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The Determinants of the Internal Migration of Foreigners in Europe: A Comparative Study¹

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe different socio-demographic explicative factors of the internal migration of the foreign population in different countries of Europe: France, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and United Kingdom. The analysis is based on data from the IPUMS microdata files which provide information on individuals changing place of residence by basic demographic characteristics (citizenship, age, sex and country of birth, origin and destination of internal migration, duration of residence and level of education) and other similar sources. We intend to answer the following questions: Are the demographic patterns of internal migration of foreigners similar to those of natives by age and sex? Do these migration patterns differ by origin? Are the observed demographic patterns by specific national groups always the same or do they differ according to the country of destination? How does the migration intensity of the foreigners or/and groups of foreigners vary in the different migration systems of the European countries? And lastly, what are the effects of the individual characteristics on the internal migration of foreigners as we compare by country of residence? Following a descriptive analysis of migration patterns of foreigners and non-foreigners we will perform multinomial logistic regression to explore some of the individual and aggregated characteristics that may influence in explaining differences in mobility among groups and countries in Europe.

Keywords: international migration, internal migration, Foreign born Census data, cross-country comparison.

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Background

The massive arrival of foreign immigrants constitutes a very transcendental geo-demographic and social phenomenon in Europe. Among the numerous consequences that stem from this phenomenon we find the modification of the internal migration patterns of the native-born population. The limited interest this topic has motivated in the new destinations of this immigration, particularly located in the South of Europe – Spain, Italy and Portugal – contrasts with the situation in the Western countries with longer tradition on external immigration, such as the United States, Canada or Great Britain. In these latter countries the research on the internal migration patterns of foreign or foreign-born population has given rise to abundant literature from the late eighties. In this paper we are going to present some results of our research, for which we have focused our efforts to answer the following questions:

- i) Are the demographic patterns of internal migration of foreigners similar to those of natives by age and sex?
- ii) Do these migration patterns differ by origin?
- iii) Are the observed demographic patterns by specific national groups always the same or do they vary according to the country of destination?
- iv) How does the migration intensity of the foreigners or/and groups of foreigners vary in the different migration systems of the Western countries
- v) And lastly, what are the effects of the individual characteristics on the internal migration of foreigners as we compare by country of residence?

In brief, the objective is to study which demographic characteristics and individual factors take part in the internal mobility when we consider the behavior of the native-born population as the comparative element.

Data and methodology

Data

It is difficult to compare Census data for different countries (Bell, Blake et al, 2002). Realities of each context, priorities of the specific administrations and years of collection change, thus research questions and hypothesis to be tested have to be adapted to these disparities. However, our effort to homogenize the data sets has been facilitated to a great extent by IPUMS international (Minnesota Population Center 2009), which has provided us with the harmonized data files for the countries we have included in the analysis for this paper.

Table 1 shows some basic characteristics of the data files

Table 1. Characteristics of the data files

Country	sample fraction (%)	sample size	foreign-born subsample	foreigners	census date (d-m-yr)	major administr. Unit	minor administr. Unit
France 1999	5	2,934,758	311782 (10.6%)	162595 (5.5%)	08-03-99	region	
Greece 2001	10	1,028,884	102466 (10%)	68109 (6.6%)	18-03-01	department	municipality
Italy 2001	5	2,990,739	117890 (3.9%)	70462 (2.4%)	21-10-01	region	municipality
Netherlands 2001	1.2	189,725	15998 (8.4%)	5636 (3%)	01-01-01	region	
Portugal 2001	5	517,026	32136 (6.2%)	11440 (2.2%)	12-03-01	subregion	municipality
Spain 2001	5	2,039,274	107394 (5.3%)	77631 (3.8%)	01-11-01	province	municipality
United Kingdom 2001	3	1,843,525	134892 (7.3%)		29-04-01	region	

Regarding our specific research objectives, we also have to mention the approaches followed in the different countries with regards to the questions on mobility. In Italy, Greece, Portugal, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom the census inquired about the place of residence one year ago². In France, information was collected about the place of residence in the last census (1990), that is, whether the person lived then in the same region or not. For Spain, we have information about the last place of residence and the year of change of residence so, even is conceptually it is not exactly the same question, we can still build up a proxy for the dependent variable that can be understood as the situation one year ago, like in the other mentioned countries.

On the other hand, we have had to adjust our explanatory variables to the degree of detail supplied by each census, while maintaining the possibilities of cross-national comparisons. This has led us to a greater simplicity in the categorization of the covariates that we would have used for country specific models. Age-group has been reduced to that provided by the British sample, in which central ages are gathered into 15 years categories. Since educational attainment was not coded in the same way for The Netherlands and the United Kingdom as for the other countries, we have re-coded it in such a way that it allows comparison (for the re-codification we have previously studied the intra-variation with regards to our dependent variables). The most difficult explanatory variable to harmonize has been that referred to the place of birth. First of all, not all countries include information on this (The Netherlands and France just distinguish between native and non-native born populations). Secondly, those that do provide some sort of detail about geographical origin, emphasize the places of birth of their own interests, which are not necessary coincident across countries. So, even if our main research question focuses on the similarity or dissimilarity in the internal migration patterns by region of birth, we have to limit the number and types of categories to those available for all countries of study.

For some of these and the rest of the covariates, the problems have been related, not to the types of categories in which they are disaggregated, but to the universe each country considered for them. For instance, employment status or academic attainment, have been treated differently in the various census. In order to avoid the biased missing data derived from it, we have constricted our initial database to people aged 25 and over.

² In some of these countries, information was also collect for some longer intervals. Since the similarity between migrants and migration movements is higher for short periods, we have kept the year interval as that of our interest.

Methodology

We centre our attention on the individual characteristics that have an effect on the probability of having changed residence with regards to that stated for the previous year (The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain) or last census (France). In this case we are not measuring migration intensity, but focusing on the personal circumstances that may act as push effects for migrating. In particular, we are especially interested in grasping the differences of behavior according to the geographical origin of the migrants and whether their patterns are similar (or not) across countries.

For this purpose, we apply two sets of logistic models depending on the territorial unit under consideration. First, medium and long distance movements, defined by IPUMS International as changes between ‘major administrative units’ and, then, short distance movements, defined as changes between ‘minor administrative units’. Information provided in the former case is available for a larger range of countries. We are aware that these minor and major administrative units differ with regards to their extension and population density, but since in this step we are studying individual propensities to move, instead of migration intensities, the territorial differences should not disturb our results too much.

Thus, our dependent variables will be:

Model 1: Migration status -1y/5y/last census. Same major administrative unit, value 0. Different major administrative unit, value 1. Obviously, people who lived abroad at the time point of reference are excluded from the data file.

Model 2: Migration status -1y/5y/last census. Different minor administrative unit within the same major administrative unit, value 1; value 0, otherwise. Obviously, people who lived abroad at the time point of reference are excluded from the data file.

The equations have the following form:

$$\ln\left(\frac{p_i}{1-p_i}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \text{sex} + \beta_2 \cdot \text{age} - \text{group}_2 + \dots + \beta_5 \cdot \text{age} - \text{group}_5 + \beta_6 \cdot \text{place} - \text{birth}_2 + \dots \\ + \beta_{10} \cdot \text{place} - \text{birth}_7 + \beta_{11} \cdot \text{marital} - \text{status}_2 + \dots + \beta_{13} \cdot \text{marital} - \text{status}_4 + \beta_{14} \cdot \text{academic} - \text{att}_2 + \\ + \dots + \beta_{16} \cdot \text{academic} - \text{att}_4 + \beta_{17} \cdot \text{house} - \text{tenure} + \beta_{18} \cdot \text{employ} - \text{status}_2 + \beta_{19} \cdot \text{employ} - \text{status}_3$$

Preliminary research results. Individual level

The results obtained from the micro perspective confirm those previously discussed for the aggregated data (tables 2 and 3) for sex, age and place of birth.

The general pattern of most of the covariates is similar across-countries when we study medium-long distance migration (table 2), although the magnitude of the coefficients varies. The probability of having experienced this sort of mobility in the previous year is always lower for females than males, although Italian women move much less than those in the rest of the countries (the estimated odds for females are 69% of those for males).

Medium-long distance migration

Table 2. Models for migration status-medium/long distance

	1 year ago						last census
	Greece	Italy	Portugal	Spain	The Netherl.	UK	France
Sex							
male							
female	,932*	,687*	,861*	,893*	,890*	,871*	,873*
age group							
25-29							
30-44	,744*	,518*	,555*	,692*	,529*	,524*	,765*
45-59	,574*	,233*	,265*	,376*	,223*	,272*	,397*
60-74	,411*	,170*	,280*	,335*	,126*	,242*	,342*
75+	,374*	,164*	,275*	,344*	,000		,189*
place of birth							
native-born							
non-native born					3,332*		,718*
Africa	,796**	1,315*	1,789*	2,283*		1,323*	
Latin-America	1,170	1,271*	1,558*	1,869*		1,114	
North-America & Oceania	1,215**	1,149	,691	1,378		1,277*	
Asia	1,067	2,107*	1,971*	1,769*		1,311*	
Europe	,852*	1,551*	1,540*	1,253*		1,325*	
marital status							
single/never married							
married/in union	1,286*	,500*	1,092**	1,000	,545*	,799*	1,181*
separated/divorce	1,799*	,925*	2,140*	1,693*	,947*	1,088*	1,324*
widowed	1,530*	,706*	1,593*	1,123	,903*	,856*	1,065*
educational attainment							
less than primary completed							
primary completed	1,443*	1,091**	1,510*	1,217*	1,028		1,642*
secondary completed	2,068*	1,905*	2,384*	1,792*	1,652*		2,785*
university completed	2,609*	3,944*	4,091*	2,683*	3,239*		4,260*
housing tenure							
owned							
not owned	1,350*	1,529*	1,689*	3,372*		2,271*	2,223*
employment status							
employed							
unemployed	,785*	,936*	1,682*	1,614*	1,776*	1,289*	1,447*
inactive	,851*	1,305*	1,300*	1,123*	1,944*	1,103*	1,560*
constant	,010*	,017*	,008*	,004*	,032*	,015*	,048*

*p<0,05; ** p<0,1

Source: IPUMS International. Own calculations

Short distance migration

Table 3. Models for migration status-short distance

		1 year ago			
		Greece	Italy	Portugal	Spain
sex					
	male				
	female	,868*	,919*	.904*	,911*
age group					
	25-29				
	30-44	,786*	,575*	.487*	,512*
	45-59	,888*	,254*	.225*	,232*
	60-74	,728*	,195*	.136*	,179*
	75+	,502*	,259*	.228*	,164*
place of birth					
	native-born				
	Africa	,633*	2,153*	1.678*	1,958*
	Latin-America	,905	1,696*	1.612*	1,796*
	North-America & Oceania	,905	,851	.614	1,080
	Asia	,565*	1,934*	1.485	1,124
	Europe	,718*	1,391*	1.194**	1,690*
marital status					
	single/never married				
	married/in union	,867*	,920*	1.994*	1,511*
	separated/divorce	,968	2,431*	3.563*	2,765*
	widowed	,903*	1,420*	2.698*	1,874*
educational attainment					
	less than primary completed				
	primary completed	1,689*	1,166*	1.498*	1,269*
	secondary completed	2,756*	1,434*	2.285*	1,936*
	university completed	3,742*	1,771*	2.989*	2,175*
housing tenure					
	owned				
	not owned	1,192*	1,235*	1.175*	1,339*
employment status					
	employed				
	unemployed	1,014	,632*	1.011	,944**
	inactive	1,157*	,788*	.772*	,854*
	constant	,016*	,029*	.010*	,010*

*p<0,05; ** p<0,1

Source: IPUMS International. Own calculations

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