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MIGRANT SELECTIVITY IN EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION

Referent

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Migrant selectivity refers to the notion that immigrants differ in certain characteristics from individuals who stay behind. This talk considers patterns and consequences of selectivity. The first part depicts the selectivity profiles of recently arrived immigrants in Germany and thus provides an illustration of the sociodemographic composition of current migration streams. The second part is dedicated to the consequences of educational selectivity for new immigrants' language acquisition in different European destinations.

We start by describing the selectivity profiles of recent migrants to Germany with respect to educational attainment, age and sex. We illustrate how refugees differ from labor migrants, and we compare the profiles of Syrian refugees who overcame the distance to Europe to Syrian refugees who settled in the neighboring countries Lebanon or Jordan. We rely on destination-country data from the IAB-BAMF-GSOEP Survey of Refugees, the Arab Barometer, and the German Microcensus as well as on a broad range of origin-country data sources. Regarding sex selectivity, males dominate among refugees in Germany, while, among economic migrants, sex distributions are more balanced. Relative to the societies of origin, labor migrants are younger than refugees. At the same time, both types of migrants are drawn from the younger segments of their origin populations. In terms of educational attainment, many refugees perform rather poorly relative to German standards, but compare positively to their origin populations. The educational profiles for labor migrants are mixed. Finally, Syrians who settle in Germany are younger, more often male and relatively better educated than Syrians migrating to Jordan or Lebanon.

In the second part, we investigate destination-language skills upon arrival and subsequent skill growth among recently arrived Polish and Turkish immigrants in Germany, Great Britain and Ireland. We introduce selectivity considerations to a model of language acquisition, arguing that positively selected individuals should display higher levels upon arrival and faster growth in destination language proficiency thereafter. For the empirical study, we supplement data from the from the two wave panel study Socio-Cultural Integration Processes of New Immigrants in Europe. In terms of language skill growth, our longitudinal findings suggest that positively selected migrants, net of differences in pre-migration investments, postmigration exposure and incentives, acquire the destination language faster than negatively selected immigrants. Despite having lower skills at arrival, they surpass negatively selected immigrants relatively quickly.