

(The Great) Migration and those Left Behind

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Abstract

We study the economic impact that out-migration imposes on those who remain behind and do not migrate. We build a shift-share instrument for the migration rate of Black Americans out of Southern counties during the Great Migration using shocks to manufacturing employment in Northern cities. We address selection into migration using newly-available longitudinal Census data that allows us to analyze changes in outcomes of non-migrating Black residents. Our results indicate that out-migration increases the income of those who do not migrate. This effect is larger for farming occupations, suggesting that changes in local labor supply are an important mechanism. Our results inform policies to encourage migration away from less productive areas.

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