

ABSTRACT:

Beat the ban migrants and their off-spring: Self-selection and economic assimilation of migrants over multiple generations

Anne Gielen

Erasmus University Rotterdam

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This paper exploits a mass migration linked to Dutch colonial history to study two related questions. First, we investigate the long-term persistence of inequality between migrants and natives using administrative micro records over multiple generations. Second, we study whether 'positively' selected migrants have better long-term outcomes than 'negatively' selected migrants. Our context is the mass migration which occurred after the announcement of the Independence of Surinam and the resulting ban on migration to the Netherlands. We find that 'beat-the-ban' migrants, those arriving just before the ban, are negatively selected compared to economic migrants arriving before the announcement of the ban. This difference in selection is reflected in the outcomes of the first generation; we find large outcome gaps between natives and beat-the-ban migrants even forty years after the mass migration, and smaller outcomes gaps for economic migrants. Remarkably, for the next generations we find a different pattern. The outcomes of beat-the-ban migrants converge towards the outcomes of natives whereas the outcomes of economic migrants hardly converge towards natives. Unobserved factors of the first generation of beat-the-ban migrants might explain this pattern; their schooling upon arrival and their income probably does not reflect their full earnings potential. In addition, they already experienced a strong upward social mobility in Surinam. Migration policies based on characteristics upon arrival might miss the full potential of migrants.