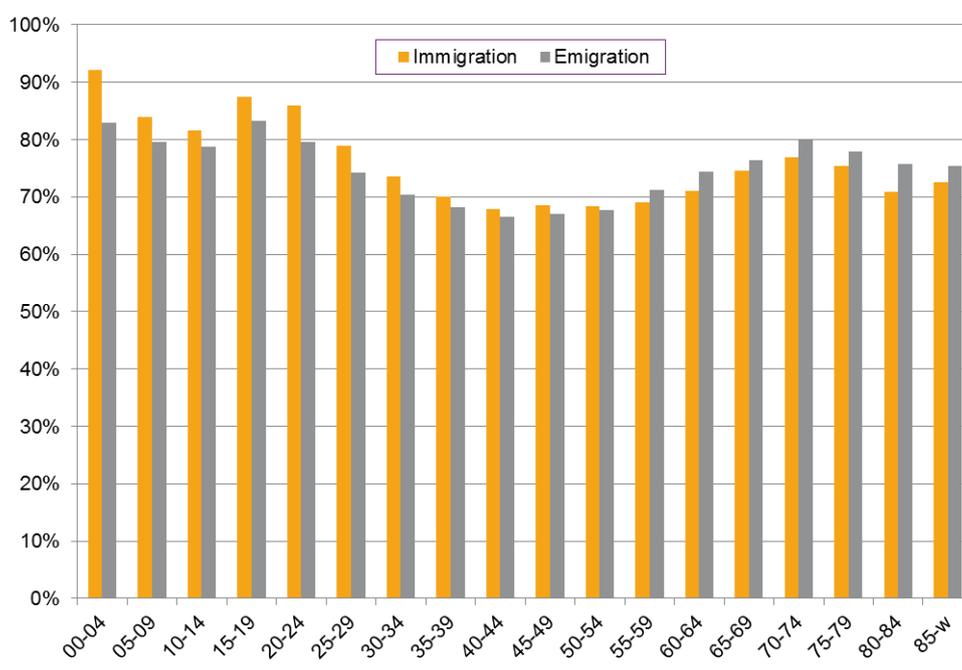
29. About 75 percent of all circular migrations are between Sweden and the migrant's country of birth. There are, however, differences depending on where in the world the migrant is born. For people born in the Nordic countries the proportion is about 90 percent of both immigration and emigration, while only about 30 percent of the emigration from Sweden for people born in Africa goes to the country of birth. About five percent of all emigrations lack information about the destination. These have been excluded to facilitate comparison.

Graph 3 Immigration and emigration between Sweden and country of birth by continent of birth, per cent



30. Besides that there are some differences between regions, one can also note the differences depending on the migrant's age. For children and young adults is a relatively high proportion of the migrations between Sweden and the country of birth. The same goes for older emigrants who relatively frequently migrate to their country of birth. Persons between the ages of 40 and 54 are most likely to migrate between Sweden and a country which is not their country of birth.

Graph 3 Immigration and emigration between Sweden and country of birth by age, per cent



VI. Building a new migration register

31. In 2016, Statistics Sweden intends to begin the work to build up a migration database to be used to identify and describe circular migrants. The assignment from the Swedish government, however, leaves room for interpretation. There are therefore many questions that must be answered before the database can be launched.

- Which population should the database contain?
- What variables should the database contain?
- What statistics should be published?

32. In 2016, Statistics Sweden intends to begin the work to build up a migration database to be used to identify and describe circular migrants. The assignment from the Swedish government, however, leaves room for interpretation. There are therefore many questions that must be answered before the database can be launched.

33. To answer the first two questions we need to decide which statistics that should be published. Should the database only include people who are defined as circular migrants or do we also want to describe both the migrants and migration patterns more widely? What is necessary to know about the group? Statistics Sweden therefore need to first create a table plan.

34. To create the database should not, however, be very complicated. In the historical population register all migrations from 1969 are registered at an individual level registered and the use of PIN in the Sweden, allows us to add information such as education, occupation and more.

35. At present it is not possible to include short-term migrants and asylum seekers. But the work should be considering how to do so in order to include information for these groups in the future. Will it be possible if the use of the individual coordination numbers increases?

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