Chapter 8

Internal Migration Patterns by Age and Sex at the Start of the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

Moving home is an event that most people experience at some stage in their lives. Previous research has shown that while men and women tend to have similar rates of migration overall, significant variations occur according to age. In this chapter, the authors examine these demographic influences on migration for internal migration in Britain using data from the 2001 Census Special Migration Statistics at district scale. The analysis of migrations rates reveals some subtle differences between males and females by age but spatial patterns of net migration for both sexes emphasise that losses for London and provincial urban centres and gains in rural Britain vary significantly by age. The chapter uses a national area classification framework to summarise the patterns of net migration taking place in the year before the 2001 Census at district scale and the latter part of the chapter explores indices of population stability – turnover and churn – that provide alternative insights into migration patterns across the country, particularly when disaggregated by age. These measures of migration are important because it is apparent that some areas that exhibit relatively low net rates of movement, actually have large numbers of migrants moving within their boundaries as well as inflows from and outflows to other areas – movements which clearly impact on the stability of their populations and have policy implications.

INTRODUCTION

The migration process involves three key variables: the migrant, the origin and the destination. Variations in the particular attributes of all three of these variables, together with intervening opportunities, make for complex migration behaviour. On a detailed micro level, any individual migrant will exhibit a unique combination of individual attributes relating to their age, sex, ethnicity, socio-economic status, et cetera, including their own perceptions of where they live now and where they might live in
the future based on their own understanding of the places involved. Whilst data on certain individual attributes are captured by the Census of Population, confidentiality constraints limit access to samples of anonymised records and detailed surveys are required to provide information about perceptions and values. At a macro level, on the other hand, a range of data sources (see Chapter 1) provide either total migration flows or flows disaggregated by certain variables. Moreover, there are particular features of origin and destination places that are commonly measured or quantifiable, perhaps relating to features such as job vacancies, unemployment or crime that we can use as potential factors with which to explain migration flows. Much research has focused on building models to quantify the significance on migration of particular attributes of origins and destinations as well as the distance between them.

Thus, as Cadwallader (1989) has demonstrated, models are frequently developed for flows at the macro level and the importance of each explanatory factor is inferred from the coefficients calibrated by the model, whilst the real decisions to leave the origin or to choose a particular destination are taken at the micro level. Whilst there may be a myriad of individual motivations and complex interactions between the migrant and their existing or desired locations, some migrant attributes and indeed the attributes of places are more likely to affect both the propensity to migrate and the origin or destination of migration than others. In this chapter we focus on two demographic attributes of migrant flows at the macro level – age and sex – and offer a national overview, based on data from the 2001 Census, of age/sex-specific migration patterns within Britain at the start of the new millennium.

THE INFLUENCE OF AGE AND SEX ON MIGRATION PROPENSITIES

Stillwell (2008) makes the distinction between the characteristics of migrants or places which influence the propensity to migrate (such as age or socio-economic status) and the factors which actually determine if a move takes place (such as the need for a job) and explains why the move occurs to a particular destination (such as more vacancies in one area rather than in others). Both influences and determinants are clearly interlinked and both have spawned research seeking to describe and account for internal and international migration around the world. Here our focus is on the propensity to migrate and the particular demographic characteristics of migrants that might make them more or less likely to change their permanent residence. Much research has been carried out on the particular attributes of migrants which might influence their migration behaviours. In this volume, for example, Stillwell (Chapter 9) explains in detail the influence of ethnicity on migrant behaviours; elsewhere, Finney and Simpson (2008) have carried out similar work using 2001 Census data and Owen (1997) provides a detailed examination from the 1991 Census. Other work, such as that by Champion and Coombes (2007) has flagged the importance of the socio-economic status of the migrant.

One of the more major attributes affecting an individual’s propensity to migrate is their age. A large volume of work, including studies in the 1980s by (Rogers and Castro, 1981; Bates and Bracken, 1982; Rogers et al., 2002; Raymer et al., 2006; Raymer et al., 2007), has identified the influence of age on migration behaviour. The seminal work of Rogers and Castro (1981) was important in identifying the similarities in migration rate age ‘schedules’ across a range of countries and cities. From these common observations, Rogers and Castro were able to construct a model migration schedule consisting of a series of key age-related components. Consider the example shown in Figure 1.

Whilst Figure 1 is an empirical schedule constructed from 2001 Census data for Britain as a whole based on data for quinary age groups, the