

Moving for proximity to family and labour market outcomes in the Netherlands

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Topic and background

According to classical human-capital theory (Sjaastad, 1962), internal migration should lead to improved individual labour market outcomes. However, later empirical and theoretical work has nuanced this notion. That literature has shown that the economic gains of migration are mainly found for the highly educated, those who move to large cities (Korpi & Clark, 2015), men (Cooke, 2003; Mulder & Van Ham, 2005) and those whose stated motivation for a move was related to work (Böheim & Taylor, 2007).

In the research on labour market outcomes of moving, proximity to nonresident family is a particularly interesting motive to consider. This is because there are theoretical arguments for expecting negative outcomes after such moves, but also for expecting positive outcomes. Negative outcomes might be related to the sacrifices those moving for proximity to family might make in the work domain (Gillespie, Mulder & Thomas, 2021; Mulder & Kooiman, 2023). These movers might prioritize the opportunities for contact and support exchange with family over economic considerations. Positive outcomes might be related to the function of family as a social resource in the labour market (Mulder, 2018; see Lin, 1999, for the social resource theory). Family members might offer a mover a job, or might help find one through their local network. They might also help with childcare, allowing parents to focus on work. Both negative and positive outcomes might be gendered.

Our research question is: *How are women's and men's individual income, employment, and hours worked associated with moving motivated by nonresident family, moving motivated by work, and moving motivated by both nonresident family and work, compared with not moving?* Following Gillespie, Mulder and Thomas (2021), we distinguish between moving for nonresident family (but not for work), moving for work (but not for family), and moving for both nonresident family and work.

Data and methods

We employ data from the Netherlands' Housing Surveys (Dutch acronym: WoON) of 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018 transformed to person-year data (1-3 person-years per respondent). These data were micro-linked to register data from the System of Social-Statistical Datasets (SSD). The sample size ranged from 344,819 to 359,336 person-years depending on the labour market indicator. We selected respondents aged 26-56 at the time of the WoON interview.

The dependent variables were derived from SSD and were measured in the year after the person-year of observation (t+1, with t the year in which the main independent variable 'whether moved and for which motive' was measured). *Individual income* was measured in percentiles of annual gross incomes from labour. *Employment* was derived from an SSD variable indicating the

main socio-economic category in a given year. *Labour supply* was measured as a percentage of full-year full-time employment. We included the same indicators measured at t-1 in the independent variables, so that the coefficients of the other variables can be read as associations given the previous situation, and thus, with change in the dependent variables (Schmid, 2001). The main independent variable was whether a respondent reported their last move in the year of observation (t0), combined with whether work and proximity to non-resident family were among the reported motives for the move (moves for other reasons were not considered).

We analyse these data using linear regression for income and labour supply, and logistic regression for employment, for women and men separately.

Preliminary results and discussion

We found that both men's and women's labour market outcomes benefited from moves motivated by work, compared with not moving (Tables 1, 2 and 3). For employment, we also found a stronger association for men than women. We did not find such benefits for moves motivated by proximity to nonresident family only. The point estimates of the coefficients for such moved varied between labour market outcomes and models; some were positive, others were negative. However, the parameters were rather small and the *p*-values were above conventional levels of statistical significance. This null finding could be caused by the lack of a clear association between moving for proximity to family and income. It could also signify that moving for proximity comes with income sacrifices for some, and income gains for others.

For those moving for a combination of work and proximity motives, we mostly found similar labour market benefits as for those moving for work only. The findings for labour supply in terms of hours worked, however, showed a clear, gendered pattern. Given labour supply in year t-1, moving for both work and proximity was strongly positively related to women's labour supply in year t+1 compared with not moving and with moving for work only. For men we did not find such an association. This finding could indicate that the additional family motive was related to women's opportunity to increase working hours thanks to family help, for example with childcare. In the Dutch context of a gendered labour market characterised by a large proportion of women working part-time with a great deal of variation in fractions of a full-time working week, making use of family resources might be an important strategy for women to increase labour supply. Moving close to family increases the opportunities to employ family resources, and may thus facilitate such a strategy.

We do not intend to make causal claims. Except in specific cases such as forced or urgent moves, it is likely that most movers take into account the labour market outcomes of their move ahead of time. They would indeed do so according to human-capital and other cost-benefit approaches of moving: in these approaches, that started from Sjaastad (1962), the decision to move is based on weighing the envisaged costs and benefits of the move.

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Table 1. Linear regression of individual income (percentiles)

	Female		Male		Difference
	Coeff.	$P > z $	Coeff.	$P > z $	$P > z $
Whether moved by motive (ref. did not move)					
Work only	2.765	0.000	3.701	0.000	0.227
Proximity only	0.120	0.865	0.290	0.715	0.587
Proximity & work	4.566	0.002	3.386	0.016	0.649
Income year t-1	0.837	0.000	0.795	0.000	

Notes:

P -values for difference between models for females and males were derived from interaction between a dummy for 'female' and the independent variable 'Whether moved by motive' in a model for females and males combined.

Model statistics to be added.

For brevity, results for control variables (age, age squared, level of education, immigrant background, urban versus less urban area, survey round) and constant are not shown. These will be reported in the full paper.

Table 2. Logistic regression of employment

	Female		Male		Difference
	Coeff.	$P > z $	Coeff.	$P > z $	$P > z $
Whether moved by motive (ref. did not move)					
Work only	0.785	0.001	1.433	0.000	0.042
Proximity only	-0.075	0.711	-0.309	0.200	0.517
Proximity & work	1.256	0.032	0.887	0.057	0.703
Employed year t-1	4.143	0.000	4.250	0.000	

Notes: same as Table 1

Table 3. Linear regression of labour supply

	Female		Male		Difference
	Coeff.	$P > z $	Coeff.	$P > z $	$P > z $
Whether moved by motive (ref. did not move)					
Work only	1.642	0.056	1.215	0.010	0.178
Proximity only	1.200	0.247	-0.216	0.765	0.271
Proximity & work	6.488	0.003	-0.145	0.892	0.002
Labour supply t-1	0.721	0.000	0.522	0.000	

Notes: same as Table 1