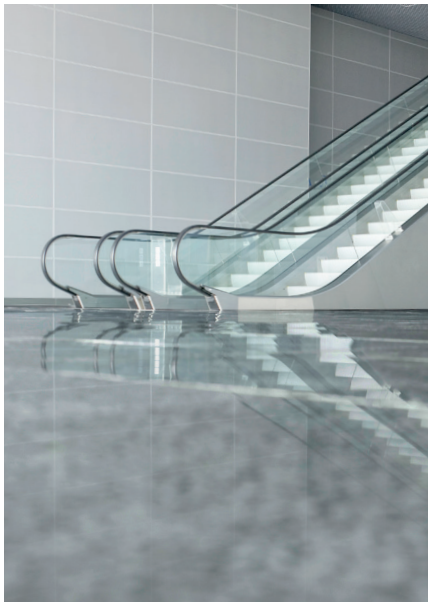
nccr on the move

National Center of Competence in Research –
The Migration-Mobility Nexus
nccr-onthemove.ch

UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE



Philippe Wanner (Project Leader), Elena Vidal Coso, Alice Milivinti, Jonathan Zufferey

—

Mapping the Demographics of the New Forms of Mobility and Measuring Their Socioeconomic Impact

University of Geneva
Institute of Demography and Socioeconomics, Geneva School of Social Sciences
40, bd Pont d'Arve, 1211 Genève 4, Switzerland

Contact: Philippe Wanner, philippe.wanner@unige.ch, T +41 22 379 89 30

This project aims at measuring the impact of new forms of migration in Switzerland by analyzing three domains: the labor market, the social insurance system and the spatial distribution of inhabitants. Using statistical methods and longitudinal analyses, as well as results from the Migration-Mobility Survey, the project reveals the complexity and the diversity of new forms of migration and mobility in Europe and sheds light on the challenges for the host society.

Messages for Decision-Makers

- **Challenges faced by women to combine family life and remunerated work should be carefully addressed. Deficiencies in conciliatory measures reinforce socio-economic inequalities across groups and this can be even more crucial for migrant families.**
- **Solid migration predictions can be useful to debate on, and develop policy solutions aimed to sustain the Swiss social insurance system.**
- **As migrants' level of education rises, their level of international and internal mobility increases.**

Migrants' Labor Attainment: The Importance of Origin, Human Capital and Sex

Measuring how successfully migrants integrate into the labor market is essential to understanding the socioeconomic impact of migration on Switzerland. We analyzed migrants' level of participation in the Swiss labor market and their occupational attainment taking into account their sociodemographic profile and migratory characteristics, as well as the reasons for their migration and the number of years since they arrived. Changing migration policies, demands from the labor market, the presence of discriminatory behaviors, and deficiencies in current family policies are the contextual elements against which results are interpreted.

Migrants' employment prospects improve with the length of their stay in Switzerland, although differences persist according to origin, human capital and sex. Moreover, the foreign labor force in Switzerland is highly polarized in terms of occupational category, creating a segmentation of the labor market depending on the migrants' national origin, regardless of their human capital. Migrants from industrialized country are overrepresented in highly skilled positions, while the ones from countries in economic transition are concentrated in low skilled occupations.

Compared to men, immigrant women are more likely to be unemployed or to work part-time. Moreover, when they have children, immigrant women – more often than native women – consider their earnings when deciding on whether to continue to work and for how many hours. By contrast, the part-time regime is more widespread among Swiss women: more than 50% of them reduce their working time after the birth of their first child, while only 35% of first-time mothers from outside the EU/EFTA do so.

The Challenges of Making Accurate Migration Predictions

The public debate pivots around the desirable amount of migration for countries to insure social cohesion and not to collapse under the burden of an ageing population. Whether such figures are compatible with electorate preferences is a further political concern. To address these issues, states need to rely on accurate predictions on future migration flows, which do not exclusively focus on internal demographic and economic challenges, but take a comprehensive view of global flows.

Migration data generally rely on interdependences between different flows: when migrating, individuals do not only compare their origin and final destination, but they also consider other states as alternative destinations. Therefore, migration choices are not only affected by origin-destination characteristics, but also by the characteristics of third countries. We observe that, in the short run, the migration policies of a destination country constitute the most significant factor in making this country a possible alternative. Migrants' networks constitute another element that makes a country attractive, with more persistent effects than other factors.

Migration predictions based on statistical approaches have for instance been used to shed light on the role of foreigners in sustaining the first pillar of the Swiss retirement system between 2014 and 2045. Clearly, the most feasible solution to relieve the pension costs lies in a policy mix, since most single solutions seem out of reach. Such single policy changes would for instance entail that, by 2045, 1) the foreign population increases by 237%, or 2) that the real GDP increases by 68% (i.e. 1.69% per year), or 3) that the contribution rate is raised from 8.4% to 13.9%, or finally 4) that pensions are cut by 37%.

Migrants' Spatial Movements Have Become More Complex

Migration trajectories have changed profoundly since the beginning of the 21st century. While for long, migration was considered a unique event leading to a permanent settlement in the host country, our statistical analyses on the Swiss case show that migrants are particularly mobile. Many of them have lived in another country than Switzerland and their country of birth, have circulated several times between Switzerland and their country of origin, or have moved internally.

Recent migrants are characterized by multiple international migration experiences: half of the migrants registered in Switzerland have lived in a third country prior to their immigration to Switzerland. In the European context of mobilities on the rise, it has become clear that migration behaviors increase with the level of education. This is a relatively new phenomenon. Before the entry into force of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons in 2002, the most mobile individuals were, on average, low qualified guest workers from Southern Europe countries, who were forced by the political system to circulate annually between Switzerland and their country of origin. After 2002, the abolition of the seasonal worker status led to the disappearance of this kind of migration: the low qualified Southern Europe work force mostly chose longer-term settlement instead of circulation.

Migrants Concentrate in Specific Regions but Not in Specific Neighborhoods

By studying migrants' spatial localization, we show that new migrants tend to arrive in the main urban areas of the country, which act as "gateway cities". The distribution of migrant populations is highly segmented at the regional level, as some national groups tend to concentrate in specific regions and to avoid others. However, at the level of neighborhoods, with a few exceptions, the spatial segregation of migrant groups is low: Swiss urban areas are more diversified than those in many European countries.

Key Publications

– Vidal Coso, Elena, and Enrique Ortega-Rivera. "Skill Composition and Occupational Incorporation of Early and Recent Immigrants in Switzerland: The Case of Italians and Spaniards." *International Migration* 55, no. 1 (2017): 86–111.
– Vidal-Coso, Elena. "Female Employment Following Childbirth: Differences between Native and Immigrant Women in Switzerland." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2018 (online version).
– Zufferey, Jonathan. "Migratory Trajectories of Foreign Nationals in Switzerland: A State of Constant Mobility?" *In a Nutshell* #8, nccr – on the move Policy Brief, 2018.