

Promoting Student Diversity in the European Higher Education Area: Lessons Learned from Educational Practice in Germany



BACKGROUND

- **European Higher Education Area (EHEA):** supra-national network with common standards in HE and joint support for mobility and intercultural exchange.
- **EHEA's current strategic priority:** policies of social inclusion and campus diversity.
- **Widening participation (WP):** encourage underrepresented groups to enroll & succeed in degree programs.

In a **quasi-sandbox setting with Germany's education system as the real-life lab**, this paper studies whether members from minority groups and students with less privileged backgrounds benefit from other school routes to university than the long-established majority.

- **Public school system** is tracked with **staggered choices of school tracks** around the ages of 10 and 16. Available at the second decision point is **track-upgrading to specialized high-track schools (SHTS)**.
- The **SHTS track substitutes** for the standard pre-university graduation track offered by **traditional high-track schools (THTS)**.
- **SHTS contribute** at least **one third** of all annually issued university entrance certificates.
- **Universities are not allowed to treat** SHTS graduates and THTS graduates **differently**.

OBJECTIVE

- Identify/approve a reliable educational practice suitable for an experimental rollout across the EHEA to promote the success of historically underrepresented groups.

Questions

- (1) As compared to their native peers at university, do second-generation immigrants over prefer up-tracking to SHTS?
- (2) How does parental education relate to the usage of the SHTS practice?

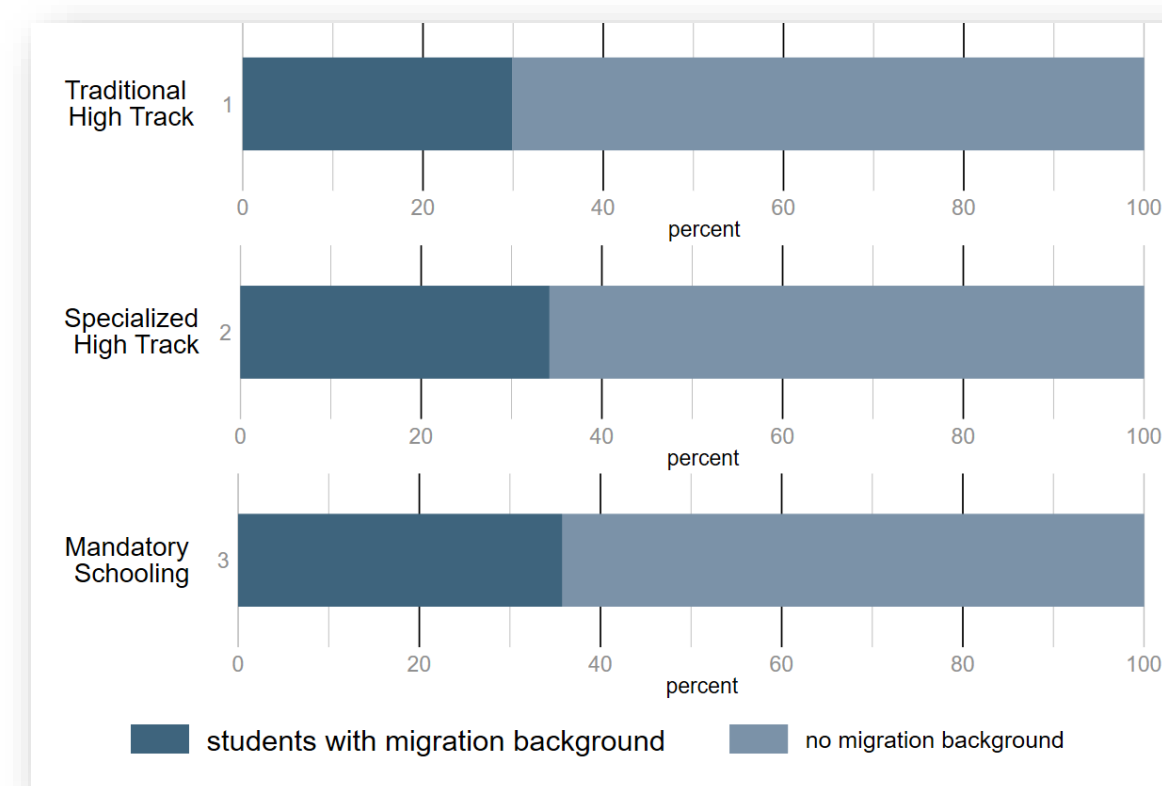
DATA AND METHODS

- ✚ **Census data for Germany, survey data covering all universities:** aggregate evidence gives an ad hoc idea of principle capability of SHTS to mitigate ethnic penalties and facilitate upward mobility; closing graduation gap.
- ▶ **Nationwide survey of first year students** (Business Administration, Business & Economics, Business & Law, Business Engineering, Business Informatics): discrete choice analysis over mutually exclusive educational routes to university.
- ▶ **Random utility approach** rooted in human capital theory of education.

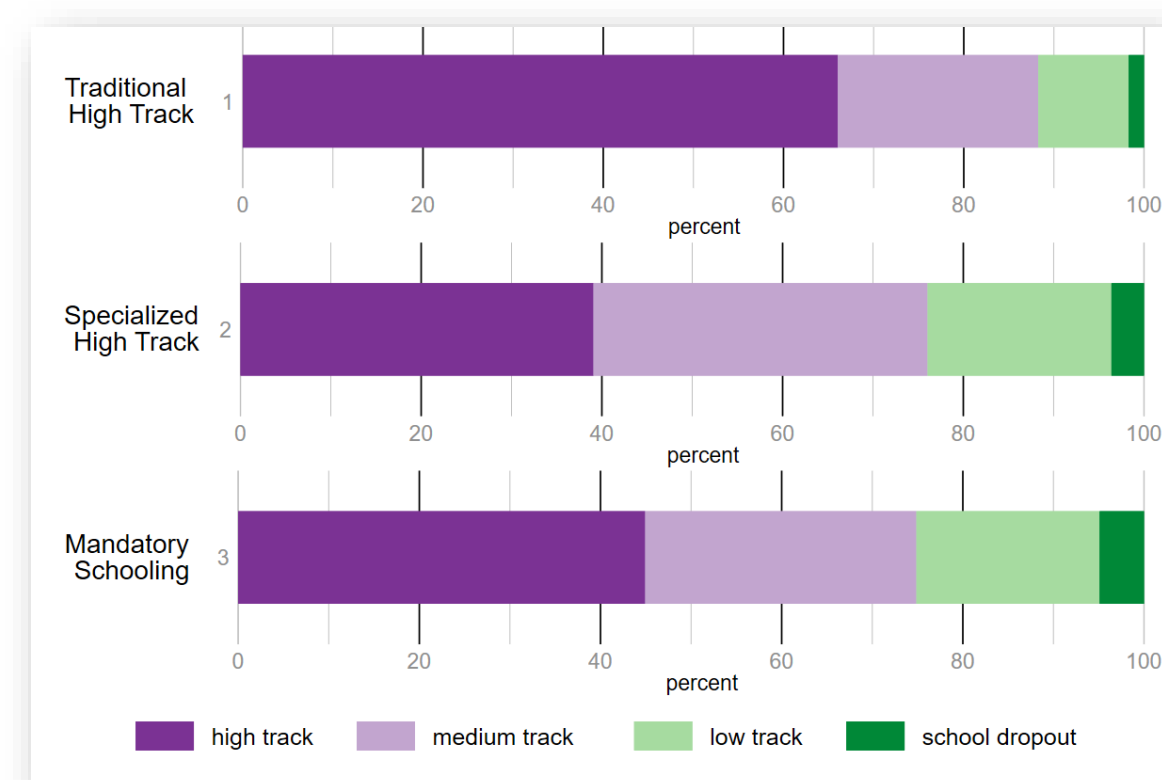
MAIN FINDINGS

✚ **SHTS high track almost mimics the school population characteristics** in terms of

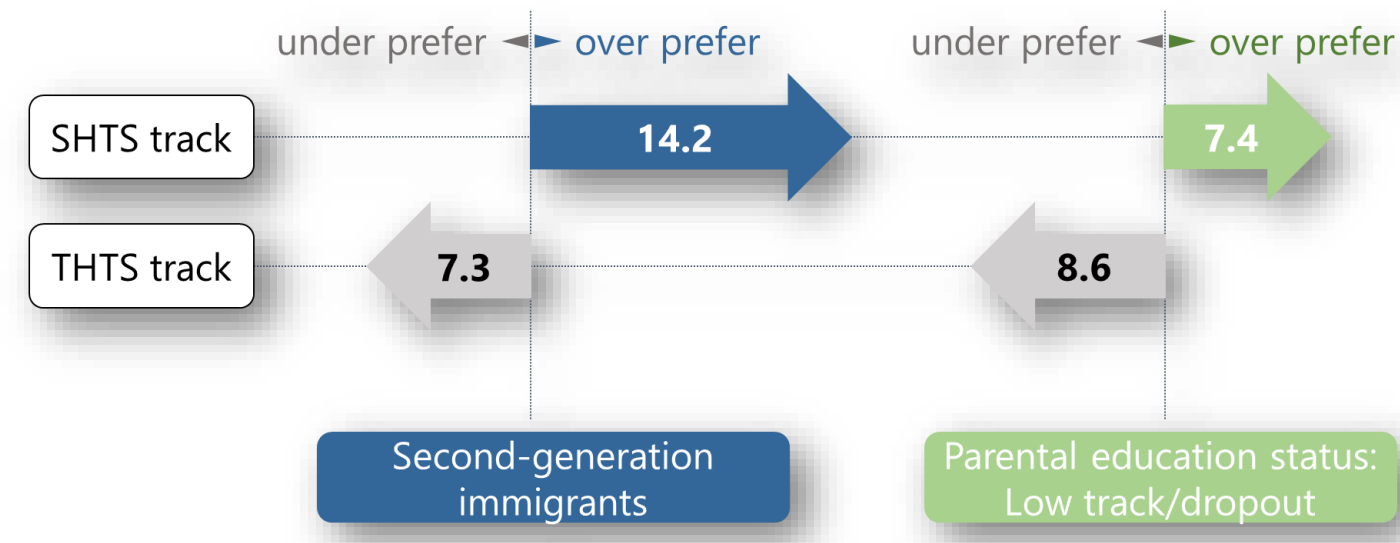
✚ **migration background** and



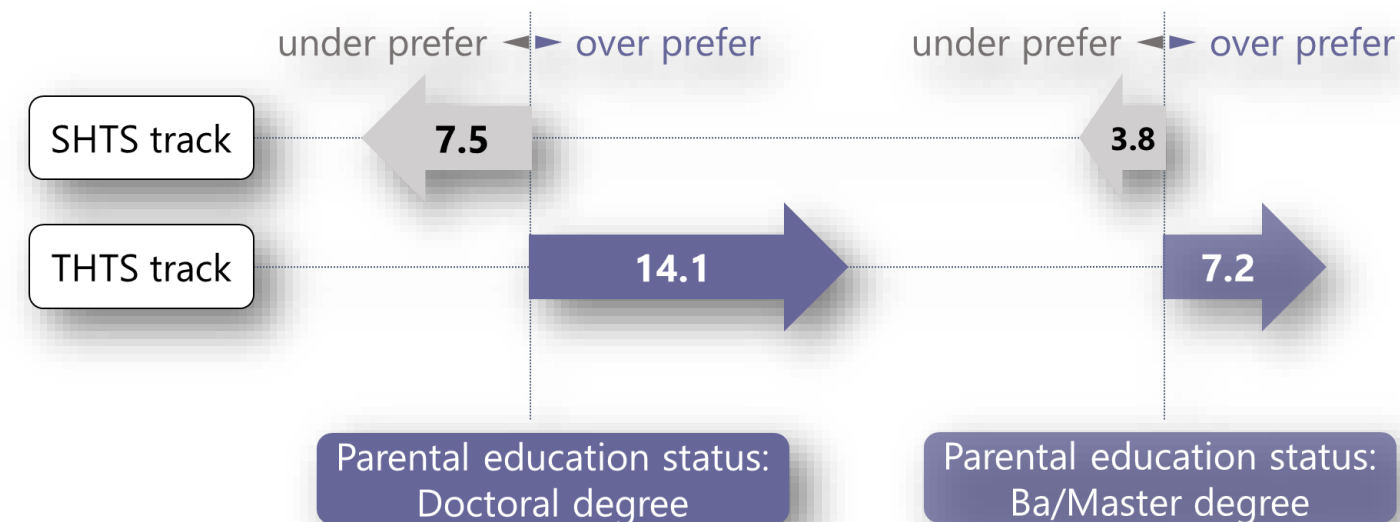
✚ **(low) parental schooling attainments**



- ▶ **Second-generation immigrants** are, ceteris paribus, **14.2% points more likely** to taking the **SHTS-route** to university
- ▶ **Students from less educated family backgrounds** are **7.4% points more likely** to benefit from using the **SHTS-pathway**



- ▶ **Contrarily**, students from **academic households** over prefer the **standard THTS-route to university**



CONCLUSIONS

- Results suggest that **SHTS establish a good educational practice** capable to alleviate disadvantages in the achievements of vulnerable groups, as they prepare for fully fledged university admission and systematically foster enrollment of
 - students with a migration background
 - students with less educated parents
- SHTS **promote equal educational opportunities** by
 - supporting upward mobility
 - mitigating educational disparities resulting from early tracking
- A **lesson learned** is that keeping young adults in compulsory education sufficiently long and, at the same time, encouraging them to upgrade school tracks off the standard trail creates social innovation that helps to put forward the goal of social inclusion within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

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