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DYNAMICS OF UNEMPLOYMENT DURATION AMONG AFRICAN MIGRANTS IN SWEDEN

The contribution of specific country of birth and gender on employment success

Abstract

This study uses Cox proportional hazard models to examine the likelihood of transition to first employment among specific groups of African migrants compared to the general population and other immigrants, respectively, in Sweden. Our findings demonstrate that the likelihood of employment upon arrival is strictly linked to country of origin after taking socio-demographic characteristics into account. When compared with the general population, lower employment likelihood was found among immigrant men and women from most African countries, especially from Somalia. In general, African men experienced better employment chances when compared with women. A gender gap on transition to first employment was found among immigrants from Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt indicating that it is particularly difficult for women from these countries to find employment.

Keywords

Africa • Sweden • immigrant • employment and gender

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Introduction

A vast majority of the migrant ethnic minority groups living in Western countries find economic and social integration in their new homelands to be a major challenge (Mannila *et al*. 2010). As in several Western countries, a great majority of Swedish migrants experience economic exclusion and significant long-term marginalisation (Schröder 2007). Labour market participation is crucial for the integration of immigrants into a society (Heikkilä 2005). Having employment contributes to income, higher status, faster acculturation and integration, better health status and more extensive social networks and so on (Garcy & Vågerö 2012; Hodge 1970; Rostila & Hjern 2012; Rostila 2013). Nevertheless, Sweden is characterised by a low level of labour force participation and poor employment attainment among migrants and ethnic minorities (Berggren & Omarsson 2001; De los Rey 2008; Ekberg & Rooth 2000; Heikkilä 2005; Nekby 2002; Nilsson 2004; Åslund *et al*. 2010). Gaps in occupational attainment are often related to the background of immigrants (Chiswick & Adsera 2006; Chiswick 1979; Heikkilä 2005). Moreover, immigrant women often experience a greater disadvantage in the labour market compared to their male counterparts due to gender inequalities and traditional gender stereotypes within the family that prevent women to participate in the labour market, such as an unequal distribution of household work (Antecol 2000; Rudmann & Glick 2001). The level of discrimination faced by women in the labour market could differ by background and country of origin and from migrant peers as well as the society as a whole. Consequently, it is crucial to take country of origin, gender and education into account when studying labour market integration among immigrants.

Immigrants from African countries have often been singled out as a particularly vulnerable group in the Swedish labour market (Åslund & Roth 2005). Immigration flows from Africa to Sweden have increased notably in the last two decades. According to Nilsson (2004), migration stock from Africa is a recent phenomenon and it has increased notably from approximately 15,000 in 1985 to almost 65,000 in 2003. In December 2008, 7.7 percent of the total Swedish migrant population was born in Africa. Nearly one-third of them were born in Somalia and around one-fifth was born in Eritrea and Ethiopia (Statistics Sweden 2009). In the 1990s, the majority of African migrants were asylum seekers coming primarily from Somalia and Ethiopia. From 1980 to 2012, about 56,167 of immigrants from Africa were granted residence permit due to humanitarian reasons, of which 29,131 were from Somalia followed by Ethiopia 10,496. However, throughout 2000–2010, family ties were the most common reason for African migrants to settle in Sweden. About 46,300 of Africans were granted residence permit for family reasons and only 5,600 Africans were granted a temporary work permit during the same period (Swedish migration board 2013).

Studies on migration and its outcomes have gained considerable attention in social research. However, studies on African immigration to Sweden have received less attention. The existing literature on African migrants in Sweden have attempted to compare African migrants with other groups of migrants and have concluded that along with Asians, African migrants experience definite disadvantages

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in the labour market in terms of long-term unemployment, lower wages and unhealthier jobs (Åslund 2000). The existing literature tends to aggregate African migrants as a homogeneous group in the labour market. This means that the existing differences in terms of gender composition, reason for emigration, ethnic heterogeneity and background between African immigrants depending on the country of origin are hidden or even ignored. This study seeks to highlight the dynamics of unemployment duration among specific groups of migrants with African origin who immigrated to Sweden between 1994 and 2008. Additionally, the study analyses the importance of gender for such associations.

There are different possible explanations for the disadvantaged position of African immigrants in the Swedish labour market. Some scholars claim that migrants often suffer from disadvantages in the labour market because they may lack the appropriate human capital needed to succeed in the host countries (Chiswick 1978; Borjas 1985). The human capital approach (Becker 1964) has become a common framework used to explain inequalities in the labour market and in earnings. According to this approach, labour market outcomes are determined by what an individual - migrants in this case - brings to the labour market expressed as a combination of a person's level of education, experience, qualifications and abilities. However, according to Bauder (2003), the human capital approach does not address issues related to 'devaluation' of a migrant's previous experience and qualifications. In Germany, for instance, Basilio & Bauer (2010) found that devaluation of human capital differs depending on the country of origin. Arai & Vilhelmsson (2004) found that previous working experience and other qualifications do not play a major role when immigrants from Africa and Middle East search for jobs in Sweden. Yet another important component of the human capital of immigrants, according to Chiswick (2005) as well as Ekberg & Rooth (2006) is that transferability of human capital may depend on the reason for immigration; accordingly, higher transferability occurs among economic migrants rather than the non-economic ones. This may occur because economic migrants are driven by the transferability of their skills, whereas in the case of refugees, migration decisions are often driven by the wish for protection and freedom. As refugees are often characterised by traumatic experiences such as war, genocide, rape and imprisonment (Bernier 1992), they may also represent the most disadvantaged part of the immigrant workforce, as traumatic events may result in poor health, which thereby negatively impacts the integration process (Edvard & Vaglum 1993). In addition, a large share of refugees lack sufficient human capital, they have less access to social networks, they are exposed to discrimination by the majority population and they face increased risks for being located in areas with poor job opportunities. For these reasons, it is likely that many groups of African immigrants with a refugee background experience greater disadvantages in the labour market compared to other migrant populations (Aslan 2011; Åslund *et al*. 2010).

In our study, we expect that African migrants marrying native Swedes might experience greater access to employment than those who immigrated to marry an immigrant from the same country or due to family reunification. Nekby (2000) defines intermarriage as a marriage between immigrants with native-born person. On the other hand, intra-marriage is defined as marriage of foreign-born persons from the same country of origin or with other migrant. In this line, Meng & Gregory (2005) and Chiswick & Miller (1995) argue that intermarried migrants have better economic adjustment than intra-married migrants because immigrants who marry a native can quickly gain knowledge about the host country's system, language and labour market from their native spouses. Additionally, intermarried migrants may have greater possibilities to form indigenous social ties, which could improve their job prospects and increase the likelihood of employment. As intermarriage increases access to social networks; this could increase the probability of finding a job as natives are better informed about job opportunities (Gevrek 2009). In addition, Basu (2010) argues that a native spouse may also help reduce the information costs regarding local job markets and may increase the likelihood of employment. In our study, we expect that African immigrants coming from non-refugee-sending countries may be characterised by a high proportion of intermarried migrants (Haandrikman 2014). According to Niedomysl *et al*. (2010), approximately 2,600 African migrants married a Swedish spouse between 1991 and 2004. As a result, they might experience higher transferability of previous human capital as well as a greater possibility of formation of social networks, which could lead to a greater likelihood of employment (Östh *et al*. 2010).

A great number of studies (see, e.g., Arai *et al*. 1999; Arai *et al*. 2006; Le Grand & Szulkin 2002; de los Rey 2008; Rydgren 2004) pointed to additional potential explanations for the disadvantages experienced by groups of migrants and ethnic minorities in Sweden. Accordingly, apart from the importance of the human capital, stereotypes and discrimination based on gender and ethnic identity might be important factors that help to explain the higher unemployment faced by women and certain groups of immigrants in the Swedish labour market (Arai *et al*.2006; Nekby & Rödin 2007; Rydgren 2004). According to Reich *et al*. (1973), stereotypes and discrimination against certain groups of migrants and women may take place because of the existence of segments within the labour market with different rates of pay, working conditions, job opportunities and so on. Workers often end up in certain segments on the basis of their qualifications as well as discriminatory attitudes from employers regarding their suitability for work and productivity based on the colour of their skin, their ethnicity and gender. Additionally, Bauder (2006) and McDowell *et al*. (2007) argue that segmentation also takes place because employers distinguish or classify migrant workforce based on their bodily performances (body language, language ability, colour of skin, etc.) as well as stereotypical views rooted in country of origin, ethnicity, gender and so on. Given that African immigrants have many visible traits (skin and hair colour, religious traits, etc.) that could enforce discriminative attitudes; they may be more exposed to such attitudes when compared with many other immigrant groups.

Studies addressing levels of workplace segregation by ethnicity and gender indicate that employment is segregated primarily by gender rather than by ethnicity (King 1992; Reskin & Cassirer 1996). Given the extensive level of gender discrimination and sex-typing of labour, the ethnicity of immigrant women in comparison with their gender may have little impact on their labour market standing (Reskin 1993). On the other hand, some scholars acknowledge that immigrant women are subjected to both ethnic and gender discrimination; for this reason, female immigrants face double-negative disadvantages in the labour market (Leif *et al*. 2000). Evidence of a double-negative effect was found in the Danish labour market, having employment gaps between migrant women from the EU-15 (European Union) in relation to women from the refugee-sending countries such as Somalia, Iran, Afghanistan and Lebanon (Brodmann & Polavieja, 2010). In addition, Galloway (2006) shows that in Norway, migrant women from the non-OECD countries (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) generally have very low employment levels shortly after arrival, but that gap decreases with the length of residence. However, the convergence is much slower for women from countries with traditional gender roles.

In short, factors such as scarcity of human capital, disadvantages related to refugee status and exposure to discrimination and racism may contribute to the disadvantaged position of some groups of African immigrants in the Swedish labour market while others, who migrate to marry a native Swedish, could be in a more advantaged position. The contribution of these factors to transition into first employment upon arrival may, however, also differ significantly by gender.

The aim of this study is to scrutinise whether there are differences in transition to first employment after arrival between specific groups of African migrants and the general population. We will particularly explore gender differences in these associations. We will also examine the contribution of education, length of residence, age and family type for such country differentials.

This study will hence examine: (1) the association between country of birth and employment probability among African immigrants compared with the general population (other residents in employable ages); (2) whether the association varies by gender; (3) the contribution of education, age, length of residence and family type to the association; (4) the magnitude of the gender gap in transition to first employment by country of birth.

Data and methods

The empirical analysis was based on data drawn from the longitudinal PLACE-database located at the department of Social and Economic Geography at Uppsala University. The dataset was originally compiled by Statistics Sweden and contains a wide array of demographical, social and economically related variables for all Swedish residents. This data source enables us to identify 35,930 individuals born in Africa. The comparison of general population consisted of 3,153,448 residents in employable ages; amongst them 444,271 individuals were non-born African immigrants. The dataset provides information regarding individual characteristics in terms of year of immigration, age, gender, emigration country, educational level and family characteristics and so on. The dataset also contains records of unemployment duration on an annual basis.

Independent variable

The PLACE database enables us to distinguish between groups of Africa-originating migrants on the basis of country of birth. Country of birth information is available for countries from which substantial numbers of migrants have been observed. Migrants originating from countries having few migrants were classified as 'remaining African countries'. The categorisation available in the database allows for the following grouping of the country of birth: Ethiopia, Somalia, Gambia, Tunisia, Morocco, Uganda, Algeria, Egypt, Eritrea and remaining Africa. We defined the reference population as all native Swedish and non-African migrants resident in Sweden in employable ages during the follow-up period.

Control variables

We included several control variables in our models. *Age* is a categorical variable categorised into three groups roughly corresponding to: labour market entry ages (18–30 years), reproductive years (31–45 years of age) and post-reproductive years (46–65 years of age). *Education* is measured each year during the follow-up period. The variable was categorised following the International Standard Classification of Education, which is used in Sweden for the registration of staff training for personnel management information system[1]. The variable falls into three levels: primary (consists of individuals with no known education, pre-secondary education less than 9 years and compulsory school 9 years), secondary (covers 3 years of upper secondary school) and university (comprises tertiary education at university colleges). *Family type* is a derived variable that reports the characteristics of the household. The variable falls into six levels: single, married/cohabiting without children in the household, married/cohabiting with at least one child < 18 in the household, married/cohabiting with at least one child ≥ 18 in the household, single mother and single father.

Length of residence is the duration of residence in Sweden in years; it is grouped in four categories, 0–4, 5–8, 9–12 and 12 + years.

Dependent variable

Transition for first employment was calculated from observation of unemployment spells (measured in years), which consist of two components, for example, the event indicator and a measure of time at risk of the event. To estimate unemployment duration, a dummy variable = 0 was created to represent unemployment for each year. When the individual becomes employed, the variable gets the value of 1. According to Statistic Sweden, a person is classified as employed if one has a control task with a salary paid at least 1 hour of work per week during the month of data collection. It means that all who carried out a gainful work at least 1 hour per week during a screening period used by Statistics Sweden. Statistic Sweden measures employment status in November each year. All individuals that are not working, according to the above definition but are otherwise members of the studied population are categorised as unemployed.

Modelling strategy

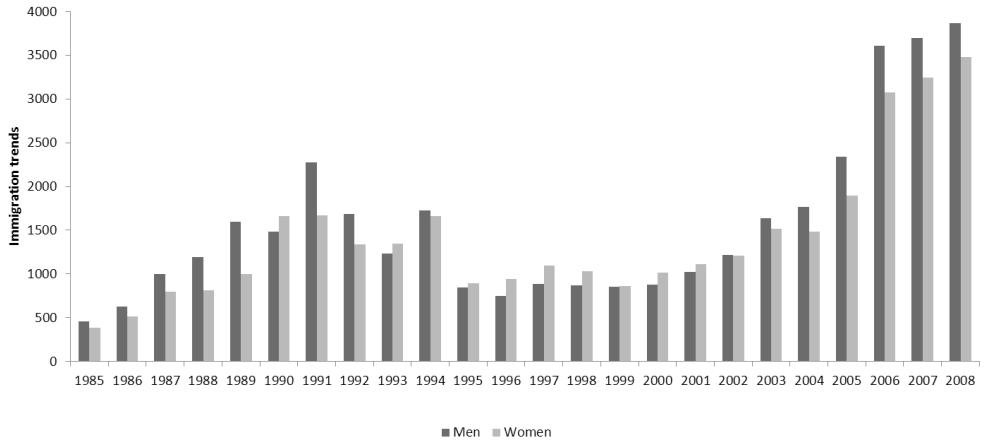
The present study was based on survival analysis technique. Survival analysis is a statistical method used to study duration until the occurrence of the event of interest (e.g., employment), where the duration is measured from the time at which an individual becomes exposed to the risk of experiencing the event (Allison 1995). All models of survival data are concerned with the timing of an event. An event is defined as the transition from one discrete state to another at a single moment in time (Steele 2005).

By means of proportional hazard models, the probability that an individual will leave unemployment during the next period, given that he or she has been unemployed for T years will be estimated. The proportional hazard function is defined as:

$$h(t|Z) = h0\,(t)\,\exp\,(Z'\beta)\quad (1),$$

Where, Z is the covariate vector, β represents the parameter vector and h0 (t) is a baseline hazard function.

By means of Cox regression models, we estimated the association between country of birth and likelihood of leaving unemployment after adjustment for several other factors that have previously been shown to be associated with unemployment (age, gender, education and family type). First, socio-demographic characteristics of the study population are presented in Table 1. Thereafter, results from Cox proportional hazard models are presented separately for women and men and Table 2, and Table 3 Model 1 examines the unadjusted hazard ratio of transition to first employment by country of origin with the general non-African population in employable ages as the



PLACE Dataset, 2013

Figure 1. Migration trends from Africa to Sweden, 1985–2008

reference category. Model 2 includes age and education as control variables. In this model, we aimed to test whether education as a proxy for human capital could account for country-level differences in transition to first employment. Finally, Model 3 is mutually adjusted for age, education and family type.

The main migration trends of African migrants (Figure 1) and its percentages by country of origin (Figure 2) were presented. In addition, non-stratified Cox regression analyses indicated that there is a considerable gender gap in transition to first employment. African women have much greater difficulties in finding employment upon arrival to Sweden. Figure 3, therefore, shows the association between country of birth and transition to first employment among women with all other African men as reference group when mutually adjusting for age, education and family type.

Results

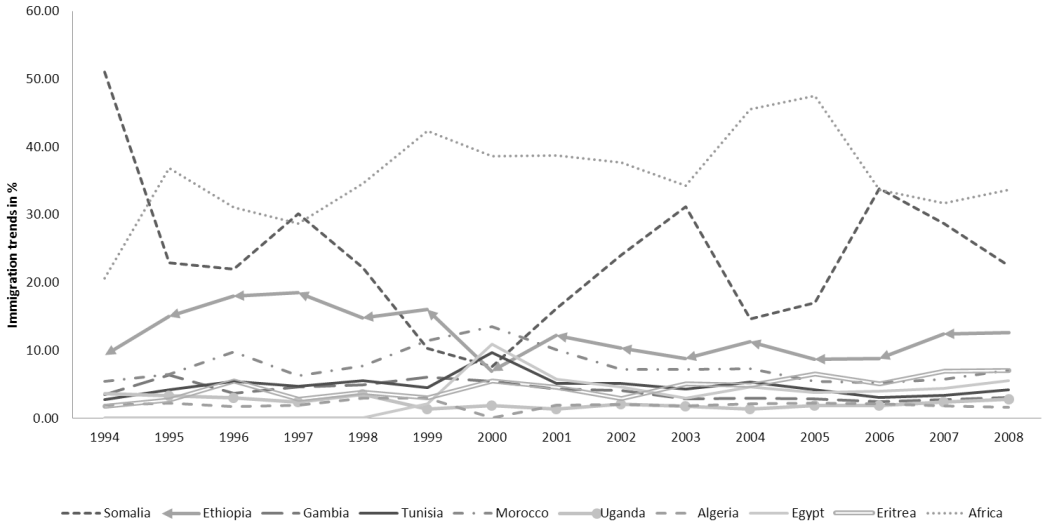
Figure 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the recent migration flows from Africa to Sweden from 1985 to 2008. Immigration inflows from Africa increased drastically from approximately 1000 in 1985 to more than 3000 in 1991. It dropped gradually during the following years. From 1995 to 2002, Sweden received around 2000 African immigrants. From 2002 to 2008, the influx of African migrants increased from around 2500 to almost 8000 in 2008.

Figure 2 describes the pattern of African immigration to Sweden. The figure shows that Somalia (about 50 percent) and Ethiopia (about 10 percent) were the largest African immigrant groups in 1994. However, while immigration from Ethiopia increased in the following years, the share of immigrants from Somalia decreased considerably until the year 2000, although it increased gradually again after 2000. The immigration from other African countries (e.g. Gambia, Tunisia, Morocco, Uganda, Algeria, Egypt and Eritrea) has remained at a fairly stable level between 1994 and 2008. They contribute with between Gambia (3.8), Tunisia (4.2), Morocco (7), Uganda (2.5), Algeria (2.1), Egypt (2.4) and Eritrea (4.2), percent of the annual immigration to Sweden.

Table 1 reports the social and demographic characteristics of individuals included in the analysis of unemployment duration among African immigrants living in Sweden during the study period. While no considerable gender differences in educational level were found among the non-African population, the table reveals that African men are somewhat more highly educated than African women. However, gender differences vary across countries. Immigrant men from Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea are considerably more educated than women from the same countries. On the other hand, there are only slight gender differences between men and women from Gambia, Tunisia, Morocco, Uganda, Algeria and Egypt. Egypt and Algeria have the highest proportion of immigrant men and women with university degrees. The lowest proportions of individuals with university degrees are found amongst immigrant men from Somalia and Gambia, as well as women from Somalia and Eritrea.

The table also compares African migrants by age, country of origin and type of family. African migrants are in general fairly young. About 50 percent of the study population is aged 18–30 with less than 10 percent aged 45–65. Higher proportions of African migrants aged 18–30 are found amongst immigrants from Somalia, Gambia and Ethiopia, whereas a higher proportion of immigrants aged 45–65 are found among immigrants from Algeria, Egypt and Eritrea. The observations about family characteristics of African migrants in Sweden seem to indicate that the highest number of single persons is found among immigrants from Somalia, whereas the highest proportions of married or cohabiting couples with at least one child in the household under 18 are found among Northern African migrants. The lowest numbers of single mothers are found among immigrants from Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. The table also reveals that more than 40 percent of the migrants from Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Egypt were married/cohabiting with at least one child under the age of 18.

Table 2 shows the hazard ratios of transition to first employment among migrant women from Africa compared with the general population as reference group. Women from Egypt, HR = 0.43 (0.35–0.53), Somalia, HR = 0.47 (0.45–0.49) and Tunisia, HR = 0.54 (0.48–0.61) reported the lowest hazard ratios of transition to first employment when compared with general women population in the non-adjusted model. When education and age are taken into account (Model 2), the results showed that women from Eritrea, HR = 1.10 (1.04–1.17) have somewhat higher hazard ratios of transition to first employment compared with the general women population resident in Sweden. The model also reveals that the gaps in the hazard ratios



PLACE Dataset, 2013
Figure 2. Percentage of African immigrants in Sweden, 1994–2008

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the study population included in the analysis of unemployment spells (%) 1995–2008

		General population	Non-African migrants	Somalia	Ethiopia	Gambia	Tunisia	Morocco	Uganda	Algeria	Egypt	Eritrea	Africa
Education	*Primary*	36.5	44	32.3	22.6	25.1	23.4	19.4	18.8	13	12.4	24.3	15.6
(Women)	*Secondary*	46.7	37.8	54	56.3	50.5	44.4	36.2	40.6	36.5	28.6	62.4	38.5
	University	16.8	17.2	13.7	21.1	24.4	32.1	44.4	40.6	50.6	59	13.2	46
	Primary	34.5	41	24.1	23.2	23.7	23.7	22	19.6	14.2	6.2	21	12.2
(Men)	*Secondary*	49.2	42.3	52.5	40.7	51.2	43.6	33.7	35.2	34.2	26.9	43.6	30.4
	University	16.3	17.7	23.4	36.1	25	32.7	44.3	45.2	51.6	67	35.3	57.4
Gender	*Women*	48.5	48.9	51.7	58.5	43	49.5	58.5	56.1	42.4	40.5	65.1	51
	Men	51.5	51.1	48.3	41.5	57	50.5	41.5	43.9	57.6	59.5	34.9	49
Age	*18–30*	69	46.1	55.7	55.6	55.1	49.8	48.2	52.4	37.7	45.7	46.4	50.6
	31–45	13.2	25	35.7	37.1	39.7	39.9	42.5	38.3	50.2	41.3	41.2	39.9
	46–65	18.8	27.9	8.6	7.3	5.2	10.3	9.3	9.3	12.1	13	12.4	9.5
	Single	34	35	49	30.6	29.2	23.8	23	31.6	24.5	23.5	36.1	40.9
Family	*Married/ cohabiting no child*	8.1	11.6	5	17.5	15.8	19.2	25.2	11	20.1	18.5	15.1	11.8
Type	*Married/ cohab. child < 18*	26	30	25.6	34.3	40.0	47.2	41.7	35.9	46.1	46.9	31.7	33.2
	Married/ cohab. child ≥ 18	16.9	9.4	0.4	1.0	1.8	2.3	1.6	2.8	2.9	3.9	0.9	2.1
	Single father	3	2.1	1.4	1.8	2.4	1.4	0.8	2.0	1.1	1.6	1.1	1.6
	Single mother	12	11.9	18.7	14.9	10.8	6.1	7.6	16.8	5.4	5.7	15.2	10.3
Unemployment spells	*Total exposure time (years)*	*10 965 276*	*2 188 990*	*38 016*	*54 225*	*7 269*	*9 502*	*13 651*	*6 744*	*4 693*	*3 566*	*11 176*	*32 564*

Table 2. Hazard ratio of transition to first employment upon arrival among female migrants from Africa, 1995–2008

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	H.R	[95 % C.I]	H.R	[95 % C.I]	H.R	[95 % C.I]
Study population						
General population	1		1		1	
Ethiopia	0.80	0.77–0.83	0.78	0.75–0.82	0.68	0.65–0.70
Somalia	0.47	0.45–0.49	0,48	0.46–0.51	0.49	0.47–0.51
Gambia	0.81	0.74–0.89	0,82	0.75–0.91	0.69	0.63–0.75
Tunisia	0.54	0.48–0.61	0,63	0.55–0.71	0.71	0.66–0.77
Morocco	0.64	0.59–0.70	0,77	0.71–0.84	0.68	0.64–0.74
Uganda	0.87	0.80–0.95	0,80	0.74–0.87	0.71	0.65–0.77
Algeria	0.65	0.57–0.76	0,67	0.58–0.78	0.74	0.67–0.83
Egypt	0.43	0.35–0.53	0,49	0.38–0.57	0.63	0.55–0.73
Eritrea	1.02	0.97–1.10	1,10	1.04–1.17	0.95	0.90–1.00
Rest of Africa	0.75	0.71–0.78	0,73	0.70–0.76	0.72	0.69–0.74
Age						
18–30			1		1	
31–45			0.69	0.69–0.70	0.70	0.69–0.71
46–65			0.21	0.20–0.21	0.31	0.31–0.32
Family type						
Single					1	
Married/coh. no child					1.05	1.04–1.07
Marr./coh. child < 18					1.25	1.24–1.25
Marr./coh. child ≥ 18					1.05	1.04–1.06
Single mothers					0.95	0.95–1.96
Education						
Primary			1		1	
Secondary			2.06	2.05–2.08	1.86	1.85–1.87
University			2.22	2.20–2.23	1.86	1.84–1.87

HR=Hazard ratio; CI = confidence intervals
Model 1 unadjusted model
Model 2 adjusted for age and education
Model 3 adjusted for age, education and family type

of transition to first employment among women from Morocco and Tunisia decreased to some degree. When we control for family type, together with education and age, the results showed that the gaps in the hazard ratios of transition to first employment between all women of non-African decent and migrant women from Tunisia, HR = 0.71 (0.66–0.77), Algeria, HR = 0.74 (0.67–0.83) and Egypt, HR = 0.63 (0.55–0.73) narrowed somewhat, while the opposite was true among women migrants from Gambia. Additional results where we compare African women migrants with other non-African migrants (results not shown) revealed that when education, age, family type and length of residence are taken into account, women from Eritrea, HR=1.58 (1.48–1.65), Gambia, HR = 1.22 (1.10–1.34) and Uganda, HR = 1.14 (1.05–1.24) had higher hazard ratios of transition to first employment compared with other non-African migrant women in Sweden. On the other hand, the opposite was true among women migrants from Egypt, HR = 0.59 (0.48–0.73), Somalia, HR = 0.72 (0.69–0.75) and Algeria, HR = 0.86 (0.74–0.99).

Table 3 estimates the hazard ratio of transition to first employment among immigrant men from Africa compared with the general male population resident in Sweden. The estimated results indicate that the lowest hazard ratios for transition to first employment were found among men from Somalia, HR = 0.49 (0.48–0.51) and Egypt, HR = 0.49 (0.42–0.56) in the unadjusted model when compared with the general male population in Sweden. When education and age are taken into account (Model 2), the gaps in the hazard ratios of transition to first employment between the general Swedish population and some African male migrants narrowed among male migrants from Eritrea, HR = 0.93 (0.89–0.99), Algeria, HR = 0.76 (0.68–0.84), Tunisia,

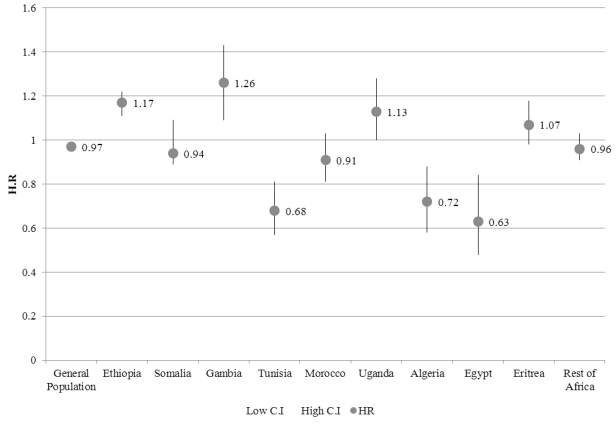
Table 3. Hazard ratio of transition to first employment upon arrival among male migrants from Africa, 1995–2008

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	H.R	[95 % C.I]	H.R	[95 %C.I]	H.R	[95 % C.I]
Study population						
General population	1		1		1	
Ethiopia	0,69	0.67–0.71	0,67	0.65–0.69	0.68	0.65–0.71
Somalia	0,49	0.48–0.51	0,49	0.47–0.51	0.50	0.47–0.52
Gambia	0,63	0.58–0.70	0,69	0.63–0.75	0.69	0.64–0.75
Tunisia	0,61	0.56–0.66	0,73	0.68–0.79	0.71	0.66–0.77
Morocco	0,57	0.53–0.61	0,71	0.66–0.75	0.68	0.64–0.74
Uganda	0,73	0.67–0.79	0,71	0.65–0.77	0.71	0.65–0.78
Algeria	0,64	0.57–0.71	0,76	0.68–0.84	0.74	0.67–0.83
Egypt	0,49	0.42–0.56	0,66	0.57–0.75	0.63	0.55–0.72
Eritrea	0,92	0.87–0.98	0,93	0.89–0.99	0.95	0.90–1.01
Rest of Africa	0,68	0.66–0.71	0,72	0.69–0.75	0.72	0.69–0.74
Age						
18–30			1		1	
31–45			0.71	0.71–0.72	0.70	0.69–0.71
46–65			0.31	0.31–0.32	0.32	0.31–0.32
Family type						
Single					1	
Marr/coh. no child					1.05	1.04–1.06
Mar/coh. child < 18					1.24	1.24–1.25
Mar/coh. child ≥ 18					1.05	1.04–1.05
Single father					1.11	1.10–1.12
Education						
Primary			1		1	
Secondary			1.87	1.86–1.89	1.85	1.84–1.87
University			1.84	1.83–1.85	1.86	1.85–1.86

HR=Hazard ratio; CI = confidence intervals
Model 1 unadjusted model
Model 2 adjusted for age, and education
Model 3 adjusted for age, education and family type

HR = 0.73 (0.68–0.79) and Morocco, HR = 0.71 (0.66–0.75). In addition, there are no major changes when education, age and family type are mutually adjusted for in Model 3, which suggests that education and not family type could be an important factor explaining gaps in transition to first employment between some groups of African male immigrants and the general population. Additional results (results not shown) reveal that apart from male migrants from Eritrea, HR = 1.27 (1.20–1.35), African male migrants have, in general, lower hazard ratios of transition to first employment compared with other non-African male migrants after adjustment for age, length of residence, education and family type.

Results in table 2 and table 3 show how African men and women differ from the general population. However, this is not clearly telling us how African immigrants compare with other groups of immigrants in Sweden. In the Appendix, African women and men (respectively) are compared with all other immigrants. Comparing with immigrants also enable us to control for how length of residence in Sweden affects employment opportunity. The results reveal that while African men, in general, (with the exception of men from Eritrea) are doing worse compared with other immigrants, the results are varying among women. While women from Somalia, Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt are less fortunate on the labour market than other migrant women, women from Gambia, Ethiopia, Uganda, Eritrea and the rest of Africa have greater odds for employment. The length of residence variable clearly indicates that staying in Sweden for more than 4 years is significantly and strongly positively associated with increasing job opportunities for both women and men.



HR=Hazard ratio; CI = confidence intervals
Models adjusted for age, education and family type

Figure 3. Hazard ratio of transition to first employment upon arrival by gender and country of birth, 1995–2008 (Male = 1: reference group)

Results not shown indicated that there was a significant interaction effect between gender and country of origin in the transition to first employment suggesting that the gender gap in transition to first employment differs by country of origin. Figure 3, therefore, shows the hazard ratios of transition to first employment among women by country of origin with all other male as reference group. Women from Egypt, HR = 0.63 (0.48–0.84) Tunisia, HR = 0.68 (0.57–0.81), and Algeria, HR = 0.72 (0.58–0.88) seem to have greater difficulties in finding employment upon arrival in Sweden when compared with their male counterpart. The opposite was true among women from Gambia, HR = 1.26 (1.09–1.46), and Uganda, HR=1.13 (1.00–1.26) and Ethiopia, HR = 1.17 (1.11–1.22).

Discussion

This paper examined the employment prospects of African migrants in Sweden, focussing specially on the importance of country of birth and gender on transition to first employment upon arrival. The main results indicated that in comparison with the general population resident in Sweden, the transition to first employment upon arrival among African migrants differ by country of birth, but there are also gender differences in this association. Our main findings suggested lower likelihood of transition to employment among most groups of African immigrants when compared with the general population and especially among immigrants from Somalia. Yet, immigrant men and women from Eritrea did not show higher risks of long unemployment duration when compared with the general population. Education explained some of the country differences in employment possibilities. Moreover, residence of 4 years or more in Sweden considerably increased employment possibilities among African immigrants. In addition, we found a gender gap in transition to first employment, saying that male African migrants from Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt were more likely to find employment when compared their female counterparts? However, the opposite was true among women from Gambia, Uganda and Eritrea.

Initially, starting with the general hypothesis that transferability of human capital is linked to reason for immigration whereby refugees are presumed to have less transferable skills (Chiswick 2005), this study shows that transition to first employment was lower among refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia when compared with the general population. The disadvantage faced by immigrants from Somalia and Ethiopia in the Swedish labour market may be linked to the fact that immigration inflows from these countries are predominantly refugees and asylum seekers (Statistics Sweden 2006). According to the Swedish migration board (2013), about 71 percent of the total asylum seekers from Africa during the period of 1980–2012 were from Somalia and Ethiopia and another substantial percentage coming from Eritrea. In comparison with Somalian refugees, Suster & Magnusson (2015) argue that Eritrean and Ethiopians refugees have similar employment patterns as the average Swedish migrant population. The disadvantages faced by Somalian refugees in Sweden could be explained by the relatively low educational levels. In general, refugees and asylum seekers were assumed to face disadvantages in the labour market compared with other general migrant population because they often deal with mental and emotional wounds that result in a poor mental health (Bhui *et al*. 2006), which negatively influence the integration process (Edvard & Vaglum 1993). Immigrants from Somalia and Ethiopia may also suffer from disadvantages in the Swedish labour market because they are often placed in areas with poor job opportunities (Åslund *et al*. 2010).

Studies conducted in Norway (Svein 2004) and Canada (Danso 2001) reported employment disadvantages among refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia compared with other migrant groups. These disadvantages were explained by their refugee status, national background along with language barriers and experience of racial discrimination. In Finland, Heikkilä (2005) found that immigrants with refugee background, coming from Somalia, Vietnam and Iraq experienced higher unemployment rates than other population migrant.

One could also speculate that refugees in Sweden might experience lower transition to first employment because asylum seekers and their families undertake the introduction programme, which consists of Swedish language instruction and preparation to insertion into the labour market. The introduction programme is about 2 years, but the situation varies from individuals and across municipalities (Lemaître 2007).

Although information on reason for immigration is not available in our data, marriage migration could also characterise a considerable proportion of African migration in Sweden. A study conducted by Nilsson (2004) showed that a great proportion of African men from Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria have emigrated to Sweden in order to build family with Swedish women. It could be valuable to consider that intermarriage with a native may have a positive influence on employment probabilities as it may enable these immigrants to quickly develop social networks and language skills with support from their native spouses. Our results demonstrated that family characteristic does not account for country differences in employment prospects as the risks for employment remained more or less the same after adjustment for family characteristics. Nevertheless, higher transition to first employment was found among married/cohabiting couples than single immigrants. These results are in line with what was previously mentioned by Meng & Gregory (2005), that intermarriage with a native increases the human capital accumulation of the immigrant via spousal influence in terms of language skills, knowledge about regulations and laws and access to native networks, all of which facilitate job searching and consequently, may lead to higher employment likelihood.

The relationship between gender and country of origin was another important part of this study. Our findings suggested a gender gap in terms of transition to first employment.

However, the extent of the gender gap varied considerably according to country of origin. While women from Gambia, Ethiopia and Uganda seemed less disadvantaged in terms of transition to first employment when compared with their African male counterparts, women from Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Somalia seemed to have greater difficulties in finding employment upon arrival in Sweden. The patterns of labour force participation of African female migrants in Sweden have, to a great extent, followed the traditional gender division of labour market participation. In fact, it seems possible to suggest that the gender discrimination that has had the effect of segregating women in the labour market (King 1992; Reskin & Cassirer 1996) may explain the employment disadvantage faced by some African women in Sweden. Moreover, one could also state that the extensive gender gap in terms of transition to first employment in certain groups of African migrants could be partially explained by differences in human capital measured in terms of level of education, in that African men are somewhat higher educated than African women. Nevertheless, when we analysed the association between gender and country of origin on transition to first employment in order to capture the extent of the gender gap across countries, a huge gap was found among the North African migrants (Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt) even though both male and female immigrants from these countries exhibit low gender differentiation in terms of level of education (Table 1). It seems clear that the extensive gender gap found among immigrants from Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt might be rooted in other factors rather than those related to differences in human capital measured in terms of educational level. The possibility of both ethnic and gender discrimination against some North African women might be one of the possible explanations for such pattern. Additionally, it might be important to consider the effect of cultural behaviours, values and customs among some North African families. It has been acknowledged that cultural values have a direct association on economic integration through the impact of religious beliefs on individual behaviour (Lindley 2010). Traditional Muslim views on the gender roles within the household whereby Muslim women more commonly undertake full-time domestic responsibilities rather than enter into the labour market may impact employment participation. In addition, some customs that can be directly associated with their faith, such as regular prayer and dress requirements (Modood *et al*. 1997) might cause prejudice against Muslim women in the Swedish labour market.

Another important result of this study is that in spite of their high levels of education, women from Tunisia, Egypt and Algeria experienced lower chances of transition to first employment. These results suggested that levels of human capital measured in terms of level of education do not explain the country differences in employment prospects among these North African women. In the USA, for example, Kimuna & Djamba (2011) found that black African women were more likely to participate in the labour market than their white counterparts. These results are in line with the hypothesis that education increases employment probability for immigrants (Becker 1964). However, the importance of education on transition to first employment among African men is different from these found among African women. Thus, future studies should focus on gender differences in the contribution by education and human capital for the successful labour market integration of African immigrants.

Despite the obvious strengths of this study as evidenced by the use of total population register data, longitudinal follow-up, reliable information on employment and other included variables, some uncertainties and limitations should be noted. Crucial variables such as the reason for immigration and Swedish proficiency are lacking in the analyses. Furthermore, important information, such as cultural values, gender roles and so on that cannot be collected via register data, may contribute to some weaknesses in our analyses because that information could be crucial when explaining, for example, the role of cultural values on labour force participation among the more highly educated women. In addition, apart from the importance of education, it could be valuable to measure the effect of other forms of human and social capital, such as job information embedded in social networks, skills, previous working experience, language proficiency and so on labour market participation. Such information was, unfortunately, not included in our registry data. Moreover, a specific problem with the use of register data is the risk of 'overcoverage', that is, some African immigrants may have returned to their countries of birth without this event of migration being registered. This could lead to overestimation of the risk of unemployment among immigrants. In order to minimise this problem, we excluded all individuals who did not have registered information regarding employment status. Information of employment/unemployment was based on employment status in November each year; thus, there is a risk that some individuals were unemployed in November but employed in other parts of the year, which may lead to an underestimation of the likelihood of employment. This should, however, primarily be a problem if there are variations between groups in employment patterns across the year, which seems rather unlikely. Finally, there is a risk that educational information available in registry data includes many missing cases, especially among newly arrived immigrants. This may have caused some bias in our analyses. This descriptive study should be considered as starting point for future research on labour market participation among African immigrants by country of birth. The findings showed that African migrants should be considered a heterogeneous group in the Swedish labour market. Transition to first employment upon arrival in Sweden differs noticeably by country of origin and gender, even when other socio-demographic characteristics have been taken into account. From a political point of view, there are many questions related to the importance of education on employment likelihood, which should be further studied. The possibility of carrying out further research regarding the role of other forms of human capital on employment likelihood as well as the existence of occupational mismatch among well-educated African migrants should be investigated. Moreover, the effect of cultural values among well-educated women from North Africa on their attitudes towards employment should be further studied as well as employment potential stigma towards this group as employers. The results of such studies will significantly enrich the understanding of the dynamics of employment among African migrants in Sweden as well as the potential disadvantaged groups in the labour market. Such findings would be highly valuable in improving the efficiency of Swedish immigration policies focussed on labour market integration among immigrants and contribute to facilitate employment among this group.

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Notes

1. MIS 2000:1. Swedish Educational, SUN 2000

Appendix 1. Hazard ratio of transition to first employment upon arrival among women and men migrants from Africa, 1995–2008

	Women		Men	
	H.R	[95 % C.I]	H.R	[95 % C.I]
Study population				
Non-African migrants	1		1	
Ethiopia	1.10	1,05–1,14	0.89	0.86–0.92
Somalia	0.72	0,69–0,76	0.68	0.65–0.70
Gambia	1.22	1,11–1,34	0.93	0.86–1.02
Tunisia	0.77	0,68–0,88	0.91	0.84–0.97
Morocco	1.02	0,94–1,10	0.88	0.82–0.94
Uganda	1.14	1,05–1,25	0.93	0.86–1.02
Algeria	0.86	0,75–1.00	0.96	0.86–1.06
Egypt	0.59	0,48–0,73	0.79	0.69–0.91
Eritrea	1.58	1,49–1,68	1.27	1.20–1.35
Rest of Africa	1.04	1.00–1,09	0.95	0.92–0.99
Age				
18–30	1		1	
31–45	0.76	0.75–0.77	0.71	0.71–0.72
46–65	0.22	0.22–0.23	0.30	0.30–0.31
Family type				
Single	1		1	
Married/coh. no child	1.03	1.01–1.06	1.10	1.08–1.13
Marr/coh. child < 18	1.19	1.17–1.21	1.42	1.40–1.44
Marr/coh. child ≥ 18	1.07	1.05–1.10	1.14	1.12–1.16
Single mothers (A1)/fathers (A2)	1.06	1.04–1.08	1.20	1.16–1.24
Education				
Primary	1		1	
Secondary	1.96	1.94–1.99	1.70	1.68–1.72
University	2.30	2.27–2.34	1.91	1.88–1.94
Length of residence				
0–4 years	1		1	
5–8 years	1.73	1.69–1.76	1.39	1.37–1.42
9–12 years	1.93	1.88–1.97	1.40	1.37–1.42
12+ years	1.89	1.86–1.93	1.40	1.37–1.42

HR=Hazard ratio; CI = confidence intervals
Models adjusted for age, education, length of residence and family type

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