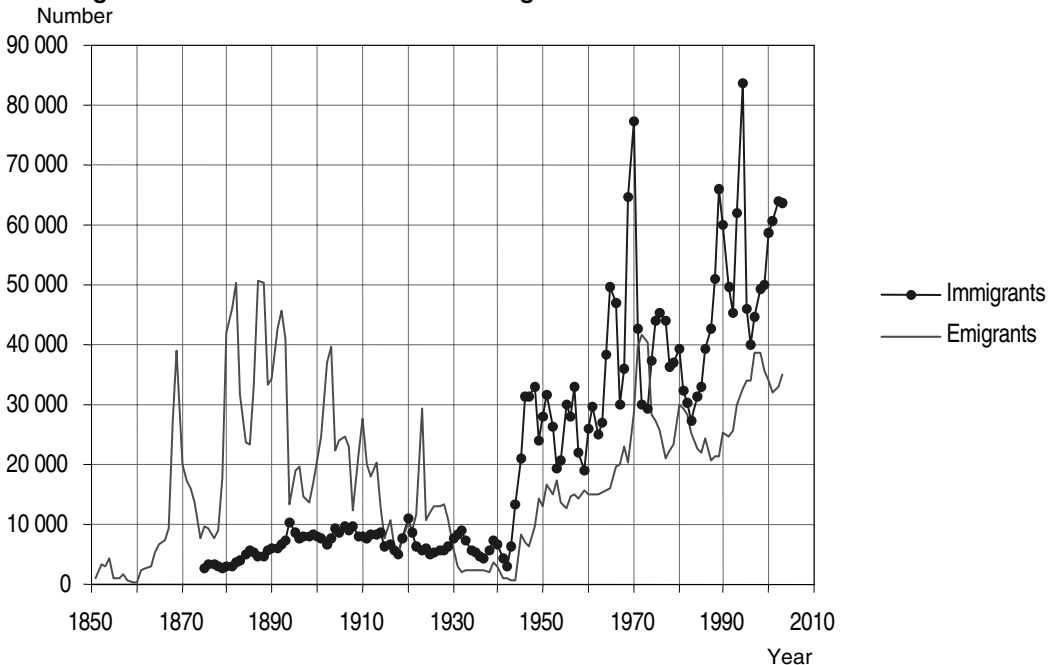


## Summary

Immigration to Sweden is a postwar phenomenon. Clearly, people have been moving to Sweden to a greater or lesser extent since long ago but immigration during the second part of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was largely made up of returning Swedes.

Statistics Sweden began to produce statistics on emigration in 1851 and on immigration in 1875. However, it was first during the late 1940s that migration statistics began to be recorded by citizenship. Previously, it was taken for granted that it was almost solely Swedish people moving across the borders, so that reporting by citizenship was seen as superfluous.

**Figure 18.1**  
**Immigration to Sweden 1875-2003 and emigration from Sweden 1851-2003**



From a land of emigration to a land of immigration - during the half century 1865-1925, Sweden was a land of emigration. Since the end of the Second World War, 1945, Sweden has become a land of immigration, with labour immigration during the 1950s and 1960s and refugee and family immigration since the 1980s.

## **Emigration to America dominating**

Between 1851 and 1930, 1.5 million Swedes emigrated from Sweden. Particularly high numbers emigrated from 1880 until the outbreak of the First World War. 1881-1882 and 1887-1888 were peak emigration years, when a crisis broke out in the agricultural sector in Sweden and the economy in the USA was booming.

The majority of the Swedish emigrants found their way to North America. Immigration to Sweden was then largely made up of Swedes returning to their home country. Roughly 400 000 people moved to Sweden during this period.

But many more moved away. Roughly 20 per cent of men and 15 per cent of women born during the latter part of the 19th century moved away from Sweden. However, despite a net emigration of 1.1 million people, the country's population increased from 3.5 million to 6 million people in the period from 1850 to 1930.

## **From emigration to immigration**

After the Second World War, Sweden became a land of immigration. In 1945, the number of foreign-born people in Sweden was still as low as 100 000. The refugees from neighbouring countries who stayed temporarily in the country during the Second World War were never registered in the population register in Sweden and so these people are not reported in any population statistics.

Since the Second World War, 2.4 million people moved to Sweden and 1.4 million left the country. Of those leaving Sweden, half a million were Swedish citizens and, of those moving to Sweden, 320 000 were Swedish citizens. Slightly less than half of these immigrants have since left Sweden.

Over a period of slightly more than 50 years, the number of foreign-born people increased by around 1 million. The number of foreign-born people in Sweden passed the one million mark in 2000. From having been an almost invisible element, immigrants have become an inherent part of Swedish society.

## **What factors affect immigration?**

Several factors affect how many immigrants come to Sweden, such as trouble in other parts of the world, the labour market in Sweden and the government regulation of immigration.

At the beginning of the postwar period, during the 1950s and 1960s, immigrants came from the neighbouring Nordic countries and from southern Europe. But this immigration from the Nordics and

Europe came to a standstill during the 1970s as the Swedish labour market was no longer as attractive. At the same time, people in troubled countries in Asia and South America found a place of refuge in Sweden. This has meant that migration from Asian countries has dominated immigration during recent decades, together with the 1990s refugee immigration from the Balkans. The Nordic immigrants from the 1950s and 1960s are now of the age where they have been reduced in number during recent decades more by death than by re-emigration.

Since the beginning of the 1970s, immigration has taken on a somewhat different character: refugee immigration and the immigration of close relatives that comes along with this have, since the middle of the 1980s, dominated more and more. At the same time, labour immigration has been minimal.

The newly-arrived immigrants have found it harder and harder to compete for jobs. Working life changed, with the disappearance of unskilled work. Education and the ability to communicate became more and more valuable in working life. It was hard for newly-arrived immigrants to get a foothold in the labour market even during the economic boom around 1990. The economic crisis of the 1990s, combined with a record number of refugee immigrants, made the problem worse. In addition, the large flow of refugees at the beginning of the 1990s coincided with the economic crisis in Sweden and job availability decreased.

The number of asylum seekers depends partly on the trouble in different parts of the world and partly on Swedish immigration policies. One example of this is the war in former Yugoslavia, which resulted in a substantial flow of asylum seekers to Sweden in 1992 and 1993.

## **Family ties dominate 1990s migration**

A widespread misconception is that immigrant and refugee are synonymous concepts. Only one eighth of people who have immigrated between 1990-2003 have been refugees. A refugee is a person who is *in need of protection*. In addition, almost twice as many people have been granted residence permits to live in Sweden on *humanitarian grounds*. Approximately four out of ten immigrants have cited *family ties* as grounds for residence. When considering immigration in recent years, it can be seen that the share of refugees has decreased while immigrants with family ties now account for half of all immigration. Returning Swedes are not included in these shares.

## **How has postwar migration affected Sweden's population?**

One direct consequence of postwar migration is that the number of foreign-born persons increased by nearly 1 million during the period from 1945 to 2003. Indirectly, immigration has also contributed to both more births and deaths. According to our calculations, immigration contributed around 1 million births between 1945-2003. Immigrants are young when they arrive in Sweden and belong to a selective group of people with a low mortality rate. The number of deaths among immigrants and their children is still low, at only 140 000. The calculated birth surplus is 870 000, which is almost as large as the immigration surplus, 970 000. Migration between 1945-2003 has thus contributed to an additional 1 840 000 people in Sweden. In comparison, it can be mentioned that, from the end of 1944 to 2003, Sweden's population increased by 2 380 000 people. Therefore, without migration, the birth surplus would only amount to 540 000, according to the calculations.

## **Regulation affects the flow of refugees**

It is more the rule than the exception nowadays that migration between countries is regulated. One exception relates to migration between the Nordic countries, which has been without restrictions since the 1950s. Labour immigration began to be regulated in 1967 for citizens of countries outside of the Nordics.

The Swedish immigration policy has been directed since the 1980s towards regulations and ordinances for asylum seekers and their families. 1980, 1989 and 1997 are important years for new and amended legislation. The Swedish migration policy seems to have contributed during certain periods to an increased influx of asylum seekers. During other periods, the policy has been more restrained, which has reduced the flow of asylum seekers.

## **Emigration and re-immigration of Swedes**

Since the end of the American emigration in the 1920s, emigration of Swedish people remained very low until around 1950. During the 1950s and 1960s, around 5 000 people per year emigrated. It was first in the 1990s that emigration began to show a new pattern and doubled from the level of the 1970s and 1980s to around 10 000 to 20 000 people per year. The increased emigration of the 1990s can be placed in the context of the economic crisis, globalisation and Sweden's entry to the EU. Roughly two thirds of Swedes return at

some point. The most popular countries to move to are the USA, Norway and the UK.

An analysis of Swedish migration statistics shows that approximately around 200 000 Swedes, i.e. Swedish-born persons, are resident abroad. If we compile data from other countries' statistical offices and make calculations for countries where there is no information, the number becomes around 300 000. This difference can be explained by around 100 000 Swedish-born persons, who are registered in the Swedish population register, being resident abroad for a shorter or longer time. The international recommendations state that a one-year rule should be applied with regard to migration. If a person is resident in a country for less than one year, they should remain in the Swedish population register and not be counted as part of the population of the country they are resident in. However, many countries have shorter time requirements for residency. So part of the difference can be due to varying definitions between countries. However, the most important cause of the difference is probably deficiencies in the statistics on migration. This could refer to, for example, persons leaving Sweden without registering their move.

## **How many immigrants are there in Sweden?**

Data on the number of immigrants in Sweden vary, depending on how the term "immigrant" is defined.

At the end of 2003, there were 476 000 foreign citizens in the country and 1 078 000 foreign-born persons. Roughly one seventh of the foreign citizens are born in Sweden. It can be calculated that there are around 800 000 Swedish-born persons with one or both foreign-born parents. Of these, 560 000 have one Swedish-born parent and one foreign-born parent.

Around one seventh, or 16 per cent, of Sweden's population is made up of persons with a foreign background, such as foreign-born persons or persons born in Sweden with two foreign-born parents. In addition, 6 per cent of the population are Swedish-born with one foreign-born parent and one Swedish-born parent.

**Table 19.1**  
**Sweden's population on 31 Dec 2003, by own and parents' country of birth - in thousands**

	Women	Men	Total
Swedish-born			
- with both Swedish-born parents	3 538	3 480	7 018
- with one Swedish-born parent	276	289	565
- with both foreign-born parents	153	162	315
Foreign-born	562	516	1 078
All	4 529	4 447	8 976

### **Immigrant - emigrant**

An immigrant is a person who intends to be resident in Sweden for a period of at least one year. Citizens of countries outside the Nordics also require a residence permit for Sweden in order to be considered immigrants.

An emigrant is a person who moves abroad and has the intention of staying abroad for more than one year.

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