

Childhood internal mobility: an overview of precariousness in Europe

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Summary

In this presentation we present a book project on childhood internal mobility in Europe.

by focussing on several dimensions of mobility: frequency, timing, distance and change in place-type. We will analyse these different dimensions of mobility for children without and with immigrant parents of diverse migrant origins and explore geographical differences in patterns of mobility. We synthesis the findings from different linked population register-data and survey data in The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and the UK.

First results show that the majority of children do move at least once during childhood. Most children move only once or twice, at a young age, over short distances and within the municipality of first residence. Levels of mobility are higher among children with a second generation migrant background and there is also much variation in the mobility patterns for different migrant origin groups. Although migrants and non-migrants born in urban areas do not seem to differ much in the frequency of moving, they do seem to differ in the type of moves. Over half of the children without a migrant background born in larger cities move out of the city, amongst children with a migrant background this is less than a third. We also see that moving in childhood seems to raise precariousness mainly when it goes hand in with other forms of vulnerability and in case of an accumulation of inequality. For example in the case that parents are divorced, have a precarious labour market situation and unfavourable housing situation in low quality housing.

Introduction

Children in most northern European countries are among the happiest in the world. Despite a wide range of studies on children, their well-being, school success and on early life courses in general, we know surprisingly little about the role of moving on the development of lives of these children. Whereas international migration studies start taking into account child moves more and more, this is much less the case for the internal mobility literature referring to moves within one country. The only group for which this has been thematized are children of refugee groups for whom it has been suggested, mainly by advocacy groups, that the numerous moves of these children have detrimental effects on their development. The current population of children (everyone below 18) in Europe is nevertheless diverse and the share of children with a migrant background is substantial in the meantime. Among them the largest share is born in Europe to

parents who migrated to the continent at some point reflecting the different waves of migration. Child development studies have stressed the importance of the context in which the child grows up. Most often personal relations and networks with parents, family, friends and at school are mentioned as crucial for child development in this regard. In addition, studies have suggested that the physical environment, including housing and the neighborhood, are equally relevant for children as this is where their lives take place mainly. Moving will result in a change of the environment and most likely implies a break of (at least some) ties. Moving in general has thus been found in the literature to be an important and stressful life event. In this presentation we add to the knowledge on and the meaning of mobility in childhood. I explore childhood internal mobility in Europe starting from the first guiding research question is *What does childhood mobility look like for children of migrant and non-migrant origin?* The analyses in the different countries focus on four dimensions of moving: frequency, timing, distance and change in place-type.

Findings for the Netherlands as an example

Internal mobility; patterns & frequency

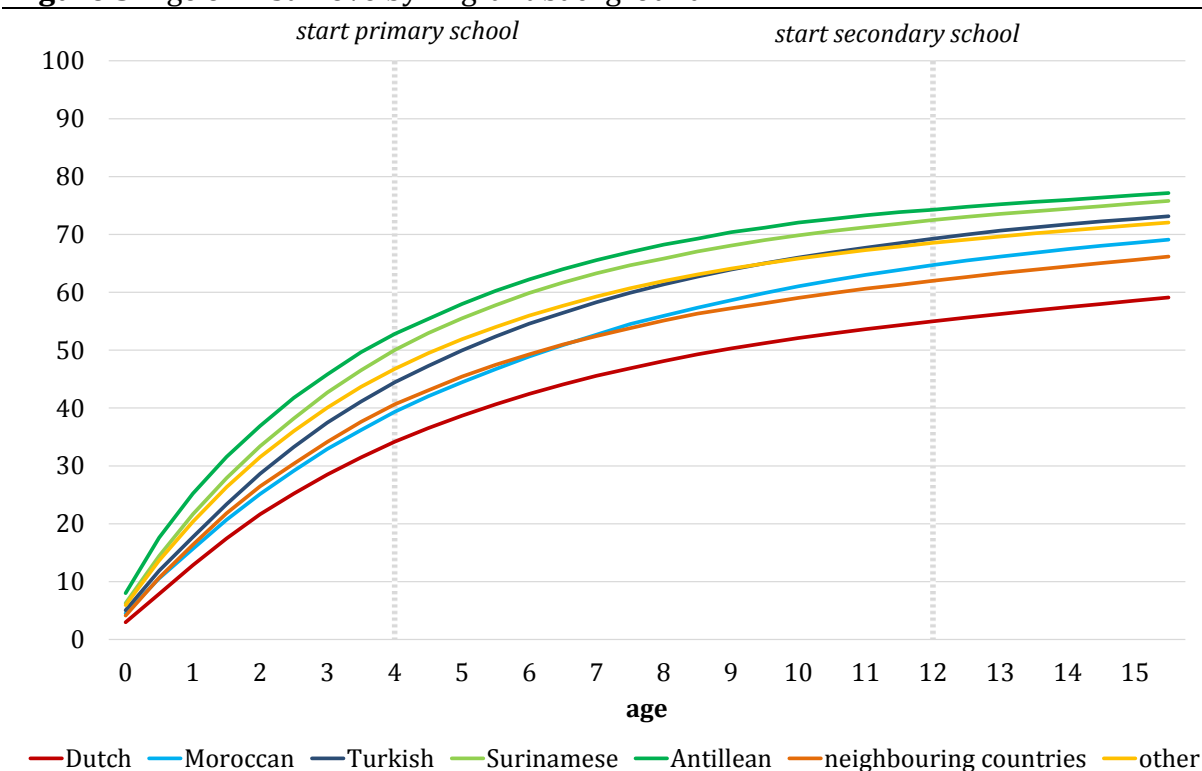
Of all the children, 62% are moving at least once during their childhood between the ages 0-16 (figure 2). As expected, this is somewhat lower among children without a migrant background (59%) and higher among children with a second generation migrant background (72%). The highest mobility is found among children with an Antillean (77%), or Surinamese (76%) migrant background. Most of the children move only once (36%) and a minority moves twice (15%) or three times or more (11%) during childhood. Compared to children without a migrant background, children with a second generation migrant background move more frequently. Especially children with a Surinamese or Antillean migrant background move more frequently, with a much higher proportion of frequent movers (3 moves or more) amongst children with an Antillean (21%) or Surinamese (18%) background compared to other migrant groups and those without a migrant background. Although also a higher proportion of children with a Moroccan (69%) or Turkish (73%) migrant background moves during childhood, they most often move only once (respectively 46% and 44%) and have only a small proportion of frequent movers (respectively 7% and 10%).

Timing

For most children the first move occurs before starting primary school, 36% of all children have moved before the age of four which accounts for 59% of the mobile children. Figure 5 shows the

age of the first move as the proportion of the total population by migrant background. It shows that the majority of mobile children make their first move before starting primary school. Looking at different migrant groups, we see that in general the different groups show a similar pattern in the distribution of the age of the first move but the levels of moving differ between the origin groups. Although amongst those with a migrant background a larger proportion has made their first move before starting primary education, the difference is not large. Of all children without a migrant background, 34% has moved before the age of four, which is 58% of the mobile non-migrant children. Of all children with a second generation migrant background 45% has moved before the age of four, which accounts for 63% of the mobile migrant children. Especially the migrant groups who move more frequently (Surinamese and Antillean), make their first move at a slightly younger age, respectively 50% and 53% of the mobile children move before the age of four the age at which school starts in the Netherlands.

Figure 5. Age of first move by migrant background



Source: CBS, own calculations