

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

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 for a period that includes World War II and the creation of the welfare state. I show that persistence between fathers and sons was high in the early 20th century but decreased substantially for cohorts born between the 1920s and 1940s. The convergence of incomes between rural and urban areas explains about half the total fall in persistence. First, I relate 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 in incomes across generations. Second, I show that the returns to education fell dramatically 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 that the onset of World War II lowered persistence in income. These results suggest that equal access to education and a compressed income distribution 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 2024

This paper generates new insights into the effect of education on fertility and partner choice across multiple generations. Using an intensity-of-treatment design, 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 in rural municipalities. The reform was binding for most of the rural population and allows us to estimate the effect of education on fertility behavior across the life-cycle, partner choice, and spillover effects on the next generation’s fertility. We present robust evidence of reduced total fertility and an increase in the age at first birth driven by increased years of education, better labor market outcomes, and mating with better-educated partners. In addition, the reform also affected the fertility behavior of the children and decreased fertility rates across multiple generations.

“The Making of Equality: How the Second World War Shaped the Norwegian Income Distributions” with Ran Abramitzky and Kjell G. Salvanes 2024

Wars and episodes of violent disruption have often been associated with reductions in economic inequality, but the underlying dynamics and mechanisms are less understood. This paper explores World War II’s effect on the income distribution in Norway. We use a newly digitized individual-level panel of tax records and document a large decline in income inequality in Norway that occurred during and after World War II and persisted until the 1980s. We descriptively show that the decline is driven by large increases in the incomes of the bottom 50 percent of the income distribution and, to a smaller degree, reductions among the very rich. Using a shift-share design, we show that more than half the decline in inequality during the war is caused by large increases in the prices of agricultural products and fish. We further identify the effect of massive investments in fortifications, airports, and war-related manufacturing on local labor markets. While the total effects vary by investment type, the investments disproportionately increased incomes for workers with low skills or low incomes before the war. Our analysis provides an alternative narrative by centering on the bottom 50 percent of income earners, contrasting with studies focusing primarily on the top income shares and capital destruction during wartime.

“Norwegian Tax Returns from the 20th Century: An Automated Machine Learning Approach” with Kjell G. Salvanes 2024

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 data set extending Norwegian tax records to the early 1900s, digitizing more than 270,000 pages. The data set includes most Norwegian regions and data on name, occupation, place of residence, income, 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 (<i>ECN402</i>). Master level at NHH	2020 (2x), 2021
Krakk og Kriser (the History of Business Cycles, <i>FIE431</i>). Master level at NHH	2019, 2023
Empirical Strategies for Causal Analysis (<i>ECO433</i>). Masters level at NHH	2019
Økonomi og Psykologi (Behavioural Economics, <i>VOA40</i>). 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