Living in limbo:
Economic and social costs for refugees[1]

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Abstract

Our paper tests the hypothesis that living in limbo could have negative consequences for socio-economic integration of refugees. We define limbo as a protracted time period when asylum seekers are waiting for the decision concerning a permanent refugee status. We rely on the data from the French survey of migrants, ELIPA, to measure integration by labor market participation, fluency in French, finding new French friends and studying. We first demonstrate that limbo is exogenous as it is not related to the ability of refugees to fulfill administrative procedures. Then, we show that a higher share of the time living in limbo slows down all aspects of socio-economic integration, except fluency in French. The chances of a given refugee being employed are 1.2 times higher than for a refugee that spent one standard deviation more time in limbo, while the odds of having French friends and studying in France are 1.7 times higher, respectively.

JEL codes: J15, J18

Keywords: forced migration, refugees, socio-economic integration

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1. Introduction

We define limbo as a protracted time period when asylum seekers are granted only a temporary residence permit linked to the asylum application, waiting for the decision concerning a permanent refugee status. Temporary means that asylum seekers do not know if they will be protected after their residence permit expires and are unable to build and plan for the future. They are denied family reunion, are excluded from the labor market, cannot attend official language classes, cannot open a bank account and do not have access to other forms of basic rights and settlement assistance available to refugees on permanent protection permit.

This paper attempts to quantify socio-economics costs of the time spent by asylum seekers in limbo and how it affects their successful integration once they receive official refugee status. Using a longitudinal ELIPA survey, which contains rich data on refugees and other immigrants in France, we measure integration of refugees by labor market participation, language skills, education, and origin of new friends.

Integration is a two-way process. On the one hand, inclusive public policies and welcoming societal attitudes could speed it up, while administrative barriers and discriminatory attitudes could erect obstacles on the road to the integration. On the other hand, asylum seekers and refugees have to exert effort to invest in human and social capital, whose strength could be related *inter alia* to administrative barriers. The theoretical framework for understanding asylum seekers and refugees' incentives is provided by the theory of human capital. The uncertainty about the future during the limbo period might diminish the willingness of refugees to invest in country-specific human capital in the destination country, such as language, or using this time to seek the recognition of qualifications or skills.[4]

The severity of the limbo period could be characterized by its length, the access to the employment and to other rights during this period and likelihood of receiving a future protection status. According to the 2014 Migration Integration Policies Index (MIPEX) France is ranked 17 out of 38[5] . Unfortunately, this index does not differentiate between forced and voluntary migration.

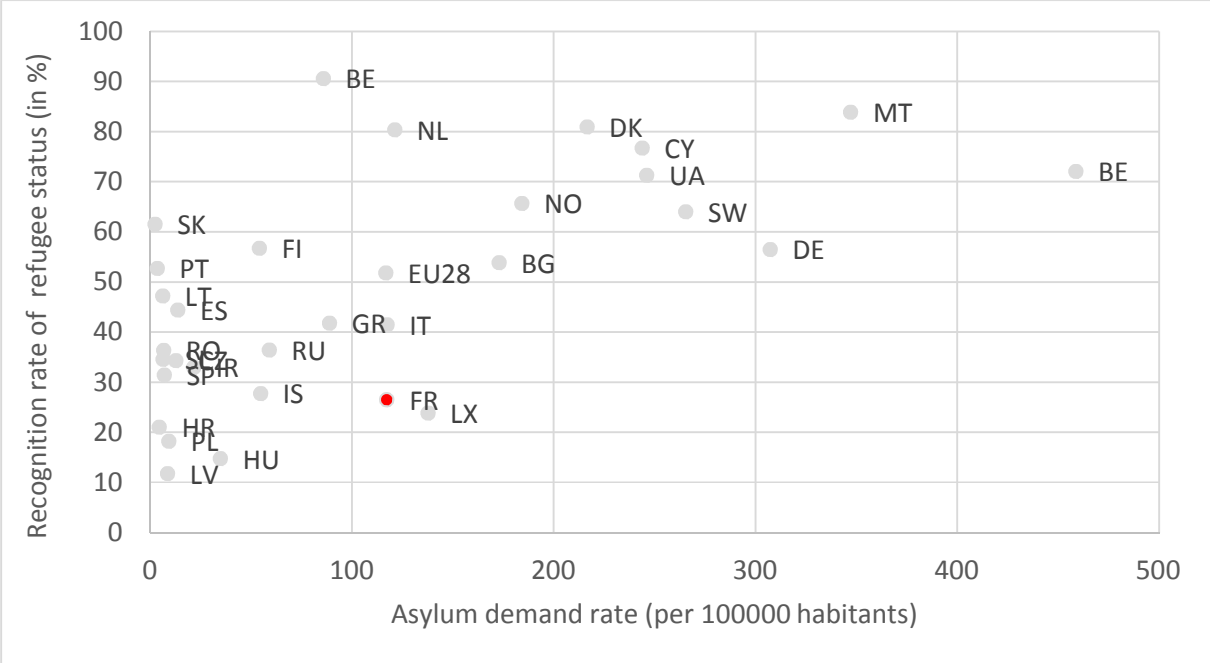
Based on to the Eurostat statistics, France has one of the lowest rates of granting protection to refugees (Figure 1). In 2014, the denial of the protection status (refugee status, subsidiary protection or humanitarian reasons) was 78% in France, 58% in Germany, 23% in Sweden and 42% in Italy. This means that asylum seekers in France spend their limbo time in complete uncertainty about their future. According to the ELIPA survey, the average length of limbo in

[4] Once they receive their refugee status, it is hypothesized that the inability of refugees to return home might enhance their willingness to invest in country-specific human capital in the destination country, relatively to other immigrants (Cortes, 2004; Bauer et al., 2013).

[5] MIPEX is produced by the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB), the Migration Policy Group (MPG) and their partners for all EU Member States, Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and the USA.

France was 2.8 years, but it varies significantly, from one year in the first quartile to 3 years in the last quartile.[6]

Figure 1. Asylum application rate vs Recognition rate of the refugee status

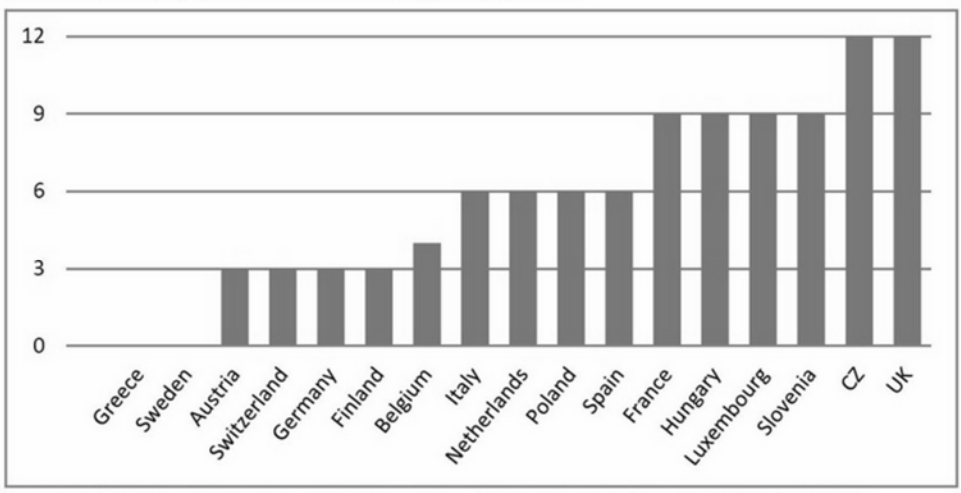


Source: Eurostat data, own calculations.

Asylum seekers in France have the right to apply for a work permit if the OFPRA has not ruled on their application within 9 months. In comparison to other OECD countries, this is a relatively long waiting period (Figure 2). Moreover, to obtain this permit, the asylum seeker has to provide proof of a job offer and the duration of the work permit cannot exceed the duration of the residence permit linked to the asylum application (6 months). The lack of work permit also complicates access to the education, because asylum seekers do not have the right to have an internship (often obligatory for the graduation). Asylum seekers do not have access to vocational training schemes as these are also subject to the issuance of a work permit.

Figure 2. Minimum waiting periods for accessing the labor market for asylum seekers in selected EU countries, in months

[6] Recognizing the burden of long waiting time, in July 2015, a major change in the asylum policy was voted in France. The new legislation simplifies administrative burden for asylum seekers and aims to reduce the average waiting period for the decision to 9 months by the end of 2016. The waiting period was de facto eliminated for Syrian and Iraqi refugees that have arrived to France in 2015 within the European relocation scheme. The impact of this reform needs to be evaluated.



Source: OECD Questionnaire on the integration of humanitarian migrants, 2016 (p 20/21)

A number of sociological studies rely on testimonies to explore the effect of limbo. Surveying refugees in Canada, Coates and Haward (2005) conclude that limbo poses undue costs in the form of suppressed labor market activity, debilitation from mental duress and excessive use of social assistance. Having interviewed Somali refugees who live for protracted periods of time in camps[7] in the North Eastern Province of Kenya, Abdi (2005) argues that such situations result in wasted human capacity and deprivations of human dignity. Refugees are dismayed by their dependency on inadequate aid, and express diminished self-worth due to their inability to better their situation or to escape from the conditions of camp life. Leach and Mansouri (2004) collect testimonies of mostly Iraqi refugees living in Australia under temporary protection regime, who testify to feeling marginalized and depressed, with little hope for the future.

The "mental" cost of complicated asylum procedures or provisions of only temporary protection has been also documented by mental health professionals. Luebben (2003) undertook a testimony project for traumatized Bosnian refugees in Frankfurt, Germany. They find that protracted periods of limbo trigger existential fears, reexperiencing of trauma and feelings of hopelessness and deep despair and can actively contribute to further destabilize survivors.

Sociologists document a "dependency syndrome" in refugee camps as camps engender passivity and break-down of all initiatives and self-worthiness of refugees. Awaiting others to provide one's needs eventually could lead to complete dependency on donations. Other researchers refute the concept of a dependency syndrome by arguing that refugees just lack alternatives at this particular period of life because they are removed from social, political and economic coping systems (Kibreab, 1993; Abdi, 2005; Clark, 1985).

The limbo effect could be compared to the hysteresis effect after long spells of unemployment, well-documented by economists. Due to hysteresis effects, extended limbo periods of refugees could lead to the loss or obsolesce of job skills, demotivation and disillusion. Moreover, unlike

[7] Living conditions of asylum seekers can differ from country to country. While some live in camps, others live in specialized hosting centers, such as CADA (Centre d'accueil de demandeurs d'asile) in France.

unemployment, there is nothing that can be done by refugees to shorten their limbo period, no matter how much effort they exert. The effects could be additionally worsened for refugees due to potential skill mismatch, the absence of qualification or skill recognition, informational and cultural asymmetries and psychological traumas.

Despite the large qualitative literature on the negative impact of the limbo, there is virtually no study that attempts to measure its impact and provide causal evidence. To our knowledge, the study of Hainmueller et al. (2016) is the only attempt to quantify the negative impact of limbo. However, they use Swiss administrative data that provides little information about refugees, limiting the measure of integration to one variable (the probability of being employed) and potentially leading to the omitted variable bias. In contrast, our paper uses data from the French longitudinal survey of migrants, ELIPA, surveyed during three waves (2010, 2011 and 2013), which allows us to rely a richer set of outcomes and control. Our findings confirm Hainmueller et al. (2016), that spending time in limbo could slow down economic integration of refugees via lower participation in the labor market. However, we find that some social effects could be even stronger, as the time spent in limbo has a significant and large effect on social integration via acquiring French friends and educational training.

Our paper contributes to the economic and sociological literature about integration of refugees. Earlier economic studies about integration of forced migrants (Cortes, 2004; Bauer et al., 2013; Rea and Wets, 2014) investigate the degree of labor market integration with time spent in a host country and compare it with the speed of integration of voluntary migrants. Yet, this standard economic literatures has little to say about what defines an inclusive society and which public policies could accelerate integration of refugees. One notable exception constitutes the analysis of dispersal policies in Sweden and Denmark that had negative effects on employment of refugees (Damm, 2009; Edin et al., 2004). By focusing on an integration policy, our paper is also related to the larger literature about the integration of voluntary migrants (Chiswick, 1978; Borjas, 1984) and socio-economic policies that could speed it up. Bilgili et al. (2014) provide a literature overview about the effect of migration-specific policies (140 policy indicators from MIPEX database on institutions) towards integrating migrants into various dimensions of social and economic life in European countries. Their general conclusion is that friendlier policies foster integration.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, we describe ELIPA longitudinal survey of migrants, present our sample and variable definition. In section 3, we explain our identification strategy and in section 4 provide empirical results. In section 5, we conclude.

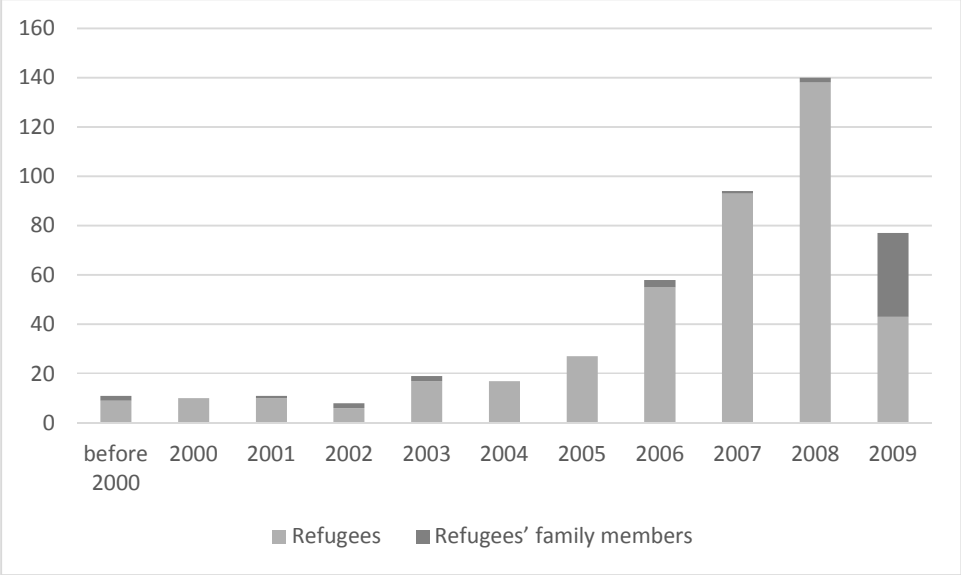
2. Data: ELIPA longitudinal survey

ELIPA, *Longitudinal Survey of the Integration of First-time Arrivals*, was initiated by the French Interior Ministry to collect data on migrants that have signed the integration contract (CAI, Contrat d'Accueil et d'Intégration) in 2009 and interviews migrants during three waves,

2010-2011-2013. The integration contract has become permanent in 2007 and it includes half a day of welcome, one day of civic education, one day of training "Living in France", a free language course of up to 400 hours[8], an assessment of professional skills and social assistance if necessary.

The sampling frame was based on the list provided by the OFII (l'Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration), the public institution in charge of immigration and integration issues. It included migrants above 18 years old from countries other than EEA and Switzerland, that have settled in four French regions (Ile de France, PACA, Rhône-Alpes, Alsace), which includes 66% of all new immigrants. The survey was conducted in 13 foreign languages plus French, which covers 93% of immigrants. Thirteen percent of surveyed migrants have an official refugee status. During the first wave 848 refugees (were interviewed (13,9% of total sample), in the second – 666 refugees (14%),(, and in the third – 471 refugees (13.1%). During the third wave, we have 425 refugees and in our sample (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Number of refugees and their year of arrival for refugees that have received their official refugee status in 2009



Source: ELIPA

ELIPA is the only longitudinal migrant face-to-face survey available in Europe. In the UK, the UK Border Agency commissioned the *Survey of New Refugees* (2005-2009) to provide a longitudinal study of refugee integration in the UK. However, it was a postal questionnaire and one can reasonably assume that it suffered from a selection bias as only well-integrated refugees have responded. Also, its time-span is only 21 months after the asylum decision.

The ELIPA survey allows us to measure the length of residency and limbo with the precision of up to six month. We know that all refugees have received their first residence permit (residence permit of the refugee or residence permit of the family member of the refugee) in

[8] The course is optional and is only offered to immigrants with very poor French skills.

the second half of 2009 (between September and December). The surveys took place in the first half (April - June) of 2010, 2011 and 2013. Hence, for refugees with no limbo, the maximum residency length is three and half years (first half of 2013- second half of 2009).

ELIPA survey data provides rich information about refugees, such as their origin, language skills, education, family status, housing conditions. We measure socio-economic outcomes of integration by relying on questions that appear in all three waves of the survey:

- To measure economic integration, we use information about employment status. The formulation of the question does not allow distinguishing between the legal or illegal nature of this job.
- We measure linguistic integration by relying on the self-declaration of refugees about their ability to speak French, to make an appointment with a doctor via a phone call, to ask for directions on a street, to write an official letter and fill an administrative form.
- Investment in human capital can be approximated by information of whether a refugee has pursued education, including language courses, in France after his/her arrival.
- Another aspect of social integration can be apprehended with information about origins of new friends acquired since arrival in France (French or same origin as a surveyed refugee).

3. Identification strategy

Identifying the effect of limbo is far from straightforward. While sociological and medical literature, surveyed in the Introduction, portrays only negative aspects of limbo, this time could be used and is used by refugees to integrate. Although official language courses are not offered to asylum seekers, they can follow courses offered by numerous associations. Although they have no right to do internships during first 9 months, refugees could study and do an internship afterwards. Although they do not have the right to vocational job training, they could do odd jobs, etc. Yet, numerous administrative barriers might diminish opportunities for asylum seekers living in limbo relatively to the refugees with the official status.

In order to measure the complex impact of limbo, the estimated model first accounts for the total numbers of years since the arrival of refugees in France and then measures limbo as a share of these years spent waiting for the official refugee status:

$$Integration\ outcome_i = \alpha_1 + \alpha_2 Time\ since\ arrival + \alpha_3 Limbo_i + \alpha_4 Controls_i + \varepsilon_i,$$

where $Integration\ outcome_i$ is one of our four measure of the socio-economic integration.

First outcome measures the probability of being employed with a categorical variable (being employed vs unemployed). Second outcome measures fluency in French with a categorical variable based on self-evaluation (fluent vs not fluent). Third outcome measures probability of studying in France, including language courses, and it is measured with a categorical variable (studied vs. not studied). The final outcome measures social integration by exploring new friendships that have been formed since the arrival in France (French friends vs no French

friends). The estimation concerning employment integration is performed only on active individuals, excluding students and retired persons, while other outcomes are measures for all surveyed individuals.

$Time\ since\ arrival_i$ counts number of years since the arrival of the refugee in France till the date of the survey that varies depending on the wave. Variable $Limbo_i$ is a share of $Time\ since\ arrival_i$ that is spent in limbo. Based on sociological literature, we hypothesize that refugees start integrating as soon as they arrive in France, however the speed of this integration could be slowed down during the limbo period. In other words, variable $Limbo_i$ describes the quality of the $Years\ since\ arrival_i$. We expect a positive sing on $Years\ since\ arrival_i$ and a negative sign for $Limbo_i$.

Finally, control variables include gender, age, squared age, nationality, location in France, fluency in French, educational level, acquaintances in France before arrival, number of children, studies in France as well as expectations concerning their future in France (permanent or temporary stay). Earlier studies have shown that language skills and investment in human capital either at home or in the host country speed up economic integration (measured by income) of refugees (Cortes, 2004; Bauer et al., 2013) and migrants (Spener and Bean, 1999; Chiswick and Miller, 2002, 2014). Several studies highlight different host country socioeconomic outcomes depending on the origin and the residential location of immigrants (Spener and Bean, 1999, Edin and Fredriksson, 2003; Ukrayinchuk & al., 2010, 2011, 2016). According to the human capital model, the existence of a social network in the host country reduces the informational gap and thus accelerates the socioeconomic integration of newcomers. The presence of children could have a dual effect on integration. On the one hand, high costs of childcare might increase aid dependence of refugees and reduce their contacts with the host society. On the other hand, having children in school would put parents in contact with other parents and teachers, extending their host network and fostering social integration. Finally, we expect that immigrants who project to stay permanently in France will make more efforts to integrate into the French society than those who envisage their stay as temporary.

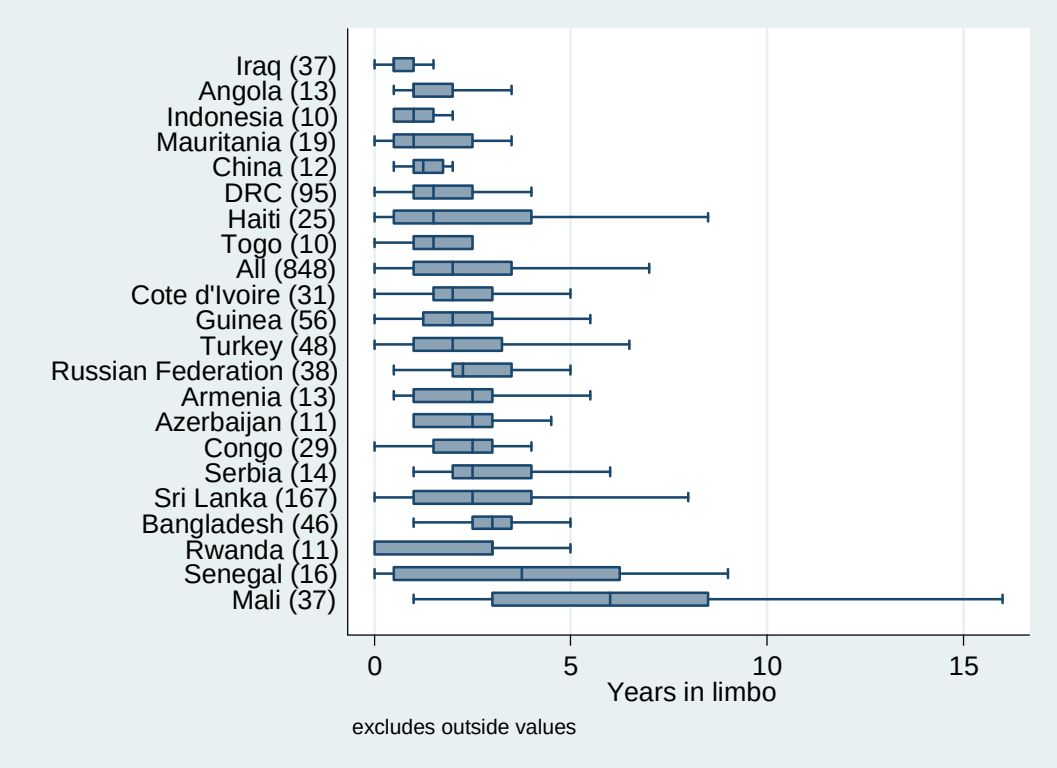
We run our model separately for male and female refugees because the process of the socio-economic integration could be gender specific due to different reasons for men and women to seek refuge and different attitudes of natives in host economies. Women have a higher probability of being victims of sexual crimes, which could have long-term negative psychological impact (Fiddian-Qasmieh, 2014). More generally, gender discrimination could be either an incentive or an obstacle to migrate (Ruyssen and Salomone, (2015). Gender differences persist after arrival in the destination country. According to "family investment model," immigrant wives could take on dead-end jobs to finance their husbands' human capital investments in the first few years after migration (Baker and Benjamin, 1997). At the same time, local authorities might apply a preferential treatment to women in assistance programs, contributing to the erosion of men's traditional roles as protectors, providers and decision makers (El-Bushra, 1999; Stepputat and Nyberg Sorensen, 2014). Finally, integration of women could be influenced by social networks, as women rely more strongly on relatives and friends for help, information, protection and guidance at destination (Docquier et al., 2009).

Since we attempt to measure the causal impact of limbo on socio-economic integration, it is important to ensure the length of limbo is exogenous. This assumption is not straightforward as one can reasonably assume that the length of limbo could be influenced by education, language skills and social network, as educated French-speaking refugees who already have acquaintances in France could have more information and be more effective in their communication with authorities, hence speeding up their application process. Moreover, it could be related to some unobserved ability of refuges, such as motivation to be integrated in a home country. However, in line with the literature in the sociology and political science, we argue that the length of the limbo is random and it depends on the administrative procedures (such as backlog). For example, Hainmueller et al. (2016) describe the situation in Switzerland where schedules for all hearings and decisions are decided by the SEC and the randomness of limbo is explained by the fact that caseworkers often process applicants from the same origin in batches once a certain number of similar cases have accumulated.

To test our assumption of exogeneity, we correlate the duration of the limbo with different refugee's characteristics. Results in Table 2 show that limbo is virtually not related to characteristics that could be related to the ability of refugees to integrate, such as education level, linguistic proficiency and acquaintances in the host country. There is a small ambiguity regarding the education. Refugees without any diploma appear to experience higher waiting times. This negative effect might reflect lower ability of uneducated refugees to fulfill administrative procedures necessary for obtaining the refugee status, or it may also be explained by the negative administrative selection of candidates to refugee status. One can assume that the refugee status is more easily granted to the more educated people because of their presumed ease to integrate. Thus, to exclude the possibility of the negative selection due to the educational attainment, we have carried out the supplementary regressions on the subpopulation of graduates only and all our results are robust.

Our findings show that the limbo period is strongly related to the age, gender and nationality, characteristics that cannot be influenced by refugees. The limbo period is shorter for women, which could explained by the fact that they are more likely to be candidates for a family reunion. We also find that older refugees experience shorter limbo times. Concerning nationality, we document that refugees from some regions receive their refugee status faster than refugees from other regions. The Box-and-whiskers plot (Figure 4) provides an additional evidence on the distribution of limbo in different countries: the median limbo varies from half a year for Iraqi refugees to 6 years for Malian refugees. Such heterogeneity of limbo with respect to the nationality is in line with the anecdotal evidence that refugees from some countries are considered as "genuine", while there are suspicions that economic migrants from some countries pretend to be refugees and hence are subject to more screening and, hence, longer length of limbo. Overall, our analysis allows us to assume that the length of limbo is exogenous with respect to the refugees' ability, but might be influenced by the administrative procedures.

Figure 4. Box-and-whiskers plot for the years in limbo for refugees from different countries



Source: ELIPA survey and authors' calculations.
The box presents 25th and 75th percentiles, the line in the box indicates the median, while whiskers are drawn to span all data points within 1.5 the interquartile range of the nearer quartile. Number in parenthesis indicates a number of observations for each country.

4. Empirical results

Estimation results are reported in Tables 4-7. Since estimation is done with logistic model and most of our explanatory variables are categorical, the findings are presented in terms of odds ratios. We present results for the whole sample, as well as separately for male and female refugees. We also estimate the model separately for refugees with at least bachelor education in order to exclude the possibility of the negative selection due to the educational attainment, which was documented earlier.

Table 4 presents determinants that influence refugees' chances of being employed. As expected, with every additional 6 months spent in France, the odds of being employed increase statistically. For example, a refugee has 1.1 times more chances of being employed than someone who has spent 6 months less in France. The magnitude of this coefficient is similar

for male and female refugees, although the results for female refugees are not statistically significant.

To evaluate the economic significance of limbo, we consider the impact of one standard deviation of limbo. The chances of a male refugee being employed are 0.88 times lower than for a refugee that spent one standard deviation less in limbo (0.992^24.58=0.82). Put slightly differently, the chances of a refugee being employed are 1/0.82=1.21 times higher than for a refugee that spent one standard deviation more in limbo. Table 8 summarizes the economic significance of our coefficients of interest (time since arrival and limbo) in Tables 4-7.

Our findings indicate that being male increases the odds of being employed by more than twice. Concerning other explanatory variables, they are mostly statistically significant but only for male refugees. As expected, being fluent in French raises the odds of being employed by 1.4 times, a result that was first noticed by Borjas (1994). Being located in the Parisian region also raises the chances by around 1.7 times. Age has an expected non-linear impact, increasing the chances of finding a job but in a decreasing manner. As to the home country, refugees from Asia have 1.4 times more chances of being employed relatively to refugees from Sub-Saharan Africa. Interestingly, educational degree has no statistically significant impact on being employed for males, but having a high-school degree increases the odds of women of finding a job by 1.7 times relatively to those without a degree. Poor significance of education could be explained by problems of recognition of diplomas. But having studied in France has no impact neither. Finally, if male refugees plan to stay in France, the odds of finding a job increase by 1.4 times relatively to those who plan to go back to their own country.

Table 5 presents determinants that influence refugees' chances of being fluent in French. In order to control for the knowledge of French before arriving in France, we include an additional explanatory variable "Parents' language", which is statistically significant. As expected, if refugees speak only French or French and other language with their parents during childhood, their likelihood of being fluent of French is much higher than those who speak other language. Every additional 6 months spent in France increase refugees' odds of being fluent in French by 1.07-08 times on average. Interestingly, our variable of interest – limbo - is not statistically significant, suggesting that uncertainty during limbo does not appear to discourage refugees from learning French.

The likelihood of being fluent in French is the same for both genders. The origin of refugees has expected signs. Male refugees from Sub-Saharan African have more than 8 times higher chances of being fluent in French than refugees from Europe and 15 times higher chances than refugees from Asia. Having high-school degree increase the chances of male and female refugees by 1.5 and 3.8 times, respectively. Having studied in France increases the chances of male refugees by 3.4 times, while the impact is not statistically significant for women. Surprisingly, living outside the Parisian district significantly increases language proficiency for female refugees but is statistically insignificant for male refugees. Women with a higher number of children are less likely to speak French (by 0.85 times), what suggest that having children doesn't sufficiently increase contacts with host society members, via school for example.

Table 6 reports odds of having French friends and we find that the chances of having French friends are 1.6 and 1.3 times higher for male and female refugee that spent one standard deviation less time in limbo. As expected every additional 6 months spent in France increase the odds of having French friends by 1.11-1.13 times. The educational attainment exerts a very significant effect as well. Male refugees with at least a high school degree have twice times more chances of having French friends than refugees with a high-school degree, while female refugees with a bachelor degree have 3 times chances than with a high-school diploma. Man have 1.4-1.5 chances of having French friends than women. Female refugees that study in France have 3.4 times more chances of having French friends. Older refugees appear to be less likely to make new friends. Having an additional child increases the odds of finding French friends by 1.3 times, but only for male refugees. Surprisingly, being employed does not increase chances of making French friends.

Results in Table 7 report odds of studying in France since arrival. To control for the fact that probability of studying is higher during earlier life stages, we include the age of refugees at the moment of arrival. The chances of studying in France are 1.7 and 1.9 times higher for male and female refugees that spent one standard deviation less time in limbo. Every additional 6 months spent in France increase the odds of studying (1.08-1.13 times). Previous educational attainment has a predictable impact on the odds of studying in France, but only for male refugees. Male refugees with at least a bachelor's degree have 2.4 times more chances of studying in France than refugees with a high-school degree. Surprisingly, refugees from Asia have less chances of studying in France than refugees from Sub-Saharan Africa.

We test the robustness of our results with respect to different cohort. To do so, we estimate our results by including only data for more recent refugees whose duration of stay in France is less than 5 years (Table 9)[9]. Our results remain robust and the effect of limbo is even more economically significant. This suggests that limbo has a particularly negative effect on the economic and social integration during the initial years, but wears off slightly with time[10].

To visualize marginal effects, we present our findings about the impact of limbo on socio-economic integration of refugees in Figures 5A-D. We choose to present the results according to gender (male or female) and education (no diploma and HS diploma) in order to highlight the relative importance of these factors. The results show that men have a higher probability of being employed than women, notwithstanding their educational attainment. A longer time spent in limbo slows down integration, but the impact is the same for both genders. At the same time, gender does not influence the probability of studying in France, probability of speaking French and having French friends: notwithstanding the gender, higher education speeds up social integration. The impact of the limbo is largest on the probability to invest in human capital (the line is the steepest). Interestingly, the impact of limbo on the probability of having friends is non-linear, as its negative impact increases by more with the share of time spent in limbo.

[9] We also estimate our results by including data for refugees whose duration of stay is less than 10 years. The results are quantitatively similar. They are available from the authors.

[10] Ideally, we would like to run separately a regression with the data from the third wave only in order to test weather the effect of limbo remains three and a half years after obtaining the official refugee status. However, a small number of observations prevents the model from converging.

5. Conclusions

Our paper tests the hypothesis that living limbo could have negative consequences for socio-economic integration of refugees. Earlier studies to address this question were done by sociologists and psychologists, with a help of in-depth interviews, and were qualitative in nature. Our study is the first attempt to quantify the impact of limbo. To do so, we rely on the data from the French survey of migrants, ELIPA.

Our findings indicate that integration - measured by labor market participation, fluency in French, finding new French friends and studying - is strengthened as a refugee spends more years in France. Yet, a higher share of the limbo period slows down successful integration for all aspects, except fluency in French. The chances of a given refugee being employed are 1.17 times higher than for a refugee that spent one standard deviation more in limbo. The magnitude of the social costs are particularly important. We find that the chances of having French friends and studying in France are 1.7 times higher for a given refugee that for a refugee that spent one standard deviation more time in limbo.

The heterogeneity of costs with respect to some aspects of integration requires further investigation. Particularly high negative impact on the likelihood of finding new friends and studying in France is worrying, as these two activities are not forbidden for asylum seekers. This might be a sign that administrative barriers impose more lasting social than economic costs due to asylum seekers' demotivation, loss of dignity, often described by the sociological and psychological literature, which prevents refugees from reaching out to the natives.

Our findings have important policy recommendations concerning numerous policies that be introduced in host countries to shorten limbo period. This would assume that the authorities are willing to do so but lack financial and human resources. However, it is often argued that temporary protection regimes are designed with an explicit intent of deterrence and not protection (Leach and Mansouri, 2004). In these cases, authorities assume that refugees would be unable to integrate and want to prevent their arrival. If limbo has long-term consequences on refugees' human and social capital, slow integration of refugees could be self-fulfilling.

Finally, this paper is also a plea for collecting better data on refugees. The existing data does not allow us to control for the situation of refugees in their source country, such as financial assets, employment, spoken language, etc. Currently, there is no data based on face-to-face survey designed to analyze issues related to the integration of refugees.

Compliance with Ethical Standards:

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The authors declare that they have **no conflict** of interest.

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Table 1. Sample description (in percent, unless specified otherwise)

		All surveyed individuals	*Individuals active on the labor market*
N. of obs		1989	1485
Years in limbo	*0*	7,44	6,26
	1-2	48,62	48
	2.5-3	16,24	18,1
Gender	Men	59,28	67,3
Age	Average age (in years)	33,59	34,3
	18-29 years	38,45	36,3
	30-39 years	37,21	40,9
	40-49 years	15,69	17,3
	50-64 years	8,61	4,86
Educational attainement	No degree	32,27	28,4
	Less than high-school	27	27,8
	High school degree	24,08	25,2
	Bachelor's or higher degree	16,19	18,2
Etude en France	Yes (%)	21,52	23,7
Nationalité	Europe	13,78	12,9
	Asia	37,16	35,4
	Maghreb	1,26	1,28
	Sub-Saharan Africa[11]	26,25	28,7
	Others	21,57	21,77
Expectations concerning the stay in France	Permanent	81,8	81,4
Fluency in French (self-evaluation)	Fluent	62,44	63,6
Employment	Employed	48.97	65,61
	Unemployed	25,66	35,09
	Study	13,32	
	Housewife/men	10,46	
	Retired	1,56	
Location in France	Ile de France	72,45	73,2
New friends since arrival in France	Same origin	14,18	13,5
	French	3,57	3,03
	Different origins	71,95	73,9
	No new friends	10,31	9,56
Acquaintances in France before arrival	Foreign and French	30,97	29,1
	Only foreing	24,28	23,4
	Only french	0,96	1,21
	Nobody	43,77	46,1

[11] Sub-Saharan Africa is defined here as the countries formerly under French administration, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, The People's Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon the Republic of Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Chad and Togo.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for continuous variables

Panel A. Individuals active on the labor market.

	Variable	Mean	Stan. Dev.	Min	Max	N
All sample	Limbo (rate)	57,99	26,13	0,00	97,22	1485
	Years since arrival	8,88	5,77	1,00	41,00	1485
	Age	34,26	8,84	18,00	68,00	1485
	Age squared	1251,96	662,04	324,00	4624,00	1485
Male	Limbo (rate)	60,72	24,58	0,00	97,22	1000
	Years since arrival	9,09	5,96	1,00	41,00	1000
Female	Limbo (rate)	52,34	28,24	0,00	96,87	485
	Years since arrival	8,44	5,32	1,00	34,00	485
Educated	Limbo (rate)	56,44	26,01	0,00	96,67	1021
	Years since arrival	8,07	4,76	1,00	3,.00	1021

Panel B. All sample.

	Variable	Mean	Stan. Dev.	Min	Max	N
	Limbo (rate)	57,58	26,97	0,00	97,22	1985
All sample	Years since arrival	8,68	5,99	1,00	41,00	1985
	Age	33,59	10,84	18,00	81,00	1985
	Age squared	1245,99	868,59	324,00	6561,00	1985
	Age at arrival	29,26	11,36	0,00	79,00	1985
Male	Limbo (rate)	60,77	25,22	0,00	97,22	1179
	Years since arrival	9,14	6,25	1,00	41,00	1179
Female	Limbo (rate)	52,80	28,71	0,00	96,87	806
	Years since arrival	7,97	5,50	1,00	38,00	806
Educated	Limbo (rate)	55,81	26,32	0,00	96,77	1265
	Years since arrival	7,78	4,75	1,00	36,00	1265

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis for testing the impact of refugees' characteristics on the length of limbo

	Number	*Length of limbo (in periods of 6 month)*		*GLM results Dependent varialbe : Length of limbo*	
		Average	**Stand. Dev**	**Coef**	**Pr > Khi-2**
Nationality					
Europe	274	6.23	5.11	-0.65	*0.41*
Asia	739	5.42	5.63	-1.04***	*<0.01*
Sub-Saharan Africa	519	6.40	5.89	-2.11	*0.97*
Other	453	4.50	5.06	Ref	*0.84*
Age at arrival					
Less than 18	228	11.02	8.54	9.32***	*<0.01*
18-29 years	930	5.40	5.01	3.99***	*<0.01*
30-39 years	530	4.52	4.07	3.49***	*<0.01*
40-49 years	197	4.34	4.29	3.32***	*<0.01*
50-64 years	74	3.15	2.21	2.04*	*0.07*
Over 65	26	1.77	0.43	Ref	*Ref*
Gender					
Male	1179	6.11	5.84	1.26***	*<0.01*
Female	806	4.79	4.99	Ref	*Ref*
Acquaintances in France before arriving					
Only foreign	911	5.67	5.84	0.04	*0.86*
Only French	19	3.26	1.05	-1.81	*0.12*
Foreign and French	185	5.94	6.73	0.28	*0.51*
Nobody	870	5.45	4.98	Ref	*Ref*
Parents' language					
French	57	6.35	6.26	0.40	*0.56*
French&others	488	5.81	5.97	-0.01	*0.97*
Others	1440	5.46	5.36	Ref	*Ref*
Education at arrival					
No degree	720	7.16	7.09	1.62***	*<0.01*
Less than high-school	497	5.18	4.36	0.01	*0.98*
High-school degree	455	4.47	4.36	Ref	*Ref*
Bachelor's or high degree	313	4.18	3.49	-0.07	*0.84*
Intercept				0.88	

Table 4. Odds ratio (OR) of being employed

	All sample		***Male***		***Female***		***Educated***	
	OR	Pr	OR	Pr	OR	Pr	OR	Pr
Time since arrival	1.10***	*<.01*	1.107***	*<.01*	1.101***	*<.01*	*1.130****	*<.01*
Limbo	0.99**	*0.02*	0.992**	*0.01*	0.999	*0.77*	*0.996**	*0.09*
Age	1.20***	*<.01*	1.249***	*<.01*	1.069	*0.37*	*1.158****	*<.01*
Age2	0.99***	*<.01*	0.997***	*<.01*	0.999	*0.60*	*0.998****	*<.01*
Male vs Female	2.21***	*<.01*					*1.817****	*<.01*
Origin								
Europe vs AfricaSS	1.05	*0.97*	1.186	*0.53*	0.809	*0.51*	*0.959*	*0.69*
Asia vs AfricaSS	1.35***	*<.01*	1.400**	*0.04*	0.982	*0.81*	*1.255*	*0.13*
Other vs AfricaSS	0.86*	*0.06*	0.759**	*0.02*	0.959	*0.88*	*0.907*	*0.32*
Not fluent vs Fluent	0.69***	*<.01*	0.720*	*0.06*	0.753	*0.22*	*0.835*	*0.28*
Ile de France vs Other	1.72***	*<.01*	1.768***	*<.01*	1.490*	*0.08*	*1.794****	*<.01*
Education								
No degree vs HS	0.86	*0.64*	1.071	*0.43*	0.586*	*0.09*		
Less than HS vs HS	0.87	*0.70*	0.864	*0.37*	0.693	*0.52*	*0.885*	*0.58*
Bachelor vs HS	0.89	*0.88*	0.940	*0.84*	0.886	*0.50*	*0.925*	*0.92*
Temporary vs Permanent	0.82	*0.19*	0.726	*0.09*	1.084	*0.74*	*0.793*	*0.17*
Not studied vs Studied	1.01	*0.91*	0.992	*0.97*	1.050	*0.83*	*0.938*	*0.72*
Nb of observations	1485		1000		485		1021	
Employed	*916*		681		235		621	
Not employed	*569*		319		250		400	
Wald	<.01		<.01		<.01		<.01	

Dependent variable is one if a refugee in employed in year t and 0, otherwise. Table presents odds ratios.
*significant at 10% ; ** significant at 5 percent; ***significant at 1 percent;

Table 5. Odds ratio (OR) of being fluent in French

	All sample		***Male***		***Female***		***Educated***	
	OR	Pr	OR	Pr	OR	Pr	OR	Pr
Time since arrival	1.077***	*<.01*	1.082***	*<.01*	1.077***	*<.01*	*1.056****	*<.01*
Limbo	0.999	*0.57*	1.000	*0.96*	0.995	*0.15*	*0.997*	*0.34*
Age	0.883***	*<.01*	0.866***	*<.01*	0.884**	*0.01*	*0.896***	*0.01*
Age2	1.001**	*0.02*	1.001*	*0.07*	1.001	*0.13*	*1.001*	*0.16*
Education								
No degree vs HS	0.490***	*<.01*	0.670**	*0.02*	0.265***	*<.01*		
Less than HS vs HS	0.790	*0.95*	0.949	*0.81*	0.593	*0.84*	*0.693***	*0.02*
Bachelor vs HS	1.033**	*0.02*	1.125	*0.17*	0.897*	*0.05*	*0.980*	*0.33*
Origin								
Europe vs SS AfricaSS	0.217***	*<.01*	0.134**	*0.01*	0.207***	*<.01*	*0.118****	*<.01*
Asia vs SS AfricaSS	0.130***	*<.01*	0.065***	*<.01*	0.171***	*<.01*	*0.079****	*<.01*
Other vs SS AfricaSS	0.508***	*<.01*	0.212	*0.88*	0.997***	*<.01*	*0.364****	*<.01*
Parents' language								
French vs other	4.335*	*0.08*	>999.9	*0.95*	1.585	*0.80*	*3.307*	*0.38*
French & other vs other	2.905	*0.27*	3.407	*0.96*	1.892	*0.25*	*4.096***	*0.02*
Ile de France vs Other	0.668***	*<.01*	0.780	*0.21*	0.588**	*0.01*	*0.824*	*0.28*
Not studied vs Studied	0.451***	*<.01*	0.293***	*<.01*	0.768	*0.25*	*0.359****	*<.01*
Number of children	0.906*	*0.07*	1.012	*0.88*	0.851	*0.03*	*1.000*	*0.99*
Male vs Female	1.170	*0.21*					*1.031*	*0.85*
Temporary vs Perm.	0.781	*0.11*	0.900	*0.60*	0.731	*0.18*	*0.720**	*0.08*
Nb of observations	1985		1179		806		1265	
Not fluent	744		436		308		451	
Fluent	1241		743		498		814	
Wald	<.01		<.01		<.01		<.01	

Dependent variable is one if a refugee is fluent in French in year t and 0, otherwise. Table presents odds ratios.
*significant at 10% ; ** significant at 5 percent; ***significant at 1 percent;

Table 6. Odds ratio (OR) of having new French friends since arrival

	All sample		***Male***		***Female***		***Educated***	
	OR	Pr	OR	Pr	OR	Pr	OR	Pr
Time since arrival	1.11***	*<.01*	1.106***	*<.01*	1.132***	*<.01*	*1.108****	*<.01*
Limbo	0.98***	*<.01*	0.981***	*<.01*	0.990**	*0.01*	*0.988****	*<.01*
Age	0.93***	*<.01*	0.860***	*<.01*	1.030	*0.52*	*0.929**	*0.09*
Age2	1.00***	*<.01*	1.001**	*0.01*	0.999	*0.29*	*1.001*	*0.26*
Education								
No degree vs HS	0.64***	*<.01*	0.460**	*0.01*	1.069	*0.16*		
Less than HS vs HS	0.62***	*<.01*	0.397***	*<.01*	1.025	*0.13*	*0.572****	*<.01*
Bachelor vs HS	1.49***	*<.01*	0.982**	*0.02*	2.913***	*<.01*	*1.460****	*<.01*
Male vs Female	1.45***	*<.01*					*0.627****	*<.01*
Origin								
Europe vs AfricaSS	0.99**	*0.05*	0.472	*0.34*	2.207***	*<.01*	*0.934*	*0.15*
Asia vs AfricaSS	0.26***	*<.01*	0.191***	*<.01*	0.391***	*<.01*	*0.236****	*<.01*
Other vs AfricaSS	1.09***	*<.01*	1.276***	*<.01*	1.089	*0.58*	*1.150****	*<.01*
Not fluent vs Fluent	0.53***	*<.01*	0.514***	*<.01*	0.500***	*<.01*	*0.607****	*<.01*
Not studied vs Studied	0.43***	*<.01*	0.607*	*0.07*	0.290***	*<.01*	*0.443****	*<.01*
Employed vs Not employed	1.09	*0.75*	1.129	*0.51*	1.223	*0.39*	*1.039*	*0.82*
Acquaintances in France before arriving								
Foreign vs none	0.80	*0.12*	0.707	*0.02*	0.979	*0.96*	*1.019*	*0.66*
French vs none	1.96	*0.35*	1.776	*0.60*	>999.9	*0.96*	*1.277*	*0.84*
For.& French vs none	1.01	*0.70*	2.181	*0.25*	0.798	*0.96*	*1.254*	*0.74*
Number of children	1.08	*0.25*	1.302**	*0.01*	1.002	*0.98*	*1.095*	*0.25*
Ile de France vs Other	0.89	*0.45*	0.770	*0.27*	0.987	*0.95*	*1.123*	*0.55*
Temporary vs Permanent	1.16	*0.36*	1.358	*0.18*	1.156	*0.57*	*1.230*	*0.29*
Nb of observations	1989		1179		806		1265	
Yes	1502		906		211		982	
No	487		273		595		283	
Wald	<.01		<.01		<.01		<.01	

Dependent variable is one if a refugee has found new French friends since his arrival until time t and 0, otherwise. Table presents odds ratios. *significant at 10% ; ** significant at 5 percent; ***significant at 1 percent;

Table 7. Odds ratio (OR) of studying in France

	All sample		***Male***		***Female***		***Educated***	
	OR	Pr	OR	Pr	OR	Pr	OR	Pr
Time since arrival	1.09***	*<.01*	1.078***	*<.01*	1.132***	*<.01*	*1.111****	*<.01*
Limbo	0.98***	*<.01*	0.979***	*<.01*	0.978***	*<.01*	*0.979****	*<.01*
Age at arrival	0.96***	*<.01*	0.961***	*<.01*	0.969**	*<.01*	*0.969****	*<.01*
Education at arrival								
No degree vs HS	0.77**	*0.02*	1.009*	*0.06*	0.571	*0.47*		
Less than HS vs HS	0.85	*0.19*	1.190	*0.50*	0.541	*0.36*	*0.819***	*0.03*
Bachelor vs HS	1.37***	*0.00*	2.396***	*<.01*	0.541	*0.45*	*1.339***	*0.02*
Origin								
Europe vs AfricaSS	0.75	*0.44*	0.572	*0.94*	1.082	*0.37*	*0.661*	*0.93*
Asia vs AfricaSS	0.37***	*<.01*	0.304***	*<.01*	0.506***	*<.01*	*0.384****	*<.01*
Other vs AfricaSS	0.77	*0.22*	0.582	*0.82*	1.181*	*0.08*	*0.796*	*0.16*
Temporary vs Permanent	0.88	*0.40*	0.839	*0.41*	1.000	*0.99*	*0.806*	*0.25*
Male vs Female	1.03	*0.81*					*0.921*	*0.59*
Acquaintances in France before arriving								
Foreign vs none	0.76	*0.68*	0.714	*0.76*	0.899	*0.21*	*0.928*	*0.75*
French vs none	0.72	*0.79*	0.443	*0.36*	8.335	*0.11*	*1.127*	*0.81*
For.& French vs none	0.83	*0.96*	1.090	*0.20*	0.582**	*0.03*	*0.924*	*0.77*
Ile de France vs Other	1.16	*0.29*	1.100	*0.60*	1.249	*0.32*	*1.078*	*0.66*
Nb of observations	1989		1179		806		1265	
No	1561		929		628		991	
Yes	428		250		178		274	
Wald	<.01		<.01		<.01		<.01	

Dependent variable is one if a refugee has studied since his arrival to France till time t and 0, otherwise. Table presents odds ratios. *significant at 10% ; ** significant at 5 percent; ***significant at 1 percent;

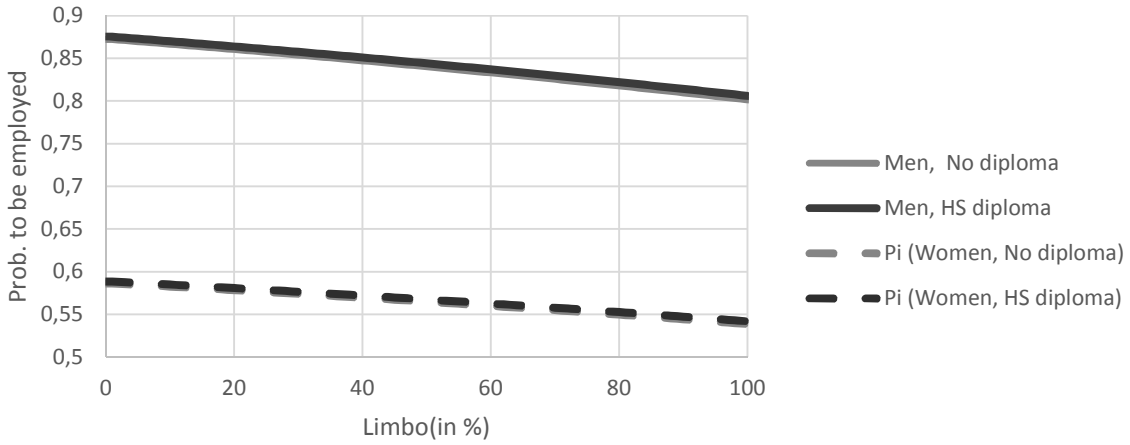
Table 8. Summary of economic significance of findings

		Unite variation				One standart deviation variation			
		All sample	Male	Female	Educated	All sample	Male	Female	Educated
Probability of …		Odds	Odds	Odds	Odds				Odds
… being in employment	Time since arrival	1.10***	1.11***	1.11***	1.13***	1,73***	1,83***	1,67***	1,79***
	Limbo	0.99**	0.99**	0.99	0.99*	0,77**	0,82**	0,97	0,90*
	StD TSA					*5,77*	*5,96*	*5,32*	*4,75*
	StD Limbo					*26,13*	*24,58*	*28,24*	*26,01*
… being fluent in French	Time since arrival	1.077***	1.08***	1.08***	1.06***	1,56***	1,64***	1,50***	1,29***
	Limbo	0.999	1.00	0.99	0.99	0,97	1,00	0,87	0,92
… of having new French friends since arrival	Time since arrival	1.11***	1.11***	1.13***	1.11***	1,87***	1,88***	1,98***	1,63***
	Limbo	0.98***	0.98***	0.99**	0.99***	0,58***	0,62***	0,75**	0,73***
… of studying in France	Time since arrival	1.09***	1.08***	1.13***	1.11***	1,68***	1,60***	1,98***	1,65***
	Limbo	0.98***	0.98***	0.98***	0.98***	0,58***	0,59***	0,53***	0,57***
	StD TSA					*5,99*	*6,25*	*5,50*	*4,74*
	StD Limbo					*26,97*	*25,22*	*28,71*	*26,32*

Table 9. Robustness test: Stay <=5years

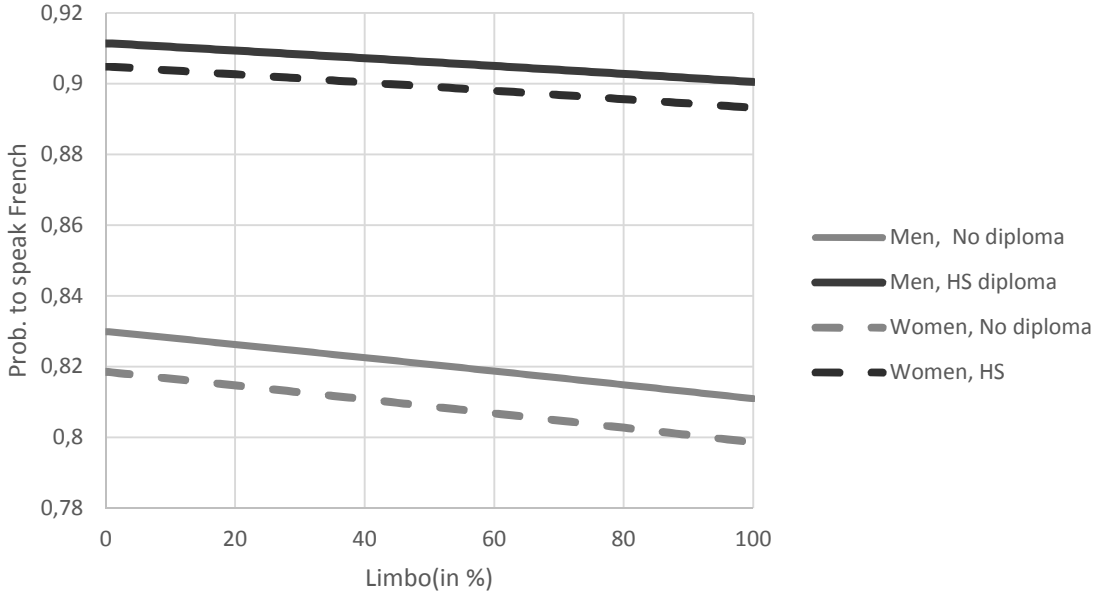
	Employed		***Fluent in French***		***New French friends***		***Studying in France***	
	OR	Pr	OR	Pr	OR	Pr	OR	Pr
Time since arrival	1.175***	*<0.1*	1.096***	*<0.1*	1.222***	*<0.1*	1.360***	*<0.1*
Limbo	0.994**	*0.03*	0.999	*0.63*	0.988***	*<0.1*	0.979***	*<0.1*
Age	1.180***	*<0.1*	0.894***	*<0.1*	0.936**	*0.04*		
Age2	0.998***	*<0.1*	1.001	*0.11*	1.000	*0.29*		
Age at arrival							0.950***	*<0.1*
Education								
No degree vs HS	0.864	*0.91*	0.519***	*<0.1*	0.604***	*<0.1*	0.614**	*0.01*
Less than high school vs HS	0.872	*0.38*	0.765	*0.57*	0.551***	*<0.1*	0.591***	*<0.1*
Bachelor vs HS	0.890	*0.98*	1.121**	*0.01*	1.328***	*<0.1*	1.455***	*<0.1*
Not studied vs Studied	1.016	*0.75*	0.462***	*<0.1*	0.486***	*<0.1*		
Not fluent vs Fluent	0.691	*0.11*			0.624***	*<0.1*		
Origin								
Europe vs Africa SS	0.955	*0.34*	0.116***	*<0.1*	0.852	*0.21*	0.495	*0.50*
Asia vs AfricaSS	1.513**	*0.01*	0.075***	*<0.1*	0.245***	*<0.1*	0.325***	*<0.1*
Other vs AfricaSS	1.075	*0.76*	0.432***	*<0.1*	0.998***	*<0.1*	0.608	*0.53*
Temporary vs Permanent	0.825	*0.21*	1.069**	*0.02*	1.139	*0.47*	0.804	*0.27*
Male vs Female	2.225***	*<0.1*	1.069	*0.64*	1.507***	*<0.1*	0.963	*0.81*
Acquaintances in France before arriving								
Foreign vs none			1.147***	*<0.1*			0.761	*0.30*
French vs none			6.779*	*0.05*			0.863	*0.87*
For.& French vs none			2.779	*0.39*			1.205	*0.33*
Ile de France vs Other	1.717***	*<0.1*	0.756*	*0.07*	0.926	*0.66*	1.083	*0.65*
Employed vs Unemployed					1.129	*0.44*		
Number of children			0.976	*0.70*				
Nb of observations	1059		1447		1447		1447	
Employed (fluent, study, French friend)	593		846		262		1043	
Not employed (no fluent, no study,no French friend)	466		601		1185		404	
Wald	<.01		<.01		<.01		<.01	

Figure 5A. Probability to be in employment according to Limbo period by gender and diploma



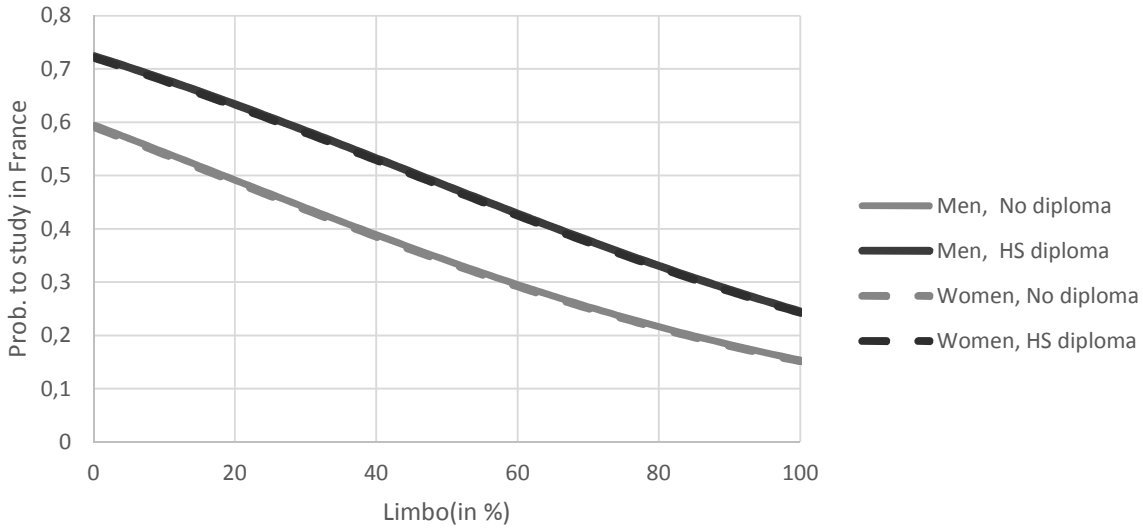
Note: Reference individual: Sub-Saharian African, 34 years old, poor french, living in Paris, haven't studied in France, with a project of permanent stay in France

Figure 5B. Probability to have a good level in French according to Limbo period by gender and diploma



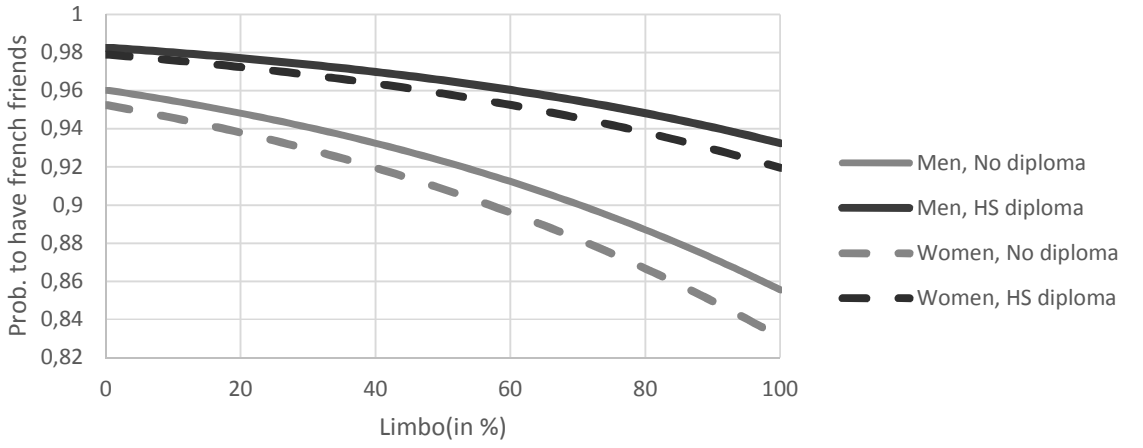
Note: Reference individual: Sub-Saharian African, 34 years old, living in Paris, with a project of permanent stay in France, not speaking French with parents

Figure 5C. Probability to invest in human capital according to limbo period (by gender and diploma)



Note: Reference individual: Sub-Saharian African, 34 years old, poor French, living in Paris, haven't studied in France, unemployed, with a project of a permanent stay in France

Figure 5D. Probability to have French friends according to limbo period (by gender and diploma)



Note: Reference individual: Sub-Saharian African, 34 years old, poor French, living in Paris, haven't studied in France, unemployed, with a project of permanent stay in France