

# Transnational Status Inconsistency: The Unequal Occupational Effects of Migration

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## Introduction

Many studies have analyzed immigrants' occupational status. In this important research tradition, scholars usually compare immigrants and natives in the society of immigration to assess the degree of immigrants' socioeconomic integration and identify the specific barriers that they face, including discrimination on the labor market.

In this paper, we adopt an alternative perspective. Instead of considering the natives as the obvious reference group, we compare immigrants' occupational status in the society of immigration with their own pre-migration status in their country of origin. Our main

research question examines the role of international mobility in modifying social inequality:  
what is the effect of migration on the level of occupational inequalities among immigrants?

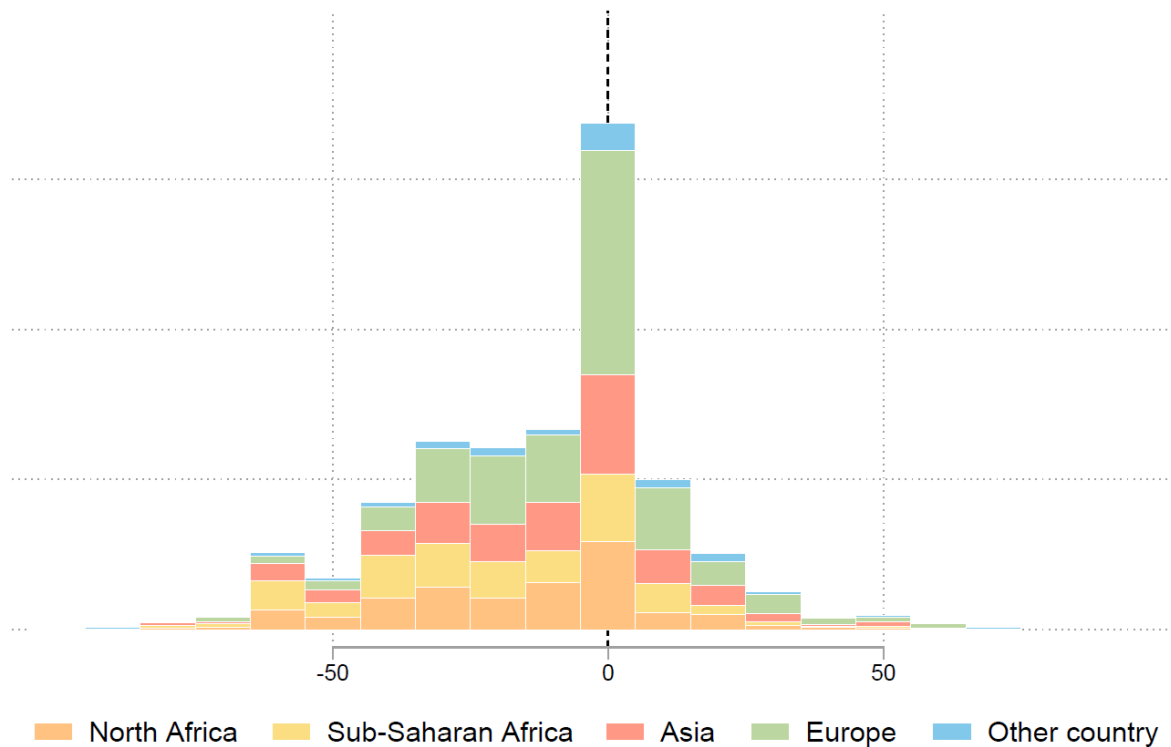
## **Data**

We use data from the *Trajectoires et Origines* survey (TeO) collected in France in 2008-2009, and designed by the French Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) and the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE). This survey combines two rare qualities. On the one hand, the data contain a large and nationally representative sample of immigrants residing in France (N=8456). On the other hand, precise retrospective information is collected on the employment status and occupation of immigrants at three points in time, i.e. before migration, upon arrival in France and at the time of the survey.

## **Preliminary findings**

Our preliminary analyses produce three main findings. First, as Figure 1 shows, the majority of immigrants experience an occupational decline between their last occupation prior to migration and their current occupation in France. Yet, this decline is not uniform and varies by region of origin: post-migration occupational demotion is relatively more frequent among immigrants coming from Africa (North and Sub-Saharan Africa) than among immigrants from Europe and Asia.

**Figure 1 – Difference between immigrants' current and pre-migration occupational status**

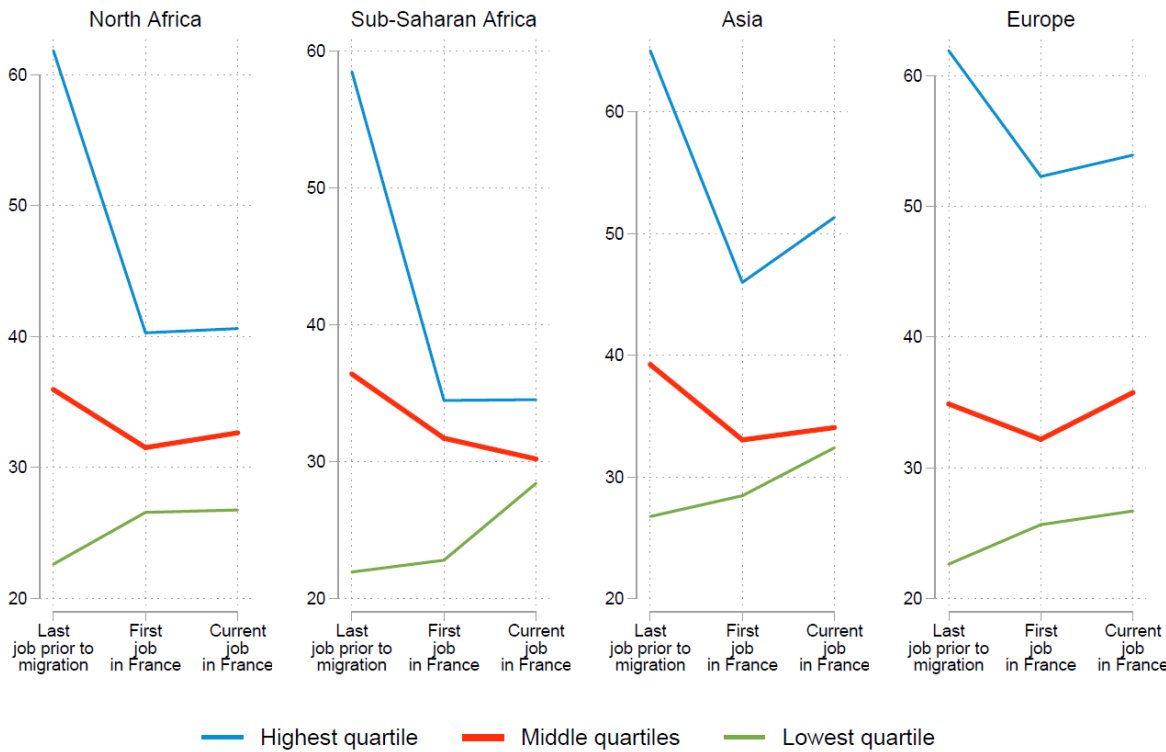


Data: TeO survey (2008-2009)

Note: occupational status is measured by the International Socio-Economic Index of occupational status (ISEI), standardized to range between 0 and 100. Values below 0 indicate an occupational decline, while values above 0 indicate a rise in occupational status.

Second, as Figure 2 shows, the experience of occupational decline happens upon arrival in France. This social status decline is more pronounced for immigrants who were initially privileged in their country of origin. In other words, one of the short-term effects of migration is an equalization in social status among immigrants. Third, as Figure 2 also indicates, over time spent in France, inequalities in occupational status tend to grow again slightly: immigrants who were initially privileged in their country of origin (top quartile) regain more of their relative pre-migration status. For their part, immigrants who were the most disadvantaged in their country of origin (bottom quartile) tend to durably lag behind their peers who originally came from higher social groups.

**Figure 2 – Average occupational status of last job prior to migration, first job upon arrival in France and current job according to immigrants pre-migration status (top, middle and bottom quartiles) and region of origin**



Data: TeO survey (2008-2009)

Note: occupational status is measured by the International Socio-Economic Index of occupational status (ISEI), standardized to range between 0 and 100.

**Conclusion**

These preliminary analyses will be expanded and refined in the full paper. The role of gender will especially be explored. Overall, considering international migration, not only as a geographical move, but also as an instance of social mobility, is fruitful and helps produce original insights into migration trajectories.