

Eirik Berger Abel

PhD Research Scholar | Norwegian School of Economics

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Education

PhD in Economics at Norwegian School of Economics (NHH) 2018 - ongoing
M.Sc in Business and Administration at Norwegian School of Economics (NHH) 2016 - 2018
Bachelor in Business and Administration at Norwegian School of Economics (NHH) 2012 - 2015

Visiting Activities

Visiting student researcher at Stanford University (visiting Ran Abramitzky) 2021 - 2022

Research Fields

Primary: Labor Economics and Applied Microeconomics
Secondary: Economic History

Placement Director

Prof. Katrine V. Løken
Norwegian School of Economics
Katrine.Loken@nhh.no

References

Prof. Kjell Gunnar Salvanes Norwegian School of Economics Kjell.Salvanes@nhh.no	Prof. Aline Bütikofer Norwegian School of Economics Aline.Buetikofer@nhh.no	Prof. Ran Abramitzky Stanford University RanAbr@stanford.edu
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Job Market Paper

“Living the American Dream: How Norway Became a High-Mobility Country”

I estimate long-run trends in intergenerational mobility in income in Norway during a period that includes World War II and the creation of the welfare state. To overcome the challenge of data availability, I digitize and link a novel dataset with more than 16 million observations from tax records between 1924 and 1964 to data on family ties from historical censuses and modern administrative data. I show that persistence between fathers and sons in the income percentile rank was high in the early 20th century but decreased substantially for cohorts born between the 1920s and 1940s. The convergence of rural and urban areas explains about half of the total fall in persistence. First, I link this result to changes in education by using plausibly exogenous variation in the intensity of schooling from a primary school reform, which reduced the gap between cities and rural areas, and find that it significantly decreased persistence. Second, I show that the return to education fell considerably over time, particularly at the beginning of World War II. Comparing persistence for a set of father-son pairs but using income for the father measured just before and after this shock, I find about 13 percent lower persistence in income percentile ranks. These results suggest that equal access to education and low income inequality are two key drivers behind Norway’s transition to high mobility.

Working Papers

“Fertility, Family Formation and Human Capital” with Aline Bütikofer and Kjell G. Salvanes
2023

By varying the intensity of compulsory schooling while keeping the number of compulsory school years constant, this paper generates new insights into the effect of human capital on fertility on the extensive and intensive margin. We leverage population-wide panel data for Norway in combination with a school reform in the 1930s changing the instruction time during the school year that allows us to isolate the effect of human capital investment on fertility behavior across the life-cycle from an incarceration effect. We present robust evidence of reduced total fertility driven mostly by an increase in the share of women with one or no children and an increase in the age at first birth by around four months.

“The Making of Equality: How the Second World War Shaped the Norwegian Income Distributions” with Ran Abramitzky and Kjell G. Salvanes 2023

Throughout history, wars and episodes of violent disruption have often been associated with reductions in economic inequality. However, the underlying dynamics and mechanisms behind the reduction in inequality during wars are less understood. This paper explores these dynamics and mechanisms in the context of Norway. We have four main findings. First, we document a large wage decline in income inequality in Norway that occurred during World War II and persisted until the mid-1960s. Second, we show that this decline in inequality was a result of convergence between occupations and across municipalities. Third, we use a newly digitized individual-level panel of official tax records, to estimate the effect of wartime local labor market shocks on employment, earnings, and inequality. Specifically, we test the effects of price shocks of food and forestry product on local labor markets and of wartime investment in industrial infrastructure, airports, and defense installations. Comparing regions that received investments with similar regions that did not, we find short run and long-lasting effects both on employment and income of investments in manufacturing, as well as strong effects on income in areas affected by the enormous wartime price increase of fish, agricultural food, and forest products.

“Norwegian Tax Returns from the 20th Century: An Automated Machine Learning Approach” with Kjell G. Salvanes 2023

High-quality administrative tax data has been instrumental in advancing economic research over the past several decades. However, the scarcity of data prior to the 1970s has posed a significant obstacle to the study of the distribution of economic outcomes across people and generations in historical settings. We introduce a dataset extending Norwegian tax records to 1900 by meticulously digitizing more than 270,000 pages. The dataset includes most Norwegian regions and data on name, occupation, place of residence, earnings, and wealth. We link observations across years to significantly enhance the usefulness of the data. We argue that the methodologies employed in this paper offer significant potential for application to a wider range of sources and countries.

Selected Work in Progress

“Becoming Sweden: A 115 Year Journey Towards Wealth and Welfare” with Josef Sigurdsson and Arash Nekoei

“Explaining the Rise in Fascism: Evidence from the Nasjonal Samling Party in Norway” with Kjell Gunnar Salvanes, Tom Melling and Laura Khoury

Articles Not Intended for Publication

“Equality before the welfare state: The Norwegian income distribution 1892-1929”, Master Thesis, with Håkon Block Vagle 2017

Other Engagements

Journalist at Dagens Næringsliv (financial newspaper) 2016, 2017 (summer)
Board member at Department of Economics at NHH 2015, 2017, 2021
Journalist at Finansavisen (financial newspaper) 2014 (summer)
Board member at Norwegian School of Economics (NHH) 2016 - 2017

Presentations

NHH (internal) 2023
SOLE, EALE, Stanford University (internal), NHH (internal), Uppsala University 2021
NHH (internal), University of Southern Denmark (HEDGE mini-workshop), the Scandinavian (online) PhD Seminar 2020

Refereeing

Journal of Human Resources, Demographic Research

Teaching and Research Assistance

TEACHING ASSISTANT

Inequality, Intergenerational Mobility and Early Childhood. Ph.D level at UiB. 2021
Econometrics/Econometric Techniques (*ECN402*). Master level at NHH 2020 (2x), 2021
Krakk og Kriser (the History of Business Cycles, *FIE431*). Master level at NHH 2019, 2023
Empirical Strategies for Causal Analysis (*ECO433*). Masters level at NHH 2019
Økonomi og Psykologi (Behavioural Economics, *VOA40*). Bachelor level at NHH 2016

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Prof. Katrine Løken 2017
Prof. Alexander Cappelen and Bertil Tungodden 2016
Prof. Kjell Gunnar Salvanes 2017-2023

Skills

DATA SCIENCE

R (advanced), Stata (advanced), Python (advanced), Bash (proficient) and Git (proficient)

LANGUAGES

Norwegian and English