



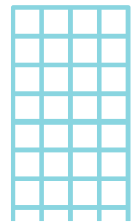
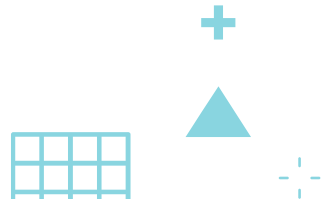
“Always standing on the  
fragile side of ice”:  
Immigrants’ integration  
into the labor market in  
Finland - Report

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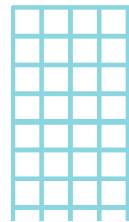
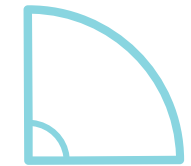
# Introduction

- TEK strives for equality and diversity in working life as well as equal pay and opportunities for career advancement
  - As such, TEK undertook a project aimed at identifying the factors affecting the international labor market position of immigrants in tech in order to enable their full integration into the Finnish labor market
- Research questions:
  - What is the current labor market position of immigrants in Finland?
  - What are the main obstacles to immigrants' acquisition of qualification-matched employment?
  - How do immigrants experience working life in Finland?
  - What additional challenges to integration do immigrants experience?
  - What kind of support do immigrants require?
  - What is the current labor market position of immigrants in tech in Finland?
- Data used here is derived from qualitative analysis of prior literature as well as quantitative data from Statistics Finland, Vipunen, TEK Graduate Survey, and TEK Labor Market Survey
- Title quote is from Habti (2014, p. 113: "I am always standing on the fragile side of ice".)



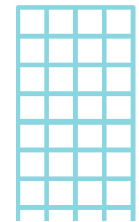
# Executive Summary

- Immigrants have an overall worse labor market situation than Finnish nationals with immigrant women being even more disadvantaged than immigrant men
- Many of the disadvantages that immigrants face in the labor market derive directly from discrimination and prejudice in recruitment practices and hiring on the part of employers
- Nevertheless, immigrants recount both positive and negative experiences of Finnish working life, such as the absence of hierarchy and the lack of knowledge of workers' rights
- Moreover, immigrants experience additional challenges to overall integration in Finland which also impact their ability to integrate into the labor market, such as difficulties making contacts with Finns
- Thus, though ICT and engineering university graduates have one of the best employment outcomes among all study fields, they still face considerable disadvantages when compared to their Finnish counterparts
- Finally, the discourse around immigrants and immigration leads to a homogenization of this diverse group of people that ultimately contributes to the precarity and stigmatization which they experience



# Main Recommendations

- The following recommendations are proposed in order to combat the disparities:
  - Finland needs to reform its systems in order to retain immigrants, such as through reducing the processing time for residence permits and reducing the income requirements for visas
  - Universities and companies should collaborate to offer paid opportunities to gain work experience during studies through internships, thesis work, and university course projects with placement aided by both
  - Employers should re-evaluate “fluent” Finnish requirements for positions by getting more familiar with the levels and contents of the Finnish National Certificate of Language Proficiency YKI (1-6) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (A1-C2), in order to properly determine the required language skills for a certain job while the public sector should remove Finnish language requirements where not required by law
  - Employers should recognize foreign qualifications and work experience in line with their legal obligations
  - Professional organizations should offer services fully in English and provide support to immigrant members regarding the specific problems they face in Finnish society, such as residence permit processes and discrimination
  - Government programs and initiatives should focus on full integration of extant immigrant populations to avoid alienating immigrants who have already invested considerable resources into life here and would be less likely to leave



# Definitions

- In this report, the terms are defined and used as follows\*:
  - Asylum seeker – “An individual who is seeking international protection [...] whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it” (International Organization of Migration [IOM], n.d.)
  - Turvapaikanhakija - Turvapaikanhakijalla tarkoitetaan henkilöä, joka hakee kansainvälistä suojelua ja jonka hakemuksesta maa, jossa hän on jättänyt hakemuksen, ei ole vielä lopullisesti päättänyt
  - Finnish background – A person with at least one parent born in Finland (Statistics Finland, n.d.a)
  - Suomalaistaustainen - Henkilö, jolla on vähintään yksi Suomessa syntynyt vanhempi
  - Foreign background / foreigner – A person whose both parents or the only known parent were born abroad (Statistics Finland, n.d.a)
  - Ulkomaalaistaustainen - Henkilö, jonka molemmat vanhemmat tai ainoa tiedossa oleva vanhempi on syntynyt ulkomailla
  - Immigrant – A person who holds a tertiary degree and/or “extensive work experience in a professional field” and moves from their country of usual residence to a new country for at least one year (IOM, n.d.; Shirmohammadi et al., 2019, p. 2)
  - Maahanmuuttaja – Maahanmuuttajalla tarkoitetaan henkilöä, jolla on korkea-asteen tutkinto ja/tai “laaja työkokemus joltain ammattialalta” ja joka muuttaa asuinmaastaan uuteen maahan vähintään vuodeksi
  - Immigrant in tech – An immigrant (as per the definition used in this report) that works specifically in the field of technology
  - Refugee – An individual whose request for asylum has been granted by the country in which the request was submitted (IOM, n.d.)
    - Pakolainen - Pakolainen on henkilö, jonka turvapaikkahakemus on hyväksytty maassa, jossa pyyntö on jätetty

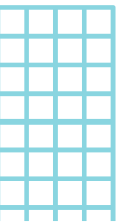
\*Finnish definitions are direct translations of the English definitions



# What is the current labor market position of immigrants in Finland?

# Summary

- This section addresses the labor market position of immigrants in Finland
  - In 2020, there were 444,031 people of foreign background living permanently in Finland
  - The total number of people with foreign background permanently living in Finland has been going up steadily, especially since the early 2000s
  - The number of unemployed foreign job seekers is 37,650 (June 2021) which is 27,5% of the total foreign workforce
  - The employment rate of immigrant men was only a little lower (71%) than Finnish men (74%), however the employment rate of immigrant women (56%) was much lower than Finnish women (73%)
  - Highly educated immigrants experienced underemployment more often, and they were more likely to work in fixed-term and part-time jobs
  - Unemployment and long-term unemployment were more common for immigrants
  - The unemployment rate was lower the higher the person was educated both among immigrants and Finnish nationals
  - 1 year after graduation the employment situation of immigrants in tech in the Finnish job market is generally good, but a significant percentage of them already leave Finland
  - 5 years after graduation the employment situation of immigrants in tech gets worse, and they are less likely to stay and work in Finland



# Immigrants in the Finnish population structure

According to Statistics Finland, all persons with at least one parent born in Finland are considered to be of Finnish background. Persons whose both parents or the only known parent were born abroad are considered to be of foreign background.

In 2020, there were 444,031 people of foreign background living permanently in Finland

**Population by origin, country of birth and language 2020**

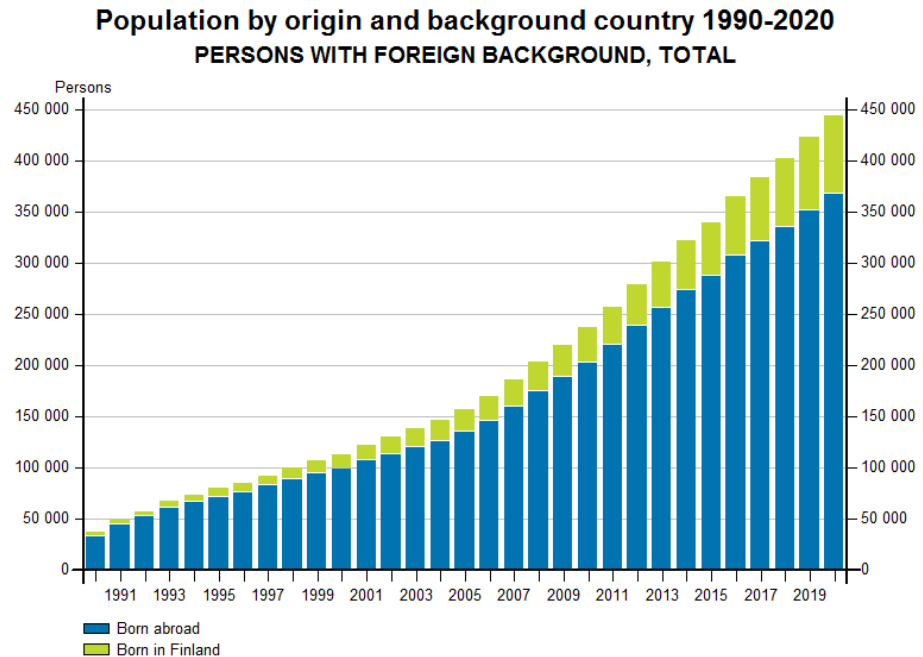
Population 31.12.2020: **5 533 793**

Finnish background <b>5 089 762</b>		Foreign background <b>444 031</b>	
Country of birth Finland <b>5 036 413</b>	Country of birth foreign country <b>53 349</b>	Country of birth Finland <b>76 614</b>	Country of birth foreign country <b>367 417</b>
Language domestic* <b>5 027 929</b>	Language domestic* <b>46 919</b>	Language domestic* <b>14 046</b>	Language domestic* <b>12 052</b>
other <b>8 484</b>	other <b>6 430</b>	other <b>62 568</b>	other <b>355 365</b>

\* Domestic languages = Finnish, Swedish, Sami  
Statistics Finland / Population structure



# Immigrants in the Finnish population structure



Statistics Finland / Population structure

The total number of people with foreign background permanently living in Finland has been going up steadily, especially since the early 2000s.

It's a heterogeneous group, including immigrants coming to work in Finland as well as those coming to reunite with family members already in Finland.

# Labor market situation of immigrants

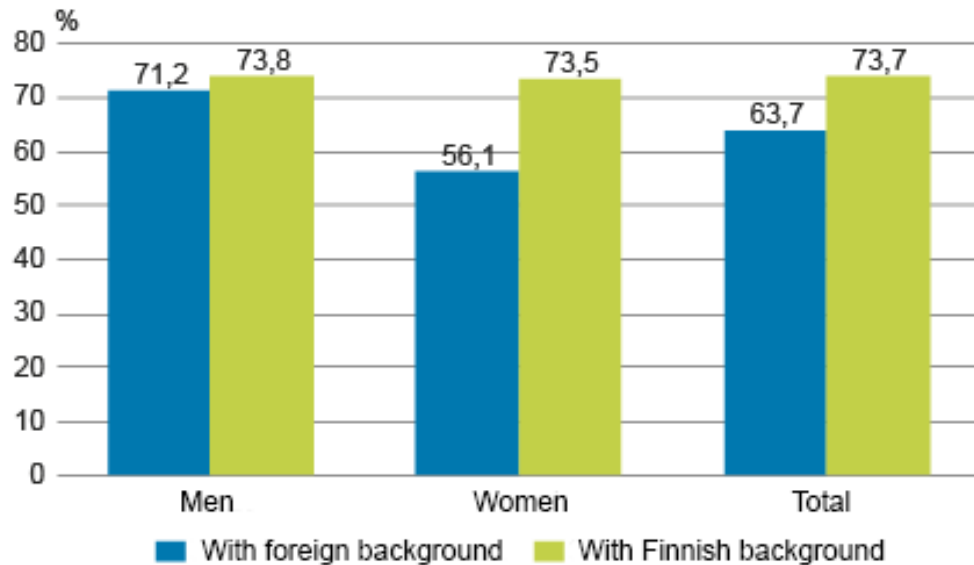
Out of 444,031 foreigners living permanently in Finland, the number of the foreign workforce (aged 15-74) according to Statistics Finland is 136,783.

Statistics Finland shows a total of 85,222 **foreign job seekers** in Finland in June 2021, which fall under 5 categories. The number of **unemployed job seekers** is 37,650, which is 27,5 % of the total foreign workforce.

Foreign job seekers in Finland in June 2021	
At work	22,220
<b>Unemployed jobseekers</b>	<b>37,650</b>
Outside labour force	25,339
On unemployment pension	0
Unknown	13

(Source: Statistics Finland, StatFin-online / Employment service statistics (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment))

# Labor market situation of immigrants



(Source: Statistics Finland, UTH Survey 2014: Employment rate by gender and origin, population aged 20 to 64 in Finland in 2014, %)

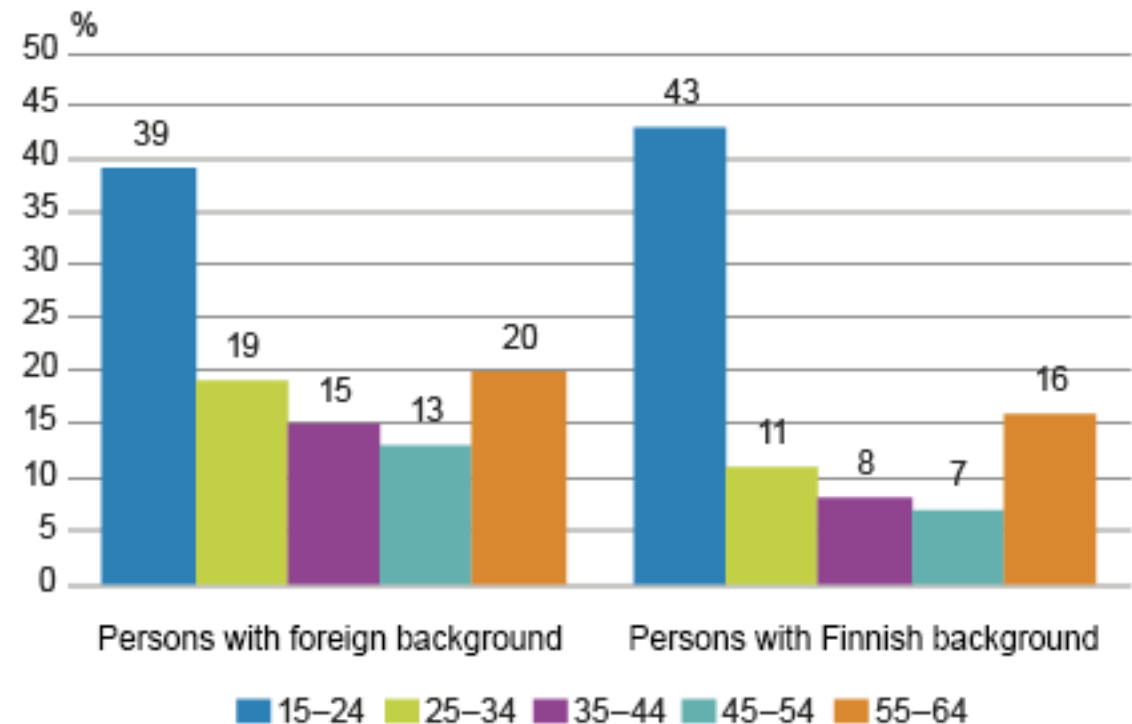
In the UTH survey by Statistics Finland (2015), the employment rate of people with foreign background aged 20 to 64 was lower (64%) than among persons with Finnish background (74%).

The difference is more striking when looking at the gender differences. Foreign women have more difficulties in finding work compared to foreign men. The employment rate of immigrant men was only a little lower (71%) than Finnish men (74%), but the employment rate of immigrant women (56%) was much lower than Finnish women (73%).

# Labor market situation of immigrants

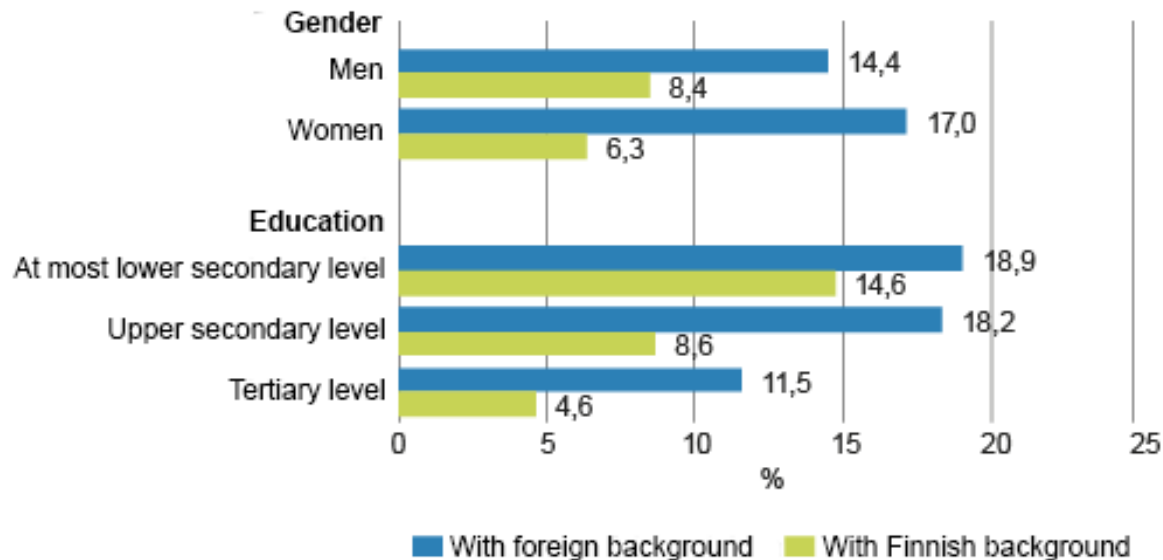
According to the UTH Survey by Statistics Finland (2015), fixed-term and part-time employment relationships are more common among immigrant wage and salary earners in all age groups, while working part-time in the Finnish population is more common with younger people.

Highly educated immigrants experienced underemployment more often, they were more likely to work in fixed-term and part-time jobs, and they had more atypical working times compared to Finnish persons.



(Source: Statistics Finland, UTH Survey 2014: Share of part-time working among employed persons aged 15 to 64 with foreign background and Finnish background by gender and age in 2014, %)

# Labor market situation of immigrants

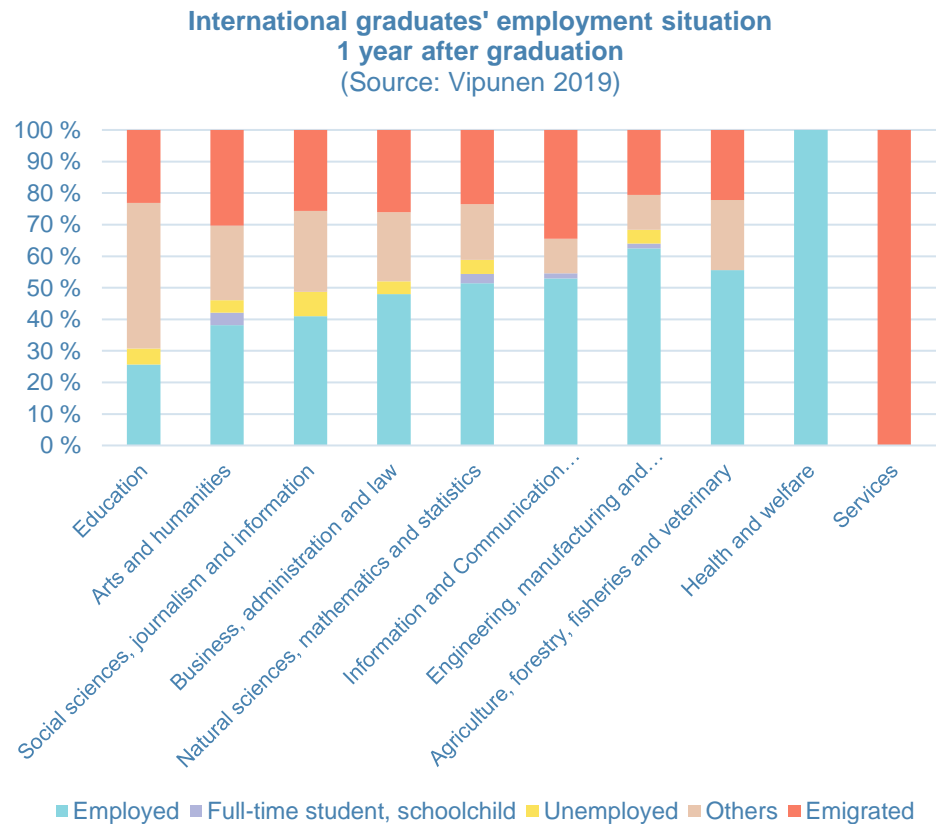


Unemployment and long-term unemployment were more common for immigrants than Finnish nationals. The unemployment rate of immigrant men aged 20 to 64 was 14% and 17% for women, as opposed to 8% of Finnish men and 6% of Finnish women.

The unemployment rate was lower the higher the person was educated both among immigrants and Finnish nationals.

(Source: Statistics Finland, UTH Survey 2014: Unemployment rate of population aged 20 to 64 with foreign and Finnish background by gender and level of education in 2014, %)

# International graduates' employment situation 1 year after graduation



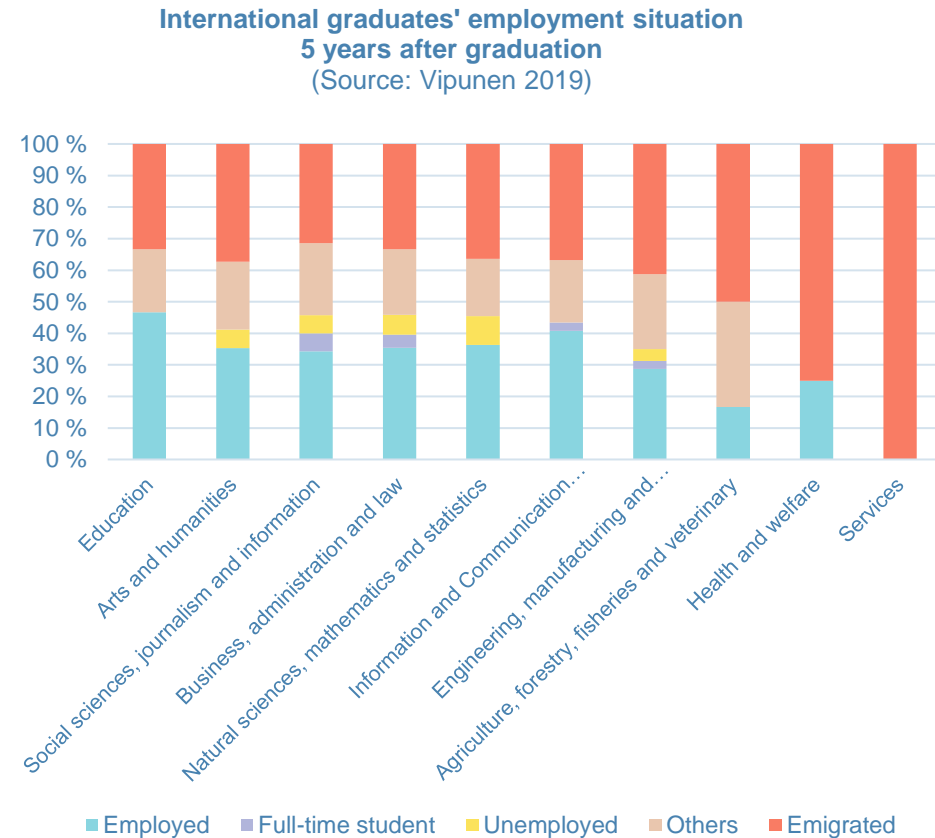
When looking at the international university graduates' situation from the latest available data in Vipunen (2019), it can be seen that the employment situation of immigrants in tech in the Finnish job market is generally good: 63% of engineers and 52% of ICT professionals are employed 1 year after graduation.

However, the percentage of immigrants in tech who have left Finland is also very high: 21% of engineers and 34% of ICT professionals have emigrated within 1 year after graduation.

Compared to other fields, graduates in the service field are the most likely to leave Finland after graduation while health and welfare graduates are the most likely to stay with the highest employment percentage.

# International graduates' employment situation 5 years after graduation

When looking at the international university graduates' situation 5 years after graduation from the latest available data in Vipunen (2019), 29% of the engineers and 41% of ICT professionals are employed in Finland, but 41% of engineers and 37% of ICT professionals have left Finland.

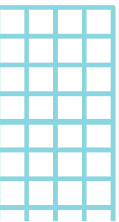
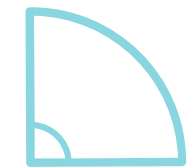


# What are the main obstacles to immigrants' acquisition of qualification-matched employment?



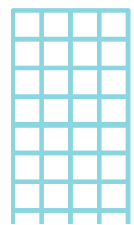
# Summary

- This section addresses the multiple interrelated explanations for the differences in the labor market position of Finns and immigrants
- Main obstacles to qualification-matched employment
  - Discrimination and prejudice
  - Lack of Finnish language skills
  - Lack of recognition of education or experience acquired abroad
  - Bureaucratic barriers to hiring non-EU nationals
  - Use of informal recruitment practices
  - Perceived organizational mismatch
  - Lack of relevant work experience compared to host country nationals



# What are the main obstacles to immigrants' acquisition of qualification-matched employment?

- Discrimination and prejudice
  - Survey research conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has found that immigrants of Sub-Saharan African origin and their descendants suffer the most harassment in Finland compared to all other EU countries surveyed at twice the EU average (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [EUFRA], 2018, 2017)
  - The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman has identified various ways in which both the Sami and Roma continue to face barriers to inclusion and discrimination in daily life (Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutettu, 2019)
  - Thus, it should come as no surprise that discrimination plays a major, albeit underacknowledged, role in the disadvantaged position of international talents in the Finnish labor market which has also been recognized by the Finnish Non-Discrimination Ombudsman (Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutettu, 2019)
  - Many of the other challenges which face international talents in the labor market spring from discrimination and prejudice
  - The negative impact of discrimination on migrants' chances of obtaining qualification-matched employment in the host country is reflected in experimental tests conducted in a variety of European countries, including Finland (Auer et al., 2019; Damelang et al., 2019; Dietz et al., 2015; Rooth, 2010; Zschirnt & Rudein, 2016)
  - Correspondence testing conducted by Vernby & Dancygier (2019) found in Sweden that native Swedes (21%) had the highest call-back rates followed by Poles, Iraqis, and Somalis (5%)
    - The authors in this study also varied citizenship, amount of previous work experience, and signals of religious activity to ascertain if certain attributes that immigrants have some control over impact their employment prospects, but found little evidence that immigrants can influence the hiring process through these characteristics



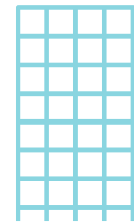
# What are the main obstacles to immigrants' acquisition of qualification-matched employment?

- Larja et al. (2012) conducted situation tests in Finland to ascertain the level of discrimination in the recruitment process based on gender and ethnicity (Finnish vs. Russian applicants)
- The authors observed three times more ethnic discrimination than gender discrimination with Russian applicants needing to send twice as many applications to get an interview compared to Finnish applicants
- Correspondence tests conducted by Ahmad (2019, 2020a, 2020b) found that Finnish applicants had the highest overall call-back rate (39%), followed by English (26.9%), Russian (22.8%), Iraqi (13.4%), and Somali (9.9%)
- There were no statistically significant differences depending on level of customer contact of the job or level of Finnish language proficiency required
- Further, when the non-Finnish applicants were given an extra two years of experience compared to the Finnish applicants, their call-back rates did not increase with Finnish applicants continuing to receive the most call-backs regardless of their level of experience (Ahmad, 2020b)
- Shortcomings of correspondence tests
  - They tend to focus on “second-generation immigrants” who have undergone education in the host country and, thus, underestimate the true extent of discrimination that immigrants face in the host country due to perceived deficiencies in language or discounting of prior (foreign) experience and education
- Studies relying on the self-reported experiences of immigrants also find experiences of discrimination and harassment to be prevalent, particularly for immigrants from outside of Europe and North America (Alho, 2020; Calikoglu, 2018; Clarke, 2014; Koivunen et al., 2015; Koskela, 2014, 2019; Könönen, 2018; Lahti, 2013; Leinonen, 2013; Masoud et al., 2020, 2021; Risberg & Romani, 2021; Shumilova et al., 2012)



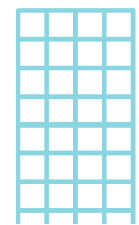
# What are the main obstacles to immigrants' acquisition of qualification-matched employment?

- For example, names can be an important source of discrimination as one female Latvian professional working in Finland explained: "The name is important; it is difficult to find highly qualified work; a qualified Finnish person will be given the first choice. When I was applying for work, it was very important not to have a Latvian name, but to have a Finnish one; otherwise you will not have a chance, it has a lot of impact." (Lulle & Balode, 2014, p. 83)
- Though anonymous recruitment would seem like the best solution to problems such as these, studies suggest that anonymous recruitment is not effective at lowering ethnic discrimination in recruitment
- For example, Aslund and Skans (2012) observed an anonymous recruitment pilot conducted in Sweden alongside a normal recruitment process and found that while non-Western applicants and women had higher interview probabilities under the anonymous recruitment pilot, non-Western applicants had a nearly identical penalty when it comes to being offered the job as in the conventional recruitment process
  - Thus, the authors concluded that ethnic discrimination is based on prejudices or preferences that manifest whenever the ethnicity or national origin of a candidate is revealed to the employer
- Similar results were found in the analysis of an anonymous recruitment pilot conducted in France in which the interview and hiring gap between native and immigrant candidates increased (Behaghel et al., 2015)
- Behaghel et al. (2015) also found that some attributes have differential returns between native and immigrant candidates, and anonymization prevented recruiters from holistically evaluating the resumes and using minority status as an attenuator for indicators that were otherwise negative on the resume
  - For example, interrupted work histories were strongly negatively valued for majority candidates but not minority candidates, so anonymized resumes led to the averaging out of the value across the groups which penalized minority candidates more than majority candidates
- Research also suggests that implicit attitudes play a significant role in discrimination in recruitment which is difficult to overcome (Calanchini et al., 2020; Lai et al., 2014; Rooth, 2007)



# What are the main obstacles to immigrants' acquisition of qualification-matched employment?

- Lack of Finnish language skills
  - In Shirmohammadi et al. (2019)'s meta-analysis of studies on factors related to skills-matched employment, greater knowledge of host country language facilitated entry into that country's labor market
  - Though language skills can be/are a legitimate factor in the hiring process, lack of language skills also serves as a justification for discrimination against applicants based on ethnic background (Khan et al., 2021; Näre, 2013)
  - Koivunen et al. (2015) interviewed several recruiters in recruitment consultancy companies and at a department store in Finland and found HR managers and recruitment consultants almost always deflected to discussing language skills when asked about hiring immigrants, but the meaning given to language skills differed depending on whose skills were discussed
    - For example, those that felt their language skills were not a problem were all from Europe and North America while those from Asia, Africa, or South America felt that their opportunities to advance were more constricted
    - Additionally, the criteria for adequate language skills is not explicit, but hiring managers still apply this to applicants as it puts the onus for equal treatment on the immigrants themselves who need to learn the language
  - Further, requirements of "fluent" or "good" Finnish are highly subjective benchmarks used to gatekeep employment as even having a foreign accent can be seen as a sign of speaking improper Finnish and mark one as a foreigner (*For Better Service, Many Switch Languages*, 2009; Koivunen et al., 2015; Leinonen, 2012; Näre, 2013)
  - The reluctance of employers to hire due to language is captured in this quote by an employer interviewed in Shumilova et al. (2012): "...if you hire the foreigner who doesn't speak Finnish, this will make the work in whole team more complicated. Because they have to change the language for one person. That is something really preventing the manager to hire, because they have to think how much extra work we have to do because of one person." (p. 80)



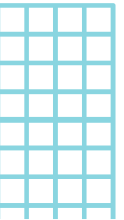
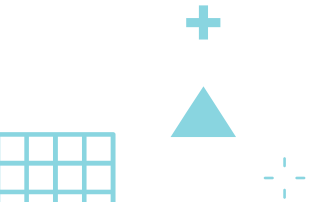
“People with MBAs and different cultural knowledge work as cleaners and have no chance of getting proper job, because the job market is not ready for international candidates, or does not have enough vacancies.” (Shumilova et al., 2012, p. 71)



# What are the main obstacles to immigrants' acquisition of qualification-matched employment?

- Immigrants also tend to be suspicious of fluent Finnish requirements which is exemplified by one American interviewed in Leinonen (2012) who said:

“Finding employment as a foreigner has been nearly impossible outside of the Helsinki area. Foreigners are still treated with distrust and suspicion – of course, by law a potential employer cannot tell you that, but he can tell you the position is no longer available, and like other foreigners, I hear it all the time, despite my degree and work qualifications. I also hear about my lack of language skills, which is another well known excuse that foreigners hear when Finnish employers are xenophobic.”
- Interestingly, Finnish skills were not perceived as necessary for those working in IT as it was seen as more important to invest in other marketable skills, like programming (Li, 2019; Shumilova et al., 2012)
- Lack of recognition of education or experience acquired abroad
  - Bontenbal et al. (2019) found that in Finland the skills and qualifications of immigrants are typically not recognized
    - Thus, despite many of the immigrants interviewed by the authors having a high level of education and previous work experience, few worked in their own profession in Finland and most “felt that their previous qualifications and skills were not of much help to them” (p. 23)
  - Masoud et al. (2020) also found that though the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture asserts that integration training respects the previous professional experience and skills of immigrants, in practice, this was far from the case. Instead of utilizing the skills of refugees, they were assumed to be either unskilled or in need of skill mending as well as in need of education on the “Finnish way of doing work” which left them in a continual process of deskilling, skilling, and reskilling
    - Oftentimes, refugees were forced to learn a completely new profession or relearn their previous one which indicates that integration practices target anyone perceived as “different” and automatically assume their incompetence



# What are the main obstacles to immigrants' acquisition of qualification-matched employment?

- These attitudes are further reflected in the narratives produced by mentors in a program for immigrants in Sweden in which immigrants were told that they “could not expect to start at the same hierarchical level or the same level of competencies and skills as they had enjoyed before their migration” (Risberg & Romani, 2021, p. 14)
- This is merely a manifestation of discriminatory attitudes towards immigrants as it reflects a perceived superiority of working culture, educational institutions, and the value of workplaces in the host country as experiential environments as well as a devaluing of the embodied cultural knowledge of immigrants (Khan et al., 2021)
- Bureaucratic barriers to hiring non-EU nationals
  - Integration policy implementers interviewed by Bontenbal et al. (2019) argued that too much regulation and too little low threshold employment and apprenticeships was hampering the labor market integration of immigrants
  - Könönen (2018) demonstrates that the bureaucracy of the residence permit system for work permits disadvantages non-EU nationals in the labor market
    - First, certain types of work permits are dependent on labor market testing to determine if there is a shortage of Finnish or EU nationals that could work in that sector. If there is not, non-EU nationals may not be granted a work permit in that area
    - Further, work permits are based on full-time employment with adequate compensation and have a long processing time as well as additional paperwork requirements that must be submitted by the employer, so the application of the work permit is “contingent on the benevolence of employers” (Könönen, 2018, p. 146)
    - Work permits may also restrict the labor market mobility of migrants which can increase their dependency on their employer and leave them in precarious employment situations or risk losing their legal status
- These types of policies lead employers to favor Finnish and EU nationals over non-EU nationals (Li, 2019)





# What are the main obstacles to immigrants' acquisition of qualification-matched employment?

- Use of informal hiring practices
  - Informal recruitment is prevalent in Finland as it is estimated that between 70 and 80% of jobs are in the hidden job market
  - Informal recruitment practices rely on the utilization of networks. Immigrants may have smaller, less dense, and less employment-oriented networks which inhibit the ability of their network to pave the way for employment
  - Further, immigrants may be less familiar with these types of hiring practices if they come from a country which makes less use of them, so may lack knowledge of their importance, how to use informal job search strategies, or be less willing to utilize them
  - It is especially important that immigrants make professional connections with host country nationals as it best facilitates their transition into qualification-matched employment (Alho, 2020; Clarke, 2014; Shirmohammadi et al., 2019; Shumilova et al., 2012)
  - The exclusive nature of informal recruitment “renders it a discriminative labor market practice” which may be detrimental for migrant groups that lack Finnish connections (Khan et al., 2021)
- Perceived organizational mismatch
  - A recruitment consultant interviewed by Koivunen et al. (2015) stated that employers may be unwilling to hire immigrants due to perceptions that the immigrant's working style will not fit in the organization
  - Begs the question of “how the employer could be familiar with the job applicant's working style when the applicant has not worked for the employer” (Koivunen et al., 2015, p. 14)
  - Risberg & Romani (2021) found that both immigrants and their mentors believed that for recruiters the employment of migrants is associated with presumed harm to organizational performance and disruption of organizational normality

“But if it is [a] local company (. . .) why would they hire someone, even with higher education, but who is not a Swede? Why? I mean it’s safer, more comfortable, and, em, more convenient for them to take Swedes.”  
(Risberg & Romani, 2021, p. 13)



# What are the main obstacles to immigrants' acquisition of qualification-matched employment?

- Lack of relevant work experience compared to host country nationals
  - Due to the high cost of living in Finland and tuition fees for non-EU nationals, many students are forced to find employment to finance their life and studies in Finland, yet most of these positions are in part-time service jobs which puts them at a disadvantage compared to host country nationals who may have greater opportunities to acquire relevant experience
    - For example, in Li (2019), many of the Chinese students interviewed worked as construction workers, as cleaners, or in Chinese restaurants which interfered with their studies
    - One interviewee in Calikoglu (2018) explained the “bad foreigner” dilemma as this:

“If you are, for example of Asian or of African origin and you don’t come from a rich background, and you come here as a student, you first start working very cheap jobs, which don’t require any Finnish, and which enable you to survive. For most of the students, that is in cleaning companies. The problem is that the students often do night shifts, they don’t even have time to learn Finnish, and it’s kind of a vicious circle. Because you have to work at night, you can’t really spend much time studying. And that means your study takes longer, and that means you get even lower jobs.” (p. 449)
    - One interviewee in Shumilova et al. (2012) recounted that some students could not graduate as a result:

“Many people that come to study in Finland do not graduate at all due to having to work during the studies to finance the living and thus they’re absent from school and fail courses. The jobs they can get without too much Finnish skills (cleaning, McDonald’s etc.) are not flexible in combining work and studies.” (p. 69)
  - This imbalance is also compounded by the limit on working hours for non-EU national students which makes them less attractive hires for employers compared to Finnish and EU nationals who can work full-time without restrictions



# How do immigrants experience (tech) working places and working life in Finland?

# Summary

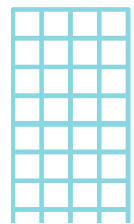
- This section addresses the self-reported experiences of immigrants of working life in Finland and/or in tech workplaces while acknowledging that this is an under-researched area of the literature that needs more attention
- Experiences of working life
  - Negative
    - No advancement possibilities
    - Informal hiring practices as exclusionary
    - Migrant women face intersecting discrimination
    - Lack of trust
    - Lack of knowledge of workers' rights
    - Insecure attachment to work
    - Direct speech and communication
  - Positive
    - Absence of hierarchy
    - Shared responsibility
    - Employees can freely give feedback
    - Sense of trust among employees
    - Supervisors as someone you can count on for support
    - Job corresponds well to field of study
    - Good work-life balance
  - Mixed
    - Colleagues can both positively and negatively affect adaptation to the work community

# How do immigrants experience (tech) working places and working life in Finland?

- There is a major gap in the literature regarding how immigrants experience working life once in Finland that likely reflects the Finnish orientation toward integration where integration ends once employment, any employment, is found (Bontenbal et al., 2019)

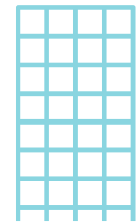
## Negative experiences

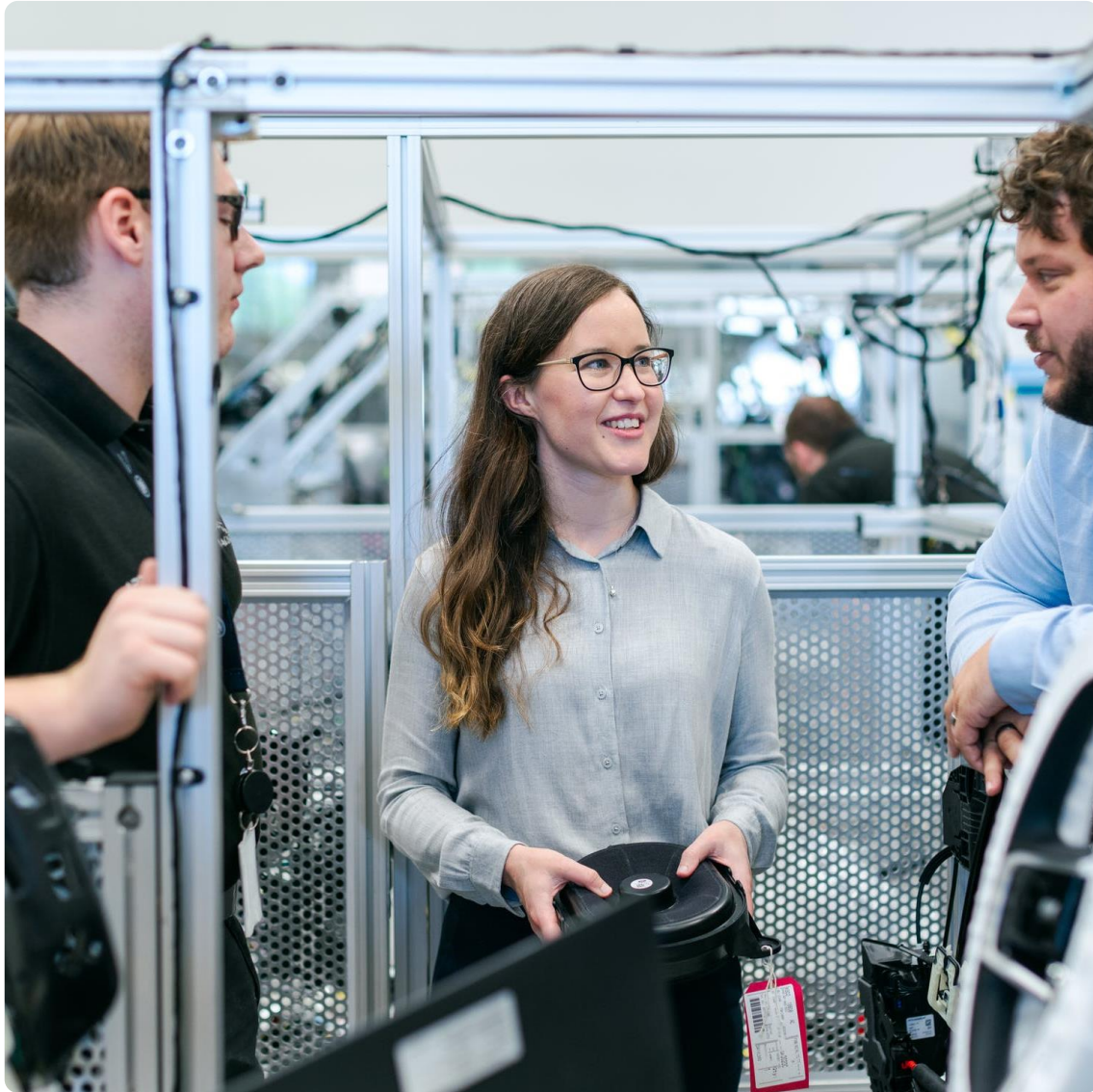
- No advancement possibilities within the company
  - “Although my career is not downward, I don’t think I have a chance to move into the management level. Maybe someday I would become senior in my current company. That’s all. There is no more career advancement for me in Finland.” – ICT engineer living in Finland for 5 years (Chang & Holm, 2017)
  - Finns are more willing to accept immigrants as co-workers than supervisors (Jaakkola, 2005)
- Informal hiring practices as exclusionary
  - “In Finland connections are the most important thing. You need to know someone who knows someone because most jobs I feel are not even [advertised] somewhere. They are just given to people before they ever get printed anywhere[...].” (Alho, 2020, p. 13)
- Insecure attachment to work
  - Immigrants’ careers are built on periods of fixed-term work, part-time jobs, unemployment, study, and supported employment. A permanent employment relationship and full-time work create a strong foundation for the employee's attachment to work and workplaces (Forsander, 2002).



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- Migrant women face intersecting workplace discrimination
  - Migrant women in STEM careers in Germany recounted being given tasks considered “women’s work” as they were not considered knowledgeable or competent enough to be recognized as engineers. They simultaneously experienced othering due to their national origin through people questioning their language skills due to their accents, bringing up (negative) stereotypes, or expecting them to abide by unspoken, native codes of workplace communication and behavior (Grigoleit-Richter, 2017)
  - A Macedonian woman who worked in accounting described her distaste for being othered based on her nationality: “I think it is horrible that in every meeting, when you engage in small talk before the meeting starts, everything is funny and great, but it is always about me because I am the only foreigner and already they have their topic. I don’t like that and it gets on my nerves. I reveal something from my personality, but maybe I don’t even like these people even if they are my colleagues. I don’t want to tell them something personal, but it is always like this: ‘Oh, you are a foreigner, where are you from?’” (Grigoleit-Richter, 2017, p. 2747)
  - Lahti (2013)’s examination of Russian professional women in Finland found that many of the women had encountered prejudices and negative treatment due to negative stereotypes of Russian women and preconceptions of their reasons for coming to Finland, yet many of them viewed these experiences as exceptional
    - For example, one woman described an incident that occurred when she approached her boss over concerns that the loss of her employment would affect her work permit: “I [told her]: “You know, I have no idea what to do because I got this contract and my visa is now in the process and if I get fired, I’ll have to go back [to Russia].” And then my boss she tried to joke, I guess, so she said: “Why don’t you get married like all Russians do?” So they do have this stereotype and she was surprised that I hadn’t been thinking about this option! And [...] she was surprised at my reaction, that it insulted me in a way. I said: “No, I’ll go back and then I’ll be looking for a job in Russia again.” And she said she hadn’t heard of this kind of, you know, that women would come to Finland “just for work” and that they’re not looking for anything more.” (Lahti, 2013, p. 34)





“You have to demonstrate more things. When you start in the job, you have to demonstrate some things that they [men] take for granted. For example, in a technical discussion they kind of test you, if you understand or if you are able to follow the problem or to give ideas. [...] I haven’t seen that my [male] friends have to demonstrate that they understand a technical conversation and I had several discussions at meetings where I knew that they were making a kind of trick to test me where they say something and do another thing just to make sure you are following and understand it.” – Industrial engineer (Grigoleit-Richter, 2017, p. 2744)



# How do immigrants experience (tech) working places and working life in Finland?

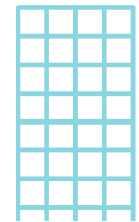
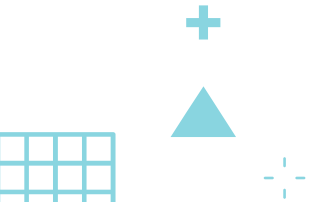
- Lack of trust
  - According to one interviewee, in a hospital work environment, immigrants are not trusted. Finnish employees are actors in the hospital ward and have a special role as inspectors of the quality of the work of their immigrant colleagues, for example, in the distribution of medicines (Katisko, 2011)
- Lack of knowledge of worker's rights
  - In Finland, because of written contracts and protection against dismissal, the employees don't have a constant fear of being dismissed arbitrarily. Finnish working life is dominated by the employee's awareness of their own rights.
  - However, according to the interviewee, it is precisely migrant workers who must exercise a certain degree of caution and precision in order to obtain the benefits and rights guaranteed by labor law. Certain supervisors exploit the ignorance of migrant workers about their interests and rights. The interviewee's narrative reveals, similarly to Alho's (2010) study, the discrimination experienced by immigrants and uncertainty about collective labor agreements. The interviewee talks explicitly about situations where a migrant worker was unaware of his or her right to receive, for example, paid sick leave (Katisko, 2011)
  - Immigrants are less likely to be members trade unions. Not belonging to a union may mean a more insecure position in the labor market and weaker material security in the event of unemployment (Toivanen et al., 2013)
- Direct way of speech / communication
  - Interviewee was sad because of the direct way of speech in their work community (Katisko, 2011)



# How do immigrants experience (tech) working places and working life in Finland?

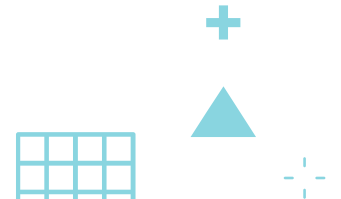
## Positive experiences

- Absence of hierarchy
  - Supervisors are part of the team, one of the employees
  - In the interviewee's home country, there is a strong hierarchy, and the supervisor has a strong role ("god-like") (Katisko, 2011)
- Responsibility is shared among the employees
  - In the interviewee's experience from their home country, the employee has individual responsibility for his or her work, for which they are solely responsible to the employer (Katisko, 2011)
- Employees can speak and give feedback freely
  - Employees have opportunities to bring things up in the work community, e.g. in relation to job/work improvement
  - In the interviewee's experience from their home country, if an employee has a different opinion from the supervisor, the employee should better be quiet than to present their own views (Katisko, 2011)
- Equal division of responsibilities and absence of hierarchies generates trust and camaraderie among employees (Katisko, 2011)



# How do immigrants experience (tech) working places and working life in Finland?

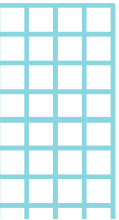
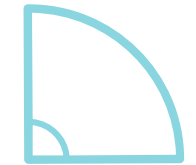
- Positive evaluation of the work of supervisors
  - Immigrants of Toivanen et al. (2013)'s study evaluate the work of supervisors more positively than the whole working population. The majority estimates that they will receive support and assistance if needed from their supervisor at least very often and consider the supervisor to treat employees always or very often fairly and equitably
- Job contents correspond well with the field of study
  - According to the TEK graduate survey (2020), the job contents of students that are employed at the time of the graduation generally correspond well with their field of study. In this case, more international students claim that the job content corresponds very well with their field of study (52%) than Finns (45%). According to 30% of international students and 35% of Finns, it corresponds well.
- Good work-life balance
  - According to the latest InterNations survey (2021), 75% of respondents are happy with their working hours and their work-life balance in Finland, which ranks Finland in the 11<sup>th</sup> place globally in the "Work and Leisure" subcategory of the survey



# How do immigrants experience (tech) working places and working life in Finland?

## Mixed experiences

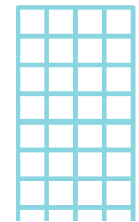
- Role of co-workers in integration
  - Co-workers make a significant impact on how an employee from a different cultural background adapts to the work community. The immigrant enters the community through interaction. If it does not arise, the immigrants feel left out of the community. In this study, a clear majority of those who had more than one person in the workplace other than themselves estimated that they receive very or quite a lot of support and help from their colleagues when needed (Toivanen et al., 2013).
  - One interviewee in Katisko (2011) felt that there was less interaction in the workplace and that colleagues were not meeting their interaction needs. As a result, they had decided not to greet colleagues anymore when arriving or leaving as they did not respond.
  - In contrast, one interviewee in Lahti (2013) described having positive intercultural exchanges with their co-workers:
    - “We have this Women’s Day and we couldn’t work with Russia on that day, we couldn’t send emails, and I said: “Well, yeah, it’s a big deal, we have a day off [in Russia].” I started telling a little bit—so they brought me sweets on that day. It was really nice, you know, we had a little coffee break all together” (Lahti, 2013, p. 35).





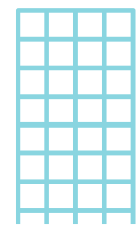
# Summary

- This section addresses challenges related to other aspects of integration beyond finding employment, such as social integration, while keeping in mind that help with overcoming obstacles in these additional areas will also aid employment integration
- Additional challenges
  - Lack of Finnish language skills
  - Barrier between Finns and immigrants
  - University-related challenges
    - Lack of information and courses in English
    - Lack of organizational support for international students
    - Lack of university activities for international students
  - Residence permits
    - Process itself
    - Family reunification process
    - Limited time for finding a job
    - Financial requirements
    - Expensive processing fees
  - Redomestication



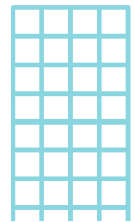
# What additional challenges to integration do immigrants experience?

- While international talents face many challenges connected solely to integration into the labor market, they also face a host of additional challenges that hinder adjustment to the host country in other areas of their life. However, these additional challenges are not entirely separate from those that cause difficulties in finding employment, but, in fact, are intimately connected with them.
- Lack of Finnish language skills
  - Lack of Finnish skills is not only a problem for finding employment, but also impacts immigrants' ability to integrate fully and make friends (Clarke, 2014; Shumilova et al., 2012)
  - Students may have difficulty dividing their time between completing their studies and learning a new language and the ease with which they can use English in Finland allows them to put off learning Finnish, especially if they are not yet sure whether they can or want to stay in Finland long-term (Li, 2019; Shumilova et al., 2012)
  - For those that find time to study Finnish, they may find their skills useless in daily life as they study "kirjakieli" instead of "puhekieli" ("*I'm broken, depressed*": *Foreigners struggle to find work in Finland*, 2019)
- Barrier between Finns and immigrants
  - In the European Commission (2017) survey on immigrants, 57% of Finnish respondents had no contacts with immigrants
  - According to the InterNations survey (2021), respondents living in Finland report that it is difficult to get used to the local culture (36% vs. 18% globally), and hard to make local friends (57% vs. 36% globally)
  - An attitude study conducted by Jaakkola (2005) showed that Finnish people would prefer having immigrants as co-workers (but not as supervisors), rather than having an immigrant as a neighbor, as a spouse of a close relative, and even less as their own spouse



# What additional challenges to integration do immigrants experience?

- Many immigrants interviewed by Koskela (2014) expressed feeling separate from Finns and frustrated by Finns' reactions to meeting them
- Most felt that Finns reproduced national stereotypes upon meeting them and had little desire to get to know them as individuals but saw them mostly as abstract categorizations of a homogenous group
- In several studies, immigrants identified Finns as a closed, homogenous group that were inaccessible – there was only one way to be a Finn which made them feel as if it is was impossible to ever be fully accepted as Finnish (Korhonen, 2014; Koskela, 2014; Leinonen, 2012)
- Asylum seekers reported experiencing similar difficulties making Finnish contacts, especially if they did not work (Yijälä & Nyman, 2017)
- Because of this, immigrants tend to hang out primarily in multinational social groups that include some “internationally-minded” Finns, Swedish-speaking Finns, and/or international students (Korhonen, 2014; Koskela, 2014, p. 32)
  - While some spent time in these groups willingly, others felt that they were forced to spend time in them due to their categorization as foreigners limiting their social options
  - Though these groups created spaces where immigrants could be free from judgment and feel equal to their associates, they were also seen as a parallel society that was separate from mainstream Finnish society
- Additional explanations given for the separation between immigrants and Finns are the language barrier, separation between international and Finnish programs at the universities, Finns' reluctance to speak English, and Finns' tight, closed social circles (Calikoglu, 2018; Clarke, 2014; Li, 2019)
  - Despite these challenges, some students interviewed by Li (2019) still managed to make Finnish friends through, for example, living in international dormitories, taking part in intercultural communication programs offered at the university, and participation in a program that connected students with Finnish families





“I felt like an animal in the zoo, a bit, like you know, everyone’s kind of asking all the same: “Why, why are you here?” and “What are you doing here?” “How do you find Finnish people?” And that’s it! That’s what defines me as a person; it’s like they don’t ask me any normal questions, they don’t want to get to know me better, they don’t want to be friends with me. They might want to practice their English, but other than that it’s like, “Very nice to meet you,” and then it’s like, “I’ve met a foreigner, from America!”  
(Koskela, 2014, p. 29)



# What additional challenges to integration do immigrants experience?

- University-related challenges
  - Lack of information and courses available in English
    - 40% of survey respondents in Shumilova et al. (2012) complained that there is a lack of courses available in English
      - Nearly all interviewees in Calikoglu (2018) reiterated this while additionally noting the lack of supervision in English
        - “What still really makes me angry is that I got accepted here as a PhD student a year ago, and since then, there has been only one course offered in English at the department. All the other courses, credits and studies I got through conferences or writing articles, but basically there is no [English] teaching at all” (Calikoglu, 2018, p. 447)
      - An international student survey conducted by Otus supports this as, of the respondents, half answered that their studies had not proceeded as planned with the most common reason being a lack of English-language courses (Korhonen, 2016)
    - There is also a belief by some, including employers, that the curriculum offered in English programs is not equivalent to the Finnish curriculum (Shumilova et al., 2012)
    - Some studies have noted student complaints that the quality of teaching in English was insufficient with some professors switching to Finnish in class or asking Finnish students to explain concepts in English (Calikoglu, 2018; Shumilova et al., 2012)
    - Nearly all interviewees observed that English was not always used in organizational communications which made it difficult to get information on academic and social events (Calikoglu, 2018)
    - This is also related to the students’ lack of Finnish skills which precludes them from utilizing resources and courses in Finnish



# What additional challenges to integration do immigrants experience?

- Lack of organizational support for international students
  - Students have also reported being upset about the lack of adequate guidance for international students regarding permit problems, academic planning, or information on how to carry out specific tasks in Finland, like taking part in the social benefit system (Calikoglu, 2018; Shumilova et al., 2012)
  - Shumilova et al. (2012) found that international students were unsatisfied with the career support provided by Finnish universities and thought that they should be more proactive in helping students create networks and acquire work placements as well as in providing more information about the Finnish labor market
    - For example, one interviewee commented “In order to retain international students, it would have been nice to have more career guidance on what is actually available in terms of jobs, or at least suggestions of websites where to find the type of specialized positions engineers are looking for [...] I did have the opportunity to continue as a PhD student at the same university, but beyond that I would have had no idea where to work.” (Shumilova et al., 2012, p. 66)
    - This was echoed by the interviewees in Alho (2020) who had found university career services to be generally unhelpful in their job search
  - In a survey of international students, many reported that insufficient academic guidance had negatively affected their studies (Korhonen, 2014, 2016)
- Lack of university activities for international students
  - Nearly half of respondents to the International Student Survey by Otus indicated that they did not participate in student activities (Korhonen, 2014)
    - The most common reasons were lack of time, lack of relevant information, language barriers, and a lack of interest in the available activities



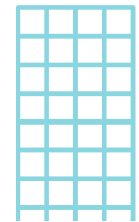
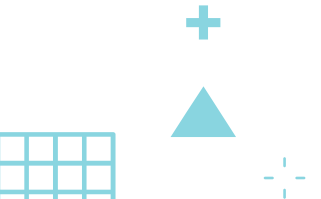
# What additional challenges to integration do immigrants experience?

- Residence permits
  - Process itself
    - Without official support for residence permit applications, immigrants are forced to rely on initiative and networks in order to finish the application which adds to the difficulties of the process (Könönen, 2018)
    - The uncertainties regarding the process have long-term mental and emotional effects on immigrants and create a sense of “institutionalized uncertainty” that impacts their ability to plan for the future (Könönen, 2018, p. 148)
      - These uncertainties can also force immigrants to search for alternatives outside of the host country which seem more stable (Li, 2019)
  - Family reunification process
    - The restrictive regulations on family reunification, narrow definition of family, and uncertainty associated with the process can leave immigrants with doubts about permanent resettlement (Li, 2019)
      - Könönen (2018) notes that there appears to be an added “culture of suspicion” during the family reunification process for African immigrants that adds to the challenges that they face (p. 147)
  - Limited time for finding a job
    - Interviewees in Alho (2020) cited multiple examples of international students they knew who had to leave Finland after graduation because they could not find employment before their legal right to reside in Finland expired
  - Expensive processing fees
    - Not only do the permits have high financial requirements, but the permit process itself can be cost prohibitive with some permits costing upwards of 1000 euros when the costs of translation and acquiring documents are considered (Könönen, 2018)



# What additional challenges to integration do immigrants experience?

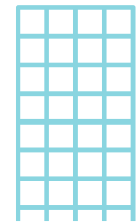
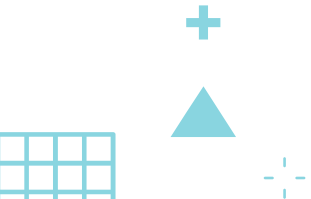
- Financial requirements
  - Income requirements for the granting of visas, particularly for non-EU students and family reunification visas, put a strain on the resources of the applicants and have a discriminatory effect towards people from certain places or in certain professions (Khan et al., 2021)
    - “I have tried to apply for family reunification, but they say I need 3,000 euros income per month. What kind of job can I do to have in hand 3,000 euros per month? Maybe if you are a doctor you can, but I am not a doctor. But what can I do if the authorities decide that way? [...] It’s really hard to live apart from your family. I cannot go back there, but I am not sure if I want to live like this.” (Könönen, 2018, p. 147)
- Redomestication
  - Migrant women who move as a result of their spouse relocating experience significant barriers of entry into the labor market which some feel forces them into the role of housewife and mother despite their appreciable employment qualifications (Cangia, 2018; Clarke, 2014; Habti, 2014)
  - This left many of the women feeling stressed as they struggled with regret over their lack of career and frustrated at the inability of their husbands to understand their fears and struggles which was compounded by a lack of social networks



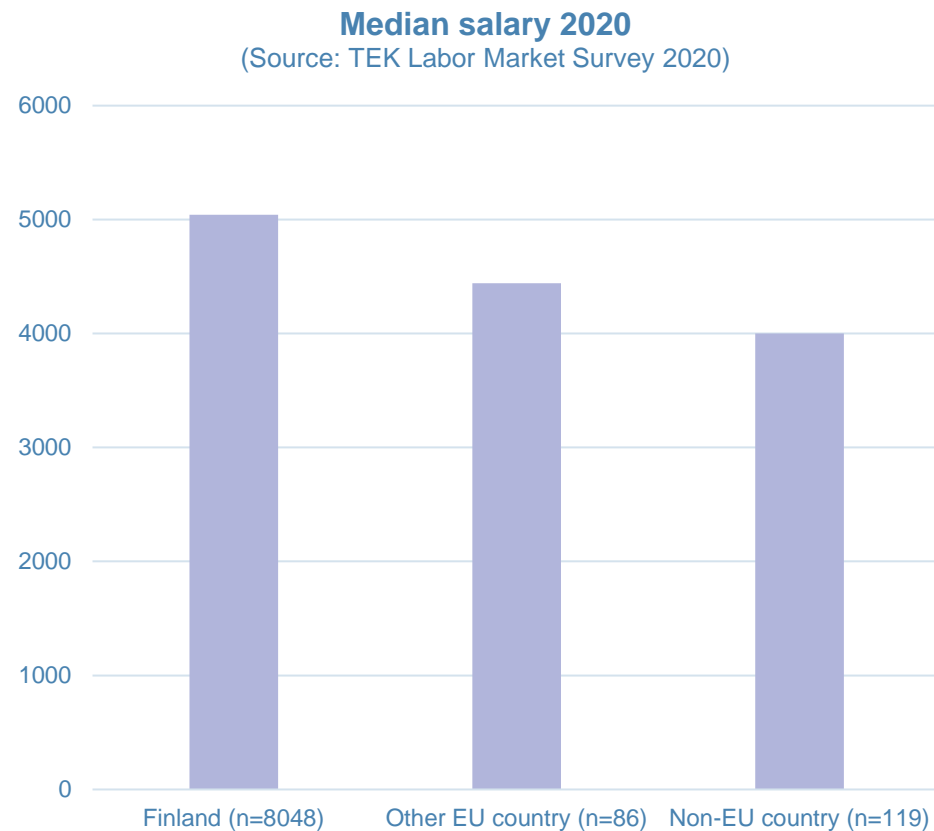
# What is the current labor market position of immigrants in tech?

# Summary

- This section addresses the labor market position of immigrants in tech through an examination of the situation of those who have spent more time in the working life as well as recent graduates according to TEK data
  - The median salary of non-Finnish nationals working in tech is lower than Finnish nationals. Finnish nationals' median salary is 5040€, EU nationals' median salary is 4440€, and a non-EU nationals' median salary is 4000€
  - Immigrants in tech are less likely to work in management and middle management positions, and they are more likely to work in expert positions
  - International tech employees are more likely to work in the university sector compared to Finns
  - International tech employees are more likely to have a fixed-term contract
  - Situation of international tech graduates:
    - At the time of graduation, international graduates are less likely to have a work contract and almost twice as many of them are job seeking compared to Finnish graduates
    - International graduates have gained significantly less general work experience as well as field-specific work experience during their studies than Finnish graduates
    - International students are less likely to complete their thesis in collaboration with a company and more likely to complete it as part of a university project
    - Among those with work contracts at the time of graduation, international graduates are more likely to have fixed term / temporary contracts



# Current labor market position of international tech employees - Median salary

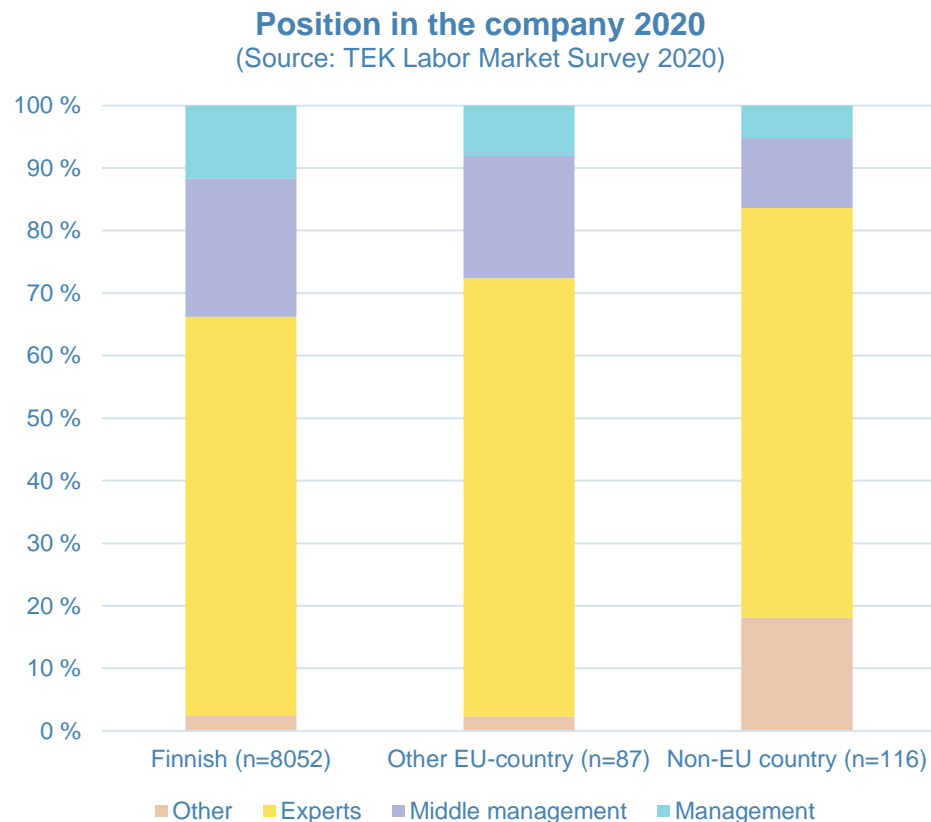


According to the TEK Labor Market Survey 2020, the **median salary** of non-Finnish nationals is lower than Finnish nationals. Finnish nationals' median salary is 5040€, EU nationals' median salary is 4440€, and a non-EU nationals' median salary is 4000€.

This trend is similar to that observed in previous years. According to the 2018 survey, when Finnish nationals' median salary was 4820€, EU nationals' median salary was 4240€, and a non-EU nationals' median salary was 3667€.



# Position in the company

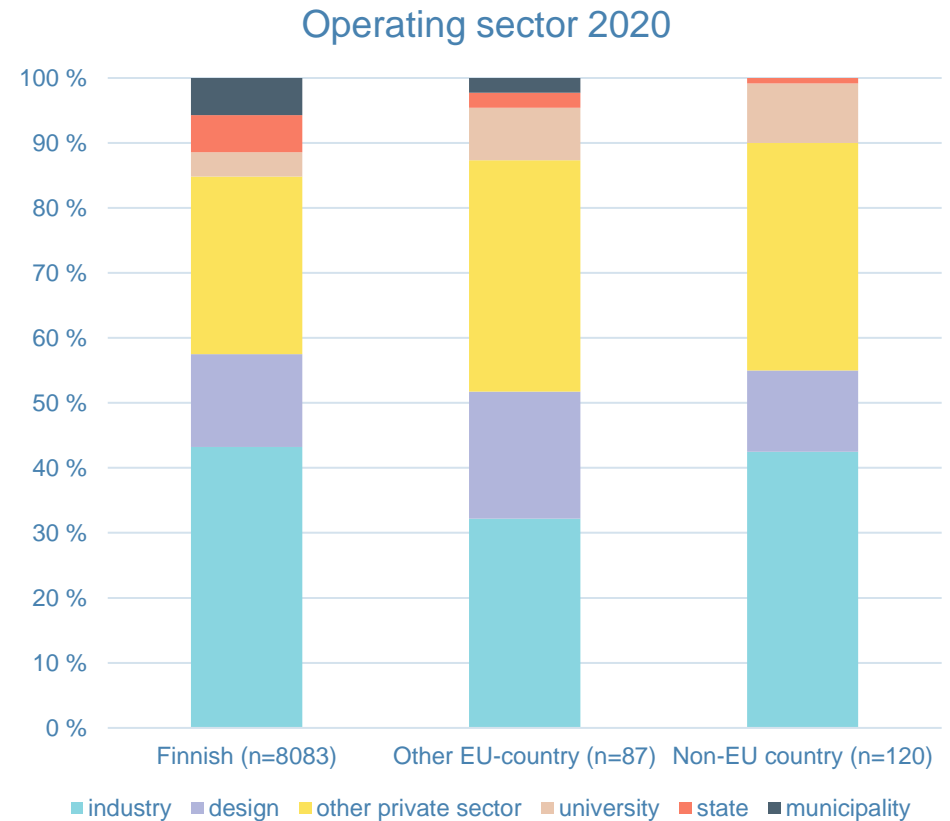


The previously mentioned salary differences largely stem from the **employee's position at the company**. International tech employees are less likely to work in management and middle management positions, and they are more likely to work in expert positions. This difference is more noticeable with international employees coming from non-EU countries. 12% of Finns are in a management position as opposed to 8% of EU-nationals and 5% of non-EU nationals. 22% of Finns are in a management position as opposed to 20% of EU-nationals and 11% of non-EU nationals.

Data from 2018 shows a similar trend, 11% of Finns are in a management position as opposed to 5% of EU-nationals and 4% of non-EU nationals. 22% of Finns are in a management position as opposed to 18% of EU-nationals and 17% of non-EU nationals. However, in 2018 the difference between EU and non-EU nationals was not significant.

# Operating sector

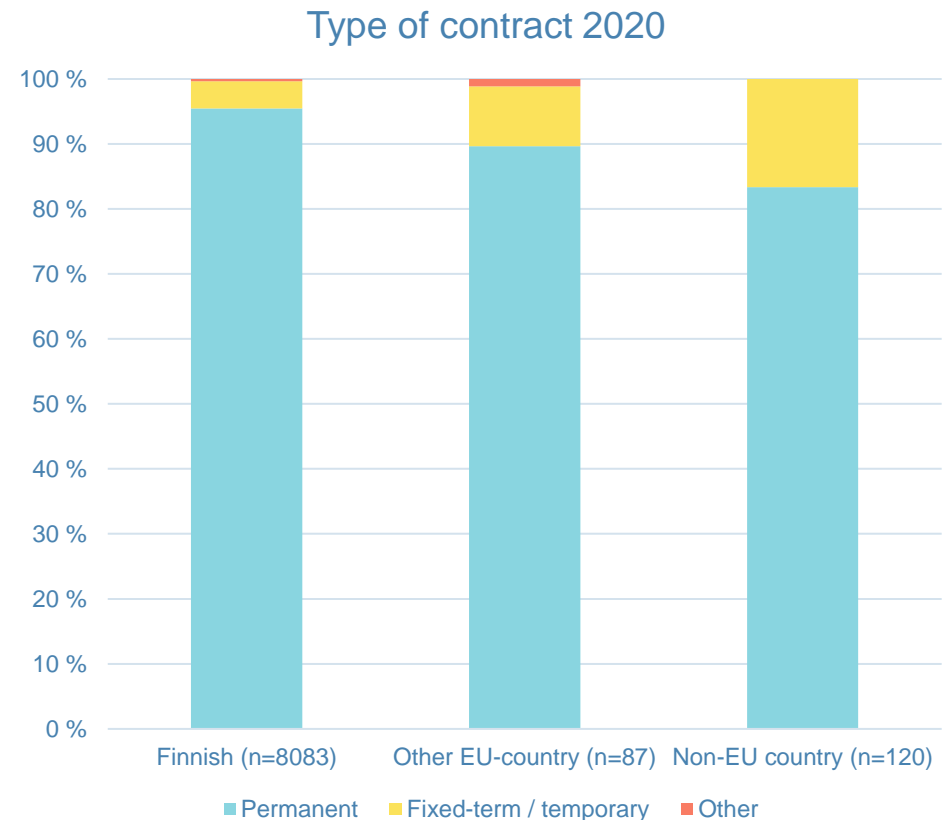
According to the TEK Labor Market Survey 2020, immigrants in tech are more likely to be employed by the university sector, compared to Finns. 8% of EU nationals and 9% of non-EU nationals work in the university sector, opposed to 4% of Finnish nationals. Internationals are the least likely to work for the government or a municipality.



# Type of work contract

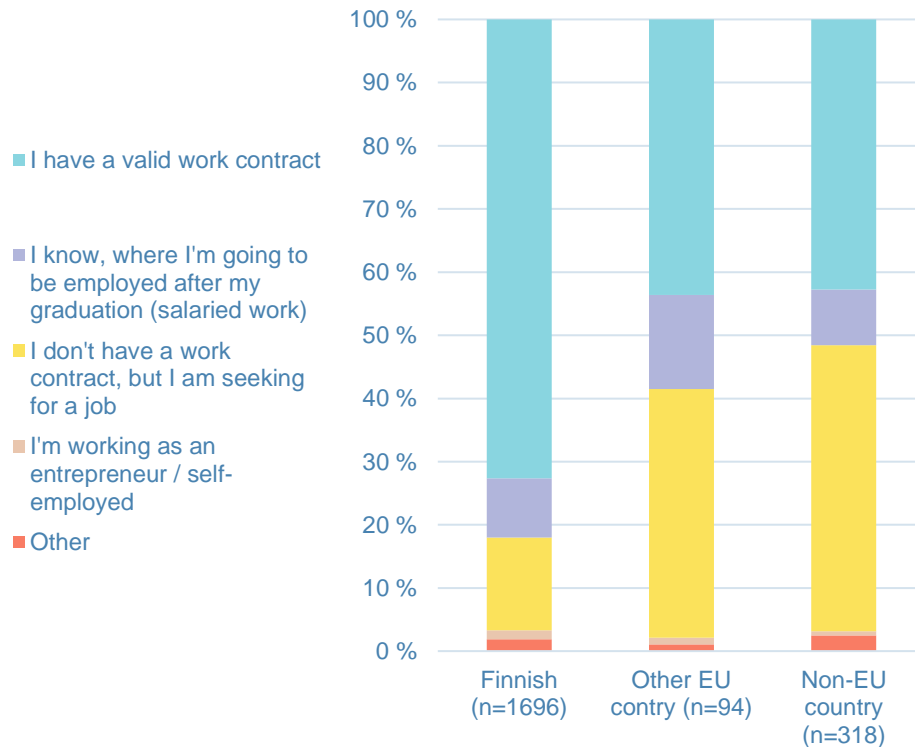
According to the TEK Labor Market Survey 2020, international tech employees are more likely to have a fixed-term **contract**: 96% of Finns have a permanent contract compared to 90% of EU nationals and 83% of non-EU nationals.

Data from 2018 shows a similar trend as 95% of Finns, 90% of EU-nationals, and 70% of non-EU nationals had permanent contracts.



# International tech graduates' employment situation at the time of graduation

Employment situation at the time of graduation  
(Source: TEK Graduate Survey 2020)



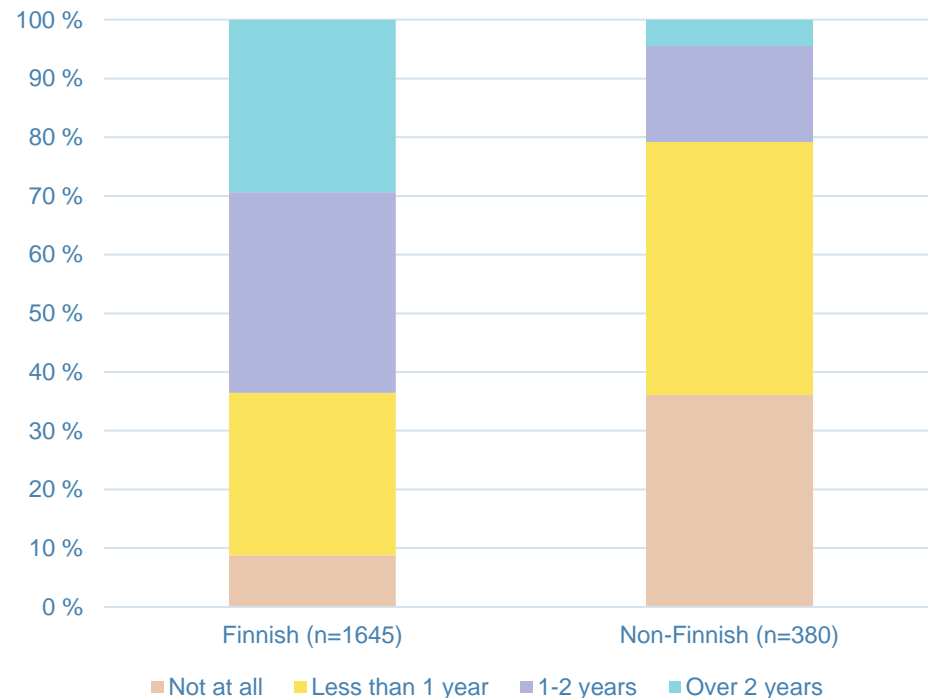
As for the **situation at the time of graduation**, the Finnish graduates were more likely to have an employment contract.

73% of Finnish students already have a work contract at the time of graduation as opposed to 44% of EU-nationals and 43% of non-EU nationals.

The majority of international students are job seeking at the time of graduation. 40% of EU-nationals and 45% of non-EU nationals graduate without a job, as opposed to 15% of Finnish students.

# Work experience of own field gained during the studies (excl. MSc thesis)

Work experience of own field gained during the studies (excl. MSc thesis)  
(Source: TEK Graduate Survey 2020)



In addition to the less general work experience, another major barrier that affects the employment of international tech graduates is **work experience gained in one's own field during the studies** at the moment of graduation.

According to the TEK Graduate Survey 2020, 29% of Finnish students have gained over two years and 34% have gained between 1-2 years of experience in their own field, as opposed to the international students, of which only 4% have gained over 2 years of experience, and 16% have gained 1-2 years of experience.

These differences may be explained by the length of studies. International students are usually in 2-year Master programmes, whereas Finnish students have usually studied for 5 years before the time of graduation, so Finnish students have more time to accumulate general and field-specific work experience.

# Master's thesis collaboration

A common way to get employed is completing the **Master's thesis in collaboration with a company.**

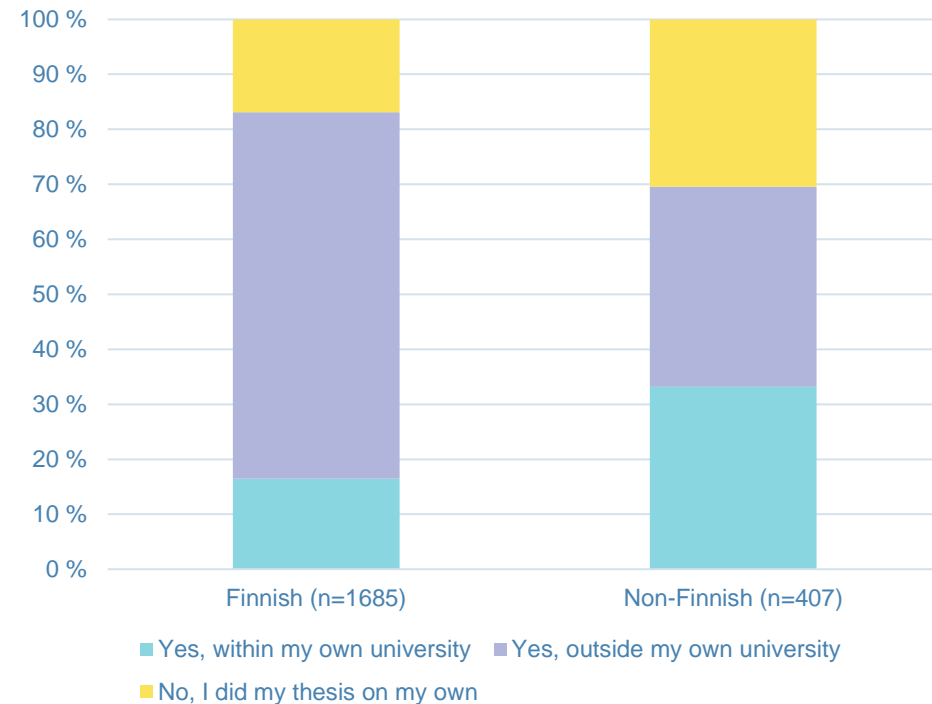
According to the TEK Graduate Survey 2020, 67% of Finnish students have completed their thesis in collaboration with a company outside their university, and 16% have completed the thesis as a university collaboration. 17% of Finnish students did their thesis on their own.

When it comes to the international students, only 36% have completed their thesis in collaboration with a company outside their university, and 33% completed it as a university collaboration. 30% of international students did their thesis on their own.

This difference might be explained by the international students' lack of professional networks. International students have less contacts at companies which makes it difficult to get a thesis commission from a company. Instead, international students utilize their contacts within their university to complete the thesis as part of a university project.

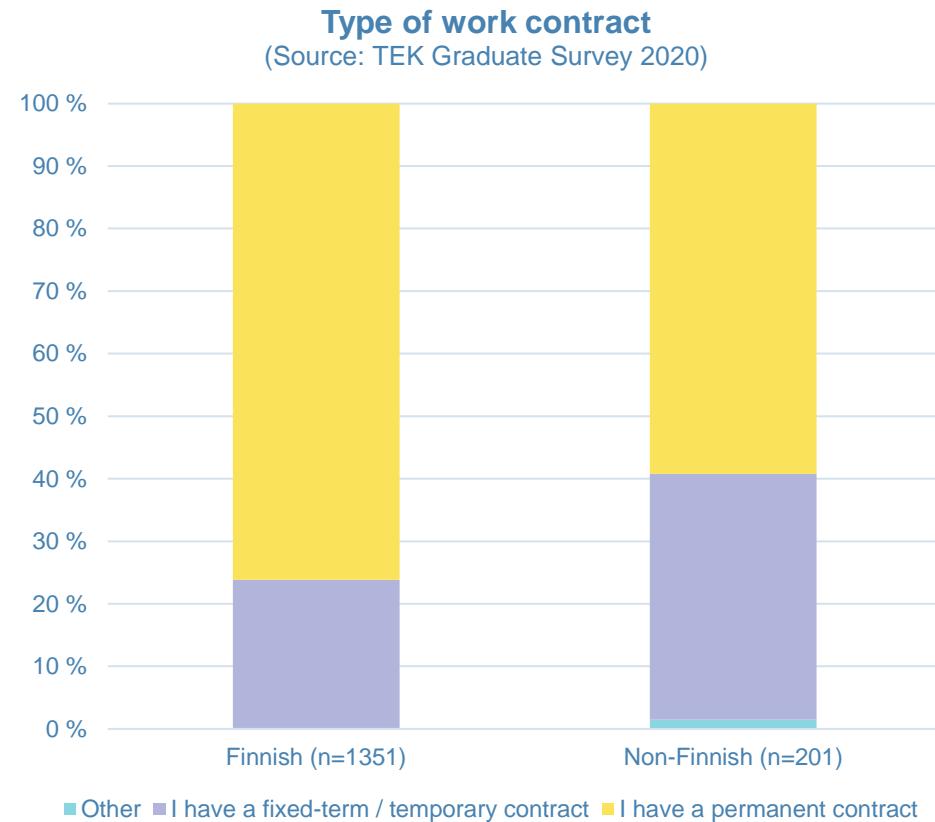
## Did your thesis involve collaboration within or outside of your university?

(Source: TEK Graduate Survey 2020)



# Type of work contract (graduates)

**Among those with work contracts** at the moment of graduation, Finnish graduates are more likely to have a permanent contract: 76% as opposed to 59% of international students. International students are more likely to be employed fixed term. 39% of international students are only employed temporarily as opposed to 24% of Finnish students.



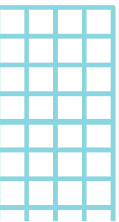
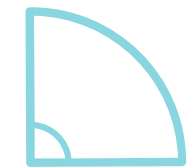
# Discussion





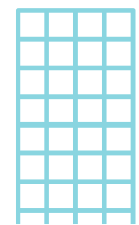
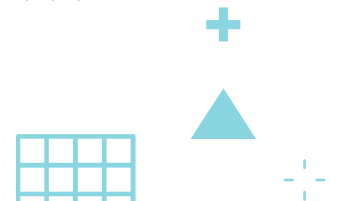
# Summary

- This section generates additional insights about the discourse around immigration that are important considerations for future research, media discourse, and governmental program development
- Immigration discourse as perpetuating harm in multiple ways
  - Emphasizing the additional benefits that immigrants bring to an organization
  - Research as potentially reinforcing negative group ascriptions
  - Employment as a marker of successful integration
  - Immigration as a necessity to prevent labor shortages due to an aging population



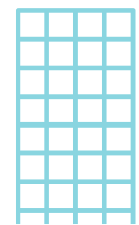
# Discussion

- Much of the discourse around immigrants and immigration, even that which professes to celebrate the multicultural diversity of cosmopolitan society, is harmful to immigrants as it essentializes and homogenizes immigrants into groups based solely on the dominant group in society's external perception of a shared cultural background
- This homogenizing discourse manifests in myriad ways
  - Discourse that emphasizes the additional benefits that immigrants offer to a workplace
    - Rhetoric that focuses on the potential benefits that immigrants bring, like new ways of thinking, imposes a singular vision of what it means to be x nationality, attempts to distil essential attributes or skills based on this conceptualization, then assumes that an individual of that nationality possesses these attributes/skills without regard for how that individual experiences their nationality or the attributes/skills they actually possess
    - Further, it begs the question of how any individual's attributes based on cultural identity or nationality can be disaggregated from those related to their other identities (Lahti, 2013)
    - It also incentivizes "equality" initiatives that do not actually seek to eliminate inequalities, but to benefit from assumptions about immigrants as "equality is reduced to a question of what diversity has to offer the organization" which benefits everyone but the immigrants themselves (Koivunen et al., 2015, p. 16)
    - Moreover, it generates concerns, such as "what if the perceived differences in the employees' backgrounds do not generate new ideas and better service solutions? How is difference thought to operate, and what kind of difference is important?" (Koivunen et al., 2015, p. 16)
      - None of the interviewees in Lahti (2013) felt that their cultural knowledge was used to enhance general organizational knowledge or innovation, but was used only in specific encounters with Russian customers or business relations which calls into question the usefulness of the notion of "culturally diverse perspectives" (p. 38)
      - As Koivunen et al. (2015) found, discourse such as this reinforces hierarchies among immigrants that privileges the perspectives and cultural background of those with specific nationalities (likely those from Europe and North America) over others



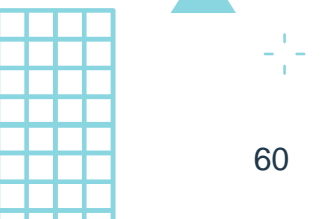
# Discussion

- Finally, it disadvantages immigrants as they are forced to justify their value above and beyond the specific qualifications for a particular job, which is not expected of local candidates, in order to simply have an “equal” opportunity at employment
- Research which reinforces negative stereotypes and assumptions about immigrants
- It is important that researchers exhibit careful use of language and awareness of their positionality when conducting and disseminating research on marginalized groups in order to not inadvertently perpetuate negative group ascriptions
- A lack of awareness of these issues can lead to situations where researchers insert their own views into the narrative and use their views to undermine the self-reported experiences of interviewees
  - For example, Iraqi asylum seekers interviewed in Yijälä & Nyman (2017) were asked their views on the impact of gender and religion on their acculturation to Finnish society, yet despite the fact that the participants generally had no concerns about women working or religious practices impacting their work, the authors imposed their own stereotypes about Iraqi culture in order to call into question their beliefs and their suitability in Finnish society while simultaneously painting an idealized picture of gender equality in Finland and the other Nordic countries
    - Regarding religion, the authors argued that “On first thought, according to the results of this study, it seems that religion would not present a challenge regarding working in Finland. That said, it is difficult to imagine that following religious rules would be totally free of challenges, for example during Ramadan, which in Finland is during the summer” (Yijälä & Nyman, 2017, p. 105)
    - This comment is inappropriate as it (1) indicates a lack of understanding of Islam (Ramadan is a month in the Islamic calendar, so it does not always correspond with summer in the Gregorian calendar), (2) is deeply patronizing towards the interviewees as it suggests that they lack adequate understanding to know their true feelings about the matter, and (3) completely ignores the lived experience of Muslims who already live in Finland and have for decades
- There is also the potential that this type of research reinforces fabricated cultural distinctions which further marginalize groups by presenting them as culturally deficient
  - For example, Yijälä & Nyman (2017) also attributed many unexpected answers to the cultural differences between “collectivist” and “individualist” cultures instead of recognizing them as phenomena that transcend culture or difficulties which stem from the traumatic experience of fleeing conflict
    - Regarding the importance of social contacts for the interviewees, the authors wrote “friendships and social contacts seem to be extremely highly valued in collectivist cultures, such as that of Iraq” (Yijälä & Nyman, 2017, p. 71) – by attributing this observation to “collectivist” cultures, they are ignoring the universality of such a feeling as well as falling into the collectivism-individualism trap



# Discussion

- Collectivism and individualism, while assumed to be neutral descriptors, are “ideological constructions in that they represent a veiled demonization of a non-Western Other by an idealized Western self” as “the distinction itself is constructed by Western academia” in such a way that the externally imposed definitions “obliterate any recognition of non-Western realities” (Holliday, 2012, p. 40)
- Consequently, the creation of the collectivism-individualism dichotomy creates a situation where “the behavior of someone from a so-called ‘collectivist culture’ is explained entirely according to imagined and negative collectivist characteristics”; for instance, “whatever any ‘Asian’ says or does is ‘interpreted with stunning regularity as a consequence of their ‘Asianness’, their ‘ethnic identity’, or the ‘culture’ of their ‘community’” (Holliday, 2012, p. 40-1)
- Ultimately, this type of research furthers what is called “cultural racism” or “neo-racism” which supplants biological racial distinctions, such as Black vs. White, with cultural distinctions, such as “European” vs. “Non-European” or “center” vs. “periphery”, in which Europeans are posited as culturally superior to non-Europeans as well as more progressive which justifies the continuance of neocolonial power relations (Blaut, 1992)
- Unfortunately, this phenomena is also reflected in Finnish integration policy in which “immigrant cultures” are associated with patriarchal modes of thinking from which the Finnish integration structure must emancipate immigrant women so that they can enact culturally acceptable (Finnish) modes of womanhood, specifically that of the working woman (once again a manifestation of the preoccupation of Finnish integration infrastructure with employment) (Rajas, 2012, p. 7)
- **Employment as the marker for successful integration**
  - Fails to account for the additional challenges that immigrants face in accessing and securing skill-matched employment and instead places blame on immigrants for not trying hard enough to become employed (Masoud et al., 2021)
  - Employment is only one aspect of successful integration, so consideration should be made for how to best support immigrants’ integration in other areas as these forms of integration are linked and can be supported simultaneously
  - Leads to situations where immigrants are encouraged or forced to take any employment instead of employment that corresponds to their interests and skills and often this work is in vocational fields that native laborers don’t want to work in (Masoud et al., 2020, 2021)
  - Striving to be perceived as a "good immigrant" by the Finnish public and being forced to take lower-paying jobs as a highly educated person instead of having a career may result in disempowerment and loss of motivation to fully stay in the job market



Sign commonly found in MIGRI offices in Finland which illustrates how Finnish state discourses contribute to cultural racism and encourage specific enactments of acceptable womanhood based on patronizing views of immigrant women as not rational or independent actors



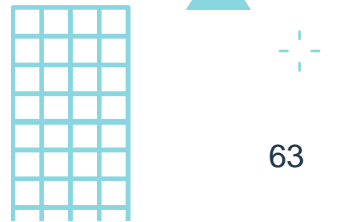
([u/ChiaBeanie], 2021)



"We Asian women are usually stereotyped as being submissive, unassertive and dependent, unlike so-called tough and independent Finnish women. Unfortunately, I am kind of going to end up fitting the stereotype because I chose to have a better quality of life by relying more on my husband. Nowadays I only take part-time jobs. I don't need to please anyone! You know, I have no expectations and won't get disappointed. I don't need to deal with any annoying co-workers. I am much happier. Since my husband has a secure income, it doesn't change my life whether I have an income or not. Migration life has shaped me from a modern career, Taiwanese woman into a dependant Asian woman. I know, some might think I just try to rationalise my laziness and weakness. Well, whatever, I don't care. Being a practical nurse is a dead-end job anyway. I was so tired of receiving little recognition." – Chen, age 35, in Finland for five years (Chang & Holm, 2017, p. 170)

# Discussion

- Immigration as a necessity to prevent labor shortages due to an aging population
  - This discourse is common in Finnish media and political discourse as a rationalization for the need to fix the obstacles that immigrants face in finding employment as immigration is needed to sustain the Finnish welfare system in the coming decades (*Aging Finland seeks to attract skilled immigrants*, 2021; *FM Saarikko: Finland needs to accept more foreign workers*, 2021; Sequeira, 2021)
    - Specifically in the technology sector, there are concerns that labor shortages will impact the growth of Finnish enterprises or force them to leave Finland (Ollikainen, 2020; *Teknologia teollisuus*, 2021)
  - As with the discourse that revolves around the additional benefits immigrants provide to the workplace, this discourse also incentivizes equality initiatives which are not interested in actual equality, but in benefiting from immigrants at their own expense
  - In fact, this need for surplus labor, and discourse which incentivizes it, creates a “migrant division of labor” where new workers are recruited from the ‘Global South’ to serve the needs of the ‘Global North’ which allows the local population to remain living on welfare entitlements without having to accept unattractive, ‘low-skilled’ jobs in the labor market (Näre, 2013, p. 73)
  - It also permits employers to benefit from the weaker labor market position of immigrants as the discrimination that immigrant workers face causes them to adopt attitudes and practices which employers see as attractive, such as excessive flexibility, lower expectations, willingness to accept any work arrangement, high work ethic, and compliant attitude (Koivunen et al., 2015, Näre, 2013; Yijälä & Nyman, 2017)
  - These attitudes about the desirability of immigrants as compliant workers coupled with perceptions of their unsuitability for ‘high-skilled’ work, lack of knowledge of workers’ rights, and the limits imposed by residence permits can trap them in exploitative work situations (Näre, 2013; Smith, 2021)
    - In some cases, researchers and policy makers even advocate for exploitative work situations, like unpaid work positions, due to prejudicial attitudes of immigrants as unskilled and in need of training in order to become worthy of wages (Bontenbal et al., 2019; Masoud et al., 2021; Yijälä & Nyman, 2017)







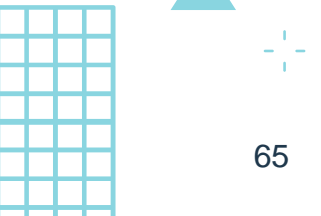
# Recommendations

- General

- Understand and change discourses around immigrants and immigration – acknowledge the role of racism and discrimination in differential outcomes, move away from employment as the only marker of successful integration, do away with discourse that discusses the additional benefits immigrants provide to a company and the focus on the needs of the Finnish welfare state instead of immigrants
- Provide more Finnish courses that help immigrants learn spoken Finnish
- Alter recruitment practices to encourage greater interaction with application materials in order to combat problems caused by implicit biases, such as through creating a scoring system for applications based on the job post requirements

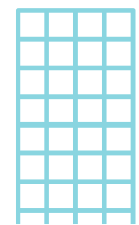
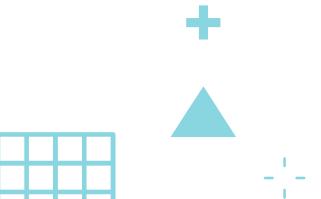
- Universities

- More comprehensive career services which provide services tailored to international degree students, such as CV and application workshops, education about potential employers in their field, job hunting skills tailored to Finland, etc.
- Greater collaboration between labor unions and universities to educate international students about working culture, labor unions, and workers' rights (Smith, 2021)
  - For example, invite union representatives to present about different unions and their activities at welcome week for international students
- Greater opportunities to gain work experience with Finnish companies during studies through internships, thesis work, and university course projects with placement aided by the university in collaboration with companies
- Help students build a professional network by connecting students with alumni and hosting networking events on campus
- Work with students to develop a greater diversity of activities available in English
- Host more programs and events which give international students the opportunity to meet and befriend Finns



# Recommendations

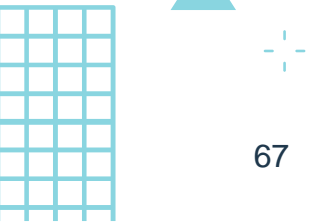
- Employers
  - Reevaluate “fluent” Finnish requirements for positions
    - Employers and recruiters should be more familiar with the levels and contents of the Finnish National Certificate of Language Proficiency YKI (1-6) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (A1-C2), in order to properly determine the required language skills for a certain job
  - Hybrid model: co-use of Finnish and English in the workplace
  - Offer Finnish courses during office hours as well as host language cafes to give employees space to practice (Rask, 2021)
    - E.g. “Workplace Finnish” project, which offered tailor-made courses to international employees in Finnish and Swedish to develop communication skills and expand professional vocabulary which was paid for jointly by employers and through project funds (TE-palvelut, 2016)
  - Recognize foreign qualifications and work experience
    - In Finland, practicing certain regulated professions, such as teaching, law, or healthcare, requires a decision made by a competent authority or agency. In other cases, no official decision is needed, and it is up to the employer to assess the skills and competence that the person’s foreign degree provides (OPH, 2021)
  - Publish job openings publicly to expand candidate pool to those without informal networks
  - Public sector employers should remove Finnish language requirements where not required by law



# Recommendations

- Unions

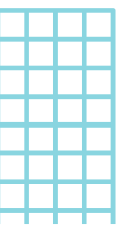
- Make non-discrimination against immigrants and their inclusion an integral part of union strategy
- Help immigrants build professional networks through mentoring programs, especially through collaboration with NGOs that work with immigrants
  - Ensure mentors are given adequate training so as not to perpetuate narratives about immigrants' unsuitability for work
- Websites should be fully translated into English and a greater variety and number of events and workshops in English should be provided
- Provide legal advice on residence permits, especially work permits, and partner with translation companies to offer discounted translation services for documents needed for the permit application process
- Collaborate with NGOs that work with immigrants and the government to educate immigrants about their labor rights and the importance of unions in Finland
- Offer subsidized Finnish language courses, especially for courses which provide occupational-specific vocabulary
  - For example, The Danish Society of Engineers (IDA) offers Danish language courses at various levels for their members
- Offer paid internship programs and thesis positions collaborating with companies
  - For example, The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers (Sveriges Ingenjörer) is one of the co-founders of Jobbsprånget, which is a 4-month internship program run by the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences (IVA). The program matches newcomer non-EU national academics with employers. The goal is to introduce professionals to the Swedish labor market and to give them a chance to show their potential
    - Expand and improve on this program by offering paid positions, offering the program also to EU nationals, and eliminating the need for the applicant to be registered as unemployed
- Operate a discrimination hotline in conjunction with other unions where people can call for advice or report concerns



# Recommendations

- Government

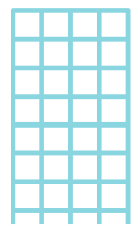
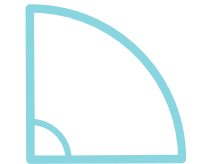
- Services for job seeking run by TE should be targeted for specific migrant groups and should push migrants towards qualification-matched employment (Alho, 2020; Bontenbal et al., 2019; Masoud et al., 2020, 2021)
- Expand the integration services offered by the government to different categories of immigrants, such as students
- Remove the working hours limit for student residence permits
- Remove/shorten the time limit that asylum seekers are required to wait before obtaining employment, especially for those without documents, to prevent employers from taking advantage of their precarity and to give them something meaningful to do with their time that fosters independence and aids their adaptation to Finland (Yijälä & Nyman, 2017)
- Government programs and initiatives should focus on full integration of extant immigrant to avoid alienating immigrants who have already invested considerable resources into life here and would be less likely to leave
- Definition of family for non-EU migrants should be expanded to allow migrants to cultivate their family ties in the host country which is incredibly important for determining willingness to stay long-term (Li, 2019; Mathies & Karhunen, 2021)
- Work programs provided as part of integration services should always be paid at an adequate level to support the basic needs of the worker





# Limitations

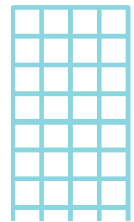
- As the UTH data is several years old, it may not fully represent the current labor market situation of immigrants in Finland, especially in light of the economic downturn precipitated by the coronavirus crisis as immigrants tend to suffer first in times of economic crisis (Hajro et al., 2019)
- Data derived from the TEK Graduate and Labor Market Surveys is limited in its generalizability due to the relatively small number of non-Finnish respondents
- The relatively small number of non-Finnish respondents in the TEK Labor Market Survey may also lead the data to underestimate the true extent of the inequalities faced by immigrants in the tech sector as those immigrants who join a union are more likely to be aware of and exercise their labor rights
- As the data also comes from TEK surveys, it best represents the situation of those in the tech sector and is not readily generalizable to other sectors in the labor market
  - However, as the first section shows, immigrants in the tech sector tend to fare better than some other sectors in the Finnish labor market, so the data likely underestimates the disparities between immigrants and Finns generally and in other sectors
- The findings rely primarily on English language sources, so there may be topics that are underexplored or missing due to their higher prevalence in Finnish language sources





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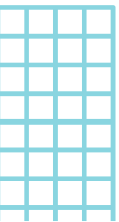
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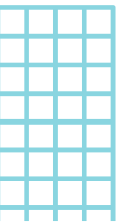
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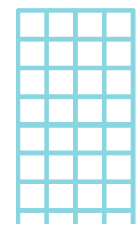
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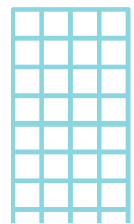
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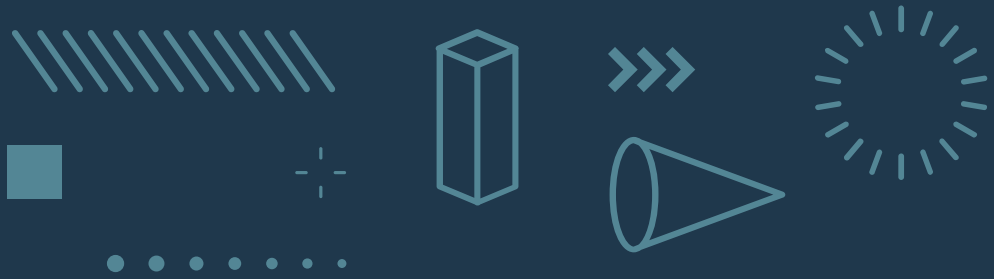
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# TEK

*Me tekniikan takana*

