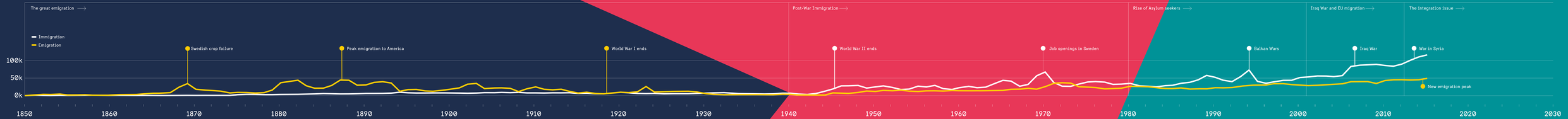
CENTURIES OF MIGRATION



THE GREAT EMIGRATION

1850–1939

No migration event has left a bigger mark on Sweden's cultural landscape than the huge emigration of Swedes to the Americas and Australia from 1850 up until the 1930s. As many as 1.5 million native Swedes left the country to escape poverty and religious persecution, and to seek a better life for themselves and their families. That figure equals 20 per cent of the men and 15 per cent of the women born at the end of the 1800s.

POST-WAR IMMIGRATION

1940–1979

Sweden was mostly an emigrating country until refugees escaping World War II began to slowly change it back into an immigrating country, which is what it is today. Migrants from Germany and other Nordic and Baltic countries made up the bulk of immigrants. While many Germans and Scandinavians returned home after the war, many immigrants from the Baltics remained.

RISE OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

1980–1999

The rise of asylum seekers began in the 1980s when Sweden saw some of its highest immigration from countries like Iran and Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Eritrea and Somalia, as well as South American countries with repressive regimes.

IRAQ WAR AND EU MIGRATION

2000–2012

When Sweden joined the Schengen co-operation in 2001, this meant open borders between the country and other European Union (EU) member states and an influx of other EU citizens into the country looking for work and love. In addition to this the war in Iraq led to an increase in asylum seekers during the same period. Migration in total – both to and from Sweden – grew after 2000.

THE INTEGRATION ISSUE

2013–2014

The Swedish population grew by more than 100,000 in 2014. This was the result of record high immigration (127,000) and more births than deaths. But more than 50,000 people also chose to leave the country. In 2015, more than 160,000 people sought asylum in Sweden – twice as many as in 2014. Sweden's self-image as open and tolerant is challenged as asylum applications pile up, housing becomes scarcer and xenophobia more visible.