



SWEDEN RESEARCH

EXPERIENCES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AMONG ASYLUM SEEKERS

Extracts from the study "Asylum Seekers in Sweden"

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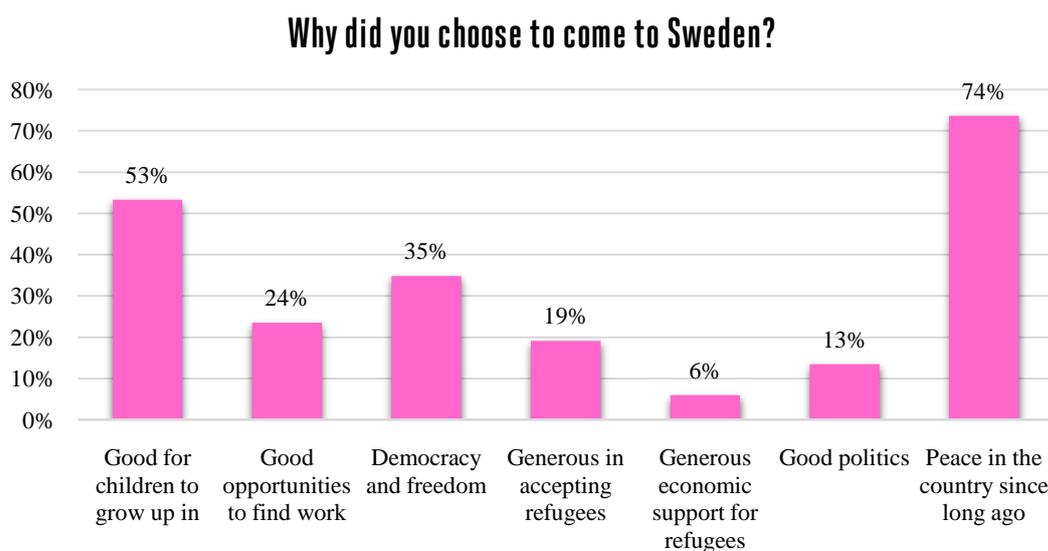
Background and method

This is an extract of responses from the study “Asylum Seekers in Sweden”. For full presentation of the study’s methodological and ethical considerations, see the original report. In short, the insights that follow are based on a study that has been conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Interviews were made from November 2015 through May 2016 with 456 respondents that have applied for asylum in Sweden. In addition to the interviews, the majority of the respondents filled o a written questionnaire. The charts in the report are results from these, while the text reviews primarily the interviews, combined with the results from the questionnaire. Of the total amount of respondents, 23% or 105 had children that were attending school.

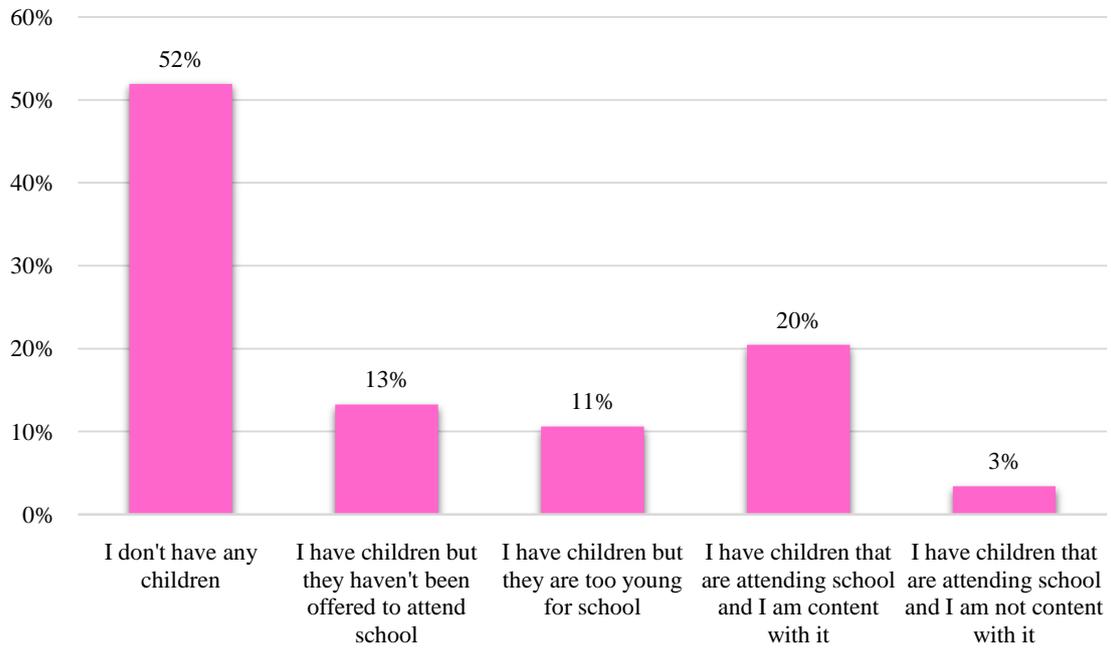
A reason to choose Sweden and were to live

Child care and that Sweden is a good country for children to grow up in have been key reasons to choose Sweden instead of other countries. Around 23% of the participants in our study, are parents with children who go to school during the waiting time at the asylum accommodation, and 85% of them are satisfied.

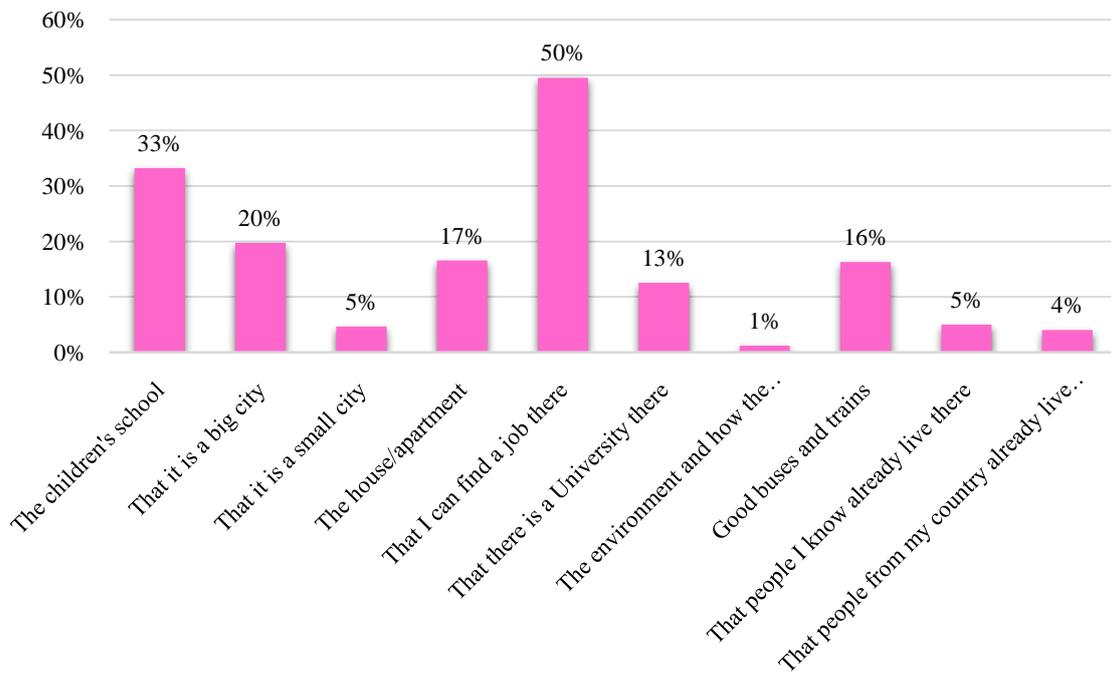
When asked about prioritized properties of a city or municipality, if faced with the possibility to choose were to live, quality of schools at that location is of importance.



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



What will be the two most important things about the neighborhood you will live in?



Attending school is seen as a good integration opportunity

Most of the parents are satisfied with the children experience in school, since children are provided with a free of charge bus card to go to school, they get the chance to change the camp environment and to interact with other children of same age, also school makes it easier and faster for children to learn Swedish and integrate in the society compared to adults. When asked for changes they have observed in their children before and after starting to attend school, the common comment is that they have observed a considerable change were the children seem to feel more joy after starting to attend school.

Dissatisfaction with lack of quality time

Parents showed some concerns regarding the quality of time at school. It is a recurring opinion that kids do not learn a lot at school, and that children go there only to play and kill time. They have explained that schools at their home countries provide more classes and homework than schools here in Sweden. A few parents said that their children refuse to go to school, but they do not know the reason.

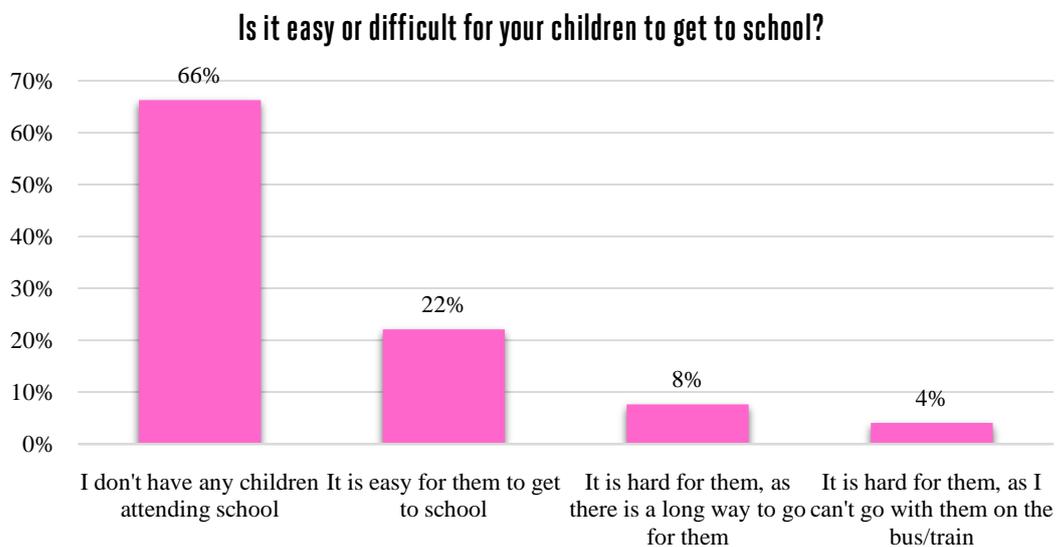
Frequent changes of asylum accommodation troubles

The families that are transferred to new asylum accommodation in new municipalities, often several times, have experienced a feeling of instability in general, but primarily in that it affects the continuity of their children's education and settlement. One family moved to seven camps in less than a year. Among the respondents, one of the parents said that the children would not start going to school until they were sure they were to stay permanently at an asylum accommodation.

"I was very happy that my daughter could go to school during our stay at the other camp. I feel really sorry for her now, she cannot go to school during our stay in this camp. If we get the decision to stay in Sweden, she will be way behind the other children of the same age of hers. How will she be able to go to same classes as other kids who went to school regularly since a very young age? There will be a gap between the refugee and non refugee children in schools. It can lead to inequality later, in the future."

The accessibility of some schools hinders

Children living at isolated asylum accommodations that are far from the municipal or city center, face more challenges when it comes to reaching their schools. They might need to change more than one bus to get to school. Parents worry about them and find it difficult to send their kids on their own to school, and there are examples of parents not letting their children go by themselves as a result of this. As the parents can't afford paying for a bus card for themselves, they cannot escort the children to school themselves.



Language and social barriers

Additionally, there are different experiences of concerns related to the children's schools. One child explained his experience in school by saying:

"I really like going to school. I have two classes, I like more the mixed nationality class, where the refugee children are distributed in different classes, so we get the opportunity to interact with Swedish and International children, the teacher also can control easily this class. But the other class is a mess; we are only five Arabic and three Afghani children in this class. It is hard for me to focus with the teacher because my Arabic friends keeps talking to me in Arabic all time during the class, the teachers do not speak none of our language so they cannot understand us, same is happening with Afghani group. Also refugee children fight more with each other in this class. I wish they change the second class soon."

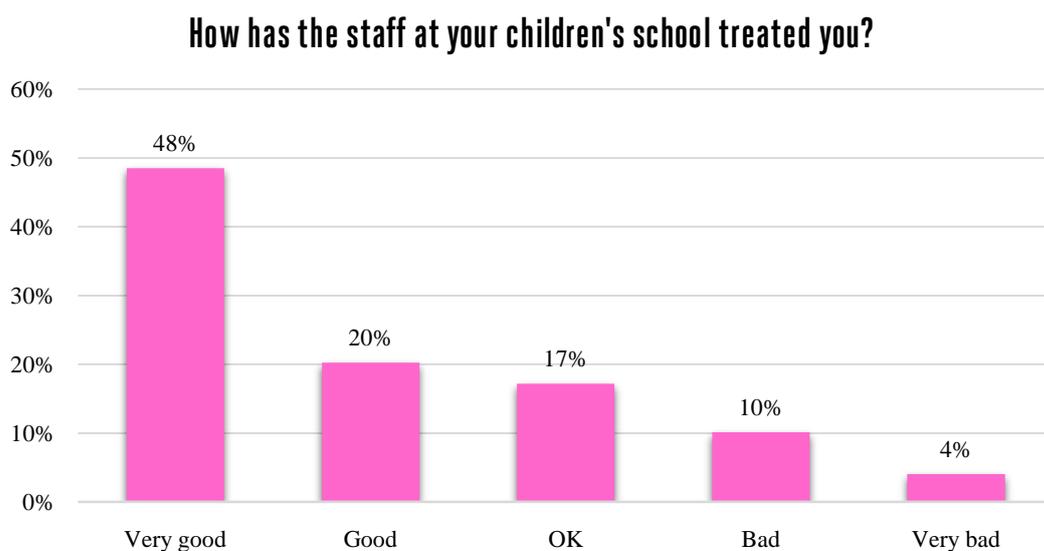
And parents consider the social and cultural context as well:

“We do not have a lot of schools around us here. My child has classes with other children with different age groups; it can be challenging to both children and teachers.”

“Right now I am very satisfied because my child go to nursery to play, but I will be concerned with cultural backgrounds of schools here in a later stage. Do they really get the children change clothes in front of each other here? That it is not accepted on my home country.”

Satisfaction with treatment of teachers and personnel

When the respondents were asked about how they had been treated by the staff at different places and institutions, the teachers and personnel at the schools got the best ratings. The other points of contact rated were the Swedish Migration Agency, the asylum accommodation, health centers and the Public Employment office. In the interviews there are also recurring remarks on the kindness and amicability of teachers, principals and others at school.



Sweden Research conducts studies and analysis in issues concerning social sustainability and urban development for authorities, municipalities and other publicly financed organizations. This report is written by Menna Elsalhy and Carlos Rojas

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