

»Poverty Risks of Ethnic Minorities in Germany« (1990-2020)

An overview by ethnic origin and generation

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Extended Abstract

This research project provides an overview of poverty risks for ethnic minorities in Germany between 1990 and 2020. Although the population with a migration history is very diverse, the available poverty literature for Germany studies migrants categorized in rather general terms. Yet, taking ethnic diversity into account is crucial because heterogeneous migration conditions, integration experiences, and social structures lead to different life circumstances that are likely to explain higher poverty risks between and within ethnic minorities of different generations. Furthermore, the current research on poverty risks of ethnic minorities for Germany is restricted to cross-sectional results / snapshots in time. However, poverty risks are likely to be embedded into a time-specific economic, political, and social context. It is therefore necessary to compare different time periods and contexts.

This article compares poverty risks of ethnic minorities from 21 countries², respectively regions, with poverty risks of the autochthonous population. The country of analysis is Germany, and the unit of analysis are prime-age workers (the share of people aged 25–54 with labor market experience). I analyze the diversity of ethnic groups in Germany using Microcensus (MZ) data to produce comprehensive descriptives of poverty risks and dynamics over time (1990-2020), and Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) data to explain individual and household dynamics.

The main goal of this article is to investigate (a) whether most ethnic minorities have higher poverty risks than the autochthonous population, (b) if poverty risks change substantially over time for different migrants, and (c) how these ethnic imbalances can be explained. While several qualitative studies and theoretical arguments provide reasonable explanations of why immigrants and their descendants experience considerably higher poverty risks, the quantitative empirical evidence of these claims remains unclear.

I expect substantial differences in poverty risks between and within ethnic minorities and I do seek to explain them, drawing on common and modern theories of poverty. Preliminary findings reveal severe differences in poverty risks and its explanations, depending largely on the ethnic origin.

² Turkey, Morocco, Iran – Vietnam, China, Japan, and South Korea (East Asia) – Russian Federation (incl. Kazakhstan and Ukraine), Romania (incl. Bulgaria), Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia-Montenegro and Croatia (Post-Yugoslavia), the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland – Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece.