

**Title:**

## **Long-Distance Relocations of One-Earner and Two-Earner Couples in Australia, Britain, Germany and Sweden: Intersections of Gender and Institutional Context**

**Authors:**

Sergi Vidal<sup>(1,2)</sup>, Francisco Perales<sup>(1)</sup>, Philipp Lersch<sup>(3)</sup>, and Maria Brandén<sup>(4)</sup>

1. The University of Queensland
2. University of Bremen
3. University of Cologne
4. University of Stockholm

**Abstract: (max. 150 words)**

It is well-known that couples' long-distance residential relocations are generally more responsive to men's than women's labour market placement and prospects. While these patterns are fairly consistent across countries, substantial variation on the width of the specific gender gaps prevails across studies. Drawing upon an extensive body of comparative evidence showing that national institutions serve as moderators of gender inequality, in this paper we shed light on unaccounted institutional features in the family migration literature to provide a more encompassing picture of the intersections between gender and family migration. To do so, we investigate the precursors of couple relocations, comparing one- and two-earner households in four developed countries. Specifically, we analyze migration intensities across couple-household work arrangements, and the individual, and couple-level factors that moderate these in Australia, Britain, Germany and Sweden, using discrete-time event-history analysis of comparable, nationally representative, panel data between 1992 and 2010.

E-mail contact: [s.vidal@uq.edu.au](mailto:s.vidal@uq.edu.au)

## Extended abstract

### *Background and research questions*

It is well-known that gender plays an important role in the determination of couples' long-distance residential relocations, so-called *family migrations*, in industrialized countries. In a historical context of rupture with traditional gender structures, and despite a steady growth of dual earner couple households since the 1970's, the household arrangement that better aligns with family migrations remains one compounded by a male bread-winner and a female home-carer (Nivalainen 2004, Tenn 2010, Cooke 2011). This paradoxical fact has been capitalized by an early family migration literature to reason the well documented declining rates of internal migration from a household utility maximization perspective (Da Vanzo 1976, Sandell 1977, Mincer 1978). Since then, an extensive literature has elaborated on multiple, confronted micro-level explanations to unveil the lower appeal for family migration among dual earner couples. These are based on weakening couple specializations in paid employment and domestic work, as a function of educational achievements (Mincer 1978) and emerging empowerment of women (Lundberg and Pollack 2003), and on declining prevalence of traditional gender ideologies (Bielby and Bielby 1992).

To date, empirical support for these perspectives is still partial and mixed. Studies vary substantially on the width of the gender gaps and the specific resources (i.e. earnings, education, occupational features) that have greater impacts on migrations of couple households with two earners. Beyond the existing differences on the research designs across studies, this literature has also been recently criticised for being opaque to broader regional and national contexts of opportunities that may channel structures of gender inequality. Although an incipient empirical literature has begun to study the role of occupational structures and regional contexts of opportunities (Abraham et al. 2010, Shauman 2010, Brandén and Strom 2011, Perales and Vidal 2013), a systematic cross-national analysis to explain variations on the migration propensities of one- and two- earner households remains unexplored.

Specifically, the bulk of family migration literature limits itself to the study of a single national context. This is limiting, since a prolific strand of international comparative studies that has unveiled a high degree of heterogeneity across countries in the prevailing levels of female employment and types of gender inequality at work and at home with divergent impacts on a number of demographic behaviours (see Cooke and Baxter 2010). Institutional explanations based on the national average support to female employment as well as the gendered structures prevalent in national labour markets have arisen to accommodate recurrent gender gaps across countries. Affordable early

childcare, couple's separate taxation or flexible work schedules and part-time employment schemes are just some examples of measures that support female employment in the context of families, but such type policies are at different stages of development or diverge importantly across industrialized nations (Gornick and Meyers 2005). Accordingly, institutional contexts provide individuals with resources to negotiate employment careers and family lives in much differentiated ways. To such an extent, institutional mechanisms are expected to mediate the association between couple's work arrangements and family migration.

The goal of this paper is to adequately close this gap by examining the experiences of family migration of one-earner and dual earner couple household arrangements across four countries representing different institutional contexts of female employment support. In line with much research in internal migration, our research adopts a life course approach, to formalize the dynamics of continuity and change on couple's employment and family lives that are conducive to family migrations (Bailey 2009). We raise the following research questions from which we will extract testable hypotheses:

*How do couple household employment arrangements in one-earner and dual earner structures mediate family migration intensities across different countries?*

*And, what individual and household features explain family migration of dual-earner and one-earner couple households in different institutional contexts?*

#### *Empirical approach, study-cases, data and method*

The analysis is based on the examination of individual- and household-level determinants for Australia, Britain, Germany and Sweden. Although case selection is influenced by data availability, the four national cases under scrutiny vary on the levels and types of female employment support over life course in accordance to their welfare tradition (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999), the occupational systems (Cartmill 1999, Estevez-Abe 2005) or the national institutions regulating gender relations (Chang 2000). Most notably, observed institutional differences on these lines suggest different configurations and stability of dual earner household structure. For instance, the Swedish institutional setting is strongly oriented towards enhancing employment continuity of women over life course, including motherhood stages. This contrast with qualitatively very different displays in Germany, where the welfare system encourage women's employment breaks, or in

Australia and Britain, where residual state intervention in family matters leads to relatively shorter employment breaks, but higher job insecurity and relatively worse conditions for part-time employed women (Gornick and Meyers 1998, 2005).

We use quantitative, nationally representative, longitudinal information for each of the countries considered between 1992 and 2011 (i.e. Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey, 2001-2011; British Household Panel Survey, 1992-2008; *German* Socio-Economic Panel, 1992-2009; Sweden in Time: Activities and Relations database, 1992-2007). The structure of these datasets allows tracking individuals over time and nesting them across couples, families, and regions. Furthermore, they all collect extensive (and reasonably comparable) information on factors relevant to this research, including geographical relocation, fertility, marital status, and employment outcomes.

As our interest lays on the analysis of family migration events, the method is based on the analysis of event histories (Allison 1984). We model discrete time hazards of migration events over a distance of 50km for one-earner and two-earner households to examine migration intensities across immediate pre-migration household arrangements as well as their past evolution before the move.

### *Preliminary results*

Up to date, multivariate results are only available for Australia, Britain and Germany. In table 1, we present results of the Event History analysis of family migration intensities weighted only on couple's work arrangements. In line with prior research, we find that dual earner couples do move less often than the *traditional* couple, composed by an employed husband and a non-employed wife, in the three countries. Yet, the odds of moving differ across countries, and by hours of work of the female partner. Regarding a full-time employed wife, Germany presents the lower odds, where dual earner couples are 50 percent less likely to move than a traditional couple, while in Australia or Britain, dual earner couples are only 20 and 30%, marginally significant, less likely to move than traditional couples. If the wife is part-time employed, the odds of moving is 40% less than the one of a traditional family in Britain and Germany.

In Table 2, we present additional model specifications that include three different sets of variables at a time. The sets of factors are operational measures to assess state-of-the-art explanations for why one and dual earner households would display different propensities to move. These relate to (i)

family compositions, (ii) partner's resources, and (iii) occupational features. As commented before, the institutional settings we study regulate opportunities to juggle career and family lives in different ways. Therefore, we expect that these sets of explanations will be more or less prevalent to explain couple household migration propensities of one-earner and two earner arrangements across countries.

First, after including in the model variables associated to family composition, dual earner couples with a full-time female spouse become marginally less likely to move than *traditional* families. Likewise, the resources that couples bring to the household (i.e. returns to education, labour experience and earnings) do not affect much the associations observed in the prior section. In contrast, occupational features do level off most of the significant differences on migration propensities across couples. The positive (negative) differences between jobless (dual earner) couples and traditional couples remains in Germany, though.

### *Discussion*

Overall, results confirm that dual earner household arrangements display lower rates of family migrations. The odds of family migration across couple households with two employed partners were systematically lower in all countries under scrutiny. Traditional explanations based on the average higher resources of the male partner over the female partner, and the family roles attributed to women after the formation of a family do not suffice to explain these differences. Unlike, in line with structural theses of gender inequality in the labour market, factors associated to the occupational experiences of men and women level off differences between differences in the odds of migration of traditional male breadwinner households with a non-employed wife, and those with two earners.

Despite evidence of common patterns across countries, the strength of the association varies between Australia, Britain and Germany. Cross-country analysis shows divergences in the negative impact of dual earners in family migrations. In the case of Germany, dual earner couples have remarkably lower odds of family migrations, and these do not level off completely after controlling for occupational features of partners. A tentative interpretation of the result can be done in light of the institutional setting for female employment support, and the spatial mobility culture. On average, welfare institutions discourage occupational careers of women over the life course, which might generate major uncertainties about family migration decision across women pursuing careers.

At the same time, Germans display relatively high residential stability, but this does not imply that they are less mobile. In lieu, many dual earner couples, particularly those with higher occupational status of the female partner, display high rates and multiple forms of recurrent job-related mobility (i.e. commuting, shuttling, etc.) as a substitute of family migrations. In contrast, employment prospects of Australian and British women over the life course are more alike, displaying relatively more employment continuity than in Germany, reducing the perceived risks for women's careers associated with family migrations. An established *culture* of residential mobility in Australia, may explain the lower substantive differences in mobility between dual earners and traditional families.

### *Future work*

Our next steps include developing a thorough explanatory framework to accommodate the results of the country comparisons, leaning on the most recent developments in the cross-national literature in gender inequalities, and enriching it with elements of the life course perspective. Additionally, we will integrate the empirical evidence for Sweden, and will strengthen the reach of our empirical results in many different ways. First, we will look into the specific triggers of one-earner and dual earner couple households in order to shed light on factors that explain differences on family migrations across countries. Second, to relax the strong assumption that household arrangements are stable forms, we will analyse the effect of changes in the sequence of employment statuses of partners prior to a migration event. Last, we will examine selectivity issues applying simultaneous equation estimation in an event history framework (e.g. Steele 2010) to explain differential behaviour across household work arrangements.

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## Tables

	AUSTRALIA	BRITAIN	GERMANY
	Odds ratios	Odds ratios	Odds ratios
One earner households			
He employed	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>
She full-time employed	1.19	1.82*	0.44
She part-time employed	2.10	1.81	1.02
Dual earner households			
She full time- employed	0.81*	0.72*	0.50**
She part-time employed	0.81	0.57**	0.60*
Jobless households	1.48*	1.58*	1.88*

**Table 1.** Discrete-time Event History analysis of family migration events. Models are additionally adjusted by partnership duration, age, period and regional control variables. \* p<0.1 , \*\* p<0.01.

	AUSTRALIA			BRITAIN			GERMANY		
	Odds ratios								
One earner households									
He employed	Ref.	<i>Ref.</i>							
She full-time employed	1.10	1.26	1.11	1.76*	1.69	1.27	0.41	0.43	0.76
She part-time employed	2.01*	2.26*	1.92	1.85	1.99*	1.28	1.04	1.21	1.60
Dual earner households									
She full time- employed	0.76*	0.79*	0.75	0.69*	0.60**	0.72	0.45**	0.46*	0.46*
She part-time employed	0.82	0.79*	0.75	0.59**	0.52**	0.59*	0.63	0.60	0.55
Jobless households	1.39*	1.66*	1.38	1.59*	2.14**	0.87	1.82	2.19*	2.89*
Family controls	YES			YES			YES		
Resource controls		YES			YES			YES	
Occupational controls			YES			YES			YES

**Table 2.** Discrete-time Event History analysis of family migration events. Models are additionally adjusted by partnership duration, age, period and regional control variables. \* p<0.1 , \*\* p<0.01.