

Migrants' children as well integrated as Swedes' children

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Children of immigrants have less education and get lower level jobs than children of the majority population. That is the impression one gets when looking at broad-based statistics. But REMESO researcher Alireza Behtoui has shown that when you break them down, the statistics tell another story.

"You can't compare apples and oranges. For the most part, [children](#) whose parents immigrated to Sweden in the 1960s and 1970s have a working-class background, while the children of the majority population come from working, middle and upper classes."

Dr. Behtoui has studied data from thousands of children and adolescents with parents born in Turkey, and compared it with an equal number of randomly selected children and adolescents whose parents were born in Sweden. In general, those with a Turkish background are less educated than those with parents born in Sweden. But if you factor in the education level of the parents, there are no differences between the two groups.

In a similar analysis, he investigated their success on the [labour market](#). Broad-based data show that unemployment is higher amongst those with a Turkish background. But when other factors are considered, the picture changes. By factoring in age and educational level, the difference between the two groups decreases drastically. And when the parents' standing on the labour market is also considered, the difference virtually disappears. Again, comparing the children with [parents](#) from Turkey

with children of Swedish natives of similar circumstances, there are no marked differences. The differences appear when the Turkish-background children are compared with the population as a whole.

However there is a difference in one parameter: salary. The difference does decrease with factors such as [education level](#), gender and whether the person has children, but it is still significant. Young people with a Turkish background have significantly lower salaries than those with a Swedish background.

Dr. Behtoui uses the term "subordinate inclusion" (coined by his colleague Anders Nergaard) to describe the standing of the immigrants' children: they are included in society, but in a subordinate position. There are a number of explanations for this. The children have attended highly segregated schools and their social networks do not facilitate a strong position on the labour market. Many of them consider themselves overqualified for the jobs they have.

"We know that social contacts are important in getting established on the labour market. Many children of immigrants lack the right social contacts."

On the other hand, these children have attended Swedish school from the outset. They know the language and the social codes. Dr. Behtoui also highlights the significance of the Swedish welfare state. Previously it was a barrier against exclusion. Things like homelessness, extreme poverty, long-term unemployment, criminality and extremely low wages amongst ethnified groups are still much less prominent in Sweden than for instance in the United States, he writes.

More information: The article was published in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, with the title "Incorporation of children of immigrants: the case of descendants of immigrants from Turkey in Sweden".

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