

Administrative trajectories of rejected asylum seekers in France

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Abstract

Being recognized a “refugee” has become a more complex and restrictive procedure in developing countries and some persons forced to flee instead become “rejected asylum seekers”. In the absence of a recognition of their need to be protected, their experiences are marked by legal precariousness. Relatively little is known on their experiences and long-term outcomes, particularly the proportion of them who eventually obtain permanent legal status. This paper focuses on the outcomes of asylum seekers arriving in France in the 2000s. Using a combination of data sources, we study the length of stay of persons having filed for asylum in France during this period before obtaining a permanent legal status, as well as the grounds for their admission to stay (international protection versus other motives). Findings show that in addition to 29% of asylum seekers who had acquired refugee status, an additional 24% were later admitted for other reasons.

Introduction

During the “refugee” or “migrant” crisis in Europe in 2015, profiles of the new arrivals were scrutinized in order to “predict” their future outcomes, and reassure the public opinion that they were not going to be a burden. Another debate focused on the distinction between “Refugees” and “Migrants”, in other words between those persons who genuinely needed protection and those who were profiting from this legal channel to gain entry and stay in the EU.¹ The use of “refugees” – and not “asylum seekers” – in this context occulted another important aspect of the process. Today, the majority of persons fleeing a country to seek international protection and applying for asylum in a developed country initially have the status of asylum seeker. Only those whose application is accepted are granted refugee status or another form of international protection. Rejected asylum seekers often fall into the category of “irregular migrants”.

¹ While it became visible to the larger public in this period, it is by no means a new debate. While some international organizations, civil society, academics plead for a distinction between the two groups, for others it is counter-productive and even dangerous and argue that all migrants have to be protected (Carling, 2015). The first position is stronger: separate UN organisms (UNHCR and IOM), separate Global Impacts on International Migration IM and Refugees.

Asylum seekers constitute an important component of migration flows to developed countries today. While only a minority of them are actually given international protection, the outcomes of rejected asylum-seekers remain little known. Some leave the country in which they have applied for asylum, through "assisted voluntary return" programs or spontaneously move to another country (Leerkes & al 2017). Others stay in the destination countries, in spite of the rejection of their asylum claim, as conditions in the country of origin make it impossible to go back. Local integration becomes the only solution for them and they often spend many years in precarious socio-economic and legal circumstances in the hope of regularizing their situation (Bloch, 2014). Despite these obstacles, they often accomplish *de facto* settlement which may make them eligible for some regularization programs (work, family ties).

While existing statistical evidence, mainly based on administrative data, provides a relatively clear picture of entries of asylum seekers, as well as recognitions of refugee or other international protection status, only little information is available on the volume and characteristics of asylum-seekers whose requests have been rejected, as well as the conditions of their eventual acquisition of legal status. In addition, they are absent from studies on immigrant integration, which also often use administrative datasets (population register, residence permit register) and the legal categories of "refugee", "family migrants" (Bevelander & Pendakur 2014). Thus, it is not possible to understand the long-term impacts of their rejected asylum application on their integration, migration trajectories and more generally long-term impacts for them and their family members.

This paper aims to shed light on their situations by focusing on the outcomes of asylum seekers arriving in France in the 2000s. During this decade around 400,000 asylum applications were registered by the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless people (OFPRA). Refugee or stateless status was only granted to one asylum seeker out of four, meaning that the majority of asylum seekers were indeed rejected. Existing evidence provides only partial answers regarding their ulterior outcomes. Assisted voluntary return programs represent several thousand persons every year, but only a small proportion (one in ten) are former asylum seekers. Some rejected asylum seekers appear to remain in France, a more frequent situation for families with children (Othily and Buffet 2013). Whereas the change of legal status during the asylum application process is not possible (for example from "asylum seeker" to "worker", EMN France 2015), it is possible that rejected asylum seekers may gain admission to legal stay on other grounds (family, work, studies) if their situation changes afterwards.

In order to understand the outcomes of rejected asylum seekers we estimate the proportion of those who obtain permanent legal status, and distinguish grounds for their admission to stay

(international protection *versus* other motives). For this, we combine data on entries of asylum seekers (aggregated statistics on first asylum applications filed in France in the 1998-2008 period published by OFPRA) and their admissions to stay (statistical survey of third-country nationals admitted for permanent residence in France in 2009²). We construct a synthetic cohort of persons having filed for asylum during this period and study their length of residence before obtaining an After 10 years, around 50% of asylum seekers obtain a permanent legal status, of which 28% as refugees and 22% on other grounds and usually after many years of residence in France.

Data and Methods

Migrants go through a series of legal status changes during their stay in the destination country and a growing number of academic studies, but also official publications adopt a longitudinal vision of their migration trajectory³. Asylum seekers also go through a series of legal statuses and often have more complex administrative trajectories than other groups of migrants: asylum applicants (with possible changes in their status if first instance, appeal); refugees, stateless person or other form of international protection; irregular migrants subject to “voluntary” return or removal (when all appeals have been used); regularized migrants (when admitted to stay for other motives). Although asylum data has improved (Hovy, 2001), particularly regarding the first two stages, data on the outcomes of former asylum seekers remain sparse. Indeed, as it is often other administrations that deal with and produce data on other procedures (return programs, expulsion, regularizations), they do not systematically identify former asylum seekers. Legal frameworks distinguish asylum seekers from other migrants (for example they may not be allowed to apply for legal status changes). Other reasons for this has been that for a long time (and in some countries still today) databases concerning asylum seekers and other migrants were separate.

This is equally the case in France. Whereas Ofpra and CNDA⁴ make decisions on the initial asylum procedure and appeals, it is the Ministry of Interior (Prefectures) that deal with rejected asylum seekers (decision to grant an eventual legal status, removal from territory...). OFRPA only publishes aggregate statistics on one type of legal transition: recognition of refugee status. The statistics of the Ministry of Interior on residence permits do not identify former / rejected asylum seekers (with the exception of certain procedures), despite the existence of information

² Longitudinal Survey on Newly Arrived Migrants (ELIPA) carried out by the Statistical Service of the Directorate General of Foreigners in France

³ We can cite examples of the Migration Journey (UK), Eurostat database on residence permit legal. In most cases these studies are based on one dataset, such as the residence permit dataset, which registers all of the events (entries, changes of legal category, exits).

⁴ Appeal Commission (Cour nationale du droit d’asile, CNDA).

relative to asylum claims in the database (having made an application, decision). Only, recently has a study taken this possibility to estimate the proportion of rejected asylum seekers who were eventually admitted to stay for reasons other than asylum (d'Albis & Boubtane, 2018). In this context, and as States are increasingly interested in improving their administrative data sources to gain a better knowledge of this population and their outcomes, using and exploring the possibilities of existing data sources, and the ways in improving them is an important task.

In this paper we develop a multi-source approach allowing to link the two populations – asylum applicants and migrants admitted to legal stay – together. We combine data on entries of asylum seekers (aggregated statistics on first asylum applications filed in France) and their admissions to stay (statistical survey of third-country nationals admitted for permanent residence in France in 2009). We construct a synthetic cohort of persons having filed for asylum during this period and study their length of stay before obtaining a permanent legal status, as well as the grounds for their admission to stay (international protection *versus* other motives). The combination of the two types of sources allows to observe transitions into other statuses of rejected asylum seekers.

Data sources

OFPPRA publishes aggregate statistics on asylum applications received a given year by nationality and sex. As a person can file several asylum applications, we use the number of first asylum applications in this paper. The statistics cover adults (aged 18 or older at time of application); minors accompanying asylum seekers are counted separately. Unaccompanied minors are included in this number and not disaggregated, but represent a relatively small number of asylum seekers (around 1-2% of asylum applicants a given year). The nationality is self-declared; OFPPRA reports mention persons without documents / claiming a nationality different from theirs because of context (2000, p. 5).

The Longitudinal Survey on Newly Arrived Migrants (ELIPA) is representative of third-country nationals⁵ receiving a first “permanent-track” residence permit in France in 2009 (Régnerd & Domergues, 2009). This represents around 100 000 out of the 200 000 admitted every year. Different categories of “temporary” migrants, such students, seasonal workers, high-skilled workers, asylum seekers, receiving a first residence permit were excluded from the survey. However, those that changed their status and were eligible for the survey, such as asylum seekers being admitted to stay, were covered by the survey. Only migrants aged 18 or older

⁵ It contains a small number of Romanian and Bulgarian nationals, which were excluded from the study. Indeed, as these countries entered the EU in 2007 and were still in the transition period in France (until), nationals of these countries wishing to work in France had to acquire a residence permit.

were eligible for the survey⁶; however, some of them may have arrived as minors in France. Furthermore, migrants eligible for the survey had to live in one of the four regions: Île de France, PACA, Rhône Alpes et Alsace. The survey was carried out by the Statistical Service of the Directorate General of Foreigners in France. It included three waves (2010, 2011, 2013); only the first wave is used in the study. The initial questionnaire in French was translated into 13 languages. The questionnaire included modules on the individuals' migratory, family, educational, professional and housing trajectories, as well their administrative situation since arrival in France and the filing of an asylum application. Additional variables were collected directly from the residence permit database (detailed admission category, nationality).

Target population

A first step before combining the data on entries of asylum seekers from these different sources consisted in identifying a comparable target population. As the aggregate statistics published by OFPRA were on a specific population – adults seeking asylum in France – we sought to identify a comparable population in the ELIPA survey. Table 1 compares the definitions of the target population in the two sources.

Table 1 Identification of asylum applicants in data sources

	OFPRA	ELIPA
Identification of asylum applicants	Registered	Self-declared
Cohort	Year of first asylum application	Year of arrival
Adult applicant	-	18 or older at time of arrival
Number of 1° asylum applicants / Sample size	434 097	1 575 (N obs.) 23 253 (N weighted)

Source: OFPRA (1998-2009): first-time adult asylum seeker applicants. ELIPA (2010), DGEF-DSED: migrants having arrived in France at age 18 or older and having filed for asylum.

The identification of asylum seekers in the ELIPA survey differs by the motive for admission to stay. Persons admitted to stay as refugees, stateless or under subsidiary protection are automatically considered to have filed an asylum application with OFPRA. Migrants admitted for other motives were asked whether they had already filed an asylum application in France⁷.

⁶ Holding a residence permit is compulsory for foreigners aged 18 or older living in France. However, foreigners aged 16-17 years wishing to work may apply for a residence permit before their 18th anniversary.

⁷ « Avez-vous déjà fait une demande d'asile en France ? »

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Those having declared “yes” and admitted for motives other than those listed above were identified as “rejected asylum seekers”.⁸

The survey does not include information on the year of the asylum application; we make the hypothesis that it is year of arrival. Crossing this information with date of birth allows us to identify migrants who were minors / adults at time of arrival (and at time of their arrival / asylum application). We only include persons aged 18 or older. The nationality provided in the survey is the one registered in the residence permit register.

Around 23 500 persons having been admitted to permanent stay in France in 2009 had filed an asylum application previously (27% of overall sample). Of these, 41% of asylum applicants were granted protection, with a majority of refugee / stateless status. The remaining persons were admitted for a non-asylum related motive (family, work, humanitarian reasons). Table 2 presents the sample size of asylum applicants in the ELIPA survey.

Table 2 Asylum applicants among third country nationals admitted to permanent stay, 2009

Year of arrival	Length of stay	n obs.			Number (weighted)		
		International protection	Other motives	Total	International protection	Other motives	Total
2009	0	77	83	160	929	1102	2031
2008	1	225	19	244	2582	283	2865
2007	2	164	36	200	2651	704	3355
2006	3	102	39	141	1679	721	2400
2005	4	39	47	86	651	876	1527
2004	5	23	56	79	413	935	1348
2003	6	22	59	81	311	991	1302
2002	7	14	98	112	227	1597	1824
2001	8	7	187	194	115	2759	2874
2000	9	12	121	133	171	1870	2041
1999	10	2	81	83	31	1116	1147
1998	11	2	42	44	18	521	538
1997	12	3	15	18	54	196	250
		692	883	1575	9832	13671	23503

Source: ELIPA (2010), DGEF-DSED: migrants having arrived in France at age 18 or older and having filed for asylum.

Despite our efforts of constructing a comparable target population between the two sources, other factors may impact their comparability.

⁸ It is important to note that some asylum applicants may have withdrawn their application before being admitted to stay for other motives. Thus technically, not all of the persons in this group received a “rejection”, whether first (OFPRA) or second instance (DNA).

Identification as asylum applicant. OFPRA statistics cover persons having filed application with the organism. Thus persons who filed for asylum outside of France or with another organism (primarily Algerians applying for temporary protection before 2002) are not included. Asylum applicants in ELIPA are identified based on self-declaration and thus sensitive to memory bias, particularly persons having arrived many years before the surveys and/or having gone through an accelerated procedure (the survey does not distinguish the type of asylum procedure). As a result, the survey may under-estimate the number of asylum seekers whose application was rejected. In addition, both data sources do not allow identifying situations of persons having entered France and not having accessed the procedure (not allowed to apply, difficulties, sent back).

Year of application. OFPRA statistics provide the exact year of first asylum application, but such information is unavailable in the ELIPA survey. This results in a bias that we link ELIPA applicants of a later cohort to an earlier one in OFPRA⁹. This may occur if there is a gap between the moment of arrival in France and the moment when the asylum procedure is registered by OFPRA. The constitution and the registration of the asylum application generally takes a few months: upon arrival in France and the registration at the prefecture, persons receive a temporary authorization to stay (3 months) to constitute the application, but which may be extended if the application is complex, additional documents need to be added, etc.¹⁰ Also, it is possible that in some cases persons file for asylum many years after arrival if the situation in the country of origin changes (conflict breaks out as is the case of Syria today), but their also present a minority.

Age at time of application. In relation to the last comment (absence of information regarding year of first asylum application in ELIPA), the use of year of arrival to identify minor / adult migrants also presents some limitations. Persons who were minors at time of arrival in France, may reach 18 by the time their application is registered. As a result, the number of asylum applicants identified in ELIPA may be fewer than those actually registered by OFPRA.

Construction of life table

In a first step, we estimate the rate of admission to permanent stay:

⁹ If the number of asylum applicants is increasing (periods 1996-2003 and 2007-2015 for total number), the size of ELIPA cohort is smaller than the actual one potentially leading to an under-estimation of persons admitted to stay. Inversely, if the number of asylum applicants is decreasing (period 2003-2007), the size of ELIPA cohort is larger than the actual one potentially leading to an over-estimation of persons admitted to stay.

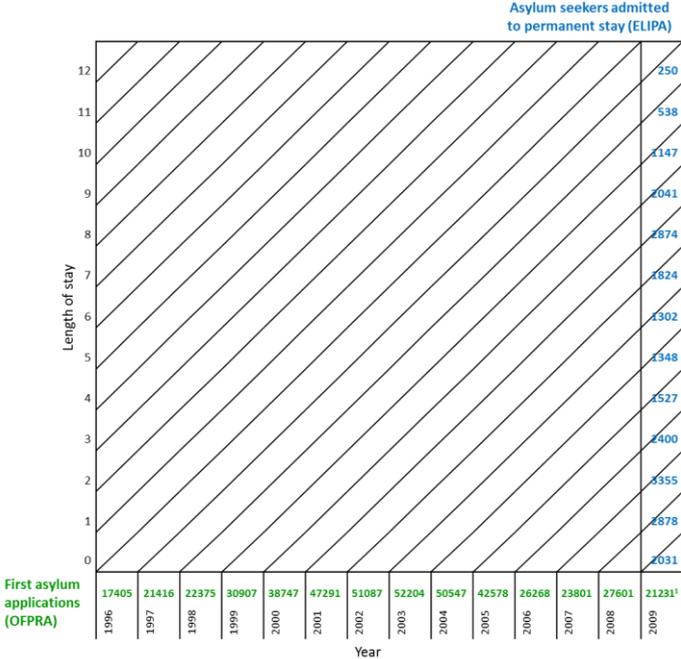
¹⁰ However increasingly (especially since 2015) there is the issue of the long time necessary to register as an asylum applicant at the prefecture (first step in filing an asylum application) and thus this gap may be longer.

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$$m_x = \frac{\text{Asylum seekers admitted to permanent stay}^{2009}}{\text{First asylum applications}_{2009-t}}$$

As shown in figure 1 the elements of the equation come from the two sources: the denominator is composed of the number of first asylum applications (OFPRA) and the numerator the estimated number of asylum seekers admitted to permanent stay (Elipa).

Figure 1 Lexis diagramme asylum applications



Source: OFPRA (1998-2009): first-time adult asylum seeker applicants. ELIPA (2010), DGEF-DSED: migrants having arrived in France at age 18 or older and having filed for asylum.

1) The survey is representative of persons receiving a residence permit between September 2009 and February 2010. Thus, persons admitted to stay past this cut-off date did not have the chance to be included in the survey. For comparability reasons we use the number of first asylum applications registered before September 2009.

In a second step we construct a life table of access to permanent stay using the following equation:

$$E_{(x;x+1)} = S_x \times m_x$$

These estimations are presented in table 3.

Table 3 Life table

x	S _x	m _x	E _x
0	100	10	10
1	90	11	10
2	80	14	11
3	69	9	6
4	63	4	2
5	61	3	2
6	59	2	1
7	58	4	2
8	56	6	3
9	53	5	3
10	50	4	2
11	48	2	1
12	47		

Source: Author’s estimation.

In a last step we estimate the number of asylum seekers admitted to permanent stay by motive of admission: international protection *versus* other motives. We consider these two events as dependent events¹¹. Thus, once we construct the general life table we distribute the events at each duration by type of admission – international protection *versus* other motives – depending on the distribution observed in the data (estimations from the ELIPA survey of persons admitted to stay by cohort of arrival and motive of admission).

In addition, to a general life table we construct life tables by sex and by origin (based on nationality). The groups were constituted based on geographic proximity and contexts of departure, but also depending on sample sizes in the ELIPA survey: former Soviet Union¹², former Yugoslavia, Algeria, Sub-Saharan African countries having formerly been under French rule¹³ (with the exclusion of Mali), other Africa, Turkey, China, Sri Lanka, other Asia, America (table 4). Due to a small number of asylum seekers from other European and other Northern African countries were excluded from the analyses. We also excluded asylum seekers from Mali: although applications from this group have been important throughout the period, their numbers have fluctuated considerably and all the more due to changes in the situation in the country of origin, there appears to be a (sometimes significant) gap between year of arrival and year of eventual application. In addition, in 2009 there was a regularization regarding workers

¹¹ During the examination of the asylum application, the applicants can not change their status or apply to stay for a different motive. Furthermore, can be admitted to stay for other motives only persons whose asylum application has been rejected.

¹² It mainly consists of persons from Russia, Armenia, Georgia and Moldavia.

¹³ Countries formerly under French administration include Benin, Burkina-Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Gabon, Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and the Gambia, Chad and Togo.

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of which a large part were Malian nationals. Thus, the admission conditions described by the survey that year cannot be considered as “normal”.

Table 4 Nationality of asylum seekers

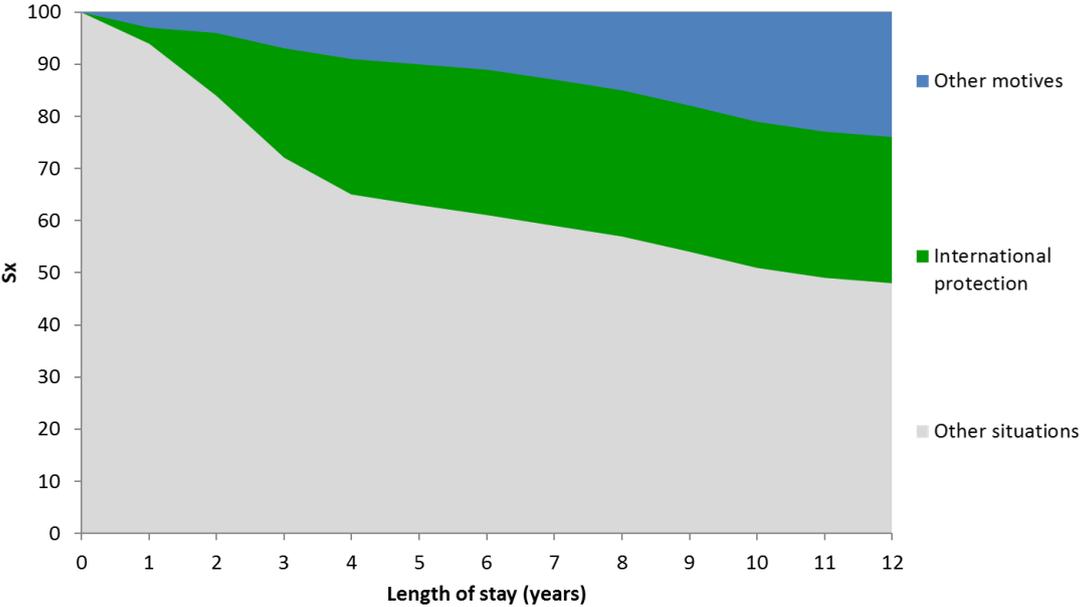
	OFPRA		ELIPA		
	N	% col	n obs.	N	% col
former Soviet Union	61 758	14	120	2077	9
former Yugoslavia	34 263	8	29	440	2
other Europe	7 530	2			
Algeria	21 488	5	119	2199	9
other Maghreb	828	0			
Mali	15 177	3	171	2419	10
Sub-Saharan Africa formerly under French rule	64 127	15	309	4260	18
Other Africa	68 318	16	200	2752	12
Turkey	42 568	10	117	1819	8
China	34 891	8	136	1555	7
Sri Lanka	24 072	5	164	2890	12
Other Asia	39 459	9	116	1706	7
America	24 986	6	89	1307	6
Total	439 465	100	1 570	23 424	100

Source: OFPRA (1998-2009): first-time adult asylum seeker applicants. ELIPA (2010), DGEF-DSED: migrants having arrived in France at age 18 or older and having filed for asylum.

Findings

In this section we look at the cumulative proportion of asylum seekers admitted to permanent legal residence by motive after 12 years of stay. Our findings show that around one half of asylum seekers are admitted to permanent stay: 29% receive international protection in France, which in the majority of cases (24%) consists in the recognition of a refugee / stateless status (Figure 2). This proportion obtained via our multi-source approach is coherent with that published in official statistics based on data by the OFPRA & CNDA: on average 25% of asylum seekers having made a first asylum application in the years 1998-2009 were granted refugee or stateless status. In addition, 24% **of rejected asylum applicants** are admitted to stay for **other motives**, often after many years of residence in the country. Whereas admissions for international protection take place in the first four years, those for other motives are more evenly distributed through time.

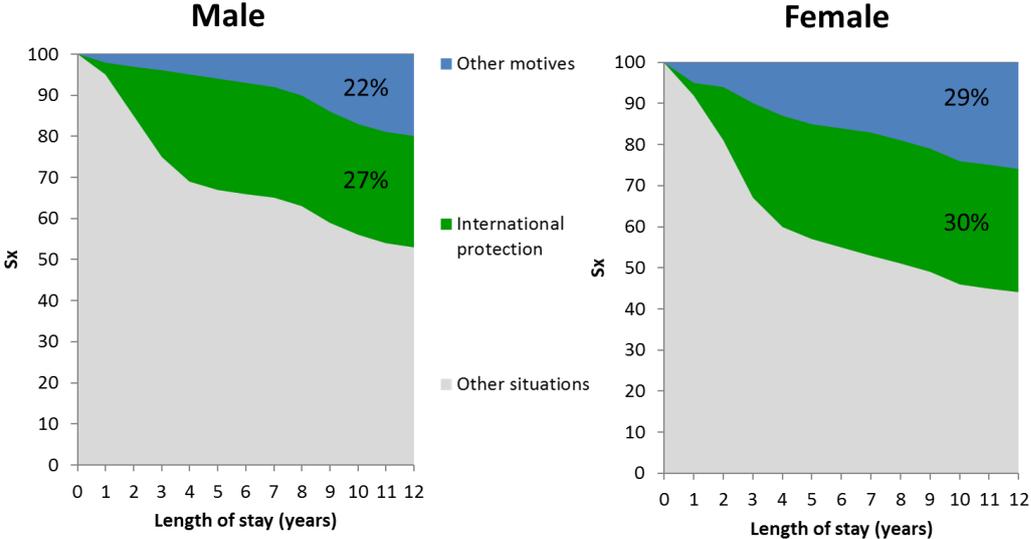
Figure 2 Proportion of asylum seekers admitted to stay by type of admission



Source: OFPRA (1998-2009): first-time adult asylum seeker applicants. ELIPA (2010), DGEF-DSED: migrants having arrived in France at age 18 or older and having filed for asylum.

A larger proportion of women are admitted to permanent stay: 59% versus 47% of men applicants (Figure 3). This difference is mainly due to their more frequent admission for other motives. Indeed, whereas the proportions of applicants granted international protection are similar (27% and 30%), 29% of women are admitted for other motives compared to 22% of men.

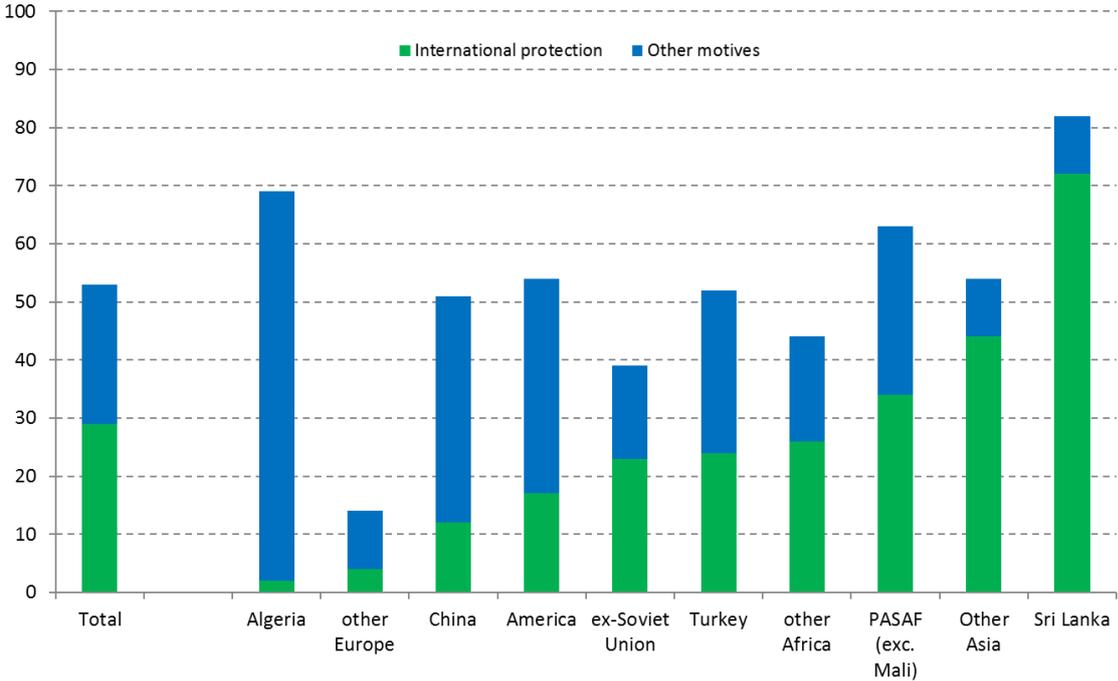
Figure 3 Proportion of asylum seekers admitted to stay by type of admission an by sex



Source: OFPRA (1998-2009): first-time adult asylum seeker applicants. ELIPA (2010), DGEF-DSED: migrants having arrived in France at age 18 or older and having filed for asylum.

Figure 4 presents the cumulated proportion of asylum seekers admitted to stay by origin distinguishing their motive of admission. Firstly, we see that the overall admission rate for all nationalities ranks are similar level (between 40 and 70%) with the exception of former Yougoslavia (14%) and Sri Lanka (82%), which we discuss afterwards. On the one hand, nationals from Asian countries, with the exception of Turkey and China, are more often granted international protection (44%) followed by Sub-saharan nationals (34%). Around one fourth of asylum seekers from former SU, Turkey and other Africa are granted international protection. This proportion is lowest for Algerian and Chinese nationals, as well as those for former Yougoslavia. These proportions globally reflect those published by the OFPRA.

Figure 4 Cumulative proportion of asylum seekers admitted to stay by type of admission and nationality after 12 years



Source: OFPRA (1998-2009): first-time adult asylum seeker applicants. ELIPA (2010), DGEF-DSED: migrants having arrived in France at age 18 or older and having filed for asylum.

On the whole, admissions for other motives represent a proportion similar to those of international protection. However, their relative importance varies between origins. For nationalities for which international protection recognition is high (Sri Lanka and other Asia), they contribute relatively little (around 10%). Among nationalities where these recognitions are at an average rate (former SU, Turkey, both regions in Africa), they can represent up to one half of the total admissions of former asylum seekers. Lastly, it is among nationalities which are most often rejected from their asylum claim – Algeria, China and America – that they contribute the most and account for the majority of admissions to stay. The case of Algeria is the most striking: only 2% are estimated to have been granted IP, but 67% are admitted to stay for other motives. Indeed, Algerian nationals were not authorized to apply for international protection and were the first to experience “temporary” status which may explain why so few are recognized as refugees.

We now turn our attention to the conditions and characteristics of former asylum seekers at time of their admission to stay with a special focus on those who were rejected from their asylum claim. Two thirds of admission of rejected asylum seekers are family related (Table 5). The largest category consists of “personal and family ties” and accounts for 36% of admissions for other motives. This is a very heterogeneous admission category: there is a wide array of personal and family

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situations that fall under this group (circulars of 19 December 2002, 30 October 2004). A second group consists of family members of French (30%), of which spouses (16%) and parents (14%). In this group it is the specific family relation that allows to make a legal claim for admission to stay. Former asylum seekers admitted for work reasons – under the “employee” category – occupy the third position (22%). Humanitarian considerations account for 8% and the remaining categories account for 4%.

Table 5 Characteristics of asylum seekers

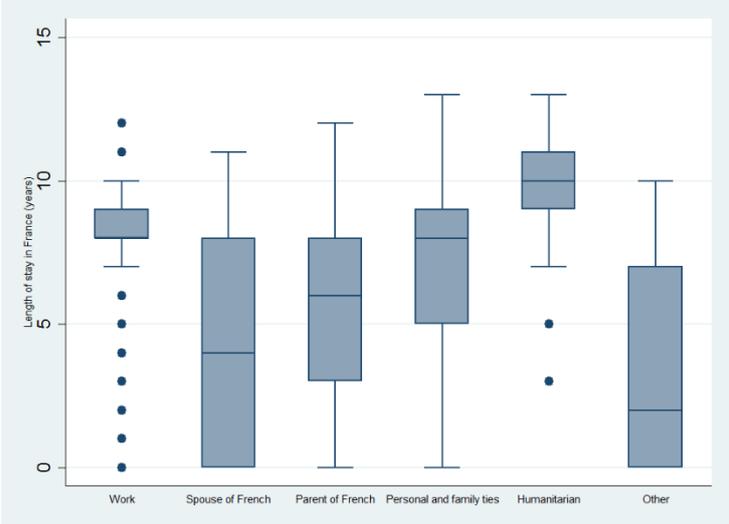
	International protection	Other motives	Total
Sex			
Male	60,6	63,5	62,3
Female	39,4	36,5	37,7
Household composition			
Lone adult	50,8	26,7	36,6
Couple without children	5,0	17,2	12,2
Couple with children	29,2	46,5	39,4
Single parent	9,0	8,4	8,6
Lives with parents	6,1	1,2	3,2
Length of stay in France			
0-1 years	29,6	8,1	17,0
2-3 years	46,4	8,8	24,3
4-6 years	16,6	19,2	18,1
7-9 years	5,6	42,8	27,4
10 years or more	1,8	21,1	13,2
Nationality			
Maghreb	0,3	16,1	9,6
Sub-Saharan Africa	15,7	25,1	21,2
Other Africa	19,4	19,7	19,6
Asia	51,6	27,2	37,3
Europe	10,1	4,8	7,0
America	3,0	7,0	5,4
Work situation			
Work	42,3	66,9	56,8
Unemployment	28,0	19,1	22,8
Other situation	29,7	14,0	20,5
Admission category			
International protection	100,0	-	41,2
Spouse of French	-	15,5	9,1
Parent of French	-	14,0	8,2
Personal and family ties	-	36,3	21,4
Work	-	22,6	13,3
Other	-	11,6	6,4

Source: ELIPA (2010), DGEF-DSED: migrants having arrived in France at age 18 or older and having filed for asylum.

Obtaining a permanent legal status for former asylum seekers comes after many years in France: 6,7 years on average. It is more rapid for family members of French: 4,2 years of spouses and 5.5 years for parents. Other groups spend more years in France: 7,1 for personal and family ties, 8,2

for work reasons and 9,7 for humanitarian considerations. While the distributions for family related reasons were spaced, they were more concentrated for work and humanitarian considerations. Indeed, in the latter cases it's the end of a process – finding a stable work contract and success of an often complex procedure to prove one's victim, health status.

Figure 5 Length of stay of rejected asylum seekers by category of admission



Source: OFPRA (1998-2009): first-time adult asylum seeker applicants. ELIPA (2010), DGEF-DSED: migrants having arrived in France at age 18 or older and having filed for asylum.

Discussion

Our findings show that around 1/4 of rejected asylum applicants were admitted to stay for other motives, often after many years of residence in the country. This proportion is similar to proportion of asylum applicants having received international protection. These estimates are consistent with another recent studies on the admission of asylum seekers in France partly based on the same data, but with another methodology (d’Albis & Boubtane 2018). We find a slight advantage for women, but this is particularly because of admissions for other motives, namely family ties, which also echoes other findings that asylum-seekers with school age children unlikely to return (Leerkes & al 2017). The importance of admission for other motives is particularly important for nationalities who generally have low recognition status rates (Algeria, China). These differences by nationality result from context at origin (possibilities of going back), but also at destination (for example ethnic incorporation opportunities). For the largest proportion of asylum applicants though, we don’t know their situation from existing data sources: did they leave the territory? Did they remain and are still in an irregular situation after more than a decade?

Scholars working on forced migration call researchers to not simply adopt bureaucratic labels as analytical categories, critically study the ways of delimiting populations: refugees, failed asylum seekers, irregular migrants (Scheel & Squire 2014). This paper contributes in this direction as it shows that members of the same group – a cohort of asylum seekers – go through many status changes and are ultimately labelled differently by the destination country (depending on their category of admission). Whereas a proportion of them are recognized as “refugees” and as persons who genuinely need protection, many others are rejected from this claim and labelled as “irregular migrants”, before transitioning to “family members”, “workers” which in turn occult their initial reasons of departure and their need of specific protection. As more and more studies look into the role of migration and asylum policies in the integration of migrants, it is important to look at how this experience – rejection and additional waiting to be regularized – has an impact on their ulterior trajectories. Existing studies have already shown that the fact that refugees are not allowed to access the labor market during the examination of their application; in the case of rejected asylum seekers this exclusion lasts for a much longer time. In addition to socio-economic integration, this situation has more widespread and long-term impacts on well-being of asylum seekers and their families. Thus in a moment, when there are discussions on the experiences of “refugees”, it is important not to forget those of “asylum seekers”, groups who share similar characteristics and reasons of departure, but some of whom will be readily accepted and others not.

This study has also shown how in the context of absent / imperfect existing data on some populations – such as (rejected) asylum seekers – it is nevertheless possible to estimate their ulterior admission to stay by crossing several data sources. Even as administrative datasets (slowly) become available to researchers, many times only aggregate statistics remain available to them. In this case, it is important to underline the contribution of a traditional demographic approach for the construction of a life table. While the advent of new data sources and new statistical methods (regression, EHA...) may seem that this is no longer useful, there remain nevertheless fields where this remains the only possibility. While making more accessible administrative datasets is important, it is also to improve the information available in existing statistical sources. This could imply including information on eventual asylum applications in the destination country (yes/no and year) in statistical surveys (for example in the ad hoc modules of Labour Force Surveys on migrants) or systematically distinguishing former asylum seekers in published statistics (for example removals from territory).

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