

Post-Migration Commuting Behavior Among Urban to Rural Migrants in England and Wales

By

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INTRODUCTION

England and Wales have experienced continuous counterurbanization since 1931 (Champion, 2003). In each decade between 1931 and 1991, small cities grew faster than intermediate sized cities which outpaced London and the nation's other dominant metropolises. Moreover, while this trend surfaced earlier in some regions than in others, by the 1970's all regions were experiencing counterurbanization. More recent data show a revival of population growth in England's largest category of cities, but this rebound is largely due to growth in the London metropolis and to reduced rates of loss in most other metropolitan counties (Champion 2004). Moreover, smaller cities and rural areas continue to grow faster than their larger counterparts. In fact, as Champion and Sheppard (2006) have shown, rural districts grew by 5.7 pct. between 1993 and 2003 compared with 2.5 pct for urban districts, and they contributed well over half of England's population growth during this recent period¹.

Internal migration from more to less highly urbanized areas and to rural areas is the principal dynamic accounting for England's counterurbanization.² Urban-rural migration, however, is not equally likely at all ages. Data from the 2001 census show that urban to rural migration is especially high at retirement and pre-retirement ages, during prime working and child rearing ages (30-44), and among children who

¹ This analysis used official population estimates disaggregated by the six fold urban-rural classification now used by DEFRA for policy analysis and administration.

² This is true in most other OECD countries.

accompany their parents (Champion and Sheppard 2006). Moreover, among labor market in-migrants to rural areas research has shown that professionals, managers and petit bourgeoisie are especially prominent (Fielding 1998). While rural retirement migration has been recognized for some time (*Rees 1992*), the working age dimension is a more recently recognized phenomenon. Accordingly, while counterurbanization has a distinct association with population ageing, it also affects labor market organization, and family process.

Previous Research on Rural Commuting in England

Scholars have observed that rural areas lack sufficient job opportunities to fully utilize their resident workforces, resulting in relatively high out-commuting (Schindegger and Krajasits 1997). Frost (2006) examined 2001 Census work travel data and showed that out-commuting was especially high for less sparse rural areas. For example, in less sparse rural towns, 52% of employed residents were shown to work in various components of the urban system. In contrast, Frost (2006) showed that the dominant sources of employment are more local in sparse rural areas. This heterogeneity within the rural category itself dampens the overall rate of rural out-commuting and supports Boyle et al's (2001) observation that rural areas were not experiencing a large scale exodus of out-commuters.³ Be that as it may, most researchers agree long distance commuting is more prevalent among rural workers.

A substantial amount of research in England has focused on commuting behavior. Green and Owen (2006) and Green (1999) have conducted comparative analyses on the composition of long distance commuting. Using data from the 1995 Labour Force

³ Boyle and his colleagues used 1991 census data, and were not able to disaggregate the rural sector as finely as Frost (who used DEFRA's new 6 category rural classification scheme)

Survey and from the 2001 Census of Population, they showed that long distance commuters are more likely to be male, permanent and full time employees, managers and professionals, and persons who have not moved recently. Green also conducted case studies focused on dual career households. She observed that there is a strong preference among dual career couples to locate their residence in strategic rural locations where long distance commuting to a number of urban labor markets can reduce the need for future migration (Green 1997). Coombes and Raybould (2001) conducted a multi-level analysis to examine the effects of residence type on commuting length controlling for worker characteristics. Their individual level findings are similar to those reported by Green (1999) and Green and Owen (2006). Short distance commuters are more likely to have low income, no car, and to be minority group members. Controlling for these individual attributes, they showed that short commutes were most likely among workers who lived near thriving employment centers with no job shortfalls in the area or nearby.

Research has also shown that average commuting distance has increased recently. (Frost 2006).⁴ However, it is not known whether most people actually travel further. It could be that most people's trip length remains unchanged, but that a minority have a much longer journey to work, and/or that the minority who travel farther has grown as a proportion of the labor market's total workforce. Accordingly, it is important to disaggregate stream-level analysis to examine the variability of journey to work behavior within the labor force. It is necessary to examine the composition of commuting within particular types of commuting streams to account for the variability trip length associated with age, gender, occupation, family type, migration status, and other factors.

⁴ Increased average commuting distance has also been noted in the US (Tigges and Fuguitt 2003).

While we know quite a bit about commuting in general, and rural commuting in particular, the interrelationship between migration and commuting is not well understood. Accordingly, given the sustained migration from urban to rural areas, and the fact that a significant share of recent rural in-migrants are workers, research on post-migration employment is an important and under-researched topic (Tigges and Fuguitt 2003). Our review of the literature on commuting identified only one empirical analysis of commuting among recent in-migrants to rural areas in England. Green (1999a) showed that rural in-migrants face a number of constraints to employment including physical accessibility, and a limited range of local jobs matched to their employment skills and occupational experiences. She concluded that rural in-migrants who plan to maintain their previous occupational levels must be prepared to commute long distances. Otherwise, they have to “trade down” or “make do.” Echoing her previous study (1997) she found that rural in-migrants tend to locate in strategic locations where long distance commuting options to several urban labor markets are present.

Objectives and Preliminary Descriptive/Comparative Analysis

This paper proposes to begin filling the gap in knowledge about employment among recent rural in-migrants. Using the Controlled Access Microdata Sample (CAMS) of the 2001 Census of England and Wales, we examine employment status and commuting length among employed persons who moved from urban to rural areas between 2000 and 2001. We will compare the employment and occupational status of recent in-migrants and longer term rural residents. Then, focusing on employed migrants and longer term rural residents, we use multivariate analysis to examine the individual

and community-level determinants of variability of commuting distance. Moreover, we examine whether these differences vary by type of rural community people live in.

While we will not have access to the CAMS data until the end of September, we have been able to conduct some preliminary analysis with the CAMS *test file*. It should be emphasized that these data are simply provided to assist in the process of research planning and are subject to substantial perturbation. None-the-less, they permit us to provide some information about urban to rural migration and commuting distance. It is not appropriate, however, to conduct multivariate analysis with these test data.

[table 1 here]

The data in table 1 show that regardless of settlement size, about 10 pct. of employed persons living in nonmetropolitan areas moved there in the previous year. While 10 pct. may seem small, it should be remembered that the migration question asked in the 2001 census of England and Wales uses a 1 year look back. Accordingly, 10 pct. is not insignificant. These data also show that the majority of recent migration among employed persons is short distance, although in-movers to the most rural settlements tend to be from somewhat farther away. Accordingly, while in-movers are not a large proportion of workers in rural settlements, they are sufficiently numerous to play an important role in rural economies.

[table 2 here]

The data in table 2 examine the journey to work among employed residents of nonmetropolitan England and Wales. These data show that in-migrants are slightly less likely to work locally and slightly more likely to travel longer distances to work, but the migrant vs non-migrant differences are not large. Moreover, these same slight differences

are apparent when examining the relationship between migration and commuting distance among employed persons who live in more vs less highly urbanized nonmetropolitan places.

The bottom panel of table 2 examines whether the distance employed rural in-movers migrated is associated with the distance of their subsequent journey to work. These data show that local movers⁵ are more likely to work close to home than persons who moved to their current residence from places that are 20 km to 99km distant, and conversely, longer distance rural in-migrants are more likely to commute 20 or more km to work. However, the relationship between migration distance and commuting distance is not linear. The data show that employees who moved to rural areas from distances of 100+ km travel shorter distances to work than their counterparts who moved 20-99km. These patterns hold in rural settlements of less than 10,000 population and in more highly urbanized nonmetropolitan places. Finally, these data show that rural in-migrants from outside of England and Wales work close to home. Their journey to work is more similar to that of non-migrants than in-migrants from elsewhere in England.

These data show that there is substantial variability in commuting distance among rural in-migrants, and that there is merit in examining whether this variability is associated with the size of rural place persons moved to, the distance they moved from, and/or their social and demographic characteristics. By examining these and other issues, our analysis will contribute to knowledge of post-migration economic behavior among persons who move from urban to rural areas in England and Wales. This is an important issue for scholars and policy makers who consider the impact of in-migration on rural

⁵ The < 2 km commuting distance category does not include at home, or no fixed work place.

economic and community development, fuel usage, various environmental issues associated with long distance commuting, and rural transport infrastructure.

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Table 1: Migrants as a Share of the Nonmetropolitan Population,
England and Wales, 2001

| | All Nonmetropolitan Areas | Urban Areas of 10,000+ | Settlements under 10,000 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Pct. lived elsewhere in 2000 | 10.3 | 10.7 | 9.1 |

Source: CAMS, 2001 Census of England and Wales

Table 2: Association between Urban-Rural Migration and Commuting Distance, England and Wales, 2001

| | Distance to Work | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------|--------|
| | <10 km ¹ | 10-20 km | 20+ km |
| <u>Urban areas of 10,000+</u> | | | |
| Migrants ² | 67.3% | 18.3% | 14.4% |
| Non-migrants | 62.3% | 19.7% | 18.0% |
| <u>Settlements under 10,000</u> | | | |
| Migrants | 64.7% | 18.6% | 16.6% |
| Non-migrants | 58.3% | 20.0% | 21.8% |
| <u>Urban areas of 10,000+</u> | | | |
| Migrated 5-19 km | 55.2% | 28.1% | 16.7% |
| Migrated 20-99 km | 42.3% | 18.8% | 38.9% |
| Migrated 100+ km | 56.3% | 19.3% | 24.4% |
| Migrated from abroad | 69.8% | 16.5% | 13.7% |
| <u>Settlements under 10,000</u> | | | |
| Migrated 5-19 km | 52.9% | 28.1% | 19.0% |
| Migrated 20-99 km | 37.3% | 21.3% | 41.4% |
| Migrated 100+ km | 48.4% | 20.7% | 30.8% |
| Migrated from abroad | 62.0% | 14.8% | 23.2% |

Source: CAMS, 2001 Census of England and Wales

¹ Does not include at works at home or no fixed work place

² Internal migrants only