

## **Legal status and economic integration of Senegalese migrants in Europe**

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### **Abstract**

Most studies of the link between migrants' legal status and their integration into destination societies conceptualize legal status as a dichotomy and focus on economic outcomes such as employment and wages. This paper will broaden the investigation to include multiple legal domains and multiple indicators of economic integration across multiple contexts of reception. Using data from the MAFE-Senegal project, this study will include time-varying indicators of legal status in the domains of work and residence to predict employment, occupational prestige, and subjective assessments of both absolute and relative economic well-being. Preliminary results indicate that legal authorization to work and reside at destination are significantly associated with all four outcomes, but that these associations vary by context of reception. Not having a work permit is associated with lower probabilities of employment in Spain and Italy, while not having a residence permit is associated with higher probabilities of employment in all three destinations.

### **Description of the topic**

This study will examine the link between legal status and the labor market incorporation of Senegalese migrants in France, Italy, and Spain. The impact undocumented status on migrants' employment and wages has been extensively studied in the US context. In general, these studies, many of which compare immigrants legalized in 1986 under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) to unauthorized immigrants, show that lack of legal status is associated with economic disadvantage.

Research in Europe has focused on the role that the informal sector and segmented labor markets have played in attracting undocumented migrants (Mingione and Quassoli 2000; Fullin and Reyneri 2011). These studies have found that undocumented migrants in many European destinations do not face any disadvantage in the probability of employment, but tend to be disadvantaged in terms of socio-professional status of their jobs. In particular, irregular migrants tend to be clustered in precarious, low-wage "3D" (dirty, dangerous, and demeaning) jobs (Koser 2010). It thus seems that lack of legal status is associated with having a worse job as measured by wages and/or prestige.

Senegalese migrants in Europe, especially those in the new destinations of Italy and Spain, often work in jobs that are precarious or informal (or both). Early Senegalese migrants worked in low-wage, low-skill jobs in the French labor market, and there has been a progressive shift towards informality of employment in France (Fall 2005). The Spanish labor market has attracted Senegalese to work as unskilled laborers in agriculture, construction, and services (Pascual de Sans, Cardelús, and Solana Solana 2000), while those in Italy have worked in informal industry or informal entrepreneurship (Riccio

2001; Kaag 2008). Wages and working conditions in Italy and Spain tend to be poor. At the same time, some studies indicate that informal jobs at destination offer solid possibilities for accumulation for Senegalese migrants regardless of prestige; Tall (2008) reports that migrants participating in commerce tend to be the most economically well-off.

While existing research has demonstrated the impact of undocumented or irregular status on economic integration, little attention has been paid to more complex forms of legal status that incorporate multiple legal domains. Research has also ignored variation in contexts of reception that is related to the access to both legal statuses and economic opportunity. This paper will attempt to contribute to this literature by studying how multiple kinds of legal status are linked to multiple indicators of economic integration in multiple contexts of reception.

### **Theoretical focus**

Much of the research on the economic integration of migrants stems from the human-capital tradition in labor economics (Chiswick 1984, 1999), with more recent sociological research paying attention to the importance of migrants' social capital in their economic integration (Aguilera and Massey 2003). The human-capital tradition finds that migrants' education and skill endowments attenuate the effects of legal status on migrant employment and wages, while the social capital tradition finds that migrants' social connections are important explanatory factors in both their probability of employment and their wage levels. While social-capital research also finds that social connections matter more for undocumented than documented migrants, much of this prior research is limited by its reliance on a dichotomous measure of legal status. In addition, the vast majority of the research focuses on the United States and considers employment and wages as the most important economic-integration outcomes.

Scholars have recently called for a more nuanced and dynamic understanding of legal status that accounts for both categorical and longitudinal complexity (Massey and Capoferro 2004; Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009; Donato and Armenta 2011). This paper will help to fill this gap by incorporating longitudinal information on multiple domains of legal status, including entry status, residence status, and employment status. This paper will also consider multiple indicators of economic integration. In addition to the classic outcomes of employment and wages, we will also investigate the link between multiple forms of legal status and occupational prestige, subjective absolute economic well-being, and subjective relative economic well-being; these additional indicators should provide a richer and more complete picture of the economic integration of migrants. In addition, this paper will investigate how multiple contexts of reception moderate the link between various legal statuses and economic integration.

We hypothesize that less-secure forms of legal status will generally be associated with decreased economic integration. We also expect, however, that this average effect will be moderated by context of reception: less-formal labor markets in southern Europe may attenuate the negative effects of less-secure legal status. While previous research has shown that lack of legal status does not necessarily prevent migrants from accessing employment, less-secure statuses may funnel migrants into lower-

status jobs; thus, the negative association may also vary by outcome. The effect may also vary by kind of status: migrants with the legal authorization to reside but not work may be more constrained than those migrants who are completely “undocumented”.

## **Data and research methods**

This paper will use the biographical data generated by the MAFE-Senegal project. This dataset includes retrospective information on legal status, employment history, earnings, job type, and subjective assessments of economic well-being for 600 Senegalese migrants in Europe (200 in each of France, Italy, and Spain) and 59 returned migrants in Senegal with migratory experience in one of the three European destinations. Our analytic sample consists of the person-years during which migrants lived in France, Italy, or Spain, yielding a sample of 8,022 person-years.

We estimate a series of discrete-time regression models for each of four outcomes. Employment is measured as a time-varying dichotomous variable. Occupational status is a continuous variable based on the International Socio-Economic Index of occupational status (ISEI-08). Absolute subjective economic well-being is measured by responses to a question regarding the ability of the household to purchase basic goods; we coded responses that financial resources were “sufficient” or “more than sufficient” as 1, and “just sufficient” or “insufficient” as 0. Relative subjective economic well-being is measured by a question about living conditions of the household relative to other households in the place of residence; responses of “better” or “equivalent” were coded as 1, while responses of “less good” were coded 0. We constructed the key independent variables of legal status for each year that the migrant was in one of the three destination countries. For residence and work status, we constructed a trichotomy of having a permit, not having a permit, and not needing a permit. For entry status, we constructed a dichotomous variable that indicates whether a migrant had a visa during the first year in destination. All regression models include correction of standard errors for the clustered nature of the data.

## **Expected findings**

Table 1 presents preliminary results from our analyses for the main legal-status variables in the legal domains of residence and work. The values in the table are average marginal effects for a discrete change from the base level of each categorical legal-status variable. The significant results for the legal domain of work are concentrated in the model for employment and exhibit significant variation by context of reception. Compared to having a work permit, not having a work permit decreases the probability of employment by 9 percentage points in Italy and 19 percentage points in Spain; both of these effects are significant at  $p < 0.001$ . Not having a work permit in France, however, is not associated with a significant decline in the probability of employment compared to a “documented” state of having a work permit. These results seem to run counter to hypotheses that lack of legal authorization to work would have less of an effect in the southern European countries; it could be that more-frequent regularization programs make work permits easier to obtain in these countries. Work authorization was associated with absolute subjective economic well-being in France and Italy: not needing such authorization was associated with increased likelihood of high well-being (although this effect was only marginally significant) in the former, while lack of a work permit was associated with a lower probability

of high well-being in the latter. Work authorization showed no significant association with either occupational status or relative economic well-being.

Effects of residence authorization were evident in three of the four outcomes. Not having a residence permit was associated with increased probabilities of employment in all three destinations. These effects are plausible in Italy and Spain, where residence and work permits have been separated and where residence authorization is dependent on obtaining an employment contract. In France, residence and work authorization have long been linked, so the increased probability of employment associated with the lack of a residence permit may also reflect lack of a work permit; additional models that include the interaction between these two kinds of authorizations will be necessary to clarify this effect. Lack of a residence permit is also associated with lower occupational status and lower relative economic well-being in France, suggesting that lack of secure residential status is associated with lower-status jobs and living conditions that are inferior to those of surrounding households. In contrast, not needing a residence permit was associated with increased probability of reporting equivalent or better relative economic standing in Spain and Italy.

Future refinements will explore the interaction between different legal domains, especially in contexts of reception where residence and work authorization are inextricably linked (such as France). Models will also account for selectivity in the estimation of the occupational status equation and will address the clustered nature of the data with a multilevel approach.

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**Table 1.** Average Marginal Effects on Outcomes of Legal-Status Variables

Outcome	Destination	Work Permit		Residence Permit	
		No Need	None	No Need	None
Employment	France	0.04 (1.63)	-0.03 (-1.05)	0.04 (0.96)	<b>0.08*</b> <b>(2.36)</b>
	Spain	-0.05 (-1.19)	<b>-0.19***</b> <b>(-5.70)</b>	-0.08 (-1.19)	<b>0.11***</b> <b>(4.21)</b>
	Italy	<b>-0.06*</b> <b>(-2.06)</b>	<b>-0.09***</b> <b>(-3.90)</b>	-0.04 (-0.70)	<b>0.08***</b> <b>(4.23)</b>
ISEI	France	-1.02 (-0.48)	1.75 (0.81)	-1.05 (-0.54)	<b>-5.24**</b> <b>(-2.59)</b>
	Spain	0.95 (0.35)	-1.14 (-0.65)	1.16 (0.44)	2.28 (1.22)
	Italy	0.15 (0.07)	-0.27 (-0.18)	2.49 (0.78)	-1.58 (-1.03)
Absolute subjective well-being	France	<b>0.09<sup>+</sup></b> <b>(1.67)</b>	-0.00 (-0.07)	-0.08 (-1.32)	-0.02 (-0.35)
	Spain	-0.14 (-0.77)	-0.06 (-0.78)	-0.01 (-0.08)	-0.06 (-0.69)
	Italy	-0.02 (-0.34)	<b>-0.17*</b> <b>(-2.48)</b>	-0.01 (-0.13)	-0.02 (-0.32)
Relative subjective well-being	France	-0.05 (-0.94)	0.06 (1.19)	0.04 (0.84)	<b>-0.15*</b> <b>(-2.04)</b>
	Spain	-0.31 (-1.43)	-0.00 (-0.06)	<b>0.13***</b> <b>(3.85)</b>	0.03 (0.81)
	Italy	0.05 (0.82)	-0.07 (-0.98)	<b>0.14<sup>+</sup></b> <b>(1.70)</b>	0.07 (1.45)

Effects are for discrete changes with respect to base level of possessing a work or residence permit. *t* statistics in parentheses.

<sup>+</sup>  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$