

# Migration trends

A comparative analytical report of  
UNHCR refugees and asylum seekers  
from the MENA region in Sweden and  
Germany (2018-2023)



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## Abstract

This report provides a comparative analysis of UNHCR refugees and asylum seekers applications in from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in Sweden and Germany between 2018 and 2023. The data was withdrawn from the UNHCR refugee statistics portal and analyzed through Python, SQL and Power BI visuals. While both countries have played significant roles in receiving refugees, Germany maintained a more open policy toward asylum seekers, particularly from conflict zones such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, whereas Sweden has focused increasingly on structured resettlement through the UNHCR quota refugee program. This report examines migration trends, emphasizing the impact of national policies, political shifts, and economic considerations on refugee and asylum intake. The findings highlight that Germany consistently received a larger numbers of asylum seeker applications, while Sweden experienced a decline in asylum applications following stricter policies introduced in 2018. The report concludes by assessing the broader implications of these migration patterns, revealing how policy decisions in Sweden and Germany shape the flow of refugees and asylum seekers from the MENA region.

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# 1 Introduction

Migration has become one of the most pressing issues in Europe in recent years, as millions of people flee conflict, persecution and economic instability in their home countries. This report aims to compare the reception of UNHCR refugee and asylum seeker applications in Sweden and Germany between 2018 and 2023. The analysis is based on data from UNHCR refugee statistics portal, which provides detailed information on number of asylum seekers and UNHCR refugee applications from various countries, particularly from the MENA region. It is important to note that the figures presented in this report reflect the number of applications rather than the number of approved applications.

The data was processed and analyzed using Python and SQL, along with visuals in Power BI, enabling a comprehensive evaluation of migration patterns, laws and national policies. This report seeks to provide insights into how these two countries manage refugee flow and the factors influencing their migration systems.

## 2 Background

Migration has become a critical issue in Europe, particularly following the 2015 refugee crisis, when millions of people fled war-torn regions such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq seeking asylum. This sudden influx placed immense pressure on European Union (EU) member states, prompting to reforms in their asylum and migration policies to better manage these flows (Lübben, 2021). UNHCR has played a crucial role in coordinating international efforts to protect the rights of refugees, offering legal support, humanitarian aid, and facilitating resettlement processes for displaced individuals. Under UNHCR's guidance, refugees are resettled in countries like Sweden and Germany through the quota refugee program designed to assist those in need (UNHCR, n.d.).

UNHCR quota refugees are individuals who have been identified by UNCHR as particularly vulnerable and in need of resettlement in a safe country. Unlike asylum seekers who make their own way to a country and apply for asylum upon arrival, quota refugees are selected and approved for resettlement before they enter the destination country (UNHCR, n.d.-b)

The Dublin Regulation, a key element of the EU's asylum framework, assigns responsibility for processing asylum claims to the first EU country that a refugee enters. However, this regulation has faced criticism for disproportionately burdening southern European states like Italy and Greece, where most refugees first arrive. In response, countries as Sweden and Germany have increased their resettlement efforts to offer protection to asylum seekers and quota refugees (Koch, Biehler, Knapp, & Kipp, 2023; European Migration Network, 2019).

While both Sweden and Germany have played significant roles in addressing the migration crisis, their approaches have diverged over time. In response to the 2015 crisis, Germany adopted more open and flexible policies, welcoming many asylum seekers, particularly from conflict zones. Germany's resettlement efforts have included both spontaneous asylum seekers and structured programs for quota refugees (European Migration Network, 2019). In contrast, Sweden is historically known for its generous refugee policies has shifted towards more restrictive measures in recent years, particularly after 2018. This transition has prioritized UNHCR refugees through structured resettlement programs. This shift has driven political pressures, the strain on public services and efforts to integrate refugees already within its borders (Swedish Migration Agency, 2021).

The UNHCR refugee statistics portal offers detailed data on asylum seekers and quota refugees, aiding to analyze migration patterns across Europe. By using data, this report offers a comparative analysis of how Sweden and Germany have adapted their migration policies to manage the flow of asylum seekers and quota refugees between 2018 and 2023 (UNHCR, n.d.).

### 3 Method and Theory

This report uses a comparative approach to analyze migration trends in Sweden and Germany, focusing on the application of asylum seekers and UNHCR refugees from the MENA region between 2018 and 2023. This period is critical, as both countries experienced significant policy changes in response to increased migration pressures. The comparative framework allows for an evaluation of how national policies have impacted migration patterns, highlighting the differences and similarities in their management of asylum seekers and UNCHR refugee applications. As previously mentioned, it is important to note that the reported figures represent applications rather than approved cases.

#### 3.1 Data Source and Extraction

Data for this report was extracted from the UNHCR refugee statistics portal, a comprehensive global database that provides detailed information on refugee populations, asylum seekers and other displaced groups. The dataset covers the period from 2018 to 2023 and includes figures on both applications of asylum seekers and UNHCR refugees arriving in Sweden and Germany, specifically from MENA countries. By focusing on this region, the report can compare between the impacts of ongoing conflicts, such as the Syrian civil war and instability in Afghanistan and Iraq, on the subsequent migration flows into Europe.

#### 3.2 Quantitative Data analysis

This report will use quantitative data analysis to process raw figures from asylum seekers and UNHCR refugees, enabling year-on-year comparisons. Quantitative data analysis examines, interprets and derives significant insights from numerical data

This approach facilitated the identification of trends, such as fluctuations in refugee intake and shifts in policy responses. The total number of asylum seekers and UNHCR refugees applying to Sweden and Germany each year was compared (Eteng & Eteng, 2022).

Additionally, the analysis included calculating the ratio of asylum seekers to UNHCR refugees in each country, allowing for a comparison of policy shifts and their effects on the migrant intake over time. These findings helped identify trends in migration, including notable increases or decreases in the number of migrants.

#### 3.3 Trend Analysis

To capture migrant dynamics over the six-year period, a trend analysis was performed. Trend analysis involves examining historical data to detect patterns and anticipate future changes. In this report it involved assessing both the short-term and long-term shifts in number of asylum seekers and UNCHR refugees in Sweden and Germany. By identifying peaks and troughs in migration data, the analysis uncovered key moments when policies may have directly influenced migration patterns. For instance, Sweden's policy changes in 2018, which reduced the number of asylum seekers in favor of UNHCR refugees, were reflected in the data as sharp decline in spontaneous asylum applications in subsequent years (Alam, 2024).

### 3.4 Data Handling with Python, SQL and Power BI

Data manipulation and analysis were conducted using Python and SQL, two powerful tools for handling large datasets. The UNHCR data was implemented into an SQL database and subsequently accessed through SQL queries and Python libraries, allowing for precise data extraction, cleaning, transformation and aggregation, such as Pandas. This approach enabled the report to derive meaningful insights from the raw data, particularly focusing on trends in refugee intake from the MENA countries to Sweden and Germany (Angün, 2024).

The initial stage involved extracting relevant subsets of data from SQL databases using structured queries. These queries were designed to retrieve the total number of asylum seekers and quota refugees from MENA countries, as well as to filter for specific countries and years. The following code, for instance, retrieves and compares the number of asylum seekers arriving in Sweden and Germany between 2018 and 2023. It also handles division by zero by replacing values with NULL.

**Table 1: SQL query code of the comparison of asylum seekers in Sweden and Germany**

```
USE Migration
SELECT
    Year,
    Country_of_origin,
    SUM(CASE WHEN Country_of_asylum = 'Sweden' THEN asylum_seekers ELSE 0 END) AS Sweden_AsylumSeekers,
    SUM(CASE WHEN Country_of_asylum = 'Germany' THEN asylum_seekers ELSE 0 END) AS Germany_AsylumSeekers
FROM (
    SELECT
        Year,
        Country_of_origin,
        asylum_seekers,
        'Sweden' AS Country_of_asylum
    FROM
        asylumseekerSE
    WHERE
        Year BETWEEN 2018 AND 2023

    UNION ALL

    SELECT
        Year,
        Country_of_origin,
        asylum_seekers,
        'Germany' AS Country_of_asylum
    FROM
        asylumseekerGER
    WHERE
        Year BETWEEN 2018 AND 2023
) AS Combined_AsylumSeekers
GROUP BY
    Year,
    Country_of_origin
ORDER BY
    Year,
    Country_of_origin;
```

By using SQL for such queries, only the essential data subsets were processed, minimizing computational load and ensuring accurate filtering and segmentation. This SQL query formed the basis for subsequent trend analysis by aggregating and transforming the retrieved data.

Once extracted, the data was imported into Python using the Pandas library which facilitated further data manipulation and preparation for analysis. Pandas' functions enabled seamless data cleaning, transformations and aggregation which allowed for calculating trends, identifying outliers and deriving summary statistics.

For exploratory visualizations, Matplotlib and Seaborn were integrated to generate initial charts and graphs to identify patterns in migration data. Line plots were used to visualize the trends of asylum seekers and UNHCR refugees over specified years. This visualization approach revealed the yearly

variation in asylum seekers and UNHCR refugees providing a preliminary understanding of the refugee trends before further analysis in Power BI.

To deepen the exploration of trends in migration patterns the processed data was imported into Power BI which created an interactive and dynamic data visualization. It allowed a dynamic comparison of asylum seeker and UNHCR refugee to Sweden and Germany by offering a clear view of policy impacts and regional differences over the six-year period (Angün, 2024).

The combination of Python, SQL and Power BI enabled efficient data handling and detailed analysis. Python data analysis libraries allowed for automation of calculations and data transformations, while SQL provided a robust tool for precise data extraction. Power BI's dynamic capabilities in visualizing data enabled a comprehensive presentation of the analysis findings, bridging quantitative insights with visual storytelling.

### 3.5 Theoretical Framework

The analysis is grounded in migration theory, particularly the push and pull factors that drive migration. Push factors, such as war, persecution, and economic instability, force individuals to leave their countries, while pull factors, such as economic opportunities and favorable asylum policies, attract migrants to specific countries. Both Sweden and Germany have acted as pull factors due to their respective asylum and resettlement policies, though their approaches have diverged (European Parliament, 2020).

Additionally, legislative frameworks such as the Dublin Regulation and EU-wide migration laws play crucial roles in shaping national policies. Sweden's shift toward focusing on UNHCR refugees and Germany's continued intake of spontaneous asylum seekers applications reflect how international agreements and national interests influence migration flows.

The UNHCR plays a vital role in facilitating structured refugee resettlement through its quota refugee program, ensuring that the most vulnerable refugees are resettled in countries committed to provide humanitarian support. This international cooperation, alongside national policies, has shaped the trends in migrant intake for both Sweden and Germany during the 2018-2023 period (UNHCR, n.d.).



## 4 Legislative and Policy Framework

In recent years, the dynamics of asylum and migration within Europe have undergone significant changes, influenced by evolving legislative frameworks and national policies. This section provides an overview of key legal frameworks, focusing on EU legislation and its implications for member states, particularly Germany and Sweden.

### 4.1 EU legislation

The EU's legislative framework on asylum and migration is built on laws designed to create a harmonized approach across member states. Central to this framework is the Dublin Regulation, which establishes criteria for determining which member state is responsible for processing asylum applications. This legislation aims to prevent multiple applications in different countries. However, it has faced criticism for disproportionately burdening southern European countries, such as Greece and Italy, where most asylum seekers first arrive (European Parliament, 2021).

Moreover, the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) has been instrumental in creating uniform standards across the EU. Key aspects of CEAS include the Asylum Procedures Directive, which sets out fair and efficient procedures for asylum applications, and the Qualification Directive, which defines the criteria for granting international protection to refugees and asylum seekers (Lübben, 2021; European Parliament, 2021).

### 4.2 Germany's Migration Policies

Germany has long been a primary destination for asylum seekers due to its open and flexible asylum policies, especially following the 2015 crisis (Koch, Biehler, Knapp, & Kipp, 2023). Since 2019, the German government has introduced several policy reforms aimed at streamlining the asylum process and improving migrant integrating. A key development was the 2020 Migration Law, which implemented measures to fast-track asylum applications, reducing delays and ensuring more efficient processing (European Migration Network, 2019; Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2019).

Germany's commitment to structured refugee resettlement is evident in its active participation in the UNHCR quota program. In cooperation with international organizations, Germany has resettled significant numbers of UNHCR refugees annually while managing the intake of spontaneous asylum seekers. Despite rising domestic political pressure from parties advocating for stricter immigration controls, Germany has maintained its relatively open approach to managing migration. This openness has enabled the country to continue receiving high numbers of asylum seekers, particularly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, solidifying its role as a key destination for refugees resettled through international efforts (European Migration Network, 2019; Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2019).

### 4.3 Sweden's Migration Policies

Sweden is historically recognized for its liberal migration policies began implementing more restrictive measures after 2018. This shift was influenced by multiple factors about the strain on public services and the challenges of integrating large numbers of migrants. In response, Sweden passed a significant legislation in 2016 and 2019 that tightened asylum regulations, resulting in a marked reduction in spontaneous asylum applications (Lübben, 2021; Swedish Migration Agency, 2021). These changes reflect a broader EU-wide trend towards eventually prioritizing structured resettlement programs over spontaneous asylum claims.

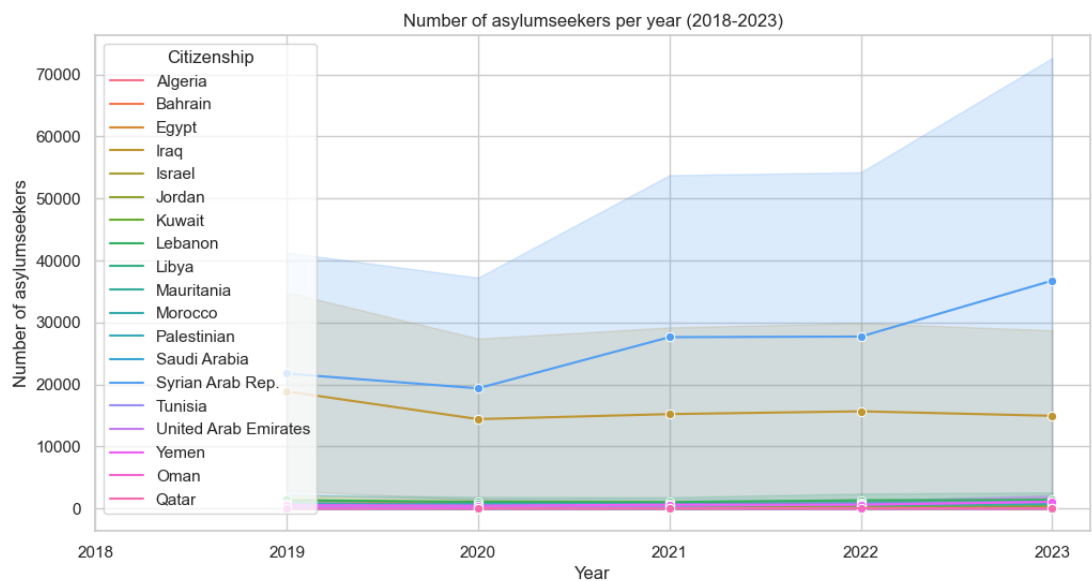
Rather than focusing on spontaneous asylum seeker, Sweden shifted its emphasis to resettling refugees through structured programs under the UNHCR quota system. This approach ensured that

refugees arriving through structured programs under UNCHR were better prepared for integration into Swedish society. By prioritizing UNHCR refugees, Sweden managed the number of asylums claims while addressing domestic concerns about pressure on public services. This strategy aligns with the EU's trend toward emphasizing resettlement programs as a more controlled and sustainable way to manage migration (Lübben, 2021; Swedish Migration Agency, 2021).

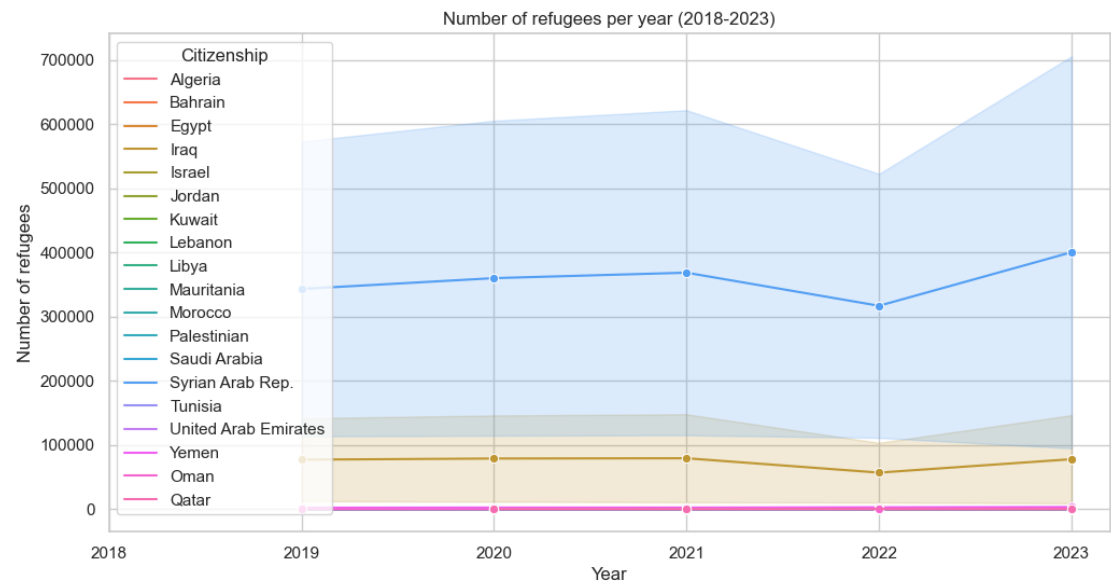
## 5 Statistical Overview: Asylum Seekers and UNHCR Refugees (2018-2023)

The UNHCR dataset has been analyzed using Python and SQL to perform data cleaning, transformation and aggregation. This process involved filtering the data set to extract relevant information for a comparative analysis. This chapter will discuss asylum seekers and UNHCR refugees to Sweden and Germany from 2018 to 2023 in separate subchapters. Table 2 and 3 present the numbers of asylum seekers and UNHCR refugees to Sweden and Germany. In these tables, Germany is represented in lighter blue and Sweden in darker color, highlighting their respective asylum seeker and UNCHR refugee numbers.

**Table 2: Number of asylum seekers per year (2018-2023)**



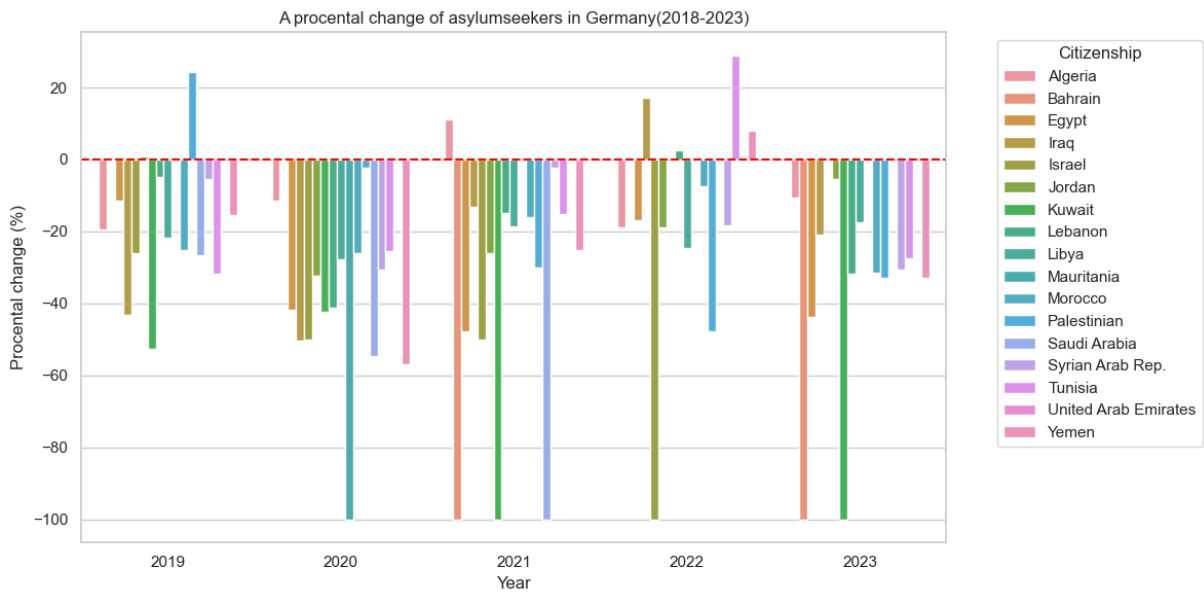
**Table 3: Number of UNHCR refugees per year (2018-2023)**



5.1 The changes of asylum seekers in Germany over time

The number of asylum seekers from the MENA region to Germany has varied significantly, influenced by different factors such as regional instability, humanitarian crises and ongoing conflicts. After a decline in 2019 and 2020, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Germany has experienced a significant increase in 2021 and 2022 after a decline in 2019 and 2020

Table 4: A percentage change of asylum seekers in Germany (2018-2023)



Among the MENA countries, Syria remains the largest group of asylum seekers with an increase from 52 396 in 2018 to 72 642 in 2023. This trend underscores the ongoing humanitarian crisis and ongoing conflict that continue to displace millions of Syrians (UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency, n.d.). Conversely, the number of asylum seekers from Iraq has decreased from 41 954 in 2018 to 28 738 in 2023. The decline may suggest a complex interplay of factors including potential stabilization within Iraq (UNHCR, 2023).

Additionally, the number of Yemenis seeking asylum in Germany has increased dramatically from 873 in 2018 to 2 077 in 2023. This reflects the ongoing humanitarian crisis and ongoing conflict (World Bank, 2024). There has also been substantial increase in asylum seekers from Tunisia from 599 in 2018 to 2 193 in 2023. This may indicate a political and economic changes in Tunisa prompting Tunisians to seek asylum abroad (Amnesty International, n.d).

The increase in Palestinian asylum seekers highlights ongoing insecurity and violence in the region. In contrast, the number of Moroccan asylum seekers has shown a downward trend, potentially indicating improvements in local conditions or reduced motivation for seeking asylum in Germany.

Lastly, Germany has seen an increase of Lebanese asylum seekers post-pandemic, driven by economic collapse, political instability and the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion in 2020 which intensified existing humanitarian needs. (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

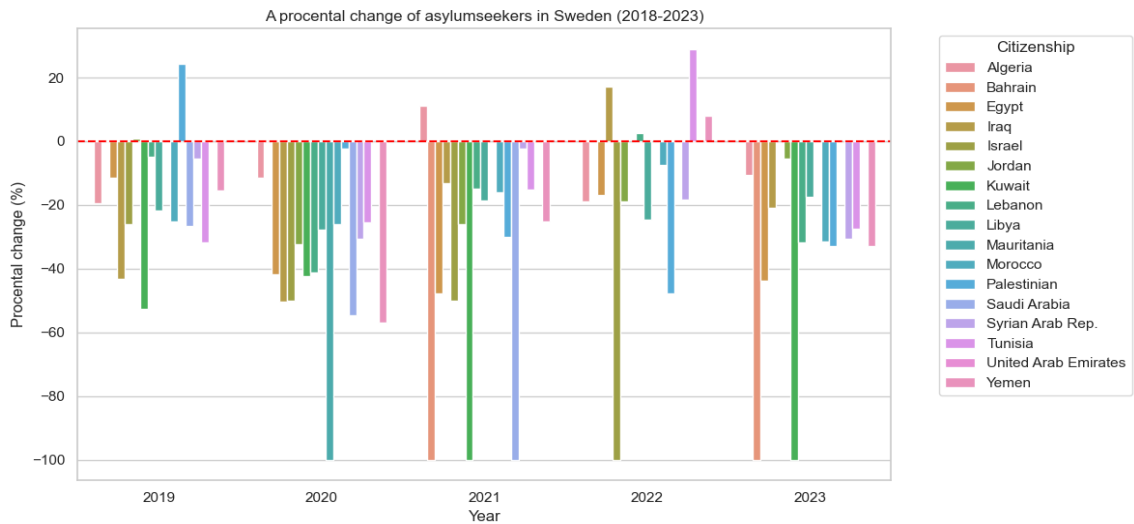
The number of asylum seekers in Germany reflects a complex and dynamic interplay of geopolitical instability, humanitarian crises and evolving regional conflicts. While the Covid-19 pandemic temporarily decreased asylum numbers in 2019 and 2020, there was an increase in 2021 and 2022 as restrictions were lifted. This highlights Germany’s critical role as a destination for asylum seekers

which requires it to adopt flexible and adaptive policies that can respond effectively to the changing factors causing people to flee their home countries in the MENA region.

5.2 The changes of asylum seekers in Sweden over time

Sweden, like Germany, has experience notable variations of asylum seekers from MENA region between 2018 and 2023. Sweden saw a general decrease in asylum applications over this period, with a significant decline particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 5: A percentage change of asylum seekers in Sweden (2018-2023)



Among MENA countries, Iraq represented one of the larger groups of asylum seekers in Sweden, but their numbers dropped significantly from 5 060 in 2018 to 1 153 in 2023. There was a temporary increase of 17.23 percent between 2021 to 2022, but this was followed by a decline in 2023. This decrease may indicate several factors, including the stabilization of certain areas in Iraq, as well as stricter migration policies in Europe (UNHCR, 2023).

Similarly, asylum seekers from Syria, a consistently significant portion of Sweden’s asylum seeking population, decreased from 2 353 in 2018 to 856 in 2023. This trend indicates that while the Syrian conflict remains unresolved, tighter border controls and diminishing prospects for resettlement may have affected the flow of asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2023). The UNHCR resettlement will be further discussed in the chapter on UNHCR refugees’ chapter, where Syrians form the largest group in.

In contrast, the number of Palestinian asylum seekers initially increased from 574 in 2018 and 714 in 2019, before declining sharply to 171 in 2023. This pattern suggests that although Palestinians continue to face long-standing political and security challenges, fewer of them sought asylum in Sweden in recent years, potentially due to shifting migration routes or barriers to entry in Europe (UNHCR, 2023).

Other countries like Morocco and Libya also witnessed a significant decline in asylum seekers. Moroccan applications dropped from 218 in 2018 to 94 in 2023, reflecting improved local conditions or reduced motivations for emigration. The situation in Morocco is complexed with both negative and positive changes occurring; human rights violations still occur and cannot solely describe the decrease of asylum seekers in Sweden. There have been positive changes such as the enforcement of the law to protect domestic workers with labor protection (Morocco/Western Sahara, 2021). Libya

followed a similar trend, decreasing from 115 in 2018 to 33 in 2023, likely due to socio-political instability from armed conflicts (Libya, 2021).

Asylum seekers from Tunisia decreased from 104 in 2018 to 42 in 2023, likely due to political and economic transitions within Tunisia and a possible reduction in incentives for migration. The president’s racists statements against black people led to a wave of attacks and mass expulsions of migrants to the borders with Algeria and Libya (Amnesty International, n.d.-b). Lastly, the number of Lebanese asylum seekers also saw a decline during this period, reflecting the country’s ongoing economic difficulties and political instability. This is particularly significant given the impact of events such as the 2020 Beirut port explosions, which has left many Lebanese citizens in a state of uncertainty (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

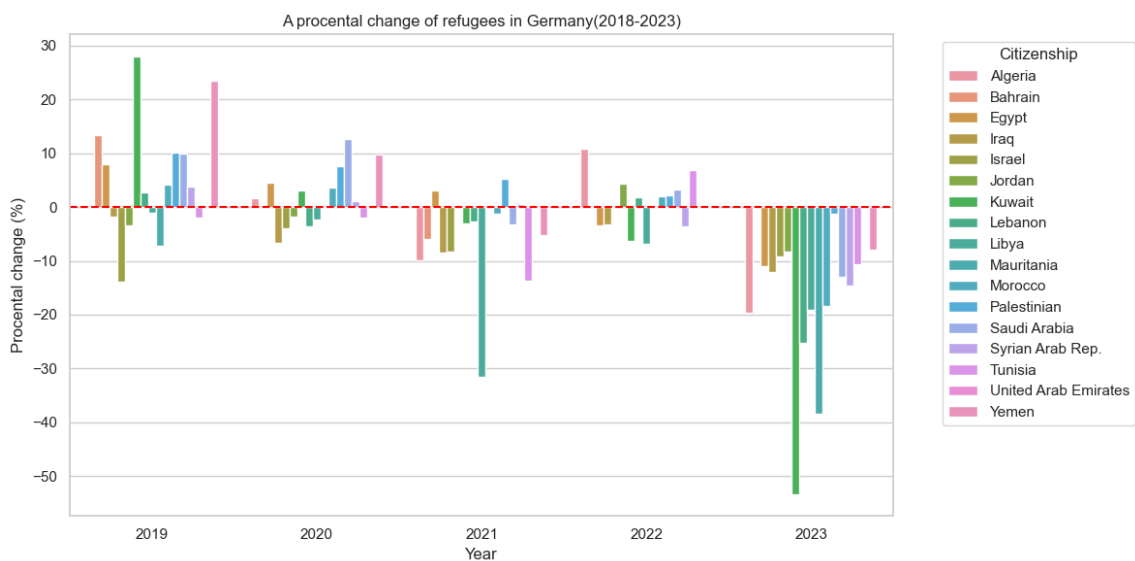
These trends underscore the broader regional developments and migration policies that have shaped asylum patterns in Sweden over the years, with pandemic-related disruptions and shifting socio-political factors playing a crucial role. Furthermore, the decrease can also indicate that asylum seekers from the MENA region are seeking asylum in other European countries.

5.3 The changes of UNHCR refugees in Germany over time

Germany has witnessed significant changes in refugee numbers from the MENA region through UNHCR facilitated resettlement programs from 2018 to 2023. Variations in refugee populations have been influenced by factors previously discussed regarding displacement (e.g UNHCR refugee camps). During this period Germany’s resettlement policies evolved to balance humanitarian obligations with political and social considerations. The country has regularly set quotas for refugee resettlement based on UNHCR recommendations (Resettlement, IOM Germany, 2021). This means that all applicants may not be accepted due to the limited number of spots available each year.

The table below does not include 2018 for the analysis of an annual percentage change of the chosen time-period for this report. There is no data available for 2017 hence there cannot be an annual percent change from 2018.

Table 6: A percentage change of refugees in Germany (2018-2023)



The table highlights the yearly changes in refugee numbers showing varied admission and percentage changes over time. For instance, Egypt saw a 40.92 percent increase from 2022 to 2023, while Iraq had a 41.7 percent increase the same period. Morocco also experienced a dramatic increase, 156.24 percent between 2021 to 2022 which stands out one of the largest jumps a long with Israel who had a sharp increase of 277.42 percent from 2021 to 2022 followed by a continued rise of 39.32 percent from 2022 to 2023.

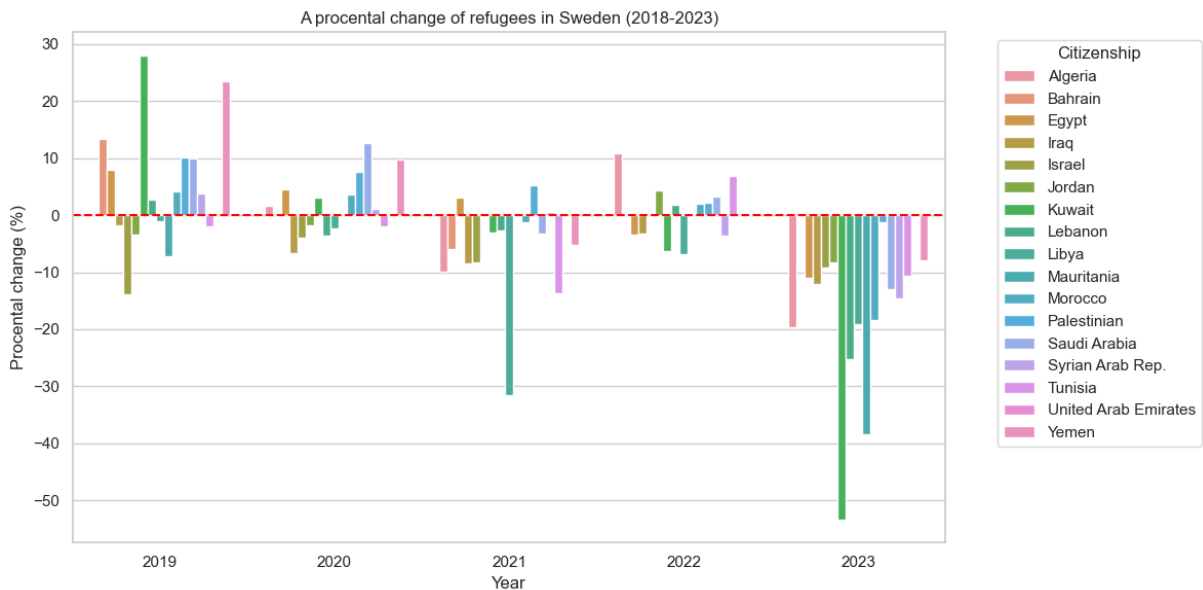
Certain countries, like Syria, have more volatile trend with increases and significant declines including a -15.95 percent from 2021 to 2022 which later increased with 35.06 percent from 2022 to 2023. Yemen has consistently shown an upward trend highlighting ongoing conflict driven displacement.

Overall, there has been a steady increase in refugee resettlement from the MENA region to Germany, although annual variations reflect adjustments in policies including quota changes.

### 5.4 The changes of UNHCR refugees in Sweden over time

Like Germany, Sweden has a resettlement program administered by UNHCR, which aims to help refugees that are in vulnerable situations. UNHCR can propose recommendations for focus areas, such as Syria and regions in Africa like Ethiopia, Eritrea, DR Congo, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia. The government provides resources to resettle several refugees to Sweden (Migrationsverket, 2024).

**Table 7: A percentage change of refugees in Sweden (2018-2023)**



There has been a marked decline in refugee resettlement for several countries from 2018 to 2023. Notably, the years 2022 and 2023 saw a significant drop in numbers, indicating a shift in Swedens refugee resettlement strategy or external circumstances affecting these regions. Iraq has shown a consistent downward trend throughout the period, while Egypt initially experienced a rise of 15.79 percent from 2018 to 2021, followed by a shape decline to 363 in 2023.

Yemen have faced with various humanitarian crises and armed conflicts, leading to a significant need for resettlement between 2018 to 2020, with an overall increase of 33.36 percent. However, a slight decrease of 5.21 percent occurred in 2021, followed by a further decline of 7.97 percent between 2022 and 2023.

Significant changes have also occurred for Syria where initial increases were followed by substantial drop from 111 199 in 2022 to 94 873 in 2023, reflecting a decrease of 14.68 percent. The

resettlement from Lebanon have had a various of changes each year until it dropped significantly from 2022 to 2023, with decline of 25.29 percent.

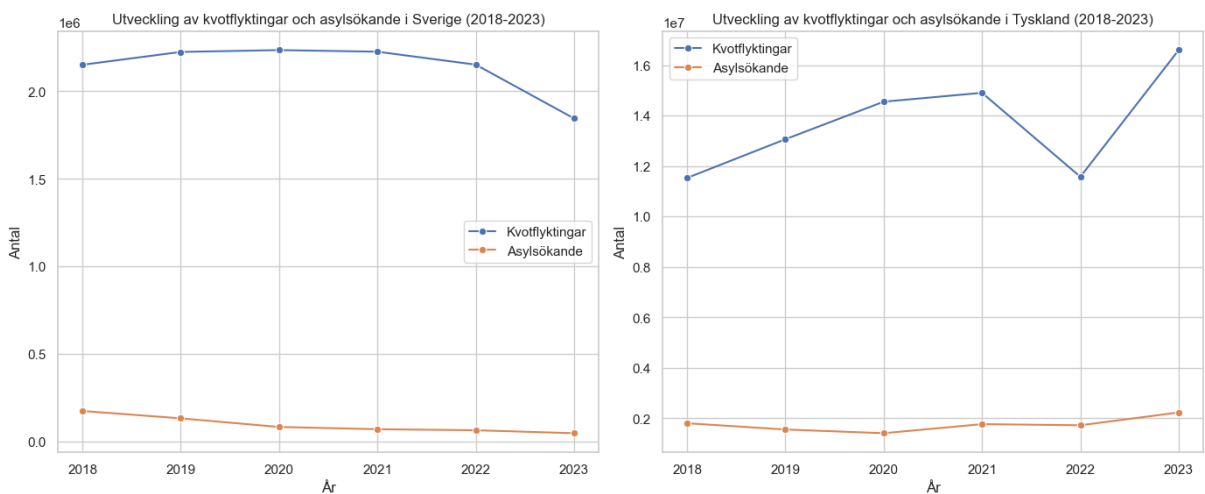
On the contrary, Palestine had a consistent increase between 2018 to 2022 but saw a decline of 1.18 percent in 2023. Overall, the trend shows a decrease in resettlement from many countries particularly those facing ongoing conflict or crisis. This shift suggests that Sweden may be reassessing its resettlement priorities or responding to changing global refugee dynamics.



## 6 Analysis of Migration Trends

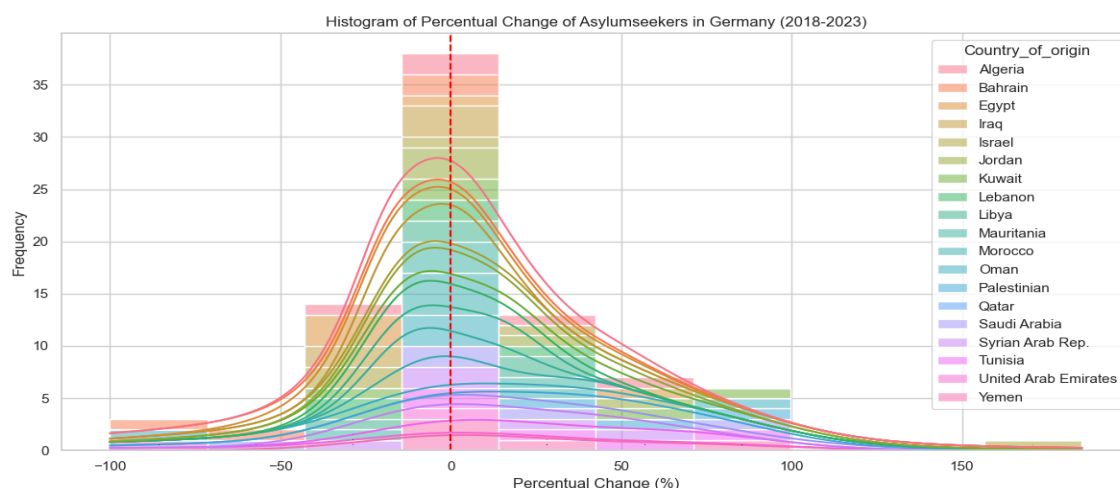
Migration trends have remained a central issue in Europe, shaped by geopolitical tensions, socio-economic factors and evolving national policies. This analysis focuses on the trends of asylum seekers and UNHCR refugees in Sweden and Germany from 2018 to 2023, particularly from the MENA region. By examining patterns, variations, and influential factors, we can gain insights into the dynamics of migration and understand how both countries respond to the challenges and responsibilities of refugee resettlement and asylum. This period is marked by the global COVID-19 pandemic and continued regional conflicts, providing a unique context to observe the effects of both crisis response and policy adjustments.

**Table 8: Development of asylum seekers and UNHCR refugees in Sweden and Germany (2018-2023)**



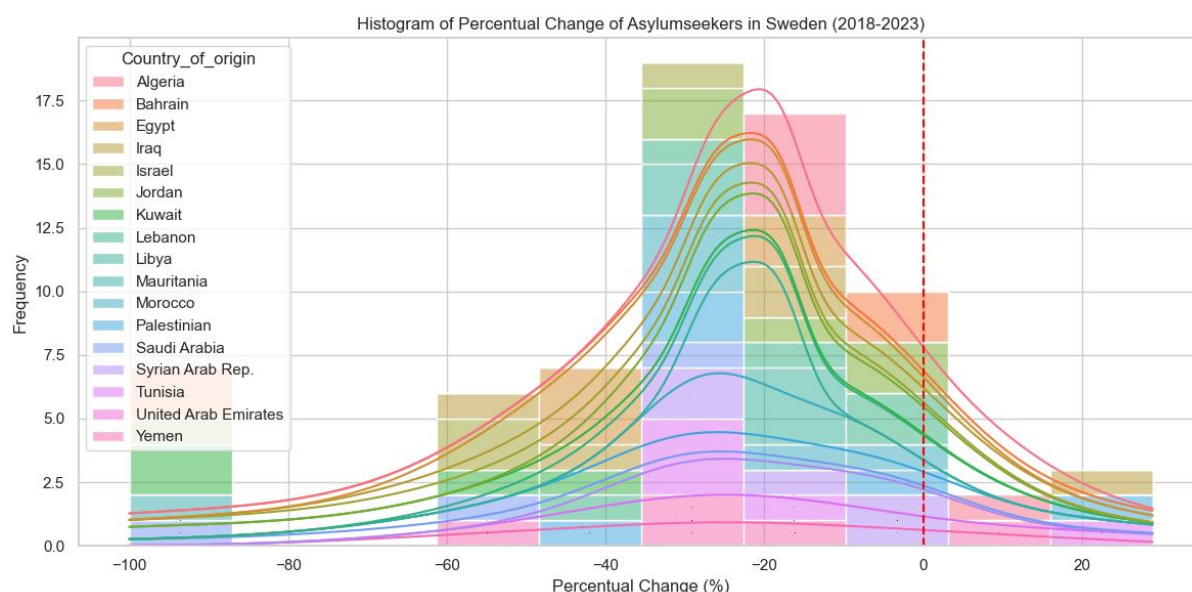
Germany has experienced notable variations in asylum seeker numbers, closely tied to regional instability and policy adaptations. From 2018 to 2023, the MENA region saw significant asylum seeker inflows, especially from conflict affected nations like Syria and Yemen, as well as countries experiencing political instability like Iraq and Tunisia. The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily suppressed migration flows in 2019 and 2020 due to travel restrictions and health concerns. However, as restrictions eased, asylum applications surged in 2021 and 2022, indicating a restoration to pre pandemic migration levels. This period also saw a decline in asylum seekers from nations like Iraq and Morocco, potentially reflecting a stabilization of conditions in these regions or shifting migration intentions and policies in Europe.

**Table 9: Histogram of percentage change of asylum seekers in Germany**



Sweden also experienced trends influenced by the pandemic and regional stability but with saw an overall decline in asylum applications from the MENA region. Applications from Iraq and Syria, for instance, decreased over this period, suggesting changing migration motivations or more stringent migration policies within Sweden and the broader EU. Some fluctuations were evident, particularly among Palestinian and Tunisian applicants, illustrating changing regional conditions and external influences on migratory choices. Declines in asylum seekers from countries like Libya and Morocco may be attributed to shifts in preferred asylum destinations in Europe.

**Table 10: Histogram of percentage change of asylum seekers in Sweden**



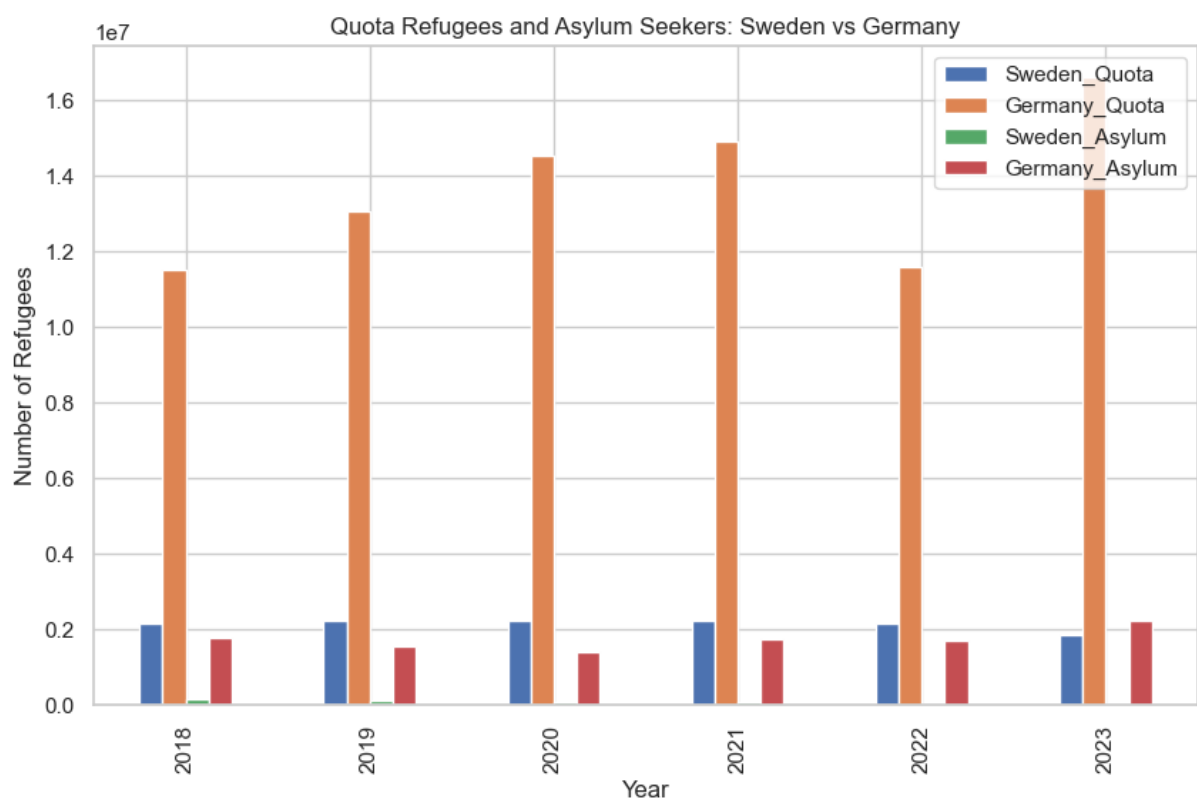
The trends in UNHCR shows that Germanys efforts reflect a pattern of responsive adjustments to the humanitarian needs of refugees from the MENA region. The country has experienced an upward trend in refugees from Egypt, Iraq and Morocco, with significant percentage increases in resettlement numbers, particularly in 2022-2023. Syrian refugee resettlement trends also demonstrated the ongoing need for asylum due to persistent conflict, while an increase in Yemeni refugees highlights the challenges faced in that region. These trends showcase Germany's prioritization of humanitarian crises while balancing its capacity to integrate and support refugee populations.

Sweden’s participation in the UNHCR resettlement program reflects a pattern of gradual decline, which may stem from adjustments to migration priorities, national quotas, or the overall capacity of Swedish municipalities to accommodate new arrivals. The consistent resettlement from MENA countries has experienced variability, with a decline in numbers, reflecting shifts in resettlement strategies. Sweden’s selective approach indicates an alignment with broader migration objectives while fulfilling international humanitarian commitments, albeit at a potentially lower intake than in prior years.

Geopolitical instability in the region is the primary drivers of migration leading to both asylum applications and refugee resettlement requests. These crises have created significant humanitarian needs, shaping the migration landscape of Germany and Sweden. National migration policies and quotas play an essential role in shaping asylum and resettlement figures. For instance, Germany’s higher intake of UNHCR refugees reflects its capacity and policy for accommodating displaced populations, while Sweden’s gradual decline might indicate a more conservative approach amidst broader migration management considerations.

The analysis of migration trends from 2018 to 2023 in Sweden and Germany underscores the significant impact of regional instability, humanitarian needs, and national policies on migration patterns. The trends reflect how each country has managed asylum seekers and UNHCR refugee resettlements, with Germany showing considerable adaptability while Sweden displays a more conservative trend. Ultimately, these trends emphasize the importance of adaptive policies and international cooperation to meet evolving migration and humanitarian needs.

**Table 11: Comparison of UNCHR refugees and asylum seekers: Sweden and Germany**



## 7 Comparative Insights and Discussion

Migration trends in Europe, particularly since the refugee crisis in 2015, have emphasized how different countries manage and respond to refugee and asylum seeker inflows. Sweden and Germany are two of the most prominent hosting countries and provide valuable case studies due to their distinct migration policies, economic capacities, and societal approaches to integration. Examining refugee and asylum seeker data from the MENA region between 2018 and 2023 allows us to gain comparative insights into each country's approach. This analysis aims to reveal patterns and challenges in each country's refugee and asylum policies, contributing to a deeper understanding of their long-term migration strategies.

Data analysis reveals that Germany consistently receives higher numbers of applications for refugee and asylum than Sweden, aligning with Germany's larger population and economic capacity. This trend reflects Germany's role as a major migration destination in Europe, particularly due to its more open asylum policies in recent years. However, while Germany's application numbers are higher in absolute terms, Sweden's per capita application rate is also significant. This may indicate Sweden's policy-driven commitment to humanitarian support, even as its overall application numbers remain comparatively smaller.

Year-over-year percentage changes in asylum seeker and refugee applications suggest different responses to international and domestic factors. Germany's application numbers have experienced sharper variation reflecting policy shifts and occasional changes in EU agreements. Sweden's numbers show steadier trends with fewer drastic shifts compared to Germany, which has a varied number of applications. Comparative data shows that asylum seekers and refugees come from varied countries in the MENA region, yet each country differs slightly based on historical ties and specific humanitarian programs. For example, Germany may reflect higher numbers of Syrian asylum seekers potentially due to targeted programs and the presence of established Syrian communities, which can facilitate integration. In Sweden, the distribution may be more evenly spread across the country, aligning with Sweden's general policies.

Recent years Sweden and Germany have taken different policy routes to manage the intake and integration of immigrants. Sweden has gradually adopted more restrictive immigration policies, aiming to address integration challenges and the social impacts of high intake of immigrants in prior years. Germany, on the other hand, with its larger economic base, has been able to sustain relatively high numbers, supported by robust integration policies focused on language acquisition, work and societal inclusion. This has contributed to Germany's high inflow, though it also points out the challenges of rapid integration.

A comparison of these trends suggests that while Germany's high intake of asylum and refugee applications may benefit its labor market, the sharp variation could challenge long-term social integration and policy stability. In contrast, Sweden's controlled and gradual intake appears more sustainable, although it may result in slower labor market integration. Both countries present distinct models that could inform future policymaking, although these numbers of applications do not tell how many of them have been approved.

Comparing Sweden and Germany's high intake of refugee and asylum application intake provides valuable insights into the effects of different approaches on migration sustainability, integration and societal acceptance. Germany's large-scale number of applications reflects its economic capacity and willingness to manage migration flows, but it faces challenges due to various numbers and the

pressure for rapid integration. Sweden's steadier, controlled approach may offer a more sustainable model by focusing on manageable applications levels to foster social structure. Both countries present important lessons in refugee integration and underscore the need for adaptable policies, robust integration programs and community support for effective migration management. This analysis highlights the necessity for each country to adjust its strategies based on international migration trends and domestic capacities to ensure long-term positive outcomes for both refugees and asylum seekers as well as host countries.

## 8 Conclusion

The analysis of Migration trends in Sweden and Germany from 2019 to 2023 reveals the complex interplay between geopolitical instability, humanitarian needs and national policies. Both countries have navigated significant challenges in managing spontaneous asylum seekers and UNHCR refugees, each reflecting distinct approaches influenced by their unique historical, economic and social contexts.

Germany's responsive and adaptable policies have positioned it as a major destination for refugees, demonstrating a commitment to addressing humanitarian crises while balancing the integration of diverse populations. The variability in asylum applications and resettlement figures reflects the ongoing challenges posed by regional conflicts and shifting international dynamics. In contrast, Sweden remains committed to its humanitarian obligations, despite a decline in asylum applications. The shifting policies signal a reevaluation of integration strategies in responses to previous high influxes of immigrants.

The findings underscore the importance of adaptive migration policies that can effectively address both immediate humanitarian needs and long-term integration challenges. As Europe continues to deal with the implications of migration, the experiences of Sweden and Germany provide valuable insights into the necessity for cooperation, flexibility and proactive strategies to ensure positive outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers, as well as for the host countries.

Further studies could explore the spontaneous asylum application of EU member states and non-EU member states providing a broader understanding of how different countries respond to migration. Additionally, a comparative study examining the rates of approved and rejected applications against total applications in various EU countries could shed light on the effectiveness and fairness of asylum process across. There could also be a further comparative study of approved and rejected applications contra applied applications in an EU country. A similar study could also examine the number of UNHCR refugee applications to other continents such as North America and South America.

Ultimately, fostering a comprehensive and compassionate response to migration is crucial not only for the well-being of individuals seeking safety and stability but also for socio-economic health and cohesion of European states. It is essential for both countries, and Europe as a whole, to engage in continuous dialogue and collaboration to develop effective frameworks that can adapt to evolving landscape of migration.

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