

Sweden's new resettlement policy: Explaining the prioritisation of women and girls

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Vulnerability Revisited: Refugee Resettlement in Policy and Practice

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Problem statement, aim

- To reduce the number of resettlement places from 5000 to 900
- To introduce integration criteria
- To prioritise women and girls (two thirds of the quota)

- To explore the worldviews behind such policy formulations

Conceptual framework

- Vulnerability and deservingness
- Gender in refugee protection

Method & material

Critical policy analysis:

- Studying how problems are represented considering assumptions, limits and effects

Parliamentary motions on selection in resettlement (2014-21)



Year	Prioritized groups and reasons given for selection
2022	M: Prioritize women, girls, or LGBTQI+ persons; <i>no reason given</i> (Committee motion 2021/22:3840) M: Prioritize women and girls to achieve gender balance in reception and avoid violence in society (Individual motion 2021/22:3817) SD: Prioritize women and children and vulnerable minority groups (e.g., Christians and LGBTQI+ persons) to help the most vulnerable (Committee motion 2021/22:2549) L: Prioritize gender equality and other vulnerable groups (e.g., LGBTQI+ persons and persons with disability) in the framework of a gender-equal overall reception (Committee motion 2021/22:3377)
2021	M: Conduct the future asylum reception through the UN's quota refugee system only to make sure women benefit equally (Individual motion 2020/21:2803)
2020	M: Conduct the future asylum reception through the UN's quota refugee system only to make sure women benefit equally (Individual motion 2019/20:3059) L: Prioritize vulnerable refugee groups, in particular women, children, disabled persons, and LGBTQI+ persons for a feminist and gender-equal asylum system (Individual motion 2019/20:1957)
2019	L: Select only vulnerable groups (e.g., women, children, persons with disability, and LGBTQI+ persons) for a gender-equal asylum system (Individual motion 2018/19:516) SD: Prioritize selection from a gender equality perspective and prioritize LGBTQI+ persons and Christian minority groups because of men's surplus in Sweden and women's vulnerable situation in countries with strong patriarchal systems (Committee motion 2018/19: 2990)
2018	L: Select only vulnerable groups (e.g., women, children, persons with disability, and LGBTQI+ persons) for a gender-equal asylum system (Individual motion 2017/18:502) S: Prioritize girls and women in resettlement selection because they are underrepresented among asylum seekers (Individual motion 2017/18:795)

The material

- 11 parliamentary motions since 2018
 - Social Democrats 1
 - Moderates 4
 - Liberals 4
 - Sweden Democrats 2

Search terms:

Resettlement OR Quota refugee AND women

The representation of men and women

“woman/women” mentioned

- by itself (“women”)
- in relation to risk and vulnerability (“women at risk,” *utsatta kvinnor*)
- in relation to women’s situation in “countries with strong patriarchal values”
- in relation to their (alleged) difficulties in refugee camps

“men” mentioned

- In relation to violence and crime

Gender, im/mobility and deservingness

Resettlement is “an opportunity for Sweden to seriously help those who need it most, *rather than those who (...) have the strength, money, and contacts to smuggle themselves here.* This means that the Swedish quota refugee system must primarily be used to *help women and children*, as well as various vulnerable minority groups (...).”

SD Committee motion 2021/22:2549:6,
italics added

Problematising gender equality in refugee protection

- Comparison with asylum seekers
- Silence on other immigration categories

Table: Immigration categories, based on gender, selected years, 2015-22

	2015	2017	2019	2022
Asylum seekers, total	162,877	25,666	21,958	16,738
- <i>Share men/boys</i>	70%	61%	60%	64%
Asylum grantees, total	33,819	30,381	12,374	5,312
- <i>Share men/boys</i>	67%	64%	58%	55%
Quota refugees, total	1,879	4,848	5,259	3,744
- <i>Share men/boys</i>	50%	50%	52%	49%
Family reunification	17,071	19,278	7,362	2,604
- <i>Share men/boys</i>	42%	42%	43%	35%
Labour migration	13,821	16,199	19,944	24,117
- <i>Share of men</i>	81%	78%	77%	78%

Source: Migrationsverket 2023, 2024ab

The combined effects of these problem representations

- Discursive effect of creating gender binaries coupled to mobility and deservingness ("immobile women"/"mobile men")
- Material effect of prioritising women and girls in new policy
- Discursive effect of weakening of human rights by delegitimation of asylum seekers as "male, mobile, non-vulnerable, non-deserving"

Thank you!

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For more, see:

Suter, Brigitte (2025) Sweden's New Resettlement Policy:
Introducing Gender and Gender Equality as Governing Tools in Migration Governance,
Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees.