

**Title:** Who leaves a wealthy, peaceful country?

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**Abstract:** Overshadowed by the high immigration to Norway in recent decades, emigration from Norway has also increased substantially. Currently, Norway has more annual emigrations (ca 30,000) than during the large emigration waves to America in the late 1800s. However, research on all those who leave Norway is scarce, which is paradoxical in a country with high-quality register data on many aspects of the population, including on those who emigrate.

This paper uses Norwegian register data to provide an overall description of those who have emigrated from Norway during recent decades, showing a long array of characteristics (such as age, sex, immigrant background, family status, citizenship and income) which is relatively unique in international studies of migration.

Guided by cluster analyses we also divide emigrants into several main groups and show the characteristics of each group. Moreover, we compare the emigrants with those who did not emigrate, using event history analyses to investigate selection into emigration from Norway.

Knowing the characteristics of emigrants – also compared with those who do not emigrate - can inform both the international research front and policymakers in several ways; about selection into emigration, loss of skills through emigration as well as determinants of emigration from a wealthy country.

**Extended abstract:** Like many other European countries, Norway has a long history as a country of emigration. In the late 1800s and early 1900s several hundred thousand Norwegians emigrated – mainly for destinations overseas like the US. This historical migration flow is relatively well documented through historical research, literature and films.

After World War 2 the direction of the net flows changed, and in the last decades Norway has been an important destination for migrants from all over the world. However, also emigration increased again in this period, but this has not drawn much attention. Figure 1 shows how the annual number of emigrations from Norway recently passed the record high levels from the 1880s.

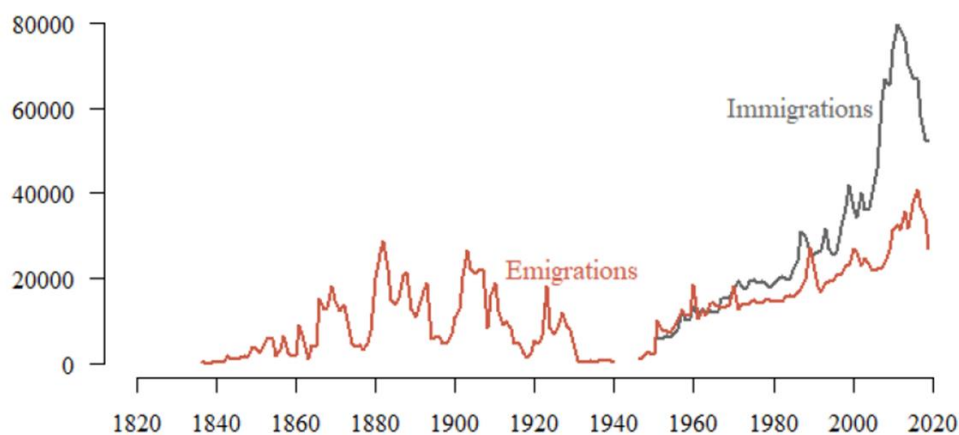


Figure 1: Emigration from and immigration to Norway, 1820-2020

Although around 30,000 persons emigrate from Norway annually, little is known about who they are and where they go.

This paper will provide a broad picture of recent emigration from Norway and the characteristics of the emigrants, their destination and whether they return to Norway again or not. In the paper, those who emigrated from Norway during the period 2000-2020 are categorized into separate groups, based on their immigration background (immigrants, Norwegian-born children of immigrants and natives), age at emigration, origin (for immigrants and Norwegian-born children of immigrants) and time since immigration to Norway (for immigrants).

The 11 groups are:

- **Young Nordic/Western** immigrants (age 18-29 at emigration)
- **Older Nordic/Western** immigrants (age 30+ at emigration)
- Immigrants from **Eastern/Central EU** (age 18+ at emigration)
- **Non-Western** immigrants, **short time** in Norway (age 18+ at emigration)
- **Non-Western** immigrants, **long time** in Norway (age 18+ at emigration)
- **Immigrants** who came and left as **children** (age 0-17 at emigration)
- **Children of Nordic/EU/Western immigrants** (born in Norway)
- **Children of Non-Western immigrants** (born in Norway)
- **Young natives** (age 18-29 at emigration)
- **Older natives** (age 30+ at emigration)
- **Native children** (age 0-17 at emigration)

The aim of using these groups is to make it easier to grasp some of the main diversity among people who leave Norway, to visualize changes over time in the composition of emigrants as well as to explore changes over time in emigration probabilities for different groups of the population.

The categorization of the groups has been guided by established knowledge on individual-level determinants of migration as well as Norwegian regulations, data availability and explorative cluster analyses.<sup>1</sup> Within the three main groups of emigrants (immigrants, Norwegian-born children of immigrants and natives), we have created groups of relatively similar sizes that have cutoff-points by age, duration of stay and origin which make sense in light of established migration research, Norway's immigration history and the Norwegian legal system for migration (for instance with children as separate categories, and with immigrants with easy access to staying in Norway in other categories than those without free mobility). Clear-cut distinctions between the groups make it straightforward to calculate emigration rates for each group (where non-emigrants have to be included in the denominator).

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<sup>1</sup> A number of different cluster analyses were run for all emigrants together as well as separately for immigrants, Norwegian-born children of immigrants, and natives. The latter process allowed for inclusion of variables specific for each group, such as origin area and time since immigration (for immigrants). Since the degree of missing information varied in our data, we first ran hierarchical/ward analyses on a subset of the data with rich register information, in order to determine starting points for the next analyses: k-means and k-medians analyses, which were run on the full sample, but only with variables well covered for all individuals. Several model specifications were tried, which included different variables (standardized and not) and distance measures (Euklidian and Gower). The majority of the results tended to point in the direction of a categorization like the one used in this paper (although the divisions were not as clear-cut), and to a large extent, they showed that many of the differences between the groups could be captured by using only the few well-covered variables that we base our categorization on (see also Table XX).

Figure 2 shows the number of emigrations annually from each of the groups in the period 2000-2020. The left panel shows absolute numbers, whereas the right panel shows each groups' share of the total annual emigration. The orange groups are people born in Norway to immigrant parents, the blue groups are from the Norwegian majority population, and the green groups are people who have previously immigrated to Norway.

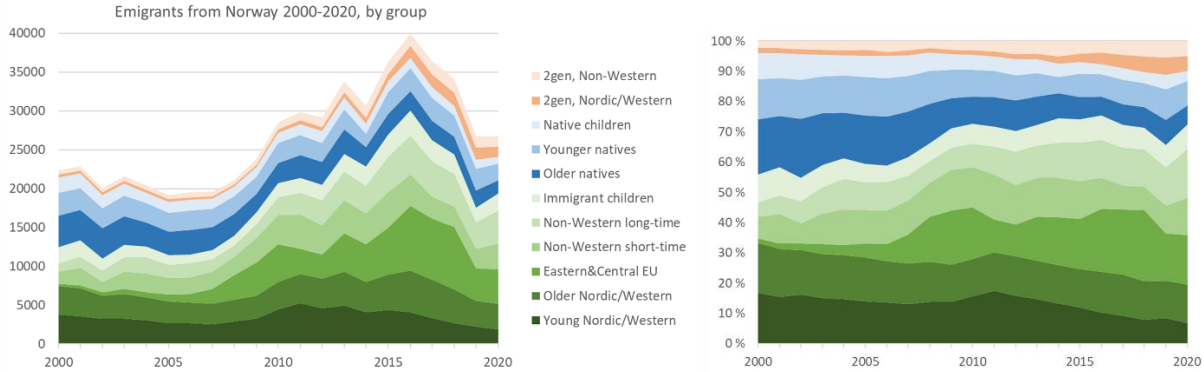


Figure 2: Emigration from Norway by groups, absolute numbers (left) and shares (right), 2000-2020

During this period, the share of immigrants (green groups) among the emigrants has increased from around 55% to more than 70% in 2020. In particular, emigration among persons from Eastern and Central EU increased markedly, which is not surprising given that immigration from this area rose substantially after the EU enlargement in 2004. Emigration of people in the majority population (blue groups) has declined over this period, both in absolute and relative terms.

Emigration rates, which also take into account the population at risk in each group, provide a more nuanced picture. Groups with relatively high emigration rates are shown in the left panel, whereas the right panel shows groups with lower rates.

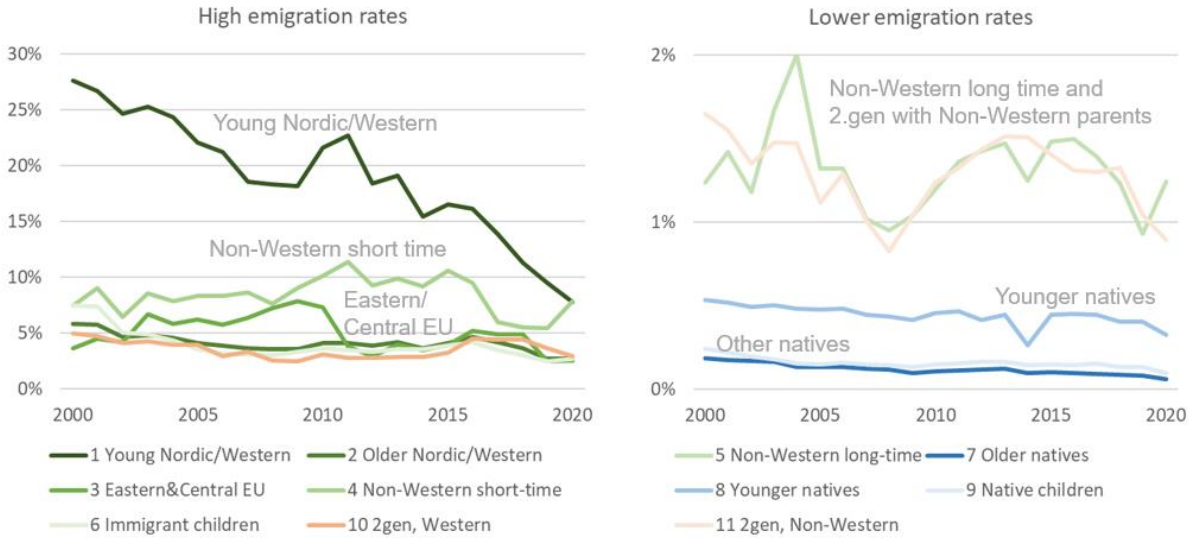


Figure 3: Emigration rates from Norway (emigrations per 100) by groups, 2000-2020.

One of the most striking features of Figure 3 is how the emigration rates for the traditionally very mobile young Nordic and Western migrants have decreased from more than 25% to below 10%. Most other groups have also seen declining emigration rates, this is even the case for the

immigrants from Eastern and Central EU – although Figure 2 showed that the *number* of emigrants in this group increased markedly over the period.

Norwegian register data also allows for a comparison of characteristics between the groups. First analyses of these differences indicate that the young Nordic/Western immigrants (Group 1) are predominantly single, have short durations of stay in Norway and very seldom move back to Norway after they have left. 42% of these emigrants are Swedish. Group 2 (older Nordic/Western immigrants) are mostly men, a majority have higher education, and they had relatively high income while in Norway. Group 3 (immigrants from Eastern/Central EU) are also mostly men, about half of them are from Poland, and a relatively high share worked in construction while in Norway. Groups 4 (Non-Western short time immigrants) are mostly women, and often from Asia, many have come as au pairs to Norway. Non-Western long time immigrants (Group 5) have relatively long stays in Norway before emigrating, a high share have become Norwegian citizens and compared with the other immigrant groups relatively many of the emigrants in this group (16%) are back in Norway five years after emigration. Group 6 came and left as children, often with parents from Poland or Sweden, their mean age at emigration is 9 years.

For the majority population, Group 7 (older natives) have a mean age of 46 years at emigration. 40% were full-time employees in Norway before emigration, and a relatively high share (18%) were on disability pensions. Their main destinations are Sweden, Spain/Portugal, US/Canada and Denmark. 37% are back in Norway after 5 years. For the younger natives (Group 8), an even higher share (46%) is back in Norway 5 years after emigration. 59% are women and their mean age at emigration is 24 years. Among the native children (Group 9) the mean age at emigration was 6 years, and they tend to belong to relatively high-income households and be back again in Norway.

Finally, Norwegian-born children of Western immigrants (Group 10) and of Non-Western immigrants (Group 11) differ somewhat: Those with Western parents tend to leave Norway at younger ages (5 years vs 8 years), and the vast majority of them move to parents' origin country. Those with Non-Western parents more often go to other destinations than parents' origin, more of them are Norwegian citizens, and as much as 22% of them are back in Norway 5 years after they left.

*Before the conference, the paper's analyses will be re-run with updated register data which will include also 2021 and 2022. In addition to the types of analyses described above, we will run event history analyses to examine selection and determinants of emigration in the different groups.*