

## A NOTE ON MIGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT

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*Abstract*—This paper examines the nature of the relation between migration and employment. A preliminary investigation confirms a previous observation that the employment rate of migrants is generally lower than that of non-migrants. A further analysis, however, suggests that this does not mean that migration has no effect on employment; in fact, the two appear to be strongly related. Migration enables some unemployed and initially disadvantaged persons to improve their employment status, making it more nearly comparable, though not equal, to that of the general population.

Many migration analysts have observed that migration and employment status are related. Thus, according to Bogue (1969, p. 794), "Migrants were found to have among their ranks a lower percentage of unemployed and a higher percentage of employed than was found among either the origin or destination populations of the same age." Seben (1964) and Lansing and Mueller (1967) found that unemployed persons are much more likely to migrate than are employed persons and that, among the unemployed, those who migrate are less likely to remain jobless than are their counterparts who stay behind. In the present study, the relationship between migration and employment status is examined using a unique set of data that has become available for the first time in this country as a result of retrospective questions asked in the 1970 census on state of residence and employment status in 1965.

### THE NATURE OF THE DATA

The data for this study are derived from a one-in-10,000 sample of the 1970 census. From 5 percent of the population, information was collected on their economic activities during both 1970 and, five years earlier, in 1965. In addition, a question

was asked about the place of residence in 1965. Together, these data make it possible to identify the migration and employment statuses of every individual in the sample at the beginning and end of the five-year period. Of the total of 20,196 persons in the one-in-10,000 sample, this analysis includes only males aged 20 through 69. Females were excluded because of their relatively low rate of participation in the labor force.

For our purposes, a migrant is defined as a person whose state of residence in 1970 was different from that in 1965. In other words, this study is limited to inter-state migrants. All persons who were reported working at a job or in the armed forces in 1965 were classified as employed; those who did not have a job were classified as nonemployed. For the 1970 data, the employed population includes those who were at work, holding jobs but not at work, and those in the armed forces, whereas unemployed persons and those not in the labor force were defined as nonemployed (Bogue, 1969, p. 216). The percent employed, defined as the ratio of the employed population to the total population, was computed separately for each of ten age groups of migrants and non-migrants in 1965 and, again, in 1970.

TABLE 1.—Percent Employed, by Migration Status and Age, U.S. Males: 1965 and 1970

Age in 1970	Migrants		Nonmigrants	
	1965	1970	1965	1970
20-24	48.3	66.7	67.3	74.0
25-29	85.3	87.1	89.3	90.3
30-34	83.9	90.1	93.5	94.3
35-39	87.6	92.1	93.8	92.9
40-44	77.6	89.6	92.8	93.8
45-49	70.9	87.3	92.8	91.2
50-54	81.6	84.2	92.6	88.3
55-59	60.0	56.0	91.3	87.2
60-64	61.1	64.4	87.0	68.6
65-69	62.5	18.7	69.1	34.7
Total	71.7	82.4	85.3	83.8

Source: Tabulations from one-in-10,000 public use sample.

#### DIFFERENCES IN ACTIVITY RATES.

Table 1 presents the age-specific percent employed for migrants and nonmigrants. As shown, migrants in general have a slightly lower percentage employed: overall, 82 percent of migrants were employed, compared with 84 percent for nonmigrants. Thus, the ratio of the former to the latter is .98. This ratio shows a tendency to decrease as men get older, dropping significantly below 1 among men aged 65 and over. The 1970 data, therefore, show that migrants are no more likely to be employed than nonmigrants at the end of the migration interval (cf. Miller, 1967).

The new data allow one to examine the

employment status in 1965 of persons who migrated between 1965 and 1970. When the percentages are calculated controlling for age, the 1965 percentages of prospective migrants were lower than those of nonmigrants at every age (see Table 1). The overall percent employed for prospective migrants is 71 percent, compared with 85 percent for nonmigrants. The ratio of the two figures is .84. Figure 1 shows that the ratio

$$\frac{\text{percent employed among migrants}}{\text{percent employed among nonmigrants}}$$

remained higher for virtually all age groups at the end of the migration interval (1970) than at the beginning (1965). In other words, the employment differentials

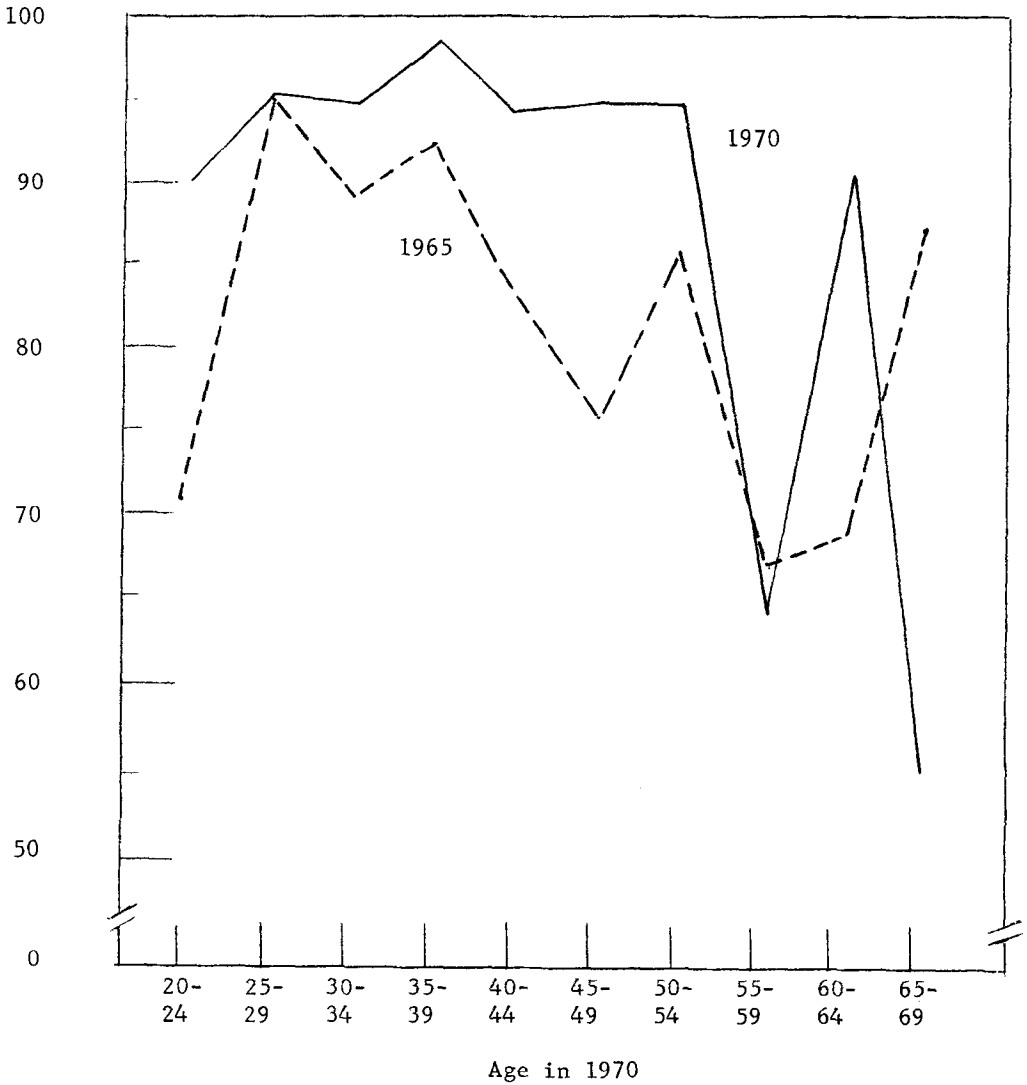


FIGURE 1.—Ratio of Employment Rates for Migrants and Nonmigrants, U.S. Males: 1965 and 1970

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between migrants and nonmigrants were reduced in the period.

The evidence appears to show that migration has an important effect on employment. It increases employment among migrants, so that their percent employed approaches that of the general population. In other words, migration has the important social function of bridging the employment gaps between different groups in a population.

MIGRATION AND NET EMPLOYMENT GAINS

We shall now examine the relationship between migration and employment more closely by focusing attention on the rate of net gain (or loss) in percents employed between 1965 and 1970, controlling for age. To do this, we form transition matrices showing changes in employment status between 1965 and 1970. For all ages combined, we have the following matrix:

Employment Status in 1965	Employment Status in 1970		
	Employed	Nonemployed	Total
Employed	4,013	456	4,469
Nonemployed	472	426	898
Total	4,485	882	5,367

Between 1965 and 1970, of the total 5,367 males, 472 entered the employment state from a nonemployed state, and 456 changed states in the opposite direction. Thus, the net gain in employment for this group was  $472 - 456 = 16$ . The rate of net gain is computed by dividing this figure by the average size of the employed group during the period 1965 to 1970. The average size in this case is  $(4,485 + 4,469)/2 = 4,477$ ; therefore, the rate of net gain in employment for the total sample is .003, or .3 percent, which is obviously not very high. This rate varies markedly, however, by migration status and age.

Age-specific rates of net gain (or loss) in employment, as shown in Table 2, suggest that the migrants' gains are overwhelmingly greater than those of nonmigrants. Nonmigrants experienced a total net loss (-1.7 percent), whereas the corresponding figure for migrants was a total net gain (13.8 percent).

The age-patterns of differences in rates of net gain (or loss) in employment for migrants and nonmigrants are markedly dissimilar. Other things being equal, the rate of net gain in employment over a five-year period for any population should decrease as age increases, because the number of dropouts more than offsets new entrants. This pattern was precisely followed by the nonmigrants, as can be seen from Table 2. The corresponding pattern for migrants, however, was one of increase—especially between the ages of 40 and 49, with the peak occurring in the group aged 45 to 49—followed by a decline.

Thus, rates of net gain in employment differ greatly between migrants and nonmigrants as age increases up to 50. For

those below age 50, then, migration and gain in employment are related, and the effect of migration (see the last column of Table 2) more or less steadily increases between ages 25 and 50, after which the pattern becomes erratic. The relatively large effect on employment from migration for those aged 60 to 64 years is probably due to the fact that migration enabled many retired persons to take secondary jobs.

We now introduce race into the analysis. The change in employment status ( $Y_w$  and  $Y_b$ , for whites and blacks, respectively) is measured as follows: 0 for no change, 1 for gain, and -1 for loss. Migration status ( $\alpha$ ) is treated as a dummy variable: 1 for migrant and 0 for nonmigrant. Age ( $X$ ) is introduced as a control variable. The following predicting equations were obtained by applying the multiple regression analysis separately for whites and blacks:

$$Y_w = 0.1059 + 0.0622\alpha - 0.0036X;$$

(0.0169) (0.005)

$$Y_b = 0.1000 + 0.1159\alpha - 0.0027X.$$

(0.0541) (0.0011)

The net gain in employment due to migration is clearly much greater among blacks than whites (compare the coefficients of  $\alpha$ ).

#### MIGRATION AND TOTAL PERCENT EMPLOYED

If migration and gain in employment are related, the question arises: How much have the gains in employment through migration cut the overall nonemployment rate? Two answers to this ques-

TABLE 2.—Gain (Loss) in Percent Employed During the Period 1965–1970, by Age and Migration Status, U.S. Males

Age in 1970	Migrants (1)	Nonmigrants (2)	Difference (1)–(2)
20–24	45.4	40.8	4.6
25–29	2.1	1.1	1.0
30–34	8.1	0.9	7.2
35–39	5.1	-0.9	6.0
40–44	14.2	1.1	13.1
45–49	20.7	-1.7	22.4
50–54	3.2	-4.7	7.9
55–59	-6.9	-4.6	-2.3
60–64	12.7	-23.5	36.2
65–69	-97.7	-66.2	-31.5
Total	13.8	-1.7	15.5

Sources: Tabulations from one-in-10,000 public use sample.

tion are equally plausible. On the one hand, it can be argued that, since many migrants got jobs, the total employment rate should have risen as a consequence of migration, especially among persons just entering the labor market and those looking for post-retirement employment. When someone cannot find suitable employment at his present location, migration gives him the opportunity of an appropriate job elsewhere; thus, migration could result in a larger number of persons at work. On the other hand, since migrants constitute only a small proportion of the population, the effect of migration on the total percent employed would not, generally, be significant.

In order to assess the effect of migration on total gain in employment, the following procedure was employed. By direct

standardization, changes in the age-specific percent employed among migrants from 1965 to 1970 were made equal to the corresponding changes among nonmigrants. The percent of migrants employed in 1970 can, thus, be estimated by multiplying their percentage employed in 1965 by the ratio of the percent of nonmigrants employed in 1965 to that of nonmigrants employed in 1970. The estimated percents employed, when applied to migrants in 1970, give the expected number of migrants who are employed, which, when added to the observed nonmigrants who are employed, yields the expected total number of males employed in 1970. The difference between the expected and observed figures provides an estimate of the effect of migration on gain in employment.

TABLE 3.—Expected and Actual Total Percent Employed, by Age: 1970

Age in 1970	Expected Percent of Migrants Employed	Expected Employed Migrants	Employed Non-Migrants	Expected Employed Persons	Expected Percent Employed	Actual Percent Employed	Difference
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)=(3)+(4)	(6)	(7)	(8)=(7)-(6)
20-24	53.1	107	401	508	68.2	72.0	-3.8
25-29	86.2	141	454	595	89.3	89.5	-0.2
30-34	84.7	84	433	517	92.7	93.7	-1.0
35-39	86.7	77	420	497	91.9	92.8	-0.9
40-44	78.4	53	441	494	92.0	93.2	-1.2
45-49	69.7	38	510	548	89.2	90.9	-1.7
50-54	77.8	30	452	482	87.6	88.0	-0.4
55-59	57.3	14	380	394	85.5	85.5	0.0
60-64	48.1	17	243	260	66.7	68.7	-2.0
65-69	31.4	5	101	106	34.5	33.9	0.6
Total	70.4	566	3,835	4,401	82.0	83.6	-1.6

From the calculations based on this procedure, shown in Table 3, one can conclude that, without interstate migration, the national rate of employment would have dropped 1.6 percentage points, from 83.6 to 82.0 percent. The decline would have been most severe in the age groups 20-24 and 60-64, with a loss of almost 4 percent among young adults and 2 percent among the retired. This indicates that, for persons in an economically insecure age bracket, success in getting jobs depends partly on geographic movement.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Two aspects of this study merit emphasis. First, though migrants' rate of employment is indeed less than that of non-migrants, this does not mean that migration has no effect on gain in economic activity. The percent of migrants employed may be lower than that of non-migrants simply because, at the place of origin, migrants typically have much lower employment levels than non-

migrants. Second, spatial mobility tends to help disadvantaged groups more than the rest of the population in getting employment.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank William Petersen, Peter Morrison, Jennifer Williams, and two anonymous reviewers for *Demography* for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. The research reported here was supported by a grant from the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, HD-07094-01.

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