

Migration and the Employment Status of Married Women*

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Introduction

Most studies of interprovincial migration have treated migrants as either heads of households or singles. Their migration decision was hypothesized to be based on the relative benefits and costs to themselves. The impact of a family was usually viewed as simply an additional cost of moving; however, when the wife is a potential or actual participant in the labour force, there may be additional benefits and costs to the household. As part of the move, the wife may gain or lose employment or move in or out of the labour force. This paper focuses on these additional benefits and costs by examining changes in the employment characteristics of wives associated with their migration.

The importance of wives' employment is highlighted by the fact that migration is often a family phenomenon. Some indication of the relationship between migration and family status is given in Table 1. Over 55 per cent of adult migrants are members of husband-wife families.¹ The highest propensities to migrate were shown by non-family persons (those single, separated, divorced, or widowed with no children present); the lowest propensity was shown by husband-wife families, suggesting, among other things, that spousal labour market characteristics may be important migration determinants.

Previous Research

A number of studies in the United States have found significant spousal considerations in the migration decision. Generally, families in

* The authors are grateful to Jacques Ledent, Kao-Lee Liaw, and three referees for their helpful comments. The authors are listed alphabetically.

¹The 1981 Census considered persons living common-law as married, regardless of their legal marital status. They appear as husband-wife families in the census data.

which the wife works are less likely to migrate than families in which the wife does not work (Long 1974; Mincer 1978; Sandell 1977; but not always supported by Da Vanzo 1976). When a family with a working wife does move, the wife's labour market status is usually adversely affected (Long 1974; Sandell 1977; Mincer 1978; Lichter 1980; Spitze 1984). Also, the wife's characteristics have effects on the migration propensity of the family similar to those of the husband (Da Vanzo 1976; Sandell 1977; Mincer 1978; Lichter 1980).

Previous studies of all migrants have found important changes in employment characteristics associated with migration. Migrants usually have higher incidences of occupation and/or industry switching than comparable non-migrants (Schroeder 1976; Bartel 1979; Schlottmann and Herzog 1984). Pre-move and post-move unemployment has also been examined (Grant and Vanderkamp 1976; Herzog and Schlottmann 1984). Personal unemployment significantly increased the likelihood of migration for all occupations. For some workers, however, migration actually tended to increase the likelihood of unemployment. Unemployment may motivate migration, but migration may not alleviate unemployment.

Marr and Millerd (1985) have recently examined employment changes associated with interprovincial migration. They found that one-third of migrants changed labour force status, with more joining the labour force than leaving it. Those joining the labour force were more than twice as likely to be employed as unemployed. However, there was an overall increase in unemployment for migrants. Over 14 percent went from employed before moving to unemployed after moving, while 7.4 percent went from being unemployed to employed.

Marr and Millerd also found that occupation and/or industry switching takes place among a large number of migrants. Over 25 percent of migrants switched occupation as part of their move. Of these, about half changed occupation but not industry and half changed both occupation and industry. Another 11 percent of migrants switched industry but not occupation.

The above suggests that several dimensions of the employment status of married women who migrate should be examined. The first to be looked at in this paper is the success that migrant wives have in finding employment, compared to nonmigrants. Special attention will be paid to the effect of the presence of children. Migrant wives are also compared to other migrants, first with respect to changes in labour force status and, second, with respect to the determinants of being employed after migration.

Table 1
MIGRATION STATUS AND FAMILY STRUCTURE
(percent)

Migration Status	Family Status			
	Male Non-Family Person	Female Non-Family Person	Husband-Wife Family	Lone Parent Family
Nonmigrant	81.3	73.4	87.6	86.8
Intraprovincial Migrant	12.1	16.1	8.3	8.8
Interprovincial Migrant	6.6	10.5	4.0	4.4
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Percent of total adult migrants	18.4	21.3	55.4	4.8

Source: 1981 Census of Canada Public Use Sample, Household/Family File.

Notes: Chi square value significant at the .001 level.

Migration status is based on the places of residence in 1976 and 1981. Only those living in Canada in 1976 and 21 or over in 1981 are included.

Generally, family status is defined as of the time of the census (1981). However, husband-wife families here only include those married to each other for more than five years.

Nonmigrants are defined as those who did not move between census divisions or provinces. Intraprovincial migrants are those moving between census divisions but not between provinces.

In calculating the distribution of adult migrants by family status, each husband-wife family was counted as two adults; all others were counted as one adult.

Data Sources

Data for this study come, first, from the household/family file of the Public Use Sample prepared from the 1981 Census. This is a one percent sample of household units, drawn from data collected during the 1981 Census. Each record contains detailed demographic and economic data on the occupants of the household.

The second data source is Statistics Canada's Current Population Profile, a survey conducted as a supplement to the labour Force Survey of August 1982.² Information was collected on those who moved

²See Statistics Canada (1983) for other results from this survey.

interprovincially between June 1976 and June 1982. For the most recent interprovincial move, the person's labour force status and industry-occupation status one month prior to the move and one month after the move were recorded. These data provide the basis for studying shifts in status while moving. As well, a number of socioeconomic characteristics for the migrants are available for the date of the survey, June 1982.

Wives' Employment and Migration

Data from the 1981 Census can be used to examine the relationship between migration and employment status for wives. The census measured employment status in the week prior to enumeration, June 3, 1981. Mobility status was measured by comparing place of residence at enumeration with the place of residence five years previous, June 1, 1976. Thus the time lag between migration and the measurement of employment status may be up to five years. The migrants discussed here are those moving between census divisions (but within provinces) and those moving between provinces.

On the basis of employment status, migration is more beneficial to husbands than wives. In 1981, 91.9 percent of nonmigrant husbands were employed, but 93.2 percent of migrant husbands were employed. For wives, however, employment rates were lower as a result of migration; 55.7 percent of nonmigrant wives were employed, but only 49.2 percent of migrant wives were employed. Despite the decline in the percent of wives working, there was virtually no difference in the proportion of families with neither husband nor wife employed. For nonmigrant families, 5.0 percent had neither employed; for migrant families, 5.1 percent had neither employed.

Another view of the employment effects of migration is provided by an analysis of the determinants of employment, including migration. Since being employed is a dichotomous variable, probit analysis is appropriate. The probability of being employed is hypothesized to be a function of the usual socioeconomic characteristics of an individual and the individual's migration status.³

The effect of migration is shown in Table 2. Three levels of migration for four groups are presented. The probit coefficients indicate the effect of a one-unit change in the migration independent variable on the probit index, which is a linear representation of the variables included in the analysis. A positive sign indicates that migration

³The explanatory variables included in the analysis are age, number of children (except for other females and other males), employment status of spouse (except for other females and other males), province of residence, education, occupation, and migration status.

increases the probability of employment; a negative sign, a lower probability of employment.

When other determinants of employment are controlled for, wives are the only group with a statistically significant effect of migration on employment. The effect of interprovincial migration for wives is to significantly lower their probability of employment. Wives migrating shorter distances than between provinces have their probability of employment negatively affected, but not at a statistically significant level. The greater the migration distance the more adverse the employment effect. The employment probability of husbands, other females, and other males is not significantly affected by migration. Both positive and negative signs are found for these groups, but no statistically significant coefficients.

Table 2
THE EFFECTS OF MIGRATION ON THE
PROBABILITY OF EMPLOYMENT
(probit coefficients)

	Wives	Husbands	Other Females	Other Males
Between census subdivisions only	.014 (.119)	-.082 (.506)	-.003 (.015)	.026 (.125)
Between census divisions but not between provinces	-.121 (1.308)	.073 (.512)	-.180 (1.331)	-.132 (.862)
Between provinces	-.228* (1.806)	-.102 (.512)	-.117 (.586)	-.091 (.486)

Notes: T ratios in parentheses.

* indicates significance at the .05 level.

For each probit analysis the appropriate group was selected from the 1981 Census Public Use Sample Household/Family file and a 10 percent random sample drawn from the group. Those between 21 and 64 employed, unemployed, or with previous work experience were included. For wives and husbands, only those in husband-wife families, married to each other for more than five years, were included. Other females are non-family females and single parent females. Other males are non-family males and single parent males.

Since the responsibility of child-rearing is a major reason why the labour market performance of wives is different than that of husbands, the combined effect of migration and the presence of children was examined. The findings are that the presence of children is a negative determinant of employment, which is magnified when the wife migrates. Compared to nonmigrants, there is a small decrease in the percent employed for migrants without young children but a consider-

able decrease in employment for migrants with young children. The effect is most pronounced if the children are less than six years old. The combined effect of migration and the presence of young children is to reduce the proportion of employed wives by almost one-third.

It is true that migrants tend to be younger than the overall population and thus are more likely to have young children; 44.6 percent of those families moving between census divisions or provinces had children less than six years of age, compared to 25.4 percent of those families not moving or moving only between census subdivisions. However, the employment-reducing effects of the presence of young children are magnified by migration. It may be that migration moves families with young children away from support systems, such as their extended family, forcing more migrant wives to remain at home with their children.

Further information on the labour force status of migrating wives is available from the Labour Force Survey data of June 1982. The Survey indicates that about 374,000 wives migrated interprovincially between 1976 and 1982. In the month before they moved, 42.1 percent were employed, 6.1 percent were unemployed, and 51.9 percent were not in the labour force. The interprovincial move dramatically affected the labour market status of many of these spouses; one month after they moved, only 25.1 percent were employed, 20.7 percent were unemployed, and 54.2 percent were not in the labour force. Seventeen percent of wives went from working before migration to not working after migration. This was a much higher adverse change than that of any other group; 6.6 percent of husbands and 1.3 percent of single males went from working before moving to not working after. Single females, in contrast, gained employment; 8.4 percent more were working after moving than before moving.

By the time that the survey was taken in 1982, the labour market situation of wives had improved. In June 1982, 42.9 percent were employed, 9.5 percent were unemployed, and 47.6 percent were not in the labour force. The dramatic rise in the unemployment rate that is associated with interprovincial migration appears to moderate some time after the move has taken place.

In order to make comparisons with other migrants, Table 3 presents figures on the percent of migrants who switched labour market status for four different gender and marital status groups. Among the wives, 40.9 percent changed their labour force status as part of the move, higher than husbands but lower than single males or single females.

The middle part of Table 3 allocates the switchers by type of switch. The most striking differences, when wives are compared to other groups, are the high proportion of wives moving from employed

to not in the labour force, the low proportion moving from unemployed to employed, and the low proportion moving from not in the labour force to employed. From the standpoint of finding employment, migration is absolutely and relatively difficult for wives. Husbands, single females, and single males all do better than wives.

Table 3
INTERPROVINCIAL MIGRATION AND CHANGES IN LABOUR FORCE STATUS
(percent)

	Wives	Husbands	Single Females	Single Males
Did not switch labour force status	59.1	64.3	50.9	54.3
Employed to unemployed	13.1	14.2	10.4	16.5
Employed to not in the labour force	12.9	4.8	4.8	4.6
Unemployed to employed	2.8	6.4	6.8	8.2
Unemployed to not in the labour force	0.8	0.3	1.0	0.5
Not in the labour force to employed	6.2	6.0	16.8	11.6
Not in labour force to unemployed	5.1	3.9	9.3	4.4
Total changing labour force status	40.9	35.7	49.1	45.7
Numbers	374,419	378,875	86,254	107,690

Source: Labour Force Survey, June 1982

Notes: The husbands, single females and single males may be regarded as independent decision makers, as they are not attending school full time, are less than 65 years of age, and are either single or classified as the head of a family.

Those whose labour force status was not known are omitted.

However, some wives did better than others in finding employment. Those less than 34 years of age and those moving to Alberta were the most likely to be employed immediately after migration. Comparing industries, those employed after moving were more likely to be in a service industry and less likely to be in manufacturing and construction than those unemployed. By occupation, those in managerial and professional occupations were the most likely to be employed.

Finding a job after moving also appears to have significant long-term labour market implications. Employment data for the time of the

survey, June 1982, indicated that spouses who were unemployed just after moving had a greater long-term propensity to be unemployed or not in the labour force than those who were employed one month after moving.

Changes in industry and occupation have been found to be an important component of the migration process.⁴ This is confirmed here, where 33.0 percent of migrant wives switched occupation and/or industry. Of this percentage, 8.4 percent changed industry only, 14.7 percent changed occupation only, and 10.0 percent changed both. Husbands and single males were both more likely to switch industry and/or occupation, while single females were slightly less likely to switch.

Determinants of the Probability of Being Employed After Migration

These findings lead to an examination of the determinants of finding employment after migration, with particular emphasis on the role of occupation and industry switching. The dependent variable is the labour force status one month after moving, taking the value one if the migrant is employed and zero if unemployed. With a binary dependent variable, the probit model is used as the estimation technique. The regression coefficients can be interpreted as indicating the effect on the probability of being employed after moving relative to one of the characteristics of the migrants. Those who move and are not in the labour force after moving are excluded from this analysis.

Table 4 describes the variables hypothesized to determine the probability of being employed after migration. All variables, other than the number of moves, are entered as binary (0, 1) variables and indicate the effect on post-move employment of a migrant having the characteristic, compared to migrants in the reference group.

The hypothesized effects of the personal, educational, industry of employment, and occupational characteristics are based on the usual incidences of unemployment that can be related to job search theory or human capital-productivity improvement relationships. Detailed discussions of the effects of labour force status before moving, region, number of moves, language, education, and part-time work may be found in Marr and Millerd (1985).

Earlier in this paper it was shown that substantial industry, and occupation shifting accompanied the migrant's most recent move. Changing industry and/or occupation likely involves a loss of information, because the migrant probably knows more about his or her own

⁴The post-move industry and occupation reported are for the first job after moving, thus eliminating the post-move unemployed simply reporting their previous industry and occupation.

Table 4
HYPOTHESIZED EFFECTS OF VARIABLES ON EMPLOYMENT

Variable	Hypothesized Effect on Employment after Migration Compared to Reference Group
Personal Characteristics:	
Male gender	Increase
Female gender = Reference Group	
Married	Increase
Single	Decrease
Divorced, widowed, separated = Reference Group	
Age 15-19	Increased employment for older age groups
Age 20-24	
Age 45-64	
Age 25-44 = Reference Group	
Education:	
Diploma or certificate	Increased employment with higher educational attainment
University degree	
No completed post-secondary education = Reference Group	
Industry of employment after migration:	
Primary	Decrease
Service	Increase
Other = Reference Group	
Occupation after moving:	
Managerial, professional, teaching or medical	Increase
Primary industry, related	Decrease
Mining, processing, construction, or transport	Decrease
Clerical, sales, service = Reference Group	
Labour force status before moving:	
Employed	Increase
Unemployed	Decrease
Not in labour force = Reference Group	
Receiving province:	
Atlantic region	Decrease
Quebec	No effect
Ontario	Increase
Manitoba or Saskatchewan	Increase
Alberta	Increase
British Columbia = Reference Group	
Number of moves since June 1, 1976:	Decrease
Languages spoken:	
Neither English nor French	Decrease
French only	Decrease
Both English and French	Increase
English only = Reference Group	
Major educational study area:	
Business or commerce	Increase
Engineering or applied science	Increase
Trade program	Increase
Other = Reference Group	
Worked part-time only prior to move:	Increase
Worked full-time or not in labour force = Reference Group	

industry and occupation than the one into which he or she switches; in some cases this delays finding suitable employment and lowers the probability of being employed just after moving. It is likely that the migrant would try to find a job in his or her original industry or occupation first, and switching would only occur if this proved impossible. This would be captured in the data by unemployment being shown just after moving; in other words, search costs rise in the destination labour market.

It can also be argued that search costs will be higher and information loss will be greater if the migrant switches occupation than if he or she switches industry. A carpenter, for example, can work in several industries using essentially the same skills, and the information loss and cost increase would be relatively low; but to switch from being a carpenter to being a manager or a sales person would have both more information loss about the labour market and higher search costs in this market. Therefore, it is hypothesized that the probability of being employed one month after moving is lower for migrants who switch their occupation than for those who change only their industry.

Table 5 provides the signs and significance of the probit coefficients. The dependent variable takes the value one if the migrant was employed one month after moving and zero if the migrant was unemployed. The coefficients indicate the effect of a one-unit change in one of the independent variables on the probit index. A positive (negative) sign indicates that the particular characteristic increases (decreases) the probability that the migrant will be employed one month after moving when compared with the reference group.

Five sets of results are given in Table 5; each represents a different group of interprovincial migrants with its own socioeconomic characteristics. Column 3, independent decision makers, is a modified version of the results that Marr and Millerd (1985) present. This column provides the benchmark case against which the other groups may be compared. The main results can be quickly summarized. Males have a higher probability of being employed after moving than do females. Both married and single migrants have a higher probability of being employed than migrants who are divorced, widowed, or separated, with the married migrants having a higher probability than single migrants. Those in primary and service industries after moving have a higher probability of being employed one month after moving than do those in manufacturing-construction industries. Only those in managerial-professional occupations have a significantly higher probability of being employed compared to all other migrants' occupations. Being either employed or unemployed increases the probability of being employed just after moving, with the employed having a higher prob-

ability than the unemployed compared to those who were not in the labour force before moving. Migrants to the Atlantic region have a lower probability of being employed and those to the Prairies a higher probability, compared to those who moved to British Columbia. Speaking only French significantly reduced the probability of being employed one month after moving. Migrants with some education in business-commerce or engineering have a greater probability of being employed. The industry-occupation switching variables are all significant with negative signs; switching reduces the probability of being employed one month after moving, as was hypothesized above.

The determinants of the probability of employment for migrant wives are generally similar to those of other groups, but there are some important differences. Education is a significant positive determinant for wives, while for most other groups it is a negative determinant, although rarely significant. Wives who held a university degree were more likely to be employed after migration than those with no completed post-secondary education. Wives' occupation after moving did not significantly improve their chances of employment, a situation not found in any other group; in all other groups a managerial or professional occupation significantly improved employment chances. Other determinants that do not affect wives' employment but do affect employment for other groups are the number of moves since 1976, the languages spoken, and the educational area.

The labour force status before moving was a significant employment determinant for wives and other groups. A wife employed before moving was more likely to be employed after moving than one not in the labour force before moving. Unemployment before moving, for wives, was positively, but not significantly, related to employment after moving. As with other groups, Alberta was the destination province with the highest probability of employment.

Industry- and occupation-switching adversely affected employment for wives, and most other groups. Switching industry and switching industry and occupation were highly significant negative determinants, while occupation-switching by itself was not statistically significant. These results are not those hypothesized. Search costs and information loss were expected to be higher for occupation switchers than for industry switchers. In any case there is a definite additional cost associated with switching, that being a higher probability of unemployment.

Table 5
DETERMINANTS OF THE PROBABILITY OF MIGRANT EMPLOYMENT

	Wives	Husbands	Independent Decision Makers	Single Females	Single Males
Personal characteristics:					
Male gender			+		
Married			+		
Single			+		
Age 15-19	+	+	+	+	+
Age 20-24	+	-	-	+	-
Age 45-64	-	-	-	+	+
Education:					
Diploma or certificate	+	-	-	-*	-
University degree	+	-	-	-	+
Industry after moving:					
Primary	+++	+++	+	-	+
Service	+++	+++	+	-	+
Occupation after moving:					
Managerial- Professional	-	+++	+++	+++	+++
Primary-related	-	-*	-	-	+
Processing- Transport	-	-	+	-*	+++
Labour force status before moving:					
Employed	+++	+++	+++	+++	+
Unemployed	+	+++	+	+	-
Receiving province:					
Atlantic Region	-	-*	-**	-	+
Quebec	+	+	+	+	+
Ontario	+	+	+	+	+
Manitoba or Saskatchewan	+	+	+++	+++	+
Alberta	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++
Number of moves since June 1, 1976:	+	-**	-	+++	-
Languages spoken:					
Neither English nor French	+	+	+	+	+
French only	-	-**	-**	-	-
Both English and French	+	+	+	-	-

Educational area:					
Business or commerce	-	+	+	+++	+
Engineering	-	+	+		+
Trade Program	+	-	-	+	+++
Worked part-time prior to move					
	+	+	-	-*	-
Switching:					
Industry only	-**	-**	-**	-	-**
Occupation only	-	-**	-**	+	-
Industry and occupation	-**	-**	-**	-*	-**
Constant:	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++
N	583	1,385	2,173	227	335

Notes: Only the signs and levels of significance of the coefficients are shown to simplify the presentation.

T ratios in parentheses.

* significant at the .10 level.

** significant at the .05 level.

Only those with an industry and occupation stated both before and after the move are included in the analysis.

Only those not attending school full-time and less than 65 years of age are included. The independent decision-makers are all heads of families and single persons. In husband-wife families the husband is classified as the head; single parent families have a husband or wife as head.

For computational reasons the unweighted survey data are used in these estimations.

Summary

This paper has examined the relationship between migration and employment for a group little considered in migration studies, married women. With most migrants moving as husband-wife families and the increasing labour force participation rate of women, married women are an important component of spatial changes in the labour force.

The results presented here suggest that the labour market experience of migrant wives, at least in the short term, is difficult. Despite having an employment rate of 42.1 percent in the month before they moved, the employment rate fell to 25.1 percent in the month after migration. There is also an indication that wives in families with young children have the least chance of being employed after migration. After some time at their destination, migrant wives do enjoy an improvement in their employment rate.

The determinants of migrant wives' employment immediately after migration were examined and compared with other migrant groups. The wives most likely to be employed were those with a university degree, those in primary or service industries, those employed before moving, those moving to Alberta, and those who did not switch industry alone or both industry and occupation.

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