# The Doubly Selected: Return Migration in Australia

Paper prepared for the XXVI IUSSP International Population Conference
27 September - 2 October 2009, Marrakech, Morocco
Session 176 - The root causes of internal migration: Are they primarily economic?

**Angélique Parr and Martin Bell**
Queensland Centre for Population Research, School of Geography, Planning and Architecture, The University of Queensland, St Lucia, Queensland 4072, Australia. Email: a.parr@.uq.edu.au; martin.bell@uq.edu.au

## Acknowledgments
The research reported in this paper is supported by Discovery Grant DP0210455 from the Australian Research Council.

## 1. Introduction

It has been repeatedly shown that return migrants are a distinct group among an already selective population of internal migrants, particularly in terms of age. While researchers have also explored its selectivity in terms of other socio-demographic characteristics, the results have often been contradictory or inconclusive. So there is still no definitive set of characteristics to encapsulate return movers (Rogers & Belanger 1990). Further, most of this work is based on lifetime measures of return migration, with little evidence of migrant selectivity employing fixed-interval measures.

This paper forms part of a larger project that aims to extend our knowledge of return migration. It builds on previously documented aspects of return migration in Australia (Bell 1995, 1996; Bell & Hugo 2000; Newbold & Bell 2001), employing fixed-interval measures of return. The opportunity to undertake this work in a different geographic setting and using an alternative measure of return movement will broaden our understanding of return migration. This is also the first time that an in-depth analysis has been made of return migration differentials in Australia. The present paper seeks to extend earlier analyses by interrogating Census microdata to determine what sets return migrants apart from other types of internal migrants.

The plan of the paper is as follows. Section Two summarises the current state of knowledge on the selectivity of return migration, before setting out the theoretical framework for this paper in Section Three. The data and analytic methods to be used are then set out in Section Four. The next three sections report the results. Section Five contains a simple tabular analysis of selected Census variables, leading into a more complex examination of return migrant selectivity using regression modelling in Section Six. This is followed by a temporal analysis of migrant selectivity in Section Seven. The paper concludes with a summary of findings in the context of our explanatory framework and outlines pathways for further research.

## 2. Previous findings on selectivity of return migration

Beginning with Eldridge's (1965) study of different migrant groups in the United States using data from the 1940 and 1960 Censuses it has been shown that as with internal migration in general, return migration is most prevalent among young adults but its profile is a little older than other migration types (Da Vanzo 1983; Lee 1974; Long 1988; Newbold & Bell 2001). This is reasonable given that a primary move has to be made at a younger age, before a return can follow (Eldridge 1965).

A review of research on other socio-economic characteristics of return migrants finds the results to be inconclusive or contradictory. Most of this work in North America has been set within the framework of "returns as failure" and has focussed largely on returnees within the working age groups. What emerges is that return migrants are likely to be less educated (Da Vanzo 1976, 1983; Hou & Beaujot 1994; Morrison & Da Vanzo 1986; Newbold 2001; Newbold & Liaw 1995; Rosenbaum 1993), unemployed (Morrison & Da Vanzo 1986) and on lower incomes (Grant & Vanderkamp 1986) than other repeat migrants. Regarding the propensity to return among different occupation groups of employed migrants, Rosenbaum (1993) found that managerial groups are less likely to return, while Grant and Vanderkamp (Grant & Vanderkamp 1986) noted a greater likelihood of return movement for transportation workers.

Basic demographic characteristics have received less attention and again the findings are inconsistent. In terms of the sex profile of return migration some studies have found no overall sex bias (Rosenbaum 1988, 1993), although Lee (1974) noted major differences at selected ages, especially for younger adults (aged 15-30 years). Other work has suggested that males were more likely to make a return move than females (Eldridge 1965; Grant & Vanderkamp 1986; Hou & Beaujot 1994; Lee 1974) and this sex imbalance has been attributed to large numbers of young men returning home from military service. The effect of marital status on the propensity to return has not been well established (Rosenbaum 1993), although it is suggested that people who are separated, widowed or divorced have a greater chance of making a return move (Grant & Vanderkamp 1986; Hou & Beaujot 1994; Newbold & Liaw 1995).

As with the North American research considerable attention has been paid to the age profiles of return migration in Australia. All studies concur with North American work that returns are most prevalent among younger adults, but a notable difference to the North American research is an increase in returns at older ages (Bell 1994, 1996; Parr et al. 2007; Parr, Bell & Wilson 2006). This is the case for both of the two distinctive groups of return migrants – those who return to the same dwelling and those returning to live in another dwelling in a former region of residence (Bell 1995; Bell & Hugo 2000). People returning to a previous dwelling are more likely to be owner occupiers, younger and if working, employed in less skilled occupations. There are also a significant number of older home owners (Newbold & Bell 2001). The second group, who have returned to a different dwelling in a previous area of residence, is similar to returnees identified in earlier North American work and notionally support the "returns as failure" hypothesis. These returnees tend to be slightly older, less educated, less skilled or unemployed. They are also more likely to be living in rental accommodation after the return move.

At least two reasons can be found for the contradictory findings on the selectivity of return migrants apparent across the international literature. First, there are critical differences in the nature of the data sets that have been used. Much of the work has been based on lifetime measures of return migration which are prejudiced by differences in the points at which the data are measured: migrant characteristics are measured at the end of the interval, whereas the return move itself may have taken place much earlier (Newbold & Bell 2001). Fixed interval data are still subject to this problem but the lag is much shorter. Longitudinal surveys are a third data source used to explore migrant selectivity. Such surveys are the ideal data source, tracking successive moves and linking them to those demographic characteristics that either influence or are altered by a change of residence. However few examples exist and they have been rarely used to investigate the selectivity of return migration

A second reason for the contradictory findings is that the prevailing explanatory framework has emphasised employment-related migration in the context of the "returns

as failure" hypothesis. This may be relevant for select labour force groups, but it does not readily explain returns made by the rest of the population. A wider view of the underlying motivations for return migration can only be gained by observing the character of all return migrants and such an approach has generally been the case with Australian research.

A fully encompassing approach calls for the consideration of a suite of reasons for return migration. While some moves have an economic basis, other reasons could also prompt a return. Further, some returns are likely to have been pre-planned while others probably represent a response to an unforseen change of circumstances as suggested by the "returns as failure" theory. Such circumstances may happen to the migrant at their new location or may relate to events at their first place of residence. The need for a broader perspective on return migration was advocated in a Canadian study of trans-Atlantic returns which showed the predominance of non-economic reasons for a return move and suggested that the economic models used by many migration researchers were of "… limited benefit in explaining return migration" (Gmelch 1983, p. 52). While work from the US has estimated that about half of *all* moves were for non-economic reasons (Long 1988), an Australian migration survey conducted in the late 1980s indicated that a significant number of moves were for factors other than financial reasons or employment (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1988). It also appears that the reasons for moving related to the geographic scale of the move and the age of the migrant. On the other hand a more recent New Zealand study revealed that the location choice of a new place of residence was predominantly motivated by social and environmental reasons (Statistics New Zealand 2007, 2008).

## 3. A framework to explain selectivity of return migration

A theoretical framework that encompasses multiple explanations for return migration is provided by the life course perspective that links migration to significant events that occur throughout people's lives (Longino 1979; Longino & Serow 1992; Newbold & Bell 2001). This approach is now gaining acceptance as a framework for interpretation of population mobility generally and has particular relevance for return migration. As recognised by Hooimeijer and van der Knaap (1994), migration represents a response to transitions in one or more of a number of overlapping domains of the life course – in health, in family formation, in residence, in work and in leisure – all of which have particular locational characteristics. Migration is an attempt to regain spatial equilibrium across these domains (Hooimeijer & van der Knapp 1994, p. 180).

Building on these ideas, the following table sets out a range of events that might prompt a return move (Table 1). These reasons may not be the same as those that motivated the initial move in a sequence. Explanations are grouped into four dimensions – economic, education-related, family-oriented and retirement-related, which together encapsulate the various life course domains identified by Hooimeijer and van der Knaap (1994, p. 180). Within each of these four dimensions, further differentiation has also been made between those people making a planned versus an unplanned return. Planned moves are those where the decision to return pre-empted the initial move. Unplanned moves are those where a decision to return is made after the initial move.

**Table 1: Explanations for different types of return moves**

| Dimension | Unplanned return | Planned return |
|---|---|---|
| Economic | • Redundancy or business closure<br>• No jobs at 'new' place of residence | • End of job transfer<br>• Take on a new job at former place of residence |
| | • Housing and living costs | |
| Education | • Drop out of course | • Completion of education<br>• Return for children's education |
| Family-oriented | • Relationship dissolution<br>• Provide care & support for infirm relatives<br>• Death of spouse | • Return home after 'gap year' travel |
| Ageing | • Retirement move unsatisfactory<br>• Need for greater assistance with onset of age-related disability | • Completion of post-retirement travel<br>• Return home after 'speculative' move |

*Economic returns*

For the first dimension, economic motives for return, a distinction is made between people whose return is linked to contractual employment and those who move for speculative employment reasons. Contractual migrants move when employment has already been organised while speculative migrants move in the hope of finding a job (Flowerdew 1992). Flowerdew (1992, p. 135) notes that while most research has assumed employment-related migration to be speculative, it is in fact largely contractual. Each type of employment-related migration has a different outcome regarding a future return move. Speculative migrants may make an unplanned return following a failure to find employment at a new location, after only finding short-term or casual employment or after being made redundant. On the other hand people who planned to move under a contractual deployment for 2-3 years may return to either take up another role with their existing employer or to take up a new job. Large private and government organisations have been shown to have a significant impact on the nature of job transfers in Australia. Examples of professions or employment sectors where job transfers are common include large corporations who transfer staff in professional and paraprofessional occupations between head office and regional locations as part of a career progression (Bell & Maher 1995; McKay & Whitelaw 1977). Public sector employees such as military personnel, police, teachers and medical professionals are routinely relocated for strategic reasons or to temporarily fill staffing shortfalls. As an example McKay and Whitelaw (1977, p. 40) noted an expectation that newly trained teachers would spend some time teaching in remote areas. On balance therefore it would be expected that employment-related returns are largely planned, at least among those segments of the labour force that operate in either a national or state-wide labour market involving multi-locational enterprises. On the other hand, returns are less likely to be pre-planned among those involved in low skill, casual or part-time, manual or service occupations and industries.

*Education-related returns*

Education-related returns, the second of the two dimensions identified in Table 1, are primarily of a planned nature and involve two groups. The first group are boarders coming home after finishing high school. This is particularly common for children living in remote areas of Australia, where there is often limited access to high schools (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000; Stokes, Stafford & Holdsworth 1999). As a result many children attend boarding schools distant from their homes. Since 1986 the Australian Census has asked boarders to record their school address as their place of usual residence. As the Census is conducted in the middle of the school year, children returning home after completing one or more years away would therefore appear in the migration statistics as returnees. A similar situation pertains to young adults leaving the parental home for post-school education or training. However in Australia, unlike the UK and North America, few tertiary students move away from home for study. Mills (2006)

found that in 1990, 14 per cent of commencing students in Australia had moved for higher education compared with more than half of students in the UK. A similarly high proportion of students moved to begin university in the United States (Heuer 2004). By 2004, the migration intensity of Australian students had fallen to less than 10%, partly as a result of increased costs, and partly due to the establishment of regional campuses which removed the need for travel. Mills suggests that the low level of student mobility in Australia generally reflects differences in cultural expectations, but it may also be a product of state parochialism and the dispersed settlement pattern of the Australian continent. The lack of a standard national curriculum and qualification standards may also deter students from travelling interstate. With relatively few young adults moving for study, there is a comparatively small pool of returnees.

*Family-related returns*

For young adults, as for others in the population, family reasons (Table 1) also trigger return moves. Why the young return also appears to be strongly related to the reasons for leaving and are often semi-permanent in nature (Young 1987, 1996). The desire to be with family for financial or emotional support or for convenience following extended travel, upon the resolution of family conflict, due to loneliness or illness, after a relationship break-up or at the parent's' request can bring the young home again (Young 1987). Young (1987) clearly demonstrates that young people's transition to independence is often a protracted and complicated process, involving multiple moves and returns, rather than a single abrupt transition. This is a relatively new development, largely because marriage is no longer the only reason why youngsters leave the family home (Flatau et al. 2007; Young 1996, p. 128). Hence young people (especially males) often return home several times over a period of years before leaving home permanently. The duration of this transition also appears to be increasing. Greater proportions of young people aged in their twenties were living at home in the early 1990s than in the late 1970s (McDonald 1995; Young 1996) and as a consequence the age at leaving home is rising. These recent changes relate to factors such as a greater participation in higher education, rising age at marriage or partnership formation, and increases in the cost of living, particularly housing affordability (Kilmartin 1987; McDonald 1995; Young 1987). How much of this movement is captured by the Census depends upon the duration of stay away from home, and the timing of the return. Ceteris paribus, however, it would be expected that the numbers of young adults returning home is substantial and makes up a significant proportion of all return moves among young adults. Further, such returns may have risen in recent years and this increase would be particularly evident at slightly older ages.

Family motives may also trigger returns among young couples in the family formation stage of the life course who decide to return to live close to other family members following the birth of their children. Not only does this help build social bonds between the generations but grandparents often play a role in providing childcare for working parents. Recent research suggests that one-third of all Australian children receive informal childcare and the greater part of this care is provided by grandparents (Goodfellow & Laverty 2003). They are more likely to care for preschool-aged children and are a particularly significant resources for single-parent families (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003, 2008a; Goodfellow & Laverty 2003). At the other end of the relationship cycle, unanticipated returns may occur following separation or divorce, particularly among the young (Young 1987). As a life course event with associated high mobility, the dissolution of a partnership usually results in the change of residence of at least one person; it may also involve the tied migration of dependent children. A study of divorce in Australia showed that people live in a diversity of living arrangements immediately upon leaving the matrimonial home (McDonald 1986, pp. 158-9). Parents played a prominent role in providing accommodation for younger study participants,

particularly younger women. Such moves could involve a return to the family home. It is expected that few such returns will be revealed by the Census given the time lapse that is likely to have passed between leaving home as a young adult and the later separation or divorce. More importantly, the Census does not distinguish between mobility resulting from the actual event of separation or divorce and the mobility that is intrinsic to this marital state (Bell & Hugo 2000, p. 41).

*Returns at older ages*

Table 1 identifies old age as a discrete category in light of its unique place in the life course. Migration at older ages takes a number of forms and is predominantly tied to three life events – retirement, widowhood and the onset of age-related disability (Litwak & Longino 1987; Rowland 1983). With no more ties to a workplace and access to retirement savings some people choose to move for amenity-related reasons. Living close to family members is not so important at this stage and connections can be easily maintained (Litwak & Longino 1987). A preplanned return may follow retirement moves after an extended period of travel or after a trial relocation to either an inland area within easy driving distance of a metropolitan centre, or to a popular coastal retirement area. Other retirees may make an unexpected return when a more permanent relocation did not meet earlier expectations. The second event to trigger migration at older ages is the death of a spouse, especially when the surviving partner has the early stages of a chronic illness or disability. While a spouse would normally have provided the requisite assistance, their death and the inherent loss of financial, physical and emotional support may prompt a move to live near family (Rowland 1983, 1996). Formal support services are not always suitable for older people needing minimal support with everyday activities so family members become their principal carers (Litwak & Longino 1987). Some of these second moves may be a return of people who made an earlier retirement related-move. The final event to trigger moves at older ages is the onset of more severe illness or disability which may necessitate moving into institutional care. Most of these moves are localised, but longer distance migration will occur where such care is not available nearby. On balance the Census is most likely to identify returns related to retirement migration. Other returns are less likely to be indentified given the distance moved and that the time interval between moves will probably be longer than the five year intercensal period.

It is important to recognise that many returns will represent a combination of reasons from more than one of these four dimensions. For example students may return home after completing their studies and to take up a new job; a worker returns home after being made redundant to take up the role of caring for an ill family member; a recently widowed grandparent returns to be near family and friends and provide child care for grandchildren. Individual reasons and the mix of causes cannot be distinguished analytically using conventional data sources, but the combined effects should nevertheless be reflected in the characteristics and composition of return migrants.

# 4. Data and Methods

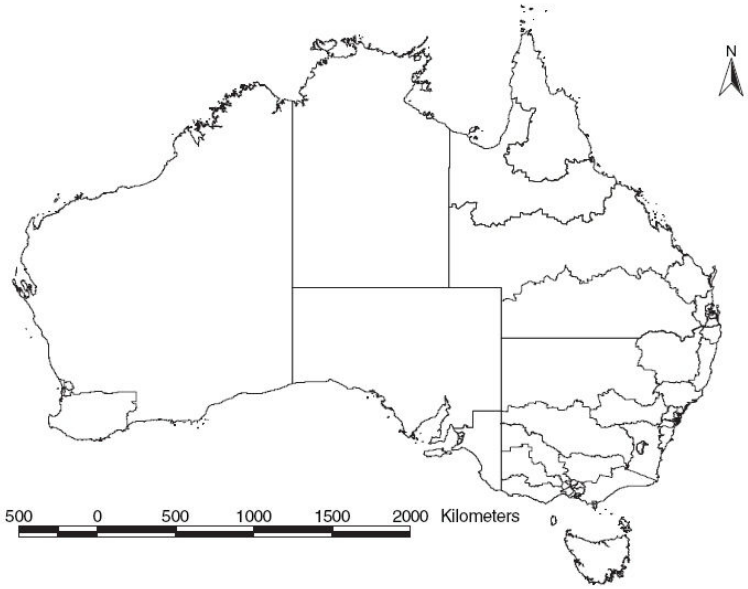
## *4.1. Census data on migrant selectivity*

The population Census provides a key source of information on the selective nature of return migration. As with all census-based studies of migration, interpretation of the migrant selectivity is complicated by the fact that the Census only measures characteristics at the end of the transition interval. Ideally, such analysis should draw upon longitudinal data sets or panel surveys that include a broader range of information than is available in the Census – e.g. the timing of different life events including changes of residence; living arrangements, changes in health state, education and employment histories, participation in voluntary and unpaid work; and the main reasons for change of

residence. Some important aspects of all four dimensions are poorly measured at Census – nevertheless, it is possible to identify a series of Census variables that capture the key dimensions underpinning return moves.

For this analysis, data are drawn from the Census Confidentialised Unit Record Files (Census CURF). CURFS are available for all censuses from 1981 onwards but return moves could only be identified for three of them. This paper focuses on the microdata from two Censuses - 1981 and 2001. The principal focus is on the 2001 Census CURF, a one per cent hierarchical sample comprising 188,013 census records of individuals living in either private or non-private dwellings. The version used in this analysis, the Basic CURF, contains 39 variables and is spatially disaggregated into 48 zones covering the whole of Australia (Figure 1) (Bell & Brown 2006).

**Figure 1: The 48 Basic CURF regions in Australia, 2001 Census**




The 1981 Census CURF is used to explore temporal continuity in migrant selectivity. However a different population of migrants is identified in the 1981 Census microdata. Using a sample of 146,088 records the 1981 Census CURF may include people who were living overseas in 1980. It also lacks any geographic detail about place of residence, so it is impossible to determine the spatial scale of these return moves.

*Identifying migrant groups*

In order to differentiate a return migrant from other types of migrant or non-migrant during an intercensal period a comparison is made of four Census variables:

- Place of usual residence at the Census
- Place of usual residence one year previously
- Place of usual residence five years previously
- Five year internal migration indicator

The internal migration indicator derives from a specific Census question which compares the stated usual address at the time of the Census with that five years earlier to indicate whether a person "did not move" (i.e. the two addresses were the same), had "moved from elsewhere in Australia" or had "moved from overseas".

Combining responses to these variables reveals a number of migrant groups and this paper focuses on two of them - those people who changed residence only during the first four years of an intercensal period (referred to hereafter as primary migrants) and those who went on to make a second (return) move in the year prior to the census. This gives a different measure of return migration to the life-times measures used in North American research. In that instance returns are determined by measuring place of usual residence at the census, five years earlier and a birth. In addition, pairing the place of usual residence variables with the migration indicator identifies two types of return in the 2001 Census CURF - people who returned to a previous address and those who returned to a different dwelling in the same region. The 1981 Census CURF only identifies people who had returned to a previous address.

The analysis presented here focuses initially on the 1996-2000-2001 period, distinguishing people who made a return move during 2000-2001 from those who only moved once during the 1996-2000 period. Subsequently, the two discrete groups of return migrants are distinguished. Those who return to a dwelling they previously occupied are deemed to have planned their return prior to departure whereas those who return to the same region, but to a different dwelling are considered to have made an unplanned return. The assumption underlying this dichotomy is that people who plan to return will retain a place of abode at the first location. This may be the family home where other family members continue to reside while the migrant is absent or a dwelling that is leased during the householder's absence.

*Measuring return migrant selectivity*

Using the explanatory framework outlined above, it is apparent that the composition of the population making a return move under each dimension will be reflected in a particular set of personal, family and household characteristics. In the case of economic motives for return, it is suggested that people making unplanned returns following a failure to find employment or after redundancy may be unemployed, low income earners or employed in low-skill occupations. They may also be employed in sectors where high staff turnover is commonplace. On the other hand people who have returned to take up a new job or following a job transfer are assumed to have higher incomes and are employed in professional and managerial occupations. In the case of education-related returns, households that can afford the cost of relocating or sending children away to boarding school are more likely to be higher income earners. Other education-related returnees, the recent graduates, may be young people characterised as returning to live in the family home, either not in the labour force or unemployed. As many are likely to be in transition between completing tertiary studies and starting a professional career, they could also be employed in semi-skilled occupations on relatively low incomes.

People returning for family and aged-related reasons are less likely to be in the labour force. Young people returning home after travel may be in transition to the labour force or are about to start a tertiary education. Those who have made an unanticipated return following a relationship breakup or the sudden death of a spouse are likely to include a significant representation of the separated, divorced or widowed. Finally, people moving for retirement-related reasons are probably semi-retired (so only working part-time) or have completely retired from the labour force. Retirees returning home after a planned absence for travel or a trial "sea-change" or "tree-change"[1] experience are probably living back in their original residence. However those aged migrants who returned for health reasons are more likely to be living in another residence, having already sold the

[1] "Sea change" and "tree change" are terms coined by Australian researchers to describe two migration-related phenomenons. "Sea change" refers to the increasing migration of people to the Australian coast, while "tree change" is the increasing migration to inland Australian towns. Both forms of migration are to areas outside Australia's main metropolitan centres (Burnley & Murphy 2004).

family home. Some may be living in a facility that provides professional care (e.g. home for the elderly).

Table 2 identifies the broad characteristics captured at the Census which reflect these attributes.

**Table 2: Census-based measures for different types of return**

| Dimension | Census measure of return migrant | |
|---|---|---|
| | Unplanned return | Planned return |
| Economic | • Working age population<br>• Unemployed<br>• Low skill occupation<br>• Low income<br>• Live in another dwelling | • Working age population<br>• Professional or managerial occupation<br>• Moderate to high income<br>• Live in same dwelling |
| Education | • Young adults (under 25 years)<br>• No post-school qualifications<br>• Unemployed or low skill occupation<br>• Low income | • Young adults (under 25 years)<br>• Student or unemployed adult child<br>• Tertiary qualifications<br>• Recent graduate<br>• Low income<br>• Living in same dwelling |
| Family-oriented | • Separated or divorced<br>• Living in rental accommodation | • Young adults (under 25 years)<br>• Not in labour force<br>• Member of family household |
| Aged | • Aged 70 years & older<br>• Widowed<br>• Not in labour force<br>• Living with family or in a non-private dwelling | • Aged 55-70 years<br>• Employed part-time or not in labour force<br>• Owner occupier<br>• Living in same dwelling |

Twelve 2001 census variables used to capture these measures are set out in Table 3. In most instances little change has been made to the variable form, other than using selected categories. The notable exception is marital status which was significantly transformed.

**Table 3: 2001 Census variables used to measure return migrant selectivity**

| 2001 Census Variable | No. of categories | Categories | Reference population and modifications to CURF variable |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 7 | Age groups 5-14, 15-24, … 55-64, 65 years & over | Small number of older return migrants preclude disaggregation for ages 65 years and over |
| Sex | 2 | Male, female | No change to classification; All persons |
| Marital status | 5 | Never married<br>Married<br>Separated; Divorced<br>Widowed | Social marital status. Married incorporates people in a de facto relationship. Population aged 15 years and over. |
| Labour force status | 3 | Employed<br>Unemployed<br>Non-labour force | Population aged 15 years and over.<br>***Labour force=*** employed or unemployed (and actively seeking work).<br>***Non-labour force*** = not employed and not seeking work |

| 2001 Census Variable | No. of categories | Categories | Reference population and modifications to CURF variable |
|---|---|---|---|
| Occupation | 5 | Managers & professionals<br>Trades people<br>Clerical & sales workers<br>Production & transport<br>Labourers | 17 major occupation groups summarised into 8 groups - see Bell & Brown (2006); Population aged 15 years employed in the labour force |
| Industry of employment | 8 | Transformative<br>Government admin & defence<br>Consumer industries<br>Distributive industries<br>Agriculture<br>Mining<br>Personal services<br>Producer industries | 9 major industry groups summarised into 5 groups - see Bell & Brown (2006); Population aged 15 years and over employed in the labour force. |
| Individual income | 5 | Less than $200<br>$200-$399<br>$400-$599<br>$600-$799<br>$800 or more | Weekly income summarised into proximate quintiles; Population aged 15 years and over. |
| Non-school qualification attained | 3 | Post-graduate degree or diploma<br>Bachelor level degree<br>Certificate, diploma or advanced diploma | Summarised into 3 categories; Population aged 15 years and over. |
| Year qualification gained | 3 | Prior to 1996<br>1996 to 1999<br>2000 or 2001 | Summarised into 3 categories; Population aged 15 years and over. |
| Student status | 3 | Student or not attending | Population aged 15 years and over |
| Position in household | 5 | Spouse or lone parent<br>Child under 15<br>Student or adult child<br>Other relation<br>Non-family member | All persons aged 5 years and older. Excludes visitors and persons living in non-private dwellings |
| Dwelling tenure | 3 | Fully owned/being purchased<br>Rented<br>Living in non-private dwelling | All persons aged 5 years and older |

Note: For all variables, not stated cases and overseas visitors are excluded.
Refer to the 2001 Census Dictionary (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002) for full details.

Not all of the 2001 Census variables were present in the 1981 CURF. The following table details the key differences.

**Table 4: 1981 Census variables used to measure return migrant selectivity**

| Census Variable | Variable present in both 2001 & 1981 Census CURFs? | 1981 Census variable, categories and reference population |
|---|---|---|
| Age | Yes | Single year of age data aggregated into groups 5-14, 15-24, … 55-64, 65 years & over; All persons aged 5 years and older |
| Sex | Yes | All persons aged 5 years and older |
| Marital status | Yes | Registered marital status only[1]. All persons aged 5 years and older |
| Labour force status | Yes | Summarised into 3 categories as for 2001. Population aged 15 years and over |
| Occupation | Yes | 3-digit classification summarised into 8 groups as for 2001. Population aged 15 years and over employed in the labour force |
| Industry of employment | Yes | 4-digit classification summarised into 5 groups as for 2001. Population aged 15 years and over employed in the labour force |
| Individual income | Yes | Reported as annual income in 1981 and weekly income in 2001. Summarised into proximate quintiles. Population aged 15 years and over |
| Non-school qualification attained | Yes | Summarised into 3 categories as for 2001. Population aged 15 years and over |
| Year qualification gained | Yes | Summarised into 3 groups to identify new graduates (qualified in 1980 or 1981) and recently qualified (qualified during 1976-1979) |
| Student status | Yes | Summarised into 3 categories as for 2001. Population aged 15 years and over |
| Position in household | No | Not available in 1981. |
| Dwelling tenure | Yes | Summarised into 3 categories as for 2001. Population aged 5 years and over |

(1) Married persons may include people who stated they were married, even if the relationship was not legalised (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1983).

## *4.2. Analytic Methods*

The analysis is reported in two parts. The first part examines simple frequency counts of the selected variables for each migrant group. The profile of return migrants is compared to that of primary migrants to identify those characteristics that most clearly set apart the two groups; a similar comparison is also made of the profile of the two identified groups of return migrants. Both simple summary statistics and migration propensities are used to summarise the data. Migration propensities are calculated as a migration probability, because the Census data measure migration transitions rather than all migration events (Brown et al. 2006). The probability of migrants with characteristic (*i*) making a return move, $P(RM_i)$ is calculated as:

$$P(RM_i) = \left( \frac{RM_i}{p_i} \right) \times 100$$

Where $RM_i$ = number of return migrants
$p_i$ = the population "at risk" of making a return move, being people who moved during the first four years of an intercensal period

While probability of migrants with characteristic (*i*) making a primary move, $P(PrM_i)$ is calculated as:

$$P(Pr M_i) = \left( \frac{Pr M_i}{p_i} \right) \times 100$$

Where $PrM_i$ = number of return migrants
$p_i$ = the population "at risk" of moving during the first four years of the intercensal period, being people usually resident in Australia five years previously

The second part of the analysis (Section 6) provides a more robust indication of the selectivity of return migration through the application of a multivariate binomial logistic regression. This is a member of the family of generalized linear regression models (GLM) and is represented by the equation:

$$P(y = 1) = \frac{\exp(z)}{[1 + \exp(z)]}$$

Where $$z = b_0 + b_1 x_1 + ... + b_n x_n$$

The response or dependent variable in binary logistic regression is always dichotomous, such as yes/no or present/absent. In the first model, comparing the characteristics of return migrants with primary migrants, the response is either 'return migrant' or 'primary migrant'. The aim of this modeling process is to determine the likelihood of being a return migrant, given a number of characteristics or predictor variables. The second model compares the characteristics of the two different types of return migration. In this case the response is either 'return to same dwelling' or 'return to another dwelling in same region'. The independent or explanatory variables used in these two models are the variables highlighted in the preceding univariate analysis. For both modeling processes the enter method of logistic regression is used in SPSS, with a significance level greater than 0.05 required for inclusion into the regression model and 0.1 for removal. Cases where responses are either not stated or not applicable for any variable have been removed.

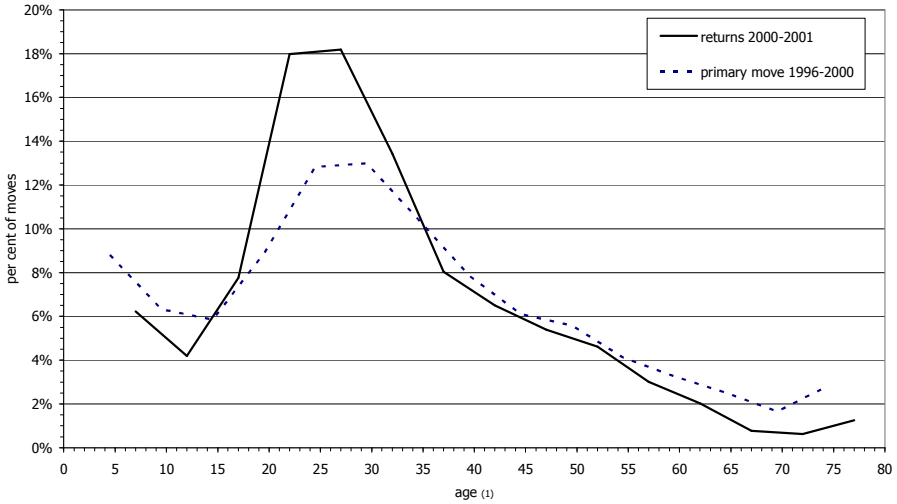
# 5. Selectivity of Return Migration

## *5.1. Age profiles*

*Age profiles of return and primary migrants*

The selectivity of return is most apparent in the age profile of migration. While both return and primary migrants are concentrated in the young adult ages, the peak for return moves is more pronounced. Figure 2 shows the distribution of migrants across the 15 five year age groups. Well over half of all returns (51 per cent) were of people aged between 15 and 34 years, compared with 41 per cent of primary migrants. Return migrants were less likely to be under 15 years of age and even less likely to be in older age groups (over 50 years) than people who only moved once between 1996 and 2000.

**Figure 2: Age profile of regional migration, Australia, primary moves 1996-2000 & return moves 2000-2001**

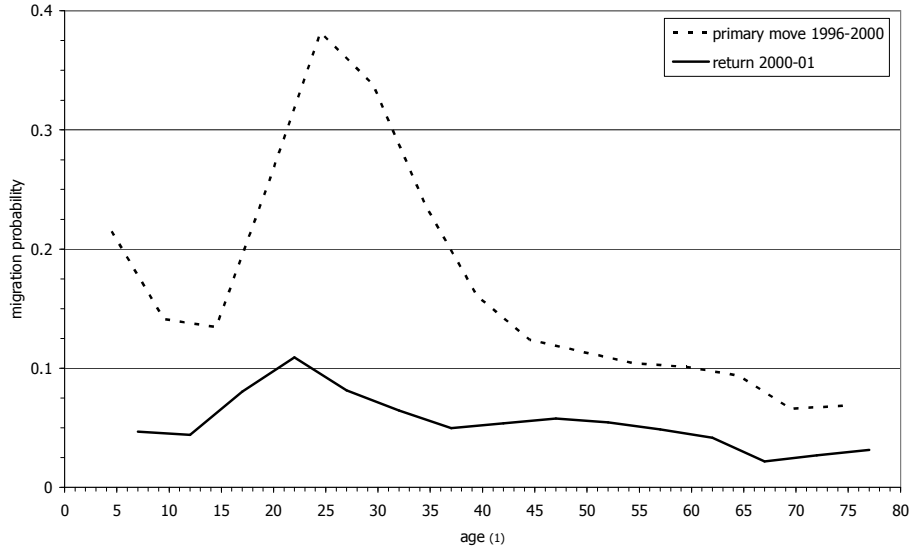



(1) Age at mid-point of migration interval.
Source: 2001 Census Basic CURF

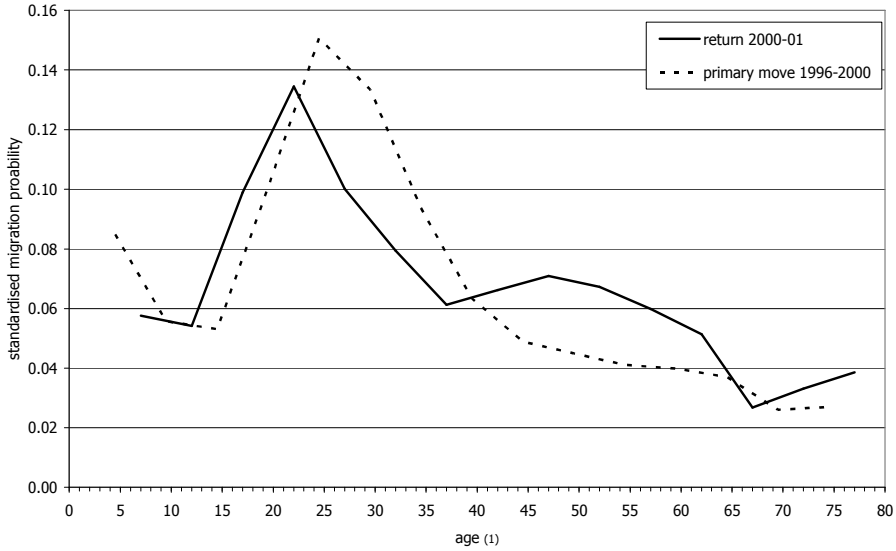
These differences are even more pronounced when the data are expressed as age-specific migration probabilities. Figure 3a shows that the probability of making a regional return is highest among young adults aged 20-24 years while the probability of moving only once peaks for migrants aged 25-29 years. A more detailed analysis of returns made by people under 25 years of age shows a peak at 23 years and a secondary peak at 18-19 years, suggesting such returns may be education-related. The probability of making a return move then declines with increasing age, with two notable exceptions - a small peak occurs among people in their late forties and an upturn at the oldest ages (Figure 3a). This mirrors the age profiles revealed in earlier work using other Census migration datasets (Bell & Hugo 2000; Parr et al. 2007; Parr, Bell & Wilson 2006). When migration probabilities are standardised so that there is an equivalent area under each curve, the differences between return and primary migration age profiles become more evident (Figure 3b). Primary migration peaks among people aged in their late twenties and declines steadily for successively older age groups. There is no apparent upturn in migration among the oldest age groups, and the levelling of migration probabilities for ages 55-69 years is almost certainly linked to retirement migration. It is therefore apparent that a double selection occurs to separate those migrants who make a return move from those who do not.

**Figure 3: Regional migration probabilities by age, Australia, primary moves 1996-2000 & return moves 2000-2001**

(a) Migration probabilities




(b) Standardised migration probabilities

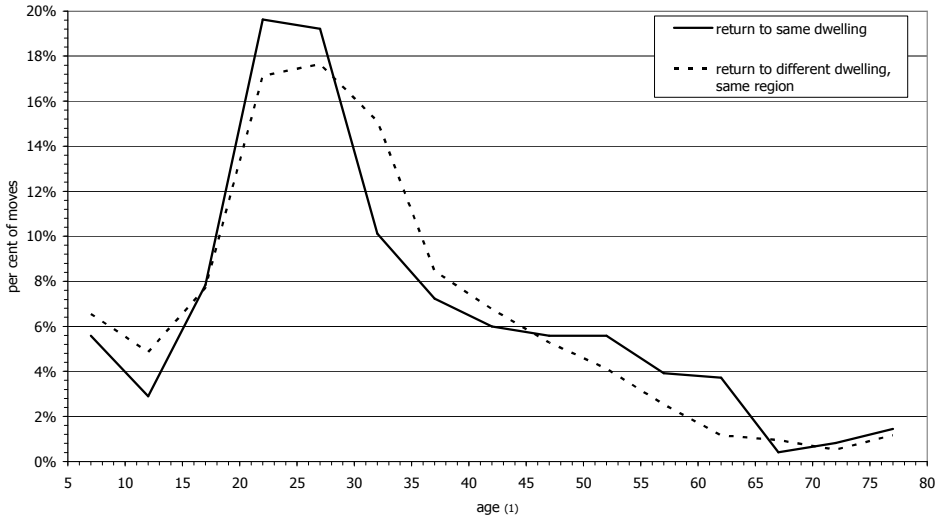



(1) Age at mid-point of migration interval.
Source: 2001 Census Basic CURF

*Age profiles of different types of return*

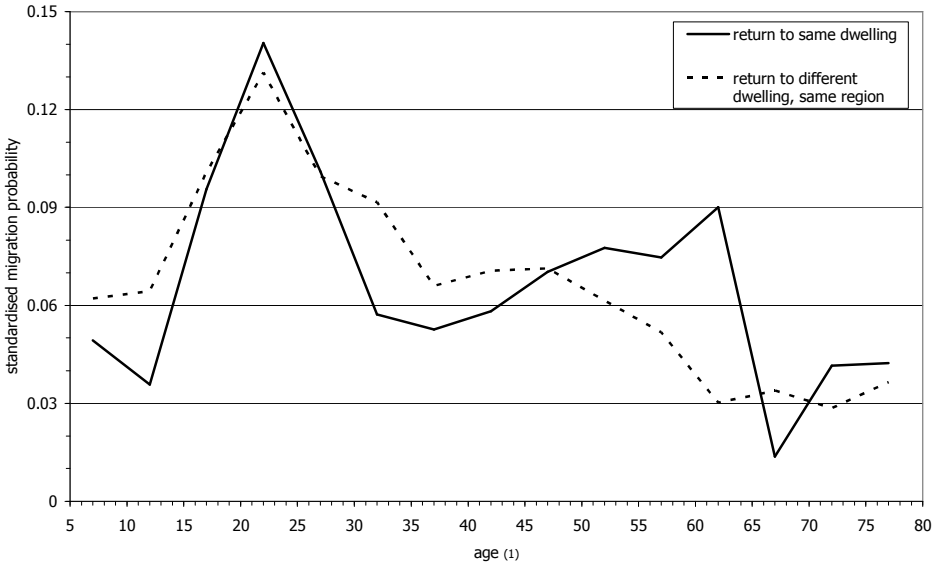
Further selectivity also distinguishes the two groups of return migrants (Figure 4). Both groups are dominated by the 20-29 age group. However, those in their twenties, together with those approaching retirement (aged 50-64) are most prominent among people returning to their own dwelling. In contrast people of mid working age (30-49) together with children under 15, are more strongly represented among those returning to a different dwelling in the same region. Standardised migration probabilities show this differentiation more clearly (Figure 5).

**Figure 4: Regional migration by age and type of return, Australia, 2000-2001**




(1) Age at mid-point of migration interval.
Source: 2001 Census Basic CURF

**Figure 5: Regional return migration probabilities by age and type of return, Australia, 2000-2001**




(1) Age at mid-point of migration interval.
Source: 2001 Census Basic CURF

These findings are supportive of several propositions outlined earlier. Larger proportions of young adults in their twenties returning to the same dwelling are consistent with the expectation of return moves to a parental home following periods of travel or for vocational or higher education and training. Similarly at older ages, people may return following a period of post-retirement travel or to live closer to kin.

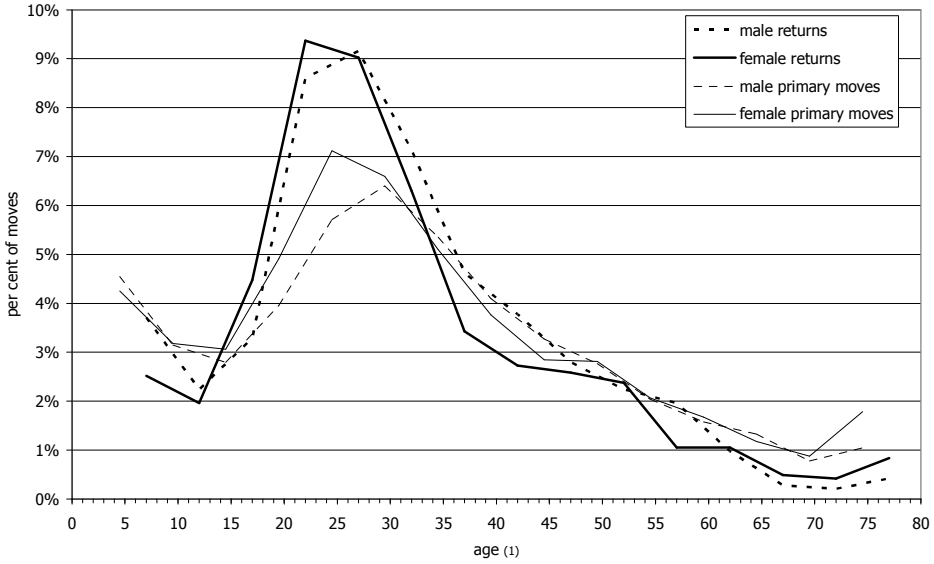
Different factors may influence the type of return made by different working age groups. People aged in their thirties are more likely to return to a different dwelling in the same region, while returns to the same dwelling are far more likely to occur at ages 45 or older. The considerably lower probability of returning to live in the same dwelling among 65-69 year olds may relate to the timing of other types of migration around retirement.

## *5.2. Sex and marital status*

*Sex*

Age influences the occurrence of many life events and the socio-demographic characteristics that may alter in state as a consequence. This is evident when looking further at the make-up of return migrants. In terms of sex, as expected there is an almost even gender balance of both return and primary migration (Table 5). But there are notable sex differentials in the age at migration (Figure 6) which accord with Lee's early work (Lee 1974). Return and primary migration both show younger selectivity of males. Migrants aged 15-24 years are predominantly female while return migrants aged 30-44 and 55-59 years are more likely to be male. Women outnumber men among older migrants, making up two-thirds of return migrants. This suggests that females are more likely to return for reasons not related to employment, while the converse is true for males.

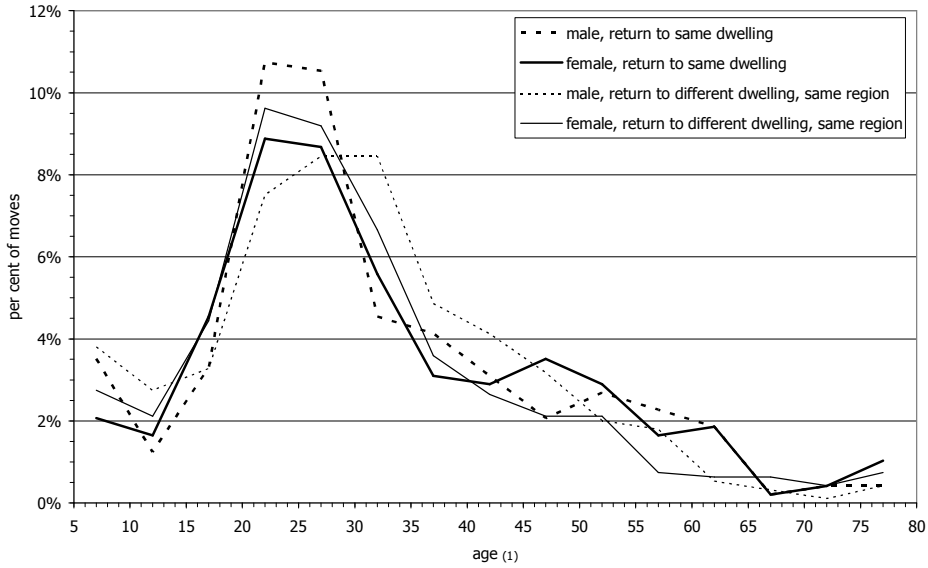
**Figure 6: Regional migration by age and sex, Australia, primary moves 1996-2000 & return moves 2000-2001**




(1) Age at mid-point of migration interval.
Source: 2001 Census Basic CURF

While the sex profiles of both types of return move accord with previous Australian work by showing an overall sex balance (Table 5), there were some distinct age-sex differentials particularly for people returning to a different dwelling (Figure 7). Females dominated among 15-24 year olds whereas males dominated among the 35-44 and 55-64 age groups. Returns to the same dwelling do not show the usual pattern of younger selectivity of females – women only dominated the 45-54 age group. The even gender balance among 15-24 year olds returning to the same dwelling may represent a shift in the sex balance of children returning to the parental home compared with the 1990s, when young men were more likely to return than young women (Young 1996). Recent work has noted changes in the age at which young people first leave the family home, noting that changing mores and values play an important role in this process (Flatau et al. 2007); such changes are also equally likely to alter the pattern of returns among young adults. The extended peak for males in their thirties returning to a different dwelling in the same region is probably employment-related.

**Figure 7: Regional returns by age, sex and type of return, Australia, 2000-2001**




(1) Age at mid-point of migration interval.
Source: 2001 Census Basic CURF

*Marital Status*

The marital status profiles of return and primary migrants were not quite as expected. The movement of people for family-oriented reasons following a relationship breakup does not feature as highly among returns as was suggested by previous research (Grant & Vanderkamp 1986; Hou & Beaujot 1994; Newbold & Liaw 1995). There was little difference in the proportion of return and primary migrants who were either separated or divorced. Nor do widowers appear more likely to make a return move. A far greater proportion of return migrants were never married (40%) than primary migrants (27%); this most certainly reflects the younger age profile of returnees as most never married returnees were under 35 years of age.

More in line with previous expectations, separated or divorced return migrants were more common among people who returned to a different dwelling in the same region (15%). While there was no sex bias in this group, divorcees returning to the same dwelling were more likely to be female. Women are more likely to be given custody of children and remain in the family home following a marriage dissolution (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008b; McDonald 1986). An unexpected finding was that the widowed (usually female) were more likely to return to the same dwelling. Never married migrants were more common among people who returned to the same dwelling (52%) than those now living in a different dwelling in the same region (34%). With many of them also being young, this supports the belief that many young people return to the family home.

**Table 5: Attributes of different types of regional migrants, Australia, primary moves 1996-2000 and returns 2000-2001**

| Characteristic | All return moves | Per cent distribution for each type of move: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Return to same dwelling | Return to different dwelling, same region | All return moves | Primary move |
| **Age** (1) | | | | | |
| 5-14 | 149 | 8.5 | 11.4 | 10.4 | 14.5 |

| Characteristic | All return moves | Per cent distribution for each type of move: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Return to same dwelling | Return to different dwelling, same region | All return moves | Primary move |
| 15-24 | 368 | 27.5 | 24.8 | 25.7 | 16.5 |
| 25-34 | 452 | 29.3 | 32.8 | 31.6 | 27.1 |
| 35-44 | 208 | 13.2 | 15.2 | 14.5 | 17.8 |
| 45-54 | 143 | 11.2 | 9.4 | 10.0 | 11.1 |
| 55-64 | 72 | 7.6 | 3.7 | 5.0 | 6.9 |
| 65 & over | 38 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 6.2 |
| Total | 1,430 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Sex** (1) | | | | | |
| Female | 695 | 49.0 | 48.4 | 48.6 | 51.1 |
| Male | 735 | 51.0 | 51.6 | 51.4 | 48.9 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Social marital status** (2) | | | | | |
| Never married | 458 | 51.5 | 34.0 | 40.1 | 26.8 |
| Married | 514 | 35.2 | 50.3 | 45.0 | 60.7 |
| Divorced | 79 | 6.3 | 7.3 | 6.9 | 6.3 |
| Separated | 72 | 4.3 | 7.4 | 6.3 | 3.5 |
| Widowed | 19 | 2.8 | 1.1 | 1.7 | 2.7 |
| Totals | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Labour force status** (2) | | | | | |
| Employed | 840 | 62.2 | 67.8 | 65.9 | 65.5 |
| Unemployed | 139 | 10.4 | 11.2 | 10.9 | 5.7 |
| Not in labour force | 296 | 27.4 | 21.0 | 23.2 | 28.8 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Occupation** (3) | | | | | |
| Managers and professionals | 331 | 41.1 | 39.4 | 39.9 | 45.9 |
| Tradespeople | 101 | 11.9 | 12.3 | 12.2 | 11.1 |
| Clerical & service workers | 269 | 33.7 | 31.8 | 32.4 | 29.6 |
| Production & transport | 53 | 4.1 | 7.5 | 6.4 | 6.5 |
| Labourer & related worker | 75 | 9.3 | 8.9 | 9.0 | 6.9 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Industry** (3) | | | | | |
| Transformative | 154 | 18.3 | 18.8 | 17.2 | 18.6 |
| Government administration & defence | 34 | 2.6 | 4.8 | 5.4 | 4.1 |
| Consumer | 160 | 21.6 | 18.3 | 20.8 | 19.4 |
| Distributive | 204 | 25.0 | 24.6 | 24.7 | 24.7 |
| Agriculture | 28 | 3.4 | 3.4 | 2.1 | 3.4 |
| Mining | 11 | 1.1 | 1.% | 1.0 | 1.3 |
| Personal | 106 | 11.9 | 13.% | 9.8 | 12.8 |
| Producer | 129 | 16.0 | 15.% | 18.9 | 15.6 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Post-school qualifications** (2) | | | | | |
| Postgraduate degree or diploma | 30 | 1.0 | 3.3 | 2.5 | 4.8 |
| Bachelor's degree | 210 | 19.5 | 16.3 | 17.4 | 15.6 |
| Other post-school qualification | 333 | 26.7 | 28.1 | 27.6 | 26.5 |
| No qualifications | 633 | 52.8 | 52.3 | 52.5 | 53.1 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Year qualification gained**(2) | | | | | |
| Prior to 1996 | 317 | 52.2 | 55.2 | 54.2 | 67.0 |
| 1996 to 1999 | 178 | 29.6 | 30.9 | 30.4 | 23.2 |
| 2000 or 2001 | 90 | 18.2 | 13.9 | 15.4 | 9.8 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Student status** (2) | | | | | |

| Characteristic | All return moves | Per cent distribution for each type of move: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Return to same dwelling | Return to different dwelling, same region | All return moves | Primary move |
| Not attending | 1052 | 79.7 | 84.3 | 82.7 | 83.8 |
| Full-time student | 113 | 9.8 | 8.4 | 8.9 | 8.9 |
| Part-time student | 107 | 10.5 | 7.3 | 8.4 | 7.4 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100.0 |
| **Position in household** (1) | | | | | |
| Spouse or single parent | 589 | 35.8 | 51.1 | 45.8 | 55.9 |
| Child under 15 | 143 | 9.3 | 12.1 | 11.1 | 15.8 |
| Student or adult child | 224 | 34.4 | 8.6 | 17.4 | 8.0 |
| Other relation | 42 | 3.0 | 3.4 | 3.3 | 2.5 |
| Non-family member | 287 | 17.5 | 24.8 | 22.3 | 17.8 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Income** (2) | | | | | |
| Less than $200 | 307 | 28.9 | 22.6 | 24.8 | 24.8 |
| $200-$399 | 258 | 22.3 | 20.0 | 20.8 | 19.4 |
| $400-$599 | 259 | 20.4 | 21.1 | 20.9 | 17.2 |
| $600-$799 | 173 | 12.7 | 14.6 | 14.0 | 14.5 |
| $800 or more | 243 | 15.7 | 21.6 | 19.6 | 24.2 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Dwelling tenure** (1) (4) | | | | | |
| Owned/being purchased | 636 | 67.8 | 36.9 | 47.1 | 55.8 |
| Rented | 713 | 32.2 | 63.1 | 52.9 | 44.2 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

(1) All persons aged 5 years and older. (2) Population aged 15 years and over.
(3) Persons aged 15 years and over, employed in the labour force.
(4) Excludes persons enumerated in non-private dwellings.
Source: 2001 Census Basic CURF

## *5.3. The labour force*

### *Labour force participation*

As anticipated in previous research, most returning migrants had close connections to the labour force: almost four-fifths (77%) of return migrants were in the workforce (either employed or looking for work). Nevertheless, almost one in four of those who made a return move were outside the labour force by the time of the Census (23%). This is lower than the figure for primary migrants, 30% of whom were not in the labour force, but still represents a substantial proportion of all returnees, and one that has been largely overlooked in prior research. Intriguingly, it is people at younger ages that make up the majority of this group. More than half of returnees who were not in the labour force were less than 35 years of age, and were probably driven by education or family-related motives (Table 1). This group featured most strongly among those returning to the same dwelling. Older people were less strongly represented among returnees than was anticipated, and were equally likely to return to their previous dwelling, or to take up residence in a different dwelling in the same region. This suggests that for older people, both retirement-related and other reasons for return such as health, disability and widowhood were relevant.

### *Unemployment*

Previous research has seen the unemployed as a key group among return movers. While they are not the majority of return migrants (65% of return migrants aged 15 years or older were working) they are certainly over-represented. Return migrants had an unemployment rate (14%) that was almost twice that of primary migrants.

Unemployment rates were notably higher for the youngest and oldest working age groups, but unemployed returnees were predominantly young - 43 per cent were under 25 years of age. This signals a return home of the young for emotional and financial support while they seek further employment, as suggested by Young (1987; 1996).

There is little evidence that the unemployed are more likely to make an unplanned return, with similar levels of unemployment for the two types of return. Both types of return are also dominated by the younger age groups. However unemployment is highest among males (17%) and lowest for females (11%) who had returned to the same dwelling. As noted by Young (1987; 1996) this suggests that young men are more likely to return home for support when out of work.

*Occupation and industry profile*

There was little notable difference in either the occupation or industry profiles of return and primary migrants. Managers and professionals were the most common occupation group for return migrants but they were less common than among primary migrants (39% versus 45%). Intriguingly clerical or service workers were more prominent among employed returnees than among primary migrants. This group usually move locally for employment, but longer distance moves may be linked to seasonal labour patterns in some parts of Australia, particularly tourism-related employment. In terms of the industry profile of migrants, fewer than expected government administration and defence workers made a return move. Working return migrants exhibited the younger age profile of returnees as a whole. The majority (61%) of returning managers and professionals, for example, were under 35 years of age which is consistent with McKay and Whitelaw's (1977) finding that professionals undertake a series of migration circuits as a part of career progression.

While the overall occupation and industry profiles were almost identical for the two groups of returns, there were some age differentials. As expected workers from the same occupation groups or the same industry groups who had returned to the same dwelling were generally younger than those who had returned to a different dwelling in the same region.

## *5.4. Education*

There is little evidence to support earlier findings that return migrants are less educated than other migrants as was suggested by Newbold and Bell (2001); while just under half of both return and primary migrants had post-school qualifications, the difference in the proportion of either group who were tertiary qualified was only marginal.

The Census does not coincide with the end of the school year so it was impossible to identify students returning home from boarding school. However recent participation in post-school education appears to increase the likelihood of making a return move. One third of returning migrants were new or recent graduates compared with 20 per cent of primary migrants. Those who graduated a few years prior to making a return may have travelled before returning home to start their professional careers. The incorporation of migrants still undertaking post-school education and training does not alter the picture of education-related returns; there was no notable difference in the proportion of return and primary migrants who were students. However there is some indication that students and recent graduates are more likely to return home than to return to live in a different dwelling in the same region. People who returned to the same dwelling were far more likely to be young and have a bachelor's degree, be a new graduate or a student than people returning to live in a different dwelling.

### *5.5. Household composition*

Specific groups of return migrants could also be identified by looking at their position in a household (Table 5). The return movement of students and young adult children is clearly evident, making up 17% of all return migrants compared with only 8% of all primary migrants. Those who return to the same dwelling are largely aged 15-34 years, suggesting a range of reasons for their return other than the recent completion of post-school education and training; it also alludes to the possible repeated return of this group to the family home (Young 1987). There is also some suggestion that single parent families and child-less couples may feature prominently among those people making an unplanned return. Such moves may be for family-oriented reasons.

### *5.6. Individual incomes*

Contrary to expectations, there is little evidence that returnees have lower incomes than other migrants. It is also clear how the focus of previous work on younger working age groups may have led to this conclusion. At first glance there was little difference in the income profile of return and primary migrants. Both groups appear to have a slightly higher average income than the Australian population as a whole - less than half of return and primary migrants had a weekly income of less than $400 while the median individual weekly income of Australians was $375 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006). As with marital status, this pattern is influenced by age. Young return migrants were over-represented among people receiving less than $200 per week – 67% were aged under 25 years of age compared with 49% of primary migrants.

At the other end of the income spectrum slightly fewer return migrants reported a weekly income of $800 or more, and these were generally concentrated at the younger end of the age profile. This suggests that for a small subgroup of young, well paid workers a return move may be one part of the complex migration circuits that contribute to their career progression.

As expected, there were more notable contrasts in the income distributions of the two groups of returns. People who returned to the same dwelling were more likely to report a lower income than those who returned to a different dwelling in the same region. This is partly because a greater proportion of them were not in the labour force. By contrast a greater proportion of migrants returning to a different dwelling reported a weekly income of at least $800. This is also reflects differences in labour force participation.

### *5.7. Housing tenure*

The last characteristic of migrants to be examined is housing tenure. This is closely tied to all of the socio-demographic characteristics just described. Return migrants were more likely (50%) to be renting their dwelling than primary migrants (39%), probably due to differences in age composition – younger people have had less opportunity to achieve home ownership. At ages under 45, less than half of all return migrants were homeowners. The figure is significantly higher for those aged 45-54, but drops away again at older ages with just 40% of those aged 55 and over living in their own dwelling. Other characteristics also influence the housing tenure of a return migrant. In particular, divorced and separated return movers are more likely to rent a dwelling, while higher income earners are more likely to be owner/occupiers.

The type of return is closely linked to housing tenure. Almost two out of three migrants returning to the same dwelling were living in their own home, compared with 36% of people who had returned to a different dwelling in the same region. Owner-occupation among those returning to the same dwelling was common across all age groups, except,

surprisingly, at ages 55-64 years, most of whom returned to rented premises. The high proportion of renters among migrants who returned to a different dwelling is consistent across all age groups, but declines marginally with age. The high proportion of young people (under 25 years) renting a different dwelling upon return may form part of the transition to independence. Other renters may not have been able to afford buying a home due to unemployment or changes in family circumstances. Another group of renters may be renting while they look to buy another home. A significant group of home owners living in another dwelling following a return move were aged 25-34 years. These may be first home buyers who have saved enough during their absence to enter the market upon their return.

### *5.8. Summary*

Drawing these observations together, the picture of return migration still remains fragmented, but some tentative associations can be made with the explanations offered in Table 1. Age emerges as the characteristic most likely to determine whether a migrant makes a return move; other characteristics largely echo differences in the age profiles. Thus young adults, the unmarried, the unemployed and people renting a dwelling were over-represented among returnees, while the separated or divorced, professional and managerial occupations were less prominent than expected.

Economic reasons appear to motivate both planned and unplanned returns among both working migrants, particularly younger professionals and the unemployed. In terms of education-related reasons there was a pool of planned returns associated with the completion of higher education and training, while post-school travel also appears to influence some returns, with the young (often male) returning home. This group are more likely to be unmarried, not in the labour force or unemployed, students or recent graduates and are more likely to report a low income. A surprising finding is that older people are not a significant group among those making a return, planned or otherwise. As predicted their return moves appear to occur close to retirement; widowhood or age-related illness are no more likely to result in a return move.

Several of these variables are closely correlated. In order to tease out the key affects binary logistic regression models are developed to help to identify those features that are *most likely* to differentiate either a return migrant from a primary migrant, or the two types of return from one another.

## 6. Modelling migrant characteristics

This section extends the analysis to establish the relative significance of each of the explanatory variables in a multivariate framework. Since the dependant variable to be examined is the dichotomous outcome of the migration decision, the appropriate form of model for analysis is binary logistic regression. A total of nine models were run, combining three migration outcomes (all returns, returns to same dwelling and returns to other dwelling in the same region) and three population groups (all return migrants, working migrants and migrants not in the labour force). While the key variables highlighted above were included in the logistic regression models, only those that were significant are reported (Table 6, Table 7 & Table 8).

While the derived models do not explain all variation return migrant selectivity, the predictors they reveal are statistically significant. Looking first at return migrants as a whole, age is the strongest predictor of a return move. All migrants under 55 years are more likely to make a return move than older migrants and with an odds ratio of 2.34, young people aged 15-24 had the highest likelihood of return (Table 6). Five other

characteristics are also associated with the likelihood of return: labour force status, marital status, education, housing tenure and position in household. As suggested by the bivariate analysis, the odds of making a return move are significantly higher for the unemployed than for those currently working or those outside the labour force. The separated, divorced or widowed also display higher odds of making a return move (1.63), although collectively they are a relatively small group. Education is also positively associated with return mobility, and is especially selective of those with a non-tertiary qualification, a finding which contrasts with earlier research. Student status and rental tenure also raise the probability of a return move. The results reveal that the likelihood of making a return move is not influenced by sex or by income.

When the two types of return move are examined separately, it is clear that this overall profile obscures two quite distinctive groups of return migrants. As can be seen from Table 6, the odds ratios for returns to the same dwelling are polar opposites of those for other returns, for each of the reported characteristics. Thus, youth delivers higher odds ratios for returns to a different dwelling in the same region than people aged 55 years and older, but low ratios for returns to the same dwelling. Similarly the odds ratios for rental tenure are high for returns to a different dwelling in the same region (2.72) and low for returns to the same dwelling (0.37). The greater tendency for people making unplanned move to be living in rental accommodation is more a product of the move than the migrants themselves. The picture that therefore emerges is that returns to the same dwelling tend to be selective of the young if they are adult children and students in a family household. In contrast returns to a different dwelling in the same region are selective of young, independent, working adults which result in a greater likelihood of people renting a dwelling.

**Table 6: Outputs of binary logistic regression models for regional migrants by type of return move, Australia, 2000-2001**

| Variable | Category | Return to same dwelling (1) | | Return to different dwelling, same region (1) | | All return moves (1) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Odds Ratio | 95% CI | Odds Ratio | 95% CI | Odds Ratio | 95% CI |
| Age | 15-24 | 0.12 | 0.06–0.25 | 8.17 | 3.99–16.75 | 2.34 | 1.68-3.25 |
| | 25-34 | 0.23 | 0.12–0.44 | 4.32 | 2.30–8.13 | 2.01 | 1.50–2.70 |
| | 35-54 | 0.40 | 0.22-0.73 | 2.51 | 1.38-4.58 | 1.39 | 1.04-1.85 |
| Marital status | Separated, divorced or widowed | * | | * | | 1.67 | 1.29-2.15 |
| Post-school qualification | Other post-school qualification | * | | * | | 1.22 | 1.04–1.43 |
| Employment status | Unemployed | * | | * | | 2.11 | 1.64–2.72 |
| Household position | Student or adult child | 6.18 | 3.24–11.82 | 0.16 | 0.09–0.31 | 2.28 | 1.70–3.06 |
| Income | $800 or more | 0.52 | 0.30-0.89 | 1.92 | 1.12-3.30 | * | |
| Tenure | Rent | 0.31 | 0.22–0.42 | 3.27 | 2.40-4.47 | 1.40 | 1.22–1.61 |

(1) Population aged 15 years and over. * Not significant at p=0.05
Reference categories: 55 years & over, female, married, not in the labour force, no qualifications, other family member in household, income $200-$399, owner/occupier.
Source: 2001 Census Basic CURF

Looking specifically at working migrants, it is evident that this group are generally similar to all return migrants (Table 7), but they differ in two distinctive respects. The first is that income emerges as an influence on the likelihood to return: those on low incomes are far less likely to make a return move than middle income workers, while having a high income does not significantly influence the propensity to return. The second point of difference is that the significance of household position is greatly strengthened: the odds of a return are significantly higher if the worker is either the adult child or student of a household. Separated, divorced or widowed workers still have high odds of making a return move than married workers, though not quite as high as for return migrants as a

whole. Somewhat surprisingly, occupation does not appear to influence the likelihood of return.

Again, the picture alters when a distinction is made between the two types of return. While youth still have the higher odds than older people of returning to a different dwelling in the same region, or to the same dwelling if they are an adult child or student of that household, these effects are confined to 15-24 year old working migrants. Renting also elevates the likelihood of returning to a different dwelling but reduces the probability of a return to the same dwelling. The marital status, education levels or income of workers do not significantly influence either type of return.

**Table 7: Outputs of binary logistic regression models of working migrants by type of return move, Australia, 2000-2001**

| Variable | Category | Return to same dwelling (1) | | Return to different dwelling, same region (1) | | All return moves (1) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Odds Ratio | 95% CI | Odds Ratio | 95% CI | Odds Ratio | 95% CI |
| Age | 15-24 | 0.29 | 0.09-0.88 | 3.49 | 1.14-10.67 | 2.68 | 1.60-4.47 |
| | 25-34 | * | | * | | 2.04 | 1.27-3.29 |
| Marital status | Separated, divorced or widowed | * | | * | | 1.50 | 1.06-2.13 |
| Income | Less than $200 | * | | * | | 0.65 | 0.45-0.94 |
| Post-school qualification | Tertiary | * | | * | | 1.36 | 1.08-1.71 |
| | Other post-school qualification | * | | * | | 1.23 | 1.02-1.49 |
| Household position | Student or adult child | 7.10 | 2.85-17.69 | 0.14 | 0.06-0.35 | 2.93 | 1.97-4.36 |
| Tenure | Rent | 0.38 | 0.26-0.57 | 2.62 | 1.76-3.89 | 1.20 | 1.01-1.43 |

(1) Population aged 15 years and over. * Not significant at p=0.05.
Reference categories: 55 and over, female, married, other occupation, no qualifications, other family member in household, income $200-$399, owner/occupier.
Source: 2001 Census Basic CURF

Migrants not in the labour force, a group largely overlooked in previous research, are another subset of returnees. A very select set of characteristics influence the probability of them making a return move (Table 8). While younger non-labour force migrants are more likely to return than older age groups, the odds are not as high as for working migrants or all returnees. The only other characteristics to positively influence the return of people not in the labour force are marital status and housing tenure. The separated, divorced or widowed are more likely to return than married migrants and the odds were higher for this group than for working migrants or all returns. While education levels, household position or income are significant characteristics for other migrant groups, they are not significant for people not in the labour force. Once again renting a dwelling is highly associated with living in another dwelling in the same region after a return. Few people would continue renting a dwelling during an extended absence but are more likely to vacate one dwelling and find another to live in upon their return. Other tenants may in transition between selling and buying another family home.

A polarised pattern is evident for age of migrants not in the labour force. Youth not in the labour force have higher odds than older migrants of returning to a different dwelling in the same region, particularly if they are under 25 years of age (odds ratio 17.26), while the odds are low of them returning to the same dwelling. As an outcome of the migration process, returning non-labour force migrants have higher odds of renting than owning a different dwelling in the same region but they are less likely to be renting if they have returned to the same dwelling. Marital status does not influence the odds of making either type of return for non-labour force migrants.

**Table 8: Outputs of binary logistic regression models of non-labour force migrants by type of return move, Australia, 1996-2000-2001**

| Variable | Category | Return to same dwelling (1) | | Return to different dwelling, same region (1) | | All return moves (1) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Odds Ratio | 95% CI | Odds Ratio | 95% CI | Odds Ratio | 95% CI |
| Age | 15-24 | 0.06 | 0.01-0.23 | 18.22 | 4.31-76.99 | 1.81 | 1.02-3.21 |
| | 25-34 | 0.18 | 0.06-0.53 | 5.58 | 1.88-16.53 | 2.11 | 1.34-3.29 |
| Marital status | Separated, divorced or widowed | * | | * | | 1.78 | 1.13-2.80 |
| Tenure | Rent | 0.18 | 0.10-0.37 | 5.35 | 2.71-10.58 | 2.04 | 1.51-2.75 |

(1) Population aged 15 years and over. * Not significant at p=0.05.
Reference categories: 55 years & over, female, married, no qualifications, other family member in household, income $200-$399, owner/occupier.
Source: 2001 Census Basic CURF

In summary, this analysis shows that return migration is a doubly selective process. Age is not the only demographic characteristic to determine whether a migrant makes a return move; marital status, education levels and labour force status are other important factors. This analysis also shows that return migrants are not a homogeneous group. The distinction between working migrants and those not in the labour force reveals two selective subgroups of return movers. Household position and income levels influence the return of working migrants, while marital status and housing tenure influence the return of those not in the labour force.

It is also clear that migrant characteristics influence the odds of making a planned or unplanned return by varying degrees – sometimes to favour a move and at other times to deter it. The picture that therefore emerges is that return migration to the same dwelling tend to be selective of the young if they are adult children or students in a family household. Among returnees outside the labour force, sex replaces household position as the critical variable; with young males rather than young females preeminent among this group. Returns to a different dwelling in the same region are selective of young, independent, working adults and people who rent a dwelling. Among young adults aged 15-24 selectivity is most pronounced for those not in the labour force.

# 7. Temporal variation in migrant selectivity

With the steady shift in the social and economic context governing migration in Australia, it is also reasonable to expect that the selectivity of return migration may have changed over time. The life events that trigger a return are ultimately influenced by broader social and economic trends – as these drivers change so may the character of the return migrants. For example, in terms of economic trends there has been a significant transformation in work practices. Recent developments in IT and communications technology allow people to live some distance from their main place of employment. The location of employment is also influenced by changing government views on the centralisation or decentralisation of publicly funded services (O'Connor, Stimson & Taylor 1998). Education and family-related moves are influenced by another range of factors including increasing participation in tertiary education, changes in the age at which young people leave home and changes in the age at marriage or formation of partnerships (McDonald 1995). The introduction of compulsory superannuation and the associated increase in self-funding of retirement offers greater lifestyle options for people as they leave the labour force.

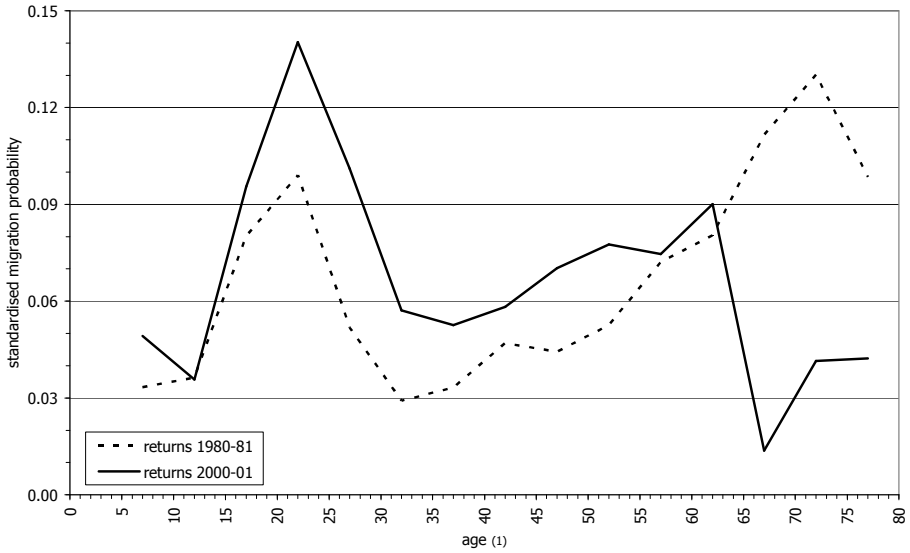
It might be expected therefore that the characteristics which are found to influence returns in the early twenty first century are somewhat different to those that were most relevant in the early 1980s. A comparison has been made of microdata from the 1981

and 2001 Censuses to determine if migrant selectivity has indeed altered over the two decades.

## *7.1. Age profiles*

The age profile of people who returned to the same dwelling during 1980-1981 differs to that of returns made during 2000-2001 (Figure 8). Both profiles show a peak at 22 years of age but the second, bigger return peak seen in 1980-1981 for migrants aged in their early seventies was not evident in the age profile for people who return home during 2000-2001. Further, the probability of making a return move increased between the two intervals for all ages under 55 years while the reverse occurred for migrants aged 65 or older. Such age profile changes suggest a shift in the relative significance of the different explanations for a return move (Table 1).

**Figure 8: Standardised migration probabilities by age, Australia, returns to the same dwelling 1980-1981 and 2000-2001**




(1) Age at mid-point of migration interval.
Source: 1981 and 2001 Census CURFs

## *7.2. Other migrant characteristics*

A comparison of univariate analyses (Table 5 and Table 9) along with migration probabilities (Table 10) reveals that the character of migrants returning to the same dwelling has altered over time. First, employment-related reasons for return have become more significant over time. Labour force participation for migrants returning home during 1980-1981 (66%) was lower than in 2000-2001 (73%). This partly reflects differences in age structure, with more returnees in the older non-working age groups in 1981. The expected dominance of managers and professionals was not evident among workers who returned home during 1980-1981. They were far more likely to have been a tradesperson or labourer. Return migration propensities for managers and professionals have increased over time, but they still remain lower than migrants in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations (Table 10). Workers in many industries, notably transformative, distributive and producer industries also showed an increased propensity to return. This reflects a transition in labour market dynamics from one of job stability where job changes were few to one where job changes are expected. Workers are now also more likely to move over long distances in response to changing economic conditions and employment opportunities, so employment-related return moves are also more expected now than in the past. But government administration and defence workers are the

exception to this pattern. With a centralisation of many government agencies or services and less movement of defence personnel between military installations public servants are now less likely to take job transfers and make a subsequent planned return.

**Table 9: Attributes of migrants returning to the same dwelling, Australia, 1980-1981**

| Characteristic | Return to same dwelling | | Characteristic | Return to same dwelling | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Per cent (%) | | Number | Per cent( %) |
| **Age** (1) | | | **Labour force status** (2) | | |
| 5-14 | 103 | 11.9 | Employed | 442 | 57.8 |
| 15-24 | 296 | 34.1 | Unemployed | 62 | 8.1 |
| 25-34 | 180 | 20.7 | Not in labour force | 261 | 34.1 |
| 35-44 | 78 | 9.0 | Total | | 100.0 |
| 45-54 | 52 | 6.0 | | | |
| 55-64 | 61 | 7.0 | **Occupation** (3) | | |
| 65 & over | 98 | 11.3 | Managers & professionals | 106 | 25.5 |
| Total | 868 | 100.0 | Tradespeople | 76 | 18.3 |
| | | | Clerical & service workers | 146 | 35.1 |
| **Sex** (1) | | | Production & transport | 25 | 6.0 |
| Female | 441 | 50.8 | Labourer & related worker | 63 | 15.1 |
| Male | 427 | 49.2 | Total | | 100.0 |
| Total | | 100.0 | | | |
| | | | **Industry** (3) | | |
| **Marital status** (1) | | | Transformative | 95 | 23.5 |
| Never married | 436 | 50.2 | Government admin/defence | 26 | 6.4 |
| Married | 305 | 35.1 | Consumer | 88 | 21.8 |
| Divorced | 42 | 4.8 | Distributive | 107 | 26.5 |
| Separated | 33 | 3.8 | Agriculture | 24 | 5.9 |
| Widowed | 52 | 6.0 | Mining | 7 | 1.7 |
| Total | | 100.0 | Personal | 24 | 5.9 |
| | | | Producer | 33 | 8.2 |
| **Post-school qualifications** (2) | | | Total | | 100.0 |
| Postgraduate degree | 7 | 1.0 | | | |
| Bachelor's degree | 45 | 6.7 | **Annual Income** (2) | | |
| Other post-school | 136 | 20.3 | Under $2,000 | 125 | 17.1 |
| No qualifications | 483 | 72.0 | $2,001-4,000 | 149 | 20.4 |
| Total | | 100.0 | $4,001-10,000 | 238 | 32.6 |
| | | | $10,001-15,000 | 137 | 18.8 |
| **Student status** (2) | | | Over $15,000 | 81 | 11.1 |
| Not attending | 619 | 88.2 | Total | | 100.0 |
| Full-time student | 44 | 6.3 | | | |
| Part-time student | 39 | 5.5 | **Dwelling tenure** (1) (4) | | |
| Total | | 100.0 | Owned/being purchased | 547 | 68.7 |
| | | | Rented | 249 | 31.3 |
| **Year qualified** (2) | | | Total | | 100.0 |
| Prior to 1976 | 82 | 55.4 | | | |
| 1976 – 1979 | 39 | 26.4 | | | |
| 1980 – 1981 | 27 | 18.2 | | | |
| Total | | 100.0 | | | |

(1) All persons aged 5 years and older. (2) Population aged 15 years and over.
(3) Persons aged 15 years and over, employed in the labour force.
(4) Excludes persons enumerated in non-private dwellings.
Source: 1981 Census CURF

Education-related returns have become more important. Students were a more prominent group among those returning home during 2000-2001 than during 1980-1981, although their overall return propensity has not changed significantly over the 20 year period. These patterns reflect of greater overall participation in post-school education and training in Australia. More than one in five migrants who returned home during 2000-2001 have a tertiary qualification, compared with only 8 per cent twenty years earlier.

**Table 10: Migration probabilities for selected migrant characteristics, Australia, returns to same dwelling, 1980-1981 and 2000-2001**

| Characteristic | Migration probability (%), returns to same dwelling [1] | | Characteristic | Migration probability (%), returns to same dwelling [1] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1980-81 | 2000-01 | | 1980-81 | 2000-01 |
| **Age[2]** | | | **Labour force [3]** | | |
| 5-14 | 1.07 | 1.25 | Employed | 1.76 | 2.16 |
| 15-24 | 2.84 | 3.56 | Unemployed | 3.29 | 4.20 |
| 25-34 | 1.29 | 2.30 | Non-labour force | 2.02 | 2.17 |
| 35-44 | 1.19 | 1.58 | | | |
| 45-54 | 1.49 | 2.12 | **Occupation [4]** | | |
| 55-64 | 2.34 | 2.34 | Managers & professionals | 1.59 | 1.93 |
| 65 & over | 3.43 | 0.92 | Tradespeople | 1.62 | 2.32 |
| | | | Clerical & service workers | 1.84 | 2.44 |
| **Sex [2]** | | | Production & transport | 1.24 | 1.36 |
| Males | 1.80 | 2.21 | Labourers | 2.24 | 2.82 |
| Females | 1.71 | 2.04 | | | |
| | | | **Industry [4]** | | |
| **Marital status [1]** | | | Transformative | 1.50 | 2.29 |
| Never married | 2.15 | 3.97 | Government admin & defence | 1.56 | 0.97 |
| Married | 1.28 | 1.33 | Consumer | 1.82 | 2.25 |
| Separated | 2.94 | 2.58 | Distributive | 1.71 | 2.19 |
| Divorced | 1.52 | 2.20 | Agriculture | 2.52 | 3.44 |
| Widowed | 2.87 | 2.45 | Mining | 1.98 | 2.33 |
| | | | Personal | 2.30 | 2.51 |
| **Individual income [3] [5]** | | | Producer | 1.44 | 1.82 |
| First quintile | 1.65 | 2.64 | | | |
| Second quintile | 2.82 | 2.58 | **Post-school qualifications [3]** | | |
| Third quintile | 2.47 | 6 | Postgraduate degree/diploma | 0.96 | 0.48 |
| Fourth quintile | 1.46 | 1.99 | Bachelor's degree | 2.68 | 2.72 |
| Fifth quintile | 1.29 | 1.48 | Other post-school qualification | 1.51 | 2.29 |
| | | | No qualifications | 1.94 | 2.02 |
| **Student [3]** | | | | | |
| Student | 2.06 | 2.01 | **Year qualification gained** | | |
| Not attending | 1.82 | 2.17 | More than five years ago [6] | 1.27 | 1.85 |
| | | | Recent graduate [6] | 2.11 | 2.74 |
| **Dwelling tenure [2]** | | | New graduate [6] | 3.21 | 3.81 |
| Owned/being purchased | 1.99 | 2.48 | | | |
| Rented | 1.31 | 1.52 | | | |

(1) Number of return moves per 100 population at risk.
(2) All persons aged 5 years and older. (3) Population aged 15 years and over.
(4) Persons aged 15 years and over, employed in the labour force.
(5) Refer to Table 5 and **Error! Reference source not found.** for income levels.
(6) Recent graduates completed studies 3-5 years prior to census; new graduates completed studies in 2 years prior to census.
Source: 1981 CURF and 2001 Basic CURF

There are signs that family-oriented moves have become more common among young adults. The propensity for new and recent graduates to return home increased between 1980-1981 and 2000-2001. This may also indicate that post school travel was more common during the late 1990s that the late 1970s. Return moves relating to ageing, on the other hand, appear to be waning. Widowers appeared less likely to return to a previous address in 2000-2001 than two decades earlier, and there were proportionally fewer non-working migrants in the older age groups. Finally, return migrant incomes have become more polarised. With professionals and managers, new graduates and the unemployed all showing increased propensities to return, this group is now a melange of both high and low income earners.

## *7.3. Comparing models of migrant selectivity*

Modelling the character of people who returned to the same dwelling during 1980-1981, in a manner similar to that of Section 6 gives few definitive results. Looking first at all migrants, their marital status was the strongest predictor of returning home. Never married migrants were far more likely to make such a move than married migrants (Table 11). Marital status was also an important predictor of return for the different labour force groups. Being married increased the odds of returning home for working migrants and those not in the labour force, while being separated, divorced, or widowed increased the odds of return if the migrant was also unemployed. Labour force status in itself also appeared to predict a return to the same dwelling. Working migrants or those not in the labour force were far less likely to return than the unemployed. Housing tenure was the only other common defining characteristic, with tenants showing lower odds of returning to a previous address than owner occupiers. As noted earlier, this characteristic is associated with the process of migration rather than being an attribute of the migrants themselves.

**Table 11: Outputs of binary logistic regression models for selected groups of migrants returning to the same dwelling, Australia, 1980-1981**

| Variable | Category | Returns to same dwelling (1) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Odds Ratio | 95% CI |
| **All migrants** | | | |
| Marital status | Never Married | 4.48 | 2.95 - 6.83 |
| Labour force status | Employed | 0.24 | 0.12 - 0.49 |
| | Not in labour force | 0.34 | 0.15 - 0.77 |
| Tenure | Rent | 0.53 | 0.36 - 0.80 |
| **Working migrants** | | | |
| Age | 15-24 | 2.52 | 1.22 - 5.23 |
| Marital status | Never married | 4.03 | 2.53 - 6.42 |
| Tenure | Rent | 0.52 | 0.32 - 0.83 |
| **Unemployed migrants** | | | |
| Marital status | Separated, divorced or widowed | 24.8 | 1.04 - 592.9 |
| Tenure | Rent | 0.13 | 0.02 - 0.92 |
| **Non-labour force migrants (2)** | | | |
| Age | 25-34 | 0.18 | 0.05 - 0.72 |
| Marital status | Never married | 13.52 | 4.12 - 44.37 |

(1) Population aged 15 years and over.
(2) Neither working nor actively seeking work.
Reference categories: 35-54 years, female, married, annual income $2000-$3999, graduated prior to 1976, not in labour firce, owner/occupier.
Source: 1981 CURF

There were also signs of unique age selection for particular migrant groups. Working migrants were more likely to return home during 1980-1981 if they were aged 15-24 years or were unmarried. By contrast, for returnees not in the labour force, being aged 25-34 years reduced the likelihood of return.

A comparison of the models identifying the key predictors of returns made during the 1980-1981 and 2000-2001 periods reveals a shift in return migrant selection. Age has become a more prominent predictor of return. On the other hand while marital status and labour force status were important in 1980-1981 they have declined in importance as predictors for people returning home during 2000-2001. In both cases tenure was a strong predictor of returning home, with tenant always having lower odds of returning to the same dwelling. These patterns indicate that the reasons for return may indeed evolve over time.

## 8. Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter explored the underlying causes of return migration through the use of census-based migrant characteristics, which by their very nature are inferential in explaining return migration selectivity. The reasons for making a return move were framed in four dimensions – economic reasons, education-related, family-oriented and retirement-related reasons.

Economic reasons, as seen through attachment to the labour force, are a strong force motivating people to make a return move. Two groups of migrants make such returns. The first are young working adults and tertiary qualified workers, intimating that returns form part of the complex migration circuits undertaken by younger professionals as part of their career progression. However the impact of career cycles on the propensity to return is less than expected, with non-professional workers also featuring among this group. Long distance moves may no longer be the domain of select occupations, with greater return propensities reflecting a general freeing up of the job market. The second group to make employment-related returns, the unemployed, are over-represented among returnees, especially the young. This group has been previously ascribed to "returns as failures" but in practice it reflects the life stage of young adults as they complete their education and move into the labour force, while at the same time transform from being a dependent child to independent adult.

Migrants not in the labour force have other motives for returning, and the dominance of youth indicates that education and family-related reasons play an important role in return migration. As expected, education-related moves were difficult to identify but there are indications that the support offered by family during times of transition between school and employment or between jobs has a significant influence on the high level of return seen among the young. The data shows little evidence of return moves for other family-oriented reasons, such as relationship dissolutions or providing care and support for relatives. This could reflect the mobility of other family members who were previously left behind, with families reunited through moves other than a return. Also, the return of the young after a marriage breakup (Young 1987, 1996) may now be less likely to occur as Australians are now older and more independent when they marry. The other dimension that did not feature as prominently as expected, particularly during 2000-2001 was returns at older ages. There is a substantial movement of retirees from metropolitan centres to regional areas in Australia and therefore some degree of return movement would be expected. The lack of evidence for this is puzzling but it could be attributed to the development of services and infrastructure that has occurred in tandem with population growth in regional centres since the early 1980s. Increasing life expectancy,

improved health at older ages and a fundamental change in the care of the aged may have also resulted in a drop in their likelihood of making a return move.

A second aspect of the conceptual framework was the differentiation between people who made a planned versus an unplanned return. The differences between planned and unplanned returns were not as expected. People who made unplanned returns do not fit with the character of "returns as failures". They may have been more likely to rent than those who returned to the same dwelling but this is more an indication of the unplanned nature of their return than their financial capacity to own their own home. They may also have been more likely to be separated or divorced, but can not be seen as a disadvantaged group.

Two key conclusions are drawn from this paper. Fiirst, return migrants are not a disadvantaged homogeneous group as suggested by the "returns as failures" hypothesis. Rather they are a multi-faceted group whose character depends on whether or not the move was preplanned and the reasons that triggered the return. Second, the character of return migrants has changed over time in line with broader social and economic trends.

A number of questions still remain unanswered. Census variables did not readily measure all four dimensions used to explain return migration. In particular it is not clear how family-oriented and retirement-related reasons influence a return move. Nor do we know if more than one of these four dimensions has influenced the decision. The analysis presented in this paper indicates that economic and education related-reasons have a significant influence on the decision to return, but the extent to which a change in employment state or the completion of education prompts a return or vice versa has yet to be established. By employing other research methods or exploring other data sources the findings presented in this paper can be built on in more creative ways to reveal more about the underlying events or drivers that trigger a return move.

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