

# Where to (next)? Experiences of family and childhood migration and migration intentions in adulthood.

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## Research background and objectives

Migrants and their children display higher migration propensities than individuals with no migration background or experience (e.g. de Jong & de Valk, 2023). This has many reasons. First, migration is a *selective process* (Borjas, 1987): not everyone wants to or has the resources to migrate. Consequently, people who have migrated once are the most likely, because of some of the same characteristics that led to or enabled their first migration, to migrate again. Second, migration is a *learned behaviour*: through migration, people accumulate knowledge, attitudes, and resources that are relevant for further migrations (Kõu & Bailey, 2014). These can include, among others, financial resources, (transnational) social networks, and language skills. Finally, the combination of knowledge, attitudes and resources that promote migration and that are learned through migration – often labelled “migration capital” (de Jong & de Valk, 2023; Kim, 2018) – can be *intergenerationally transmitted* through socialisation and/or status inheritance, so that even children of migrants with no direct migration experience are more likely to migrate than non-migrants without a migration background.

In this article, we aim to study how migration background and migration experience – in childhood and in adulthood – interact in shaping *migration intentions*, which are a precondition and a major determinant of migration behaviour (Kley, 2011). We will distinguish between intentions to migrate to a country of origin (“return” migration) or to a new country (onward migration). In addition, we will investigate the mechanisms underlying the association between migration background, experience, and intentions, such as socioeconomic background, transnationalism, and national/cultural identity.

## Data and variables

We use data from Trajectoires et Origines 2, a survey conducted in France between 2019 and 2020 targeting migrants and children of migrants living in France, and including a group of individuals without a migration background. Once individuals with missing information on the variables of interest are excluded, the analytical sample includes 25805 individuals aged 17 to 60. In this preliminary version, we consider DOMs and TOMs as foreign ‘countries’.

The main dependent variable captures *migration intentions*. Respondents who answered “yes” or “maybe” to a filter question (“Do you think you will, one day, go live in a DOM, in a TOM, or abroad?”) were asked to indicate to which country they would migrate. If this corresponds to the birth country of the individual, of one of their (grand)parents, or to one of the countries where the respondent lived in their childhood, respondents are coded as intending to migrate to their origin country. If the country indicated differs from each of these countries or if it corresponds to “don’t know”, respondents are coded as intending to migrate to a new country. Respondents who did not give a valid answer to the filter question (1374 “don’t know”, 2 refusals) or who indicated France as their potential destination (N=9) are coded as missing and excluded from the analyses.

The main explanatory variables are migrant background and childhood migration experience. *Migrant background* distinguishes between individuals with two parents born in France (3+gen), including 216 respondents born outside of metropolitan France; individuals born in France with one parent born abroad and one born in France (2.5gen); individuals born in France with two parents born abroad (2gen); and individuals born abroad with at least one parent born abroad (1gen). *Childhood migration experience* identifies whether individuals did or did not experience migration as children (between ages 0 and 17). The crosstabulation between migration background and childhood migration intentions is reported in Table 1. Importantly, while most 1gen individuals who experienced migration as children (N=3448 out of 3837) migrated to France as children (1.5gen), 362 migrated elsewhere as children, and only moved to France as adults.

Table 1. Experience of migration in childhood by migration background.

	3+gen	2.5gen	2gen	1gen	Total
No migration experience in childhood	3282	5632	5363	6720	20997
Experienced migration in childhood	262	347	362	3837*	4808
Total	3544	5979	5725	10557	25805

\* of which 3448 migrated to France as children (1.5gen)

## Preliminary results

In Figure 1, we report preliminary results from a multinomial logistic regression of migration intentions (no migration, return migration, or onward migration) on the interaction between migration background (3+gen, 2.5gen, 2gen, 1gen) and childhood migration experience. The model controls for gender and age and is weighted using the provided population weights. 3+gen individuals are coded as having “return” migration intentions when they preferred destination country correspond to a country where they lived as children or to the birth country

of one of their grandparents (20.5% of 3+gen respondents have at least one grandparent born outside of metropolitan France).

### Migration intentions

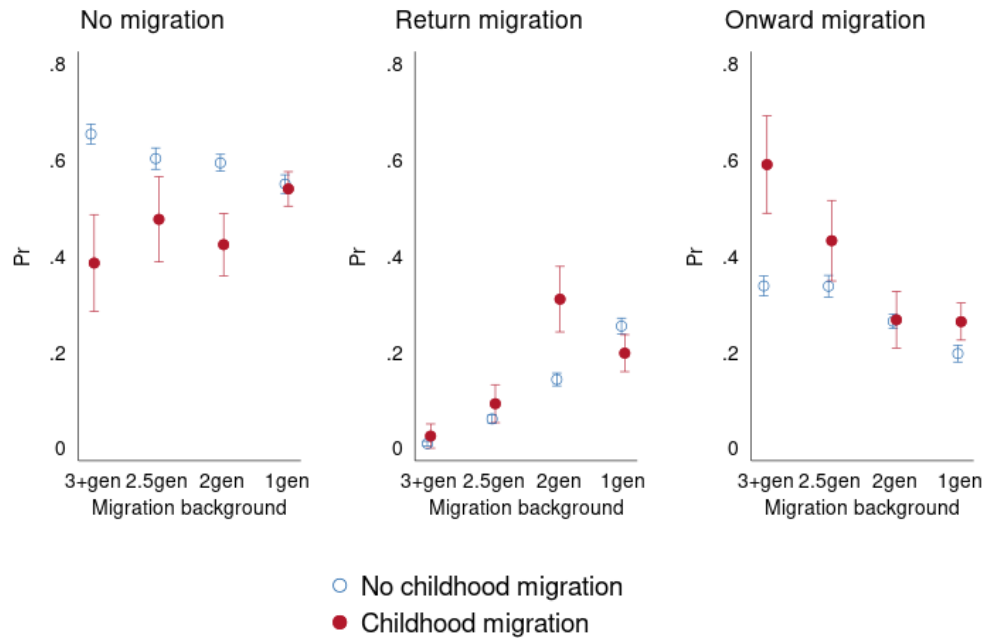


Figure 1 Predicted probabilities of having no expectations to migrate (left), expecting to migrate to the origin country (centre), or expecting to migrate to a new country (right) from the multinomial logistic regression of migration intentions on the interaction between childhood migration experience and migration background. The model controls for gender and age and is weighted with the provided population weights.

3+gen individuals without childhood migration experience are the group who least expects to leave France in future (cf. leftmost panel in Figure 1). In all groups except 1gen, individuals who migrated in childhood are substantially more likely to express intentions to migrate in future than those who did not experience migration as children.

1gen who only migrated as adults and 2gen who migrated as children are the only groups more likely to have return- than onward- migration intentions. For all the other groups, migration to a new country is a more palatable option than return migration. The high share of 2gen with childhood migration experience intending to migrate to their origin country is likely explained by the fact that most of them (77%) migrated, as children, to their origin country, hence potentially developing strong links to it.

Remarkably, although 3+gen individuals without childhood migration experience are the group who least expects to migrate in future, they are more likely to expect to migrate to a *new* country than 2gen and 1gen individuals with or without childhood migration experiences. Therefore, it seems that the low expectations to ever leave France of 3+gen without childhood migration

experiences are due to the fact that, by definition, this group is less likely to expect to migrate to an origin country compared to groups with a migration background and/or migration experiences. These findings seem to contradict the hypotheses that migration behaviour is intergenerationally transmitted or learned; rather, *attachment to the origin country* is intergenerationally transmitted (2gen) or maintained after migration (1gen with childhood migration experience).

In further developments of the article, we will control for confounding factors and investigate the mechanisms of the association between migration background, childhood migration experience and migration intentions: this will include socioeconomic background, transnational relations with the (parental) origin country (frequent visits, ownership of assets, parental residence), attachment to France and to the origin country, partners' origin and residence country.

## References

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