

**Southern Economic Association 92nd Annual Meeting**  
**November 19-21, 2022**  
**Fort Lauderdale Marriott Harbor Beach Resort & Spa**  
**Fort Lauderdale, FL**

**Conference Registration:** Forthcoming at the Southern Economic Association website

**Session 1:** The Environment and Social Justice

**Type:** Presidential

**JEL Codes:** Q53 Air Pollution  
J10 Demographic Economics, General

**Organizer:** Areerat Kichkha, Association for Integrity and Responsible Leadership in Economics and Associated Professions (AIRLEAP), [areerat.kichkha@airleap.org](mailto:areerat.kichkha@airleap.org)

**Chair:** Brian Sloboda, Department of Labor, [bsloboda@email.phoeniix.edu](mailto:bsloboda@email.phoeniix.edu)

**Description:** This session investigates air quality to see how levels of air pollutions are different in various demographical communities deploying various quantitative methods. It then aims to see how the COVID pandemic alters economic behaviors and air quality outcomes. In addition, it explores the impacts of air quality on work safety and student outcomes. This session seeks implications for equal opportunity for clean air and health quality.

**Paper 1: Data-driven Investigation on Impact of Air Quality in Different Demographics**

Areerat Kichkha, AIRLEAP; Jaelin Lee, Digital Built National Capital Region; Irina Amari, Netsas

**Presenter:** Areerat Kichkha, AIRLEAP, [areerat.kichkha@airleap.org](mailto:areerat.kichkha@airleap.org)

This paper investigates air quality to see how levels of air pollution are different in various demographical communities, employing a data science approach, for implications to improve health and well-being equality. Studies have shown that some communities in the United States are disproportionately affected by air pollution levels. This research focuses on the evolution of air quality and main environmental pollutants in different communities in the past few years, including the COVID-19 lockdown period. The lockdown impacted human behaviors, traffic patterns, industrial activities, and commercial and residential building operating schedules. As a result, some communities experienced improvement in air quality, while other communities experienced the opposite in regard to certain pollutants. Our research analyzes air pollutants, weather, and census data provided by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to answer key questions such as: 1) Did COVID-19 improve the air quality equally across communities with different demographics? 2) Is economic status a proxy for the likelihood of getting exposed to health-threatening air pollutants? 3) What recommendations can we consider for promoting environmental justice in different communities in the United States?

**Paper 2: Air Quality, Vulnerable Populations and Health Outcomes** Christine M. Kuta, Kuta Intellectual Property Law

**Presenter:** Christine M. Kuta, Kuta Intellectual Property Law, [ckuta@kutaiplaw.com](mailto:ckuta@kutaiplaw.com)

Studies show that the areas where disadvantaged people live are more polluted than the areas where less socially and economically challenged people live. What does this mean beyond simple unpleasantness? We are interested in discovering whether there are other negative

consequences to poor air quality. In particular, in our research, we are looking for correlation between poor air quality and social vulnerability with negative health outcomes, particular with regard to COVID-19. We will be using data analysis and other data science techniques on EPA air quality data merged with census data, health and mortality data to look for correlations. Correlations will need to be studied further to verify causation. The reason why this kind of research is important is that there are likely to more pandemics occurring more frequently with climate change. We hope understanding whether pollution makes vulnerable populations more susceptible to illness will provide the basis for new regulations, will inspire creative solutions and will be the basis for directing funding to implement those solutions.

**Paper 3: The Effect of Particle Pollution on Work Safety Evidence from Bounds and Imperfect IVs** Zhanhan Yu, Syracuse University

**Presenter:** Zhanhan Yu, Syracuse University, [zyu127@syr.edu](mailto:zyu127@syr.edu)

I investigate the causal effect of particle pollution, particularly PM2.5, on work safety using novel data of work-related severe injuries and PM2.5 pollution in the US from 2015 through 2018. I leverage partial identification methods to estimate the minimal impact of PM2.5. Preliminary results suggest that exposure to PM2.5 pollution increases the prevalence rate of severe injuries per million population. Working in days with a higher level of PM2.5 by one microgram per cubic meter raises the prevalence rate of severe injuries by “at least” 5%. The effect is greater for exposure to severe PM2.5 pollution measured by PM2.5 above 25 micrograms per cubic meter. Exposure to severe PM2.5 pollution increases the prevalence rate of severe injuries per million population by 36%.

**Paper 4: The Effects of Toxic Air Pollution on Student Outcomes, Household Sorting, and Racial Gaps** Tucker Smith, Vanderbilt University

**Presenter:** Tucker Smith, Vanderbilt University, [tucker.w.smith@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:tucker.w.smith@vanderbilt.edu)

This paper examines the effects of exposure to toxic air pollutants in childhood and adolescence on short- and long-term outcomes. Specifically, I will utilize the EPA’s Toxic Release Inventory to identify industrial facilities that emit toxic air pollutants and daily wind data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to identify the predominant direction that wind carries emissions from toxic plants. I will compare the difference in outcomes of students attending schools downwind relative to those upwind of the same toxic facility while it is operating (i.e., when one side is differentially exposed to pollutants) to this difference after its closure (i.e., when neither side are exposed to pollutants) in a difference-in-differences framework. I will use longitudinal student-level data to both estimate intent-to-treat parameters that are not subject to bias from student sorting following plant closure and to directly examine sorting responses as an outcome of interest.

**Paper 5: Environmental Justice and the Multigenerational Persistence of Environmental Exposure** Huan Li, North Carolina A&T State University; Ruohao Zhang, Binghamton University; and Neha Khanna Binghamton University

**Presenter:** Huan Li, North Carolina A&T State University, [hli1@ncat.edu](mailto:hli1@ncat.edu)

We examine whether and to what extent the disproportionate exposure to relatively low environmental quality among socio-economically disadvantaged populations transmits from one generation to the next using approximately four decades of individual data from the US. Furthermore, we explore heterogeneous individual preferences for residential location by emphasizing the role of childhood environmental exposure.

## **Session 2:** Topics in International Migration: Approaches, Data, Liberalization, and Policies

**Type:** Presidential

**JEL Codes:** F22

**Organizer and Chair:** Areerat Kichkha, Association for Integrity and Responsible Leadership in Economics and Associated Professions (AIRLEAP), [areerat.kichkha@airleap.org](mailto:areerat.kichkha@airleap.org)

**Description:** This session explores international migration with case studies from Norway, Mexico & the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) & European Union (EU), and general political economies. It particularly investigates the following topics: 1) why people leave a wealthy country like Norway which has invested in their people's education, health, and welfare may want to retain them; 2) how Mexicans self-select to enter the US as documented or undocumented immigrants; 3) explanations about the UK sharp public divide on immigration issues; 4) when a host country would be more liberal towards its immigrants; and 5) the use of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) administrative data to address some basic questions in migration research.

### **Paper 1: Goodbye Norway: Testing Neoclassical versus Other Theories of Emigration**

Amelie F. Constant, Princeton University; Marianne Toennessen, OsloMet; Astri Syse, Statistics Norway

**Presenter/Primary Contact:** Amelie F. Constant, Princeton University, [ameliec@princeton.edu](mailto:ameliec@princeton.edu)

Over the years, a high-income country like Norway has been receiving increasing numbers of immigrants. At the same time, Norway has been experiencing high emigration rates. For example, in 2020, about 30,000 people left the country of 5.3 million. Yet, little is known about why people leave a wealthy country like Norway, which is part of the European Economic Area (EEA), and where they go after they exit. Such knowledge is crucial to policymakers who want to formulate appropriate and effective policies that retain their valued citizens or immigrants.

Studying and understanding why people leave and where they are going after their exit can provide insights in the success or failure of the current immigration policies. This paper examines the reasons why people leave Norway, testing the Neoclassical Theory of income maximization and the New Economics of Labor Migration that views migrants as target earners. The paper focuses on two distinct types of Norwegian residents who decide to emigrate. First are the natives, who may emigrate for the first time, or they may repeat-migrate but have been neglected by the literature. This is a novel contribution because the literature on emigration has concentrated on immigrants who leave the host country. Second, are the immigrants in Norway, who return-migrate or move onwards to a third country. Moreover, we differentiate between immigrants from the European Union (EU), whose duration of stay in Norway is not restricted by temporary residence permits, and non-EU immigrants. Where people are going provides insights in the success of the country's immigration policies. For example, immigrants returning home is incompatible with Neoclassical Theory. It rather indicates "target earning" applications and may not reflect badly on the host country's integration policies. On the other hand, when immigrants move onwards to another wealthy country this indicates income maximization tendencies. Similarly, when native Norwegians emigrate this may indicate that they can do better elsewhere. Countries like Norway that have invested in their people's education, health, and welfare may want to retain them. Our study is based on rich Norwegian register data from 2000 to 2021 that contain information on people's exit and destination. It will help us gain a deeper understanding of the role of free labor

mobility (such as within the EU/EEA area) on exit migration from wealthy nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We expect to find that the theory of income maximization applies to native Norwegians and Norwegian immigrants who migrate to a third country.

**Paper 2: Using DHS Administrative Data to Address Some Basic Questions in Migration Research** Willie Jasso, New York University; Mark R. Rosenzweig, Yale University

**Presenter/Primary Contact:** Willie Jasso, New York University, [gj1@nyu.edu](mailto:gj1@nyu.edu)

This paper develops a framework for using DHS administrative data to address basic questions in migration research. The linchpin data set is the time-tested Immigration File, containing basic information for all persons who were granted lawful permanent residence (LPR) in a fiscal year. This data set is well known, having once been available for public use (1972-1998) and having formed the sampling frame for the New Immigrant Survey cohorts of 1996 and 2003. And the linchpin procedure is matching of the basic Immigration File to several other DHS data sets, following the classical matched data sets linking new LPRs to naturalization data, also well-known and once available for public use. The questions on which we focus pertain, separately by cohort, to the nativity of the U.S. citizen sponsors of spouses, the proportion of conditional LPRs whose conditionality restrictions are removed and the proportion who become deportable, the proportion of new LPRs who sponsor the immigration of relatives (spouse; unmarried children) and the number of sponsored relatives, the proportion who acquire citizenship thru naturalization and its timing, the proportion who acquire citizenship by deriving it from a parent and its timing, the proportion who disappear after ten years (viz., because they neither become citizens nor renew their green card), and the proportion who sponsor the immigration of relatives after they become citizens. The framework envisions a sequence of stages, progressing to enhancements to the information in current files and to additional questions. In this way, a rich new data base can grow.

**Paper 3: Self-Selection among the Documented and Undocumented Immigrants from Mexico: Evidence from Mexican Migration Project Data** Sandip Sureka, Iowa State University

**Presenter/Primary Contact:** Sandip Sureka, Iowa State University, [sureka@iastate.edu](mailto:sureka@iastate.edu)

We develop an empirically tractable model of migration to study self-selection of legal and illegal Mexican migrants to the United States. We apply the model to a data set that combines information from the U.S. Current Population Survey, The Mexican Census, and the Mexican Migration Project. We use discrete choice models, in which Mexican residents faces three choices- staying in Mexico, migrate to the U.S. legally and migrate to the U.S illegally. The analysis includes measures of the costs of legal and illegal migration including historical migration networks, border protection effort, and each individual's expected wage earned in Mexico, in legal employment in the U.S., and in illegal employment in the U.S. We find that Mexican individuals with intermediate-level of skill are most likely to migrate illegally. But legal immigrants are more evenly selected across the skill distribution.

**Paper 4: Identity, Immigration and Subjective Well-Being** Peter Howley, University of Leeds,

**Presenter/Primary Contact:** Peter Howley, University of Leeds, [p.howley@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:p.howley@leeds.ac.uk)

We put forward differences in the form of national identity across natives as a key mechanism explaining the sharp public divide on immigration issues. We show that inflows of migrants into local areas can be harmful for the self-reported well-being of natives, but this is only true for natives who self-identify with an ethnic form of national identity. On the other hand, we provide some evidence to suggest that immigration may be utility enhancing for natives with a civic form of national identity. We also show how differences in national identity significantly predicts voting preferences in the UK referendum on EU membership where concern with immigration issues was

a salient factor. Drawing on identity economics, our proposed explanation is that for natives with an ethnic form of national identity, any positive economic benefits associated with immigration may not be enough to outweigh losses in identity-based utility.

**Paper 5: Skills and Immigration: A Short Run Trade Theoretical Approach** Dhimitri Qirjo, State University of New York at Plattsburgh

**Presenter/Primary Contact:** Dhimitri Qirjo, State University of New York at Plattsburgh,  
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We examine the political economy of immigration in a specific factor trade model with an arbitrary number of sectors, where labor is considered the short-run immobile factor. We show that labor liberalization depends on the host country's stock and distribution of capital, the diversity of skills set that each country has, and the variety of goods produced by each country. In particular, the more diverse in skilled labor is each country, or the wider the variety of goods produced in both countries, the more liberal the host country would be towards immigration.