

Immigrants' Selectivity and their Socioeconomic Integration: the Italian Case

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The socioeconomic integration of immigrants in European countries is a very prominent issue in the political agenda. The aim of this paper is to understand how the pre-migration socioeconomic status affects immigrants' labor market integration and their children's educational success in Italy. We measure migrants' pre-migration socioeconomic status in absolute terms, using the index of socioeconomic status (ISEI score) associated with the last job before migration, and in relative terms, using a measure of selectivity in education with reference to the distribution of educational titles in the country of origin. For the analyses, we use data from the 2011-2012 Istat survey "Social condition and integration of foreign citizens" (ISTAT, 2016), integrated with macro-data from the Barro-Lee dataset and the World Bank. Results from hierarchical linear regression models indicate that positively selected immigrants are more often unemployed than less positively selected ones, but immigrants' selectivity in education is not related to the status attained in the host society. On the other side, the socioeconomic status associated with the last job before migration is not related with the unemployment risk, but migrants who had higher status jobs in their country of origin tend to attain higher status jobs in Italy. Finally, immigrants' relative education and pre-migration socioeconomic status significantly reduce their children's risks of early school dropout.