Living and working without legal status in Geneva. First findings of the Parchemins study

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LIVING AND WORKING WITHOUT LEGAL STATUS IN GENEVA: FIRST FINDINGS OF THE PARCHEMINS STUDY

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We would like to extend our warmest thanks to all the migrants who agreed to take part in the Parchemins study. They took the time to meet with our investigators in order to report on their living conditions in Geneva in an irregular situation. The data collected in this way is very valuable in describing and understanding their reality, which remains poorly known scientifically. Their testimonies found in this Sociograph are also important for accompanying policy measures on irregular labour migration. Finally, they represent a rare opportunity to give a voice to a population that is most often invisible and silent.

In 2017, the study started while Professor Giovanni Ferro-Luzzi was conducting an evaluation study of the Papyrus pilot project on behalf of the Canton of Geneva. He made a significant contribution to the development and implementation of the Parchemins study and we are very grateful to him for his insightful contributions to our research process.

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Communautaires (CAMSCO) of the University Hospitals of Geneva for their support in disseminating information about the study and recruiting participants.

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Finally, we would like to thank the many agencies that provided financial and administrative support for the Parchemins study, namely the Rectorate, the Faculties of Social Sciences and Medicine, the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gerontology and Vulnerability Studies (CIGEV) and the LIVES Centre of the University of Geneva, the Swiss National Science Foundation, the Departments of Security, Population and Health and Social Cohesion of the Canton of Geneva, the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH), and the Safra Foundation.

INTRODUCTION

IRREGULAR MIGRATION

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) defines irregular international migration as "movements that take place outside the regulatory norms of origin, transit and host countries" (International Organization for Migration, 2020). Migrants may thus find themselves in an irregular situation (undocumented migrants below) as a result of an extended stay after the expiry of a temporary residence permit, a refusal to apply for asylum, or entering the country without a valid migration document (Kraler, 2009). This migration situation, defined by the migration policies and legal framework within each country, varies substantially across regions. The existence and maintenance of this condition depends largely on the opportunities for access to the labour market in the destination countries. Most undocumented migrants are informally employed in low-skilled, under-protected, low-paid economic sectors and exposed to excess health risks (Ahonen, Porthe, et al., 2009; Benach, Muntaner, et al., 2011).

As these people are not included in population registers, the figures mentioned by international organisations, national authorities and in scientific studies are based on cross-checked estimates from different sources. The IOM reported that there were 20-30 million undocumented migrants worldwide in 2010, but these figures are likely to have been influenced by the health, political and economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, international mobility was significantly slowed down by air traffic disruptions and border closures, and many migrants were stranded in the host country with no possibility of returning home (International Organization for Migration, 2020). According to the Pew Hispanic

Center (2013), the number of undocumented migrants from Latin America in the United States increased from 8.4 million in 2000 to 11.1 million in 2014. The effects of successive administrations' migration policies have influenced the number of migrants in recent years. Europe was home to an estimated 1.9 to 3.8 million undocumented migrants in 2008, and ongoing armed conflict in the Near and Middle East has significantly increased the size of this population (International Organization for Migration, 2016).

In Switzerland, the latest estimates published in 2015 indicated a total of 76,000 (margins: 58,000 to 105'000) persons residing without legal status in the country (Morlok, Oswald, et al., 2015). Most of them had been residing in Switzerland for 5 to 10 years after entering the country without a valid residence permit or as tourists, rather than after overstaying a permit or being denied asylum. People from South and Central America were the most numerous, followed by those of European, African and Asian origin. In Switzerland, their geographical distribution by gender depended on the main sectors of activity. In urban cantons, women working in the domestic sector predominated, while men were more numerous in rural areas, working in agriculture, hotels and restaurants or construction. Generally speaking, these migrants are adults between the ages of 18 and 40 (an estimated 21% are minors and 28% are over 40) living in urban areas, most often without a spouse or children. Legally and administratively, undocumented migrants are entitled to assistance in situations of distress, have access to public primary and secondary education, are subject to the Federal Law on Health Insurance (LAMal), and are eligible for cantonal subsidies and social insurance contributions. However, the majority are employed without a valid contract, are not registered with social insurance and are not insured against illness and accidents (Efionayi-Mäder, Schönenberger, et al., 2010; Morlok, Oswald, et al., 2015).

The canton of Geneva is home to an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 undocumented migrants, comprising mostly of single individuals but also two- to three-generation families with children born and educated in Geneva (Morlok, Oswald, et al., 2015). The

main communities are from South America, Asia (mainly the Philippines), the Balkans and North Africa. There is a marked majority of women as the domestic sector (cleaning, childcare and care of the elderly) is the main provider of jobs and is not easily accessible to the labour inspectorate (Office Cantonal de l'Inspection et des Relations du Travail OCIRT[1]). The particularity of the canton of Geneva is the strong involvement of trade unions and associations supporting undocumented workers. This has led to advances such as easier access to social insurance even in the absence of formal employment contracts and a higher number of applications to the federal authorities for regularisation compared to other cantons (Efionayi-Mäder, Schönenberger, et al., 2010).

In Geneva, undocumented migrants, who are most often uninsured under the LAMal, have access to care at the Geneva University Hospitals through the Consultation Ambulatoire Mobile de Soins Communautaires (CAMSCO[2]). Studies conducted at CAMSCO have illustrated some specific health needs in this population, notably in relation to infectious diseases (Jackson, 2009), sexual and reproductive health (Wolff, Epiney, et al., 2008; Sebo, Jackson, et al., 2011) and the accumulation of chronic diseases (Jackson, Paignon, et al., 2018).

To date, there is not enough data to assess the living conditions, health and well-being of undocumented migrants in a comprehensive way. While reports exist in Switzerland and Europe, their findings are mainly based on interviews with experts in the field (Levoy et al. 2003, Krenn 2009, Morlok 2015). There are studies that analyse migration policies and regularisation programmes (Chauvin, Garcés-Mascareñas, et al., 2013; Kraler, 2019) from a comparative perspective. Moreover, studies focus more often on migrants in the asylum field (*i.e.* (Bertrand, 2020; Jauhiainen and Tedeschi, 2021) than on undocumented economic migrants. In

[1] Geneva Canton Office for the Inspection of the Laboral Relationships
[2] A medical unit of the Geneva University Hospital providing care to underserved patients.

general, knowledge on the impact of the regularisation of undocumented migrants' legal status on health, well-being and living conditions is very scarce or even absent in Switzerland and Europe. However, the context of the Covid-19 pandemic has brutally highlighted the lack of empirical data on this population and its consequences for the formulation of adequate public policies (Pelizza et al. 2021).

'OPERATION PAPYRUS'

The Swiss legal framework allows undocumented migrants to apply for a temporary permit (type B). In practice, this is restricted to situations of exceptional severity (force majeure), often of medical origin. The possibilities of regularising legal status are therefore generally very limited. The processing of these applications by the cantonal authorities differs widely between regions of the country although the legal framework is uniform nationwide (Swiss Confederation, 2020). For example, for a comparable population of undocumented migrants, the canton of Geneva submits between 10 and 100 times more applications each year than the canton of Zurich (Swiss Confederation, 2020).

The canton of Geneva, together with the federal authorities and several civil society actors (associations and trade unions that are members of the *Collectif de soutien aux sans-papiers*), developed 'Operation Papyrus'. This pilot project for the conditional regularisation of the legal status of undocumented workers was accompanied by increased control of undeclared work and support for the retention of regularised workers in employment. The pre-existing legal basis (articles 30 al. 1 let. b LEtr and 31 of the Ordinance on admission, residence and the exercise of a gainful activity (OASA; RS 142.201)), was not modified but a consensus was reached to establish objectives and transparent criteria allowing the submission of a type B permit application, even without the

support of the employer[3]. In this sense, 'Operation Papyrus' cannot be considered an amnesty. The criteria for applying included: a) a continuous stay of at least 10 years in Geneva for single individuals or at least 5 years for families with children attending school in Geneva; b) financial autonomy; c) no criminal convictions; and d) minimum language skills in French (level A2).

This public policy is unique in Switzerland in that it eliminates the randomness of the processing of applications for regularisation that was previously in place. It was established that, in principle, any file that met the criteria would result in a residence permit. The associations and trade unions were responsible for helping the applicants to establish their administrative file and to check its validity. When the criteria were met, the file was forwarded to the cantonal and federal authorities (Fakhoury, 2018).

After a preliminary phase launched in 2015, 'Operation Papyrus' officially ran from February 2017 to December 2018. In total, 2,883 people received a renewable B permit, of which 1,676 (58.1%) applied as family members. The majority of applications were for people employed in the domestic economy (Swiss Confederation, 2020). The OCIRT identified that 30% of the cases in this sector involved abusive employment relationships, the majority of which were brought into compliance. The new social security declarations for employers in the domestic economy *via Chèque Service* have resulted in an annual gain in social security contributions of 5.7 million Swiss francs[4]. Nevertheless, in practice, significant administrative delays have limited the number of B permits actually issued within the expected timeframe of 3 to 6 months after the applications were submitted. Thus, many eligible persons who applied for a permit under 'Operation Papyrus' found themselves in an intermediate situation, having come out of anonymity but without the relative security guaranteed by a residence permit, sometimes for periods of up to several years (as still observed in

[3] The Foreign Nationals Act has been replaced by the Aliens and Integration Act (LEI) since 01.01.2019

[4] 1 Swiss franc (CHF) = 0.9 euro and 1 US dollar as at 31.12.2018

2021). Once the pilot project was completed, the usual administrative procedure was reinstated.

THE PARCHEMINS STUDY

Seizing the opportunity of 'Operation Papyrus', the Parchemins study aims to measure the impact of this pilot regularisation policy in Geneva on the health, well-being and living conditions of undocumented migrants by following a cohort of people over several years. The study, launched in autumn 2017, is interdisciplinary, bringing together the expertise of researchers in medicine, social sciences and economics.

The study is based on the social determinants of health perspective, which considers structural, social, and individual factors influencing the chances of being healthy. While it has not yet been widely used in relation to migration (Castañeda, Holmes, et al., 2015), this perspective is particularly relevant for studying how a change in migration policies, in this case a regularisation programme as a transformation of structural conditions, can influence health status. These social determinants influence the health status of individuals, but also their closely related well-being.

Indeed, it is now considered important to measure people's well-being beyond the material resources at their disposal. This indicator makes it possible to assess the coherence between the opportunities open to individuals, both through their individual characteristics and those of the context in which they live, and their concrete achievements (Veenhoven, 2000). This potential mismatch between expectations and outcomes is particularly important in the context of migration and therefore justifies an interest in individuals' subjective assessment of their situation. Considering the aspirations of migrants that led them to settle in a host country despite the difficulties encountered due to their (lack of) status, their perceived quality of life offers a measure of their own assessment of the costs and benefits of their migration journey (Hendriks and Bartram, 2019). As measures of well-being have

become relatively standard in population surveys, it is also possible to compare evaluations across population groups living in very heterogeneous circumstances.

Finally, we mobilise the life course perspective, still little integrated in migration research (Wingens, Windzio, et al., 2011). However, it allows us to look at the trajectories that led people to become undocumented migrants eligible for a residence permit, and then to evaluate the opportunities offered by regularisation by following people over time. While obtaining a permit is likely to bring about an improvement in living conditions, it also represents new constraints (paying taxes, competing in the labour market with regular workers, etc.) that could affect health and well-being, at least in the early stages of regularisation.

Initially financed by private foundations and various administrations in the canton, funding from the Swiss National Science Foundation has made it possible to ensure longitudinal follow-up over several years of the people recruited into the study. The National Research Centre LIVES 'Overcoming Vulnerability: A Life Course Perspective' also contributes to the funding of the research. A post-doctoral fellow is responsible for data collection and analysis. Two doctoral students in sociology are doing their doctoral thesis in the framework of the study. In addition to the academic valorisation of research data, the study has over the years also provided opportunities for young researchers to gain research practice. Indeed, to support the data collection, interns in global health, medicine, sociology and socio-economics at the University of Geneva were recruited during the different waves of the study. Bachelor and Master students were also involved in the data collection and analysis.

METHODOLOGY

The Parchemins study*: a prospective study of the impact of the Papyrus regularisation programme on the health and living conditions of undocumented migrants in Geneva* aims to follow undocumented migrants over a period of 4 years in order to have time to evaluate the effects of obtaining a residence permit on their living conditions and health status (Jackson, Courvoisier, et al., 2019). Participants were recruited through the associations involved in 'Operation Papyrus' and the CAMSCO. In the first wave of data collection, which took place between 2017 and 2018, 464 people were recruited. They were over 18 years of age, from countries outside the European Union (EU) or the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). They had been living in Geneva for at least 3 years and planned to stay for at least another 3 years. Migrants who had applied for asylum were not included in the study. The participants are divided into two groups: 1) those who are in the regularisation process and have filed an application or have received a residence permit for less than 3 months, hereafter the 'visible', and 2) those who do not meet the eligibility criteria or do not wish to be regularised, hereafter the 'invisible'. The data from the first wave of the study do not yet allow us to evaluate the consequences of obtaining a residence permit, but we consider it important to compare these two groups, which distinguish between migrants who are more or less established in Geneva.

The research methodology combines quantitative data collected by questionnaire and qualitative data from in-depth interviews. The quantitative component involves 4 successive waves of data collection, planned at approximately one-year intervals between 2017 and 2022. A standardised questionnaire is adminis-

tered face-to-face with the help of a digital tablet. The questionnaire is available in different languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese and English) and the data collectors - interns and students of medicine, social sciences and economics - are selected to cover the main languages present in the study population. In addition to the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, the questionnaire assesses their living conditions (housing, quality of life), employment conditions, health status and access to health care. In order to allow comparisons with the resident population, some questions were taken from routine Swiss surveys, including the Swiss Household Panel (SHP)[5] and the Swiss Health Survey (SHS)[6].

The qualitative component involves three waves of data collection and is conducted with a sub-sample of people in the process of regularisation. One of the doctoral students in the Parchemins study is responsible for collecting and analysing this data. Between May 2018 and February 2019, 39 people were interviewed. On the basis of existing quantitative data, they were chosen to ensure a certain diversity of profiles according to gender and origin. The interviews aimed to explore the experiences and trajectories of undocumented migrants as well as their aspirations.

The study protocol was approved by the Cantonal Research Ethics Commission (CCER) in 2017.

The results presented here relate solely to the first quantitative wave carried out between 2017 and 2018, with a sample of 464 people, as well as to the first qualitative wave, carried out between 2018 and 2019 with 39 participants. The responses are systematically differentiated between men and women, and also according

[5] Swiss Household Panel, hosted by FORS at the University of Lausanne: https://forscenter.ch/projects/swiss-household-panel/, accessed 23.12.2021

[6] Swiss Health Survey, conducted by the Federal Statistical Office: https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/sante/enquetes/sgb.html, accessed 23.12.2021

to legal status, with, on the one hand, migrants who have not applied for a residence permit (defined here as 'invisible') and, on the other hand, those who have submitted an application, are awaiting a reply from the administration or have already received their residence permit (defined as 'visible'). These differences are tested using the usual bivariate statistical models (Chi-2 test and T-test depending on the type of data studied). The following thresholds were used to present the significance levels of the results in the tables and figures: *** p-value<0.01; ** p-value<0.05; * p-value<0.1; n.s. not significant.

Furthermore, for comparisons with the resident population of the canton of Geneva, the population survey data are limited to the responses of persons belonging to the same age categories (i.e. aged between 18 and 74 years) and belonging to the active population. Thus, the data of 599 respondents to the Swiss Health Survey and 210 respondents to the Swiss Household Panel are mobilised on different occasions.

RESULTS

The descriptive analyses presented here aim to document the living conditions and health of participants in the Parchemins study recruited at the beginning of the regularisation programme ('Operation Papyrus'). As mentioned above, empirical data on this population remains scarce and the Parchemins study aims to fill these gaps, making it possible to describe the pathways and characteristics of undocumented economic migrants. The combination of quantitative data from standardised questionnaires and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews makes it possible to assess the distribution of their living and health conditions in the different areas investigated, while providing a more detailed understanding of undocumented life experiences. After describing the socio-demographic characteristics and migratory trajectories of the participants, we present their working conditions and then their health status. The chapter ends with data on life satisfaction.

PROFILES OF UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS AND THOSE IN THE PROCESS OF REGULARISATION

The sample recruited in wave 1 (2017-2018) was predominantly female (71.8%) with an average age of 44.2 years (minimum 18 years and maximum 74 years). Two-thirds of the participants were from Latin America (mainly Bolivia and Brazil), one-fifth from Asia (mainly the Philippines), one-tenth from Africa and one-tenth from Eastern Europe. Three quarters of the participants had reached at least a secondary education, with 22.8% having a tertiary education (Table 1).

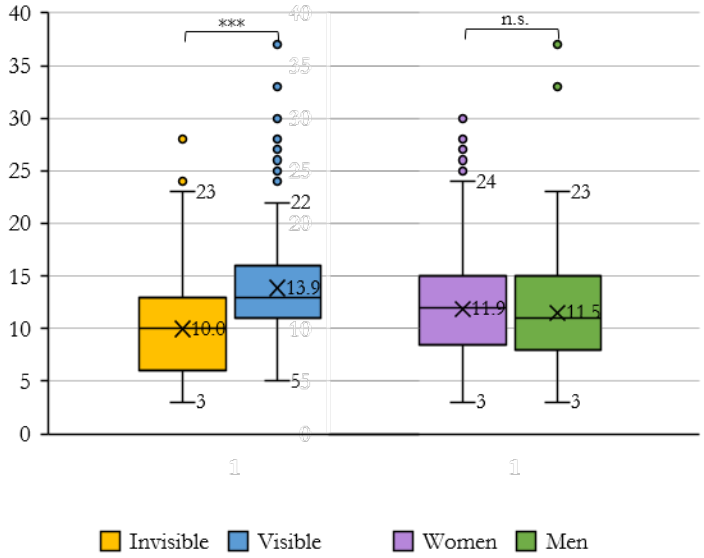
At the time of recruitment for the Parchemins study, a third of the participants had not taken any steps towards regularisation, mostly because they were not eligible to apply for a permit, but also for some by deliberate choice. Half had submitted or prepared a regularisation application, only a minority (16.4%) had already obtained a residence permit (for less than 3 months) (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

N=464	n	(%)
Sex		
Female	333	(71.8)
Male	131	(28.2)
Age (mean, standard deviation (SD))	44.2	(10.5)
Origin		
Latin America	295	(63.6)
Asia	93	(20.0)
Eastern Europe	40	(8.6)
Africa	36	(7.8)
Level of education		
Primary	108	(23.3)
Secondary	250	(53.9)
Tertiary	106	(22.8)
Regularisation process (groups)		
Not engaged (invisible)	149	(32.1)
Demand in preparation (visible)	102	(22.0)
Demand submitted to authorities (visible)	137	(29.5)
Permit obtained (visible)	76	(16.4)

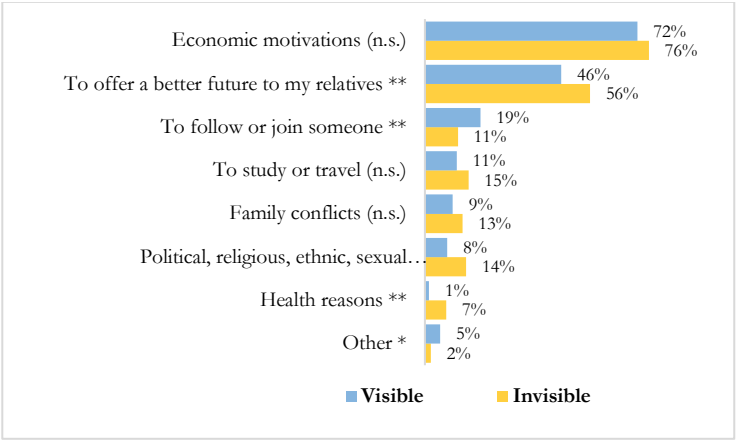
Participants in the regularisation process (visible) had been in Geneva longer (on average 13.9 years) than those not in the regularisation process (invisible) (10.0 years) (Figure 1). This reflects the criteria of the regularisation policy, which requires a continuous stay of at least 10 years for single persons or 5 years for those with children in school. The length of stay, however, does not differ between men and women.

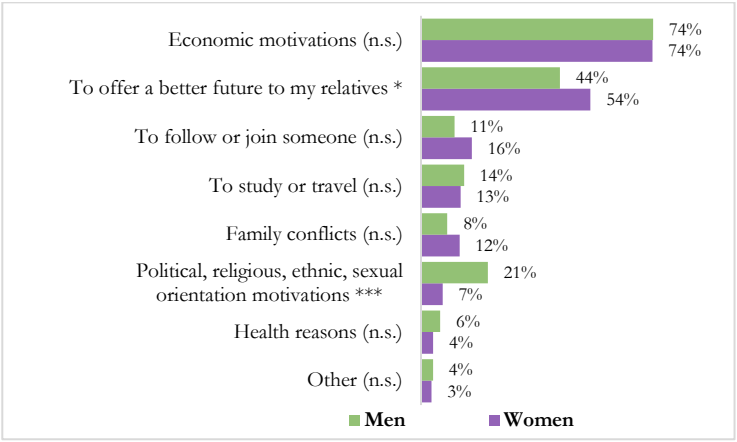
Figure 1: Length of stay in Geneva (years)



Economic motivations (reported by three quarters of the participants) and the desire to offer a better future to one's children (one in two participants) are the main reasons for migration. This concern for the children's future is more frequent among invisible people and among women (Figure 2). One in 10 people mentioned that family conflicts contributed to the decision to migrate. Men more often mentioned political, religious, ethnic or sexual orientation reasons than women.

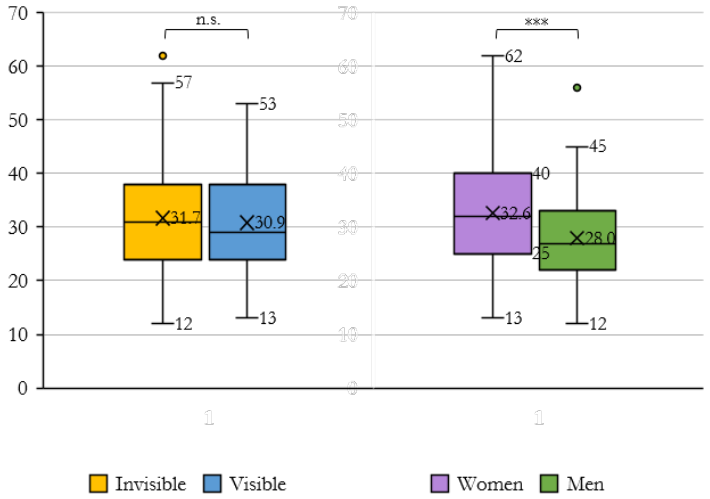
Figure 2: Motivations for migration (%, multiple answers possible)





The average age at the time of migration was just over 30 years, with no significant difference according to legal status. However, women migrated on average at a later age (32.6 years) than men (28.0 years), which is consistent with their desire to give their children a better future as they would make the decision to leave at a later stage in their life course (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Age at migration



The semi-structured interviews revealed that undocumented migrants often came with the idea of staying temporarily in Switzerland, having planned to return to their country of origin after building up savings. This finding is also present in the literature (Zentgraf and Chinchilla, 2012; Bryceson, 2019). Economic motivations were indeed related to debts to be repaid, loss of employment or unfavourable economic conditions in the country of origin. We can give the example of a 39-year-old man who said that he arrived alone in Switzerland in 2002 with the intention of earning money to build a house in his country in Latin America and return. But his wife joined him in Geneva 6 months later and they decided to stay. Another man from Eastern Europe, aged 35, told us that earning 350 euros/month in his country was not enough to start a family. He came to Geneva in 2007, thanks to contacts provided by people in his village. When he arrived, he stayed with a man from his village, intending to stay for a while and then return after he had saved up. In 2017, he had applied for regularisation and was waiting for his permit.

The opportunity to offer a better future to her children is expressed by this 57-year-old participant from Latin America:

> *"My son said to me, 'Yes mum, go and work hard'. And I also thought that he was going to finish his studies and go to university. It was important for him to study graphic design. He said, "Mum, if you stay here, I can't go to university, I can't do anything. And in my country, a person who has studied finds work". I had already made the decision to leave. The first year was very difficult, the absence and everything, but yes."*

The transnational nature of irregular migration routes is evidenced by the extent of money circulation between workers in Geneva and their relatives back home (Table 2). Two-thirds of the participants send money back home, at a fairly high level of almost CHF 450 per month on average. Although there is no difference in terms of legal status, women are more likely than men to report sending money home (69.7% compared to 56.2%), confirming that women's migration is frequently part of economic logics of family support across borders (World Health Organization, 2017). This woman explains this economic relationship:

> *"I send money for the house I had bought, my children's problem... and it goes to my mother-in-law. She's old, she doesn't work, but she's the only person I trust to keep the house. And to her, yes, I send 180 CHF a month: 100 for her, and 50 for the Internet, so that communication with my children costs her nothing. This is very important to me, because she is my children's grandmother. She has helped me a lot emotionally, and I always keep in touch with her, especially with my children. I pay for this and I pay the electricity. The children's father lives there, but he doesn't pay anything."* (Female, 36 years old, Latin America)

Another woman from Latin America said that she sends money every month to her parents because she does not want them to lack anything, considering that they have worked hard to raise their children and that the situation in their country is now difficult.

Since the arrival in Switzerland, one person out of two has already returned to his or her country of origin, this is more often the case for migrants who have obtained or are in the process of obtaining a residence permit, which gives them freedom of movement and the guarantee of being able to return to Geneva (Table 2). While there is no difference between men and women in this respect, the tension felt around the costs of the journey, the risks and the emotional ties are described by this participant:

> *"I've been here for years, because I don't have much money to go out and visit* [Latin American country] *all the time, because it's expensive and far away.* But you went back to see...? *Yes, the last time I went back was when my mother was sick, but alive. It's been four years, almost five years since I last went.* And otherwise it's more by phone? *Yes, but next year I'm going to do everything I can to go there. I really want to. Before, as I didn't have a permit, I was afraid to go out! It was because of that. I was afraid to go there and not come back. Because it's not easy. To go is all right, but to come back is complicated."* (Female, 55 years old, Latin America)

Table 2: Remittances and visits to the country of origin, n (%)

N=464	Invisible (n=251)	Visible (n=213)	sig.	Women (n=333)	Men (n=131)	sig.
Sending money home	163 (65.5)	140 (66.4)	n.s.	230 (69.7)	73 (56.2)	***
Return(s) since arrival in Switzerland	111 (44.2)	130 (61.0)	***	167 (50.2)	74(56.5)	n.s.

Half of the people who took part in the study were not in a relationship at the time of the first wave, one in five was married and one in four was in an unmarried relationship. Men more often cohabit with their spouse or partner than women, and women are more often without a partner (Table 3). However, the marital and residential situation does not differ between the invisible and visible migrant groups. The participants in the study are clearly different from the rest of the population living in Geneva. In the

Swiss Household Panel data, having a partner is the norm, as it is the case for 4 out of 5 people, and a majority of people live conjugal co-residence. These comparisons highlight the particular situation of undocumented migrants, who are more often without a partner and benefit less from the economic and emotional resources associated with a couple relationship.

The qualitative interviews reveal the diversity of family trajectories. Some came to Switzerland as a couple, while others started a couple relationship once they had settled in the country. However, several respondents stressed that the lack of legal status was a major obstacle to entering in a relationship:

> *"I'm in a relationship with someone, and I'm well with him, and we speak French. He speaks Spanish, but we never speak Spanish, only French, I'm happy.* [...] *I thought that someone who has the permit would refuse to be in a relationship. In my head I thought "he'll think I'm with him for the papers". I would like to show, if there is a way to show, that I am not with him because I am interested in his permit, but that I am with him because I really have feelings for him* [...] *because people have told me so. I've been told 'all the people who are undocumented, they come to take advantage to get a permit'".* (Female, 34 years old, Latin America)

Regularisation then clearly represents an opening of horizons in this respect (Consoli, Burton-Jeangros, et al., 2022), as expressed by this respondent:

> *"I hope to improve my life even more, that it works out very well, that I live my life like everyone else. Find a wife, maybe. Have children, maybe. To make a family, that's what everybody tells me, all the time."* (Male, 44 years old, Latin America)

For others, obtaining a permit allows them to consider family reunification:

> *"I'm waiting for my residence permit to make sure I can bring my wife here.* [...] So your wife is still in [African country]? *Yes.* If your wife, who you are going to marry, joins you... what will that change in your life? *Eh, it's a good life! Make a little family... like everyone else. I'm not asking... to be rich... but to live*

like everyone else. To travel, to live a normal life like everyone else."
(Male, 39 years old, Africa)

Table 3: Marital and family status, n (%)

N=464	Invisible (n=251)	Visible (n=213)	sig.	Women (n=333)	Men (n=131)	sig.
Marital status						
Married cohabiting	23 (9.2)	28 (13.1)		29 (8.7)	22 (16.8)	
Married not cohabiting	25 (10.0)	22 (10.3)		36 (10.8)	11 (8.4)	
In a cohabiting couple	42 (16.7)	35 (16.4)	n.s.	43 (12.9)	34 (26.0)	***
In a non-cohabiting couple	19 (7.6)	26 (12.2)		28 (8.4)	17 (13.0)	
Not in a couple	142 (56.6)	102 (47.9)		197 (59.2)	47 (35.9)	
Is a parent	158 (62.9)	143 (67.1)	n.s.	227 (68.2)	74 (56.5)	**

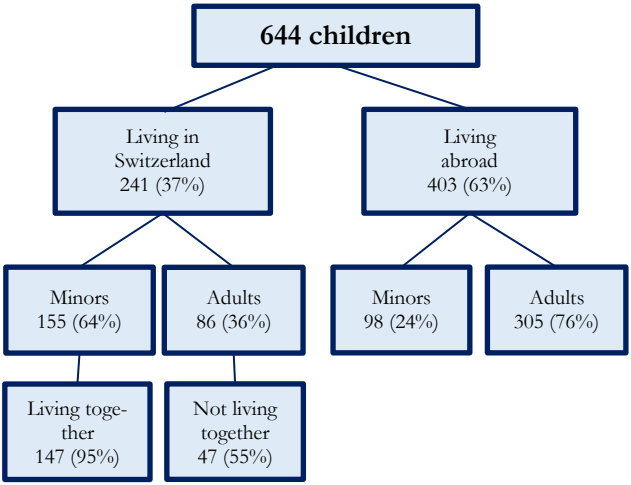
Two-thirds of respondents have at least one child; this is more often the case for women (68.2%) than for men (56.5%) (Table 3). The majority of these children (63%) do not live in Switzerland, especially those over 18 years of age. On the other hand, children who do live in Switzerland are more often minors (64%) and in this case almost all live with the parent recruited in the study (Figure 4).

The diversity of these situations reflects the complexity of transnational families, namely those whose members most often live apart from each other, while maintaining the perception of forming a community across borders (Bryceson, 2019). Some children are born in Switzerland, others in the country of origin before the migration of the parent. Such life trajectories are not necessarily planned as explained by this mother whose children came for holidays and decided to stay in Switzerland:

"When they left there, I didn't plan for them to stay here. I had brought them here just for a holiday. At that time I didn't have a flat, a good place for everyone, and it was difficult to know how things would go here, as I didn't have any papers. I had a job but I was working from Monday to Sunday to manage to accomplish something and it was very, very complicated for me to decide to let them stay here. A month after their arrival, they decided to stay. At that point,

I really thought about what to do. I couldn't say to them: "you have to leave". It's true that it was a really difficult decision, I talked to both of them, I explained to them how things work here and that, in order for them to stay here, I really had to work 100% and that they had to go to school until they were 18, especially the little one. And they agreed, until today. It's true that it's not easy. (Female, 36 years old, Latin America)

Figure 4: Children of the participants



Furthermore, the experience of single parenthood is very present in the accounts of undocumented mothers and concerns both mothers living with their children in Switzerland and mothers whose children have remained in their country of origin (Consoli, Burton-Jeangros, et al., 2022). For some of them, single parenthood is the very reason for their departure: they found themselves alone with young children and unable to earn enough money to cover their basic needs and ensure their education. Others went through a separation during undocumented life.

The difficulties of the single parent experience, already great for legal residents, are exacerbated by the lack of legal status.

These parents feel that they are not able to be present enough for their children by having to juggle several jobs and accept unpaid overtime under threat of dismissal, in order to guarantee a sufficient income to support the family. These mothers find it particularly difficult to assert their right to a contribution from the children's father. They often say that they are exhausted by the situation, which does not allow them to have time for themselves, either for their social life or for rest.

The diversity of transnational families is not necessarily compatible with the regularisation criteria of 'Operation Papyrus'. For example, some parents reported that because of their age and residence history between Switzerland and their country of origin, some of their children could not be included in the application for a residence permit, even though they were living in Geneva at the time the application was prepared.

Finally, families whose children are resident in Switzerland are concerned about their children's future prospects after compulsory schooling. Without a residence permit, their possibilities of professional integration are indeed restricted, since the entry into an apprenticeship requires a residence permit. Some participants spoke of their children dropping out of school, but also of situations where the anticipation of the end of schooling could lead to a disinvestment in school or to tensions and uneasiness among their children. This pressure was highlighted by one mother:

> *"During this time, for me, what is difficult? Seeing that my children have limits all the time. There are things at school, there are outings that they can't do, and when my daughter had reached the end of mandatory school, they talked to her about the permit, so that she could continue her studies here, they told her that it was very important. It's true that that's why I'm going to struggle a lot to do things, to take the steps* [for the permit]. *In principle I wasn't sure because I was afraid they would tell us to leave. But in the end I know that... [I had to] decide because from one day to the next it could happen too. We were afraid all the time that we wouldn't have a legal status here."* (Female, 37 years old, Latin America)

With regard to their social integration in Geneva, seven out of 10 participants said they were rather or very well surrounded (Table 4), with no significant difference between men and women. On the other hand, invisible migrants expressed loneliness more often than people in the process of regularisation, which probably reflects the distance from the family and the difficulty of meeting people in the absence of a legal status. This is confirmed by the larger network size among visible migrants than among invisible migrants (Table 4). Several people noted that the fear of being identified as undocumented is a serious barrier to social relations:

> *"I didn't always dare to talk to people*...You didn't dare to talk to people? *No, I didn't dare to talk to people about my situation. I didn't say that I didn't have a permit. For example, I work out at the gym, and when people asked me if I had a permit, I said yes.* [laughs] *Because I didn't know who they were. Afterwards, with the people I was closer to, I would tell them the truth, but I wouldn't say it all the time, no. Often I would deny it. A lot of times I would deny it. No. Because you never know what people will do."* (Female, 46 years old, Latin America)

> *"I go to work and I go to church. That's it. So, I don't have any other hobbies. In the summer when people go to the lake, I can't go... you never know, someone might stop you on the way. I'm afraid of that. So, I stay at home."* (Female, 31 years old, Africa)

Visible migrants and women are more likely to report membership of a club or association (Table 4). These affiliations are often associated with religious communities. According to the Swiss Household Panel data, there is a very large gap between the participants in the study and the resident population, among whom only one third report participation in associations.

Table 4: Entourage and social participation, n (%)

N=464	Invisible	Visible	sig.	Women	Men	sig.
Feeling of loneliness			***			n.s.
Very lonely	32 (12.9)	6 (2.9)		23 (7.0)	15 (11.7)	
Rather lonely	64 (25.8)	30 (14.4)		64 (19.5)	30 (23.4)	
Rather surrounded	114 (46.0)	108 (51.7)		164 (49.8)	58 (45.3)	
Very well surrounded	38 (15.3)	65 (31.1)		78 (23.7)	25 (19.5)	
Participation in clubs, associations, etc.	163 (65.5)	158 (75.2)	**	239 (72.6)	82 (63.1)	**
Network size[1]			**			n.s.
0 person	38 (15.3)	20 (9.6)		37 (11.3)	21 (16.2)	
1-2 people	108 (43.4)	73 (34.9)		140 (42.7)	41 (31.5)	
3-4 people	61 (24.5)	64 (30.6)		88 (26.8)	37 (28.5)	
5 or more people	42 (16.9)	52 (24.9)		63 (19.2)	31 (23.8)	

[1] "How many people are close enough to you that you can count on them in case of serious personal problems?

Obtaining a residence permit changes relationships with others, as this participant noted: *"The permit gives you respect.* (Female, 47 years old, Latin America). A Latin American man waiting for his permit added: *"It's as if people without a permit have a disease and those with a permit don't."*

To conclude this first section, we propose a synthesis of the diversity of the profiles of the people we met around four fictional portraits, reflecting typical experiences within the study population. They are constructed in line with qualitative analyses focusing on aspirations (Consoli, Burton-Jeangros, et al., 2022).

Four fictional portraits

Aged 23 when she arrived in Switzerland, Sofia came with the desire to discover the world and earn some money. When she arrived, she thought she would only stay a few months, but one job opportunity after another led to a longer stay. The prospect of obtaining a residence permit through 'Operation Papyrus' offers her new education and employment opportunities. At the same time, at her age, she feels the competition on the Geneva labour market. After spending more than 10 years in Switzerland, she now hopes to meet a partner and start a family, since her presence in Geneva is now legitimate as evidenced by her residence permit. A return to Brazil is difficult to envisage for her.

Ali arrived in Switzerland at the age of 40, alone and without children. He has remained in Geneva despite the difficulties linked to his status, as sending monthly money to his ageing parents in Morocco has become essential over the years. Employed in the construction sector, he now suffers from the difficult working conditions. As he gets older, he does not envisage returning to his country where opportunities would be very limited for him, but the question of retirement is starting to arise. Obtaining a permit gives him the opportunity to comply with the social security system in Switzerland. Besides, being able to travel without restrictions leads him to consider living between Switzerland and Morocco.

In their early thirties, Maria and Juan decided to come to Switzerland with their two young children in order to offer them a better future, as the economic and political prospects in Bolivia seemed too uncertain. Juan came alone at first, then Maria and the children joined him. In order to carry out their project, Maria and Juan took on successive precarious jobs. Obtaining a residence permit justifies the hardships encountered throughout the clandestine period. They now hope to improve their working conditions and move into a larger flat.

Susan arrived from the Philippines at the age of 35, with two children in her care following her divorce. She left her children in the care of her mother to whom she sends money every month by accumulating childcare jobs with Geneva families. Since arriving in Geneva in 2008, she has not seen her children again, as traveling back to her country represented too much risk of not being able to return to Geneva. In addition to being separated from her children, she is relatively isolated in Geneva, as she has remained cautious in her relationships for fear of being sent home. She hopes to return to the Philippines once her own children are grown and settled.

These portraits highlight the heterogeneity of family and migratory trajectories, while underlining the importance of transnational links that justify staying in Geneva despite the many constraints linked to an undocumented stay. These pathways reflect the global inequalities in employment and income that lead some people to choose undocumented life. The spread of international transport, virtual communication and money transfer facilities between countries has supported these pathways, allowing families to maintain relationships despite distance (Bryceson, 2019). In addition to the economic dependency relationships that affect migrants' stay and limit their choices, the emotional costs for parents and children who are separated are potentially significant. Nevertheless, studies have shown the creativity of parents in maintaining ties with their children and the adaptability of family members (Zentgraf and Chinchilla, 2012). These authors also caution against interpreting these pathways in terms of the Western nuclear family model, without considering the diversity of family norms on a global scale.

On the migration policy side, the persistence and even growth of irregular migration highlights the extent to which institutions, despite the controls they put in place, fail to prevent undocumented economic migration (Garcés-Mascareñas, 2010). The hypocrisy of destination countries, which do not take strict measures in the knowledge that these workers perform indispensable tasks,

particularly in the domestic economy, is also noted (Fakhoury, 2018).

These pathways lead us to present the living conditions of the participants in the study in different areas, including housing, economic resources and employment, and health.

HOUSING CONDITIONS

In the canton of Geneva, access to housing is particularly difficult due to the relative scarcity and high cost of rents. The situation of undocumented migrants who cannot claim their rights exposes them to abuses, which are periodically denounced in the press and are subject to legal proceedings[7].

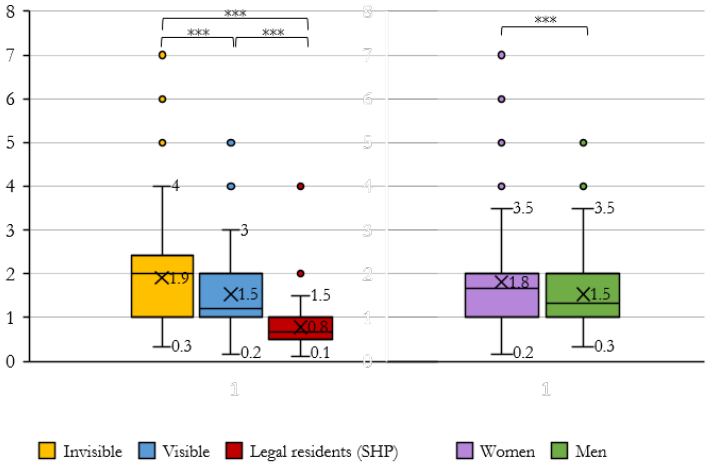
Beyond the political debate about 'sleep merchants', the data from the Parchemins study allows us to learn more about the housing conditions of undocumented migrants living in the canton. The first finding is that housing density - calculated as the ratio between the number of cohabiting persons and the number of bedrooms in the apartment - is much higher for undocumented migrants than for the resident population, rising from 1.9 persons per room on average for invisible migrants to 1.5 for visible migrants and 0.8 for the rest of the population (Figure 5). Moreover, women live in denser housing than men, which suggests that they more often share their private space with several people. Their limited room to manoeuvre is highlighted by this participant:

> *"The difficulty is to find flats to live in. There are people who take advantage of us. We work, but we pay more to live here. It's illegal. "Ah, you don't have the right", "ah, you're undocumented, but well... you have to pay, more". They take advantage of the fact that you can't defend yourself: "if you don't want to, madam, there's someone, there are lots of people, so... out! That's how it is.* Has this ever happened to you? *Yes, yes, many times. The rooms now,*

[7] For example : *A Genève, la justice enquête sur un vaste réseau de marchands de sommeil,* Le Temps 30 October 2021

you can see, it's incredible. From 1000.- [CHF]. Until last year I paid 750.- for a room in [name of district]*, where I lived with a man who was a widower and who had a 6-room flat. He rented to people like us, undocumented migrants. As we couldn't denounce him, he asked for 750.- for each room... And if we weren't happy, we were out! No right to cook in the kitchen, you have to eat outside. [...] And since I need the accommodation... what can I do? Listen and do as he asked. I lived with this man for three years."* (Female, 55 years old, Latin America)

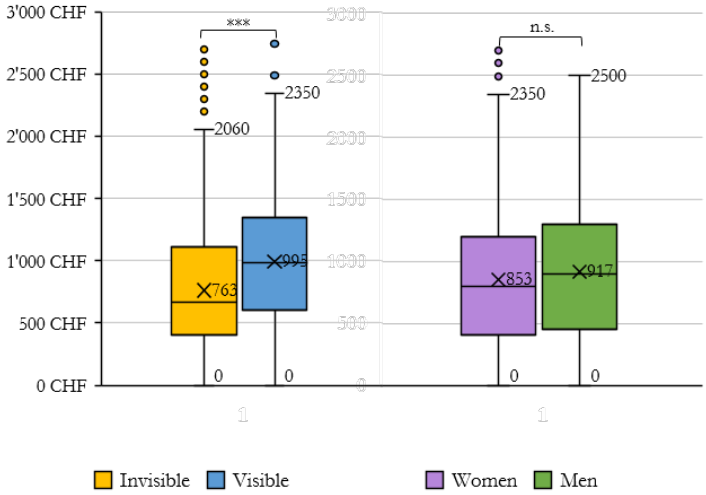
Figure 5: Density of apartments (number of persons per bedroom)



The rents paid by visible migrants are on average higher than those of invisible migrants (Figure 6). It is likely that this is a result of the lower density of housing after obtaining a residence permit and reflecting a greater privatisation of housing - less shared - when legal status allows. While women live in denser housing, this is not associated with them paying lower rents (Figure 6). The trade-off between the cost of housing and the ability to provide economic resources for the family back home is well highlighted by this participant:

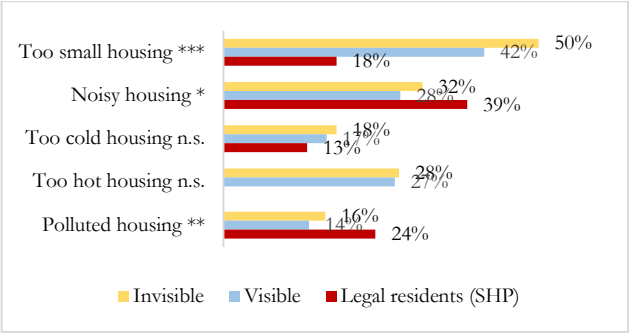
"As people don't have papers, they need to... For me, if I share a studio with two people, one studio is fine. But not more. There are people who want to save more and share with several people but... And that's to manage to send a lot of money...Yes. ... To [Latin American country]." (Female, 53 years old, Latin America)

Figure 6: Monthly rent (in CHF)



With regard to housing conditions, the high density is reflected in the fact that almost half of the participants feel that their accommodation is too small, a finding that is more pronounced among invisible migrants (50.4% compared to 41.7% among visible migrants). They clearly differ from the local population, among whom less than one person in five considers he or she lacks space. Local residents more often than migrants consider their apartment to be noisy or polluted (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Housing conditions, %



The housing conditions of undocumented migrants are poorly documented in the existing literature. We see here that the possibility of obtaining a residence permit is associated with an improvement in these housing conditions. This is probably favourable for their state of health, especially mental health. Moreover, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have shown how much undocumented migrants were worried about losing their apartment following the loss or reduction of their income (Burton-Jeangros, Duvoisin, et al., 2020).

ECONOMIC RESOURCES AND EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

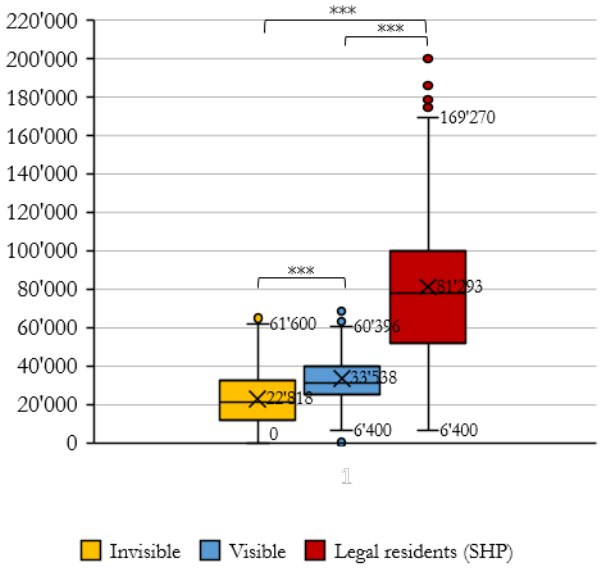
It is well documented that the economic conditions of undocumented migrants are much lower than those of the regular population. The economic motivation at the heart of migration is sustained by the regular sending of money to the country of origin. At the same time, their status exposes them to difficult and low-paying working conditions, which their lack of rights does not allow them to challenge.

These economic conditions are assessed here in terms of income and the ability to pay an unexpected bill, which reveals the presence or absence of savings. The income was standardised in a form equivalent to that of a single adult without children in order

to homogenise very diverse situations. The median annual income shows significant differences between the two groups of participants. On average, it is just under 23,000 CHF among invisible migrants compared to 34,000 CHF among those who are in the process of regularisation (Figure 8). The income of invisible migrants is often below the Swiss poverty line (27,348 CHF in 2019), whereas the majority of visible people have an income above this line. This difference echoes the criteria of financial independence to apply for regularisation. The income of the participants is well below that of the general population. Even visible migrants have an average annual income that is less than half that of the general population (Figure 8).

Men earn on average 14% more than women, which can be explained by the fact that they work in more stable and higher valued employment sectors (Figure 9). This gender wage gap confirms the systematic differences observed in the Swiss population.

Figure 8: Annual equivalent income by legal status (in CHF)

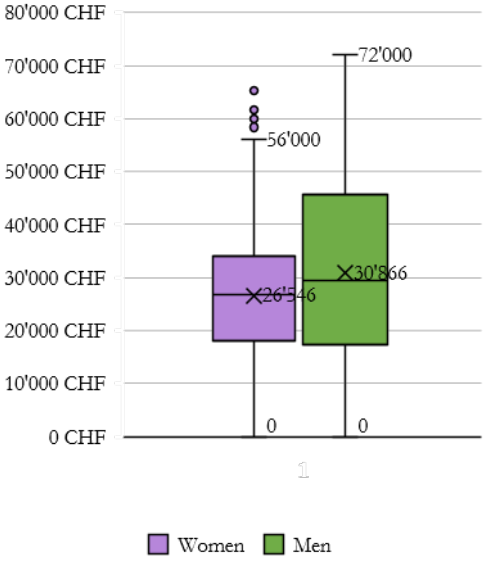


Participants have little savings in general and face difficulties in the event of unexpected expenses. Indeed, invisible migrants and women in particular have significantly fewer financial reserves to pay an unexpected bill of 1500 CHF (Table 5). In addition to the low income and high expenses in Geneva, the need to support relatives and friends back home, as described above with the regular sending of money, contributes to these reserves.

Table 5: Capacity to pay an unexpected bill of CHF 1500, n (%)

N=464	Invisible	Visible	sig.	Women	Men	sig.
No	194 (77.6)	110 (51.9)	***	228 (68.9)	76 (58.0)	**
Yes	56 (22.4)	102 (48.1)		103 (31.1)	55 (42.0)	

Figure 9: Annual equivalent income by gender (in CHF)



The words of these two participants illustrate financial insecurity:

> *"In 2009, I worked here for almost nothing. I didn't know that here you earn, but you also waste because everything is expensive. My salary at that time was 1100 CHF and I had to pay the rent, the food, the bus ticket, and on top of that I send money for my children. It's true that to save money, it doesn't work.* (Female, 36 years old, Latin America)

> *"I like to save money because otherwise I would be on the street, you know? Now that I'm without a job, I can go on living. I don't know... two or three months... just to find more work."* (Male, 47 years old, Latin America)

As far as employment is concerned, the proportion of people in employment is over 90%. It is higher among visible migrants and women (Table 6). It should be noted that 14% of invisible migrants and 18.3% of men declared themselves to be unemployed at the time of the survey, which is a major obstacle to regularisation. This employment rate is very high compared to other studies conducted in Europe among undocumented migrants. For example, a survey by Médecins du Monde in 11 countries showed that only 56.8% of migrants who had been established for at least three years had a regular or intermittent paid job (Chauvin, Parizot, et al., 2009).

Table 6: Employment status, n (%)

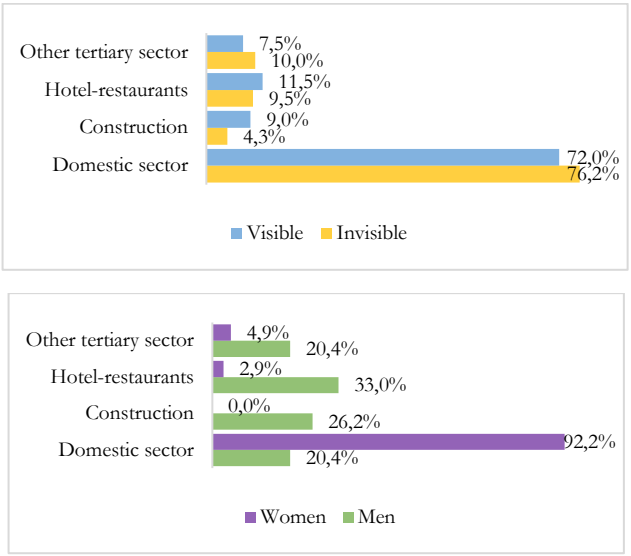
N=464	**Invisible**	**Visible**	**sig.**	**Women**	**Men**	**sig.**
Unemployed	35 (14.0)	7 (3.3)	***	18 (5.5)	24 (18.3)	***
In employment	215 (86.0)	203 (96.7)		311 (94.5)	107 (81.7)	

The main sectors of activity occupied are predominantly low-skilled jobs, which contrasts with the often high level of education of the participants. The majority are employed in the domestic sector (housework, childcare, care of the elderly), while the tertiary sector (e.g., beauty care, hairdressing, moving), construction or

hotels and restaurants employ only about a third of participants (Figure 10). These data are comparable to those from other European countries (Chauvin, Parizot, et al., 2009; Benach, Muntaner, et al., 2011). Women are overwhelmingly active in the domestic sector, whereas the distribution of sectors is more heterogeneous among men (construction, hotels and restaurants, domestic sector). This gender distribution of employment sectors in Geneva is consistent with the situation of migrant workers at the international level (World Health Organization 2017).

These gender differences are also reflected in the conditions of employment (discussed in more detail below): number of employers, unpaid travelling time, declaration and contribution to state social insurance, etc. The lack of difference between visible and invisible migrants in terms of the sectors of activity occupied highlights the persistent difficulties over time to valorise one's professional qualifications and skills acquired in the country of origin many years before, in a labour market as competitive and highly qualified as in Geneva (Ferro-Luzzi, Duvoisin, et al., 2019).

Figure 10: Sectors of activity



A 57-year-old female participant from Latin America expressed the tension between her professional aspirations and the constraints of her personal situation:

> *"It's true that when I came here, I knew I wasn't going to work in my profession. I knew I was going to clean like this... do this. I would like, for example, now to change jobs, for example, if I have a licence. [...]. I know I need to practice my... improve my French, to speak, to... yes, that's it, so to find a better job."*

In general, a majority of participants work at least partly undeclared, thus escaping the various protections, rights and duties governed by the law and collective labour agreements. This is particularly the case for invisible people, half of whom work only in undeclared jobs, and for women, only one third of whom work fully in declared jobs as opposed to 70.3% of men (Table 7). This difference can be explained in particular by the distribution of sectors of activity. As the domestic sector is more difficult to control and regulate by the authorities, it is likely that women hold more undeclared jobs. The participant mentioned above adds:

> *"Even so, I have continued with employers who know that I have received the permit, but who have said, "so [participant's first name], that's how it is, if you want to continue working, it will continue illegally, if not, forget it, I'm looking for someone and you're looking for another job"."*

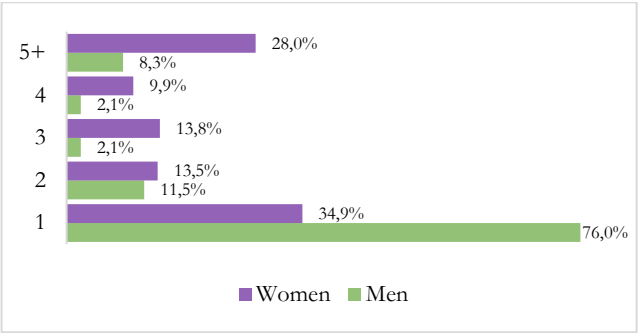
Table 7: Share of declared jobs, n (%)

N=400	**Invisible**	**Visible**	**sig.**	**Women**	**Men**	**sig.**
None	100 (50.0)	15 (7.9)	***	92 (30.8)	23 (25.3)	***
Some	51 (25.5)	55 (28.9)		102 (34.1)	4 (4.4)	
All	49 (24.5)	120 (63.2)		105 (35.1)	64 (70.3)	

A majority of participants reported having several employers. Furthermore, 22.5% of invisible migrants and 28% of women work for more than four different employers (Figure 11). Men have a lower average number of employers, with three quarters of

them having only one. This can again be explained by the distribution across sectors of activity. Indeed, the majority of domestic jobs are part-time, which makes it necessary to cumulate them in order to generate a sufficient income. This necessary accumulation often implies substantial travel time on a daily basis. The fact that this time is unpaid reduces the earning capacity of people who hold many jobs.

Figure 11: Number of employers

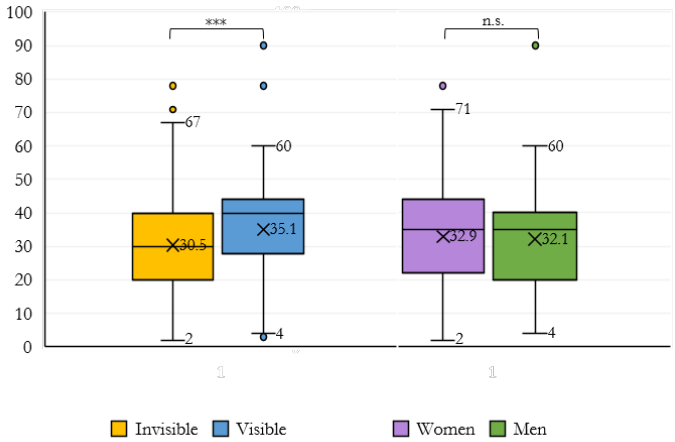


Visible people accumulate more paid hours per week than invisible migrants, but there is no difference between men and women (Figure 12). This gap in disfavour of invisible people may be an obstacle for their eligibility for regularisation.

Several participants also report a difference between the workload initially agreed upon with the employer and paid for, and the actual workload that is carried out. A significant difference can lead to real situations of abuse such as the one experienced by this 40-year-old female participant from Latin America:

> *"the boss I had before, we signed a contract for 8 hours work a day, after that I was working 11 hours, 12 hours every day and it didn't change anything for her and I say, "how does she have money for everything, but not to pay?" And it's not fair, I didn't think it was fair, that I have to work more hours for the same pay. We had signed one thing, then it was something else. But we need, we have to do it, we have to continue."*

Figure 12: Number of hours worked per week

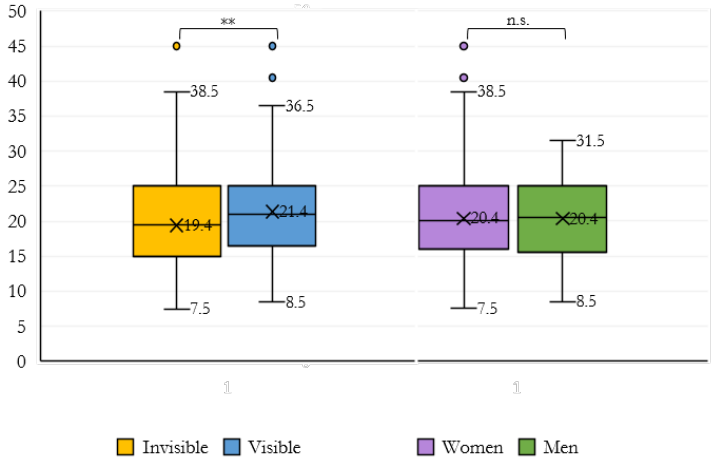


Another participant, a 42-year-old male from Latin America, also reported having faced inappropriate demands from an employer:

> *"We notice that there are... people who sometimes take advantage [of us]. They haven't declared [our jobs]. They try to make you stay in that circumstance, and they don't tell you the rights you are entitled to, the things that... sometimes they ask for a lot of things in a time that is not feasible. The lady I worked for who was doing [law], she asked me to do a big flat in 2.5 hours, so all the rooms, the veranda, watering all the plants - she had a lot of plants - and every week she was doing some work to put little things in, and to remove dust and all that, it took longer. So I said, "well, she's increasing the work but not the pay, and not the time to do it"."*

On average, participants' hourly wages were around 20 CHF and varied significantly by legal status but not by gender. It should be noted that some reported hourly wages of less than 10 CHF. Visible people are better paid, reflecting better compliance by employers with the labour agreements in force (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Hourly wage (in CHF)



The international literature reports the frequent exposure of precarious migrant workers to a combination of occupational health risks (Benach, Muntaner, et al., 2011; Hargreaves, Rustage, et al., 2019). While 20.3% of the resident population of Geneva declare that they are not exposed to any health risks in their workplace, only 2 to 3% of the participants in the Parchemins study report a similar situation (Figure 14). While legal status does not influence the number or nature of occupational risks, gender does have a significant influence. Men reported being exposed to multiple risks more often than women (Table 8).

Figure 14: Number of occupational risks by legal status

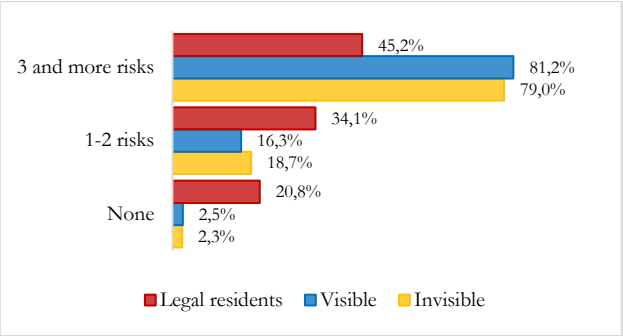


Table 8: Occupational health indicators, n (%)

N=418	Invisible	Visible	sig.	Women	Men	sig.
Influence of employment on health (self-assessment)			n.s.			n.s.
None	94 (45.2)	101 (51.0)		148 (49.0)	47 (45.2)	
Positive	46 (22.1)	43 (21.7)		61 (20.2)	28 (26.9)	
Negative	45 (21.6)	43 (21.7)		66 (21.9)	22 (21.2)	
Positive and negative	23 (11.1)	11 (5.6)		27 (8.9)	7 (6.7)	
Maslach burnout inventory - emotional exhaustion dimension			n.s.			n.s.
Low score	162 (75.7)	155 (77.1)		230 (74.0)	87 (83.7)	
Moderate score	28 (13.1)	33 (16.4)		51 (16.4)	10 (9.6)	
High score	24 (11.2)	13 (6.5)		30 (9.6)	7 (6.7)	
Has suffered an accident at work	9 (3.6)	6 (2.8)	n.s.	6 (1.8)	9 (6.9)	*
Job-related physical risks - Number of exposures			n.s.			*
None	5 (2.3)	5 (2.5)		9 (2.9)	1 (1.0)	
1-2	40(18.7)	33 (16.3)		61 (19.6)	12 (11.4)	
3 s and more	169 (79.0)	164 (81.2)		241 (77.5)	92 (87.6)	

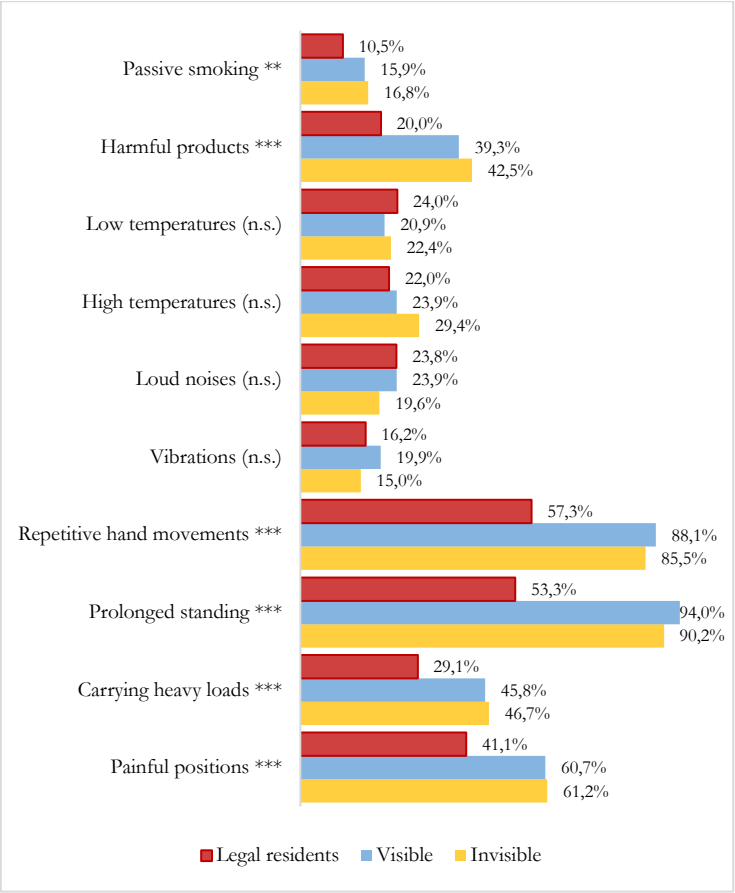
In subjective terms, half of the migrants felt that their work did not influence their health, and an equal proportion reported a positive and negative impact, regardless of legal status and gender (Table 8). On an objective level, a quarter of the participants had moderate or severe emotional exhaustion related to their work activity, according to the Maslach scale, with no difference between groups. Few participants reported having had an accident at work in the last 12 months, in contrast to previous surveys of migrant workers (Hargreaves, Rustage, et al., 2019). Men are more at risk of accidents, which is probably related to their more frequent activity in areas such as gardening or construction (Table 8), as indicated by this 46-year-old participant from Eastern Europe:

> *"Scrapper, yes, but I've been working in the same job since 2008 until 2018, now I'm not changing anything. [...] Last year I was a bit ill but now I'm very well, I'm very well, I'm staying three months, off sick you know, because of... I have a bit of pain, back pain. [...] Yes, I hurt myself a bit on the site but now I'm very well."*

The most frequently mentioned occupational risks include exposure to harmful products, repetitive hand movements, prolonged standing, carrying heavy loads and painful positions. These risk factors are clearly more frequently reported by the study participants than the legal working population (Figure 15). Although men are particularly exposed to high or low temperatures, passive smoking, vibrations and heavy loads (Figure 16), women also face different difficulties in their daily work, as explained by this 37-year-old participant from Latin America who works in the domestic sector:

> *"It's difficult, it's hard. I feel it a lot on my health; when I get home in the evening, if I sit down to eat with my children for 30 minutes, on the sofa or something like that, then to get up, it's very difficult to walk. It hurts my back so much, it hurts my shoulder so much to iron, to iron, to iron all the time. And it's true that there are things that you can't understand how you make it."*

Figure 15: Types of occupational risks by legal status

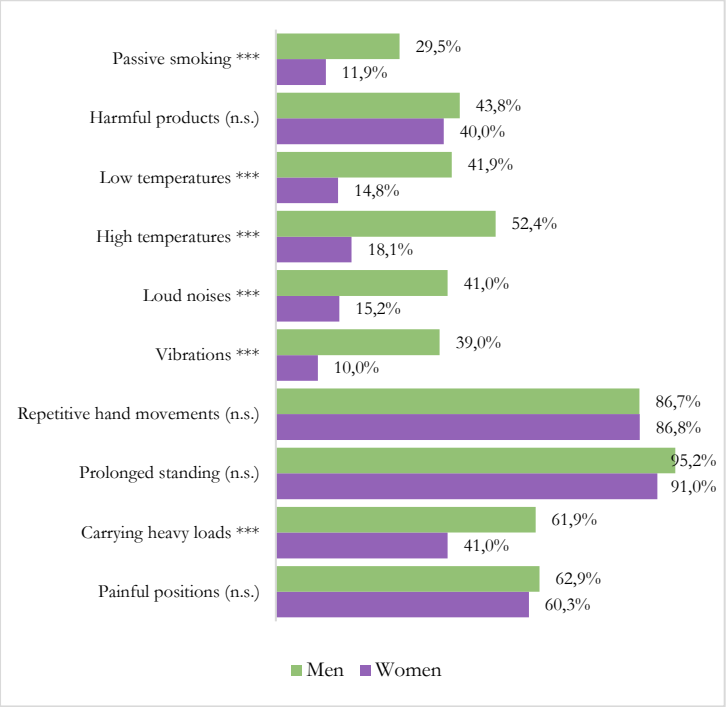


The hardship of the work is felt all the more when exposure to the risks is prolonged over time, as expressed by this 59-year-old participant from Latin America:

> *"Before, I always worked in a private household. Now I'm starting to change a little bit, because I'm already too tired of cleaning. Tired because I am starting to find it difficult to work because of my spine.*

[...]. My back hurts everywhere, every day. I can't... like before. Before I was young, I had a lot of energy... but now at my age, I can't do it. [...] before I was cleaning big houses, three floors, children, and... there you go, lots of hours of work, and even bosses who, it's true, have exploited me a lot."

Figure 16: Types of occupational risks by gender



In general, migrant workers in precarious situations have little possibility of asserting their right to rest in the event of a health problem and run the risk of not being paid if they are absent from work (Benach, Muntaner, et al., 2011). In our sample, only a quarter of the invisible people and a third of the visible migrants who had been ill in the last 12 months were able to stop working, whereas this was the case for half of the people in the general

population (Table 9). On the other hand, there is no difference between men and women in terms of continuing to work while ill.

Table 9: Working while ill, n (%)

Participants reporting illness in the previous 12 months, N=288	**Invisible**	**Visible**	**Legal residents**	**sig.**
Continued to work	119 (74.4)	81 (63.3)	178 (51.7)	***
Stopped working	41 (25.6)	47 (36.7)	166 (48.3)	

Sometimes participants face work obligations that are contrary to existing conventions, such as this 32-year-old mother from Latin America who describes the impossibility of taking maternity leave:

> *"After my daughter was born I stayed at home for 15 days and then I went back to work. So that's it.* Because then you weren't entitled to a break? ... *No, no, no, no, because if, for example, I stay at home, they don't pay me, so it doesn't suit me."*

This other participant, aged 51, from Latin America, explained the pressure to continue working because of the high financial costs she had to cover each month, including her health insurance:

> *"Before I was more relaxed it seems. But now, if you do the maths, since 2015, I've been paying rent of 2,080 CHF, plus after [receiving] the permit, insurances. I haven't managed to get a subsidy, I've asked for one, but they haven't granted a subsidy for insurance yet. So, for the children it's 289 CHF and for me it's 340 CHF at least. And for me, because I took out insurance with a deductible of 2,500 CHF, so if I fall ill I'm in trouble. I can't get sick. If I get sick, I have to pay 2,500 CHF. I did this so I wouldn't have to pay 480 CHF a month, to save money. Sometimes you pay more afterwards."*

These data illustrate the financial and employment-related insecurity that migrants face even immediately after regularisation.

They also highlight how the low-skilled and informal labour market remains insufficiently protected in Geneva. Most undocumented or recently regularised migrants face arduous and underpaid working conditions that keep them in poverty, necessitating cumulated jobs and exposing them to multiple health risks. Moreover, they have little capacity to claim and benefit from rights such as social insurance or rest in the event of illness or accident. Now this leads us to present the data related to health.

HEALTH STATUS

The housing and working conditions described above suggest risks for the health of migrants under investigation. In this section, we focus on their health status, mainly self-reported, and their use of the health care system.

Self-rated health status is a recognised indicator of morbidity and mortality (Idler and Benyamini, 1997). One third of the participants reported excellent or very good health, which is less than half the proportion reported in the general population (Table 10). There was a significant difference in the health status of invisible migrants, who reported poorer health, but there was no difference between men and women. These results confirm those from surveys conducted in various other Western countries (Kuehne, Huschke, et al., 2015; Cloos, Ndao, et al., 2020).

The burden of self-reported chronic somatic diseases is significant given the relatively young average age of the participants. This is particularly the case for invisible people and women (Table 10), confirming data from neighbouring countries (Chauvin, Parizot, et al., 2009; Chauvin, Simonnot, et al., 2014).

Depression screening, assessed by means of a validated population survey questionnaire (PHQ-9) (Kroenke, Spitzer, et al., 2010), is positive in one in four invisible migrants and one in ten visible migrants, both of which are significantly more frequent than in the general population (Table 11). Invisible migrants and

women are more often affected and, among those with depression, they have more severe symptoms (Table 11). Men are not immune to depression, as this 38-year-old participant from Latin America indicates when describing the impact of losing his job on his mental health:

> *"I spent all my life here in Geneva for 12 years, but there was a time when I lost the job, I got sick, the adjustment period and all that, so I was for a year without a job. I was desperate... depression and all that. I had to ask for help from... people I know."*

Table 10: Health indicators, n (%)

N=464	Invisible	Visible	Legal residents	sig.	Women	Men	sig.
Self-rated health status[1]				***			n.s.
Excellent or very good	72 (28.7)	95 (45.0)	529 (88.5)		116 (35.0)	51 (38.9)	
Poly-morbidity[2]				n.s.			**
≥3 chronic diseases	54 (21.5)	27 (12.7)			69 (20.8)	12 (9.2)	

[1] Excellent or very good health versus good, poor or bad health.
[2] Chronic diseases=asthma, lung disease, heart disease, hypertension, brain disease, joint disease, back disease, neck disease, diabetes, cholesterol, osteoporosis, allergy, liver disease, kidney disease.

Compared to depression, a somewhat smaller proportion of participants report anxiety symptoms as measured by the GAD-7 scale (Spitzer, Kroenke, et al., 2006). However, as with the previous measure, invisible migrants and women are more often and severely affected.

About a quarter of the participants report suffering from sleep disturbances, especially invisible migrants when interviewed using the PSQI scale (Mollayeva, Thurairajah, et al., 2016) (Table 11).

This high prevalence of depression, anxiety and sleep disorders confirm the vulnerability of migrants in precarious situations to mental health disorders in Western countries. Several hypotheses

related to living and working conditions and social environment have been put forward as contributing factors (Lindert, Ehrenstein, et al., 2009; Heeren, Wittmann, et al., 2014; Andersson, Hjern, et al., 2018). Our data suggest that the resilience of these migrants is undermined by the cumulative effect of risk and stress factors.

Table 11: Mental health indicators, n (%)

N=464	Invisible	Visible	Legal residents	sig.	Women	Men	sig.
Depressive disorders (PHQ-9)				***			*
No depression	110 (44.0)	143 (67.5)	371 (62.7)		173 (52.1)	80 (61.5)	
Mild depression	74 (29.6)	49 (23.1)	152 (25.7)		89 (26.8)	34 (26.2)	
Moderate to severe depression	66 (26.4)	20 (9.4)	69 (11.7)		70 (21.1)	16 (12.3)	
Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD-7)				***			**
No anxiety	139 (55.4)	157 (74.4)	--		197 (59.5)	99 (75.6)	
Mild Anxiety	56 (22.3)	41 (19.4)	--		80 (24.2)	17 (13.0)	
Moderate to severe anxiety	56 (22.3)	13 (6.2)	--		54 (16.3)	15 (11.5)	
Mental health condition diagnosed by a medical professional				***			n.s.
Diagnosis of depression and/or anxiety	65 (26.0)	19 (9.0)	--		64 (19.3)	20 (15.4)	
Quality of sleep (PSQI)				***			n.s.
Very good	49 (19.5)	67 (31.6)	--		84 (25.3)	32 (24.4)	
Fairly good	121 (48.2)	120 (56.6)	--		173 (52.1)	68 (51.9)	
Bad	69 (27.5)	19 (9.0)	--		65 (19.6)	23 (17.6)	
Very bad	12 (4.8)	6 (2.8)	--		10 (3.0)	8 (6.1)	

Despite the high prevalence of symptoms, only a small proportion of participants reported having received a medical diagnosis of depression or anxiety. This may be explained by the low demand for mental health care, their frequent expression as specific somatic complaints and the difficulty of primary care physicians to correctly identify them (Fakhoury, Burton-Jeangros, et al., 2021).

The obligation to join a health insurance scheme for all persons residing in Switzerland applies to migrants without legal status from the fourth month of stay. Nevertheless, a vast majority of invisible participants remain uninsured despite an average stay of more than eight years (Table 12). This is mainly due to the high costs of health insurance premiums[8], but also to a frequent lack of knowledge about rights, obligations and procedures for affiliation (Efionayi-Mäder, Schönenberger, et al., 2010). Among visible migrants, the proportion of uninsured persons rises to 50%. Less than one in ten (7.4%) of insured persons receives a cantonal subsidy for the payment of insurance premiums, even though the vast majority of them meet the financial eligibility criteria. On the other hand, all 147 minor children living in Geneva in the participants' households are insured. Indeed, the practices in force in the Canton greatly facilitate access to a subsidy for children, unlike adults.

Compared to the general population, the study participants consulted a doctor less often (Table 12). Although visible migrants are more frequently insured and more often report having a family doctor, they do not seek medical attention more often than invisible migrants. Maintaining good health and avoiding health care costs are imperative for these workers in precarious situations. The pressure of having to pay high medical costs was expressed by this 40-year-old male participant from Latin America:

[8] In 2018, the average monthly cost of health insurance including accident coverage for an adult in Geneva with a deductible of CHF 300 was CHF 470.

"(Silence) *the most difficult part... the health part already. You have to be very careful. So as not to spend money, so as not to fall ill... it can quickly add up to 5,000 CHF for a stay in hospital. You mustn't break anything... you mustn't do anything stupid, you understand?* "

Nevertheless, while invisible migrants have very limited health insurance coverage, 78% have received a medical consultation during the previous 12 months, which demonstrates the good accessibility of health care services for this population in Geneva. Women were more likely to have consulted at least once during the year. However, among the participants who had consulted, there was no difference between men and women and visible and invisible people in terms of the annual number of consultations (Table 12).

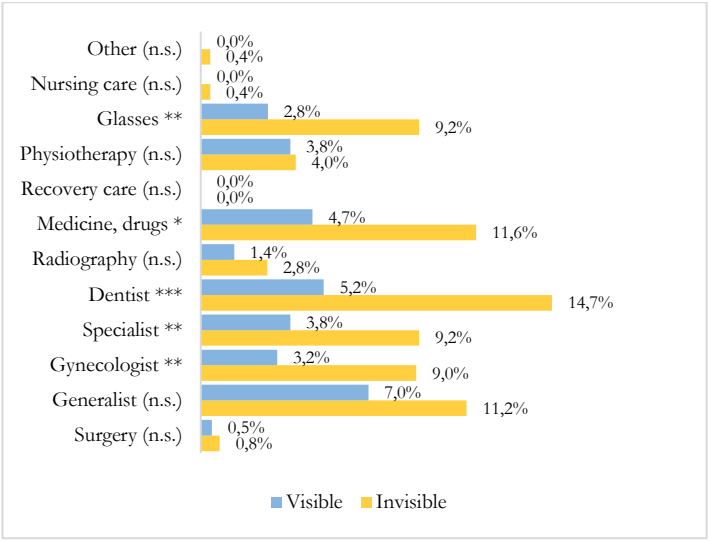
Table 12: Access to and use of the health care system, n (%)

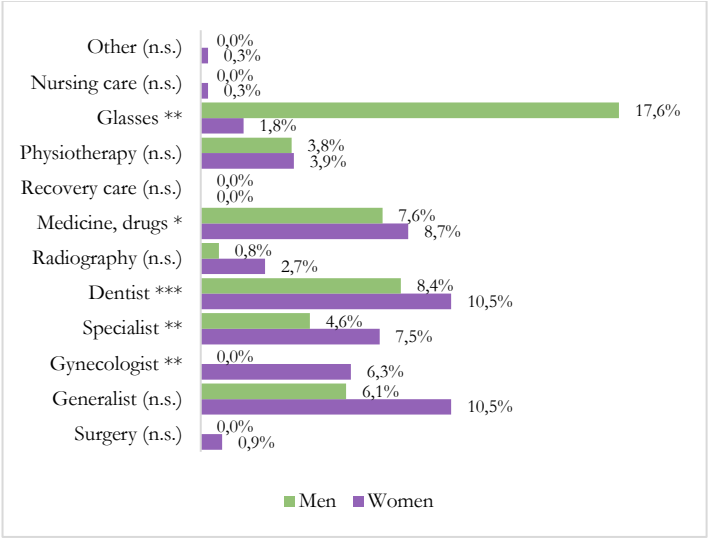
N=464	Invisible	Visible	Legal residents	sig.	Women	Men	sig.
Health insurance membership	33 (13.1)	106 (50.0)	-	***	97 (29.2)	42 (32.1)	n.s.
Having a family doctor	61 (24.3)	100 (47.4)	538 (89.8)	***	113 (34.0)	48 (36.9)	n.s.
At least one consultation with a doctor (except dentist)	192 (78.0)	151 (71.2)	503 (84.4)	***	266 (81.1)	77 (59.2)	***
Number of visits to a doctor in last 12 months: mean (standard deviation)	4.8 (6.1)	4.3 (6.0)	5.8 (9.3)	*	4.4 (5.3)	5.2 (8.1)	n.s.
Foregoing health care for economic reasons	85 (34.0)	39 (18.5)	-	***	100 (30.1)	24 (18.6)	**

Foregoing care for economic reasons is common, especially among invisible migrants and women (Table 12). Dental care, medication, glasses and visits to a general practitioner are the services that participants most often forego (Figure 17). Although the frequency of renunciation is lower in the general population (Wolff, Gaspoz, et al., 2011), the categories of benefits that people renounce are comparable.

The data demonstrate the close link between difficult living and working conditions and health. They illustrate the presence of chronic diseases that tend to accumulate at an early age, particularly among women. Mental health is particularly affected and often insufficiently cared for by the medical community. Despite these health needs, the use of the health care system is limited not only because of the frequent lack of affiliation to the health insurance system but also because of the fear of the financial burden of care and the low access to the health insurance subsidy for those eligible. This leads to a particularly high level of renunciation to seeking health care among women and invisible migrants.

Figure 17: Types of care foregone for economic reasons (multiple answers possible)





QUALITY OF LIFE

Measuring quality of life considers people's view of their life situation. Indeed, beyond the indicators relating to living conditions described above, the evaluation of well-being makes it possible to appreciate the variability of people's expectations, shaped by their socialisation context but also by their efforts to improve their opportunities. Indeed, it is known that the choice to migrate is supported by aspirations for a better life (Burton-Jeangros, Duvoisin, et al., 2021).

It is therefore important to look at how migrants assess the transformation of their life circumstances and thus their level of well-being. The data reveal that the quality of life in general is as high among visible migrants as among the rest of the population living in Geneva (Figure 18). While invisible migrants rate their quality of life lower, it remains relatively high on average (6.9 on a scale of 0 to 10). Women report a higher satisfaction with life than men (average of 7.5 versus 7.0).

The level of satisfaction is also high in relation to different areas of life. The participants were generally satisfied with their living situation with regard to their family and friends, with high and similar scores between the two groups of migrants and legal residents (7.9 and 8.4). The differences are also fairly small with regard to employment conditions, with the invisible group expressing the most dissatisfaction (6.3), while the visible and legal residents are at the same level (7.3 and 7.4), with no gender differences.

The results are more contrasted with regard to housing and financial situation, reflecting the major difficulties encountered by invisible migrants. Thus, with regard to housing conditions, invisible people are the least satisfied (6.4 on average), followed by those in the process of regularisation (7.1 on average) and legal residents who are the most satisfied (7.8 on average) (Figure 19), with no significant difference between women and men. The lowest scores were for financial satisfaction, again following a gradient between invisible migrants (4.4), visible migrants (5.8) and legal

residents (6.6) (Figure 20). In this respect, women are slightly more satisfied than men (5.2 versus 4.6), even though they earn less than men on average.

Figure 18: Satisfaction with life by legal status (scale 0-10)

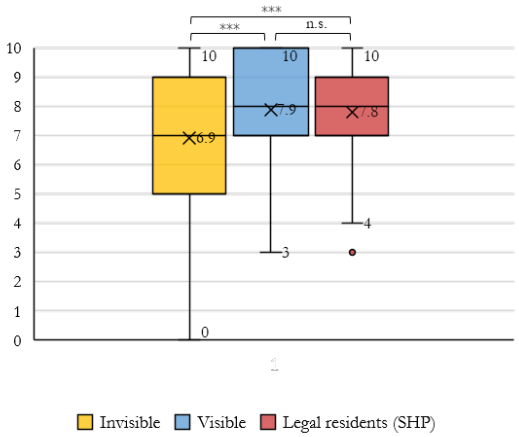


Figure 19: Satisfaction with housing by legal status (scale 0-10)

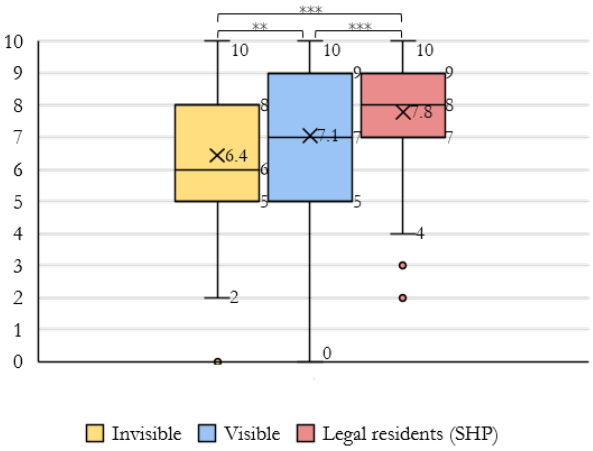
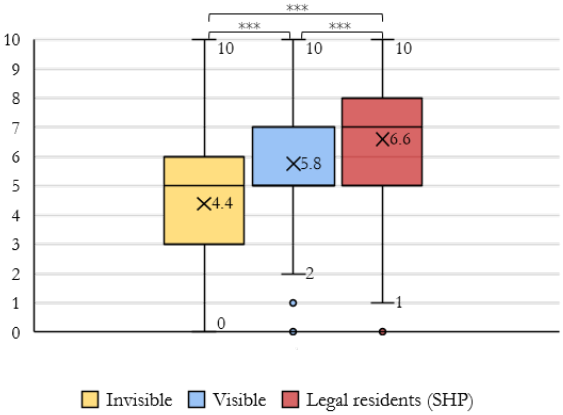


Figure 20: Satisfaction with one's financial situation by legal status (scale 0-10)

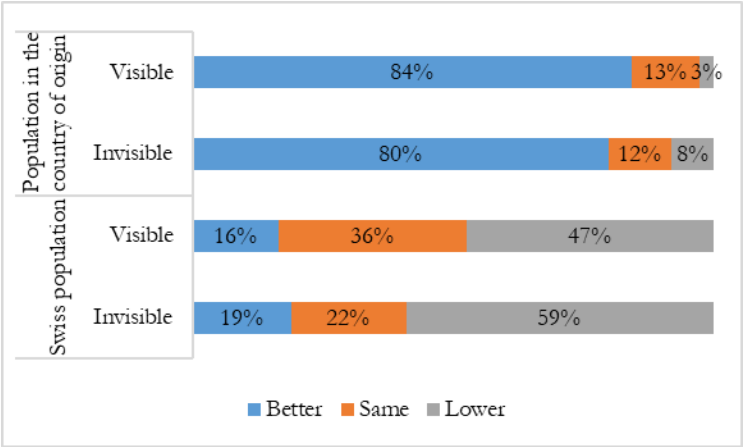


Considering that during the migration process, migrants first compare themselves to people in their country of origin and then gradually also to those living in the destination country (Hendriks and Bartram, 2019), we asked participants to compare their quality of life with respect to these two contexts. Both invisible and visible migrants felt that their quality of life was much better than that of people in their country of origin (Figure 21). While most believe that their life is worse than that of the population living in Switzerland, half of the visible migrants consider their quality of life is as good as or better than that of the Swiss population.

Elements recurrently mentioned in the qualitative interviews help to understand this high level of satisfaction with life. The feeling of freedom was mentioned, particularly by women:

> *"In fact, how can I put it, when I came here in Switzerland, it was quite different. It was nothing like back home. For example, I felt, for example, "free". So I liked it too much, I said to myself "well, I'm here now, I'm going to move", I started doing odd jobs with some girlfriends I met here too. Then I met my boyfriend and that was it, I liked it, I said to myself 'I like it here, I like it...' and that was it."* (Female, 31 years old, Latin America)

Figure 21: Quality of life comparisons



The political and economic stability of Switzerland as well as the fact that they feel safe there are valued over the violence and financial difficulties that are omnipresent in the country of origin:

> *"Here I feel, even when I was illegal I felt freer than over there. Over there it's violence, problems of danger, and all the worries I had. I had no freedom. When I came here, I found that again, so it meant a lot to me. Apart from the work and the other minor problems I had here. For me, being illegal was the least of my worries. Because I was living well anyway."* (Female, 56 years old, Latin America)

Participants noted their ability to meet their basic needs, which is enough to justify their journey and accept the difficulties encountered in Switzerland:

> *"Switzerland was easy for me. In the sense that even if I didn't have the [permit] ... my situation was always good. With or without. For example... I was never sick and I could pay my rent. I could hold 1 or 2 jobs at least and I could pay my rent and maintain my flat."* (Female, 41 years old, Africa)

At the same time, the economic relations maintained with the country of origin also reinforce their choice. Thus, the ability to support relatives left behind, by ensuring the education of children, improving their living conditions and access to medical care for family members was highlighted. This 38-year-old woman from Asia explains this in relation to her parents.

> "What was the effect of being able to send money to your family? What changed in your family's living conditions in [Asian country]? *Um... I was able to improve our house. My parents' house. So, they are not worried when it rains. And... as far as living conditions are concerned, like when my parents get sick, at least we can take them to the hospital. We can take them there. Because my father had a stroke and we took him to the hospital, but if we didn't have the money, he could have died. So... it helps them, in every way. My parents are happy that they can buy... food, they can eat what they want. Because I give them money* [laughs]. *And ... my parents are very grateful* [...] *they are not extravagant. They just want... a simple life. Just... um not feel rich, but at least there's improvement."*

Participants stressed that they were proud of their achievements, despite the difficulties associated with undocumented life. As this participant put it:

> *"So, I feel proud to be in Geneva, proud to have learned French, proud to have brought my son back. Even though it was a difficult time to be without a residence permit, I still feel good. Because I've achieved a lot. Yes."* (Female, 29 years old, Latin America)

This pride is also sometimes carried by the family back home, and reinforced by the fact of having obtained a residence permit.

These results on quality of life suggest that a large number of undocumented economic migrants rate their choice to migrate positively, as the benefits are considered to be important both for themselves and for their relatives. They confirm the importance of including data on subjective assessment of well-being in population surveys, as they complement indicators of objective conditions. Nevertheless, they should not lead to the conclusion that

the situation of undocumented migrants is not problematic, as it remains so in comparison to the living conditions of the population living in the canton of Geneva.

Conclusion

The data from the first wave of the Parchemins study make it possible to describe several facets of the lives of undocumented and newly regularised migrants in Geneva. Beyond the diversity of migratory paths and family configurations that have led participants to live in Geneva without a residency permit for a long period of time, the data reveal commonalities in their paths but also the gaps between their living conditions and those of the local population.

Before presenting a summary of the main results, it is important to mention some of the pitfalls encountered in conducting the Parchemins study. Firstly, the data collected undoubtedly provides original knowledge in Switzerland and in Europe on the living conditions of undocumented economic migrants, who are present in all countries but are often poorly known. We were able to recruit a relatively diverse sample through different channels, which is fairly representative of the migrant population according to the field observations of health professionals and associative partners. However, it is obviously impossible to assess the representativeness of this sample in the absence of systematic data on this population. Furthermore, we were able to document the situation of those who managed to stay in Geneva despite the difficulties encountered, namely those who were the most motivated, the most resilient and/or those who were the most spared from identity checks. In addition, it is known that many undocumented migrants return voluntarily to their country because of the constraints of life in Geneva and that certain categories of migrants are more exposed to identity checks and the risk of expulsion (Schwarz, 2016). In other words, while the data are important and original, they only provide knowledge about the people we were able to mobilise to participate in the Parchemins study and whose

resources, skills and belonging to migrant categories less exposed to repression have enabled them to reside in Switzerland for many years.

Secondly, the study took the opportunity of a pilot regularisation programme to develop a project adopting the format of a natural experiment. The aim was to follow a cohort of people on the assumption that, according to the commitments of 'Operation Papyrus', migrants in the process of regularisation would receive their residence permit 3 to 6 months after the application, i.e. between the first and second wave of data collection. It was thus planned to evaluate the differences between regularised migrants and those who remained undocumented. But this was without taking into account the administrative delays in the management of the files, which led many applicants to wait for their permit well beyond the announced deadline, with some of them still waiting for their permit in 2021. In addition, the irruption of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 in Geneva had a strong impact on the project, disrupting the lives of economically precarious migrants as we documented during the first containment in 2020 (Burton-Jeangros, Duvoisin, et al., 2020; Duvoisin, Jackson, et al., 2022). These elements affect the initially planned comparison between newly regularised and undocumented migrants that we will implement in the rest of the Parchemins study. The data presented here therefore provide a picture of the situation of undocumented economic migrants at the time of the implementation of 'Operation Papyrus' and before the Covid-19 pandemic.

The results highlight the difficulties encountered in the areas of housing, social integration and working conditions. The lack of residence permits exposes to abuses by landlords and employers, who take advantage of undocumented economic migrants' lack of protection. For them, the fear of being identified as undocumented limits leisure activities and constrains their social and emotional life (Sigona, 2012; Pila, 2016). At the same time, activities organised by associations and communities of belonging (churches, sports activities, etc.) offer important opportunities to

break out of isolation, while keeping these migrants in places and activities separate from the rest of Geneva society.

As might be expected, the hardship of not having legal status has consequences for the health status of these migrants, who report poorer health than legal residents, chronic illnesses and psychological disorders clearly more often than the general population. However, as the ability to work and therefore to earn a wage is the driving force in their migratory project, illness does not prevent them from working or lead them to challenge their employment conditions. Moreover, their ability to access the health care system is less than that of the local population, except for children, with the risk of allowing health problems to seriously deteriorate before being taken care of.

The data on living conditions highlight differences between men and women which reflect hierarchical gender relations at the global level. Women who work more often in the domestic economy are paid less and are exposed to arduous working conditions. As these take place in the private sphere of the home, they are particularly difficult to challenge. Women go to the doctor more often, reflecting their greater burden of chronic illnesses and mental health problems, and they renounce to seek care more often than men. The gendered dimension of undocumented economic migration trajectories thus translates into particularly difficult living conditions for women living in Geneva without legal status, while at the same time they make an essential contribution to the local domestic economy (World Health Organization, 2017). The implementation of 'Operation Papyrus', targeting in particular women domestic workers, can be seen as a recognition of the merit of these migrants (Chauvin and Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014), who are socially better tolerated than other undocumented groups.

Furthermore, the results show that the migrants we have described here as visible have better living and health conditions than those who are undocumented. In other words, meeting the criteria for obtaining a residence permit is favourable in several

respects. It is likely that these differences reflect the selection process that allows the least precarious undocumented migrants to apply for regularisation, since they have to prove a longer presence, a job and an income ensuring financial independence.

Paying attention to the quality of life of people who have lived without legal status for a long time highlights their conceptions of life and their expectations of it. The results suggest that these expectations are not the same as those of a population who has not experienced migration. Furthermore, it can be hypothesised that for these people, the fact that they judge their living conditions to be satisfactory or even good, particularly in comparison with the situation in their country of origin, enables them to accept the difficulties and to legitimise their choice to migrate. The results thus underline the ability of undocumented migrants to face hardship, in the name of the benefits of their journey, both because of the freedom and security they have gained in Switzerland and because of the possibility of support to relatives left behind in their country of origin, whose living conditions are made better by the hard work carried out by one of their relatives in the canton of Geneva.

The ability of the people we met to consider their situation in Geneva as satisfactory in their own eyes is not enough to make it acceptable from the point of view of local standards. As their presence is in contradiction with the law, these people find themselves in a situation that limits their capacity to mobilise themselves around their rights, which, moreover, takes time and exposes them. This highlights the crucial role of the associative partners who led the negotiations that led to 'Operation Papyrus' and who today continue to accompany the candidates for regularisation through the stages of the administrative procedure. The role of Geneva's trade unions in the field of domestic economy can also be highlighted (Guex, 2021).

Access to a residence permit not only provides rights, but also social recognition with a now legitimate presence in the canton of Geneva. In addition to these advantages, regularisation nevertheless brings with it constraints, particularly financial, with the need

to take out health insurance, pay taxes and social security contributions (and sometimes arrears in these areas), and return trips to the country, which are now possible and expected by relatives. Moreover, although the permit gives access to the Geneva labour market as a whole, competition is strong and the ability to use the skills and diplomas obtained relatively long ago in the country of origin is not self-evident. The longitudinal data collected in the Parchemins study, which will be used in future publications of the project, aim to evaluate the consequences of obtaining a residence permit, but also the ambivalence generated by the new status obtained.

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In 2017, the canton of Geneva implemented Operation Papyrus, an innovative policy to regularize undocumented migrants. The Parchemins study was initiated in this context in order to measure the consequences of access to a residence permit on health, well-being and living conditions. Adopting an approach combining social determinants of health and life course, this interdisciplinary study collects quantitative and qualitative longitudinal data by following a cohort of people over several years. This publication reports on the results of the first wave of data collection. It describes the characteristics and motivations of undocumented economic migrants living and working in the canton of Geneva, their family and social situation, their housing and employment conditions, as well as their health status. These results fill a gap in the empirical data for this population in Switzerland and in Europe.

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