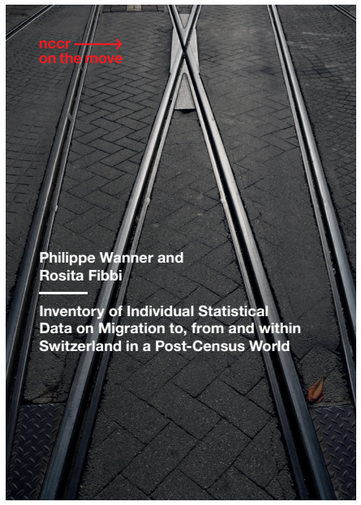
On the other hand, there is a strong male gender bias among migrants from countries such as the Maghreb and Gambia, where the reasons for leaving are as much economic as they are political. For migrants from these countries, access to asylum is less certain and there are high risks involved in crossing the Mediterranean. These applicants are only rarely granted refugee status or provisional admittance. It is mainly men who attempt this course of action.

Further reading

See the CNN site for a transcript of Ben Carson's words
http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1509/14/cg.01.html

See the following site for data on Syrian refugees
http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php

Eurostat (2015), Asylum Statistics
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics



Inventory of Individual Statistical Data on Migration to, from and within Switzerland in a Post-Census World

Project of the "nccr – on the move"
Philippe Wanner and Rosita Fibbi, University of Geneva

In order to precisely document the complexity of the phenomenon of migration, accurate statistical information is required for both researchers and politicians, as well as for the public. Relying on administrative data and surveys, this project aims to describe today's international migration towards Switzerland and the processes leading to the integration of migrant populations. For this purpose, longitudinal approaches will be used, aimed at describing the life course of migrants in Switzerland.

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The nccr – on the move is the National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) for migration and mobility studies. The center aims to enhance the understanding of contemporary migration patterns. Designed to develop new perspectives on the changing migratory reality, the nccr – on the move brings together research projects from social sciences, economics and law. Managed from the University of Neuchatel, the network comprises seventeen research teams from seven universities in Switzerland: the universities of Neuchatel, Basel, Bern, Fribourg, Geneva, Lausanne and Lucerne.

"in a nutshell" provides answers to current questions on migration and mobility – based on research findings, which have been elaborated within the nccr – on the move. The authors assume responsibility for their analyses and arguments.

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Philippe Wanner

Why Are so Many Asylum Seekers Male?

in a nutshell #2, March 2016

FNSNF
Swiss National Science Foundation

The National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCR) are a research instrument of the Swiss National Science Foundation

Messages for Decision-Makers

Of the refugees who have left Syria, women outnumber men. Yet the refugees that have arrived in Europe are predominantly male.

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Most of the asylum applications in Switzerland (from applicants of all nationalities) are filed by men. In 2014, almost three-quarters of all applicants were male.

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This male gender bias is particularly strong among refugees from the Maghreb and West Africa.

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The asylum process helps to restore gender equality, as women are currently better represented in the permanent resident population.

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The higher proportion of males is specific to asylum-related migration flows.

What do we mean by …

… male-to-female ratio
This is the gender balance in a population and expresses the number of men to women

The events that occurred on New Year's Eve 2015 in Cologne and some other German cities, as well as in Zurich, not only had a major impact on public opinion on account of their violence; they also raised questions about people of different cultures and nationalities living together. These events have also given rise to concerns about the consequences of migration consisting predominantly of young men, rather than families. But if we focus on Europe and Switzerland, what role do men actually play in these refugee flows?

The impact of the migration of men in terms of social wellbeing has been an area of study for some time, with reference, for example, to the Gulf countries where migrants tend to be working men who have left their families behind. But with the massive influx of refugees that we have seen over the last two years, the question is now being seen in a different light. For example, Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson expressed the fear of many in September 2015 that the waves of young Syrian men arriving in the West could be infiltrated with terrorists.

Asylum is a global phenomenon, but it is mostly males making the journey to Europe.
So what is going on here? The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) keeps a record of Syrians who have fled the country. On its website, accessed on 30 January 2016, the UNHCR reported that women accounted for 50.7 % of the 4.6 million Syrian refugees they had registered, most of whom were in Turkey and Lebanon. More than half of the registered refugees were children. Violence makes no distinction between adults and children, or between men and women, which is why we see equal numbers of both sexes among the Syrians fleeing their country.

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"Of the 4.6 million Syrian refugees – most of whom are in Turkey or Lebanon – 50.7% are women, and more than half of them are children."

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However, the European statistics concerning asylum seekers in Europe paint a different picture. The latest asylum statistics published by Eurostat showed a large majority of men among adult asylum seekers. Detailed data published by the European agency show that for 2014, a total of 88,830 Syrian men and 33,220 Syrian women submitted their first asylum application to one of the 28 member states of the European Union (EU-28), representing a male-to-female ratio of 2.7 : 1. Eurostat figures for Switzerland for the same year show that 2,095 applications were made by Syrian men and 1,720 by Syrian women, a more balanced male-to-female ratio of 1.2 : 1.

So, although men and women are fleeing in equal numbers, more men are arriving in Europe. This certainly raises questions about the legitimacy of an immigration policy that selects immigrants based on gender, but let's take a look at the situation in Switzerland.

Differences based on country of origin
Interestingly, Switzerland's State Secretariat for Migration does not make available any data on the sex of persons filing an application. In fact, their monthly asylum statistics do not include any demographic information (age, sex, marital status) – only the nationality, canton of residence, and status of the application procedure. Fortunately, with the aid of Eurostat statistics, it is possible to work out how many women are making asylum applications.

Graph 1 shows the distribution by sex of the thirteen main groups who submitted an application in 2014. While men outnumber women in all the nationalities represented, there is clearly a range of different situations. Of the applicants from Ethiopia, Syria, and Kosovo, for example, women account for a little over 40% of applicants. At the other extreme, women represent less than 5% of applicants among asylum seekers from Morocco, Tunisia, and Gambia. For these countries applicants are overwhelmingly male, with a male-to-female ratio of 35 : 1 for Tunisians, 27 : 1 for Moroccans, and a remarkable 76 : 1 for migrants from Gambia. Other nationalities lie somewhere in between these two extremes.

Is this male gender bias specific to asylum seekers?
The situation for asylum seekers is not the same as it is for permanent residents (defined as persons who have lived in Switzerland for at least a year or who hold an annual or permanent residence permit). In fact, the male-to-female ratio is more balanced for those living in Switzerland with a residence permit. Graph 2 shows the six countries for which women account for less than 20% of the asylum seekers who arrived in 2014. It shows the proportion of women holding an N permit (asylum seeker), F permit (provisional admission), B permit (annual residence permit) or C permit (permanent residence permit) as at 31 December 2014.

With the exception of Nigeria, there is a higher proportion of women among those who have been granted provisional admission or who hold an annual or permanent residence permit than among asylum seekers still being processed. For Moroccans and Georgians, women are actually better represented than men among holders of B and C permits (and F permits only in the case of Moroccans). For these two groups and, to a lesser extent, for Algerians, these figures suggest that there are two quite distinct migration flows into Switzerland: on the one hand asylum seekers, who are predominantly male, and on the other hand migrants, motivated by other reasons (mainly labor). The male-to-female ratio is more balanced in this second group and there is even a predominance of women in the case of family reunification or healthcare work.

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"The asylum process helps to reduce the strong male-to-female ratio among asylum seekers, as it appears that applications from males are more likely to be refused."

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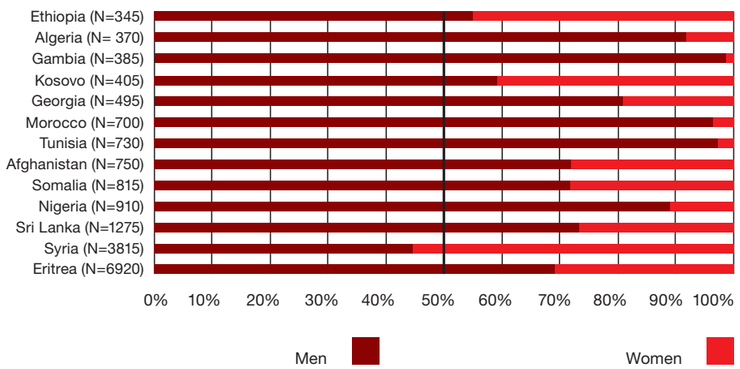
Why are there so many male applicants?
For a start, it is noticeable that the majority of asylum-related migrants arriving in Switzerland from North or West Africa, generally via Italy and Spain, are male. By contrast, there is a greater gender balance among the population taking the Balkan route.

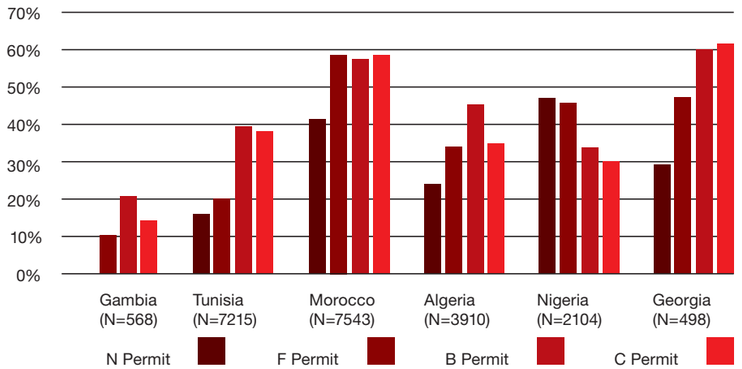
Secondly, equal numbers of men and women are fleeing from active conflict zones (Syria, Afghanistan); this gender balance can also be seen for citizens of the Horn of Africa and Kosovo. There has been an exodus from Kosovo since the end of 2014, following the easing of travel rules in Serbian territory, with a resulting rise in the number of people trying to reach Western Europe, and especially Germany. This group is largely made up of families who have left Kosovo in the hope of obtaining residence status in German-speaking Europe.

Graph 1: Proportion of men and women who submitted an asylum application in Switzerland in 2014.



Source: Eurostat

Graph 2: Proportion of women for a selection of nationalities involved in asylum applications according to permit type. 31 December 2014.



Source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office. As at the end of December 2014, all Gambian nationals living in Switzerland and holding an N permit were male.