

# Eirik Berger Abel

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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](mailto:Katrine.Loken@nhh.no)

## References

**Prof. Kjell Gunnar Salvanes**  
Norwegian School of Economics  
[Kjell.Salvanes@nhh.no](mailto:Kjell.Salvanes@nhh.no)

**Prof. Aline Bütikofer**  
Norwegian School of Economics  
[Aline.Buetikofer@nhh.no](mailto:Aline.Buetikofer@nhh.no)

**Prof. Ran Abramitzky**  
Stanford University  
[RanAbr@stanford.edu](mailto: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 during a period that includes World War II and the creation of the welfare state. I link a novel dataset with more than 16 million observations from tax records between 1924 and 1964 to data on family ties from historical censuses and modern administrative data. I show that persistence in income was high in the early 20th century but decreased substantially for cohorts born between the 1920s and 1940s. The convergence of rural and urban areas can explain about half of the total fall in persistence. I link this result to changes in education by causally estimating the effect of a primary school reform, which reduced the gap between cities and rural areas, and find that it significantly increased mobility. Finally, the return to education fell considerably over time, particularly at the beginning of World War II. Using the sharp drop in premiums in 1941-1942, I find that it directly decreased persistence in income across generations.

## **Working Papers**

### **“Fertility, Family Formation and Human Capital” with Aline Bütikofer and Kjell G. Salvanes 2023**

By varying the intensity of compulsory schooling while keeping the number of compulsory school years constant, this paper generates new insights into the effect of human capital on fertility on the extensive and intensive margin. 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 that allows us to isolate the effect of human capital investment on fertility behavior across the life-cycle from an incarceration effect. We present robust evidence of reduced total fertility driven mostly by an increase in the share of women with one or no children and an increase in the age at first birth by around four months.

### **“The Making of Equality: How the Second World War Shaped the Norwegian Income Distributions” with Ran Abramitzky and Kjell G. Salvanes 2023**

It is well established that wars and episodes of violent disruption have throughout recorded history often been associated with reductions in economic inequality. Combining our newly digitized individual-level panel of official tax records for Norway, occupations, and local labor markets approach, we estimate event history specifications for identifying the local labor market shocks on employment, earnings, and inequality. More precisely, we exploit the idiosyncratic variation across local labor markets in wartime investment in industrial infrastructure, airports, and defense installations, as well as the impact of national-level price shocks on local labor markets dependent on the pre-war intensity of employment in agriculture, fishery, and forestry. Our main findings are as follows. From the descriptive analysis, we find that a large convergence between occupations and municipalities occurred during World War II, and the convergence between municipalities continued until the mid-60s. In our analyses of causal effects comparing treated and non-treated regions of investments and price increases of food and forestry products, we find strong and quite immediate and long-lasting effects both of employment and income of German investments in manufacturing factories, as well as of strong effects on income in areas affected by the enormous price increase of fish and agricultural food products, as well as forest products in the wartime economy.

### **“Norwegian Tax Returns from the 20th Century: An Automated Machine Learning Approach” with Kjell G. Salvanes 2023**

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 dataset extending Norwegian tax records to 1900 by meticulously digitizing more than 270,000 pages. The dataset includes most Norwegian regions and data on name, occupation, place of residence, earnings, 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

## 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