INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION FROM ITALIAN REGIONS: OLD AND NEW DISPARITIES

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1. Introduction and aim

In the last decade of 1900, after the historical exodus that characterized the Twentieth century, when millions of Italians left the country especially towards transoceanic destinations (America, Argentina, Brazil), Italy became an immigration land. The first significant immigration wave, due to globalization on a world scale encouraged large movements from the South to the most industrialized countries of the world. In Italy, the primary historical settlements of foreign citizens occurred in the southern regions (thanks to their position on the Mediterranean Sea) and hence involved the Centre and the North, where the highest presence of foreigners is registered nowadays.

Also, the collapse of communism and the entry of Romania, Bulgaria, and Poland into the European Union in the early 2000s, led to a new wave of foreign immigration, that came from the eastern European countries.

The economic crisis of 2008 marked a slowdown in immigration (Bonifazi, 2013a); also, the persistence of the crisis on one hand, and the difficult situation of the Italian labor market on the other hand, produced an increase in emigration of both foreigners and Italians (Bonifazi, 2017). In fact, there has been a reversal trend known in the literature as the "new Italian emigration" (Gjergji, 2015; Pugliese, 2018; Sanfilippo, 2017).

In addition to the dichotomy "Country of immigration and emigration", Italy is characterized by a dualism between North and South playing two opposite roles in the dynamics of national mobility (Impicciatore and Strozza, 2016). Indeed, internal migration has always characterized the history of Italian demographic dynamics and its contribution to the population distribution across the country is still different by subnational level (Bonifazi, 1999; Bonifazi *et al.* 2021). However, the migration flows from the South to the North of Italy depend on the significant economic gap between these two broad areas of the country, that has been increasing over time. The central and northern regions are more dynamic than the South, and this affects the emigration patterns of the areas: short or medium-range movements characterize the Centre and the North, while long-range departures and

reallocations characterize the South (Impicciatore and Strozza, 2016): the development of industrial and economic activities in the Center-North has driven the economy of the entire country thus representing a job opportunity for the entire population.

However, important inequalities in the study of both internal and foreign migration have been observed by scholars (Bonifazi, 2009) in terms of emigrants' characteristics, especially gender differences, with the male component more inclined to move than the female one (Reynaud and Tucci 2014). The continuous internal and international emigration from the South, accompanied by "slow" mobility, has led to an exacerbation of the economic delay of the South which seems to be aggravated by important gender differences: although the increasing share of graduated emigrants, compared to men, women show a lower propensity to leave their place of origin. It is worth noting that the economic crisis of 2008, seems to have partly changed emigration from the South of Italy: compared to the rest of the country, for people moving from the more developed regions, i.e., the Northern ones, movements towards other nations seem to be a useful tool to cope with the economic consequences of the crisis (Strozza and Tucci 2018).

The aim of the present work is to analyze the evolution of the main differences in Italian (internal and international) emigration over the last 25 years, by identifying the different migration types. In particular, we focus on the major areas of origin in order to highlight the role of the South in migration dynamics and investigate the evolution of the geographical gap in migration over time. The analysis also examines gender differences: the lower propensity of women to migrate compared to men shows the persistence of a gender disadvantage that is reflected in the economic delay of the South.

2. Data and methods

For the purpose of the analysis, we use data on residence change both among Italian municipalities and from/towards other countries over the period 1995-2019. This information is annually provided by ISTAT (Institute for National Statistics) through the Survey "Registrations and cancellations on the Population Registry due to changes of residence across Italian municipalities and from and towards other nations"[1]. In particular, the Survey, which has been carried out since 1955, offers the database for all the analyses on domestic and international migration flows, and allows researchers to measure their intensity and direction. In addition, the Survey

[1] Iscrizioni e Cancellazioni all'Anagrafe per Trasferimento di Residenza tra i comuni italiani e da e per l'estero.

model (APR.4) contains data on migrants' major socio-demographic characteristics (such as gender, marital status, citizenship, age and level of education).

The observation unit is municipality, and we consider five geographical subdivisions (NUTS1): North-West, North-East, Centre, South, and Islands. We have chosen to name these broad regions *macro areas*[2] and, in order to show territorial differences, to consider the South and the Islands as a single unit, i.e., Mezzogiorno. Indeed, these two areas have always had similar historical migration paths and are often considered as a single geographical area in studies on Italian migration. Furthermore, splitting the country in different broad regions allows us to classify the movements as intra-provincial, inter-provincial, intra-macro areas and inter-macro areas according to the municipality of origin and destination. This categorization can be considered as a valid proxy for the distance of movements, so that changes of residence within provinces can be assimilated to short and medium-range movements, while those between intra macro area and between macro areas to long-range movements and to very long-range movements respectively.

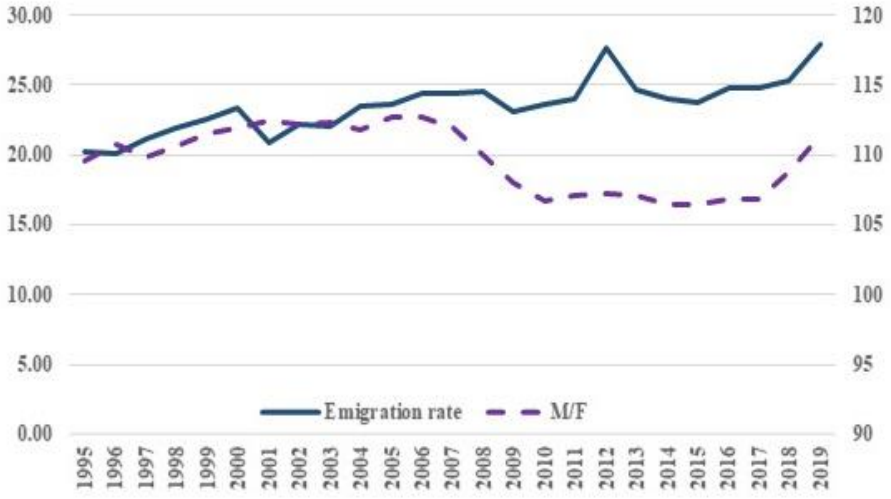
Finally, since the micro-level survey on individuals who change their residence (and are de-registered because of their move to other municipalities within the country or abroad), provides information on their age and year of birth, analyses by contemporaries and by generations are allowed. Specifically, we conduct a two-steps investigation. Firstly, we carry out a descriptive analysis by comparing emigration rates. Secondly, we run a Poisson regression model, where the dependent variable is the number of emigration flows, and controlling for year, sex, macro area (North-West, North-East, Centre, South and Islands), and type of move (intra-Provinces, intra-macro areas, inter-macro areas, abroad). Also, we run the model for all emigrants as a whole and for emigrants grouped by age class (20-24, 25-29, 30-34, and 35-39).

3. Results

As a first step, we conduct a descriptive analysis through rate comparison. As shown in Figure 1, (internal and international) emigration rates increased during the observation period, with a peak in 2012, while gender differences reduced over the second half of 2000 and slightly recovered in the last two years.

[2] In the text, the areas corresponding to NUTS1 are also named "broad regions", "broad areas", "macro areas", "macro geographical areas", "geographical subdivisions".

Figure 1 – *Emigration in Italy, 1995-2019 (Rates per 1,000 inhabitants).*

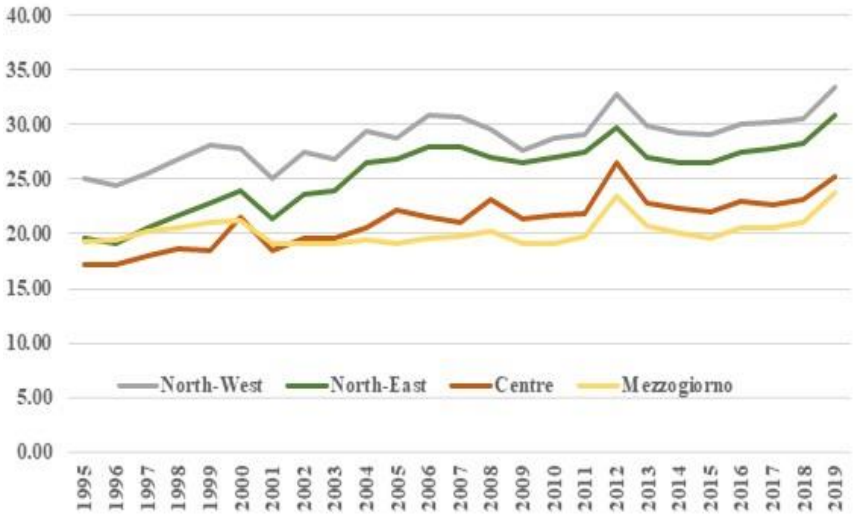


Source: Authors' elaboration on ISTAT data.

Between 1995 and 2019, the highest emigration rates were registered in the North of the country, especially North-West (Figure 2), and changes of residence occurred above all within the same province, while emigration abroad was the least observed type of relocation (Figure 3). This type of move is driven by traditional life paths (such as marriage or leaving own family of origin and choosing a better home), and not by real migration choices. Although the lowest values were registered for emigration abroad, it has been on the rise since 2010. Such an increase may be linked to the economic crisis, that produced unemployment thus encouraging emigration abroad (Bonifazi, 2013b). This is reflected in all the four broad Italian regions, although inter-macro areas movements are higher in the southern regions than in the rest of the country (Figure 4). Inter-provincial flows are less frequent in Mezzogiorno and this shows a lower economic opportunity to improve life conditions across this area (Bonifazi, 2009). At the beginning of the observation period, emigration towards foreign countries seems to be more frequent in the South of Italy than in the other regions; in more recent years, instead, the highest increase is observed in the central north area. This seems to confirm the hypothesis that people from the most developed regions of the country have coped with the economic crisis by leaving abroad (Strozza and Tucci, 2018). Since the northern and central regions are the most developed economic areas in Italy, the higher emigration rates towards foreign nations in these areas, compared

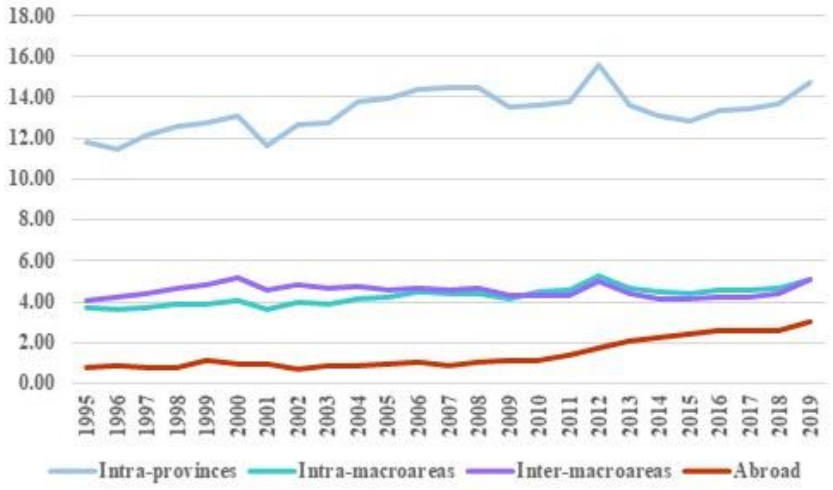
to the other macro areas, may reflect the difficulty to find better job opportunities in the rest of the country.

Figure 2 – *Emigration by macro area in Italy, 1995-2019 (Rates per 1,000 inhabitants).*



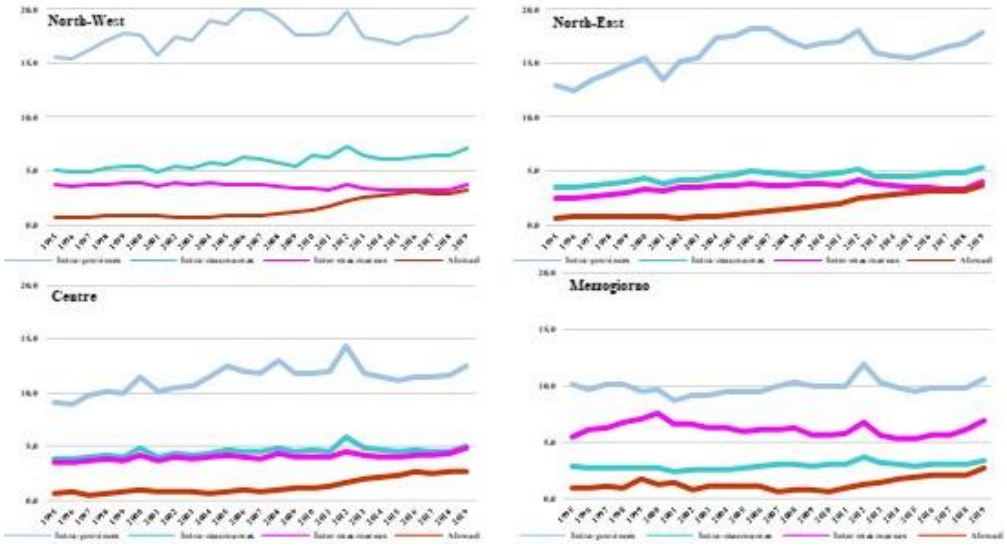
Source: Authors' elaboration on ISTAT data.

Figure 3 – *Emigration by type of move in Italy, 1995-2019 (Rates per 1,000 inhabitants).*



Source: Authors' elaboration on ISTAT data.

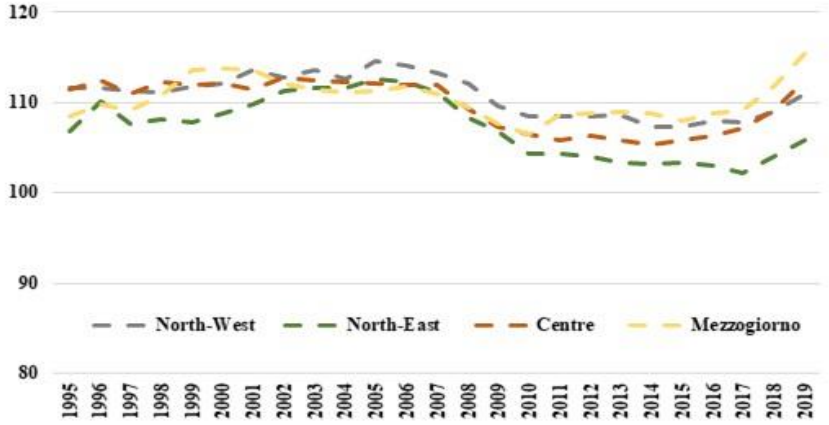
Figure 4 – *Emigration by type of move and macro area in Italy, 1995-2019 (Rates per 1,000 inhabitants).*



Source: Authors' elaboration on ISTAT data.

Over the last years of observation, an increase in the gender gap in emigration is detectable in all macro areas, with the highest values registered in the region of Mezzogiorno from 2014 afterwards (Figure 5).

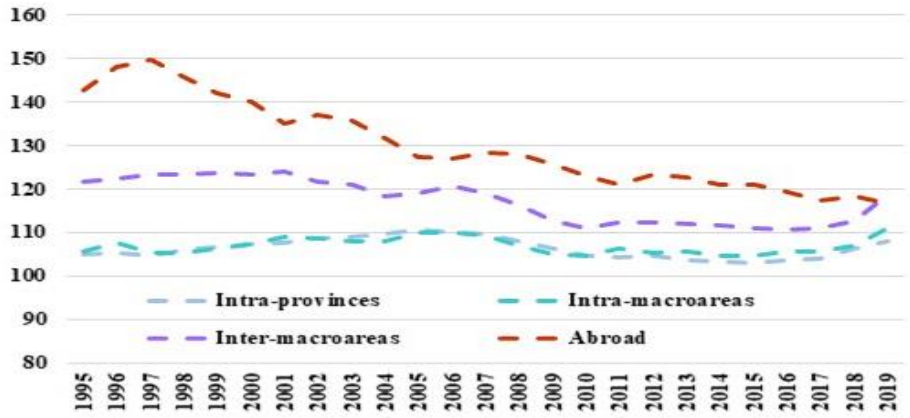
Figure 5 – *Emigration by gender (M/F) and macro area in Italy, 1995-2019 (Rates per 1,000 inhabitants).*



Source: Authors' elaboration on ISTAT data.

Data show that men emigrate more than women do, and this is observed for all the different types of movements (Figure 6). Smaller gender differences are observed especially in short-distance migration, but this may be linked to the different migration reasons. Short-distance migrations, as already noted, are driven by life paths and project shared by men and women. Long-distance migration, on the other hand, is driven by job opportunities and life improvement aims: this kind of choice usually characterizes men's life pattern, still marking a big gap in gender differences in our country. However, the highest gender gap concerns migration towards other countries, although a reduction in emigration rate abroad is recorded as well (Figure 6).

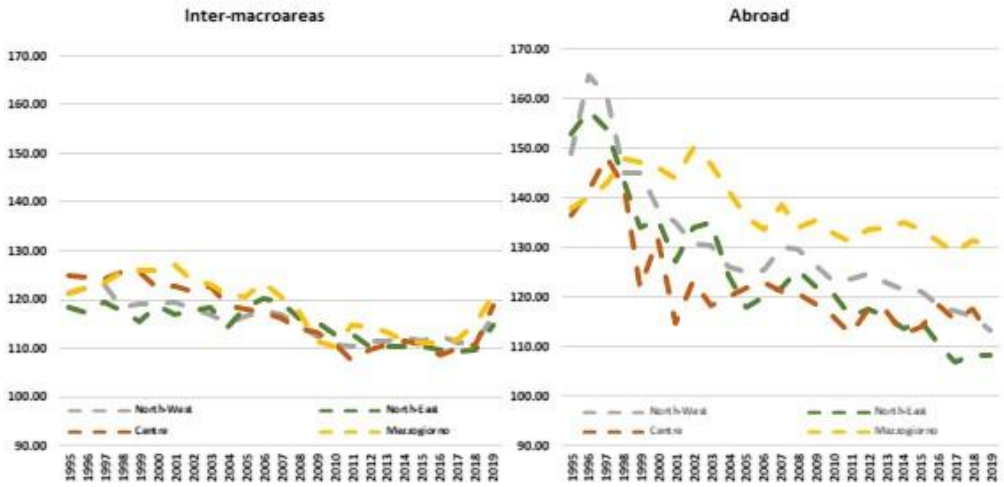
Figure 6 – *Emigration by gender (M/F) and type of move in Italy, 1995-2019 (Rates per 1,000 inhabitants).*



Source: Authors' elaboration on ISTAT data.

Also, people from Mezzogiorno show a higher gender gap in both inter-macro areas movements and reallocations abroad (Figure 7). But gender differences observed in migration towards other nations are narrowing in all the considered macro areas, although the decrease in the Mezzogiorno is much smaller than in the other areas. This shows that in the Mezzogiorno, women, despite being better educated than in the past, continue to have fewer opportunities than men.

Figure 7 – *Emigration by gender (M/F), type of move and macro area in Italy, 1995-2019 (Rates per 1,000 inhabitants).*



Source: Authors' elaboration on ISTAT data.

As a second step, we run a Poisson regression model to study emigration flows both for people as a whole and for those aged 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, and 35-39 (Tab. 1). Results of both models confirm the descriptive analysis.

Overall, emigration flows from Italy both intra macro area and towards other countries are increasing by year. Results show a gender gap in emigration, but considering the different age groups, we can see that for people aged 20-24, females emigrate more than males do. Also, as for the macro area of origin, compared to North-West, the analysis suggests a lower propensity to emigrate from the North-eastern and the central regions of the country, and a higher propensity to emigrate from the South and the Islands, which decreases by age (indeed, an opposite trend is observed for the flows of people aged 35-39). If we look at the type of move, instead, compared to the intra-Provinces changes of residence, flows within the same macro area and those towards other countries are less likely to have place, while reallocations among macro areas are more likely to happen, even if the analysis by age reveals opposite results for the classes 25-29, 30-34, and 35-39.

Interactions help interpreting the model output: Emigration flows of men aged 20-24 are not increasing over time.

Table 1 – *Results from Poisson Regression Model.*

Variable	All age groups	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39
Intercept	-17.750***	-33.430***	-17.580***	-21.880***	-23.640***
Year	0.004***	0.015***	0.007***	0.009***	0.010***
Sex (ref. Male)					
Female	-4.419***	9.736***	-8.845***	-13.950***	-15.880***
Geographical area (ref. North West)					
North East	-12.420***	-10.520***	-10.740***	-10.150***	-12.470***
Centre	-10.560***	-7.282***	-0.604***	-4.814***	-8.342***
South	9.698***	33.530***	18.260***	2.735***	-3.620***
Migration type (ref. Intra-provinces)					
Intra- macro areas	-12.240***	-9.248***	-15.770***	-20.880***	-21.950***
Inter- macro areas	13.410***	40.020***	-1.411***	-10.610***	-9.516***
Abroad	-120.500***	-131.000***	-169.300***	-147.000***	-122.100***
Year*sex	0.002***	-0.005***	0.005***	0.007***	0.008***
Year*North-East	0.006***	0.005***	0.005***	0.005***	0.006***
Year*Centre	0.005***	0.004***	0.000	0.002***	0.004***
Year*South	-0.005***	-0.017***	-0.009***	-0.002***	0.002***
Year*Intra-macro areas	0.006***	0.004***	0.007***	0.010***	0.010***
Year*Inter-macro areas	-0.007***	-0.020***	0.000	0.005***	0.004***
Year*Abroad	0.059***	0.064***	0.083***	0.072***	0.060***
Sex*North-East	0.033***	0.022***	0.039***	0.026***	0.020***
Sex*Centre	0.011***	-0.137***	-0.010***	0.035***	0.042***
Sex*South	0.111***	-0.203***	-0.101***	-0.001	0.028***
Sex*Intra-macro areas	-0.005***	-0.121***	-0.034***	0.013***	-0.013***
Sex*Inter-macro areas	-0.097***	-0.473***	-0.299***	-0.082***	-0.025***
Sex*Abroad	-0.172***	-0.462***	-0.341***	-0.160***	-0.098***

Source: Authors' elaboration on ISTAT data

4. Conclusions and discussion

Gender differences in emigration are still detectable: the male propensity to emigrate is higher than the female one. However, the descriptive analysis shows that, overall, the gap sharply decreased between 2007 and 2010 while started increasing again in 2017.

Flows from the North-West have always been higher than those from the other macro areas of the country. Flows from the Mezzogiorno started being the lowest in the early 2000s; however, for both genders, an increase is observed in the last observation years.

Intra-Provinces changes of residence are the most favourite reallocations, while slight differences between intra and inter-macro areas flows are observed.

Considering the macro area of origin, instead, over the observation period, inter-macro areas change of residence are higher than intra-macro areas ones only for the Mezzogiorno for both males and females.

Overall, the regression analysis confirms that, in Italy, differences in emigration by gender, macro area of origin, and type of move still exist.

However, results suggest considering the role of age in shaping emigration flows in terms of both the different Italian macro areas of origin and the type of residence change (by gender).

Emigration keeps being a significant phenomenon with not only demographic but also economic and social implications. The investigation of emigration evolution as well as the analysis of the characteristics of those who emigrate allow policy makers to deeply understand the phenomenon thus helping them to choose and apply appropriate policies also directed to reduce the gaps that we have emphasised in this work.

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SUMMARY

In Italy, internal migration has strongly contributed to the population distribution across the country, with different types of residence change and showing an important gender gap, with men moving more than women do. In particular, emigration from the southern regions has always been an important component of Italian emigration both towards other local divisions and towards other nations. The present paper aims at investigating Italian migration in terms of flows from five macro areas towards both the rest of the country and at international level. The analysis focuses on gender differences controlling for all the sociodemographic characteristics of emigrants, both Italians and foreigners.

We use ISTAT (Institute for National Statistics) data on residence change both among Italian departments and from/towards other countries for the period 1995-2019. In particular, we collect information about residence change by considering gender, type of move across the country (intra-province, intra-macro geographical area and inter-macro geographical area) and abroad, and macro-area of origin (North-West, North-East, Centre, South and Islands).

The first step is a descriptive analysis through emigration rate comparison. As a second step, we employ a Poisson regression model to analyse emigration flows within the country (in the same province and department, as well as among different provinces and departments) and from/towards other nations, by considering both Italian and foreigners, and controlling for year, sex, macro geographical area, and type of move. Also, we consider both all the respondents as a whole and people grouped by age class (20-24, 25-29, 30-34, and 35-39).

Results show that, in Italy, differences in emigration by gender, macro area of origin, and type of move still exist. However, the analysis suggests considering the role of age in shaping emigration flows in terms of both the different Italian macro areas of origin and the type of residence change (by gender).

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