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before, during, and after migration

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Abstract

Young adults crossing borders between wealthy countries for work and adventure is an under-studied group of international migrants. In this paper, we use a unique combination of full population register data from both Sweden and Norway to explore the so called ‘Party-Swedes’ – young people emigrating from Sweden in 2010-12 to work in Norway. We follow them and their median income before leaving Sweden as well as during their stay in Norway and after possible return to Sweden. Additionally, using individual level data, we model selection into migration and return, as well as income levels after return. This enables us shed light on several theories and concepts in international migration research, such as those on selection into emigration and return, income maximization vs. target earning and concepts related to youth migration, such as the gap year within a context of liquid migration. Overall, our results suggest that in economic terms, the ‘party penalty’ seems clearly larger than the ‘party premium’. Even if these young Swedes earned well while staying in Norway, this did not translate into higher income than among their non-migrating peers after returning to Sweden. Additionally, a pronounced income drop the year after return and results showing that migrants rather postpone than abstain post-secondary education, speak of the youth migration to Norway as a ‘period of delay’ within the transition to adulthood.

Keywords: Youth migration, liquid migration, migration premium, migration penalty, gap year, mobility interregnum

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Introduction

Following the economic crisis in 2008-2009 Sweden experienced a notable increase in emigration levels, especially among young adults, to its richer neighbor Norway. These migrants left for a destination with lower unemployment levels, higher wages and potentially high economic benefits. However, they differ in international comparison in the sense that they migrate within a context of almost open borders, as well as geographical, linguistic and cultural proximity. In media and popular culture, these young temporary labor migrants have repeatedly been referred to as ‘Party-Swedes’.

A majority returned to Sweden after a couple of years. Whether staying in Norway benefitted their life after coming back, has never been studied on the aggregate level. On the one hand, they may have obtained useful work experience in Norway. On the other hand, they may have less network in the Swedish labor market, and their experience in Norway may not be so relevant for the type of jobs they want in the longer run in Sweden.

In this study we examine the Swedish-Norwegian youth migration to enhance knowledge on the economic outcomes, and on selection into migration and return. Unlike previous studies within the field, we are able to observe income trajectories prospectively over time in both origin and destination country, providing a more holistic account of the migration experience. Whereas previous research is characterized by a strong poorer-to-rich-country migration emphasis, we are able to examine to what extent classical economic theories can be applied to wealthy country contexts, or to what extent this type of youth migration rather should be interpreted through a life-course perspective. Moreover, the temporary youth migration such as the one between Sweden and Norway is of great societal importance, as it affects many young persons and the labor markets in both destination and origin.

With the use of full population register data from two countries we offer an unprecedented approach where we follow ‘Party-Swedes’ and their income trajectories over time and across borders, i.e., before, during and after migration. We also compare them with their non-migrant counterparts in both countries. Additionally, we examine the selection into Norwegian bound migration among young Swedes as well as into return to Sweden. The approach is exclusive in the return migration literature in the sense that it does not face problems with failing representation or cross-sectionality.

The ‘party migration’ from Sweden to Norway offers a highly useful case for the broader study of young labour migration. Whilst the Swedish-Norwegian migration still reflects clear economic differences between the sending and destination country, the legal, cultural or linguistic barriers are almost non-existent. This creates an almost experimental migration setting where economic determinants could be expected to play a more unrestricted role. Yet, with the exception of Sweden bound migration from Finland peaking in the 1970s (i.e. Saarela & Finnäs 2013; Saarela & Rooth 2006; Weber & Saarela 2019), there have been few studies on youth migration within this context.

Previous literature

The economics of emigration and return

Return migration has traditionally been framed within the economic development literature (Constant, 2020; Hagan & Wassink, 2020), with a majority of studies relying on econometric models and arguments tracing back to Neoclassical Economics (NE) and New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) theories. Empirical findings comprise mainly from low- to high-income country migration (Whaba 2022; Witte & Guedes Auditor 2021). Both NE and NELM theories are empirically supported, for example through studies of guest-workers in

Germany (Constant & Massey 2002; 2003; Dustmann 2003), migrants re-migrating from the US (Borjas & Bratsberg 1996), and Finnish-born migrants returning from Sweden (Rooth & Saarela 2007).

According to Neoclassical Economic Theory (NE), differences in labour demand and supply create wage differentials across nations which, in turn, cause individuals to migrate. According to this view, migrants are rational and individual actors who aim for permanent settlement in the new destination and seek to maximize their life time earnings (Sjaastad 1962; Todaro 1969). Initial migrants are positively selected in terms of skills, however, where initial expectations of higher earnings are not met, migrants are likely to return to their origin country. As such, return migration is seen as a failed attempt for a permanent move and returning migrants are theorized as being negatively selected in terms of income.

Contrasting NE, the theory of New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM), views intentional temporary migration as a household strategy to minimize the risks arising from market failures in origin countries. Initial selection into migration is based on those not able to subsist in the origin country. Contrarily, return migration is perceived as a successful achievement of accumulated savings, where a sooner return reflects a migration experience characterized by higher income (Stark & Bloom 1985). In NELM, migrants are considered 'target earners' who leave again once they have obtained their earning target.

Migration has been perceived as beneficial for the economic development both within origin and destination countries, and for migrants themselves (e.g. de Haas 2005). However, this intrinsic relationship has also been questioned. Win-win-win-situations where origin and destination countries as well as the migrants themselves benefit from international labor migration have been questioned in the literature. Scholars have called for more attention to migrants' heterogeneity and unequal experiences in the destination countries (Battistella 2018; Hagan & Wassink 2020), their abilities to mobilize resources (Cassarino 2004) and transfer skills (Mensah 2016; Hamdouch & Wahba 2015), the conditions of return itself (Monti & Serrano 2022), as well as in the origin countries (Åkesson 2015; Hagan & Wassink 2016; Kuschminder, 2017).

Migrants moving between wealthy countries may have different motives, resources, and constraints than other migrants. On the one hand, the possibility to mobilize resources and transfer skills is presumably enhanced in contexts of migration within wealthy and culturally proximate countries. On the other hand, other non-economic motives might be even more pronounced in settings with less inter-state economic and structural inequality. Emigration from and return to similarly economically developed countries are still missing pieces within the migration and return literature, as are examinations of labor market outcomes of these migrants (Witte & Guedes Auditor 2021). Hence, we do not know to what extent or under what conditions classical economic theories can be applied to wealthy country contexts. Initial results on settlement or return intentions (though not actual migration) among emigrated German citizens show that these are not primarily explained by neoclassical models, but linked to work- and family life, well-being and social embeddedness within individual life courses (Erlinghagen et al. 2021; Ette et al. 2021).

Liquid migration and the life course

Following the fall of the iron curtain, the EU enlargement and a European spatial-political development characterized by the core principle of free movement of labor, Europe witnessed a rapid increase in its intra-European migration. This migration was temporary in nature, linked to circular, return and onward movements, and especially comprising young adults (Boswell & Geddes 2011:7-12; Favell & Hansen 2002; King 2018). The new migration flows

were argued to be characterized by individualization and spontaneity, and gave rise to the concept of ‘liquid migration’, inspired by Zygmunt Bauman’s work on liquid modernity (Engbersen 2012; Engbersen & Snel 2013). Migrants were young in times of postponed marriage and childbearing, hence less bound to family obligations, legal constraints, borders, or pre-defined labour markets. Their migration was characterized by temporality, flexibility, fluidity and open-endedness, and they could quickly react and adapt to changing opportunities (Cairns 2021; King 2018:9).

The concept of liquid migration reflects a relatively privileged migration. Compared to third country nationals, intra-European migrants hold both a legal and ethnic competitive advantage (cf. Favell 2008; King 2018). However, language barriers and the transferability of skills are still structural constraints pertaining the intra-European migration. Additionally, the liquid migration is deeply interrelated with ‘youth’. Empirical findings hold that as time goes by, family concerns, economic factors, working life conditions, and a wish for more ‘grounded lives’ emerge, and less mobility have been found among the once young and mobile (Bygnes & Bivand Erdal 2017).

Youth migration and the gap year

Across historical time and space, societies have tended to institutionalize the transition from youth to adulthood into ‘institutional moratoriums’, meaning a period of delay, in which young individuals are free to explore who they are and who they want to become. The idea emanates from the psychologist Erik Erikson (1958:153; 1968). Later, episodes of living abroad have been argued to become the norm for many welfare states’ younger populations, thanks to globalization, communication and transport technologies (Erlinghagen et al. 2021).

In contemporary wealthy societies, the phenomenon of a ‘mobility interregnum’ (Cairns 2021:21) is sometimes presented as a ‘gap year’, in which privileged youth may engage in different activities, often after the completion of secondary education and before higher-level education, in order to obtain soft skills, maturity, self-awareness and independence, at the same time enabling postponement of future life choices associated with adulthood (Heath 2007; Korpela 2009). More often than not, the gap year includes one period of full-time employment followed by overseas travels, i.e. backpacking explorations or unpaid volunteer work in the global south (Chelsom Vogt 2018; Heath 2007; Korpela 2009).

By sociologists, the mobility described has been interpreted partly through the perspective of social distinction (Bourdieu 1986), in which economic, social and cultural capital are mobilized in order to increase and maintain employability in an increasingly competitive graduate labour market (Heath 2007, see also Cairns 2021; Chelsom Vogt 2018; Erlinghagen et al. 2021). In his qualitative study from Norway, Chelsom Vogt (2018) notes how the gap year seemed premised on the commitment to higher education, related to a contemporary pressure to ‘stand out’ and build a CV whilst figuring out the direction of future studies. On the other hand, individuals following a vocational transition trajectory perceived this year as nuisance on their way to adulthood and an occupation already decided upon.

Swedish-Norwegian Migration

Within the Nordic countries, the free mobility in which individuals can move or migrate for work, studies or leisure is older and more pervasive than the one created with the EU enlargement in the 1990’s. Through the Common Nordic Labour Market (CNLM), introduced in 1954, Nordic citizens have the right to work and reside in any other Nordic country without needing a work or residence permit. In addition to equal access to employment, intra-Nordic migrants and citizens are generally covered by the social security

system at destination. The institutional settings make working in Norway a relatively effortless endeavor for Swedish citizens, who with ease can have their professional qualifications recognized (Vaughn et al. 2020).

The Swedish Norwegian migration is further characterized by low socio-cultural barriers. The Swedish language is not only very similar to Norwegian, but does also enjoy a certain prestige in other Nordic countries, reflecting the historically political, economic and social power relations within the region (Nordenstam 1979:14). Hence, Swedish migrants in Norway complies with an ideal of similarity, both in how they perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others, thus escaping the marginalization related to a migrant position (Knutsen et al. 2020; Tolgensbakk 2014:55).

During the years following the economic crisis in 2008-2009 migration from Sweden to Norway increased, peaking in 2011 (Figure 1). From a macro-economic perspective, the migration followed the logic presented within neoclassical theory: Norway had a higher GDP per capita and lower unemployment rate than Sweden, and the exchange rate made working in Norway extra profitable for Swedes (Figure 2 A-C). With this backdrop, over 18 000 Swedish born persons migrated from Sweden to its neighboring country during 2010 to 2012. Over 50% of these migrants were young adults aged 20-25 years at time of their migration, and a vast majority had returned within five years. In media and popular culture, these young temporary migrants become a well-known phenomenon, repeatedly referred to as the ‘Party-Swedes’ (Expressen 2015; Det Norske Akademis Ordbok; Språktidningen 2015; Swedish Television 2009; Swedish Radio 2010; 2012; 2014).

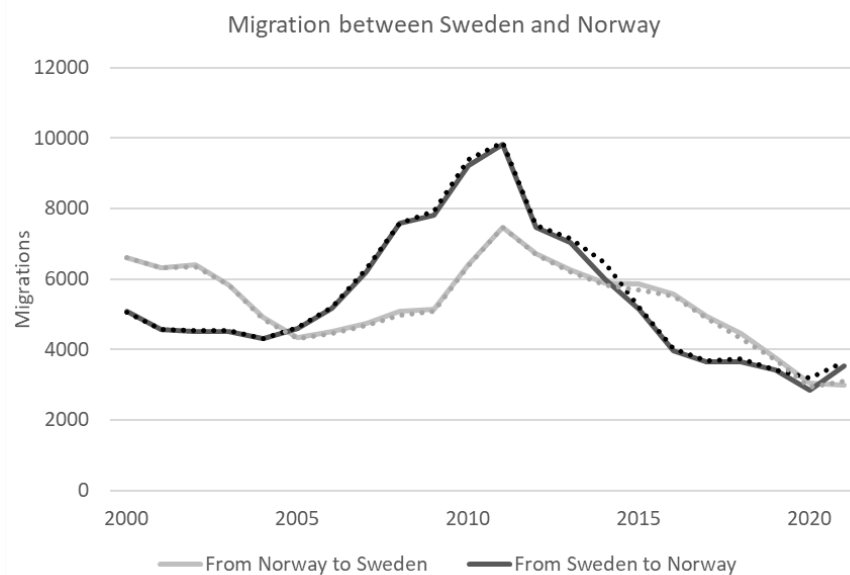


Figure 1. Migration from Sweden to Norway and from Norway to Sweden, reported by Swedish official statistics (solid lines) and Norwegian official statistics (dotted lines).
Sources: Statistics Norway (2023); Statistics Sweden (2023).

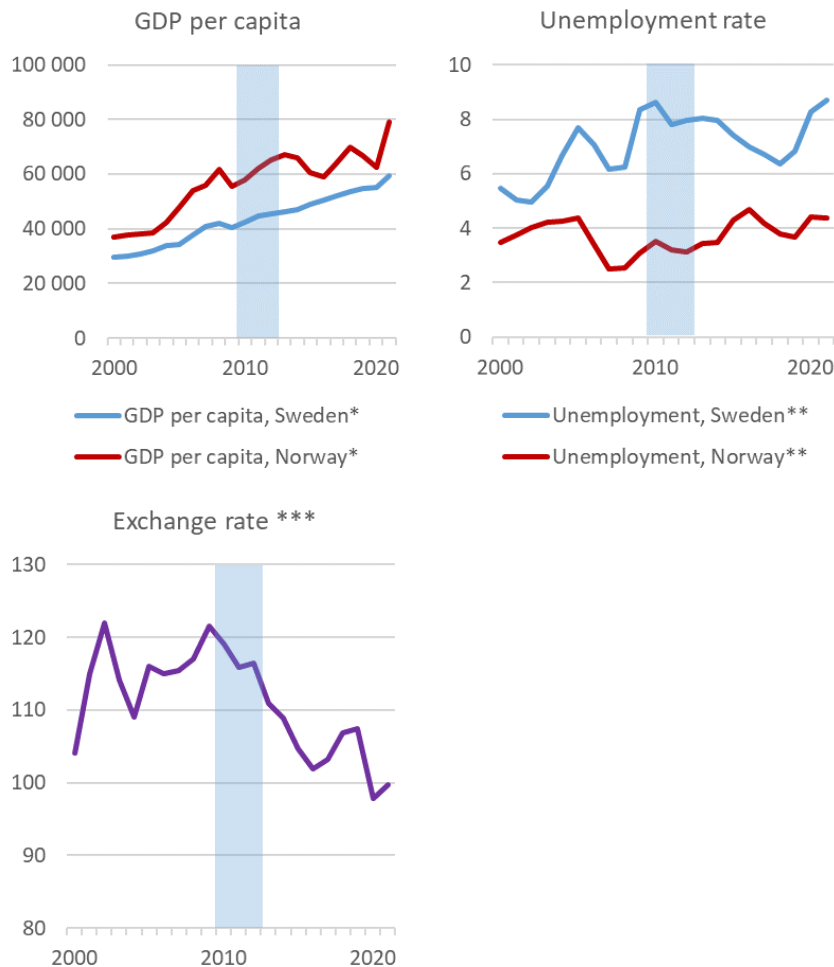


Figure 2 A-C. GDP per capita, unemployment and exchange rate in Norway and Sweden 2000-2020. The years of our sample's emigration to Norway (2010-12) are marked with light blue.

* GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$), source World Bank (2023a)

** Total unemployment as share of labor force, source World Bank (2023b)

*** The amount of SEK that corresponds to 100 NOK, source Sveriges Riksbank (2023)

'Party-Swedes'

The term 'Party-Swedes' ('Partysvensker' in Norwegian) emanates from a graffiti painting around 2008 (Figure 3) in central city of Oslo, the capital in Norway (Språktidningen 2015), and is used as a disgraceful and/or humoristic description of a young and party-loving Swedish temporary labour migrant (Det Norske Akademis Ordbok; Wiktionary). The typical 'Party-Swede' is young and a sought-after workforce in the service industry or other jobs the Norwegian youth themselves often have been unwilling to take on. Media provide pictures of young Swedes crowded in small expensive apartments in Oslo, working during the days, partying at night (Expressen 2015). However, in the otherwise humorous and warm depictions of this group, there is also a trace of ambivalence, partly as a result of the individuals' low-class position at the Norwegian labour market, partly by the virtue of being young and in search for their own development (Tolgensbakk 2014:216).

In the ethnographic dissertation work of Tolgensbakk (2014) young Swedes describe their time in Norway as a process of personal growth. The literal journey, the big 'adventure', is an explicit goal of their stay, and many later use their financial savings to embark on longer

distance travels. In this sense, the migration to Norway itself is not necessarily perceived as a migration, rather a break and preparation for ‘the big trip’ (Andersson og Jonsson 2007:13; Lindahl 2010:117; Tolgensbakk 2014).



Figure 3. Graffiti wall in central Oslo.

Photo: Anne-Sophie Ofrim 2008, used with license <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/no/deed.en>.

The ethnographic and media descriptions suggest that most of the ‘Party-Swedes’ did not come to Norway to settle. In terms of economic migration categories, we might assume that they were predominantly ‘target earners’, having Norway as only one step in their future plans. However, it is not obvious what kind of selection into migration to Norway and return back to Sweden we can expect to find. On the one hand, high unemployment in Sweden and the ethnographic and media descriptions of them taking up low-class jobs suggest that they could be negatively selected compared with youth who remained in Sweden. On the other hand, the portrayals of party-loving Swedes who come to Norway to save for their big travel suggest that this migration is an example of a ‘mobility interregnum’ for privileged youth, and hence that the initial selection may not be so negative.

For the selection into return, we could expect the target earners to leave quickly if they reach their saving target, hence a positive selection in terms of income. Those who fit into the neoclassical economic image of lifetime income maximizers can be expected to leave if they earn less than they expected, hence a negative selection (measured by income). However, the liquidity of this migration and the unclear ideas about their future that the Party-Swedes are reported to have, suggest that it may not be entirely clear to anyone – not even to themselves – which of these theoretical categories they fit into.

Aim and research questions

In this study we examine the income trajectories and selection of the ‘party migrants’ from Sweden to Norway, using a unique combination of register data from two sovereign countries. We guide our work according to two research questions:

1. How did the migrants’ income trajectories look like, covering the period before, during and after migration, and how to these compare with the ones of Swedish and Norwegian non-migrating peers?
2. In terms of income, who were selected into Norwegian-bound migration (from Sweden), and who were selected to return?

By accentuating the evolvement of income in this group, contrasted to the income of non-migrating peers in both origin and destination, we can illuminate both selection mechanisms as well as economic ‘premiums’ and ‘penalties’ of this type of migration. This may shed light on the applicability of previous theories to this type of migration and enrich the literatures on return and youth migration.

Data and methods

Origin and destination register data

Records of return migrants are seldom regular or representative (Whaba 2022). In addition, a majority of quantitative data is limited to events referring to one nation state (see discussions on methodological nationalism by Horvath 2012; Wimmer & Schiller 2002;2003).

In this study, we offer an unprecedented research set up, where we follow groups prospectively *over time* and on a yearly basis, in *both* the origin and destination context. Using *full* population register data from both Norway and Sweden, our study does not face problems with failing representation or cross-sectionality. This is exclusive in the context of return migration literature.

Data cover the period 2000 to 2016, and are comprised of two different and non-linked data sets stored and maintained in separate and secure microdata online access systems within Norway and Sweden. Using information about migration year and age at migration we identified corresponding groups of migrants in each country’s registers. Previous studies have raised concern regarding the fact that unregistered emigration can bias emigration rates from Sweden to Norway (Monti et al. 2020). However, there is a high correspondence between the countries’ migration registers with regard to our study population and observation window (Figure 1).

The recorded migrations include only those with stated settlement intentions of at least six months. This distinguishes the observed migrations from other regional *mobility* (e.g. cross border commuting or shorter durations of stay).

Additional to traditional sources of national register data, we have used an alternative data source: microdata.no, a website where researchers at approved research institutions can run analyses on selected register data from Statistics Norway. We use this data source to get information from the tax register about labor income among persons not registered as part of the Norwegian population.

Study population

Our study population includes Swedish born persons who migrated to Norway from Sweden in 2010-2012 (when migration levels of young adults were at its peak) at an age of 20-25 years, as well as non-migrating Swedish- and Norwegian born persons of the same age. In case one person migrated from Sweden to Norway several times during these three years, we depart from their first migration in this period. From both the Swedish and Norwegian dataset we excluded individuals who died or moved to another destination (i.e. not Norway or back to Sweden) before the end of the observation period, as we then can’t follow their income trajectories, neither in the register data nor microdata.no. As a consequence, the numbers of individuals in each dataset will differ slightly (as we can’t know which specific individuals moved from Norway to another country by the accessed information in the Swedish dataset and vice versa).

Methods

We present income trajectories covering the period before, during and after the migration to Norway, as compared with Swedish- and Norwegian-born stayers. To analyze the selection into migration we apply logistic regressions using Swedish data. Return from Norway is intrinsically linked to time since migration (Figure 4). To account for this, as well as the time varying Norwegian income, we use discrete event history models in the analysis of return from Norway. Additionally, we present results from an OLS regression of annual income in Sweden in 2016, when most migrants have returned (Figure 4).

In order to facilitate comparison with same-aged non-migrants, we present our results separately by yearly migration. This means that we in our presentation of migration cohort 2011 restrict the comparison groups of Swedish- and Norwegian born stayers to those born 1986-1991, for the migration cohort 2010 to those born 1985-1990, and for migration cohort 2012 to those born 1987-1992.

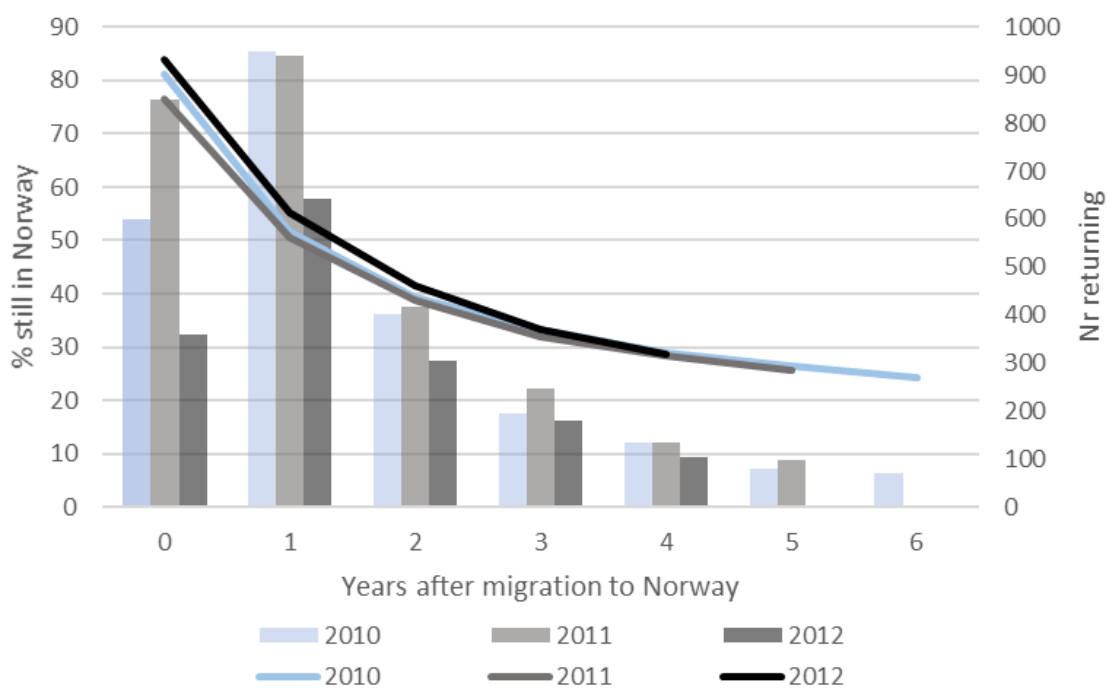


Figure 4. Share of migrants still in Norway (lines) and numbers returning (columns) by year since migration and year of arrival.

Dependent variables

Dependent variables include annual income in Sweden and Norway expressed in Swedish kronor, either as median (Figure 5) or as individual annual income in Sweden (Figure 6). The income variable is given by the sum of wages and net business income during the calendar year for all persons registered as part of the population per 31.12. the relevant year. We have access to income data from 2008 to 2016, which allows us to follow these groups before, during and after their migration to Norway.

Modelling selection into emigration, the dependent variable is emigration to Norway vs staying in Sweden for one particular year (2010, 2011 and 2012). For modelling return to Sweden, the dependent variable of return vs stay in Norway is measured any time from first migration up to the end of the observation period.

When illustrating the income trajectories (Figure 5), we first calculated the median income for groups defined by year of migration to Norway and duration of stay, in Norway and Sweden respectively. Second, all incomes in Norway (in NOK) were transformed to SEK using the annual exchange rates from the Norwegian central bank.¹

Many migrants who return from Norway to Sweden in a certain year do also have some income in Norway that year, even if they are not registered as part of the Norwegian population at 31.12. To take this income into account, we have used income information from microdata.no, where it is possible to single out Swedish-born persons in our birth cohorts who arrived in 2010-2012 and who left Norway in various years. We combine the income in this group with the median income registered in Sweden to calculate their (median) total income in the year of return to Sweden. This combined income (from Norway and Sweden) is marked with a ring in Figure 5.²

Since Statistics Sweden do not offer a similar alternative data source, we cannot calculate a similar combined income measure for the year of migration from Sweden to Norway. Hence, the income lines in Figure 5 have a break at year of arrival in Norway, and the migrants' incomes in the year of migration to Norway may be underestimated. However, since these migrants' incomes in Sweden the year before migration were relatively low (Appendix figure A1), we assume that this bias is not overwhelming.

Whereas we use the information from microdata.no to include the migrants' income in Norway the year of return, we do not do the same for the year *before* migration to Norway (because relatively few had such income) or in the year *after* migration back to Sweden (because this median income is so low). This is elaborated on in the results section and in Appendix Figure A1.

Control variables

Control variables for selection into migration include gender, year of birth, and one year lagged time dependent variables as reported December 31st: region of residence, employment status (measured in November each year), annual unemployment benefits, student enrolment (referring to the autumn term) and income quartile. For selection into return, models include gender, age at immigration to Norway, migration cohort, years since immigration, place of stay, and one year lagged time varying variables of labour market status (employed, in education, unemployed or other, measured towards the end of the year) and income quartile (measured in the sample of Swedes).

Descriptives

Table 1 shows main descriptives of migrants and their non-migrating Swedish and Norwegian peers, from Swedish and Norwegian register data – allowing comparisons of the size of the groups in the two registers. For those who emigrated in 2010, the Swedish register has 3215 individuals whereas the Norwegian register has 3251 – a discrepancy of 36, or 1.1%. For the 2011 and 2012 emigrants the discrepancy is smaller (9 individuals (0.2%) and 18 individuals (0.8%), respectively).

Compared with same-age peers staying in Sweden, the migrants were, on average, more often women. In the Swedish labor market prior to migration, they were less employed and less students, though with similar uptake of unemployment benefits. A large share of migrants

¹ <https://www.norges-bank.no/tema/Statistikk/Valutakurser/?tab=currency&id=SEK>

² It is not possible to single out the approx. 110 persons in this group who left Norway for another country than Sweden. However, they only constitute around 1.2 % of our sample.

were from Western parts of Sweden (which is closest to Norway), such as Gothenburg and Bohuslän, and young people from Värmland (bordering Norway) were overrepresented.

Compared with same-age non-migrants in Norway, the migrants from Sweden were more often recorded with employment as their main activity in the Norwegian labour market, and less often recorded as unemployed. Only 1% were recorded as 'In education' – compared with 15-17% among Norwegian stayers at the same age. Since a substantial share of the Swedes were not recorded with any labor market status in Norway (normally measured in November), we can assume that the share who worked while in Norway was even higher than the 77-85% shown in the table. About two thirds of these Swedish migrants lived in the municipality of Oslo, which is a far larger share than the 11-12% among non-migrant Norwegians at the same age. Moreover, and an additional 7-8% of the Swedish migrants lived in the county of Akershus (with commuting distance to Oslo), making the 'Party-Swedes' predominantly an Oslo-phenomenon.

As shown in Figure 4, the re-migration back to Sweden was highest the first years after arrival. Around 20% returned the same calendar year as they came to Norway, whereas 28% returned the first year after migration. Hence, almost half of these migrants had left Norway the same year or the year after they arrived.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the young migrants from Sweden to Norway (2010-2012) and their Swedish and Norwegian non-migrating peers, from Swedish and Norwegian register data.

	Year 2010				Year 2011				Year 2012			
	Swedish data		Norwegian data		Swedish data		Norwegian data		Swedish data		Norwegian data	
	Stayers, Sweden	Migrants from Sweden to Norway	Stayers, Norway		Stayers, Sweden	Migrants from Sweden to Norway	Stayers, Norway		Stayers, Sweden	Migrants from Sweden to Norway	Stayers, Norway	
Number of persons (N)	604418	3215	3251	313429	630535	3612	3621	324001	652626	2231	2249	332684
Share female	48%	51%	51%	48%	48%	52%	52%	48%	48%	52%	52%	48%
<i>Labor market status in Sweden</i>												
Employed in November												
Year -2*	53%	47%			46%	37%			50%	44%		
Year -1*	55%	36%			59%	33%			59%	43%		
Unemployment benefits												
Year -2*	4%	4%			4%	4%			3%	2%		
Year -1*	6%	5%			4%	3%			3%	3%		
Student enrollment autumn term												
Year -2*	45%	38%			47%	36%			47%	44%		
Year -1*	37%	21%			37%	16%			36%	20%		
<i>Labor market status in Norway**</i>												
Employed			77%	71%			85%	71%			83%	70%
Unemployed			1%	3%			1%	2%			1%	2%
In education			1%	15%			1%	16%			1%	17%
Other			1%	7%			1%	7%			1%	7%
Missing			20%	4%			13%	4%			15%	4%
<i>Region of residence in Sweden***</i>												
Gothenburg and Bohuslän	17%	20%			17%	19%			17%	21%		
Skåne	13%	8%			13%	9%			13%	10%		
Stockholm	19%	8%			20%	8%			20%	8%		
Östergötland	5%	7%			5%	6%			5%	7%		
Värmland	3%	7%			3%	8%			3%	5%		
Halland	3%	7%			3%	6%			3%	5%		
Other	40%	42%			39%	43%			39%	44%		
<i>Region of residence in Norway****</i>												
Oslo			65%	11%			68%	12%			63%	12%
Akershus			8%	9%			7%	9%			7%	9%
Other parts of Norway			28%	79%			25%	79%			30%	79%

* Year-1 (or -2) denotes the year before (or two years before) either 2010, 2011 or 2012

** Measured during the migrants' year of migration to Norway, and comprising those (still) living in Norway 31.12 that year.

*** Measured 31.12 in the year before migration to Norway

**** Measured 31.12 in the migrants' year of migration to Norway, and comprising those (still) living in Norway at that time.

Results

Our main results are illustrated in Figure 5, showing the income trajectories of the migrants and their non-migrant peers. The findings can be further explored in regression results shown

in Table 2 (selection into Norwegian-bound migration), Table 3 (selection into returning to Sweden) and Figure 6 (income in Sweden for returning migrants vs. those who never left).

Who emigrates to Norway?

Prior to migration, migrants' income first follows the income of Swedish-born stayers, then it decreases the year before migration. In terms of income, young people moving to Norway seem thus negatively selected compared to those who stay. This notion is also partly supported by Table 2, which shows the results from the model of selection into leaving Sweden: Employment and high income from the previous year reduces the likelihood of moving to Norway, and so does being enrolled in education.³ Data provided by microdata.no show that some of these migrants are recorded with incomes in Norway the year *before* migrating from Sweden to Norway (this could, for instance, be because of short-time work). This may explain part of the increased income gap between migrants and non-migrants in Sweden the year before migration. However, only a small share of the migrants had such pre-migration income in Norway (even if the median income among those who did was relatively high), as shown in Appendix figure A1.

However, Table 2 also shows that higher parental education – often used as an indicator for socioeconomic status – *increased* the likelihood of emigrating. This can indicate 'mobility interregnum' motives for moving to Norway, at least for a large share of these youth.

Who returns to Sweden?

During their time in Norway, migrants had incomes clearly higher than for those remaining in Sweden. For migrants returning the same year as they migrated to Norway, or the year after, annual incomes are at the level of Norwegian stayers, or slightly higher. However, for immigrants staying longer, the income received in Norway clearly exceeds the level of Norwegian stayers already from the year of migration, peaking around the second year in Norway. This suggests that the ones who return first are the ones who earn the least. Similar results are found in our model of selection into return, where higher incomes received in Norway predict somewhat lower likelihoods of return (Table 3), although these results are not significant when looking separately at the 2011 and 2012 migrants – age at arrival and duration of stay appears to be stronger predictions of return than income in Norway.⁴

Following the income trajectories of those *not* returning within the observation period, we note that their income levels remain around the same level as from their second year in Norway, and that Norwegian stayers pick up reaching similar levels towards the end of the observation period (Figure 5).

³ This is not due to different age composition between migrants and stayers: Educational enrollment was higher among those who stayed also when looking only at one birth year at a time (not shown in table).

⁴ These effects of age at arrival is also found for those who returned the same calendar year as they arrived. Results of modelling their return (with fewer explanatory variables) are shown in Appendix table A1.

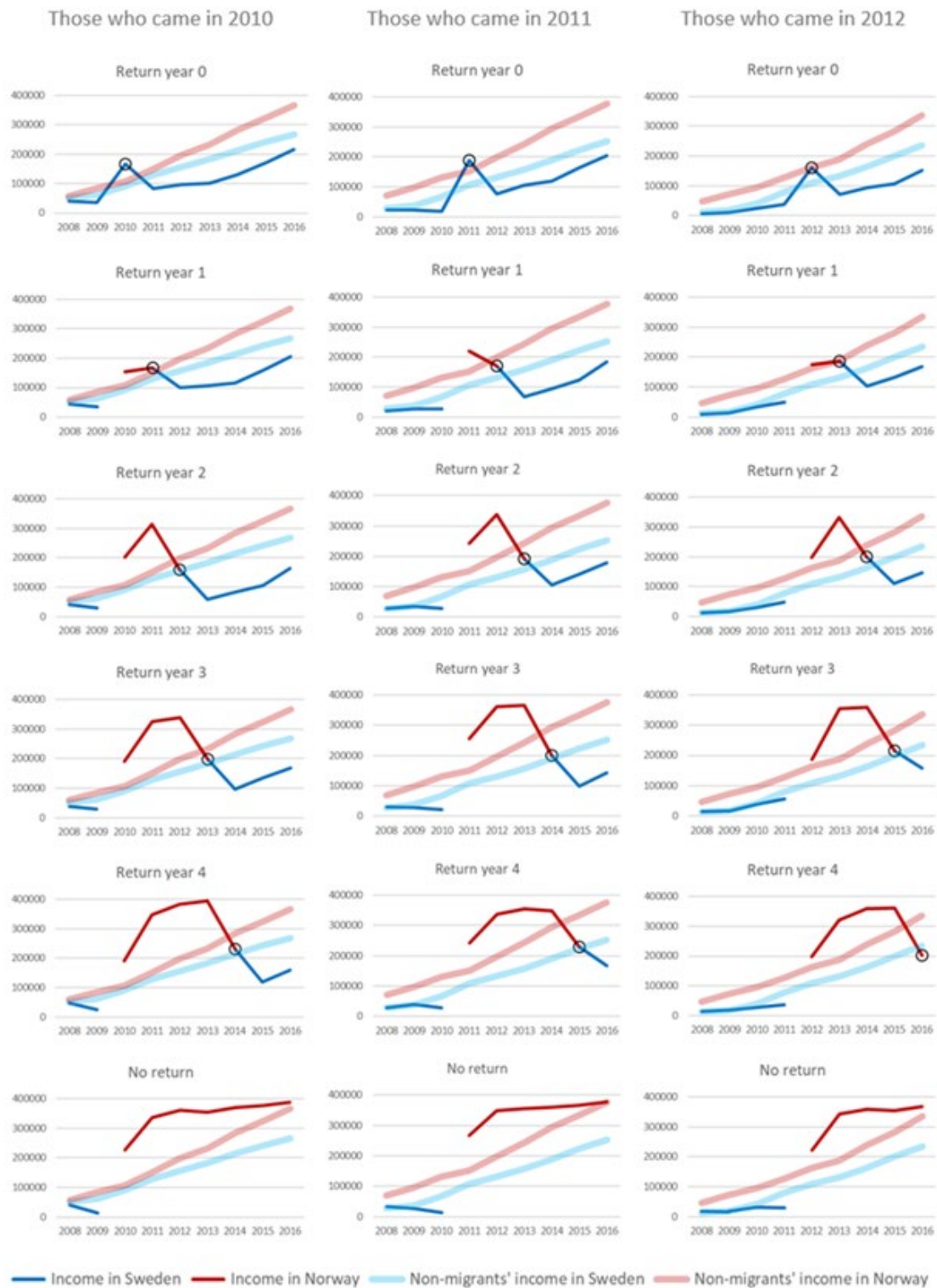


Figure 5. Median labor income (in SEK) for young migrants from Sweden to Norway (and back), and for non-migrants in Sweden and Norway, 2008-2016.

^o Incomes marked with a ring are combinations of median incomes in Sweden and in Norway.

Table 2. Logistic regression of selection into Norwegian-bound migration versus staying in Sweden.

Outcome: Emigrating to Norway vs. staying in Sweden						
	Year 2010		Year 2011		Year 2012	
	OR	sig.	OR	sig.	OR	sig.
Gender						
<i>Woman (ref.)</i>	1.00		1.00		1.00	
Man	0.82	***	0.82	***	0.88	***
Year of birth						
1985	1.00					
1986	1.23	***	1.00			
1987	1.21	***	1.08		1.00	
1988	1.16	**	1.11	*	0.96	
1989	1.17	**	1.02		1.00	
1990	0.94		0.85	***	1.00	
1991			0.67	***	1.10	
1992					1.00	
Region of residence year-1						
<i>Stockholm (ref.)</i>	1.00		1.00		1.00	
Göteborg och Bohuslän	2.87	***	2.70	***	3.02	***
Skåne	1.56	***	1.67	***	1.91	***
Östergötland	3.34	***	2.86	***	3.11	***
Värmland	4.95	***	5.32	***	4.11	***
Halland	5.68	***	4.67	***	3.91	***
Other	2.50	***	2.52	***	2.66	***
Employment status in Nov., year-1						
<i>No (ref.)</i>	1.00		1.00		1.00	
Yes	0.60	***	0.34	***	0.60	***
Unemployment benefits year-1						
<i>No (ref.)</i>	1.00		1.00		1.00	
Yes	0.90		0.80	**	1.05	
Student enrollment autumn term year-1						
<i>No (ref.)</i>	1.00		1.00		1.00	
Yes	0.28	***	0.17	***	0.27	***
Income quartile year-1						
<i>Lowest (ref.)</i>	1.00		1.00		1.00	
Second lowest	0.87	***	0.84	***	0.98	
Second highest	0.81	***	0.97		0.69	***
Highest	0.40	***	0.32	***	0.35	***
Parental education						
<i>One secondary or lower (ref.)</i>	1.00		1.00		1.00	
Both secondary	1.04		1.01		0.91	
One tertiary	1.68	***	1.64	***	1.43	***
Both tertiary	2.19	***	2.08	***	1.66	***
Missing	2.64	***	1.46		2.64	***
Constant						
	0.01	***	0.01	***	0.00	***
<i>Log likelihood</i>	-18786		-20310		-14248	
<i>N</i>	607598		634130		654846	
<i>Pseudo R</i>	0.05		0.08		0.04	

***<=0.01, **<=0.05, *<=0.1

Note: Year-1 denotes the year before either 2010, 2011 or 2012.

Table 3. Discrete event history model of returning to Sweden vs staying in Norway.

Outcome: Migrating back to Sweden vs. staying in Norway				
	All cohorts	Cohort 2010	Cohort 2011	Cohort 2012
Age at migration				
20 (ref)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
21	0.89 **	0.90	0.88	0.87
22	0.65 ***	0.68 ***	0.59 ***	0.72 ***
23	0.63 ***	0.69 ***	0.55 ***	0.68 ***
24	0.51 ***	0.45 ***	0.54 ***	0.57 ***
25	0.44 ***	0.49 ***	0.37 ***	0.49 ***
Gender				
Woman (ref)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Man	1.06	1.08	1.09	0.98
Labor market status year (tv)				
Employed (ref)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
In education	0.54 ***	0.62 **	0.52 ***	0.42 ***
Unemployed	1.26	1.28	1.31	1.09
Other	0.91	1.06	0.86	0.70
Place of stay in Norway				
Outside Oslo (ref)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
In Oslo	1.07 *	1.09	1.08	1.02
Income quartile year (tv)				
Lowest (ref.)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Second lowest	1.02	1.03	1.04	0.97
Second highest	0.87 **	0.82 **	0.90	0.90
Highest	0.86 **	0.81 *	0.87	0.88
Years since migration to Norway				
1 year (ref)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
2 years	0.60 ***	0.60 ***	0.59 ***	0.64 ***
3 years	0.42 ***	0.35 ***	0.44 ***	0.50 ***
4 years	0.29 ***	0.31 ***	0.25 ***	0.36 ***
5 years	0.21 ***	0.19 ***	0.22 ***	
6 years	0.18 ***	0.18 ***		
Cohort (year of migration to Norway)				
2010 (ref)	1.00			
2011	0.99			
2012	1.02			
Constant	0.75 ***	0.75 ***	0.76 ***	0.74 **
Log likelihood	-9370	-3473	-3581	-2298
N	18946	7374	7318	4254
Pseudo R	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.04

***<=0.01, **<=0.05, *<=0.1

Note: Covers those who arrived from Sweden 2010-2012 and who did not return in the arrival year. For those who returned the same calendar year as they arrived, the Norwegian registers have less information. Results of modelling their return (with fewer explanatory variables) are shown in Appendix table A1. tv= time varying variable lagged by one year

What do they earn back in Sweden?

For returning migrants, annual median income tends to decrease at the year of return (incorporating income in both countries – marked with a circle in Figure 5). The year *after* returning to Sweden, income levels drop even further, before they increase again the following years.⁵ However, the income is still lower among returning migrants compared to those who never left Sweden, and stay so during the entire observation period, up to five years after return. For those spending less time in Norway and returning up to two years after migration, we may see the beginning of a convergence with the Swedish born stayers, but this we cannot know.

Lower income levels among returned migrants could be explained by the fact that higher shares are enrolled in education post return than are non-migrants. The share of students is clearly higher among returned migrants in 2016 than among same-age stayers (see Appendix figure A2). The difference is largest for the 2010 cohort – which may indicate that many returnees take on relatively long educations and hence are students long after their peers have started working.

However, as presented in the upper panel of Figure 6, income levels are lower post return also controlling for student enrolment (and age, gender and municipality), as is done in the upper panel of Figure 6. There seems to be an income penalty for the returned migrants: The estimates for most of the returnee groups are significantly lower than for non-migrating peers. The income difference is generally of around 20-40,000 SEK annually (1700-3500 Euro). Interestingly, the figure also shows that the income penalty is largest for those who stayed two years or more in Norway – that is, those who made the highest incomes in Norway.

Part of the remaining income difference between stayers and returnees could be due to the (non-studying) stayers being employed to a larger extent than (non-studying) returnees. It could also be due to unobserved characteristics that made the migrants earn less even before leaving for Norway. Adding employment status in November and income quartile the year prior to migration (lower panel of Figure 6 **Error! Reference source not found.**), the negative impact of migration becomes less salient and less significant. However, with the exception for those both migrating and returning from Norway in 2011, migration is still found with a negative effect on income, and we still see some of the trend of a larger income penalty for those who stayed longer in Norway.

In the Appendix, Table A2a and A2b show the background figures for Figure 6 with controls.

⁵ The income drop observed the year *after* migration cannot be explained by income from Norway not being included. Although many migrants were recorded with some income in Norway even the year after migration to Sweden (which could be due to the Norwegian system of 'holiday pay' where a small share of people's salary is paid in June the following year), their median Norwegian income is almost zero in the year after return migration, see Appendix figure A1.

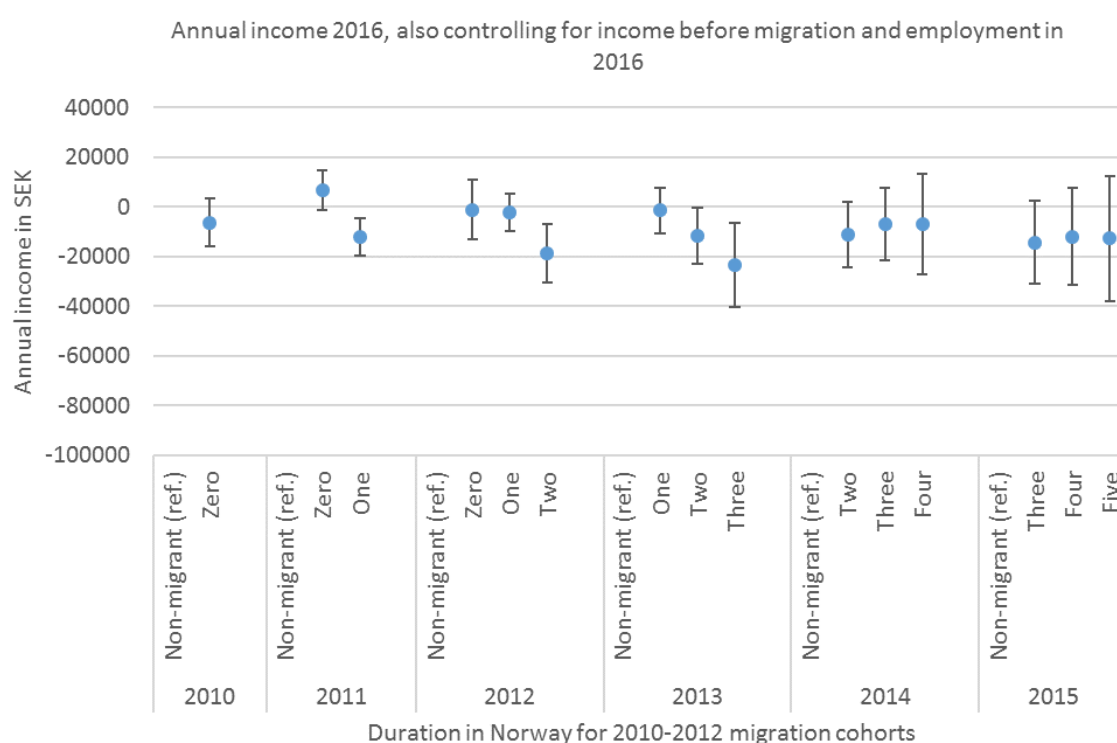
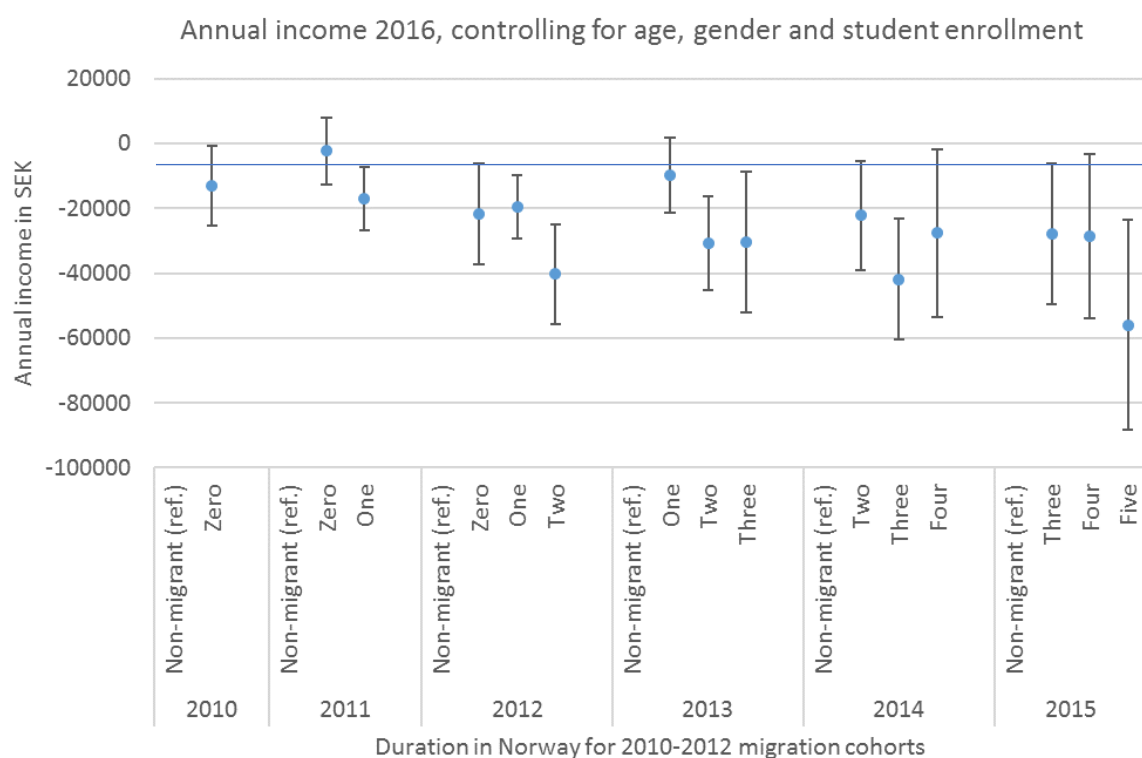


Figure 6. Annual income in Sweden in 2016 for non-migrants (ref) and migrants with different years of stay in Norway.

Note: Upper panel includes controls of year of birth, gender, and student enrollment in 2016. Lower panel Includes controls of year of birth, gender, student enrollment in 2016, employment in 2016, and income quartile the year prior to migration.

Discussion

Our results show that the large groups of ‘Party-Swedes’ who came to Norway during the period 2010 to 2012 gained an economic premium by moving to Norway, followed by an economic penalty after returning to Sweden. This is true for all the three arrival cohorts as well as for their different durations of stay in Norway. Whereas the ‘Party premium’ was initially high, the ‘Party penalty’ after returning to Sweden has been large and persistent.

Although the above results are unambiguous, our results are more ambiguous when it comes to selection into migration and return. Those who left Sweden for Norway appear, on the one hand, negatively selected: Their median income before leaving was lower than that of the stayers, fewer were employed and fewer were enrolled in education compared with their non-migrating peers in Sweden. On the other hand, their parents seem more educated, which indicates that many of them came from a privileged socioeconomic background, and hence could be positively selected in other intangible measures.

Moreover, the selection into return from Norway is not obvious. Although we do find some significant results showing that lower income predicts return (at least for some migration cohorts) – which suggests a negative selection – duration of stay and age at arrival appear to be far stronger predictions of return. Hence, life-course and non-economic determinants for migration seem to play more important roles than income. Further, even if those who returned first were the ones who earned least, in the longer run they seem to earn more back in Sweden than those who stayed longer in Norway before returning, suggesting that the early returnees’ negative selection in terms of income did not necessarily correspond to a negative selection in terms of skills or ability.

These ambiguous results make it hard to define this type of migrants according to the standard economic migration theories. First, the Neoclassical Economic Theory (NE) does not seem to explain their behavior well: These young Swedes do not appear to use migration as a strategy for maximizing their lifetime earnings – almost all of them have returned after a couple of years, even though staying in Norway probably would yield much higher incomes. Moreover, the early returnees are not, as mentioned above, necessarily so negatively selected.

Nor do the ‘Party-Swedes’ fit so well into the New Economics of Labour Migration’s descriptions of target earners who migrate as part of a household strategy. The ethnographic and media descriptions portray them as individualistic decision makers, and although many of them may have moved to Norway as part of a ‘mobility interregnum’ project, it is not obvious that those returning early were the ones who quickest obtained their earning target – another reason for return could be that they did not find a job in Norway (which could call for a new theoretical category – ‘failed target earner’ – a category that would blur the theoretical distinction between return behaviors of ‘target earners’ and ‘income maximizers’). So even in our almost experimental migration setting, with virtually non-existent legal, cultural or linguistic barriers, a setting where economic determinants could be expected to play a more unrestricted role, it is not easy to place the ‘Party-Swedes’ within any of the traditional economic theories of labor migration.

A possible explanation for our apparently ambiguous results can be found by drawing on existing research on ‘liquid migration’, institutional moratorium and ‘gap year’. Considering this research, the ‘Party-Swedes’ could be seen as representatives of liquid migration flows consisting of young people seeking temporary employment in another wealthy country as part of a larger institutional moratorium, before they eventually will start their further education and ‘grounded life’. This may, at least partly, explain why job experience from Norway does

not seem to help them in the Swedish labor market – the type of job they had in Norway were perhaps never meant to be their lifetime occupation. Although motivated as a way of increasing employability on an increasingly competitive labour market, the reason for why we don't find elevated income levels among returnees might be due to our relatively short observation period, covering the time in direct connection to tertiary education.

The fact that the general unemployment in this period was so high in Sweden did not only imply that many young adults did not get to start their proper career in the labor market; it also meant that it was harder for Swedish youth to finance a gap year. In this macroeconomic context, some youth from homes with relatively high socioeconomic status who did not find a job in Sweden and were not ready to start further education (hence low employment and school enrollment), may have decided to try Norway as the first step in their mobility interregnum. For them, the time in Norway could have been a kind of 'migration for mobility'. In this light, the drastic drop in income after leaving Norway may partly be due to many of these young Swedes having embarked on the adventure they had saved for. And in the longer run, many of them enrolled into higher education, which explains some of the persistent income penalty compared to the stayers in Sweden within the observed time period. If these explanations hold for a substantial share of the 'Party-Swedes', what looks like a 'party penalty' may primarily have been a delay for many. Figure 5's results for those who have stayed longest in Sweden after return from Norway, may support such an interpretation, as the income difference between the Swedish stayers and the returnees narrows somewhat after 4-5 years.

Summary

In this paper we have examined a yet understudied group of young temporary labour migrants between wealthy countries: Swedish born young adults who after the economic crises in 2009 migrated to Norway for work, and who in popular culture are known as 'Party-Swedes' since they reportedly were 'working during the days, partying at night'.

Using an unprecedented empirical approach with high-quality, full population register data from two countries, we follow the median incomes of these migrants prior to migration, during their time in Norway and after possible return to Sweden and compare it with the incomes of their non-migrating peers on both sides of the border.

Results show that these migrants indeed increased their incomes after coming to Norway, particularly if they stayed in Norway for two years or more, but that their income decreased drastically after return to Sweden and remained below that of their Swedish non-migration peers up to five years after return or to the end of the observation period.

We argue that, even in this almost perfect laboratory for economic migration theories with very few linguistic, cultural or legal barriers to migration, the two main economic theories of labor migration (the Neoclassical approach and the New economics of labor migration) do not really explain these young migrants' behavior. It may be that their decisions are not governed so much by purely economic considerations after all. Instead, we draw on analytical tools and concepts such as 'liquid migration', 'institutional moratorium' and 'gap year' to illuminate our results, suggesting an interpretation of this group as 'migrating for mobility' within a period of delay related to their own life course.

Although the income differences between the Swedish stayers and the returned migrants narrow somewhat over time, suggesting that this could be a delay due to many of the returnees starting their education or career later, there is still an apparent income gap 4-5 years after return. Hence, the economic penalty for the 'Party-Swedes' has been relatively

persistent even long after they came back to Sweden. But they might have had a good time on the way.

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Declaration of interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix

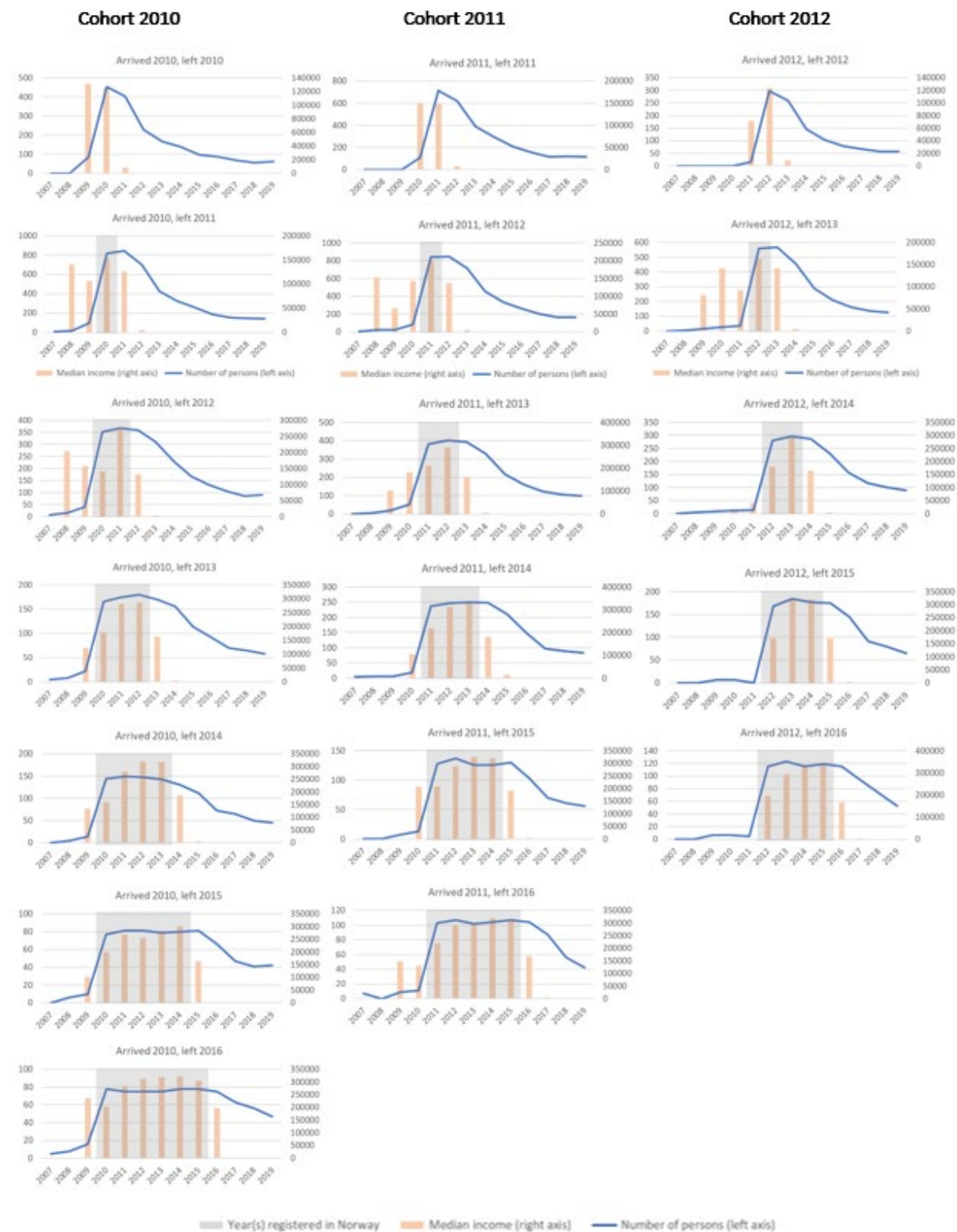


Figure A1. Median income in Norway for young adults immigrating from Sweden 2010-12.
 Note: These figures include information about approx. 100 persons who re-emigrated from Norway, but not to Sweden.
 Source: Norway's tax register/microdata.no

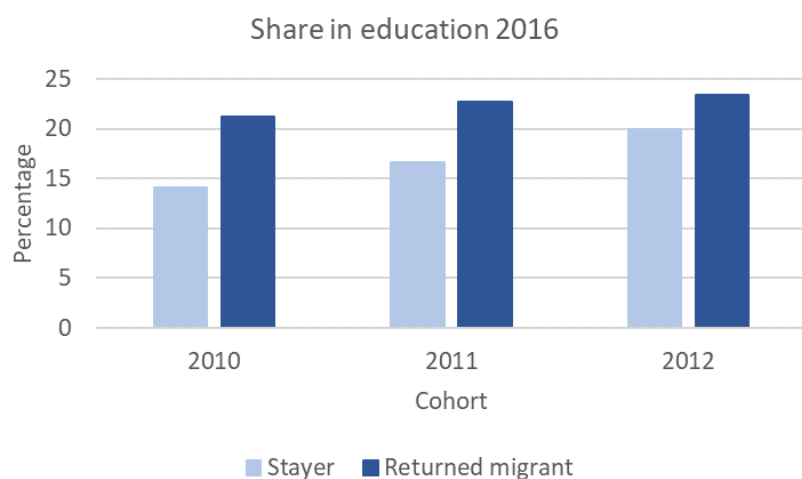


Figure A2. Share among returned migrants and non-migrating peers who were in education in Sweden in 2016.

Table A1. Discrete event history model of returning to Sweden vs staying in Norway for migrants who returned the same calendar year as they came to Norway.

Outcome: Migrating back to Sweden vs. staying in Norway

Swedes who returned to Sweden in the arrival year

Age at migration

20 (ref)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
21	0.95	0.91	1.03	0.90
22	0.69 ***	0.66 ***	0.73 **	0.66 **
23	0.64 ***	0.76 *	0.64 ***	0.49 ***
24	0.58 ***	0.61 ***	0.67 ***	0.40 ***
25	0.43 ***	0.50 ***	0.47 ***	0.30 ***

Gender

Woman (ref)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Man	0.94	0.98	0.85 **	1.08

Cohort (year of migration to Norway)

2010 (ref)	1.00
2011	1.37 ***
2012	0.83 **

Constant	0.33 ***	0.32 ***	0.45 ***	0.29 ***
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<i>Log likelihood</i>	-4553	-1579	-1977	-990
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<i>N</i>	9121	3251	3621	2249
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<i>Pseudo R</i>	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.02
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*** ≤ 0.01 , ** ≤ 0.05 , * ≤ 0.1

Table A2a. OLS model of income in Sweden in 2016 for non-migrants (ref) and migrants with different years in Norway

Outcome: Annual income in 2016, hundreds of SEK

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
	Coef.	Sig.	Coef.	Sig.	Coef.	Sig.	Coef.	Sig.	Coef.	Sig.	Coef.	Sig.
Migration experience												
(duration in Norway)												
Stayers (ref.)	0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0	
Return year zero	-129.2 **		-23.7		-216.1 ***							
Return year one			-170.8 ***		-195.6 ***		-98.7 *					
Return year two					-403.3 ***		-306.2 ***		-222.5 ***			
Return year three							-304.3 ***		-419.2 ***		-279.1 **	
Return year four									-276.5 **		-286.4 **	
Return year five to six											-560.3 ***	
Year of birth	-90.8 ***		-90.8 ***		-90.8 ***		-90.8 ***		-90.9 ***		-90.8 ***	
Gender												
Man (ref.)	0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0	
Woman	-574.4 ***		-574.1 ***		-573.5 ***		-573.9 ***		-574.1 ***		-574.2 ***	
Student enrollment 2016												
No (ref.)	0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0	
Yes	-1214.9 ***		-1215.5 ***		-1215.3 ***		-1215.0 ***		-1215.1 ***		-1214.8 ***	
Municipality	Results from 290 municipalities not shown											
Constant	183483.0 ***		183351.2 ***		183357.5 ***		183453.2 ***		183495.0 ***		183461.5 ***	
<i>N</i>	836557		837619		837543		837163		836658		836402	
<i>R-square</i>	0.1736		0.1738		0.1737		0.1737		0.1737		0.1736	
***<=0.01, **<=0.05, *<=0.												

Table A2b OLS model of income in Sweden in 2016 for non-migrants (ref) and migrant cohorts 2010-2012 with different duration in Norway, also with controls for employment in 2016 and income level before migration.

Outcome: Annual income in 2016, hundreds of SEK

	<i>Return year</i>											
	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
	Coef.	Sig.	Coef.	Sig.	Coef.	Sig.	Coef.	Sig.	Coef.	Sig.	Coef.	Sig.
Migration experience (duration in Norway)												
Stayers (ref.)	0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0	
Return year zero	-61.9		67.5 *		-10.9							
Return year one			-120.2 ***		-23.0		-13.7					
Return year two					-185.8 ***		-117.2 **		-113.1 *			
Return year three							-233.4 ***		-68.1		-141.9 *	
Return year four									-69.3		-118.8	
Return year five to six											-126.0	
Year of birth	-34.2 ***		-34.2 ***		-34.2 ***		-34.2 ***		-34.3 ***		-34.2 ***	
Gender												
Man (ref.)	0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0	
Woman	-604.8 ***		-604.5 ***		-604.1 ***		-604.5 ***		-604.6 ***		-604.7 ***	
Student enrollment 2016												
No (ref.)												
Yes	-518.4 ***		-518.6 ***		-518.3 ***		-518.5 ***		-518.4 ***		-518.4 ***	
Employed in Nov. 2016												
No (ref.)												
Yes	2231.8 ***		2231.3 ***		2231.3 ***		2231.3 ***		2231.6 ***		2231.8 ***	
Income quartile year prior migration												
Lowest (ref.)	0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0	
Second lowest	286.6 ***		286.1 ***		286.2 ***		286.5 ***		286.5 ***		286.6 ***	
Second highest	339.1 ***		338.9 ***		338.7 ***		338.9 ***		339.0 ***		339.1 ***	
Highest	538.2 ***		538.0 ***		538.1 ***		538.1 ***		538.1 ***		538.3 ***	
Missing info	113.4 ***		118.0 ***		109.5 ***		116.7 ***		120.2 ***		119.0 ***	
Municipality	Results from 290 municipalities not shown											
Constant	68622.2 ***		68610.5 ***		68596.4 ***		68647.3 ***		68686.6 ***		68627.7 ***	
<i>N</i>	836557		837619		837543		837163		836658		836402	
<i>R-square</i>	0.5		0.5		0.5		0.5		0.5		0.5	
***<=0.01, **<=0.05, *<=0.1												
¹ For non-migrants, income quartiles are based on year 2010.												

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