

Emigrants in the Historical Population Register of Norway*ⁱ

Gunnar Thorvaldsen – Ural Federal University and University of Tromsø

gunnar.thorvaldsen@uit.no

Abstract

Both the completed transcription of our emigration protocols, the construction of the national Historical Population Register, and other developments make an article about methods for studying emigration from Norway through the last couple of centuries topical. This article starts by discussing the Norwegian and American source material through which we can identify the emigrants' absence from Norway. In particular, it focuses attention on groups that are difficult to follow because of international migration, and the consequences this has for emigration statistics. A key issue for further research is to see the degree to which emigration and return migration can be reflected in the population registry.

Keywords: Emigration, Norway, Historical Population Register, Microdata, Migration statistics

Introduction

This article discusses how available source material can be organised to provide a more accurate overview of emigration from Norway since the nineteenth century. Several factors make such an article relevant. At the launch of Mørkhagen's important book, *Farewell Norway* - media focused on the too-low numbers in the emigration statistics.¹ Secondly, the National Archives have finalized the transcription of Norwegian emigration protocols and has published these in their Digital Archive from the period 1867 to 1961. Thirdly, the transcribed and encoded 1910 census contains the first easily accessible overview of returnee Norwegian-Americans. Fourthly, these records, including immigrants' previous residence, can also be studied in immigration protocols scanned by the regional archives in Stavanger. Fifth, immigrants to the United States and Canada can now be studied in more and more digitally available censuses. Sixth, US scholars have published an overview of Norwegian immigrants to 1850. And finally, the construction of the Historical Population Register for Norway (HPR) requires an optimal monitoring of who left the country, when they travelled and possibly when they returned. The Historical Population Register will be based principally on censuses and church records in order

¹ Sverre Mørkhagen, *Farvel Norge : utvandringen til Amerika 1825-1975* (Oslo 2009).

to cover the period 1800 to 1964 when the current Central Population Register starts.² It is important in all demographic analyses to know the number of residents present. Thus, the newly available sources and register will enhance the tracing of the large number of emigrants and significantly improve the estimates of the population at risk.

We shall start with a critical review of source material that can contribute to the reconstitution of emigrants, especially in the era of the mass exodus. Historical sources in Norway and in the receiving countries contribute to compiling a more complete record of those who left. The emigrants to the United States and Canada play the leading role. Although migration flows to other countries are interesting research objects, it is for only those who crossed the North Atlantic that significant adjustments in statistical aggregates and in the Historical Population Register are realistic. We have previously made an overview of who emigrated to Sweden - our most important neighbouring country in this respect. Presently, we do not provide any conclusive number of emigrants who should be added to the statistics, however, we explain a methodological road map for work with sources at the individual level, and we provide examples of groups which are underrepresented in the source material.

Emigration Protocols

The main sources for tracing individual emigrants, emigrant groups and compiling Norwegian emigration statistics are the police protocols from the emigration harbours. These contain nearly all emigrants who were registered by the police before embarkation. One reason for introducing these protocols was that the *Storting* (Parliament) had abolished passport obligation for travellers in 1860.³ Pass protocols that have been preserved since 1811 show that the passport requirement captured a minority rather than a majority of emigrants. The main counter-argument against dropping the passports was the loss of control over unscripted emigrants. When emigration numbers rapidly increased after 1865, the government needed an alternative method to register this new mass migration. In principle, the police should register all emigrants from 1867 onwards. However, time passed before registration became a reality in all port towns, and researchers consider the protocols from 1869 provide an almost complete overview of legal emigration from Norwegian ports. A doctoral dissertation using family reconstitution to study emigration confirms this impression regarding Bergen: 'The emigration protocols for Bergen in the years 1874–1924 must be considered a relatively secure source for recording emigrants

² Gunnar Thorvaldsen, "Using NAPP census data to construct the Historical Population Register for Norway," *Historical Methods* 44, no. 1 (2011).37-47. CHANGE TO NO-CAPS - done

³ Einar Niemi, et al. *I nasjonalstatens tid, 1814-1950*. Norsk innvandringshistorie. Bd. 2 (Oslo 2003).

from Vik parish'.⁴ These listings have been used in many theses and other presentations about the exodus from Norwegian communities.⁵ The freely available version on the Internet is now the primary source for information about Norwegian emigrants after the American Civil War. They are also the most reliable source in this period with the largest 'emigration leaks' from the Historical Population Register.

Despite the generally high quality of the emigration protocols there are a number of challenges. Firstly, as already mentioned, they did not start until the late 1860s, which excludes both pioneer migration and the increasing exodus in 1850 and the 1860s. Secondly, the protocols from Bergen are the only ones containing the emigrants' birthplaces. For other ports where they only provide the latest residence, we must combine the emigration protocols with other source material to find the birthplace. Thirdly, the Norwegian protocols do not contain tens of thousands of sailors who escaped from ships abroad. Neither do they always list emigrants who travelled via foreign ports. The challenge of under-counted sailors is discussed as early as by Norway's Official Statistics in 1921. In the fourth place, a small minority of those registered, never left in reality. Fifthly, it is not systematically listed in the protocols how many times the same person emigrated and when returnee migration occurred. In the sixth place, some emigrants falsified their name, for instance to avoid military service. Seventhly, many lied about the age of their children to get a cheaper ticket. Eighthly, the original protocols from Stavanger (1867-1928) were destroyed in a fire in 1929. Lastly, the protocols from Bergen for the years 1867 to 1873 and the oldest protocol for Arendal (1916) have disappeared.

Some of the lost source material can be reconstructed since excerpts were sent to The Central Statistical Bureau. This material has been used to transcribe information about emigrants from Stavanger to the database in the Digital Archive. The Regional Archives in Bergen and the National Archives in Oslo have organised the available emigration protocols from the ports into a coherent database. For the largest emigration harbour, Kristiania / Oslo, the resulting database holds almost 470,000 emigrant records. Stavanger is referred to as the only important exit port without preserved original emigration protocols. For the period 1903–1928, there are copies of the lost protocols from Stavanger, which was sent to the Central Statistical Bureau. The database that is based on this material contains 34,877 names. All names from the emigration protocols were not included in the excerpts sent to The Central Statistical

⁴ Rasmus Sunde, "Vikjer ved fjorden, vikjer på prærien : ein demografisk-komparativ studie med utgangspunkt i Vik i Sogn" (Høgskulen i Sogn og Fjordane, 2001).

⁵ See the overview attached to Ole Jone Eide and Gunnar Thorvaldsen, "Historisk befolkningsregister: Oversikt over emigrasjonen," *Heimen* 48, no. 3 (2011).

Bureau because the statisticians were only interested in first time emigrants. Thus, the replacement lists are frequently based on registration cards from the 1970s, which in their turn are based on secondary sources such as newspapers, local history books and genealogies with incomplete references. Elsewhere primary sources such as church records are used for reference. But many business travellers, people visiting Norway, and sailors are missing in this part of the database.⁶ In other parts of the emigration protocols there are many duplicates, usually because the same person emigrated several times. When building the Historical Population Register it will be challenging to identify the returning emigrants in order to include them in Norway's resident population, even more difficult for those who emigrated via the towns of Stavanger and Arendal. The record linkage technology employed to construct the Population Register opens up new possibilities for improving the overview of emigrants, especially those using data from church records and American passenger lists.

Province	Emigration list	Emigrants
Østfold	Emigrants via Fredrikstad 1883–1890	95
	Database with emigrants via Kristiania 1871–1930	495 725
Vestfold	Emigrants via Sandefjord 1904–1921	125
	Emigrants via Larvik 1887–1930	5 042
Aust-Agder	Emigrants via Arendal 1903-1930	5 965
Vest-Agder	Emigrants via Kristiansand 1873–1930	78 160
Rogaland	Emigrants via Stavanger 1903–1928	(34 877)
	Emigrants via Stavanger 1825–1970	(121 806)
Hordaland	Emigrants via Bergen 1874–1930	110 228
Møre og Romsdal	Emigrants via Ålesund 1878–1930	15 969
	Emigrants via Kristiansund 1882–1930	13 119
Sør-Trøndelag	Emigrants via Trondheim 1867–1930	193 230
Troms	Emigrants from Målselv and Bardu 1867–1930	1 255

Tabell 1: Emigrants and emigration protocols in the Digital Archives per province and harbour/origin. Source: <http://www.digitalarkivet.no/cgi-win/WebMeta.exe?slag=vismeny&fylkenr=0&knr=&katnr=5&aar=&dagens=&emnenr=1> (20 August 2016).

⁶ <http://www.digitalarkivet.no/cgi-win/webcens.exe?slag=visbase&gardpostnr=&personpostnr=&sidenr=1&filnamn=Stav1903&visdok=vis> (20 August 2016).

Church records

After 1812, it became easier to overview the results of the demographically related religious ceremonies of baptism, marriage, and funerals due to the introduction of standardised forms in the ministerial protocols. Lists of migrants into and out of the parish were also introduced this year. The Poor Laws from 1845 and 1863 demanded a vicar's migration certificate when moving to a different poor district. The responsibility for such certificates was transferred to the police at the turn of the century, and the registration of migration in the church books ended around 1910. In 1820 and 1877 the forms were revised with more variables, which must be taken into consideration when standardising transcription work.

Due to the relative lack of non-conformism, Norwegian ministerial records remained of high quality after 1812 compared to countries outside of Scandinavia. However, they contain weaknesses, especially pertaining to the migration records. It is not unusual that about half of the geographic mobility in and out of a parish went unregistered. Most priests would register Intercontinental emigration more properly, since they were ordered to report about emigration to the province administration, and more migrants asked for a certificate ahead of a lengthy journey.⁷

In his study of emigration from Verdal in Trøndelag, however, Jostein Molde found certificates for emigrants that the priest had not copied to the out-migration lists in the church books. He believes it was due to disorder in the vicar's archive. Another reason for this under-registration in the migration lists is that geographic mobility was not directly linked to any religious ceremony, such as baptism, wedding and funeral. In Skjervøy parish the priest held the migration records in such disregard that he used the pre-printed pages not for their purpose, but rather to write Information about ecclesiastical ceremonies. Over-registration also occurred, for instance, in Karlsøy parish in Troms, or in Bergen, where the step migrant Metsä from Finland – after preparing for emigration and having been registered as an emigrant in the protocols – instead married his newly found love in Bergen, now calling himself Woods, the English translation of his Finnish surname.⁸ Also with respect to over- and under-registration of migrants, the Historical Population Register will have a source critical function.

In his doctoral dissertation Terje Mikael Hasle Joranger pointed out the importance of church records in relation to other sources of emigration studies, stating that church books are our main source for finding emigrants before the registration of emigrants started in the ports

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<http://digitalarkivet.uib.no/cgi-win/WebMeta.exe?slag=vismeny&fylkenr=&knr=&katnr=4&aar=&dagens=&emnenr=8> (20 August 2016).

⁸ Oral information from prof. Jan Oldervoll, University of Bergen.

in 1867. However, we must be aware of the shortcomings when we make use of these. Church books were most complete until approximately 1860, when the passport requirement was abolished. This is supported by a study of emigrants from the parish Reinli in Sør-Aurdal, where 98 per cent of the emigrants found in various sources which covered the period from 1848 to 1865, were also found in the church records. Conversely, 45.4 per cent of all emigrants found in various sources for the period 1866–1886 were found in church records.⁹ In his published thesis on emigration from Tinn, Andres Svalestuen noted the diminished value of church records from the late 1870s. He found the emigration protocols to be a more reliable and complete source after that time.

[Figure 1 about here: Absolute and relative number of emigrants who were not entered in the church records for Tinn parish.¹⁰]

Figure 1 shows the reduced value of the migration lists in the church records, but we can argue that they have supplementary value. Figures from several masters theses confirm this for parishes scattered throughout Norway. But we must also ask to what degree we can trust the emigration protocols. The category ‘latest home’ was filled more or less accurately, for instance sometimes with the parish name ‘Tinn’, sometimes with ‘Upper Telemark (province)’, and sometimes with just ‘Telemark’. This makes it difficult to trace the emigrants back to their parish of origin. About 90 persons during the period 1880 to 1907 who received priests’ certificates stating an intention to emigrate from Tinn, cannot be found in the emigration protocols for Oslo. The reason may be that some changed their mind, while others emigrated via other ports.

In conclusion, the emigration protocols for this area provide quite reliable data, while the church books were rather accurately recorded during the period when they were the most common source. Compared to the numbers in Norway’s official statistics for the period 1866-1905, these aggregates have an excess of 150 emigrants from Tinn parish. The reason is that those who are registered with unspecific home origin, province names such as ‘Telemark’ has been distributed on the basis of emigration rates in each parish. This has led to Tinn parish being over-represented in the statistics.

⁹ Terje Mikael Hasle Joranger, *The migration of tradition?: a study on the transfer of traditions tied to intergenerational land transfers among emigrants from the Valdres region, Norway to the Upper Midwest and their descendants for three generations, 1850-1980* (Oslo 2008) Thesis University of Oslo.

¹⁰ Andres Svalestuen, *Tinns emigrasjons historie 1837-1907*. (Oslo 1972), 19.

Despite their strengths, it is challenging to make these sources compatible with computer-based research material in the Historical Population Register, a discussion which is particularly relevant when it comes to the priests' migration lists. These may be useless when it comes to short-term or short-distance migration, and have significant weaknesses also when it comes to long-distance migration. They provide useful information when it comes to individual migrants, but they are not so useful as a basis for statistical overviews. Only after having integrated information from a variety of sources at the individual level in a national population register will it be possible to investigate the full emigration flows sources critically.

In order to identify both the residents, the emigrants and other migrants, the Population register must use a unique social security-like number as part of a method to connect each individual with relevant information from a diversity of sources. When combining the names, age and other information with the characteristics found in emigration protocols, the church records provide a useful mutual control. In addition, the demographic and migration sections in the church records together with the censuses are valuable sources for identifying returnee emigrants.

The Norwegian Historical Data Centre has transcribed migration lists from fourteen different church books.¹¹ The Digital Archive has posted about 200 local data sets with emigrants and other out-migrants from different parishes. 29 of these data sets are from Rogaland province. This is largely work done by volunteers, who are contributors to the 'Digital Pension', but much transcription work remains. It will be especially interesting to get better coverage of migration into and out of parishes in Rogaland and Agder in order to improve the quality and assure the quality of the list of emigrants from these areas where the emigration protocols have gone missing. The microfilms produced by the Mormon Church are now scanned and are freely available via the Internet as part of the National Archives' collection of church records.¹²

Local emigration studies

'Our local history literature is consistently brief and summarily [sic] with regard to dealing with emigration.' This was the first sentence in Svalestuen's pioneering article on the topic in 1970. Many historians have since joined the effort to change this historiographical picture. As part of the basis for local studies, approximately 40,000 emigrants have been identified in two or more sources, particularly censuses and church records, in addition to the emigration protocols or the

¹¹ <http://rhd.uit.no/kirkebok/rkbok.html> (20 August 2016).

¹² http://digitalarkivet.arkivverket.no/en-gb/finn_kilde (20 August 2016).

church book migration lists. Some studies limited their scope to the emigration protocols and the period after 1870, however. To some extent, the migration lists and emigration protocols were complemented with passenger lists, passport records, and newspaper notices.¹³ There is almost no end to the possible source material where a dedicated researcher or genealogist can attempt to trace the illustrious emigrant who seemingly had disappeared from - if not the Earth - at least from Norway's surface.

The above-mentioned appendix shows that all regions in Norway are represented by local emigration studies. The most serious lacuna is the lack of studies from Østfold and Vestfold, the provinces surrounding the Oslo fiord. Both were areas with low emigration rates. We should add, however, that minister to seamen Ole Gustav Barman¹⁴ counted more than 16,000 runaway sailors from this area, which makes up a significant addition. Unlike family reconstitution research, the local emigration studies are unfortunately not designed according to a standardised methodology, and are therefore not simple to compare. What a difference it would have made if the microdata about the nearly 40,000 emigrants could be merged into an integrated database, thus creating a fruitful basis for new emigration studies and providing a significant contribution to the Historical Population Register. Retrospective coordination is not impossible, but very resource demanding. We understand what important role the Population Register can play in the future for coordinating the efforts of Norwegian local historians and genealogists.

We saw above how the proportion of emigrants listed in the church books' migration records decreased over time, especially when mass migration accelerated after the Civil War. Several local studies have compared figures based on the nominative sources with the aggregates in Norway's Official Statistics. Typically, about 90 per cent of the total number of emigrants have been identified. Such statistical comparisons on the group level is approximate, however, not least because the definition of the local research area changed over time and the regional number of emigrants is distributed roughly between the municipalities, as demonstrated for Telemark above. Therefore, we cannot base a re-evaluation of the total number of emigrants directly on the local comparison of the number of emigrants in various sources. Instead, an overall assessment of emigration statistics must be based on the completely

¹³ For an overview of alternative source materials, see Liv Marit Haakenstad, *Slektsgranskerens guide til utvandringen 1825-1930* (Oslo 2008).

¹⁴ Yngve Nedrebø, "'En kræftskade på vor sjømandsstand og en ulykke for landet'," (II), <http://www.digitalarkivet.no/utstilling/sjorom.htm>. Barman's archive is available at the Regional Archive in Bergen.

transcribed emigration protocols, the Historical Population Register, and the local historical investigations. Mørkhagen's book unfortunately lacks reference to most local emigration studies and instead focuses too narrowly on the escaped sailors.

Difficult to identify emigrants

Three groups of emigrants will be particularly cumbersome to keep track of in a historical population register. These are the almost 100,000 who emigrated in the 1850s and 1860s without getting a certificate from the priest and being listed in their migration records, the many who had step migrated within Norway's borders, and the escaped sailors and the returnee emigrants to Norway. For all of these groups there is useful information in American source material, which we shall consider below.

Step migrants

The simplest way to solve the challenge of researching step migration is using the emigration protocols for Bergen, which are the only ones listing both the emigrants' birthplace and last residence before embarkation. Nearly half of the 20,318 emigrants leaving Bergen with this city as the last residence before emigration had a different birthplace, and in addition almost three thousand emigrants born in Bergen left their native city via other places.¹⁵ To find the birthplace of emigrants who left via other ports, complementary sources, usually censuses, must be used. Among family emigrants from Kristiania in 1880, almost 60 per cent were step migrants, about the same proportion that in-migrants constituted of the city's population.¹⁶ In the Population Register, both the birthplace, intermediate residences, and the last residence in Norway are identified, to the extent that an emigrant has left traces in source materials from these places.

Runaway sailors

'The available statistical data on the number of escaped Norwegian sailors are very incomplete. The escape was illegal, a covert immigration[...]'¹⁷ This author questions the degree of criminality inherent in a sailor's escape, but agrees that compiling statistics is difficult.

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<http://www.digitalarkivet.no/cgi-win/WebMeta.exe?slag=vismeny&fylkenr=&knr=&katnr=5&aar=&dagens=&emnenr=4> (21. August 2016): Bergen by municipality is an adaptation of list of using the emigration protocols for Bergen. The emigrants who sailed from Bergen are sorted by last residence and place of birth. The emigrants are divided by province, but for Hordaland and Sogn og Fjordane the lists are also broken down by municipality.

¹⁶ Rolf Kåre Østrem and Peter Rinnan, *Utvandringen fra Kristiania 1880-1907 : en studie i urban utvandring* (Oslo 1979). 159-160.

¹⁷ Johan Nicolay Tønnessen, *Den Norske sjøfarts historie: fra de ældste tider til vore dage* (Oslo 1951), 148.

Prosecuting these violations was impractical, and because of the frequent lack of sailors, no one liked to jail the offenders. Leaving the ship before the mustering period had expired was, however, a clear violation of the mustering contract. We have still chosen to keep the popular, but imprecise term ‘escaped’ sailors. Estimating the number of such irregular emigrants is possible because the escape was listed in the muster rolls, in lists of conscripts, and in reports from consulates in major foreign ports.¹⁸ But it is inherent in the nature of such half-crimes that we shall never get closer than approximate statistical estimates and incomplete lists of runaway sailors. The notes in the muster rolls may be vague and are seldom processed systematically. The military authorities and the consulates alike lacked a full overview of the conscripts who had fled and still sailed with Norwegian ships. In addition to providing a free ticket to America, higher wages aboard US ships was an important reason to escape – many sought enrolment there and the American statistics of foreign sailors are incomplete. When the American wages fell with the business cycles, escaped Norwegian seamen repatriated without systematic registration.

Moreover, escapes in British ports occurred during certain periods as extensive as in the US. Internal European emigration is also important to include in the Historical Population Register, but the UK lacks the genealogical rosters created through painstaking work in Norwegian-American immigrant communities. On the other hand, the British censuses were taken according to the *de facto* principle so that Norwegian sailors should be recorded both when visiting the UK and aboard British ships. The *de jure* principle, which was followed in the US, however, implies that people should be recorded where they had their address ashore, which was often lacking among Norwegian escapees. Since the Norwegian censuses from 1875 combined the *de facto* and the *de jure* principles, we have information about many sailors both listed aboard Norwegian ships and where they belonged ashore.¹⁹

While waiting for the linkage of different data elements about runaway sailors, we base our statistical estimates on the reports from the mustering authorities and consuls in foreign harbours. There is agreement that the mustering numbers are too low, while the consuls probably exaggerated the escape frequency. A major reason is that their statistics tried to include all escapees from Norwegian vessels – i.e. both Norwegian and foreign national seamen, such as the many Swedes, who were sailing with Norwegian ships. A doctoral dissertation about the Norwegian harbour environment in New York claims that up to 70,000

¹⁸ Gunnar Thorvaldsen, *Håndbok i registrering og bruk av historiske persondata* (Oslo 1996a). 170.

¹⁹ Gunnar Thorvaldsen, "Away on census day. Enumerating the temporarily present or absent," *Historical Methods* 39, no. 2 (2006). 82-96 ADD PAGE NUMBERS AND CHANGE CAPS

sailors left the Norwegian ships abroad during the period 1866 to 1915.²⁰ However, this included both legal and illegal immigration, and the figure applies to all foreign ports, including the significant number who left Norwegian ships in the UK. Moreover, foreigners could make up between a third and a half of the escapees. We must, therefore, conclude that this high number includes not only Norwegian sailors and not only those who ran ashore in America.²¹

Tønnessen's aim above was to estimate the proportion of the workforce that was lost for ship owners because of legal and illegal emigration. He relied on the consul's reports, added the legal emigrants and deducted the returnee emigrants. In this way he summed a total loss of 92,000 and a net loss of 68,700 sailors to emigration in the half century from 1866 to 1915. Tønnessen and Mauk agree that from the mid-1880s, legal immigration became more common than escaping when sailors immigrated, although there was a new escapee wave in the 1910s.²² Seaman's priest Barmann created an extensive archive for the period 1870 to 1900. He concluded that Norwegian ships lost about 40,000 sailors because of escaping, and that about half soon returned to Norway or Norwegian ships. Thus, while we have a good overview of the legal emigrants in the emigration protocols, it is a difficult puzzle to identify the escapees and returnee emigrants for the Historical Population Register. Construction of this register is still the only realistic way to approach a more precise statistical estimate, because we can combine the traces they left in the source material in Norway and the US. This also applies to those who first fled without a trace and then returned to Norway without the return being recorded.

Returnee emigrants

The criticisms levied at historical statistics about immigration to Norway more generally also apply to the overviews of returnee emigrants from other continents. This can be seen if we compare the nominative lists in the emigration protocols longitudinally and if we compare with the more complete entries of immigrants in the Swedish church records. Only from 1903 do we find more systematic immigration records in the Norwegian archives, in dated protocols with names and professions, arrival time, birthdate and birthplace, as well as notes about identity papers and onward travels.²³ Thus, most historical studies of the emigration from Norway have failed to discuss the returnees. Return emigration is dealt with in Ingrid Semmingsen's monumental emigration history volumes, and in the more recent *Norwegian immigration*

²⁰ David C. Mauk, *The Colony that Rose from the Sea*. (Chicago 1997).

²¹ Kjartan Fløgstad, *Eld og vatn : nordmenn i Sør-Amerika* (Oslo 1999).26.

²² Mauk, *The Colony that Rose from the Sea*.106-108.

²³ For scanned specimen from the Regional Archive in Stavanger, see url http://arkivverket.no/URN:db_read/db/67084 (25 August 2016).

history.²⁴ Several quantitative and qualitative aspects of return migration remain to be studied, ranging from their group size and influence in various parts of Norway to their intermediary function between religious communities on both sides of the Atlantic. Of particular interest are the emigrants from Rjukan in Telemark province to Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the United States during the period 1907 to 1930, especially concentrating on the local crisis of the 1920s. Here are lists of returned emigrants on the individual level, especially for the many emigrants to South America - although without specific source references.²⁵

[Figure 2 about here]

The primary sources for identifying returning emigrants are the Norwegian censuses from 1910 and 1920. In 1920, we can only see during what period they had emigrated, but the 1910 census also states where they had lived and what career they had exercised 'over there'. The US states from which the Norwegians had returned according to the 1910 census can be viewed statistically in figure 2. In Norway, the return emigrants were concentrated in the coastal areas from Agder to Hordaland, while the pioneer areas for emigration in the interior were relatively poorly represented, as can be seen from the bar charts on the province map in figure 3. A microstudy was done by the author of this article of the 28 return emigrants whom we identified as connected to rural Rendalen municipality north-east of Oslo in the 1910 census. 26 of them were born in Rendalen, but only 20 gave this as their latest residence before leaving Norway. In 1910, eighteen of them had returned to Rendalen, while 10 lived elsewhere. In 1920, 8 of these returnee emigrants were still in Rendalen, while the 1920 census for the rest of Norway would be too resource-demanding to search. It is likely that very geographically mobile emigrants coming from and returning to more urban and less isolated places than Rendalen will be even more difficult to follow over time.

The special census questionnaires contained information about 19,323 (in 1910) and 42,156 returned Norwegian Americans in 1920. A source critical reason for the increase is that the 1920 census instructions explicitly order children born in America to be included, while the concept "Norwegian-American" was not clearly defined in 1910. In addition, in 1910, 5,183 children born in America can be added, while the 7,604 American-born children in the 1920

²⁴ Respectively Semmingsen volume II, 1950, p. 460-470, and Myhre volume II 2003, p. 420-427. K. Ranaweera (2009) analyses how Nordic authors have dealt with the return emigration, among others Ingrid Semmingsen, Hans Storhaug and Knut Djupedal.

²⁵ Tom Nilsen, *Canadafeber: utvandring fra Rjukan 1923-1927* (Rjukan 1995).

census should be counted among the returned emigrants. This can be checked when the microdata is released after 2020. This will allow us to verify how many returned emigrants were counted in both 1910 and 1920; so far we know that according to statistics from the 1920 census, about 20,000 persons returned to Norway between 1910 and 1920. Increased return migration can explain the decline of about half of the number of Norwegian-born individuals in the United States as there were about 40,000 fewer people with Norway listed as their birthplace in the US census in 1920 than in 1910.

Since the British censuses from 1841 to 1911 and the US censuses from 1850 to 1940 have been transcribed and are searchable, we can capture many Norwegian immigrants in these sources. However, they do not always indicate which period they spent abroad. In addition, the church records are so deficient in the UK and the US that they will be of limited help when tracing immigrants from Norway who stayed for a shorter or longer period of time on the other side of the North Sea or the Atlantic Ocean. Moreover, returning migrants must be included in the gross emigrant numbers. According to The Central Statistical Bureau they amounted to 155,000 persons in the period 1891 to 1940, or a quarter of the emigrants in the period 1891 to 1930.²⁶

[Figure 3 about here.]

In some sense, a returnee emigrant rate of 25 per cent is not particularly high – about half of the Italian emigrants returned. Still, this proportion of Norwegians returning needs an explanation. One reason might be that the immigrants from Norway were not satisfied with the material conditions they met in the US. This has been investigated in an econometric study which used linked Norwegian and US census data to compare the social mobility of siblings who emigrated to those who stayed in Norway. The clear result was that with respect to wages the emigrants did better than those who stayed behind. Thus, while individual hardships can explain why some emigrants chose to return, this may not be a general explanation behind the many decisions to return to Norway.²⁷

American source material

²⁶ Julie Backer, *Ekteskap, fødsler og vandringer i Norge 1901–63* (Oslo 1965).184.

²⁷ Ran Abramitzky, Leah Platt Boustan and Katherine Eriksson, 'Europe's Tired, Poor, Huddled Masses: Self-Selection and Economic Outcomes in the Age of Mass Migration', *American Economic Review*, 102:5 (2012) 1832-1856.

Gerhard Naeseth and Blaine Hedberg of the Vesterheim Genealogical Center in Madison, Wisconsin have published five volumes with a comprehensive overview of the approximately 18,000 Norwegian immigrants to the United States in the period 1825–1850. This is primarily based on American sources and thus captures emigrants from all parts of Norway, including the pioneers who sailed from Stavanger in 1825. Every immigrant's name, birthplace, year of birth, occupation, arrival port in America, date of death, and place of burial is listed. Whenever possible, the immigrants are linked to their parents, spouses and children. The volumes are organised by emigrant ship, so that the immigration context is included.²⁸

The remaining period needing more thorough examination, is the two decades between when the Vesterheim genealogy ends in 1850 and the emigration protocols started around 1870. Since emigrant numbers rose sharply in this period, this is a task on a significant scale. Out of the approximately 18,000 identified immigrants from Norway, 12,678 were alive according to the first nominative US census in 1850, thus the first time the white citizens' names were listed. Since the US censuses were notoriously under-enumerated and some had died, it is not surprising that the Vesterheim team found higher numbers. In the 1860 census, the number of persons born in Norway according to US statistics increased to 43,995 and in 1870 census to 114 246.²⁹ The increase in the 1860s was surprisingly large considering that the Civil War raged in the United States through half of the period. There must have been more places than Tromsø, which sent emigrants across the ocean despite the war. In 1864, for example, two ships from Bergen brought 210 emigrants from this arctic town to Quebec. We have not found passenger lists from these ships, and Canada did not keep immigrant lists before the country received dominion status in the British Commonwealth in 1867.³⁰ There is reason to believe that many immigrants to Canada during this period step migrated into the United States, especially once the civil war ended, and at this border we lack registration throughout the period covered by this article.

American passenger lists

After 1820, ships arriving in US harbours were required to submit passenger lists to the Federal government. These lists are useful for verifying and supplementing the emigration protocols kept in Norwegian and other European ports. The main institutions that have transcribed

²⁸ Gerhard B. Naeseth and Blaine Hedberg, *Norwegian immigrants to the United States : a biographical directory, 1825-1850*, 5 vols. (Madison, Wisconsin 1993-2008).

²⁹ See references to figure 3.

³⁰ Amtmannsberetningen 1861-5, Nos C No 2, s. 17. Thorleif Svendsen, "Amerikafeber i ishavsbyen : emigrasjonen fra Tromsø til Amerika 1860-1925" (Master, Universitetet i Tromsø, 1997).

passenger lists are the Castle Garden Immigration Center, the Generations Network, Ancestry, the American Family Immigration History Center (Ellis Island records), and the Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild.

The Netherlands has made comprehensive record linkage on the individual level between population registers, emigration protocols and passenger lists. The linked file provides a way to test the reliability and accuracy of the official emigration statistics of the Netherlands and the United States, according to Swierenga. He criticised the passenger lists for their extensive underreporting, which he explained with a lack of motivation and skills among those responsible for the registration.³¹ The record linkage revealed weaknesses both in the Dutch emigration protocols and population registers. Only by linking nominative registers and lists does a complete overview of the emigrants become possible as a basis for realistic emigration aggregates. Also, the Danish emigrants archive *EmiArch* employs Danish names that have been transcribed by www.ellisland.org to verify and correct the existing Danish sources.

Above, we considered the relationship between the church records and the emigration protocols. Here we find emigrants before and after the first leg of their journey. An interesting approach is to pursue this source series by following the emigrants across the ocean, for instance by linking and juxtaposing European and American sources. In our experimental spot check, the European source series will be represented by the emigration protocols from the Norwegian harbours as transcribed in the Digital Archive. The complementary source is passenger lists in North America, represented by Ellis Island Records from New York, the largest immigrant port for Norwegians. The selected period is 1905–1915.

The search criteria in both databases are that the persons' first name starts with 'Pe' and their last name with 'Be', for instance, Petra Berntsdatter. In the emigration protocols we found 129 hits, while the Ellis Island lists contained 49 hits. 39 of those hits were found in both places, while 10 cases were only registered in the Ellis Island records and 80 only in the emigration protocols. One person was found four times in the Ellis Island lists and five times in the emigration protocols. Four of his trips to America were thus recorded on both sides of the ocean.

Our spot test indicates clear differences between the emigration protocols and the immigration lists as they appear on the Internet. The likely reasons may be: 1) The original sources are incomplete, both in Norway and in America. Various tests indicate that we need both sources to get a more complete overview of emigration from Norway. 2) Misspellings of names are widespread, introduced especially in the original documents, but also during digital

³¹ Robert P. Swierenga, ed. *The Dutch in America. Immigration, Settlement and Cultural Change* (New Brunswick: 1985). 19.

transcription. The result can be significant or slight spelling differences, which can be disturbing when we link the transcribed documents on the individual level. People more rarely used double first names alternatively and changed from patronymics to farm names, while women increasingly adopted their husbands' surname. 3) There may be different registration practices concerning repeated migration of the same person. This is especially important when the periods covered by the European and the American sources do not fully overlap.

We found several examples of spelling problems both for the names of persons and places, especially the town name 'Trondheim' seems to be difficult to spell consistently. However, we had expected that names like 'Peter Berg' should not be hard to spell for a native speaker of English. There are also search results which do not match our search criteria because of double names. We found nineteen examples where the search result is not 'Pe', but another first name followed by the 'Pe' name, such as 'Lars Petter'. It may be difficult to conclude on this topic based on a small non-random sample, but our method can help to clarify the reliability and usability of the protocols and lists in order to determine the extent of Norwegian emigration. Generally speaking, the American passenger lists are publicly available, but the Generations Network, and Ancestry.com demand a fee. Searching the Internet database of Norway-Heritage with 71,548 entries in 458 passenger lists throughout the period 1825–1873 is free, however, with almost a third of the early emigrants from Norway.³²

North American censuses

The full count 1880 and 1881 censuses for the United States and Canada respectively are encoded and available for statistical research in nappdata.org. As part of the North Atlantic Population Project (NAPP), person records in the surrounding decadal censuses of the United States have been linked to the 1880 census.³³

The Digital Archive contains transcribed records of Norwegians in the US censuses. In the census from 1880, Professor Gerhard Naeseth registered immigrants born in Norway together with their spouses and children - all-together over 300,000 individuals. These records have been transcribed by Regional Archivist, Yngve Nedrebø, and Lars Øyane. There is a list of databases in the Digital Archive with immigrants and their families (see table 2).

[Figure 4 about here: Norway-born and persons with Norwegian ancestry in the US censuses before and during the mass emigration period. Sources: the Digital Archive and the

³² http://www.norwayheritage.com/pasquest_test.asp (20 August 2016).

³³ <http://www.nappdata.org> (20 August 2016).

US Census Bureau at
<http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab04.html>]

Figure 4 first provides an overview of the number of persons born in Norway according to the nominative censuses of the United States from 1850 to 1930. Second, it includes statistics processed by the Vesterheim Genealogical Center, including ethnic Norwegian individuals in the families of the immigrants, usually their children. This almost doubles the number of first and later generation Norwegians in the United States in 1880. This was the first phase of the process, which led to the number of people who currently consider themselves of Norwegian origin over there being larger than the Norwegian population. The NAPP and IPUMS projects' censuses contain variables that make it possible to follow the development of first- and second-generation immigrants until the second half of the 1900s, which could be the basis for a separate study.

Table 2: Persons of Norwegian ancestry in the census in 1880 for selected US states. Source: Digital Archive.³⁴

US state	Norwegians
Dakota in the 1880 census	23,534
Illinois in the 1880 census	30,530
Iowa in the US in the 1880 census	45,427
Kansas in the 1880 Census	6,920
Michigan in the 1880 Census	5,998
Minnesota in the 1880 census	120,611
Nebraska in the 1880 Census	3,866
Texas in the 1880 census	2,014
Nevada in the 1880 census	210
New Hampshire in the 1880 census	157
New Jersey in the 1880 census	457
New Mexico in the 1880 census	24
Wisconsin in the 1880 <u>census</u>	98,026
Total	337,774

The entire 1880 census and the 1881 census of Canada and Britain have been transcribed by the Mormon church. These censuses are publicly available without charge, but the versions prepared by the NAPP project at nappdata.org require application in order to use them for

³⁴

<http://digitalarkivet.uib.no/cgi-win/WebMeta.exe?slag=vismeny&fylkenr=&knr=&katnr=1&aar=&dagens=&emnenr=7> (20 August 2016).

statistical analyses. However, access is free and permission will be granted to all serious researchers. America's other censuses from the period 1850 to 1940 are now transcribed, except the 1890 census which disappeared in a fire. This material is made public as a paid service for genealogists via ancestry.com in a format more suitable for genealogical purposes than the source editions from nappdata.org and ipums.org in the Minnesota Population Center. While Norwegian censuses are confidential for 100 years and the 1910 census is the most recent opened up for searching, the US censuses enjoy a closed period of only 72 years for the identifiable personal data.

How many emigrants?

Are we approaching an answer to the challenge in Mørkhagen's book mentioned initially: should the number of emigrants from Norway be adjusted upwards from about 900,000 to a million? Hedberg's and Naeseth's detailed work on the Norwegian-born emigrants before 1850 should be trustworthy. Adjusted for mortality and some return migration their number of 18,000 pioneer immigrants corresponds well with the number of persons born in Norway according to the 1850 US census. The figures for mass emigration after 1870 are not as solid since these are mainly based on only one source – the emigration protocols.

Local studies show that for this period we should add a number of persons who are only recorded in the church books' migration lists. On the other hand, The Central Statistical Bureau has likely been unable to eliminate all multiple enumerations of those who emigrated several times. It is difficult to identify people with common names longitudinally by simply comparing entries in the emigration protocols over time. Until we have a more complete national register that takes into account information in multiple sources, there is small reason to adjust the figures in the official statistics for the period from 1870 onwards. The local history theses essentially support the emigration figures for this period, as they usually managed to identify over 90 per cent of the emigrants. As stated above, the Central Statistical Bureau added emigrants with imprecise places of origin quite randomly.

What about the particularly uncertain emigrant numbers from the 1850s and 1860s? There is more variation regarding the extent to which the priests' migration lists contain the bulk of the emigrants. Not everyone can match the overview found from the priest in Tinn parish, Telemark. The statistical series 'Population Movements' contains emigration numbers since 1856 based on the reports from the province governors, the passport protocols, and the

migration lists in the church records.³⁵ The sum of 36,070 emigrants seems to be too high rather than too low when the Norwegian-born population in the United States according to the 1860 census was not higher than 43,995.

The official statistical estimate of approximately 98,000 emigrants during the 1860s is the Achilles heel in this chronological calculation. Most of the decade lacked both passport control and police protocols in the Norwegian ports. Return migration during this period was still insignificant - among the nearly 20,000 returnees in the 1910 census only thirteen reported a return year before 1870 and only 217 American-born are found in the Norwegian 1875 census. We shall see below that the mortality rate among the Norwegian-born must have been unreasonably high in order to adjust the number of emigrants in the 1860s upwards of 98,000. We base this calculation on the nominative transcriptions of the US 1860 and 1870 censuses which give higher numbers for the Norwegian-born population than the official aggregates used in figure 4. We can check this growth against Norwegian emigration numbers, considering also under-registration in the US censuses and mortality among Norwegian-born persons in the United States.

Unfortunately, US vital statistics are deficient and covered the 1800s only in some of the north-eastern states. However, we are fortunate to have death rates for a subset of Norwegian immigrants in the 1860s from a demographic analysis of immigrants to the Mid-West originating in Vik by the Sognefiord.³⁶ Alternative death rates for the entire white population was calculated by Michael Haines, and these are higher, partly due to more urban groups than the Norwegian-born in his material.³⁷ Therefore, we choose to use Sunde's rates for immigrants in the 1860s, who distributed age-wise according to the age groups in the 1870 census, sum to 9,552 dead. Mortality was also low because Norwegian immigration was relatively new and made up of persons in their prime age. In 1870, 64 per cent of the Norwegian-born belonged to the age group 20 to 54 years according to the US census, while the corresponding proportion was 43 per cent for the entire US population and 44 per cent Norway in 1865. As table 3 shows, this calculation gives no reason to adjust the emigrant numbers upwards, quite the contrary. Even if we add fifteen percent to the number of Norwegian-born because of under-enumeration in the two American censuses, and even if mortality was higher than according to Sunde's

³⁵ Backer, *Ekteskap, fødsler og vandringer i Norge 1901-63*. 156; Andres Svalestuen, "Om statistisk grunnlagsmateriale til utvandringshistorien," *Heimen* 15, no. 1 (1970).12-13.

³⁶ Sunde, "Vikjer ved fjorden, vikjer på prærien : ein demografisk-komparativ studie med utgangspunkt i Vik i Sogn."

³⁷ Michael R. Haines, "Estimated Life Tables for the United States, 1850-1910," *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History* 31, no. 4 (1998). 149-169. PAGE NUMBERS

results, the number of emigrants sufficed to explain the rise in the number of Norwegian-born between 1860 and 1870. The registration quality in the US census from 1870 has been disputed ever since the statistics were originally published and a number of cities complained about too low numbers. Many estimates for the under-enumeration lie around two to three percent (except for significantly higher proportions in the southern states).³⁸ When calculating the Norwegian immigration based on the 1860 and 1870 censuses, we could also add an estimate of the dead Norwegian-born among those who were counted in 1860 (maybe 4,000 people). They had to be compensated by new immigrants in the 1860s, without changing our reasoning significantly.³⁹

Table 3: Comparison of growth in the number of Norway-born in, the US during the 1860s as measured in the US censuses and the vital statistics for emigration numbers / mortality rates respectively.⁴⁰

Sources	Population Changes	
US census 1860	50,594	
US census 1870	132,003	
Norw. emigrants 1860-69	97,953	
Dead immigrants 1860-69	9,552	
Growth 1860-70	81,409	88,401

The final conundrum in the emigration equation is the number of escaped seamen who emigrated without being registered in emigration ports. Because of the US *de jure* system, many of these will not be counted in the US censuses when sailing aboard US vessels. Up to 70,000 fugitive sailors have been estimated, but this includes foreigners who sailed with Norwegian ships and persons who stayed abroad for a short period, making this estimate too high.⁴¹ According to minister of seamen Barmann, we have no better ‘guesstimate’ than an additional 20,000 emigrants among the runaway sailors.⁴² This must be added to Hedbergs and Naeseth

³⁸ Richard H Steckel, " Census matching and migration. A research strategy," *Historical methods*, (1988). 52-60..
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³⁹ Margo J. Anderson, *Encyclopedia of the US census* (Washington, D.C. 2000).271.

⁴⁰ The number of persons with Norway as birthplace is calculated from the full count nominative censuses in 1860 and 1870 for the USA available from ancestry.com and the representative data files from IPUMS project. The aggregates from the US Census Bureau (see Figure 4) produces lower numbers.

⁴¹ Sverre Mørkhagen, *Farvel Norge : utvandringen til Amerika 1825-1975* (Oslo 2009). 586.

⁴² No estimate of escaped sailors during the twentieth century has been added because of lack of data, because it then was easier to return to Norway and because many may be included in official emigration aggregates.

18,000 immigrants in the period up to 1850, an estimated 36,000 emigrants in the 1850s and 98,000 in the 1860s and the more secure number of 786,000 emigrants listed in Norwegian Official Statistics (NOS) for the period 1870 to 1975. We sum a total of 960,000 Norwegian emigrants to America during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. We might consider this a reasonable compromise between the old emigration statistics and Mørkhagen's revised estimate. If we deduct the approximately 155,000 returning migrants to Norway, net emigration figures to the United States end at just over 800,000 permanent emigrants. But again: More than providing a definitive answer to the question about emigrant numbers, the article is intended as a methodological contribution, which will yield more accurate results when the Historical Population Register becomes more complete.

Conclusion

An overview of the mass emigration from Norway to America is both an important task in itself and a necessary part of the creation of a historical population register for Norway. A main point of the article is to look into how the creation of the Historical Population Register can contribute to monitoring emigration across the Atlantic. Combining digitised source material on the individual level makes this effort more realistic. This applies to sources from both sides of the Atlantic and both church records, censuses and various forms of emigrant and immigrant records. Only immigrants up to 1850 are mapped in detail in the US, but this database is now being continued. On the Norwegian side, emigrants have been surveyed in more than thirty communities, a lot of linking and source criticism work remains before we have a national database of emigrants as part of a historical population register.

While emigration may be regarded as 'leaks' in a Norwegian context, it is considered internal migration in the North Atlantic setting. This migration gave significant population growth in North America and helped to balance growth in Europe, not least because the emigrants' many children had birthplaces west of the ocean. This has led to much interest in overseas migrations among demographers, social historians, economists, and other disciplines, and as a basis for research we will gain access to more and growing historical person registers on both sides of the ocean.

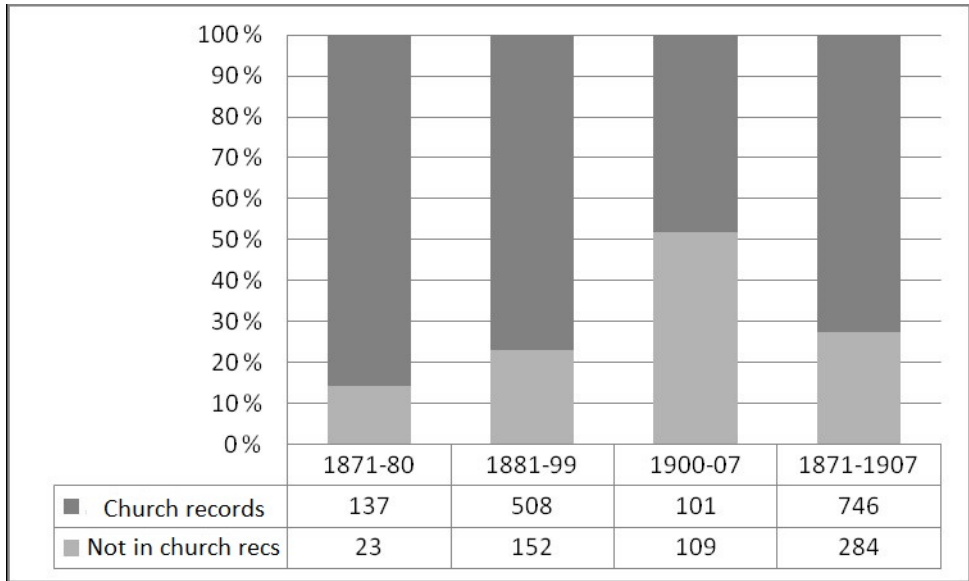


Figure 1: Absolute and relative numbers of emigrants who were found and not found in the church records for Tinn parish, Telemark.

Return emigrants 1910 N = 19327

Alaska: 250 Canada: 534 US unspecified: 171 Else / missing 376

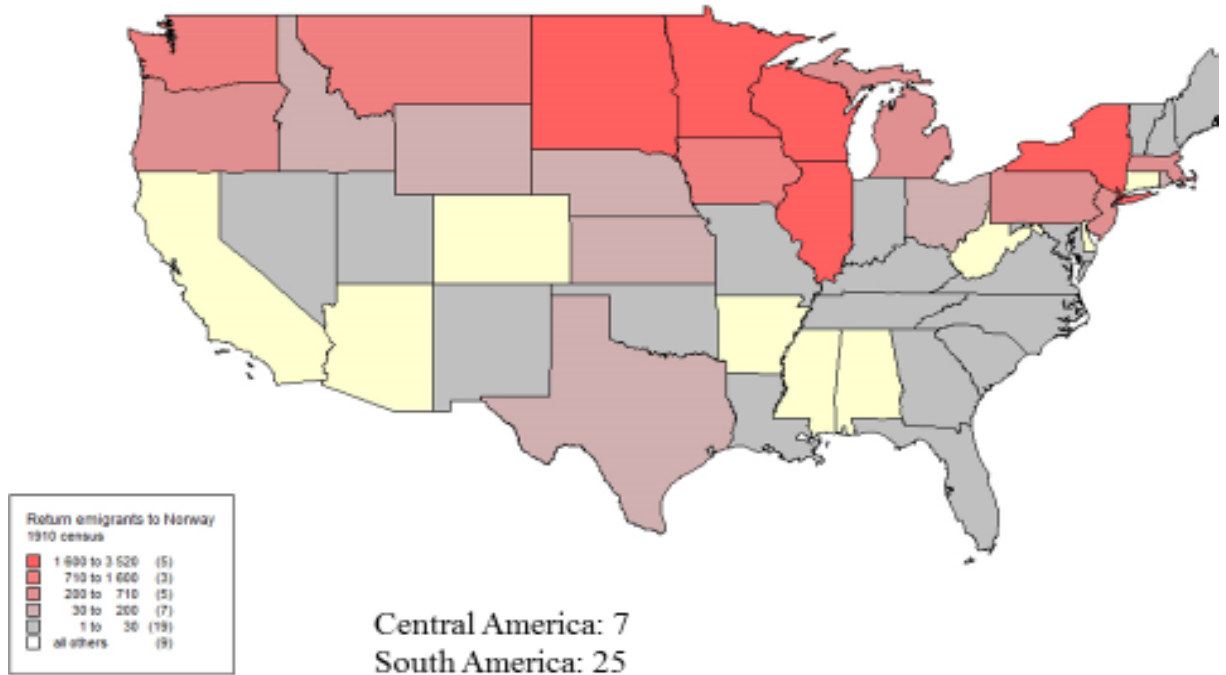


Figure 2: US states and other parts of America where return emigrants to Norway by 1910 had their primary residences. Source: The Norwegian Historical Data Centre, University of Tromsø: The digitised 1910 census, author's data processing.

Figure 3: Number of returnee emigrants to Norwegian provinces according to the censuses of 1910 and 1920. (See pdf).

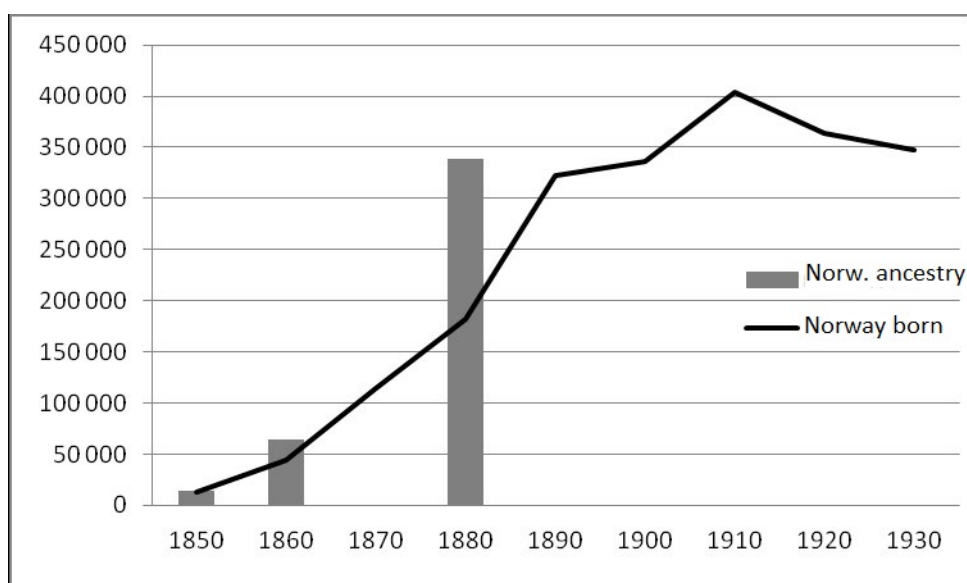


Figure 4: Norway-born and with Norwegian ancestry in the US censuses before and during the mass emigration. Sources: The Digital Archive and the US Census Bureau at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab04.html>

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