

The Impact of Family Background and Household Composition on Internal Migration: Evidence from the Netherlands

Andrea Colasurdo ^{1,2}, Clara H. Mulder ², Diego Alburez-Gutierrez ¹

¹ Kinship Inequalities Research Group – Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research

² Population Research Centre, Faculty of Spatial Sciences - University of Groningen

Abstract

This study investigates the role of kin in shaping migration behavior, focusing on how the migration history of parents and the presence and characteristics of household members influence an individual's likelihood to migrate internally over time. We examine multiple generations and extended family networks to fully understand these dynamics. Utilizing the Historical Sample of the Netherlands, which provides comprehensive migration histories of individuals from 1850 to 1950 and detailed household compositions at each address, we analyze internal movements throughout the life course. Preliminary findings suggest that individuals with parents who have a migration background are more likely to move internally, indicating a potential intergenerational transmission of migration behavior. Living in intergenerational households appears to reduce the propensity to move. This work contributes to our understanding of migration patterns from a historical perspective, offering valuable insights for predicting future trends and understanding the long-term impacts of family networks on migration decisions.

1. Introduction

Many studies have analyzed the impact of kin on migration behaviors, focusing on the important role family plays in migration decisions and how family experiences influence future migration patterns and behaviors of relatives. Kesztenbaum (2008) introduced the concept of ‘spatial capital’ to describe the knowledge families possess and accumulate about geographical locations, showing that migration events are also shaped by past migration of the family. Each movement from a family or community alters it, increasing the likelihood of future migration from that community (Garip and Asad, 2016).

The intergenerational transmission of migration has received less attention than that of other demographic behaviors, such as fertility and mortality. However, it is reasonable to expect that kin transmit migration specific knowledge, information, and values (Cote-Gendreau, 2024). Through migration kin acquire migration capital, which they then transmit to their relatives (Bernard and Perales, 2024). Existing studies show that families with a history of migration are more likely to produce subsequent generations who also migrate (Bernard and Perales, 2024; Gagnon et al., 2006; Ivles and King, 2012).

The literature also highlights the potential effect of the location of familial ties on migration decisions, and the role of intergenerational support in internal migration. In particular, proximity to family reduces the likelihood of migration (Hünteler and Mulder, 2020; Thomas and Dommermuth, 2020). Furthermore, we can expect that when individuals reside in intergenerational households frequent exchanges of support may occur. These households may foster a strong attachment to the local environment, reducing the likelihood of migration.

Despite the importance of these dynamics, migration has often been overlooked in studies of intergenerational transmission, particularly in the context of more distant relatives and extended family networks. By examining internal migration patterns in the Netherlands from 1850 to 1950 - a period marked by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and population growth - this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how family and household factors have historically shaped migration decisions, providing insights that may be relevant to contemporary migration studies.

2. Research Questions

So far, the study addresses two primary research questions:

1. How is the propensity to migrate within the historical Netherlands shaped by the migration background of family members, particularly parents? This question explores whether individuals with parents who have migrated are more likely to migrate themselves and how this propensity varies based on the parental migration experience.
2. How does family and household composition, including the presence of multiple generations within a household, influence the likelihood of migrating over an individual's lifetime? This question investigates whether living in multi-generational households acts as a deterrent to migration due to the strong familial ties and support networks.

3. Data

The research utilizes the Historical Sample of the Netherlands (HSN) (<https://hdl.handle.net/10622/PCM0ZX>), a rich dataset comprising detailed life course information for 37,137 individuals born between 1850 and 1922 based on birth, death and marriage certificates, and dynamic population registers. The HSN provides comprehensive data on individuals' residential histories and household compositions at each address, allowing for an in-depth analysis of internal migration patterns. Additionally, the dataset includes information on people living with the sampled individuals, allowing for the consideration of extended family and household networks. At this early stage the study focuses on the first internal migration event - defined as a change of municipality - and examines how this event is influenced by the migration backgrounds of the individuals' parents and the composition of the household at the time of migration. The dataset is particularly valuable for this study, as it includes very detailed locations on the address of individuals and detailed information on their household structure at each point in time, allowing for a nuanced analysis of the interplay between family dynamics and migration behavior.

- Historical Context

The historical context we are focusing on in this study is the Netherlands between 1850-1950. In the second half of the 19th century, the Netherlands experienced large industrialization, and the period from 1850 to 1920 was marked by high population and economic growth. However, substantial internal disparities were present in the country, with wealthier urban areas contrasting with more agriculturally oriented rural regions (Fedorova et al., 2022). These economic and geographical differences within the country have stimulated considerable internal migration, with people moving from rural to urban areas (Kok et al., 2014).

4. Research Methods

The study employs a combination of event history analysis and multinomial logistic regression to address the research questions. The structure of the data, which includes life course trajectories from birth for all sampled individuals, makes it ideal for event history analysis. Cox regression models are used to assess the impact of parents' migration background and household composition on the likelihood of internal migration. To categorize the household composition, we focus on the number of generations living in the household. Thus, our household's composition variable is divided into three categories: (1) one-generation households, consisting only of the sampled individuals and possibly spouse, other non-kin or more distant relatives; (2) two-generation households, including the sampled individuals and their parents or children; and (3) three or more generation households, which also include grandparents or grandchildren. This categorization allows us to examine how the presence of multiple generations within a household influences migration decision. To define the parents' migration background, we look at the migration history of parents, comparing parents' municipality of birth with the first municipality of residence of the sampled individuals. This results in four categories of parents' migration background: 1) neither parent moved; 2) only the mother has a migration background; 3) only the father has moved; 4) both parents have a migration background.

The multinomial logistic regression further refines the analysis by distinguishing between different types of migration events, such as moving alone (or without parents), with one parent, or with both parents. This approach provides a deeper understanding of the specific conditions and reasons that may drive individuals to migrate. Indeed, when analyzing the first migration event, depending on the people with whom one moves, we have different types of events and different motivations behind the decision to move.

So far in the analysis we have only considered the first migration event. Since the individuals in the sample are followed since birth, this first migration event can occur at all ages and, when it occurs at an early age, it is likely to occur with the parents. At this early stage we do not distinguish between events according to with whom one moves, which is also why we are implementing additional multinomial logistic analysis. However, in later stages we intend to develop the analysis by considering all migration events over the life course, distinguishing different setups and samples according to the life stages in which the moves occur and whether individuals migrate alone or not.

5. Preliminary Findings

Preliminary results from the Cox regression analysis reveal a strong association between parents' migration backgrounds and the likelihood of their children migrating (Figure 1). Specifically, individuals with at least one parent who has migrated are more likely to migrate themselves, with the effect being even larger when both parents have a migration background. This finding supports the notion of intergenerational transmission of migration capital, where the experiences and knowledge gained by parents through migration are passed down to their children, increasing the likelihood that they will also migrate. The analysis also suggests that living in intergenerational households - where multiple generations reside together –acts as a deterrent to migration (Figure 2). There seems to be a cumulative effect, with the likelihood of migrating internally decreasing further when three or more generations reside together. This effect is likely due to the stronger attachment to the local environment fostered by close familial ties and the availability of intergenerational support, which may reduce the need or desire to migrate. The multinomial logistic regression further reveals that, when compared to people who never moved, the effect of parents' migration background is more pronounced for first movements made without parents, suggesting that the transmission of migration capital may be particularly influential when individuals migrate independently (Figure 3).

6. Next Steps

The next phase of the research involves refining the analytical models to better capture the complexities of our predictors and the different migration experiences of the individuals sampled. We also want to account for the unique differences and settings of household composition and social class in the historical context analyzed. This includes developing more appropriate categories for household composition that reflect variations in family structure, and assessing socio-economic background through the classification of parents' occupations. Additionally, the study will expand its focus beyond the first migration event to encompass individuals' entire migration histories. The availability of detailed address changes over time, which is uncommon in both contemporary and historical datasets, allows for a more comprehensive analysis of internal

migration patterns across the life course. This longitudinal approach will enable an examination of how early-life migration experiences shape later migration decisions in adulthood, particularly in a historical context. Evidence suggests that individuals who migrated during childhood are more likely to migrate internally as adults (Bernard and Vidal, 2020). Furthermore, focusing solely on first migrations, often occurring with parents, may reflect specific motivations tied to family movements. The reasons for migrating differ based on whether individuals move with or without their parents, and the influence of parents' migration history takes on varying significance depending on these circumstances. A further key aspect of this analysis is considering the age at which these internal migrations occur and the stage of life during which they happen. By accounting for these factors, the study aims to disentangle different migration behaviors and motivations, offering deeper insights into the lasting impact of migration capital and family background on migration decisions.

7. Figures

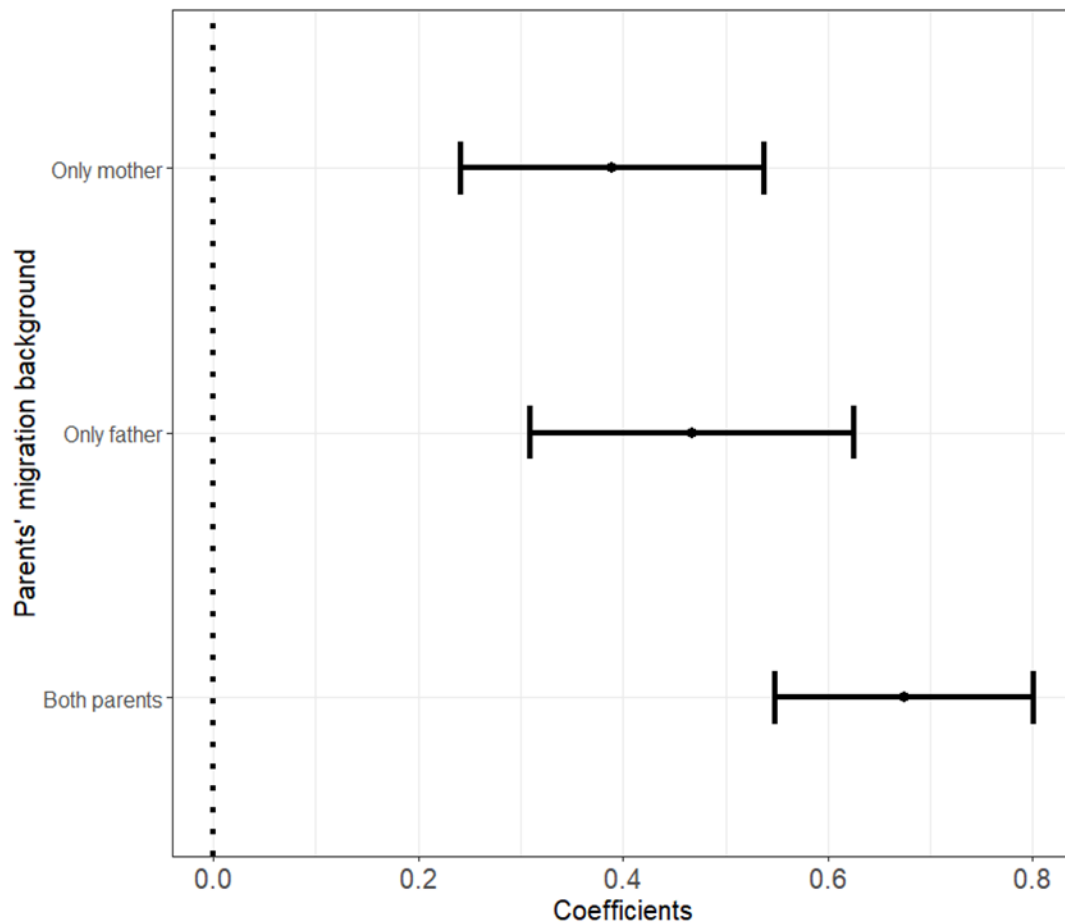


Figure 1: Cox regression model coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the 'Parents' migration background' regressor. The reference category is individuals with both parents without migration background.

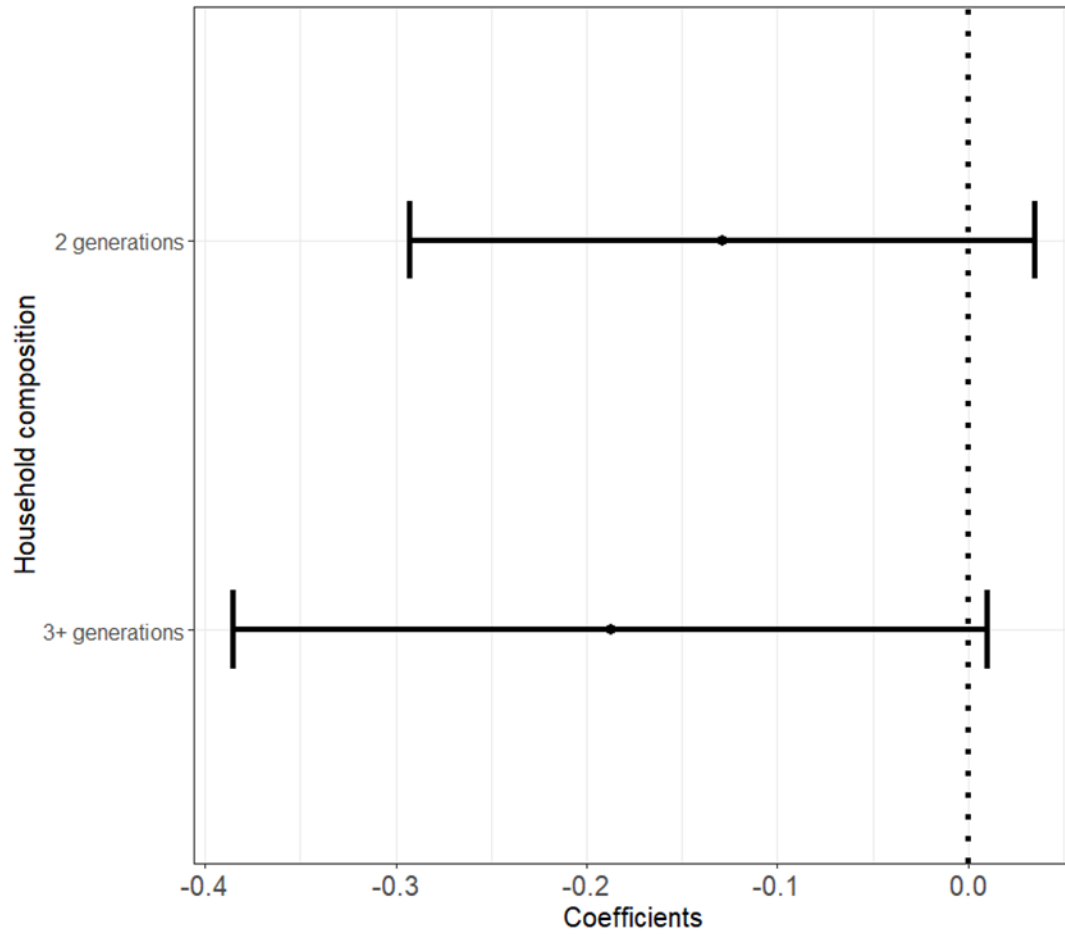


Figure 2: Cox regression model coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the 'Household composition' regressor. The reference category is individuals living in a one-generation household.

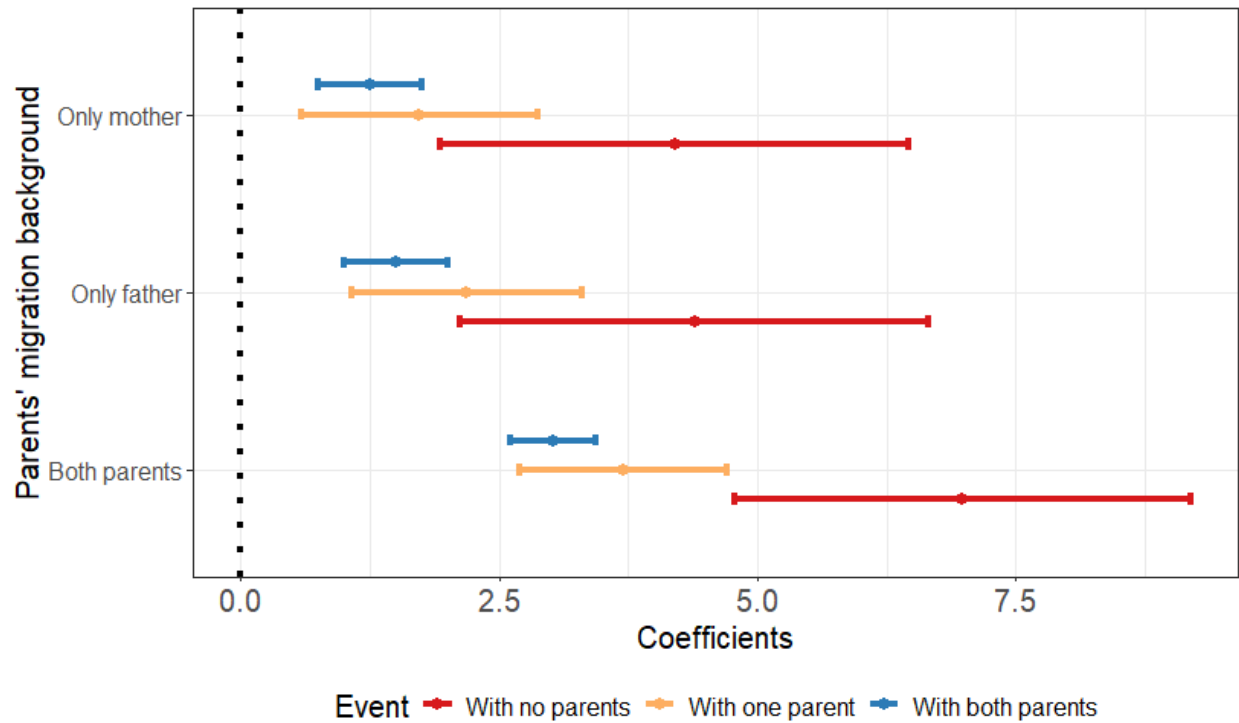


Figure 3: Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals of the multinomial logistic regression model for the 'Parents' migration background' regressor. The reference category is individuals with both parents with no migration background. The reference category for the event is individuals who have never moved within the country during their lifetime.

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