



**University of Gothenburg**

**Department of Social Work**

**“Examining the Relationship between Migration Policy  
Changes and Labor Migration Trends in Sweden (1947-  
2023)”**

Program: Master’s Program in Social Work and Human Rights

Degree report: 30 Hp

Year: Spring 2024

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# Abstract

**Title:** “Examining the Relationship between Migration Policy Changes and Labor Migration Trends in Sweden (1947-2023)”

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Sweden is known for its openness to labor migration among the OECD countries and has undertaken several of policy measures in recent years to regulate and manage labor migration. This study aims to thoroughly understand the demographic distribution and the effects of migration policy changes on the labor market. It blends historical narrative and policy analysis to reach relevant findings regarding the relationship between migration policies changes and migration trends. The study utilizes the mixed method research design by analyzing statistical data from Eurostat and Statistics Sweden, backed by policy document analysis. The historical institutionalism and labor market dualization theory is the theoretical framework for this study. These theories are used throughout the analysis to understand how policies define the demographic distribution of migrants, the outcome of labor migration policy changes on migrants, and how labor migration policies changes influence migration flow in Sweden. The study results shows the complex nature of labor migration policies whereby the country focuses on attracting labor migrants but they form a smaller section of the entire migrant community.

**Keywords:** “labor migration policy,” “labor migrants,” “non-EU labor migrants,” “migration,” “Sweden,” “policy changes.”

# Acknowledgement

Firstly, I would like to thank God Almighty for making this journey possible and giving me the ability to write this thesis. I say thank you to the Swedish Institute Scholarship for granting me a scholarship into this program which made my two-year academic journey easier and achievable. Again, I would like to show my appreciation to Daniel Åman of Räddningsmissionen, who had time to explain the issues of migrant integration and exploitation, which formed the basis of my interest in this area and increased my curiosity to embark on this study area for this thesis. Daniel was very instrumental and open to help anytime I had challenges within my studies and in providing some sources that helped in writing this thesis. I cannot say thank you without thanking my amazing supervisor Jayeon Lee. This thesis was made possible because of her advices, supervision and most importantly her encouragement. Even when I felt overwhelmed by the thesis, I just needed to talk with her and I will calm down because I never left any meeting feeling this thesis was not achievable. The “it is possible spirit of hers” kept me going and I do not take it for granted at all. To my friends, Luisa and Johanna, thank you always for lifting my spirit anytime I felt down and making me know I am more than I see myself. To Deniz Kellecioglu, my lecturer, I am grateful for bringing out the best in me through your honest criticisms. Lastly, to my wonderful family, the Oduro-Appiah’s, and my aunty, Mummy Stella Asante, how can I say thank you enough, the emotional support, prayers and encouragement have brought me this far and made this thesis possible.

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# Chapter One

This chapter presents the introduction, statement of the problem, research objectives, relevance of the study to social work and human rights and the background of the research.

## 1. Introduction

Migration can be defined as the movement of people either willingly or unwillingly from one place to the other as a result of either pull or push factors (European Parliament, 2020). Some of the reasons associated with migration is political issues like wars, conflicts and environmental or climate changes (ibid.). This explains why in 2015, there was a peak in refugee and asylum seekers in most European countries due to outbreak of wars and conflict and as at 2022, a quarter of asylum seekers came from war torn countries (European Parliament, 2020). According to the Intergovernmental Organization of Migration (IOM), in 2020 there was a global increase in the migrant community from 272 million people in 2019 to 281 million people in 2020 which is 3.6% of the world's population (Intergovernmental Organization of Migration, 2022). Out of the 272 million migrants in 2019, 169 million were labor migrant which is more than 50% of the migrant community making labor migration a critical issue worth talking about (ibid.).

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), most migrant workers find their destination in Europe making European Countries recipients of most migrant communities globally (International Labor Organization, 2021). Statistics have shown that as at 2023, there were 448.8 million people living in the European Union (EU) countries, of which 27.3 million were migrants from non-EU countries which is approximately 6.1% of the entire population (Eurostat Statistics, n.d.). The migrant community has become an integral part of the EU's economy and as such, understanding their issues on the labor market has become necessary. There is mostly an increase in labor migration in a country when the country is seen to have more employment opportunities, higher standards of living and good welfare benefits (European Parliament, 2020). Influx of migrants in a country leads to policy changes both at the global and country level.

In recent years, Sweden has emerged as one of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries with liberal labor migration policy, attracting people from all over the world looking for work, education and security (OECD, 2011). As a social democratic welfare state, the country has become one of the best countries for labor migrants who seek to better their lives (Ahlén and Palme, 2020, p.424). However, the country has had its fair share of labor migration policy changes which is influenced by a wide range of historical, economic, political and social factors. The country opening up to labor migrants in 1947 was a governmental response to labor market demands to fill labor shortages in some sectors.

The country's labor migration policy after 1947 has been changing and so understanding the evolution of Sweden's labor migration policy is critical to understanding the complicated interplay between labor migration and labor market demands. After the implementation of the labor migration policy in Sweden in 2008, the country experienced an influx of labor migrants who has contributed to its economic growth. According to Statista (2023), in 2021, the service sector which is characterized with migrant workers contributed 64.83% to the country's GDP (Statista, 2023). Sweden's changing and expanding economy demands the need to attract and retain foreign labor in order to maintain development and competitiveness on the global market.

In 2016, after the 2015 refugee crisis, the country received its largest migrant population of 163,005 which consisted of both asylum seekers and labor migrants (Statista, 2024). While labor migration has been a key component of Sweden's economic development strategy, the decision to allow migrants into the country goes beyond the protection of the country's economy and this reflect in policies made. One of the main concerns addressed by the country is meeting humanitarian needs such as the protection of asylum seekers fleeing persecution and family reunification; and this set of people also contribute to the labor migrants' quota in the labor market. As such, any evaluation of Sweden's labor migration policy can be complete by taking into consideration not just policies made concerning labor migrants but also refugees/asylum seekers and family members of labor migrants.

Historically, key actors like the Swedish trade union has played a major role in defining labor market dynamics and advocating for the rights of all workers and this is central in the discussions of labor migration policy with its changes in Sweden (OECD, 2011). The trade union plays a role as an advocate for the labor force assisting in the adjustments of labor migration policies that is to

balance the interest of employers, the workers and the society at large by ensuring fair labor standards and equitable treatment for all. It is therefore worth discussing the role the trade union has played over the years in shaping labor migration policies in Sweden.

Despite Sweden's effort made with labor migration policies, it still faces some challenges within the labor market arena whereby even a sector of the migrant community is rendered vulnerable through labor migration policies. Within the migrant community, non-EU migrants may be disadvantaged when it comes to getting access to the country and into the labor market. This is because of factors like visa/permit restrictions, language barrier, discrimination and problems with the recognition of foreign qualifications and skills.

To fully understand the impact of labor migration policies on migrants, a longitudinal analysis will be helpful. The research seeks to focus its analysis of labor migration policy changes from 1947 to 2023 because it helps to give a nuanced understanding of how policy changes have contributed to labor migrants experiences and outcomes over a long period of time. This will help identify key patterns and trends which might not be obvious when studies are done based on few years. Research has been made in the areas around these studies however, there has not been a direct analysis to find out the relationship between changes in labor migration policies and its extensive effects on the labor migrant over a continuous period of time which this research seek to address. The study seeks to shed light on the complexities of labor migration policies and its impact on migrants in order to provide recommendations for future policymaking.

## 1.0 Statement of Problem

Labor migrants' important role played in Sweden's economic growth is seen in their major contributions to the country's workforce by filling critical gaps in industries and other sectors facing labor shortages. Since 1947, the government has implemented numerous migration policies to regulate the influx of labor migrants but the effects of these policy changes on labor migration trends are not fully established.

The Swedish government has made labor migration policies over the years that seem to work well with integrating the migrant community into the Swedish system. Despite the seemingly inclusive structure put in place by the government, migrants still face significant barriers that

increase their vulnerability and limit their seamless integration into the Swedish labor market. Labor migrants usually face difficulty in finding secured job, fair wages, and acceptable working conditions. These issues are frequently exacerbated by restrictive migration policies and unpredictable labor market demands. Furthermore, economic downturns and policy changes may disproportionately affect labor migrants, resulting in job insecurity and social marginalization. Understanding the historical background and long-term trends in labor migration in the face of policy changes can shed light on the underlying causes of these challenges, allowing for more effective policy interventions.

## 1.1 Research Objectives

The primary goal of this study is to thoroughly analyze how labor migration policies in Sweden from 1947 to 2023 altered the patterns, characteristics, and experiences of labor migrants. Specifically, the historical development of the Swedish labor migration policy will be analyzed, focusing on significant legislative changes and administrative decisions that impacted labor migrants. The study will assess how specific policy changes affect the inflow and demography of labor migrants with the aim of providing a thorough and nuanced knowledge of the relationship between policy changes and labor migration patterns in Sweden.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The research questions this study seeks to answer are:

1. How do changes in migration policy in Sweden determine labor migration flow?
2. Has the demographic distribution of labor migrants in Sweden changed over the years as labor migration policy changes?
3. Have changes in labor migration policies in Sweden disproportionately affected labor market outcomes?

To answer the research question, there will be an analysis of policy documents regarding the changes in labor migration policies from 1947 to 2023, alongside the interpretation of graphs generated from statistical databases to showcase the impact of these changes on labor migrants before concluding the study.

## 1.3 Relevance of the study to Social Work and Human Rights

Social work and human rights are to ensure the social inclusion of all persons and to avoid or reduce social exclusion to the barest minimum. Implementing of policies that help in the social inclusion of marginalized communities has been a topic of discussion in many countries (Lyons and Huegler, 2011). The study gives a historical framework for labor migration, which will add to the knowledge social workers have in this sector, which sets the stage to assist them in better understanding migration issues and policy changes, thereby increasing empathy and understanding for its service users who are migrants. Since the study aims to reveal how changes in labor migration policies affect different people/sects within the labor migrant community, the study will help social workers understand what their role of advocacy is to be by advocating for fair migration policies by providing insights and ensuring new policies are grounded in the realities of labor migrants.

The study provides historical analysis backed by statistical data, which will support human rights activists by highlighting discriminatory practices and promoting policy change to combat such issues. Examining the evolution of Swedish labor migration policies can uncover how these policies contribute to labor market marginalization and identify the most affected groups. This understanding is crucial for advancing social justice and human rights principles. The insights gained will also inform evidence-based policymaking to protect non-EU labor migrants in Sweden better.

## 1.4 Background of Research

To begin with, Sweden decided to open its borders to attract labor migrants as a migrant-tolerant country who is committed to the promotion of equality. This became more visible in December 2008, when the country came out with liberal rules for labor migration for all people regardless of where they are coming from (Frödin & Kjellberg, 2018). The free labor movement within the EU was up for discussion. It became complicated since most member countries who opposed this idea believed it would overtake Western labor markets (Berg & Spehar, 2013).

However, Sweden opened its doors to EU citizens and third-country labor migrants (*ibid.*). A third-country migrant here means anyone who is not a member of a member country of the European Union (European Commission, n.d. -a). This meant that migrants could come to

Sweden to seek economic opportunities and refuge. Sweden has undertaken several programs and policies throughout the years to aid in assimilating migrant workers into its labor market. The Swedish government, however, continuously reviews its labor migration policies in response to changing societal demands and migration patterns, which is to aid in the maximization of the contribution of migrant labor to the economy. The Swedish labor migration policies have seen many changes over the time, and key actors like the Swedish trade union and employers organizations have played significant roles in this.

The initiation of labor migration is guided by its historical and economic influence. Sweden experienced significant hit in its labor market and population growth when almost one million Swedes moved to America between 1851 and 1910 (Statistics Sweden, 2013). This emigration of many Swedes resulted from poverty, no hope for the future, political constraints, and the quest to seek "greener pastures" (Swedish Institute, 2023). After World War II, Sweden started experiencing an inflow of migrants from the EU. However, these migrants returned to their countries of origin when things were getting better in their respective countries (ibid.). Even though there was economic hardship during and after the World War II, leading to unemployment even among Swedes, Sweden still opened their borders and introduced the so-called liberalization of labor migration (Berg & Spehar, 2013). The 1970s and 1980s saw significant inflows of migrant workers, mainly from Southern Europe and the Middle East, contributing to Sweden's economic development.

In 2001, Sweden joined the Schengen group, which meant opening its borders to attract EU members because of their free movement policies, leading to 29,000 non-EU citizens moving to Sweden to work (Swedish Institute, 2023). Irrespective of the free movement policies to increase labor migration, there were strict measures based on labor market assessments to avoid shortages in some sectors (Frödin & Kjellberg, 2018). Despite efforts made to increase free movement in the EU, it was realized that labor migration of non-EU migrants, especially, was a problem, and this led to Sweden introducing a new policy in 2008 called the labor migration policy (OECD, 2011). This policy is said to be the most liberal in Europe, aiding the employability and easy movement of migrant workers (ibid.). Research shows that the labor migration policy was enacted to target non-EU migrants to fill labor shortage gaps in some sectors that could not be filled by the country's citizens alone (Emilsson, 2015).

Interestingly, between 2008 and 2009, when Sweden introduced its new policy to attract a lot of migrant workers, there was an economic recession in Europe, and this recession significantly impacted Sweden, leading to the most significant GDP decrease since 1931 and an increase in unemployment rates, particularly among non-EU migrants (Hassler, 2010). Regardless, Sweden did not revert but kept on with this policy and modified the policies with time to suit current market economic demands. Historically, it can be said that Sweden has maintained a tradition of openness to migrants, driven by labor shortages, demographic shifts, and humanitarian concerns, which was seen in 2015 when the country received many refugees from war-torn countries (Swedish Institute, 2023).

One would wonder why Sweden went ahead and opened its borders to attract skilled and unskilled foreign workers in 2008 and 2009, even though the country faced some economic crisis. It can be said that some sectors demanded more unskilled workers, which Swedes were not interested in working there, like the cleaning and hotel jobs, hence the need for foreign workers. Another issue that can be raised is the country's desire to tap into foreign workers' human capital. This can be deduced from the 2009 manifesto by the Moderaterna party emphasizing the need and importance of not just skilled labor but unskilled labor through open and accessible labor migration (Moderaterna, 2009). It can be said that, during the post-war era, Sweden actively recruited labor migrants to fuel its growing industries and welfare state.

Around 2015, labor migration policies were modified as a result of an outburst of refugees and asylum seekers in Sweden because of the outbreak of wars. This season can be said to be one of the peak seasons where Sweden was overwhelmed with migrants, and this brought many integration challenges that needed redress. Some changes included the need to teach migrants the Swedish language, vocational training, and labor integration programs for newly arrived migrants. Labor migration policies needed to be reviewed to ensure their relevance and effectiveness to meet changing demands in the market economy due to globalization, rapid technological changes and increasing population.

## 1.5 Thesis Outline

The thesis has seven (7) chapters. Chapter one (1) is the introduction chapter, and it consists of the statement of the problem, research objective, research questions, the relevance of the study to

social work and human rights, and background of the research. Chapter two (2) is the literature review section, which focuses on previous studies review, the role of key actors in Swedish migration policies, and an overview of the Swedish labor migration policies. Chapter three (3) encompasses the theoretical framework of the thesis. Chapter four (4) is the methodological section, which highlights the methods used for this thesis. Chapter five (5) details the data analysis and research findings. Chapter six (6) is where the conclusions of this study are made, and in this chapter, there is a recommendation to key actors and further research.

## Chapter Two

### 2.0 Literature Review

This section seeks to understand the existing knowledge of this study. What will be discussed in this section is a review of previous studies, the role of key actors in labor migration policies, and an overview of Swedish labor migration policies. Reviewing previous studies will help to understand what other studies have said about this topic and bring to bear what this study needs discover. This will then lead to the role key actors played in shaping labor migration policies, and how labor migration policies have changed over time. All these are necessary to know because they form the basis for understanding how relevant the study is.

### 2.1 Previous studies review

According to the Swedish government labor migration policies changes are made to protect migrants in the labor market, prevent labor exploitation, and ensure integration (Barun, 2022). Some researchers have explained why there have been changes in the labor migration policies whereby Cerna (2009) explains the liberalization of labor migration policy as a switch of power between capital and labor as advocated by employers' organizations in order to reduce the veto power of the trade unions (Cerna, 2009). On the other hand, Berg and Sephar (2013) argue that the change in labor migration policy can be explained by the preference of political parties rather than by the influence of key actors (Berg & Sephar, 2013). It is argued that after Sweden moved to the demand-driven system where there was no governmental hand in recruitment and regulations of migrant labor, labor exploitation increased (Pelling, 2020).

On the contrary, it is said that labor exploitation of non-EU migrants is now minimal as a result of the reform in labor migration policies as reported by the employers' organization (Ekenger, 2013); however, per research, highly-skilled labor migrants do not find Sweden as an attractive work destination because of high taxes (Wallen & Sanandaji, 2013) leading to labor market being characterized by low-skilled workers. The demand-driven system has made non-EU migrants vulnerable in the labor market because the system allows work permits to be tied to the employer (Emilsson et al., 2014, p. 16), which can be a manipulative tool for employers.

The Swedish Trade Union Confederation's 2013 report reveals that the liberalization within the labor market system is primarily for intra-corporate transfers whereby employers seek cheap labor even within sectors with surplus labor (Emilsson et al., 2014, p.47). Emilsson (2015) confirms that even though permits are granted to highly-skilled migrant workers, many low-skilled migrants come to work in sectors experiencing a surplus of workers, increasing unemployment in the country (Emilsson, 2015).

Research has it that the attempt made by the government to get a "one-fit-all" policy for labor migrants is leading the country to the choking of sectors that require low-skilled workers, like the hotel and cleaning services, and making it difficult for high-skilled workers to integrate into the Swedish labor market (Pelling, 2020, p.6). Even though Sweden sought to increase the number of labor migrants in the labor market, a report from the OECD showed no significant increase in work permits even after the policy change (OECD, 2011). Previous research has shown that the trend for labor migration has changed, shifting from just highly-skilled migrants getting access to the Swedish market to low-skilled migrants and seasonal workers getting same opportunity (Emilsson, 2015).

## 2.2 Key actors' role in labor migration policies

Research indicates that labor market actors, such as trade union federations and employers' organizations, play a crucial role as lobbyists for various open labor migration policies (Facchini & Mayda, 2008). Over the past few years, the Swedish trade union has played a vital role in determining that labor migrants are not being exploited, even though the union has experienced different changes in its role and execution (Karras & Morina, 2016). The veto power of the trade union to decide who gets employed was eliminated in 2008, and they did not have the power to

decide that anymore (Bender, 2023). Their role in deciding issues on labor migration is said to have helped reduce labor exploitation to the barest minimum (Karras & Morina, 2016).

Johansson (2014) brings to bear the different interests of employers and trade unions, where the liberal policy granted employers power over labor migration against restrictive policies that would help avoid lower minimum wages (Johansson, 2014). The change in power and the coalition of parties in parliament contributed to this change (Frödin & Kjellberg, 2018). Despite retaining corporatist traits, the Swedish model is less centralized than in the mid-1980s, allowing unions and employers to negotiate wages and conditions through collective bargaining agreements (Bender, 2023). Interestingly, Sweden has no minimum statutory wage, so not being a union member means the employer has the power to determine what you will receive as a wage (Åman, 2023, p.12). According to research by Lindberg (2020), the Swedish National Audit Office reported that migrants do not have easy access to knowledge and information concerning their labor market rights, making it challenging to learn about the Swedish Trade Unions and their relevance (Lindberg, 2020).

Research has proven that most migrants, significantly non-EU migrants, do not benefit from the Swedish Social Safety Net and are not part of any union, which makes them vulnerable in the labor market (ibid.). This has led a lot of migrants into labor exploitation, and it comes as no surprise that they end up in jobs/industries that are said to involve work-related crimes such as the so-called “gig” economy, which includes delivery service companies, construction, cleaning, hotel and restaurant jobs (Åman, 2023, p.10).

However, studies have shown that all employees at firms bound by the collective agreements are covered regardless of union membership, either through individual signings or through sectorial-level negotiation with employer associations (Bender, 2023). Even though union membership has fallen from 77% to 70%, the collective bargaining coverage rate has been stable since 2006 because of high organizational levels among employers (Kjellberg, 2022b). The inability of the unions to protect labor migrants is explained by a vicious cycle where there is a decline in union density in sectors where the migrant population is dominant which affects workers’ bargaining power, wages and working conditions (Kjellberg, 2019).

Amidst all these, high union membership fees become a burden for the migrant workers because they find themselves in low-paying jobs like restaurants and hospitality making the union unattractive to join, and the cycle continues (ibid.). The union is said to be facing challenges with integrating the migrant community as a result of different labor conditions for migrant workers and natives, which stems from the growing support of natives for the radical right-winged government, creating organizational and political problems, especially in the blue-collar jobs sectors (Bender, 2023). The reduction of power of the Swedish trade union has led to its inability to protect all people in the society, and this is argued from the power resource approach in welfare state which depicts that the state is shaped by power distribution among competing classes with interest organizations like the trade union advocating for public welfare (Korpi and Palme, 2003).

## 2.3 Overview of the Swedish Labor migration policies

This section will elaborate on how labor migration policies have evolved and how Sweden's openness to labor migration began to change. According to studies made by Bender (2023), Sweden, which acted as the "humanitarian hub" in Europe in the 80s and became a destination for many migrants and received many refugees during the 2015 refugee crisis, is no longer like that now as it was confirmed during the Ukrainian crisis where the country made it clear their unpreparedness to receive a lot of Ukrainian refugees (Bender, 2023, p.202). The story began to change in 2010 when the Sweden Democrats, a radical right-winged party known to be an anti-immigration party, was able to increase their votes by 4%, making them gain seats in parliament and eventually amassing more votes from both the Moderate Party and the Social Democrats in 2022 (ibid.).

The 2015 refugee crisis significantly boosted the party, which has since ranked third in popularity because of the political shift towards a more restrictive migration stance driven by the fear of losing votes to parties with more restrictive policies because the priority of voters is on migration-related issues now (Bender, 2023). The Center-left parties fear Sweden Democrats' influence could harm liberal democracy and minorities, while politicians and the general population express concern about the negative social consequences of migration, including effects on labor, school, and criminality (ibid.).

Most blue-collar union members have gradually shifted from the Social Democrats to the Sweden Democrats because of concerns about immigration and economic insecurities (Bender, 2023). The 2015 refugee crisis has intensified the Swedish labor migration debate, and its argument is on the 2008 liberal labor market policies made by the liberal-conservative government and the Green Party, which changed the country's initial policy, making Sweden one of the most liberal countries in the OECD (OECD, 2011). Before the 2008 reform, the Swedish Public Employment Service, Arbetsförmedlingen, had to assess labor migration needs and the union ensured compliance with collective agreement (Riksdagen, 2008). The Labor Migration Act of 2008 shifted the power to employers in Sweden, allowing work permits for individuals offered employment under certain conditions, which replaced previous regulations (Bender, 2023). After the influx of refugees in the country in 2015, stricter measures have been put in place of which some are refugee permits are now temporary which was not the case before, family reunification is more stringent, and financial support requirements have been introduced with even higher levels being considered by government (ibid.).

Statistically, in 2020, 35% of labor migrants had tertiary education-requiring jobs, while 36% did low-skilled work. The labor migrants intake remained around 20,000 annually, but the number of refugees has declined since 2016 (Bender, 2023). The Swedish parliament initially focused on reducing refugee intake but has since expanded to include labor migration, which has been largely driven by the 2015 refugee crisis (Bender, 2023).

## Chapter Three

### 3.0 Theoretical Framework

This section talks about relevant theories that will be used to understand the relationship between changes in labor migration policies and labor migrants. The study utilizes two theories: the historical institutionalism theory and the dualization theory. The historical institutionalism theory talks about how past experiences influence present decisions. This is relevant for this study because the theory will help to understand the historical background of how labor migration flow influences the changes in labor migration policies, which will bring to light the patterns in labor migration policies.

The path dependence and critical juncture concepts within this theory help to understand how historical paths have been shaped and why major turnarounds in labor migration policies were made which is beneficial for the study. The dualization theory, on the other hand, helps to understand the sectors in which labor migrants find themselves in the labor market by categorizing “insiders” and “outsiders.” It is relevant for this study because it helps to understand the dynamism of the labor market, bringing to light how segmentation in the labor market takes place. It will help to understand the demographical distribution of labor migrants and the outcome of changes in labor migration policies on non-EU labor migrants. The two theories complement each other because the historical institutionalism theory helps to understand how history has led to the modification of labor migration policies, and the dualization theory explains the effect these changes have on labor, leading to the “insider” and “outsider” issues.

### 3.1 Historical Institutionalism theory

Historical institutionalism (HI) is a political science and sociology paradigm emphasizing how institutional structures and historical legacies influence social behavior and political outcomes with predictable patterned behaviors and key actors (Pan et al., 2023). Research has shown that “institutions shape actors’ interest and action arenas through complex structures” (Sitek, 2010, p. 570), while “history creates context and shapes choices” (Aspinwall & Schneider, 2001, p. 10). Hall and Taylor (1996) highlight four key features of historical institutionalism: an extensive understanding of institutional relationships, a focus on power relations, path dependence, and causality, and the perception of institutions as a determinant in political outcomes (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 941).

According to Capoccia and Kelemen (2007), policy change occurs when external shocks reveal the shortcomings of the previous institutional structure, thereby giving key actors the platform to push for policy reforms (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). This study’s key concepts under historical institutionalism are path dependence and critical juncture. Path dependence is a change in current decisions based on previous actions (Pan et al., 2023). In contrast, critical juncture is the crucial moment when decisions need to be made to significantly impact the course of events leading to a specific outcome (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007).

This theory will be used in the analysis section to unravel why the country made some decisions and the outcome. In so doing, the researcher will use the concepts in this theory to explain every significant action and decision throughout the study. This theory will be more utilized in analyzing policy documents because it chronicles historical labor migration policies and patterns. In short, analysis made with historical institutionalism in labor and labor migration policy changes helps to understand the “whys” behind policy changes in this area.

## 3.2 Dualization Theory

Dualization theory is defined as a political process that involves differential treatment of people within the labor market who are classified as “insiders” and “outsiders,” leading to social policies as a result of changes in the labor market (Emmenegger et al., 2012, p. 3). Insiders are defined as people in the labor market who are wage-earners with stable and protected employment, while outsiders are unemployed or hold low-protection jobs with potential for conflicting interests due to unemployment vulnerability (Lindvall and David, 2012, p. 279). As a result of unemployment vulnerability, dualization theory is important because it helps to understand the social and income inequality gap created in the labor market, which influences economic decisions in a country.

The OECD report indicates that social policies ensuring equality in the labor markets have become less effective in reducing inequality and poverty for years as labor developments drive these disparities (OECD, 2008). Historically, redistributive social policies that ensured social justice, economic equity, and welfare enhancement moderated market income inequalities, but reforms in many countries may have lost some redistributive capacities with a trend towards means-testing and privatization of old-age security, which may have led to the widening of inequality gaps in the labor market (Emmenegger et al., 2012, p. 8). The dynamics of social policies within the labor market affect the migrant community, which is considered part of the “outsider” group.

Research has shown that migration policies are altered to promote “desired” workers’ arrival while imposing barriers for “undesired” immigrants thereby extending the cheap immigrant labor pool paradoxically (Emmenegger et al., 2012, p. 20). During and after the early 1990s economic crisis, immigrants in the labor market notably were excluded from crucial social insurance programs like unemployment insurance (Lindvall and David, 2012, p. 281). The theory of

dualization, therefore, suggests that liberalization affects certain workforce sections with well-organized “insiders” manipulating policy processes to destabilize “outsiders” while maintaining the core of the labor market as a result of being part of key political parties (Rueda, 2007).

Sweden, in contrast to other EU countries, is less susceptible to the issue of dualization. This is attributed to the active involvement of key centralized actors in the labor market, such as trade unions and employer organizations (Lindvall and David, 2012, p. 281). These actors prioritize general goals and promote solidaristic policies, serving as a protective shield for the vulnerable in the labor market (ibid.). The Swedish party system further influences the labor market dynamics, with the Social Democratic parties focusing on protecting low-wage earners when in power, while the Christian Democratic parties do not prioritize “outsiders” (Lindvall and David, 2012, p. 281).

The theory of dualization will serve as the guiding framework throughout the analysis. It will illuminate the demographic distribution within the migrant community and the sectors where migrant workers are concentrated in the labor market. This theory will be instrumental in understanding how segmentation is manifested in the labor market, particularly when analyzing the data. It will also provide insights into how Sweden categorizes individuals as “insiders” and “outsiders” in the labor market through its policies.

## Chapter Four

### 4.0 Methodology

This chapter details the thesis methodological approach used. In this section, the researcher discusses the research design, ontological and epistemological considerations, data collection, data analysis, reliability, replication and validity, researcher’s reflections, and ethical considerations. Pallant (2020) asserts that high-quality research requires meticulous planning and study execution (Pallant, 2020, p.3). This is why the researcher has carefully analyzed the essential documents, databases, and procedures used for this study in this chapter. Contentious issues surrounding this topic are assessed to determine what is already known about the subject, theories and concepts are employed and a review of previous literature is conducted first

(Bryman, 2016, p.8). Reading various texts and articles on this topic aided in understanding the problems surrounding this research problem better (Pallant, 2020, p.3). In this study, organizing and controlling research findings were ensured through concepts and terms like migration, labor migration policies, and the Swedish labor market which helped to get the correct articles and successfully convey the research topic to the intended audience (Bryman, 2016, p.8).

## 4.1 Research Design

A research design is a framework for data collection, analysis, and understanding of behavior to gain long-term knowledge of social phenomena (Bryman, 2016, p.46). This research utilizes the longitudinal research design to determine the labor migration policy changes from 1947 to 2023. The reason for beginning the studies in 1947 is because, that was when the need for labor migrants was assessed, forming the basis for understanding why the country enacted the labor migration policy in 2008. The longitudinal analysis of labor migration policies will enable the researcher to track these changes and better understand how policy alterations affect the paths of migrants. This will help to understand how policy changes influence the experiences and outcomes of migrants and how the influx of labor migrants shapes labor migration policy decisions.

According to Bryman (2016), a longitudinal design is a study that involves collecting data from the same sample or population over some time (Bryman, 2016, p.63). In this study, the population studied is the labor migrant community. Refugees/Asylum seekers and family members of labor migrants will be discussed since they all form a part of the labor market, and labor migration policy changes also affect them.

The research strategy employed for the study is a mixed method approach, combining qualitative document analysis and quantitative data analysis using SPSS for a comprehensive and robust analysis of the research problem (Bryman, 2016, p.628). This mixed method was used for the study because it reduces the weaknesses of the research strategy, focusing on the strengths of both the qualitative and quantitative approaches, thereby increasing the robustness of the results (ibid.). The study analyzes policies and statistical data collected from different databases. The development of policy analysis was driven by the need to provide decision-makers with

trustworthy information regarding urgent social and economic issues and a deeper understanding of the policymaking process (Fischer, Miller, and Sidney, 2007).

The policy analysis which is the qualitative approach is needed to interpret the intentions and implementations of labor migration policies that have evolved while showing their impact on migrants. The statistical data from different databases will identify migration trends and the effect of labor migration policy changes on labor migration patterns. Descriptive analysis would be done through descriptive statistics, using numerical measures and graphs to summarize data (Thompson, 2009). Descriptive analysis is a comprehensive method of analyzing and presenting data to help understand a pattern or trend which, would add up to the conclusion of this study.

Research questions, as highlighted by Bryman (2016), are a crucial component of studies, providing clarity on the knowledge that the researcher aims to acquire and shaping the focus of the research (Bryman, 2016, p.9). In our analysis, the research questions serve as the foundation for determining which documents to use and the variables that will help answer the research question. The study employs a deductive theoretical approach, where theories serve as the basis for analyzing results (Bryman, 2016, p.24). The theories were selected after the research questions were designed, and they guide the organization, selection, and interpretation of data in the analysis.

#### *4.1.1 Ontological and Epistemological Considerations*

The ontological consideration made is constructivism, which says that social phenomena are continually created and recreated through social interactions, emphasizing the active role of social actors in shaping reality and placing emphasis on context and interpretation (Bryman, 2016, p.33). The researcher takes this position because the study explores the intricate social phenomena of labor migration and policy changes, highlighting how social structures, policies, and human actions shape these outcomes. The study acknowledges that social realities and policies are dynamic. So, the analysis of labor migration policy changes from 1947 to 2023 considers historical contingencies and how past events influence present conditions and future possibilities. The study finds the diverse perspectives of various stakeholders, including trade unions, policymakers, and employers, on labor migration and the impact they have had on labor migration policy changes.

The epistemological considerations of this study are interpretivism and empirical realism. The study uses the two because of the mixed method strategy utilized. Interpretivism is a critical epistemological stance that argues that social sciences should focus on unique human behavior and interactions and requires a distinct logic (Brymann, 2016, p.28). The study uses interpretivism because of its qualitative stance, where it interprets and explains labor migration and policy changes. Empirical realism posits that by employing suitable methods, it is possible to understand reality (Brymann, 2016, p.29). This is what the quantitative method used in this study seeks to achieve. Combining the two epistemological considerations is to understand the complexities of labor migration and policy changes by combining interpretations of policy documents with reality through the interpretation of statistical data.

## 4.2 Data Collection/ Material

Data collection involves defining the research objectives and designing research instruments to effectively implement what needs to be known (Bryman, 2016, p. 12). This study uses secondary source of data for its analysis. All documents and data were accessed through Google searches and from other published works. The empirical data for the study is explained in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 below.

### *4.2.1 Empirical Data for Policy Analysis*

The main empirical data meticulously selected for the policy analysis is from the OECD 2011 policy review document on Sweden, DEMIG dataset and Regeringen och Regeringskansliet. Due to the fact that the researcher is not a native speaker, care was taken when data was being chosen. These documents were chosen for their English language, reliability, and recognition as authoritative sources.

Even though the OECD document used is a policy review document examining the impact of labor migration policy and its effectiveness in solving labor needs in Sweden, the researcher used chapter 4, pages 56-66, which details the history of labor migration policy changes from 1947. This study did not use the reviews made by the OECD but focused on the policies needed for the analysis of this study.

DEMIG POLICY dataset is a database that focuses on the migration policy changes of countries over the years. These datasets detail migration policy changes for 45 countries over several

decades. The dataset details the significant policy changes every year, the source of the data, and policy restrictiveness, making it unique for this study. The researcher used this by checking the policy changes with other reliable sources like the OECD, Swedish governmental websites, and published papers, confirming that the data was reliable for the study. The site is easily accessible, detailed, and easy to use, making it more straightforward for everyone who wants to use the same information.

Using the DEMIG POLICY dataset made it easier for researcher to compare policy changes over time. However, the dataset covered policy changes in Sweden from 1894 to 2013 so; there was a need to use other reliable sources. The researcher, therefore, used alternative sources for the changes implemented from 2014 to 2022. The additional data on migration policy changes were obtained from the website of the Migrationverket, which offers a historical overview of migration in Sweden (Migrationsverket, 2022), and Regeringen och Regeringskansliet gives a parliamentary discussion on labor migration policy changes in 2022.

The tables below provide an overview of the documents used and why they were used, with Table 1 detailing documents used to access changes in labor migration policies in Sweden. Table 2 records the timelines from the DEMIG POLICY dataset for Sweden.

**Documents used to access changes in labor migration policies in Sweden**

Documents	Content Used	Reason
OECD	Chapter 4 of policy review document of OECD which captures “the evolution of the Swedish labor migration” OECD,2011 was used. It details the different labor migration policies from 1972.	It helped to avoid the translation of Swedish policy documents which could have affected the meaning of the information
Regeringen och Regeringskansliet	Swedish government website which entails the parliamentary discussion on the Tidöavtalet	To get the policy changes in Sweden in 2022 which was missing in the other documents used

Table 1: Documents used to access changes in labor migration policies in Sweden

**Timelines from DEMIG POLICY dataset used in this study with the year, policies made and its restrictiveness.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Description and Restrictiveness</b>
<b>1947</b>	Free labor migration policy (Less restrictive). (DEMIG, 2015)
<b>1972</b>	Union rejects all work permit application from foreigners. (More restrictive). (DEMIG, 2015)
<b>1973-1980</b>	Policies for integration of all migrants (Less Restrictive)(DEMIG, 2015)
<b>1981</b>	Residence and work permit required before entry into Sweden (More restrictive). (DEMIG, 2015)
<b>1985</b>	Integration policy for all migrants (Less Restrictive)(DEMIG, 2015)
<b>1994</b>	“Free movement of workers within EEA and temporary protection visa” (Less Restrictive)(DEMIG, 2015)
<b>2005</b>	Integration policies for all migrants (Less Restrictive)(DEMIG, 2015)
<b>2006</b>	“The Committee on Labor Migration to Sweden (KAKI) recommendations on labor market policies and the enactment of the Aliens Act of 2005” (Less Restrictive)(DEMIG, 2015)
<b>2008</b>	The 2008 Labor Migration Policy(Less Restrictive)(DEMIG, 2015)
<b>2009</b>	The New Anti-discrimination Act was enforced (Less Restrictive)(DEMIG, 2015)
<b>2010</b>	Tightening of family reunification policy(More Restrictive)(DEMIG, 2015)

<b>2012</b>	Stricter measures for employers recruiting non-EU migrants(More Restrictive)(DEMIG, 2015)
<b>2013</b>	“Permanent resident permit granted to all Syrian asylum seekers” (Less Restrictive)(DEMIG, 2015)

Table 2: Timelines from DEMIG POLICY dataset used in this study with the year, policies made and its restrictiveness.

Source: DEMIG, 2015

#### *4.2.2 Empirical Data for Statistical Data Analysis*

The primary data source used for the statistical data analysis is the Eurostat and Statistics Sweden (SCB) databases. Eurostat database is preferred because data is coming from a double-checked source. Eurostat is the statistical body for European Union countries, and it works with the statistical units of the member countries. This means that after the local statistical office has checked the results of the data received, they pass it on to Eurostat, who double-checks the results for accuracy, making it more reliable than other sources, which is not to say there might not be errors. The Eurostat database utilizes the data navigation tree, where the researcher had to navigate to the migration section and to get the variables needed for the study. The data is downloaded in Excel and then compiled since, for instance, data for males has to be downloaded separately from females. After compiling the data, it is transferred to IBM SPSS Statistics to run the analysis, enabling the data to be converted into diagrams. The statistical analysis section illustrates these diagrams in Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Data from SCB is preferred because it is a reliable source for all databases in Sweden and has a detailed database on the migrant community which covers the said period of this study. The researcher utilizes both databases because they complement each other. The decision made by the researcher as to which database to use for a particular variable was determined firstly by checking if the source had published data on that variable in question and then later checking the timeframe covered by the source. With the SCB website, the data was already compiled on an Excel sheet, so it was downloaded and exported to IBM SPSS statistics, and the analysis was run to get Figure 6 in the statistical analysis section.

The Eurostat and SCB database is preferred because it gives data collected from a large group of people that the researcher would not have been able to reach if a personal data collection exercise had been undertaken. The metadata page of various variables confirms that data was collected based on a random sampling method of the migrant community; however, this did not represent the total population of the said group. The researcher prefers this dataset because it eliminates biases whereby data could have come from a particular group within the migrant community, and data for the specific period that the researcher wants to study is covered even though it was not for all variables.

The variables for the analysis are explained in details how they were measured and used in this analysis. The first variable is education levels of migrants based on gender. The education level was characterized into two groups; that is migrants with tertiary level of education and migrants with 0-primary level of education. The dataset downloaded had the educational level, age, sex and citizenship of migrants. The focus for the researcher was on the educational level and gender with citizenship status being noted. The age gap looked at is from 15-64. This two variables were preferred because it helped to explained the educational gap based on gender clearly. The data was obtained from the Eurostat database which highlights data conducted annually and the unit of measurement is in percentage and data is collected on individual levels but presented in an aggregate form. Aggregate form is defined here in this study as answers from individual participants grouped based on similar answers and then in a particular year. The educational levels of migrants based on gender was used under the theme “welfare notion of social provision” to help understand the demographic distribution of migrants based on the educational levels and gender while understanding the relationship between educational attainment and employment under the same section.

The variable migrant employment trend was the second variable used and this was characterized into two groups; migrant employment trends based on gender and the total migrants’ employment and unemployment trends. The dataset downloaded had sex, age, citizenship and labor status of migrants. The focus for the researcher was on the employment/unemployment and gender with citizenship status. The age gap looked at is from 15-64. These two variables were preferred because it helped to understand the pattern of employment and unemployment status of migrants over the years based on gender which is necessary for the study when looking at labor migration.

The data was obtained from the Eurostat database which highlights data conducted annually and the unit of measurement is in thousand persons and data is collected in an aggregate form. The employment and unemployment trends of migrants based on gender was used under the theme “welfare notion of social provision” to help understand the role of the welfare state in the employability of migrants while understanding the relationship between educational attainment and employment under the same section.

The variable immigration trends was the third variable used. The dataset downloaded was immigration by sex and country of birth, 1970-2023 and projection 2024-2070. For the purpose of this study, the data used for the analysis was up to 2025. These variables were preferred because it helped to explain the migration pattern right from 1970 and it was under the theme “meeting the economic needs for labor shortage in Sweden” which helped to showcase how policies influence migration patterns. The data was obtained from the Statistics Sweden database which highlights data gotten from the Swedish Tax Agency on yearly basis and the unit of measurement is in thousand persons and data is collected in an aggregate form.

The researcher wish to emphasize that, there was no correlational or regression analysis done through SPSS. The dataset was downloaded from the various databases into excel. The variables needed was selected and worked on so that it could be transferred to SPSS. It was then uploaded to SPSS and on SPSS, the chart builder and line was used under graphs to generate the graphs for the analysis. The analysis made is solely descriptive statistics which means that the researcher described the characteristics of the graphs generated based on the patterns generated with graphs (Pallant, 2020, p.69). Graphs together with the policies were used to explain the rise and drop in numbers within some specified periods. The basis is to understand the relationship between changes in labor migration policies, demographic distribution, and outcome of changes in migration.

The variable “Percentage share of unemployment rate for domestic and foreign born in 2023” compares the unemployment rate based on continents in 2023 and groups people who answered the questionnaires without selecting any country under “other countries” and people who just said they were “foreign born”. The Figure 7, was downloaded from Ekonomifakta website but the cited source on their website shows that the dataset was from Statistics Sweden. Ekonomifakta is a reliable site as it is part of the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise whose duty is to produce

knowledge about the Swedish economy. The data was conducted for the year 2023 which is recent, the unit of measurement is in percentage and the data was collected in an aggregate form. The variable was used under the theme “roles of collective actors and unions in labor migration policies” to help understand the effects marginalization in the labor market.

The variable share of foreign born members in blue-collar unions and union membership density among blue-collar workers has its source from Kjellberg but was picked from Bender’s book (Migration and Integration in Post-Pandemic World) on page 208 and was properly cited. The variable was under the theme “roles of collective actors and unions in labor migration policies” to help understand the relationship between labor migrants and the trade unions. The researcher made use of this Figures 9 and 10 because it was difficult to get data from the various databases on union participation of migrant workers in Sweden.

The variable shown in Table 4(Labor immigration to Sweden) and Figure 7 (number of permits granted per category) are from the Swedish Migration website, which the researcher deemed appropriate to use and was cited correctly. Table 4 is discussed under the second theme and Figure 7 is used to under the theme “asylum and family reunification” to help understand how asylum seekers and family members of labor migrants influence the migration trend to help understand Sweden’s priority within the migrant groups. These other sources were used because the primary source of statistical data, Eurostat and Statistics Sweden, did not have a dataset to cover the chosen variables, which was needed for the study. Table 3 below shows the source of the databases and why it was selected for this study.

**Source of databases for statistical analysis**

Database	Contents used	Reason
<b>Eurostat</b>	Data on migrants employment and unemployment trends, educational level of migrants in Sweden	This was needed to understand the rate at which migrant workers are being represented on the market and which sector of the migrant community is benefiting from labor migration.

<b>Statistics Sweden (SCB)</b>	Data on Immigration trends in Sweden from 1970-2023	To understand migration trend over the years and how policies reflect in this
<b>Swedish Migration/Migrationverket</b>	Data on permits granted to different groups within the migrant community and labor immigration	This was to help confirm the assertion created about the need of labor migrants in Sweden
<b>Ekonomifakta</b>	Data on the percentage of unemployment rate for domestic and foreign born in 2023. Cited Statistics Sweden	It helps to understand dualization and which group of people face dualization more in the labor market
<b>Kjellberg</b>	Published paper and gives data on the share of foreign born members in blue-collar jobs who are in trade unions from 2005-2020	To help understand the migrant worker – trade union relationship better

Table 3: Source of databases for statistical analysis

### 4.3 Data Analysis

To analyze data, the researcher utilizes the thematic analysis approach, a technique used to discover, examine, and interpret recurring patterns or themes within qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2016, p.297). For the qualitative policy analysis, the researcher familiarized with the policy changes from 1947 to 2023 by reading thoroughly to understand the policy changes. Codes were then identified and written down, which were then grouped to generate the study's themes. The researcher contacted the research supervisor for a second look to finalize the themes. Figure 1 below shows how themes were generated using codes.

The variables used in the statistical data analysis were derived from the research objectives and questions presented in 1.1 and 1.2, respectively, to ensure alignment with the study's goals. For instance, to answer the research question of labor migration flow, the migration pattern was chosen as the variable. Similarly, the variables of education and employment, work permits, and

trade union membership of migrant workers were selected to address the second and third research questions under section 1.2. The choice of these variables was influenced by the available data that could be assessed. The analysis was not done separately but the variables were used to strengthen the analysis of the policy documents.

The reason for using both policy document analysis and statistical data is because policy documents give a clear picture of the historical patterns of labor migrants and how labor migration policies have evolved, whereas statistical data is needed to back this analysis and help reveal the patterns within these periods. The researcher makes an emphasis to the times and years talked about in the analysis that, even though the document elaborates on all the years with its changes that can be discussed, the most relevant years where significant changes were made will be utilized for this analysis to avoid the study being unnecessarily lengthy.

## Generation of themes using codes for policy document analysis

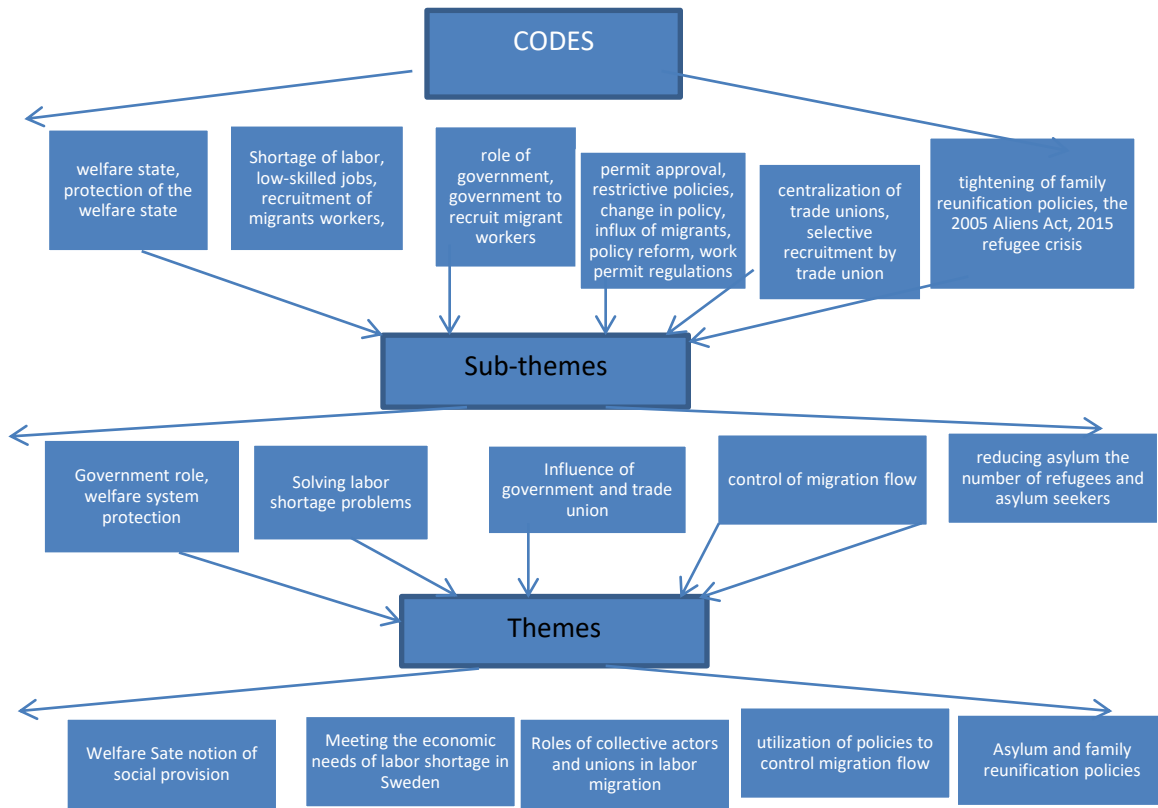


Figure1: Generation of themes using codes for policy document analysis

### 4.4 Reliability, Replication and Validity

When deciding on a study design, its measurement, known as the quality criteria and reliability to ensure reproducible outcomes (Bryman, 2016, p.46). Reliability in research ensures consistency and trust since policymakers and researchers will trust your study because results are consistent under similar conditions. The study's reliability is assured because it uses secondary data where the policy documents are from the DEMIG POLICY database and the policy review document on Sweden from OECD. The primary source of statistical data is from Eurostat and SCB databases. where the members of the migrant community answered questionnaires based on the changes in policy within the particular year the data was collected; these sources can be trusted that answered questionnaires were coming from the migrant communities because of the sources' reputation over the years.

With all these said, there are a barriers that can affect the outcome of the collected data which can be linked to the language used for data collection. The main languages used by SCB for data collection are Swedish and English. However, the migrant community is very diverse and speaks different languages. Hence, participants are subject to the interpretation of questions, and their understanding of the language they are being asked in determines the answers they will give, which cannot be corrected after data is sent in, which can affect the reliability of the dataset. To address these challenges, the researcher called SCB to check website credibility and how reliable the dataset is and followed up with and an email. SCB confirmed the credibility of the dataset. However, the email sent to Eurostat was not replied to. Triangulation became an option. Different sources were studied to cross-check how reliable this study would be, using various policy documents to see how changes were reflected in the data. Combining statistical data and policy document analysis will help strengthen the reliability and validity of the study.

Bryman (2016) highlighted that replication is another crucial aspect of scientific research, which involves repeating previously studied fields to validate previous research (Bryman, 2016, p.47). This study will validate existing research on policy changes and their effects on the labor migrant community and highlight the field's importance to policymakers. Measurement validity, or construct validity, is a crucial aspect of research, ensuring that a measure accurately represents a social scientific concept (Bryman, 2016, p.47). The study's validity is examined by assessing its consistency and ensuring that theories utilized for assessment are appropriately reflected. Deviation from these notions can provide problematic results, necessitating the alignment of conceptions and measures. To ensure the validity of this study, theories were used to guide the generation of appropriate research questions, which are further used in the analysis of the study to ensure consistency.

## 4.5 Researcher's Reflection

With the researcher's background as a migrant passionate about this area of study, there was the need to ensure that personal beliefs, mindset, and biases do not influence the study. This was important because studies influenced by practitioners' biases risk losing their scientific credibility (Bryman, 2016, p.39). As stated, research values may reflect personal beliefs, so social scientists are to strive for objectivity and avoid subjectivity to ensure scientific validity (ibid.). The researcher chose a mixed-method approach, utilizing both policy documents and statistical data to

maintain objectivity and minimize biases because the researcher could not alter these sources of data any way. Interviews were avoided because of the risk of designing research questionnaires that might align with the researcher's interest, which might lead to results analysis being interpreted to suit researcher's ideologies. Designing and distributing questionnaires was also avoided because the researcher believes that they would have circulated among a specific sector within the migrant community while neglecting the lot of migrants from different backgrounds. This would have been a result of limitation in time for the study.

## 4.6 Ethical Issues

Social research necessitates meticulous adherence to research and professional ethics, underscoring the researcher's unwavering commitment to the research community and participants (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017, p.12). As outlined by Bryman (2016), four fundamental ethical principles are rigorously adhered to in this study (Bryman, 2016, p.135).

To begin with, every researcher needs to consider the harm of their research to its target group/participants, which can occur in different ways (Bryman, 2016, p.135). Researchers must balance protecting participants and conducting quality research, depending on the questions and methods used (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017, p.13). To achieve a good study, this research sought to use a secondary source of data because the migrant community is considered part of the vulnerable communities in a country, and as such, overexposing them to this kind of research might not be helpful. The researcher considers these people as those exposed to policy changes that have affected them directly or indirectly. So asking them questions about their past experiences and fears are for the future based on new policies might cause harm, especially emotionally, which is against research ethics. To minimize this effect, the researcher used data collected from the same target group to avoid harm to participants.

In every research study, it is crucial to address the principles of informed consent, privacy protection, and avoidance of deception (Bryman, 2016, p.135). Since the study utilizes a secondary data source, it had no issues with these principles. However, the Eurostat and SCB database, the primary database source for this study, makes known how data is collected which meets these criteria. When questionnaires are sent out, participants' consents is sought, and the purpose of the study is explained. Participant confidentiality and anonymity are assured and

leading questions that can cause one to be traced are avoided. Details are given on the purpose, outcome, and potential impacts on the participants to prevent deception, and findings are provided not individually but in an aggregate form.

Using statistical data to back policy analyses helps reduce the researcher's biases and beliefs, which could have influenced the outcome of this research.

Another ethical issue the researcher realized was that most of the vital information needed for the research was written in Swedish, so translations were required since I am not a native speaker, which might influence the interpretations. However, much effort was placed into searching and using documents written in English, which were equally valuable for this study, hence limiting errors and biases. Most of the databases could not give data from 1947. Still the researcher used it because it was able to explain the pattern changes in policy changes, so the outcome of this study will not be affected in any way.

## Chapter 5

This chapter will be focused on answering the research questions by analyzing the policy documents listed in chapter 4.2.1. The process that will be utilized is that, the details of the documents relevant for this study will first be discussed to help understand the historical background and then analyzed together with statistics. The analysis will be based on the themes discussed in chapter 4.3.

Variables from the statistical data will be used to identify trends and patterns which will back the analysis of the policies. How this will be achieved is explained in chapter 4.2.2. The researcher emphasizes that; it is only in the first theme that the relationship between the variables is analyzed because this will help to understand the demographic difference among migrants. The rest of the variables are used to analyze policies being discussed under the various themes. The themes are not isolated rather they relate with each other to help and answer all the research questions in chapter 1.2 generally. The data analysis will be done using the theories and concepts discussed in chapter 3.

### 5.1 Welfare State notion of social provision

A country's welfare state model has a considerable influence on its labor migration policies and practices, and hence, understanding the principles and structure of Sweden's welfare state gives a background for analyzing labor migration policy changes. Sweden is known to be a social democratic welfare state which, implies that the state has the duty of providing a comprehensive welfare system for its citizens (Esping-Andersen, 1990). The notion behind comprehensive welfare provision is that the country provides a universal social security, whole employment policies, and a strong network of public social services, providing care from birth to death (Aspalter, 2011).

The notable thing about welfare regimes that is worth mentioning is that the means of survival is based on employment in the labor market; however, it is characterized by inequalities in the market (Wood & Gough, 2006). Looking at the employment rate from Figure 2 which is between males and females in Sweden, it can be said that, from 2001, the gap between males and females were not that wide until after 2004 where the gap was widening. Through the lens of path dependency theory, it is expected that decisions would be taking by the state by making social policies that will help to attain the welfare goals (Wood & Gough, 2006). So in 2005, the integration of migrants became the topic and "job practice" became the format for the government whereby people were given 3 months to gain experience in the job they desired but did not have the Swedish experience (DEMIG, 2015) so as to close the inequality gap.

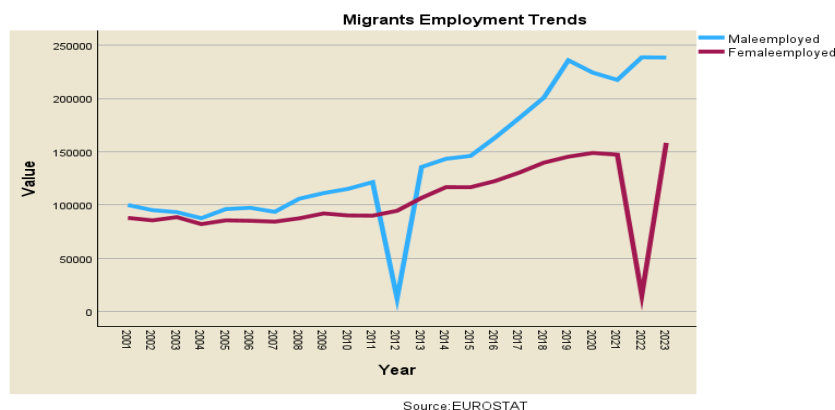


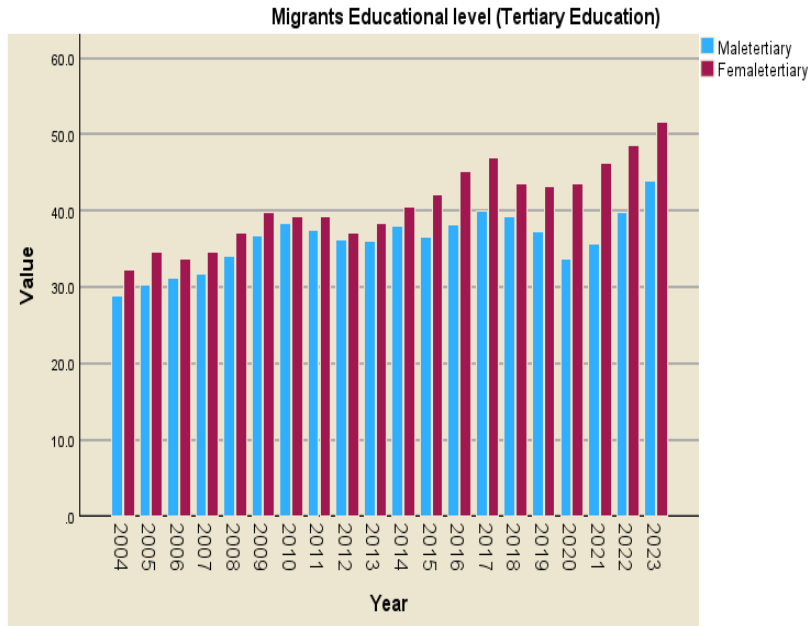
Figure 2: Migrants Employment Trends based on gender

Source: Eurostat

As studies have shown, a higher educational qualification coupled with relevant job experience gives one an upper hand in the labor market (NG et al., 2023). However, in the case of Sweden, the employment inequality gap between male and female migrants kept increasing based on the statistics presented in Figure 2; even though from Figure 3 below, it can be seen that female migrants attained higher education qualification as compared to male migrants. It can be argued that, migrants who had some form of education from Sweden were prioritized on the labor market.

From the Figure 4, it can be seen that in 2005, the gap between male and females who had 0 to primary level of education were widening and so it can be said that most men took the opportunity of the integration program policy since they were less educated in order to get into the labor market whereas many women did not because they felt their educational qualification was more than enough to get them into the labor market, hence the gap around that period. This is backed by a research conducted that showed that migrants with foreign qualification and work experience find it difficult in entering the Swedish labor market because their qualification is not rated as equal to the Swedish education (Dahlstedt, 2015).

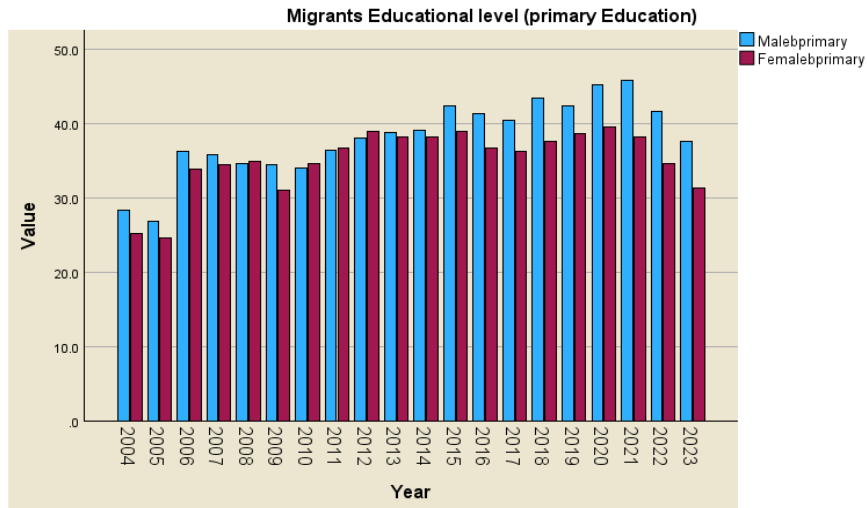
Studies on labor market dualization in highly developed countries have shown that, the secondary sector of the labor market is characterized with low-educated and unskilled labor (Piore, 1979). According to the OECD (2021), there is a shift in educational trends, with women now more likely than men to complete a tertiary degree before age 30, which was the case in 2019, whereby 55% of tertiary admissions were women (OECD, 2021), however, women still face challenges in the labor market compared to men (OECD, 2023) which is the case in Sweden as shown in Figure 2 above.



Source: Eurostat

Figure 3: Migrants Educational level (Tertiary Education)

Source: Eurostat



Source: Eurostat

Figure 4: Migrants Educational level (0-Primary Education level)

Source: Eurostat

Despite the disparities in the employment gap based on gender, Figure 5 which compares the general employment and unemployment rate among migrants over the years shows that Sweden is doing well with the employability of migrant workers. However, in 2023 for an instance, which records the highest number of employed migrants in Sweden, Eurostat records 91,200 migrants who were unemployed which is quite huge a number.

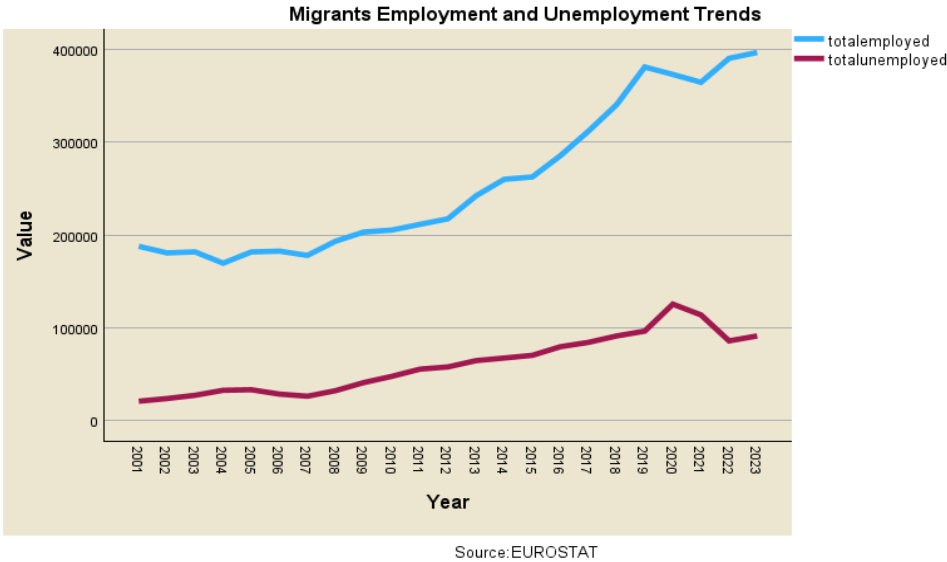


Figure 5: Total Migrants’ Employment and unemployment Trends

Source: Eurostat

Due to the characteristics of a social democratic welfare regime, Sweden was intentional about making decisions that would not allow people to take advantage of the Swedish welfare system, and that explains why in 1947, it was the sole duty of the government to recruit labor to areas that faced shortage (OECD, 2011, chapter 4). Integrating migrant workers into the labor market became essential because, as previously mentioned, securing employment is vital for their survival. Thus, as part of its duty as a social democratic welfare state, the country made the integration of migrants into the Swedish system their focus whereby there was a program like adult education, language and vocational training which was administered to newly arrived immigrants to educate them on how the Swedish system works (DEMIG, 2015).

In order to fully execute this, the Public Employment Service's funds were increased to train people in sectors facing labor shortages to meet the skills demanded for jobs (OECD, 2014). However, the researcher argues that, the focus of these policy changes were not to ensure the equality and wellbeing of the labor migrants as portrayed with the introduction of integration policy and the likes in the labor market but was to build a sustainable welfare state for its citizens. And so as history was leading to the modification of choices and policies, the outcome was the promotion and extension of cheap migrant labor pool (Emmenegger et al., 2012, p. 20), as integration policies made like adult education, did not target the integration of highly qualified migrants.

Making social policies to achieve welfare goals helps to understand the historical institutionalism assertion that institutions are the rules and practices that influence behavior and affect results in a political or economic system (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p.938). Research has shown that, even though institutions influence policy outcomes, they are not the sole determinants; but it interact with other factors like social norms, economic conditions, and individual agency in determining the final policy outcomes (Pan et al., 2023). And so the emphasis on migrant integration could be described as an institutional response to societal demands for social cohesion and inclusion, indicating efforts to match migration policy with broader community ideals and goals. Per the welfare system in Sweden, the government was to ensure that the country's economic problems gets sorted (Aspalter, 2011) and this leads us to the next section on the economic need for labor.

### *5.1.1 Meeting the economic needs of labor shortage in Sweden*

As the research intends to find out how migration policy influences labor migration flow, it is interesting to know how the economic needs of the country around 1947 on shortage of labor, especially in low-skilled jobs, made Sweden decide to recruit over 20,000 migrant workers to work in its manufacturing industries (Pelling, 2020). This reflects the country's historical need to solve labor shortages in specific sectors, which brings to light the quest to meet the country's economic conditions with societal norms becoming a factor in this decision-making.

The problem of filling labor shortage gaps lingered on, leading to lots of debates in parliament and with stakeholder organizations about adjusting the restrictive policy on labor migration because it was realized in 1972 that the Swedish working class population was falling, which was increasing the dependency ratio gap and so the need for labor migration (OECD, 2011, chapter

4). It can be argued that labor migrants became a means to an end. Interestingly, the role of the state becomes questionable since as a democratic welfare state, it is the duty of the government to promote the overall welfare of its citizens (Esping-Andersen, 1990), while at the same time, the Swedish integration policy is said to promote the equality of all people regardless of their background (European Commission, n.d. -b). The question is that whose interest is a priority? Hiring low-skilled migrant worker to fill labor shortage gaps in order to protect the welfare state and ensuring that the states' responsibility to its citizens are met, to the researcher, leads to dualization with equality not the focus. Analyzing this with the labor market dualization theory, it can be said that, since migrant workers were hired for low-skilled industrial roles, they might be forced into the part of the labor market that is mainly marked by unstable employment conditions and limited social protections, making them "outsiders" per the status they used in entering the labor market (Lindvall & David, 2012, p.279) which is not the characteristics of a social democratic welfare state.

The historical institutionalism theory explains how policy changes influence patterns, and these policy changes are influenced by actions that were taken in the past (Pan et al., 2023). From Figure 6, in 1970, 73,175 migrants moved to Sweden due to a less restrictive migration policy to solve labor shortage issues from 1947. However, this began to drop in 1972, when the trade unions decided to restrict labor migration. So, from 73, 175 migrants, it dropped to 24, 602 in 1972 and further down to 13,126 in 1973 as shown in Figure 6 below. This was the period when trade unions had the veto power to decide who was granted labor permits into the country, so low-skilled migrants were denied permits around this time (OECD, 2011, chapter 4). There was a rise from 1974 as a result of less restrictive policies, until 1980, when it dropped from 1981 through to 1985 because there was a national policy on border control whereby work permit was mandated before being granted access to Sweden (DEMIG, 2015). Even though there were restrictive policies, in 1994, the country experienced a sharp rise because less restrictive and major policies were made like the free movement of workers within EEA and temporary protection visas (ibid.).

Between 2005 and 2006, there was a steep rise from 54,358 to 83,113 migrants because of the enactment of the Aliens Act of 2005 and the KAKI recommendations in 2006 leading to less restrictive policies which was crowned in 2008, where the Moderate party passed the "Labor

Migration Policy” which is evident in the Figure 6 below (OECD, 2011, chapter 4). The institution of the KAKI Committee’s role in 2006 (DEMIG, 2015), can be better understood through the lens of the critical juncture concept where decisions have a significant impact and can affect the course of events leading to a specific outcome (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). The specific outcome of the KAKI committee’s findings was the establishment of the “Labor Migration Policy” in 2008, which led to a demand-driven system (OECD, 2011, chapter 4).

Shifting to a demand-driven system where the focus was filling labor shortage gaps by employers as the labor market demanded rather than just hunting for high-skilled workers as done by the trade unions (OECD, 2011, chapter 4) was an act of institutional continuity and adaptation, which is seen as the general objective of addressing labor shortages which remained constant across several policy regimes and changes in recruitment tactics (Pan et al., 2023). It can be suggested that, the effectiveness of this policy attracted a lot of migrants leading to a continuous rise in migration flow from 2005 till the country reached its peak in 2016 after the 2015 refugee crisis, where the country witnessed 150,301 migrants, mostly refugees and asylum seekers (DEMIG, 2015). As studies have shown, history gives a clear idea of the decisions to make (Aspinwall & Schneider, 2001, p.10), so it is deduced that the country needed to make more restrictive policies to cut down numbers. Restrictive policies like tightening family reunification policies, temporary border control and adjustment to asylum policies were made (European Commission, n.d. -b) which explains the fall in numbers from 150, 301 migrants in 2016 to 83,921 in 2023 and it is projected to even go further down to 75,162 in 2025. Even though there is a decline in immigration after the 2016 rise, it still remains significantly high looking at the migration trend in Sweden (SCB, no date). The shift to a demand-driven approach signified a divergence from past strategies that prioritized high-skilled migrant recruitment, which aimed to solve the labor market’s segmentation and reduce labor market dualization (OECD, 2011, chapter 4).

According to the path dependence approach, past decisions significantly influence present ones by making some alternatives more appealing (Pan et al., 2023), and so the labor migration flow influenced labor policy decisions, whereby there were stricter measures given to employers desiring to employ workers from non-EU countries (DEMIG, 2015), which can be said to be institutional efforts to regulate labor migration and accommodate labor market demands. However, this decision can be said to be the utilization of policies to increase inequalities in the

labor market by making employment of non-EU migrants unattractive (Emmenegger et al., 2012, p.10). Such actions from the state can be analyzed as using policies to raise barriers to prevent “undesired” migrants from entering the Swedish labor market (Emmenegger et al., 2012, p. 20).

**Immigration Trends in Sweden**

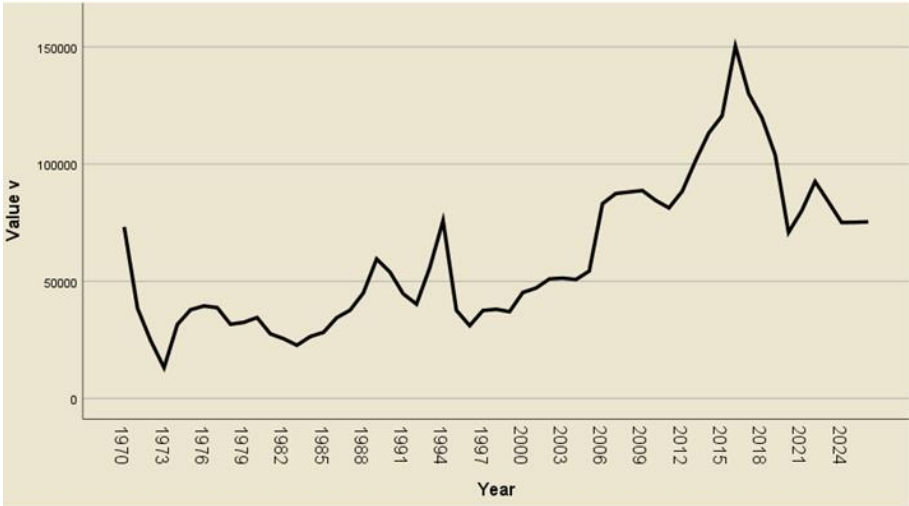


Figure 6: Immigration Trends in Sweden from 1970-2024

Source: Statistics Sweden (SCB)

Despite the fact that, the overall migration trend in Sweden is said to be relatively high (SCB, no date), labor migration specifically is low based on the statistics from Table 4. For instance, from Figure 6 above, in 2018, 119,746 migrants came to Sweden and out of that, migrants who came to Sweden on the labor migration status were 41, 050 as shown from Table 4. This gives a difference of 78,696 migrants coming to Sweden in 2018 for different reasons other than work.

In the same year, out of the 41, 050 migrants who moved under the labor migration permit as shown from Table 4, 15, 373 came based on family reunification. The International Labour Organization asserts that most family migrants are women however, they also confirms that most women who relocate with family members move for other reasons than finding work (International Labour Organization, 2021) which can be said to contradict Sweden’s agenda of opening its borders for migrants. This therefore helps to understand why tighter family reunification policies are made, making it difficult for accompanying family members to join their family here in Sweden or get a permanent permit as compared to the former policies that were made (Migrationsverket.se, 2024). On the other hand, the researcher argues that there is a

higher probability that most migrant women who move to Sweden based on family reunification have higher educational qualifications and skills, which might not be regarded as equal to the Swedish standard, and are not willing to fill the labor shortage gap in areas characterized by low-skilled workers, which makes their employability a problem.

**Table 4: Labor immigration to Sweden**

Broad category	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Employees	21 490	22 944	16 315	21 807	24 199
Family members of labour immigrants	15 373	15 131	12 510	14 164	14 120
Self-employed	135	104	114	221	160
Visiting researchers	1 155	1 216	905	1 173	1 121
Work in Sweden under special rules	2 897	3 855	2 538	1 988	1 881
<b>Total</b>	<b>41 050</b>	<b>43 250</b>	<b>32 382</b>	<b>36 109</b>	<b>38 399</b>

Source: Swedish Migration Agency.

Table 4: Labor immigration to Sweden, 2018-2022

Source: Swedish Migration Agency (European Migration Network, 2022)

*5.1.2 Utilization of policies to control migration flow*

Research shows that “history creates context, which shapes choice” (Aspinwall & Schneider, 2001, p.10), and this is seen in the case of migration policy changes in Sweden. Due to the influx of migrants in Sweden, there was the need to control migration flow, so the trade union pushed for a policy reform that required people to secure a job, get housing and a work permit before they entered Sweden in 1967, which became a part in the immigration law in 1968 (OECD, 2011, chapter 4). Around the mid-60s, there was a pattern that was noticed that migrants used in getting into the country, and that was to come as tourists, look for a job, and then later change their visas to employment visas (OECD, 2011, chapter 4), which called for a more restrictive policy in 1972 to secure the country’s labor market (DEMIG, 2015) confirming what Aspinwall and Schneider concluded on history determining choices. This led to legislation that mandated migrant workers to obtain residency and work permits before entering Sweden (DEMIG, 2015).

“Path dependence can be caused by both political and economic factors” (Pan et al., 2023, p.159), and in Sweden the legislative continuity highlights how institutional norms and historical legacies have shaped policy paths throughout time. Some path-dependence actions taken included, the

1980 policy changes of migrant protection in the Aliens Law which showed how institutions reacted to perceived flaws in policies already in place, and the requirement to bring immigration policies into compliance with changing human rights standards (DEMIG, 2015). As a result of previous actions influencing current decisions as posited by path dependence, making significant changes required bringing together significant resources (Pan et al., 2023) and this happened in 2008 when the Labor Market Policy was made, revealing the complex interactions between political process, institutional structures, and socioeconomic settings in order to make a significant change.

It was noted that for one to be considered as a labor migrant under this policy, the person undergoes what is called the “labor market test” when applying for a work permit where the said job should have been advertised on platsbanken for about ten days, the salary should be according to the collective agreement for the particular sector being employed into and the employee should be able to have a “maintenance allowance” of 13,000 SEK per month which measures institutionalized pathways (OECD, 2011, p.63). In 2012, the Swedish Migration Board implemented more stringent criteria for employers seeking to hire workers from non-EU countries, mandating evidence of their financial capacity to pay wages as a prerequisite for obtaining work permits (DEMIG, 2015), thus again, targeting a sector of the migrant community (non-EU migrants).

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2022, the right-wing parties, that is, Sweden Democrats, Moderate Party, Christian Democrats, and Liberals, announced the so-called Tidö Agreement (Tidöavtalet), which is to bring drastic changes to the Swedish system with which the section on migration and integration is of interest with regards to this paper (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 2022). Research has shown that individuals regarded as “insiders” are less likely to support parties that devote many resources to job creation initiatives or financial help to the unemployed because of the job security they have, while “outsiders,” who are more vulnerable to unemployment or have limited employment protection, prefer to support policies/parties that provide employment security and unemployment benefits (Lindvall & David, 2014, p.461). The dynamics of these politics practically play out when “insiders” decide to vote for the center-right party when the center-left parties prioritize the interest of “outsiders” (ibid.). This forms the basis of our analysis to explain why the right-wing bloc of the Riksdag brought the Tidöavtalet precisely one month

after gaining the majority seats in parliament, deeming it as a “paradigm shift” (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 2022).

Researchers have analyzed dualization to be a phenomenon where policies have become the tool used to heighten the discrimination between workers based on their position within the labor market whereby “the status of insiders remains relatively stable while that of outsiders tends to worsen over time” (Emmenegger et al., 2012, p.10). Policies made in this agreement is to tighten migration policies, stating that Sweden would not go beyond the EU directives on migration as they formally did, which put the country out to be one of the EU’s countries that has the most liberal and welcoming policies for migration (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 2022).

Some of the changes include but are not limited to internal border control, constitutionally amending the collection and storage of the DNA and biometric data of third-country migrants, which should be shared among all governmental authorities (ibid.). 8 years of stay is now needed to convert your permanent residence permit to citizenship, and that is after thorough investigations have been made (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 2022). To attain citizenship, one needs to know the Swedish language, what it means to be a Swedish citizen (i.e. values and culture) and being self-sufficient (ibid.).

As of now, permanent resident permits and citizenship can all be revoked unless one complies with the rules and accepts the country’s values. There is an imposition of stricter labor immigration conditions which is argued as helping to prevent labor exploitation, whereby work permit based on labor migration would only be granted if the income equals the Swedish median wage which is 27,360 SEK, which is 80% of the current median wage (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 2022) which aligns with the argument made about protecting the interest of “insiders” rather than “outsiders” depending on the party in power (Emmenegger et al., 2012, p.10).

It can be argued from the researchers’ point of view that, by establishing income requirements, the government hopes to ensure that migrant workers are not employed in conditions that undercut local wages or contribute to labor market segmentation, however, this is not entirely true because, as it stands now, Sweden does not have a statutory minimum wage and so not being a member of the trade union means employers are not bounded by the collective agreement

concerning the individual in question (Åman, 2023). This can be deduced that migrant workers who fail to meet the new income requirement will be automatically excluded from the system. Alternatively, the researcher argues that, there is a higher probability that, they might be compelled to work longer hours, regardless of wage and employment conditions, to meet the criteria and remain in Sweden, potentially leading to increase labor exploitation issues. The audit report from the Swedish National Audit Office confirms this by saying that some migration policies made, lead migrant workers to exploitative jobs, and they are also discouraged from seeking help, as asking for better conditions may result in job loss or forced exit from Sweden (Lindberg, 2020).

The Tidö Agreement can be analyzed as a contradiction between upholding Sweden's humanitarian character and responding to domestic political pressure representing a substantial break from Sweden's past openness to migration (OECD, 2011, chapter 4). Implementing stricter border controls, citizenship requirements, and labor immigration criteria indicates a shift towards more restrictive immigration policies, which may result from external forces, such as EU directives and domestic political concerns (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 2022). The changes in labor migration policies over time confirm the argument that dualization permits a situation where the status of "insiders" remains relatively stable while only the status of "outsiders" declines over time (Emmenegger et al., 2012, p.10).

### *5.1.3 Asylum and Family Reunification Policies*

As stated earlier, the asylum/refugees and family members of labor migrants mostly became a part of the labor market. The Aliens' Act of 2005, which was enacted in March 2006, permitted asylum seekers to work while awaiting a decision, could look for a job six months after an unfavorable decision was given and was able to switch to a work permit easily without returning to their home country while family members of labor migrants had easy access to the labor market (OECD, 2011, chapter 4) which met the country's need of filling labor shortage gap. This led to the granting of permanent residents permit to all Syrian refugees in 2013 (DEMIG, 2015), explaining the increase in the number of refugees from 2013 as seen from Figure 8. However, it also affected the issuance of permits given on the basis of work until 2018 when the number of refugees was reduced and work permits increased which is evident from the Swedish Migration statistics from Figure 7 below. The researcher argues that, with the country's' quest to be seen as

humanitarian and with its labor focus, they preferred to grant permit to asylum seekers and refugees. This is because as stated, asylum seekers are already in a vulnerable state and so nothing mattered anymore with regards to education and skillset. This means that, they will be willing to fill the gaps in the labor market that is predominantly characterized by “outsiders”, which becomes a win for the country in the end.

It can be assumed from this analysis that, an influx of migrants in Sweden and precisely in the labor market can be seen as threatening as citizens would have to compete with migrants over resources which is seen as negative externalities according to the critical juncture concept and demands an action to be taken (Pan et al., 2023). So, in 2016, the permanent residence permit, given to all asylum seekers and people who needed protection, was changed to a temporary residence permit, which was subject to renewal if the person proved they had a reason for extension (Migrationverket, 2022).

The passage of the anti-discrimination Act in 2009 marked a shift in Sweden’s legislative framework, necessitating adjustments to migration policies. After the new anti-discrimination Act came into force in 2009, 2010 saw a more restrictive policy, an institutional response to legal requirements. Under this policy, labor migrants from non-EEA countries with less than four years of permanent residence were required to prove financial support and housing ability before bringing their family to Sweden (DEMIG, 2015). This policy has the potential to exacerbate labor market dualization, as those unable to meet these criteria risk exclusion, regardless of their contributions to the labor market.

These policies led to a decline in permit acquisition for refugees from 2016 onwards, a trend that continued until 2022 when Ukrainian refugees sought refuge in Sweden. This historical context underscores Sweden's commitment to addressing the needs of refugees and asylum seekers (Swedish Institute, 2023). The researcher argues from the statistics in Figure 8 that, Sweden is more moved toward family reunification which has received more permits throughout the years amidst restrictive family reunification policies made. From Figure 8, in 2017, where the number of refugees’ intake was cut down, migration based on family reunification received the highest permits being granted. Even as at 2022, whereby there were restrictive policies like the requirement to prove one had sufficient funds before permit based on family reunification is

granted, the number is still quite high from Figure 7 below. Looking at the reasons of which permit is granted, it can be analyzed that study permits receives the least of attention in Sweden.

According to research, path dependence can lead to either positive or negative outcomes, shaping the impact of change (Pan et al., 2023). This underscores the rationale behind the decision not to automatically grant permanent residency to accompanying family members, a measure aimed at preventing labor exploitation, abuse of the Swedish System and the deviation from the main motive of labor migration (Migrationverket.se, 2024). This insight into path dependence provides a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play in migration policies.

**Number of Residence Permits Granted per Category**

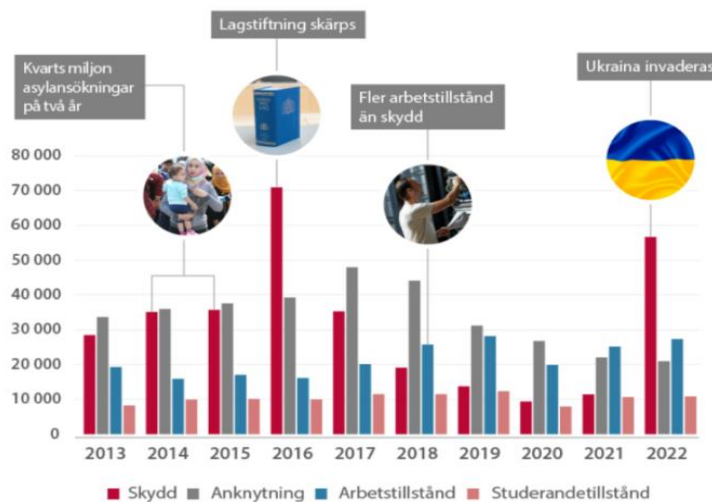


Figure 7: Number of residence permits granted per category, 2013-2022

\*Skydd-Protection \*Anknytning-Family reunion \*Arbetstillstånd-Work permit  
 \*Studerandetillstånd-Student permit

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

#### 5.1.4 Roles of collective actors and unions in labor migration policies

Following history, it can be said that a significant institutional change occurred with a migration policy change around 1965 when trade unions took on a more centralized role in recruiting labor migrants (OECD, 2011, chapter 4), which depicts the influence key actors have in shaping labor market policies and addressing the labor market dualization issues in general (Lindvall & David, 2014, p.461). The trade union's institutionalization in labor market governance is shown in the change in their authority to approve labor migrant permits, which results from their expanding

influence and worries about labor migrant issues (OECD, 2011, chapter 4). It can be argued that, past labor organization and collective bargaining practices coupled with experiences with labor migration may have strengthened the position of trade unions as essential players in labor market regulations, which have impacted path-dependency dynamics and historical legacies. The de-facto veto power of the trade union was used to recruit people with high qualifications only (OECD, 2011, chapter 4), which can be said to reflect their adaptability to changing labor market demands, making social welfare considerations, and preserving the integrity of the Swedish welfare state model. However, one can argue that, the trade union's veto power could lead to economic inefficiency whereby employers would find it hard to get the right people with the right skills for the jobs thereby leading to mismatch between job requirement and available labor.

One key actor that had a say in the changes in the labor migration policies was the employer and employee organizations who protested against the biased nature of employment of labor migrants by the trade union (OECD, 2011, chapter 4). In short, the Trade Union Confederation, Landsorganisationen (LO), wanted to maintain its veto power in the labor market while the employer's organization, Svenskt Näringsliv (SN), wanted a policy for job-seeker visas to be passed that would not go through the trade union for permit approval (Ekene & Wallen, 2002). However, labor market dualization can be said to be worsened as a result of trade unions' selective recruitment, as some sectors of the migrant community are privileged over others, leading to increased gaps in social protection and employment opportunities, which is seen as a means of segregating the labor market into the "insiders" and "outsiders" stream (Emmenegger et al., 2012, p.20).

A change from prior policies was shown by the elimination of trade unions' veto power and emphasizing on demand-driven labor migrant recruitment, portraying an institutional shift. The idea here is that institutions reflect the complex and different frameworks that determine actors' goals and the circumstances in which actions occur (Sitek, 2010, p.570).

On the other hand, the involvement of numerous stakeholders brings to light the issues of power and power imbalances, which are essential in historical institutionalism because all institutional studies have a direct influence on power interactions (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p.940). Historical institutionalism has brought us to the understanding of the power dynamics and how institutions distribute power unevenly, which affects some people negatively in a social setting but makes it

look like it is for the good of all (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p.941), which might lead to an uneven demographic distribution among labor migrants. For instance in Sweden, it can be argued based on Figure 8 that, if an employer needs to prove much of his capability in order to employ a non-EU citizen but have the opportunity to employ an EU citizen without stress, they would rather go for the latter or better still a Swede. Statistics has shown that, among the migrant community in Sweden, Africans and Asians face a lot of unemployment challenges compared to people from Europe or America as seen in Figure 7 below (Ekonomifakta, 2024) which all stems from changes in migration policies.

**Percentage Share of Unemployment Rate for Domestic and Foreign Born in 2023**

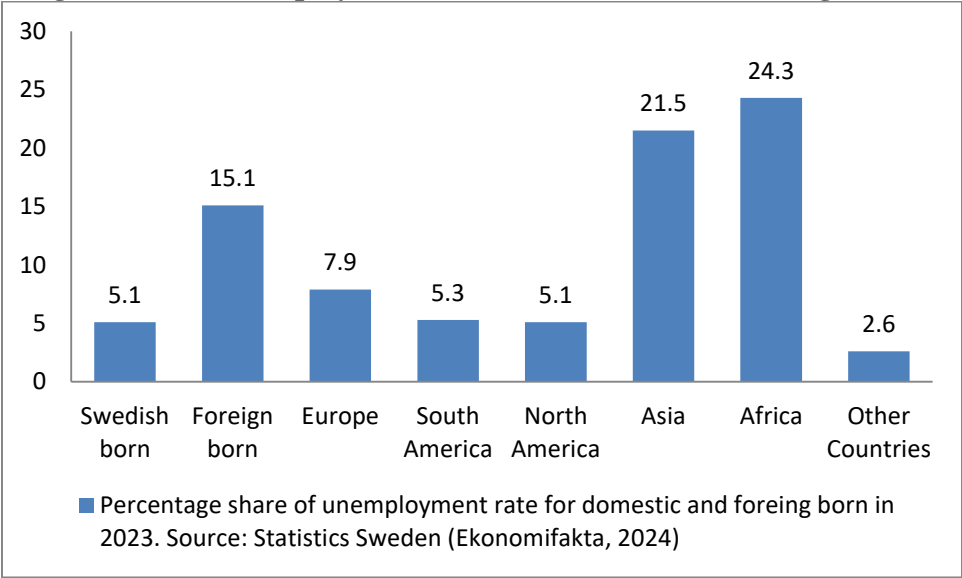


Figure 8: Percentage share of unemployment rate for domestic and foreign born in 2023. Source: Statistics Sweden (Ekonomifakta, 2024)

However, in all these, all the government wanted was to address labor shortages without necessarily a legislative change, so it set up committees like KAKI and Committee on Circular Migration and Development (CiMU) to find out the best ways to avoid the risk of “social dumpings” where people would take advantage of the system for their “selfish gains” (OECD, 2011, chapter 4).

Membership of the Swedish trade union is important to analyze because of the role trade unions play in safeguarding the labor market together with the protection of its members (Åman, 2023). Figure 9 and 10 below show the percentage of migrant workers in the blue-collar jobs that are part of the trade union and the overall union density rate. From Figure 9, it can be seen that union

membership among migrant workers within the blue-collar sector keeps increasing by the years. Sectors like food, real estate, hotel and restaurant services who records a lot of migrant workers, has seen tremendous increase in union membership over years with for example the food service recording an increase from 22% membership in 2005 to 42% in 2020. After the Covid-19 pandemic which led to a lot of unemployment in sectors like the service sector, where most migrant are found (OECD, 2020), it is seen from Figure 9 that union membership increased in all these sectors within the blue-collar union which can be argued that migrants workers felt threatened and wanted a form of security in the labor market. However, the overall union participation of migrant workers as shown in Figure 10 has dropped drastically from 77% in 2006 to 54% in 2021 even though their participation in both the private and public sectors of the labor market is increasing.

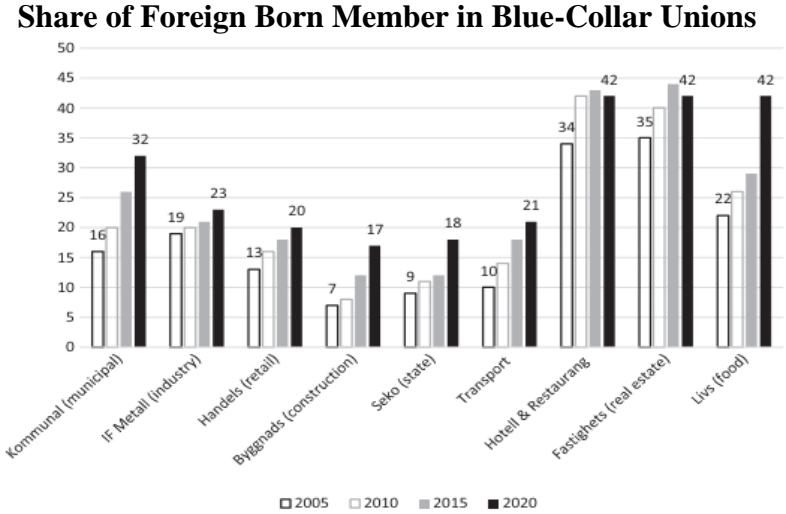


Figure 9: Share of foreign born members in the major blue-collar unions 2005-2020 (percent).  
 Source: Kjellberg (2022a) (Bender,2023)

**Union Membership Density among Blue-Collar Workers**

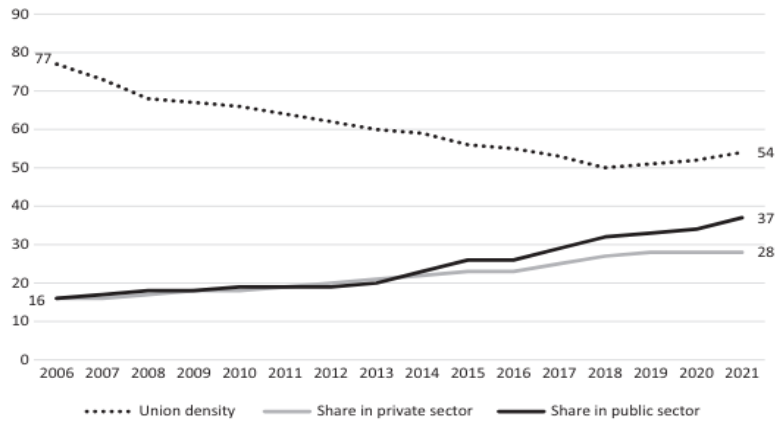


Figure 10: Union membership density among blue-collar workers 2006-2021 (percent).  
 Source: Kjellberg (2022a) (Bender,2023)

## Chapter 6

### 6.0 Conclusion

It is seen from the study results that the labor migration policy in Sweden has undergone several changes and adjustments, with policymakers determining migration pattern with policy regulations. The theories helped to understand that, changes in migration policies and the openness to labor migrants is more political even though key actors had their own influence. The government influence the vulnerability of migrants as the migrant become the political platform if one wants to assume political power. This is to say that, the aim of changes in migration policies is to stabilize the country’s economy, protect the welfare state, acquire political power and satisfy the needs of its citizens. In all these, the welfare of the labor migrant is not in focus. And this is realized over the years whereby, it is seen that migration policies have not been one way, moving from less to more restrictive policies and vice versa depending on who have power.

In answering the first research question which says “How do changes in migration policy in Sweden determine labor migration flow?” it can be concluded that, migration policies have a significant impact on labor migration flows. Effective policies that strike a balance between economic requirements, social integration, and border security can maximize the benefits of labor

migration, contributing to economic growth and social stability. And such policies are made when the country is in need of labor to solve labor shortages which significantly leads to the influx of migrants as the country becomes attractive for labor migrants. Consequently, when such policies are made to bait migrants into the country leading to influx, a reverse policy such as strict border control, employer sanctions and stringent visa processes becomes the means to reduce the numbers and limit the flow of migration.

With regards to the second research question, “Has the demographic distribution of labor migrants in Sweden changed over the years as labor migration policy changes?” The study shows that demographic shifts underscore the considerable impact of migration policy on labor migration flows, which influence not only the makeup of the migrant population but also their integration and contribution to the Swedish economy and society. Initially, the focus was on labor migration and only highly-skilled migrants were allowed into the country, which changed along the line to low-skilled workers being the focus. As results of the areas that labor migrants are expected to work, males were preferred because it was labor-intensive jobs. However, along the line, policies like family reunification helped to get more women into the country. Even though, more women migrants are assumed to be in the country, the employability of male migrants are still higher and people’s educational status did not really influence where they end up on the labor market as migrants.

The initial focus was to employ labor migrants but interestingly, asylum seekers were given more permits. From the understanding of the theories, this shift was a gain for the country because they simply met their humanitarian need mandate and filled shortage gap. However, this shift to admitting more asylum seekers also had an influence on the sector of migrants allowed in Sweden. In the face of adversities and the need to reduce the flow of migrants, non-EU migrants became the target whereby strict policies were made targeting them. Non-EU migrants’ employment is on the low because strict labor migration policies have made their employability unattractive, contributing to they forming a small portion of the migrant community statistically.

Concerning the last research question “Have changes in labor migration policies in Sweden disproportionately affected labor market outcomes?” The statistics show that, while Sweden's labor migration policies have sought to address economic demands and promote integration, they

have also produced and sustained gaps in labor market results, disproportionately affecting non-EU migrants. The non-EU labor migrants have low representation in the labor market because of strict permit regulations making it difficult for them to enter Sweden. They are not competitive enough in the labor market because of strict rules given to employers who want to employ them, pushing them to the secondary sector of the labor market, making them “outsiders” and susceptible to abuse. Strict family reunification policies may result in family separation as tight visa policies make it difficult for them to bring their family members which can lead to emotional and psychological impacts on the migrating families, rendering them less productive.

Looking at the trend in labor migration policies and the impacts it has had on the labor migrants, it can be assumed that the Tidöavtålet will lead to more non-EU migrants being kicked out of the labor market. The projected decrease in migrants in 2025 (European Commission, n.d. -b) can be assumed that it will be the resulting effect of Tidöavtålet.

## 6.1 Recommendation to Stakeholders

Recommendations for labor migration policy developers in Sweden will be that because the country needs labor migrants to fill its shortage gaps, they should realize that a one-size-fit-all policy will not be feasible. An all-inclusive labor migration policy is necessary taking into consideration the diversity of the migrant community and designing specialized policies or solutions that address their specific requirements. In the case of non-EU migrants, policies concerning visa acquisition and permit issues should be critically examined so that they do not become so tight that they become vulnerable in the labor market. Labor migration laws and rules should consider the potential risk that labor migration policies can pose for migrants who might be exposed to labor exploitation.

Qualifications and skills of migrants should be duly acknowledged by policymakers so that their skills are not underutilized and eventually pushed to the “outsider” category automatically. Trade unions should reach out to labor migrants in the labor markets especially in sectors like the blue-collar jobs to empower them on the benefits of being a member of the union, reduce union membership fees so that everyone can pay easily while advocating for less restrictive policies on visa and permit acquisition.

## 6.2 Further Research

A comparative study analyzing non-EU labor migrants in different countries could significantly advance our knowledge on effective labor migration policy making. This approach allows us to compare the labor migration policies of various countries, providing valuable insights on how to address the issue of labor migration policies sidelining non-EU migrants. By learning from countries that are handling this issue more effectively, we can inform our own policy decisions.

Due to time limitation, the researcher could not access various stakeholders like the employers' associations, trade unions, government organizations and NGOs to understand their perspectives on labor migration policies and their impact on non-EU migrants. Therefore, the researcher encourages fellow researchers to do this since their feedback will be helpful in making concrete research findings and more accurate recommendations.

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