

# Of Fathers and Sons: The Intergenerational Transfer of Return Premium in Children of Returnees.

In the rapidly evolving dynamics of global migration, return and temporary migration phenomena have become central subjects. Yet, while the impacts of return migration on origin countries have been debated, a significant research gap remains around the "return premium" and its potential intergenerational transfer. Our study delves into this uncharted territory, exploring the intergenerational social mobility of children born abroad or those who migrated and later returned with their parents. We propose two primary mechanisms that might facilitate this mobility: exposure to diverse human capital sources during schooling abroad and the intricacies of learned spatial mobility behaviors. Using data from SHARE, a representative survey across 13 European countries, we study the diverse trajectories of individuals and track migration histories meticulously. Notably, we link migrant parents to their children's data, focusing on education and social mobility, offering a novel insight into the shared characteristics of returning families. Our research promises to shed light on the multifaceted impacts of return migration, emphasizing its implications for both the migrants and their subsequent generations.

## 1. Introduction, literature, expectations.

While return migration and temporary migration have historically taken a backseat in scientific literature, these phenomena are crucial to comprehending the evolving dynamics of global migration. As we transition into a new era of international migration (Castles, Miller, & de Haas, 2013), studies suggest that 25% to 33% of migrants eventually return to their origin countries (Azose & Raftery, 2019). The implications of return migration have been intensely debated. Discussions often swing between optimistic and pessimistic views on the migration's effects for origin countries, particularly around the concepts of brain drain versus brain gain and the relationship between migration and development (Geiger & Pécoud, 2013; Nyberg-Sørensen, Van Hear, & Engberg-Pedersen, 2002). In this evolving landscape marked by non-linear migration patterns, transnational ties, and shifts in Western immigration policies favoring more restrictive circular migration schemes (Triandafyllidou, 2022), researchers are increasingly interested in how return migrants can use their migration-acquired resources and skills for upward social mobility at home (Wahba, 2022). This lies at the core of the burgeoning field of "economic sociology of return" (Hagan & Thomas Wassink, 2020)

Despite numerous studies examining the social mobility of return migrants—achieved through the accumulation of human and financial capital (Hagan, Hernández-León, & Demonsant, 2015; Reinhold & Thom, 2013; Wahba, 2015; Wassink & Hagan, 2018)—there remains a significant research gap: the potential intergenerational transfer of this "return premium". Intergenerational mobility in migration research has traditionally been studied within the context of immigration in destination countries. Here, the wealth, earnings, and skills accumulated by the first generation often transfer to subsequent generations (Borjas, 1993; Dustmann, 2008; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). However, when the lens is shifted to origin countries or regions, existing literature provides varied findings on the effects of parental migration on the education and work outcomes of children left behind (Halpern-

Manners, 2011; Lu, 2014). Even rarer are studies extending this investigation to other family members, as seen in the multi-generational migrant family research by Guveli et al (2016) and Viera (2020).

In this study, we aim to explore a fresh perspective on the transmission of the "return premium": the intergenerational social mobility of children who were either born abroad or migrated alongside their parents, and subsequently returned with them. While children have often been studied in the context of opportunities or constraints tied to their migrant parents' decisions regarding return (Aragón & Bretones, 2020; Dustmann, 2003), a burgeoning field is beginning to emphasize the subjectivity of these children (Grosa, 2022). The intricacy of such studies stems from the complex agency children exert in return decisions and the integration process (Michail & King, 2023; Vathi & King, 2021). Factors like diasporic belongingness, transnational ties, and varied mobilities can blur the lines, leading one to question whether the move is genuinely a "return" or simply another migration (Knörr, 2005). Nonetheless, returning migrant children present intriguing possibilities as potential beneficiaries of the advantages their parents accrued during migration. We propose several mechanisms, which are outlined as follows:

### **Exposure to different sources of human capital.**

Similarly to their parents, children may also be exposed to various types of human capital during their schooling, which could yield higher returns upon their return to their country of origin. There are several mechanisms by which migration can enhance human capital. One perspective views migration as a means to hone occupation-specific skills. While much of this research has examined how these skills align with the roles returnees take on in their home countries (Reinhold & Thom, 2013), we can extrapolate this to suggest that migrant children may have benefited from higher quality education during their time abroad, thus boosting their productivity upon return. Another avenue to consider is the set of unique skills acquired simply through the act of migrating. This "general" experience is often derived from the demand for skills and competencies that arise from interactions with foreign cultures, exemplified by language proficiency in our globalized era. This idea is explored in literature on transnational human capital (Gerhards, Hans, & Carlson, 2016). However, some evidence suggests that the importance of such skills might be overstated in academic circles, impacting only a specific segment of the labor market and centering on particular competencies, like English fluency (Díez Medrano, 2016). The differing impacts of these skills across institutional settings and countries further support the notion that returns on this general experience are primarily driven by the supply-demand dynamics of valuable assets (Gazzola & Mazzacani, 2019).

### **Higher mobility rates**

The relationship between spatial mobility and social mobility has been well-documented both theoretically and empirically in the literature (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Savage, 1988). We contend that children who are return migrants may have distinct advantages compared to non-migrants, particularly given their potentially higher rates of mobility. Extensive research has illustrated the ways in which previous migration experiences serve as strong predictors for future migration. This is often attributed to factors like location-specific capital and reduced constraints to movement (Davanzo, 1981, 1983). Recent scholarship has sought to frame migration from a life course perspective rather than viewing it as isolated events. This approach has highlighted the significant finding that migrating during childhood can positively influence the frequency of moves in adulthood (Bernard & Perales, 2021; Bernard & Vidal, 2020). This understanding of migration as a "learned" behavior may also play a role in enhancing the benefits experienced by return migrants.

## 2. Data and methods

We utilize both retrospective waves and current ones from SHARE. SHARE is a nationally representative survey that targets the population aged 50 and over across 13 European countries. Within SHARE, migration histories have been meticulously collected using life history grids. These histories encompass an extensive range of modules centered around labor market dynamics, sociodemographic factors, and comprehensive records of individuals' residential mobility throughout their lives. This includes intraregional, interregional, and international migration movements. The survey's multi-setting design facilitates the exploration of variations across regional and country-specific contexts of reception. This enables tracking the diverse trajectories of individuals who resided in different countries until the age of 18, comparing them with nationals who did not move. Another significant feature of SHARE is its ability to establish parent-child pairs. This allows us to link migrant parents (the primary respondents of the survey) with specific data concerning their children, particularly in the realm of social mobility, such as educational achievements. This pairing provides insights into the characteristics shared between returning parents and their children. To harness the potential of this data, we restructure the SHARE data, utilizing its life-history framework, into a retrospective panel dataset. This transformation arranges the data into person-year segments, and we plan to employ various longitudinal analysis methods for our subsequent evaluations.

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