

Residential concentration of non-western immigrants in Norway – will they all end up in Oslo?

A number of studies have shown that immigrants in Western Europe tend to settle in major cities and their immediate surroundings. This is also a phenomenon we have observed in Norway. Only 12 percent of the total Norwegian population lives in its capital city Oslo, whereas 36 percent of the immigrants with non-western¹ background live in Oslo. Non-western immigrants have contributed substantially to the population growth in Oslo during the period 1996 to 2006, when 86 percent of the total population growth in Oslo came from growth in the non-western immigrant population.

The statistics cited above were published in the daily newspaper Aftenposten in June 2006 and spurred a debate in media. Some politicians who were taken aback by the massive influx of non-western immigrants called for extreme measures to curb the influx, for example one well known politician (himself an immigrant), suggested a ban on refugees' opportunity to move to Oslo, and the same politician also predicted a majority of non-western immigrants in 2015 unless Norwegian migration policies were changed.

In this paper we will exploit Norwegian population register data to examine this issue further. Firstly, we will show that there are important differences between different immigrant groups in their propensity to settle in the capital city depending on their country background, year of arrival and their initial reason for migrating to Norway. Secondly we will try to identify the main components in the growth of the non-western immigrant population in Oslo.

Norway has solid register data that should be ideal for answering these questions. However, the abovementioned surprised reactions suggest that the data from Statistics Norway (SN) probably should be better communicated and used.

Data

The main source for Norwegian migration statistics, both on stocks and flows, is information from the Central Register of Population (CPR). Most demographic statistics in Norway is based upon the CPR; although the register was established primarily for administrative, not statistical purposes (Østby 2002). This is important, as this determines many important aspects of the quality of the statistics that may be produced.

The CPR was established in 1964, based on the Population Census of 1960. Between 1964 and 1990, it was located within Statistics Norway, and run jointly by the tax authorities and Statistics Norway, with all municipal offices being run by the tax authorities. From its inception, the CPR has included all persons who were registered as being settled in Norway at the time of the Census as well as all registered population movements, and assigned them a unique Personal Identification Number (PIN-code). The PIN-code is essential in linking the persons registered in the CPR to information about them in other administrative registers for the purpose of statistical descriptions and analysis.

Based on information in the CPR each person resident is classified as belonging to the immigrant population if they have an intention to stay in the country for more than six months

¹ Country background from Asia, Africa, South and Central America and Eastern Europe.

and a) are born abroad by two foreign born parents (first generation immigrants) or b) born in Norway by two foreign born parents (descendants).

Immigrants in Oslo and Norway

In 1970 Norway had only 60 000 immigrants, the majority had come from our Nordic and Northern European neighbours, and only 3 500 had a non-western background. In 2005 the number of immigrants had increased to 365 000, and 265 000 having a non-western background. In total 8 percent of Norway's registered resident population have an immigrant background. Compared with other OECD countries the relative size of Norway's immigrant population is modest. But the growth in the immigrant population has been substantial during the last 10-15 years.

This paper focuses on Oslo's share of the immigrants in Norway. With a population of 530 000 in 2005, roughly one ninth of Norway's population, Oslo is one of the smaller capitals in Europe. For immigrants of both western and non-western origin Oslo is the single most important place of residence in Norway, both in absolute and relative numbers.

In 2005, 36 per cent of the non-western immigrant population in Norway lived in Oslo. If we include the neighbouring county Akershus we cover 47 percent of the non-western immigrants in Norway, but only 23 percent of the rest of the population. Within Oslo's borders there are huge differences in the share of non-western immigrants between the different parts of the city. Consistent with earlier patterns of migration to Oslo from other parts of the country, we find the highest proportion of non-western immigrants southeast and northeast in the city. Earlier the immigrants tended to settle in the central eastern parts of Oslo. Recently, a gentrification process has started in this part of the capital.

As Norway's immigrant population has gradually increased, Oslo's share of non-western immigrants has gradually decreased. In 1986, 48 percent of the non-western immigrants in Norway lived in Oslo, whereas in 2006, the share has fallen to 36 percent. However, it is important to keep in mind that in the same period of time the share of non-western immigrants in Oslo's total population has grown from 5 percent to 19 percent.

Some groups settle in Oslo – others don't

There are huge differences in where they tend to settle between the different country-of-origin groups. Figure 1 shows the 15 largest nationalities living in Norway. With only a few exceptions the same nationalities are also the largest groups living in Oslo.

The first non-western immigrants, represented by persons from Pakistan, India and Morocco all have a high proportion living in Oslo, Moroccans have the highest share with 73 percent. All these groups came to Norway as labour migrants in the 1970s, settled in Oslo, and have continued to stay there. The Pakistanis and the Moroccans were mostly unskilled labourers, whereas the Indians belonged to all social groups.

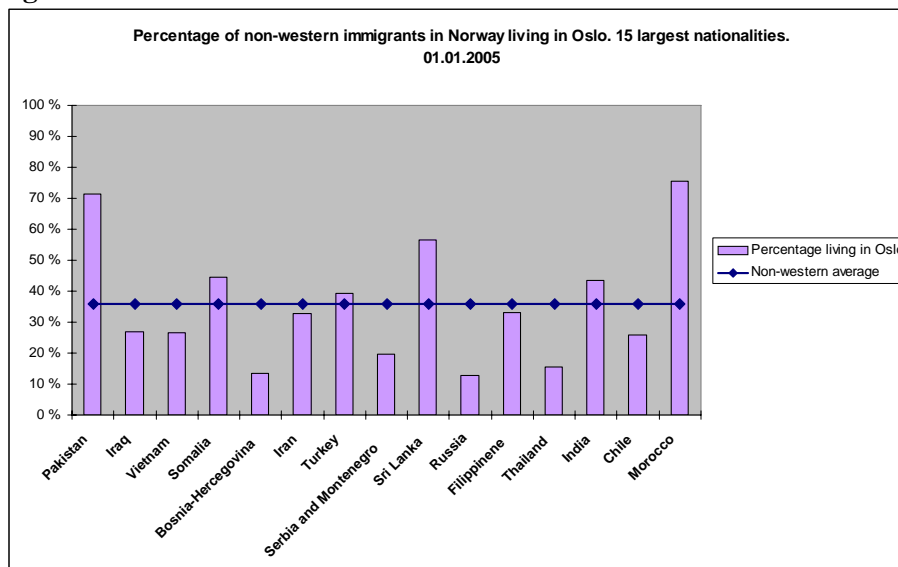
Immigrants from Turkey also have a higher share than the average living in Oslo; however the highest proportion of Turkish immigrants in Norway live in Drammen, a city within commuting distance of Oslo.

During the last years family related immigration has been the most important source of long-term immigration to Norway, and an important group has been foreign women marrying men with no immigrant background (UDI 2005). This immigration has mainly come from three countries; the Philippines, Thailand and Russia. From Russia there has also been a considerably number of Chechen refugees. Immigrants from these three countries have a lower share living in Oslo compared to the average among non-western immigrants.

Lastly most refugee groups distinguish themselves with a low share living in Oslo, this is due to the consensus based dispersed settlement policy for refugees pursued by different Governments during the last decades. This is most notable for refugees from Bosnia, with only 13 percent living in Oslo, close to the national average of 12 percent. Two exceptions are immigrants from Somalia and Sri Lanka who mostly have a refugee background and who tend to live in Oslo, the latter due to secondary migration.

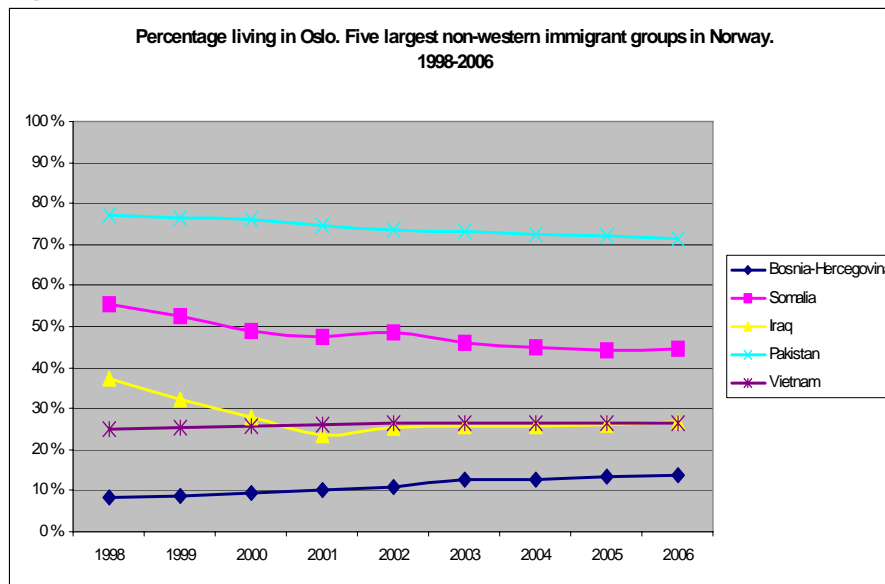
Immigrants from Sri Lanka mostly came to Norway in the late 1980s. In the 1990s immigrants from Sri Lanka were considered to be the refugee group who had integrated most successfully in the rural areas, with a high proportion working in the fishing industry in the northernmost part of Norway. However, as the job and fishing market collapsed in the end of the decade, many moved to more central parts, most of them to Oslo.

Figure 1.



Source: Statistics Norway Population Statistics

Figure 2.



Source: Statistics Norway Population Statistics

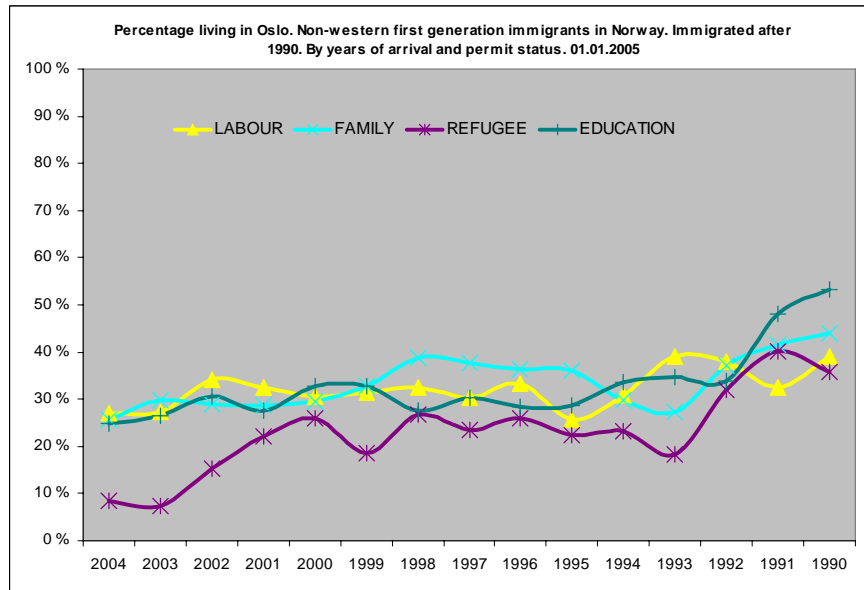
The Pakistanis are the largest immigrant group in Norway, and also one of the groups with the highest proportion living in Oslo. As we can see from figure 2 – the percentage is high, and relatively stable – with a small decline of the percentage living in Oslo for the groups who has stayed the longest period. Immigrants from Somalia and Iraq have a different pattern. The proportion living in Oslo increases with years of residence. For Somalis in Norway with more than 10 years of residence, more than 60 percent live in Oslo; the share is somewhat lower for Iraqis but almost reaches 50 percent for those with the longest residence.

For both the Vietnamese and the Bosnians the share of those living in Oslo is lower than for the other groups and it does not seem to increase with the number of years they have been resident in Norway.

The propensity to settle in Oslo differs with reason for migration

Refugees are as before mentioned generally settled outside Oslo (figure 3), however secondary movements for some groups lead to a higher proportion living in Oslo. All groups start off with a lower share living in Oslo than the national average (36 percent). The increase in the proportion living in Oslo is most notable for refugees.

Figure 3.

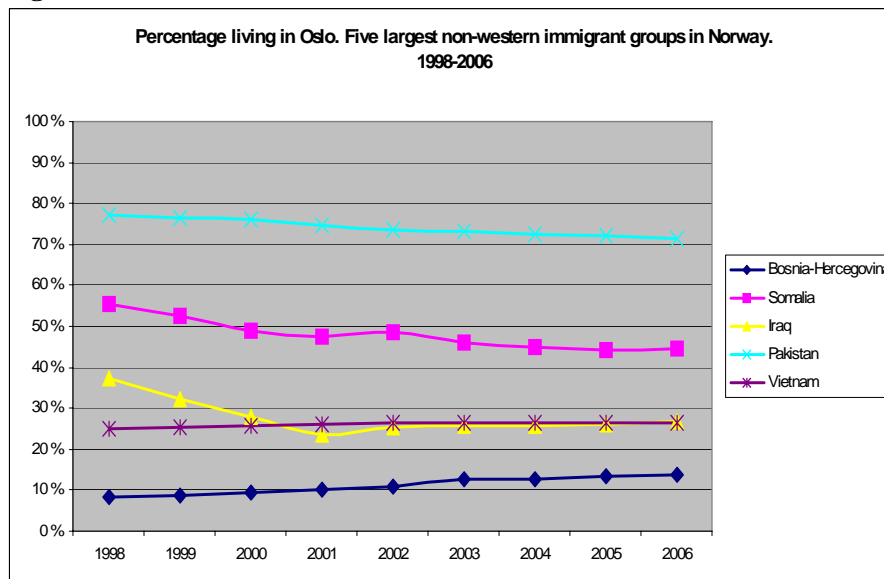


Source: Statistics Norway Population Statistics

Decreasing share as time goes by...

If we compare the situation in 2006 with 1998 (see figure 4) we find that for all these groups, with the exception of the Bosnians, the share living in Oslo has decreased during the last years, but for different reasons. For Somalis and Iraqis the decreased share in Oslo is due to a high influx of newly arrived refugees who are settled in municipalities outside Oslo, however on a cohort basis we have seen a consistent growth in the proportion of these groups living in Oslo. For the Pakistanis the decrease is due to secondary movement to the municipalities bordering Oslo in the north, a pattern of migration from Oslo that previously was observed for non-immigrants who wanted to improve their living and housing conditions.

Figure 4.



Source: Statistics Norway Population Statistics

Table 1. Population changes in Oslo. By immigrant category. 1998-2003

Immigrant category	Excess of births	Net migration from abroad	Net internal migration	Population growth
Non-western immigrants	31 %	59 %	10 %	22 312
Western immigrants	-2 %	13 %	-4 %	1 608
No immigrant background	-17 %	-8 %	-3 %	-6 196
Total	12 %	64 %	3 %	17 724

Source: Statistics Norway Population Statistics

What are the main components in the growth of Oslo's immigrant population?

The growth in the non-western immigrant population mainly stems from direct net migration from abroad (table 1) and excess of births over deaths, and only to a lesser degree from net domestic migration of immigrants. So even though many refugees move to Oslo after some years the main components of the immigrant growth in Oslo comes from net migration from abroad, and mainly from family related immigration, and from births within the immigrant population. We find the same tendencies if we look at data from 1988-1998. Thus a ban on refugees' opportunity to move to Oslo would only have a limited effect, if the goal were to slow the population growth of non-western immigrants in Oslo.

Based on these data one can conclude that Oslo's immigrant population most likely will increase in the coming years, while Oslo's share of the non-western immigrants in Norway probably will continue to slowly decrease.

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