Self-Selection of Asylum Seekers: Evidence from Germany

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Abstract:

We examine the pattern of selection on education of asylum seekers recently arrived in Germany from five key source countries, namely Afghanistan, Albania, Iraq, Serbia and Syria. The analysis relies on original individual-level data collected in Germany combined with surveys conducted in the five countries of origin. The results reveal a positive pattern of selection on education for asylum seekers who were able to flee Iraq and Syria, while the selection is neutral for individuals seeking asylum from Afghanistan. By contrast, asylum seekers from Albania and Serbia are found to be drawn from the lower tail of the education distribution associated to the origin population. We provide an interpretation of these patterns based on differences in the expected length of stay at destination, in the migration costs faced by asylum seekers to reach Germany, and in the size of migration networks at destination.