

# Household migrations: The link between household and housing

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## Abstract

A methodology allowing distinction between individual and household migration is proposed. Individual migration involves a person independently from the household in which he/she was living for joining another household or building a new one. At the opposite, household migration involves all the persons composing a given household. All the household members experience the same migration so that no change of household is observed. Both types of migrations result from different decision making processes. Moreover these two types of migrations have different consequences on housing. In the more simple cases, individual migration does not make a dwelling free of occupation and does not need an empty dwelling for new occupation. At the opposite this is the case for household migration. At individual, local and regional levels, the distinction between individual and household migration brings a lot of clarifications in the link between household and housing helping to forecast housing needs.

According to the UN census recommendations, the place of usual residence is the place where the person spent most of the daily period of rest. That means that through the concept of the place of usual residence a housing unit or dwelling may be assigned to all individuals in censuses or in population registration systems. Migration is defined as a change of place of usual residence and therefore a change of dwelling. If all housing units would be occupied by a unique person, then every migration would empty a given dwelling and occupy another one previously empty. In fact migrations may be split in two main categories, **individual migration** where a person moves alone and **household migration** where all members of a given household move together at the same time to the same new place of residence. As such household migration is unique among demographic events as all members of the household do the same migration at the same time. Considering separately individual and household migrations will give the possibility to improve investigations on future housing needs by introducing information from household projections and trends in household migrations.

## Conceptualization of the link between household migration and housing needs

First of all we define the household as composed by all persons living together in the same housing unit. Household may be defined on an administrative base in population registration systems or through specific question asked in censuses or surveys. Basically the following rules are observed:

- private household have to be distinguished from collective household like nursing homes or religious communities (only private household have a person of reference or head of household);
- private household may include some persons who do not have a family link with the person of reference or head of household;
- in practice, more than one household may live in a given housing unit, just depending the way how precisely housing units are identified (by considering all flats in a given building and sometimes all rooms distinctly in a give house). For a matter of clarification we consider that a housing unit may be occupied by one and only one private household.
- a person living alone is considered as a specific household including only one person (which means that the migration of such a person will be considered as household migration).

Then we consider the following classification of migrations. First of all we have to consider separately emigrations and immigrations. For the former, the situation with the dwelling of origin will be considered while for the latter the dwelling of destination will be taken into consideration. We will define:

- **A household emigration** where all persons composing a given household (including one-person household for persons living alone) emigrate together at the same time and accordingly the dwelling is free for occupation.
- **An individual emigration** where a person within a given household composed by more than one person emigrate to occupy another housing unit either alone or joining the household of other person(s) already living there, the dwelling of origin being still occupied.
- **A household immigration** when all persons composing a given household immigrate together at the same time in a dwelling that was free of occupation.
- **An individual immigration** when a person immigrates in a dwelling to be part of a household already living in this dwelling.

## The link between migration and the availability and need of housing units

Following the above detailed rules, any household migration will make a housing unit empty and therefore available on the housing market. While no individual migration will do so as we have considered that the migration of a person living

alone is a household migration. So the availability of housing units may be easily captured and each housing unit becoming free for occupation may be characterized by the size of the leaving household and the age of the head of this household or person of reference.

What about the occupation of an empty housing unit at destination? From a destination viewpoint, either the housing unit was free of occupation or a household was living there and will incorporate the incoming persons in order to form a new household. In the first case an empty housing unit will be occupied why in the latter there is no change in the vacancy on the housing market.

The links between different type of migration and their impact on the housing market is summarized hereunder:

The more simple cases are:

- A household migration makes a housing unit free and occupies another one that was free of occupation.
- An individual migration which does not make the housing unit empty while the migrant will join an existing household so that no additional housing unit is needed.

Then more complex cases are:

- A household migrating to a housing unit for joining an existing household so that a housing unit is made free but no additional one is needed
- An individual migrating to a housing unit free for occupation so that an additional housing unit is used.

	Household emigration Origin dwelling becomes free (+ 1)	Individual emigration Origin dwelling is still occupied (0)
Household immigration Destination dwelling was free (-1)	Household emigration and immigration (0)	Individual emigration and Household immigration (-1)
Individual immigration Destination dwelling was already occupied (0)	Household emigration and Individual immigration (+1)	Individual emigration and immigration (0)

## The data used

We will consider the whole Belgian population, that means more than 10 millions individuals and 4 millions households, followed from 1991 to 2006 and identify both

individual and household migrations in a total of half million migrations per year, which means half million changes of dwelling either individually or for the whole household. The data source will be the *Registre National*, the centralized population register available in Belgium for scientific investigations for the period starting in 1991 and that include all changes of addresses and all changes in household composition.

### **The utility of this innovative approach**

At global level by drawing the interregional household migration matrix, only by considering the household migrations opposed to all other migrations. That will give an overall picture on the housing market in the country.

This methodology will allow to fix the propensity to move by age and sex with the distinction between individual and household migration (figure 1) but also to compare the propensity to move for each type of households (figure 2).

At local level this methodology will help understanding the evolution of the housing market by including the possibility to add information in order to distinguish existing housing unit and newly built housing units. The balance between household immigration and household emigrations will be directly linked with availability on the housing market (deaths of persons living alone also make a dwelling free for new occupation but this is not to be counted as household emigration).

At individual level, the reasons underlying individual migration are not the same as the ones supporting household migration in terms of decision-making process.

Finally the distinction of household migration allows identifying migrations that have no impact on the composition of the concerned household. All other migrations will change the structure of the concerned household more or less deeply including the start of an additional household or the suppression of an existing one.

Figure 1. Propensity to move by age and sex for individual and household migrants

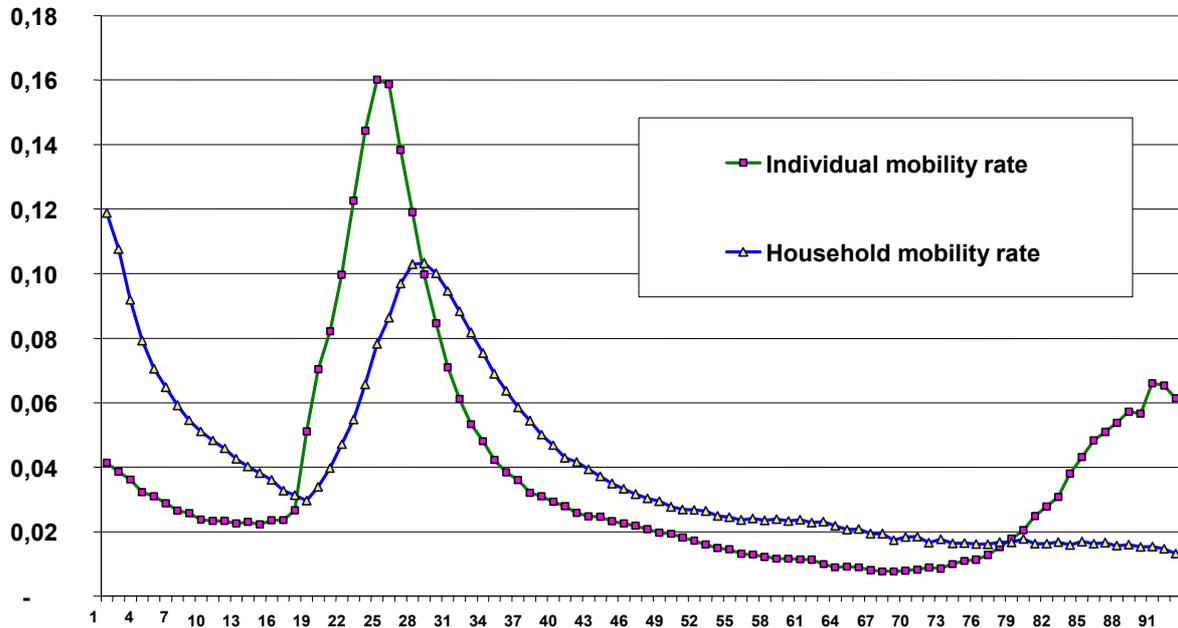


Figure 2. Proportion of household involved in household migrations and in individual migrations.

