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Executive Summary of the 6th Migration Observatory Report

“Immigrant Integration in Europe”

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This is the sixth edition of the Migration Observatory annual report on immigrant integration in Europe. This year, we focus specifically on the characteristics and labour market outcomes of immigrant women in Europe.

The report is articulated in two parts. In the first part, we use data from the latest edition of the European Labour Force Survey (2020) to provide a concise, easily accessible and up-to-date source of reference regarding the size, characteristics, and relative economic performance of immigrants in EU countries. In the second part, instead, we focus on the gendered dimensions of immigrant economic integration. First, we describe the main characteristics of immigrant women in Europe and contrast them with those of immigrant men; then, we analyse their differential labour market outcomes relative to both immigrant men and native women.

We show that women face considerable disadvantages in the labour market. They have a lower employment probability, are employed in less economically rewarding occupations, and earn lower wages than men even when they perform comparable jobs. Such gender inequality is exacerbated for immigrant women, who face labour market penalties over and above those faced by immigrant men.

The key findings are summarized below.

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PART I - IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION IN EUROPE IN 2020

IMMIGRANT POPULATION - SIZE AND CHARACTERISTICS

BOTTOMLINE: Almost one in ten residents of the European Union is an immigrant. This ratio increases to 11% in EU14 countries, where most immigrants live. The number of foreign born residents in the EU may have decreased from 2019 to 2020, due to the health emergency and economic crisis. In fact, less than one in six immigrants living in a European country in 2020 has emigrated within the previous five years. More than half of the immigrants are European. The share of tertiary educated natives and immigrants is strongly correlated across countries.

- In 2020 immigrants account for 9.4% of the total population in the European Union. Most of them (38 million) live in a EU14 country, where the share of immigrants in the population is 11%.
- Immigrant concentration is highly heterogeneous across countries. The share of immigrants ranges from as low as 0.06 or 0.1% in Bulgaria and Romania to as high as 23% in Sweden, 30% in Switzerland and above 50% in Luxembourg.
- Less than one in six immigrants (17%) living in a European country in 2020 has emigrated within the previous five years, whereas in 2019 this share was 19%. Only in Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal and Sweden is the share above 25%.
- Most immigrants (57%) were born in another European country: 37% come from a EU member state, while an additional 20% was born in a European country outside of the EU. Among the other areas of origin, Africa and the Middle East account for 14% of all immigrants, while 17% come from Asia and 13% from the Americas or Oceania.
- Among the foreign-born population, 52% are women. Only in Germany, Norway, Romania and Slovenia more than 50% of immigrants are men.
- About one third of immigrants have tertiary education, one third at most upper secondary and the remaining third has at most completed lower secondary education. However, the educational levels of immigrants vary considerably across destination countries.

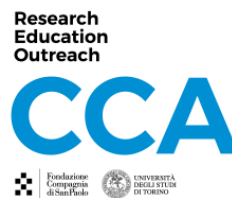
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- Differences in immigrants' education across member states reflect the educational level of natives: countries with higher shares of university-educated natives also have higher fractions of immigrants with tertiary education and vice versa.
- Italy is the country with the least educated immigrants (14% have tertiary education) and the second lowest (after Romania) share of natives with tertiary education (21%). Conversely, Luxembourg and Ireland have among the highest shares of tertiary educated immigrants, respectively 53 and 55%.

EMPLOYMENT

BOTTOMLINE: Immigrants have a lower employment probability than natives, especially in central and northern Europe. The employment gap has increased relative to 2019. Portugal, Ireland, and Italy are among the countries with the smallest immigrant-native gap in the probability of being employed. Gaps cannot be explained by differences in age-gender-education profiles.

- On average across Europe, immigrants are 10.1 percentage points less likely to be employed than natives. In 2019, the differential was 7.7 p.p.
- Employment gaps are larger in central and northern European countries like Sweden (-18.3 p.p.), the Netherlands (-15.9 p.p.), Finland (-15.4 p.p.) or Germany (-14.2 p.p.) and smaller in Spain (-8.8 p.p.) and in Italy (-4.3 p.p.). In Luxembourg and Portugal there immigrants are as likely as natives to be employed.
- Differences in employment probabilities cannot be explained by immigrants' age-gender-education profiles.
- EU immigrants have almost the same probability of employment as natives, whereas immigrants from outside the EU display a disadvantage of 14 percentage points. Such differences do not depend on age-gender education profiles: the same individuals would face less difficulties in finding a job if they were EU rather than non-EU citizens. Institutional factors like free mobility within the EU play a central role in explaining this difference.

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- The probability of employment is higher for immigrants who have spent more time in the host country. The immigrant-native gap is ten percentage points lower (18.6 vs 8.6 p.p.) between immigrants with less than 5 years of residence and those who have been in the country for 6 years or more.

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS AND INCOME

BOTTOMLINE: Immigrants are considerably more likely than natives to be employed in low-pay and low-status occupations, even after accounting for differences in personal characteristics such as education. They are also disproportionately more likely to be in the lowest income deciles. Differences in type account for more than 60 percent of the immigrant-native wage gap.

- Immigrants' occupational distribution is more polarized than that of natives. Immigrants are as likely as natives to work in high-status and high-paying occupation. They are however much more concentrated than natives in the least qualified occupations and they are absent from the middle part of the occupational distribution (measured by the ISEI index).
- Immigrants are 46% more likely than natives to be in the bottom decile and 17% less likely than natives to be in the top decile of the wage distribution.
- Almost two thirds of the immigrant-native difference in probability of being in the bottom income decile can be explained by differences in distribution across occupations.

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PART II: A GENDERED LOOK AT IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

IMMIGRANT WOMEN - SIZE AND CHARACTERISTICS

BOTTOMLINE: Immigrant women account for more than half of the total immigrant population in Europe. Across origins, European and American women are slightly more numerous than men, while the opposite is true for Asians and Africans. Immigrant women are on average better educated than immigrant men. The immigrant population has become better educated over time – though not as fast as natives -, and immigrant women are on average more highly educated than men. Across countries of destination, the education levels of male and female immigrants are highly correlated. In Italy, immigrant education levels are among the lowest in Europe, and they have not been improving at all in the past 15 years, neither among women nor among men.

- In most European countries immigrant women are more numerous than immigrant men (52%), with the exception of Germany (47%), Slovenia (47%), Luxembourg (49%), Norway (49%) and Romania (38%). Italy hosts the highest share of immigrant women over the total immigrant population (55%) among all countries with large immigrant populations.
- On average, women represent more than half of the immigrant population among Europeans and Americans, while African and Asian immigrants are more frequently men.
- In Italy, the gender skewness within areas of origin is much greater than in Europe. This is mirrored in the lower than average share of immigrants who live with their partner, which is true irrespective of the area of origin.
- Across Europe, one should change country of origin of 4% of immigrant women for the country-of-origin distribution of immigrant women to be the same as the distribution of immigrant men. In Italy, this proportion is 14%, the second highest after Finland (15%).
- On average across Europe, 31% of immigrant women, and 28% of immigrant men have tertiary education. The higher education of immigrant women relative to men is a feature of most European countries, though male and female immigrants' education are strongly correlated. In Italy, 17% of immigrant women and 10% of immigrant men have university education.

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- Native and immigrant women are becoming more educated more quickly than men, though the education of native women is growing faster. From 2005 to 2019 the share of immigrant women with tertiary education has increased by 9 p.p., and the share of those with at most lower secondary education has decreased by 8 p.p.
- In Italy, between 2005 and 2020, the share of immigrant men with tertiary education has remained stable around 10 percent, and the share of highly educated immigrant women has only slowly increased from 14 to 17%.

EMPLOYMENT

BOTTOMLINE: Immigrant and native women have lower employment probability than men, but the immigrant-native differential is higher for women. Even though immigrant women are better educated than immigrant men, very little of their disadvantage in employment probability can be explained by individual characteristics. The gender gap in employment probability is larger among immigrants than among natives. Countries with large gender gaps among natives, also have larger gender gaps among immigrants.

- The immigrant-native difference in employment probability is higher for women (14 p.p., 58 vs 71%) than for men (6 p.p. 82 v. 76%) not only on average, but also in almost all European countries, with the only exception of a few countries with very low immigrant presence (Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, Croatia) and Iceland.
- The country in which immigrant women are most disadvantaged relative to native women is Romania (29 p.p.), followed by Sweden (23 p.p.) and Germany (22 p.p.).
- Individual characteristics explain very little of the immigrant-native employment differentials: comparing immigrants and natives with the same age and education profiles reduces the employment probability gap by only 1 percentage point for women, while it has no effects on the estimated gap among men.
- The percentage point difference in the employment probability between immigrant and native women in Italy (7 p.p.) is about half the European average (14 p.p.), a fact which is mainly determined by the extremely low employment rate of Italian women. The

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- employment rate of immigrant women in Italy is also the second lowest in Europe, after Greece (50 vs 44%, respectively).
- Immigrant women in Italy have demographic characteristics that make them less employable than Italian women: the employment probability gap decreases from -7 to -4 percentage points when accounting for age and education.
 - In Europe, the gender gap in employment probability is larger among immigrants (17.5 p.p.) than among natives (10.8 p.p.). The gap among immigrants has remained substantially unchanged over the past decade.
 - In most European countries the male-female gap in employment probability is larger among immigrants, with the exception of Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Portugal and Malta.
 - Italy is one of the European countries with the highest male-female employment probability gaps: the raw gender gap is 28 p.p. among immigrants, and 19 p.p. among natives.

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS AND INCOME

BOTTOMLINE: Women, particularly immigrant women, are strongly overrepresented at the bottom of the income distribution, while the top income deciles are dominated by men, both native and immigrant. Immigrant women are clustered into low-pay and low-skill jobs more than immigrant men. The immigrant-native gap in the probability of being in the bottom income decile is determined for the most part by occupation. Yet, one third of the gap of immigrant women is not explained by the type of job or by their individual characteristics.

- The concentration of immigrants at the bottom of the income distribution is mainly driven by the low incomes of immigrant women. 18% of immigrant women are in the bottom income decile, and almost half of them fall in the three lowest income deciles (49%). Instead, only 5% of immigrant and native men are in the bottom income decile.
- In most countries immigrant women in the bottom decile are more than 10%. In three countries their share is more than 20%: Italy (28%), Greece (25%) and France (21%).

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- The only country in which immigrant women in the top decile reach 10% is Belgium; in the rest of Europe the top decile is dominated by men, both immigrants and natives.
- Immigrant women tend to be disproportionately more employed than immigrant men in low-skill and low-pay jobs. The mean ISEI gap between immigrant men and women is close to one sixth of a standard deviation, but it becomes 50% larger when we compare immigrant men and women with similar characteristics.
- In Italy, the immigrant-native differences in occupational status, both for men and for women, are more than twice the European average: the mean ISEI score for immigrant women is 89% of a standard deviation lower than that of native women, while for men the difference is 57%.
- Differences in individual characteristics explain only 7% of the immigrant-native differential probability of being in the bottom income decile for women (but 17% for men), whereas occupational clustering is responsible for about two thirds of the differential for both men (64%) and women (61%). One third of immigrant women's gap remains unexplained (18% for immigrant men).

MOST COMMON OCCUPATIONS

BOTTOMLINE: Immigrant women are disproportionately employed in elementary occupations. Of these, almost three quarters are employed in cleaning jobs. Among the ten most common occupations of immigrant women, the majority requires a low or intermediate level of skills.

- Almost one fourth of immigrant women (14% of immigrant men) are employed in “elementary occupations”, i.e., occupations that require a low level of skills and competences as they consist of simple and routine tasks, which often demand some physical effort and the use of hand-held tools. The corresponding share is 8% among native women (6% among native men).
- Immigrant women are especially concentrated in elementary jobs in Southern European countries: about one third of immigrant women in Italy, Greece and Spain are employed in an elementary occupation.

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- The most frequent occupation of immigrant women in Europe is “domestic, hotel and office cleaners and helpers” (18%). The following four most common occupations, which jointly employ an additional 22% of immigrant women, require an intermediate level of competences.
- African women (and men) are by far the most commonly employed in elementary occupations, with a differential relative to natives of 40 p.p. among women and 22 p.p. among men, EU immigrants are those with the lowest differentials in the probability of working in an elementary occupation relative to natives: 13 p.p. women for women, 4 p.p. for men.
- The immigrant-native gap decreases over time, but even after ten years of residence immigrant women are still 23 percentage points more likely to work in an elementary occupation relative to native women, and the difference is still about 15 percentage points until 35-39 years since migration.
- Almost half of all elementary workers fall in the three bottom deciles of the national income distribution. However, among elementary workers, both immigrant and native women are three times more likely than men to be at the bottom of the income distribution.
- Women are paid less than men even within the same type of elementary occupation: almost half (46%) of immigrant women employed as cleaners and domestic helpers are in the bottom income decile, which compares to 42% among native women, and to only 20% among immigrant and native men.

REASON FOR MIGRATION

BOTTOMLINE: Three out of five foreign-born women who were living in Europe in 2014 migrated for family reasons. Migration for family reasons is more common among non-EU immigrants, who require visas to enter the destination countries, and among recent immigrants. The immigrant-native gap in employment probability is wider among immigrant women who migrated for family reasons, even after more than 15 years in the country.

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- Almost 60% of immigrant women who were living in Europe in 2014 had migrated for family reasons, and only 27% for employment reasons. In contrast, just 39% of immigrant men migrated for family reasons, which indicates that women often migrate to reunite with their partner, something that happens less frequently among men.
- Women from non-EU countries migrate for family reasons more often than those from an EU country. Migration for family reasons is significantly more common among African women (almost three quarters in 2014), while it is least common among American women (45%).
- The share of family migrants is significantly higher across all origins among recent than among earlier migrants, which can be explained by the progressive tightening of restrictions to labour migration pathways in Europe.
- The immigrant-native employment gap is much larger among immigrants who migrated for family reasons. However, there are wide gender differences: the differential for men is close to zero and non-significant, regardless of the time spent in the country, while immigrant women have a 37 percentage points disadvantage with respect to native women after 2-4 years, and a 20 percentage point disadvantage after 15 years.

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