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Research Article

Remain, leave, or return? Mothers' location continuity after separation in Belgium

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Contents

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Remain, leave, or return? Mothers' location continuity after separation in Belgium

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Abstract

BACKGROUND
Partnership dissolution can mark an extended period of residential instability for mothers and their children. Location continuity, i.e., the ability to stay in or return to the same neighbourhood after separation, is essential to reduce the negative consequences of separation.

OBJECTIVE
We focus on mothers' post-separation location continuity in the three years following separation and study the role of socioeconomic resources and local ties (to a home, neighbourhood, and region) in remaining in or returning to their pre-separation neighbourhood.

METHODS
Using linked Belgian Census (2001) and register data (2001–2006), we estimate multinomial logistic regression models (N = 25,802). Based on the occurrence, frequency, and destination of moves, we distinguish between high, moderate, and low degrees of location continuity. We also study the probability of remaining in, leaving, or returning to the pre-separation neighbourhood.

RESULTS
Mothers who live at their place of birth (a measure of local ties) tend to stay in or return to their pre-separation neighbourhood or region; if they have more socioeconomic resources they are more likely to remain in the family home. Mothers from disadvantaged backgrounds move further and more often.

CONCLUSION
If separated mothers lack socioeconomic resources and local ties, they are less likely to

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maintain location continuity. Policy programmes should target these women in order to provide better opportunities for separated mothers and their children.

CONTRIBUTION

We introduce the concept of post-separation location continuity and account for separation-induced as well as post-separation residential changes in the first three years after separation.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, separation and divorce rates have substantially increased in many countries, which not only means that individual life courses have become more diverse and non-linear, but also that people's residential biographies have become more complex (Thomas, Mulder and Cooke 2017a). Partnership dynamics and residential mobility[3] are strongly interrelated, as partnership formation or dissolution implies a move for at least one of the partners (Clark 2013; Dewilde 2008; Mulder 2006; Mulder and Lauster 2010). Separation-driven moves are usually urgent and rely on a restricted budget (Feijten 2005; Feijten and van Ham 2007, 2010; Mulder et al. 2012; Mulder and Wagner 2012). An unfavourable residential situation may imply further moves to re-adjust to pre-separation housing quality; for example, in terms of neighbourhood or area (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen 2008). Therefore, separation is likely to have long-term consequences for separated individuals' residential mobility (Mikolai and Kulu 2018a, 2018b).

When separating, people may have to leave the joint home, but they might not necessarily want to leave the place where they live (Mulder 1996; Mikolai and Kulu 2019). Most people feel attached to their environment (Gindes 1998) and a move may imply a change in housing circumstances, discontinuation of daily routines, and even a change in employment. Nevertheless, whereas for the separating adult a move may also appear advantageous, research on residential mobility after parental separation has unanimously shown that children fare worse if they move away from their earlier home (Braver, Ellman, and Fabricius 2003). A separation-driven move is psychologically disruptive and disorienting to children, because the loss of friends and familiar surroundings that are sources of support can hamper their adjustment to the family crisis (Tucker, Marx, and Long 1998; Austin 2008; Amato 2000). Residential mobility may have a negative effect on children, translating into, e.g., school behavioural

[3] Throughout this paper we use the term 'residential mobility' to describe a change in individuals' place of residence.

problems, less academic success, higher dropout rates, and lower well-being (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994). In fact, a large part of the detrimental effect of divorce on child outcomes can be explained by children's higher residential mobility (McLanahan and Sørensen 1984; Astone and McLanahan 1994; Simpson and Fowler 1994). Researchers and mental health professionals agree that after separation, location continuity, such as staying in the family home, in the same school, or at least in the same community, is advantageous for children (Gindes 1998; Hagan, MacMillan, and Wheaton 1996). Although joint custody is becoming increasingly common across some Western and Northern European countries, most children still stay with their mother after parental separation (for Europe see, for example, Bernardi and Mortelmans 2018; for Belgium see Sodermans, Matthijs, and Swicegood 2013). Therefore, it is especially relevant to study the post-separation residential situation of mothers and the determinants of their moving behaviour.

In this study we focus on mothers' location continuity; that is, whether a mother remains in the pre-separation neighbourhood[4] (by not moving or by moving within the same or to a nearby neighbourhood) or returns to it later. We are interested in determining how characteristics of the separated mother, the ex-couple, and the place where the family lived at the time of separation relate to a mother's probability of remaining at or returning to the pre-separation location. We assume that location continuity is the preferred option for most mothers, unless they have ties to another location (Mulder 1993; Mulder and Malmberg 2011; Feijten and van Ham 2007) or their current location is suboptimal (Cooke, Mulder, and Thomas 2016). However, whether location continuity is feasible may depend on the mother's socioeconomic resources, her relative bargaining position in the (ex-)couple, and her local ties. The social and economic ties that bind people to a place can be fixed to a home, a neighbourhood, or the surrounding region. We introduce a qualitative concept to understand separated mothers' degree of location continuity, which is highest if a woman remains at her pre-separation address, moves only within the neighbourhood (e.g., municipality) where she lived at the time of separation, or returns to her pre-separation neighbourhood sometime after separation. If a woman moves to a different neighbourhood in the same region (e.g., province), her degree of location continuity is moderate, and it is low if she moves to a different region. By introducing this new perspective, this study contributes to existing research on the post-separation residential mobility of mothers.

The second novelty is that we follow mothers from the time of separation up to three years after separation, which allows us to account for both separation-induced and

[4] Throughout the paper we use the term 'neighbourhood' in a general sense to refer to the area and environment where individuals live, rather than as a spatial unit. It is explained later on in the paper that the smallest spatial unit that we can measure are municipalities, followed by provinces.

post-separation residential changes. This is important because the effect of separation on residential mobility can be lagged (Oakil 2013), meaning that some individuals may not move out of their pre-separation home at the same time that separation occurs. Furthermore, repartnering is common after separation and may lead to additional residential moves with consequences for mothers' and children's location continuity (Feijten and van Ham 2010). Additionally, several moves may be necessary to re-adjust to pre-separation residential standards and moving away from the pre-separation location can be temporary (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen 2008). Therefore, we also explicitly study separated mothers' propensity to return to their pre-separation neighbourhood.

We study post-separation residential mobility in the context of Belgium, a country with high rates of union dissolution and an increasing share of lone parent families, a key driver of increasing housing demand. Belgium is rooted in a residential tradition of homeownership and single-family houses; there is limited supply of good quality and affordable rental housing (Dewilde and Lancee 2013; Winters and Heylen 2014) and the rental market is inflexible. These conditions are likely to accentuate the negative consequences of separation for separated mothers' housing careers and well-being. We use unique, linked population data from the Belgian Census (2001) and the Population Register (2001–2006). The individual-level data covers the complete Belgian population and includes the exact date of all residential moves between 1 October 2001 and 1 January 2006. We focus on mothers whose marriage or cohabitation ended in 2002 (N = 25,802); this design allows us to follow them for a period of three years after separation.

2. Background

2.1 Moves following separation

Separation may mark the beginning of a period of increased residential mobility (Feijten and Mulder 2005; Feijten and van Ham 2010). Sub-optimal and transitory residential situations can further increase already high levels of stress associated with separation (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielssen 2008). The effect of separation on residential mobility can be lagged, as one partner might initially stay in the family home and only move after the house is sold or rented (Oakil 2013). Separation-driven moves are specific as they frequently are the result of a negotiation process between the ex-partners and do not necessarily follow from individual decision-making. The (monetary and non-monetary) costs of moving for both ex-partners determine who moves out and who stays in the joint home upon separation (Mulder and Wagner 2010).

Those who leave the home more often declare that the housing outcome of the separation was to their disadvantage than those who stay (Mulder and Wagner 2012).

In general, women are more likely to move out of the joint home after separation than men (Dewilde 2008; Feijten 2005; Mulder 2013). If the ex-couple has children, men are somewhat more likely to leave the family home than women (Thomas, Mulder, and Cooke 2017a; Fiori 2019). Whether moving or not, the negative financial consequences of separation are more severe for women than for men, which may translate to an unfavourable residential situation (Andreß et al. 2006; Feijten 2005; Mulder 2013). Women's relatively higher vulnerability at separation has commonly been attributed to their weaker absolute and relative socioeconomic position in partnerships. In practice, it is often easier for the man to keep the joint home because of his better income prospects (Mulder 2013; Feijten and Mulder 2010). Women are especially likely to move out of the joint home if they have low levels of education or are less educated than their partner (Theunis, Willaert, and Van Bavel 2016).

The impact of relative resources is not gender-neutral, as women need comparatively more resources than men to negotiate staying in the home (Mulder 2013; Andreß and Hummelsheim 2009; McCarthy and Simpson 1991). Living in social housing, however, which is more prevalent among the less educated, reduces women's likelihood of moving out in Denmark and the United Kingdom (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielssen 2008; Thomas, Mulder, and Cooke 2017a). Educational differences in moving propensities following separation persist among both parents and the childless (Theunis, Eeckhaut, and van Bavel 2018). Women also move out of the joint home more often if they live in a rural area (Feijten and van Ham 2007). If homeowners, separated women are also more likely both to move and to move longer distances than men (Feijten and van Ham 2007). Additionally, already having a new partner at the time of separation lowers the costs of moving and increases the probability of a move (Mulder and Wagner 2010). Starting a new partnership is one reason for a move among separated people and a potential way for women to recover their housing quality (Feijten and van Ham 2010; Jalovaara and Kulu 2019).

2.2 Location continuity after separation

Location-specific capital, defined as the ties that bind people to a specific place, plays an important role in defining the costs of a move and can serve as a resource that enables people to stay at a given location (Mulder and Wagner 2012). Social, human, or economic capital that cannot be taken to a new location can create local ties (DaVanzo 1981). These ties can be fixed to the home (e.g., being a homeowner or living in social housing), or they can be fixed to its location (e.g., the community or region) through

social and family networks and familiarity with the location (Mulder and Wagner 2012). The concept of neighbourhood encompasses the idea of a familiar environment in which people interact for utility, support, and socialization. A neighbourhood can contribute to one's identity and become a reflection of oneself and one's values, aspirations, and socioeconomic conditions (Lebel, Pampalon, and Villeneuve 2007). Next to the neighbourhood, the surrounding environment, such as the district or region, is also a source of social and economic ties (Lebel, Pampalon, and Villeneuve 2007). Hence, location-specific capital can increase the benefits of remaining in a specific location and make a longer-distance move costlier. Ties may also increase opportunities to remain at the same location following separation: the local social network can provide help in finding a nearby place (Mulder and Wagner 2012).

Next to ties, the attractiveness of the location also affects the decision to move and the destination of moves following separation. The attractiveness of a location is determined by its proximity to daily amenities such as schools and cultural and sports facilities (Reginster and Goffette-Nagot 2005). Ideally, facilities should be within walking or cycling distance even in suburban or rural areas (Boussauw, van Meeteren, and Witlox 2014). Proximity to childcare and schools becomes more important when both parents are engaged in paid work and is essential for maintaining employment activity after separation (Karsten 2007). People often move within the same neighbourhood and within the constraints formed by access to these daily amenities (Clark and Rivers 2012).

Remaining in close proximity to the pre-separation family home may bring benefits for the mother and her child(ren), as it leads to continuity in their social networks, daily routines, and emotional attachments (Thomas, Willaert, and van Bavel 2017a). However, this may also be a costly decision as it constrains housing choice: it might be more difficult to find affordable accommodation when the search radius is smaller. If separated mothers wish to remain in the pre-separation environment, tight markets may restrict their opportunity to find appropriate housing (Thomas, Willaert, and van Bavel 2017a; Mulder and Hooimeijer 1999).

There may be situations in which changing environments after separation is attractive to women. For example, geographic proximity to family is crucial to receiving support (Mulder and Van der Meer 2009) and may be a key factor in the decision of where to move after separation for those living further from family (Petterson and Malmberg 2009). Other reasons to change location might be moving in with a new partner, escaping the ex-partner (Bowstead 2015), or simply the desire for a new start in a new location (Schier 2015). Moreover, the pre-separation location may reflect the ex-partner's residential preferences rather than that of the mother, in which case mothers are likely to move to a place which better suits their needs (Cooke, Mulder, and Thomas 2016). It has also been shown that separated persons are

especially likely to move to cities (Feijten and van Ham 2007). However, Thomas, Adam, and Verhetsel (2017) show that the actual post-separation mobility behaviour of parents often contradicts pre-separation locational preferences. It is likely that separated parents are still tied to their pre-separation place of residence because of their children.

A handful of studies have analysed the distance of a move after separation: these studies typically analyse the likelihood of moving followed by the distance moved among the movers using the Euclidian distance (in logged kilometres) between the origin and destination location. They show that when children are present, people tend to remain in their neighbourhood, as the social networks of the children are considered crucial (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielssen 2008; Mulder and Malmberg 2011; Feijten and van Ham 2007, 2013; Ferrari, Bonnet, and Solaz 2019). Most studies find that mothers stay in closer proximity to the pre-separation family home than fathers (Clark and Rivers 2012; Feijten and van Ham 2007), whereas Mulder and Malmberg (2011) find no difference.

Mulder and Malmberg (2011) study moves in the first year following separation among people with and without children using Swedish register data. They show that separation-driven moves involve shorter distances from the former home than moves for other reasons, especially for parents. Local social ties, measured as grandparents living less than 2 km away, decrease the likelihood of moving and the distance moved. They do not find an effect of education on moving distance, but as their analysis includes childless persons as well as parents we do not know whether education influences the distance moved by separated parents. Similarly, using longitudinal Dutch data, Feijten and van Ham (2007) study whether separation has an effect on the likelihood, distance, and destination of moves. They exclude 'event moves' from the analysis, i.e., moves related to a change in partnership status (e.g., separation or repartnering), and only analyse 'state moves,' i.e., moves whilst already in a given partnership status (e.g., among separated or repartnered individuals). They show that even when excluding event moves, separated people move more often and over shorter distances than those who are in a first relationship. However, separated mothers and mothers in relationships have similar moving distances.

Additionally, Thomas, Mulder, and Cooke (2017a) study a small (N = 354) sample of British parents and investigate which parent moves out upon separation and the distance between the centroids of separated parents' neighbourhoods in the first year after separation. The educational composition of the ex-couple and whether the mother repartnered are not significant predictors of the distance between parents. Using the same sample, Thomas, Mulder, and Cooke (2017b) study the distance between parents, following them for several years after separation. They show that the distance is determined by moves in the first year, but tends to further increase over time since separation. Net of other characteristics, highly educated parents live further away from

each other than parents without a degree. Unfortunately, these analyses do not allow us to draw firm conclusions regarding the location continuity of separated mothers.

Some other studies have focused on categorical measures of distance to capture the degree of location continuity after separation. A study on Danish separated persons (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielssen 2008) shows that the large majority of moves after separation are within the same municipality, especially if children are involved (less than 15% moved to another region). According to studies conducted in the United States, about 17% of custodial parents move to another city within two years after separation (Braver and O'Connell 1998; Kelly and Lamb 2003).

Separation may force people to leave their neighbourhood if they do not find appropriate housing nearby. However, if pre-separation locational ties remain important, separated people may later return to their pre-separation neighbourhood. Existing evidence shows that a considerable proportion of separated people moves to temporary housing and thus faces several residential transitions. For example, Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielssen (2008) show that about half of separated individuals who moved from the matrimonial home to a new address moved again one year later to yet another new address. The lack of empirical evidence to date makes it difficult, if not impossible, to quantify the probability of returning to the pre-separation location after a temporary period of absence.

2.3 The Belgian context

Belgium is characterized by high union dissolution rates and an inflexible housing market, which can make it difficult for mothers to find a new place of residence after separation. We describe the Belgian context based on previous studies and official statistics from 2014, the latest year for which data is available.

In 2014 there were 6 divorces to every 10 newly formed marriages in Belgium. Apart from marriage, since 2000 couples have also been able to register cohabitations, and official statistics provide information on these unions. Informal cohabitations are not registered and thus are not covered in official statistics. In 2014 around 50% of newly formed registered cohabitations ended in separation. More registered cohabitations than marriages were formed (45,000 registered cohabitations vs. 40,000 marriages). Since the 1970s social policies have provided practical support for families through widely available childcare that allows couples to combine work and family (Esping-Andersen 1999; Neels and de Wachter 2010). Most children live with their mother after separation, but time spent with the father has increased over the last decades (Sodermans, Matthijs, and Swicegood 2013).

Belgium is a small country (30,528 km^2) comprising 589 municipalities with an average area of 52 km^2.[5] Population density in the municipalities is on average 773 inhabitants per km^2 (Statistics Belgium 2015).[6] From the north to the south and the west to the east the maximum distance is around 200 km. The division of the country into a more densely populated Dutch-speaking North (Flanders) and a less densely populated French-speaking South (Wallonia) contributes to small moving distances, as people tend to remain in their language communities. Furthermore, moving and commuting behaviours[7] reveal the pre-eminence of the borders of the 10 provinces (Thomas, Adam, and Verhetsel 2017). Moving distances are generally short and take place within provinces, because Belgians want to stay close to relatives, social relationships, neighbours, and sports and collective activities situated in the same province (Thomas, Adam, and Verhetsel 2017).

Provincial borders have a long-standing history, rooted in the 18th century. Some institutional competences are exerted at the provincial level (such as education, leisure activities, social assistance, healthcare, and maintenance of provincial roads and waterways)[8], which may strengthen the bonds between provinces and their inhabitants. Childcare and primary school education are organized by language communities and municipalities. Municipalities are thus another relevant spatial structure in people's everyday lives as they provide local infrastructure (such as schools and leisure organizations), a sense of identity, and location-specific capital (e.g., friends and relatives living nearby). Research has shown that Belgians identify foremost with their local environment (town or village) (Hooghe 2004). Furthermore, rental allowance is organized at the municipality level. Eligibility requirements for social housing can be based on existing local ties (already living or working in the municipality) and thus motivate within-municipality moves (CGKR 2014).

Residential mobility is hampered by housing market rigidity, e.g., the high prevalence of homeownership and the limited supply of good quality and affordable rental housing (OECD Economic Survey 2015, 2017). About 72% of the Belgian population are homeowners (the European Union (EU-28) average is 70%; Eurostat 2018). Rising rents and the weakening income profile of tenants have contributed to the

[5] Median: 40 km²; Inter-quartile range: [27 km², 67 km²]

[6] Median: 308; Inter-quartile range: [166, 606]

[7] Belgians have longer home–workplace commuting distances than moving distances (Thomas, Adam, and Verhetsel 2017). In Flanders the average one-way commuting distance is 19 km, whereas the commuting distance to educational institutions (including primary and secondary schools as well as higher education) is around 9.5 km (Janssens et al. 2011). The mean distance to elementary schools is much shorter (1.8 km), indicating that most children live within walking or cycling distance of their school (Boussauw, van Meeteren, and Witlox 2014).

[8] The provinces are autonomous institutions but under the supervision of the regions (Flanders and Brussels-Wallonia) or the communities (Dutch-, French-, German-speaking). For example, a provincial school is managed by the community, whereas an initiative on land use is monitored by the region.

'residual character' of the private rental market (OECD Economic Survey 2015: 85). The social housing sector is very small (about 6% of the housing stock); thus, many people who would qualify for social housing based on their financial resources have to resort to the private rental market (Andrews, Sanchez, and Johansson 2011). Belgium's rental market is rather inflexible as tenants can only decide between a three-year (short-term) and a nine-year (long-term) contract (De Decker 2001). A long-term contract can only be terminated prematurely with a payment of compensation to the landlord. A short-term contract cannot be easily terminated by the tenant before its end. The landlord has the right to choose between enforcing the rental agreement and dissolving the contract with additional compensation charges to be paid by the tenant. When contracts are negotiated landlords are in a more powerful position and they favour short-term contracts, because these allow them to review the rental price every three years (De Decker 2001). Altogether, these renting conditions result in unfavourable situations for tenants in case of partnership separation.

Housing prices have been on the rise for decades and are higher than in other European countries (OECD 2017; Caldera Sánchez and Andrews 2011; Warisse 2017). One reason for this is that transaction costs are particularly large in Belgium (Caldera Sánchez and Andrews 2011). The proportion of tenants whose housing costs exceeded 40% of their equivalised disposable income is 34%, higher than the European average of 27%; whereas the percentage spent on housing by owner-occupiers in Belgium is below the European mean (2.4% vs. 6.7%; Eurostat 2018). The ownership of a detached house is traditionally viewed as the ideal housing tenure, providing the highest degree of housing security (Halleux and Strée 2013). This view has contributed to Belgium's housing structure, which is dominated by its suburban style of one-family houses. Around a quarter (22%) of the Belgian population lives in apartments, compared to 42% in Europe. The share of apartments is low by international standards, even in cities. In 2014 most Belgians (53%) lived in suburban areas in comparison to 31% in the European Union.

As the supply of rental housing is low and concentrated in disadvantaged communities, people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or with financial constraints have limited locational choice. In addition, discrimination contributes to limit the choice of location; for example, single mothers tend to be discriminated against in the private rental market (CGKR 2014). As the number of single-parent families is increasing, the demand for housing in Belgium is also projected to increase (OECD 2015).

3. Hypotheses

We assume that location continuity in the years following separation is the preferred outcome for most separated mothers, unless they have ties to another location or their current location is suboptimal (Mulder and Wagner 2010; Mulder and Malmberg 2011; Feijten and van Ham 2007). Whether location continuity is feasible is expected to depend on the mother's socioeconomic resources, her local ties, and her relative bargaining position in the ex-couple. First, we formulate three sets of hypotheses relating to the propensity to experience a high (1.1), moderate (1.2), or low (1.3) degree of location continuity. We define location continuity as high if the mother either stays in the same municipality or returns to it later, moderate if she changes municipality but stays in the same province, and low if she leaves the pre-separation province. Then, we formulate hypotheses about the determinants of return moves to the pre-separation location (2.1 and 2.2).

We expect mothers to be more likely to remain in the pre-separation municipality (and thus the degree of location continuity to be highest) if they have socioeconomic resources, location-specific capital, and are in an advantageous bargaining position relative to their ex-partner (Hypothesis 1.1). The latter should especially increase a mother's likelihood of staying in the family home. Mothers in a disadvantaged position in the housing market are expected to have difficulties finding new housing nearby immediately; these women will be more likely to leave their pre-separation location than those who have better circumstances. However, they might move to another municipality within the province if they have ties to that municipality, thereby keeping at least some (i.e., moderate) degree of location continuity (Hypothesis 1.2). We expect that a lack of socioeconomic resources and local ties is associated with an increased likelihood of moving to a different province following separation and thus leads to a low degree of location continuity (Hypothesis 1.3).

Women who have to leave their neighbourhood may only move away temporarily until they can move back again. We hypothesize that women with a disadvantaged profile on the housing market follow this strategy, as they may face more difficulties to find housing nearby immediately following separation than their more advantaged counterparts (Hypothesis 2.1). Beyond that, local ties should increase the likelihood of returning to the pre-separation location. Women who lack these ties will likely not return to their pre-separation municipality (Hypothesis 2.2).

4. Data and methods

4.1 Data

We use a dataset provided by Statistics Belgium, which links information from the National Population Registers (2001–2006) and the 2001 Belgian Census. The 2001 Belgian Census provides information on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the entire Belgian population on 1 October 2001. National Population Registers include information on all residential moves between and within municipalities from 1 October 2001 to 1 January 2006. The large sample size enables us to study the mobility patterns of separated mothers in more detail than prior studies. We have information on the date of residential moves and the destination municipality. Although information on the actual distance moved is not available in the dataset, we can calculate Euclidian distances between municipality halls to give a rough estimate of the distance moved. Our geographical information is limited to the municipality level: we know whether a person moved within a municipality, but we have no information on the distance of these moves, as we do not have information on the exact address.

The census allows us to identify married and cohabiting couples. The identification of married couples (as well as multiple married couples in the same household) is based on the relationship between household members. Consensual unions are identified based on the LIPRO typology (van Imhoff and Keilman 1991). We focus on the physical separation of both previously married and previously non-married (i.e., cohabiting) women. Separation is defined as household dissolution; the time of separation is defined as the date when one of the partners (or both) leaves the joint household. If only one partner moved between 2001 and 2006, the date of this move is considered to be the date of separation (in the case of several moves, we take the earliest move). If both partners moved but on a different date, the earliest move is considered the date of separation. We know that a couple separated through information on their union status in 2006. If a couple is known to be separated in 2006, but the only move is on the same date and to the same municipality, then this move is considered as the separation move.

Our sample is restricted to women with coresident children, who separated in 2002, were residing in Belgium between October 2001 and January 2006, and were between 18 and 49 years old at the time of separation (N = 25,802).[9] We chose to study women who separated in 2002 because this allows us to follow the residential

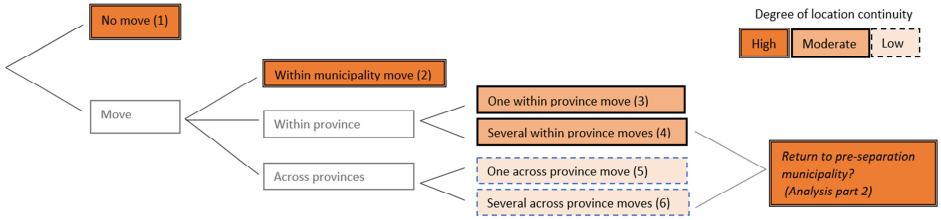
[9] The sampling design is similar to that in the study by Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielssen (2008), who used Danish register data on all couples who moved apart in the year 2002, including those who were not legally married, and focused on the housing situation in 2002 and 2003. In contrast to this Danish study, we focus on mothers only and extend the observation window to three years after separation.

biographies of these women for three years following separation. All women were observed throughout the entire observation period. Our estimate of union dissolution is close to official divorce statistics. Official Belgian divorce statistics report 30,628 divorces for 2002 (Eurostat 2018). We have identified 48,902 separations for 2002, of which 28,814 were separations from marriage. The difference between our estimate and the official statistics can be explained by the fact that we focus (a) on household dissolution, which in most cases precedes divorce, (b) on couples that were still living together in 2001, and (c) on a specific age range.

4.2 Analytical strategy

The analyses are divided into two parts. In the first we analyse the degree of location continuity after separation and in the second we evaluate the likelihood of 'return moves'. In the first part we distinguish between high, moderate, and low degree of location continuity (Figure 1). Separated women may experience several moves, each of which may have different levels of location continuity. To this end we apply a spatial hierarchy to the moving patterns and group women according to the move that disrupted their location continuity the most in the first 36 months following separation.[10] This results in six moving patterns.

Figure 1: Moving patterns of mothers following separation



Location continuity is considered high if the woman remains in her pre-separation municipality throughout the observation period. This can be achieved by either staying in the pre-separation family home throughout the three years following separation (pattern 1) or by moving to a new dwelling in the same municipality (pattern 2). Distinguishing between these outcomes is important, as previous literature has shown that staying in the family home is associated with certain factors that may not apply to

[10] For example, mothers who moved across municipalities may have had within-municipality moves as well, or those who moved across provinces might have also moved within provinces.

within-municipality moves. The degree of location continuity is moderate if women remain in the same province by moving once (pattern 3) or several times across municipalities (pattern 4) and it is low if they change provinces either once (pattern 5) or multiple times (pattern 6).

Distinguishing single from multiple moves is analytically important, because it takes into account that some women changed their environment several times within a few years after separation. Women who moved once to another municipality or province could by definition not return to their pre-separation location. Multiple moves could mean that women move from one place to another, implying that their location continuity is somewhat lower compared to women who only had one move of that kind. However, it is possible that additional moves are related to moving back to the pre-separation neighbourhood. In that case the degree of location continuity would be higher than for mothers who left their pre-separation location and did not return to it. To understand whether these patterns relate to the characteristics of the mother, we distinguish between women who moved multiple times and those who only moved once. Then, to understand whether repeated moves are related to a higher or lower degree of location continuity, in the second part of the analysis we explicitly address separated mothers' propensity to return to their pre-separation municipality. Furthermore, we compare the characteristics of mothers who returned to their pre-separation neighbourhood to those of women who remained in their municipality or who left and did not return.

The six mobility patterns are (Figure 1 and Table 1): (1) no move (32%); (2) move(s) within the same municipality only (26%); (3) one move to a different municipality in the same province, i.e., a within province move (21%); (4) several within province moves (10%); (5) one move to a different province, i.e., a cross-province move (9%); and (6) several cross-province moves (3%). In line with previous studies (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielssen 2008), these proportions demonstrate that most mothers remain in their pre-separation municipality and only a minority leaves the province. About 7% (N = 1,595) of separated mothers who moved away returned to their pre-separation municipality during the three-year follow-up period.

Table 1: Descriptive information on mobility patterns of separated mothers in the first three years following separation, N = 25,802, column percentages (for total sample and by mobility pattern)

	Mobility pattern					
	High degree of location continuity: Remaining in same municipality		Moderate degree of location continuity: Remaining in same province, but moving to different municipality		Low degree of location continuity: Moving to different province	
Total	**(1) No move**	**(2) Within-municipality move(s)**	**(3) One cross-municipality move**	**(4) Several cross-municipality moves**	**(5) One cross-province move**	**(6) Several cross-province moves**
N = 25,802 (100%)	8,127 (32%)	6,617 (26%)	5,339 (21%)	2,656 (10%)	2,298 (9%)	765 (3%)
Number of moves						
0 (32%)	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1 (30%)	0%	59%	56%	0%	42%	0%
2 (25%)	0%	32%	34%	54%	39%	40%
3+ (13%)	0%	9%	10%	46%	19%	60%
Number of moves within municipality						
0 (56%)	100%	0%	56%	69%	64%	69%
1 (28%)	0%	59%	34%	23%	28%	23%
2 (11%)	0%	32%	7%	6%	6%	6%
3+ (4%)	0%	9%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Number of moves across municipalities - within the same province						
0 (63%)	100%	100%	0%	0%	71%	73%
1 (25%)	0%	0%	100%	0%	23%	20%
2 (10%)	0%	0%	0%	78%	5%	5%
3+ (3%)	0%	0%	0%	22%	1%	2%
Number of moves across provinces						
0 (86%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	0%
1 (10%)	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
2 (3%)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	82%
3+ (1%)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	18%
% moved at separation						
(53%)	0%	68%	70%	85%	73%	82%
% moved back to pre-separation municipality						
	0%	0%	0%	46%	2%	42%
Total distance moved (km) *						
Mean (SD)	0	0	22.20 (27.03)	55.69 (64.35)	58.60 (47.22)	123.57 (98.58)
Median [IQR]	0	0	13 [7; 26]	33 [18; 66]	49 [21; 85]	106 [48; 174]
% less than 30km	100%	100%	78%	45%	35%	15%
Distance between first and last address (km) *						
Mean (SD)	0	0	22.20 (27.03)	16.45 (26.92)	51.62 (40.49)	26.76 (35.19)
Median [IQR]	0	0	13 [7; 26]	8 [0; 20]	43 [17; 77]	12 [0; 40]
% Less than 30km	100%	100%	78%	83%	39%	69%

Note: IQR = Interquartile range. * Calculated as distance between municipality halls.
Source: Authors' own calculations using linked Belgian Census (2001) and Population Register data (2001–2006).

In both empirical parts of the analysis we apply multinomial logistic regression models. The multinomial logistic regression estimates coefficients for five outcomes

relative to the sixth outcome (reference outcome). Relative risk ratios indicate how the risk of an outcome compared to the risk of the reference outcome changes with the variable in question. We present the results as average marginal effects (with 95% confidence intervals), which show the percentage point difference in the predicted probabilities of one category compared to the predicted probabilities of a reference category for all six outcomes (predicted probabilities and relative risk ratios are shown in the Appendix). The use of marginal effects enables us to compare the probability of belonging to one of the six mobility patterns by independent variable category, as well as to compare this probability between the three degrees of location continuity. As we use population data, p-values, confidence intervals, and standard errors can be interpreted as illustrations of the effect strengths.

4.3 Variables

The characteristics of the woman, the dissolved couple, and the area where the woman lived at the time of separation matter for women's post-separation residential mobility.

Characteristics of the woman include woman's education, measured as the highest level of education achieved by the time of the Census (2001). Following the ISCED97 classification we distinguish between three levels of education: low (ISCED97 0−2; no qualification or degrees up to lower secondary school), medium, (ISCED97 3−4; upper secondary education), and high (ISCED97 5−6; tertiary education). Other characteristics are her age at separation (measured in years), her employment status during the last 12 months before separation (full-time, part-time, unemployed, missing), the number of children at the time of separation (one, two, three, and four or more children), and the age of the youngest coresident child at separation (younger than 7 years old, 7–11 years old, 12–17 years old, and at least 18 years old). Unfortunately, we cannot distinguish children from a previous relationship from those born within the dissolved union, as we do not have information on the start date of the union if it was non-marital. Education and employment status are proxies for women's socioeconomic resources. Women are considered disadvantaged on the housing market if their educational level is low or if they have more than two children (i.e., more than the average number of children).

We do not have information on the place of residence of the separated mothers' parents or siblings or her social networks. However, a proxy for these local ties is whether at the time of separation the woman lived in the municipality or province where she was born. If she was living where she was born, this was most likely where she was socialized, and where her network of family and friends were.

To measure characteristics of the place where mothers lived at separation, we include whether the woman lived in the municipality or in the province where she was born, the degree of urbanization (urban, suburban, rural) based on the classification of Belgian municipalities into city regions (Luyten and van Hecke 2007), and the region (Flanders vs. Brussels/Wallonia). A further measure of location-specific capital is whether separated mothers have access to social housing, as this is organized at the municipality level. Further, we consider information on the housing tenure at the time of separation (owner, private renting, social renting, or missing information/living rent-free).

Several characteristics of the ex-couple are available in the 2001 Census, such as their educational composition (woman equally educated as her ex-partner, woman more/less educated than ex-partner), marital status (married vs. cohabiting), and the age difference between the ex-partners (same age, she is older than him, he is 2–4 years older than her, he is 5 or more years older than her). Women are in an advantageous bargaining position when deciding who stays in the family home after separation if they are more educated or older than their ex-partner. Recent research shows that marital status affects the probability to leave the family home (Murinko 2019). We also control for whether the woman started a new coresidential partnership at the time of union dissolution or thereafter. This information is reconstructed based on movements in the register data and the household situation in 2006. The condition for identifying repartnering is that the newly formed couple lived together in 2006, which means that we are not able to capture living-apart-together relationships or short coresidential unions that were formed and dissolved between 2002 and 2006.

5. Descriptive results

Separated mothers can move several times within the observation window. As explained above, we applied a spatial hierarchy to classify the moving patterns and gave priority to the move that likely had the most impact on separated mothers' location. Table 1 describes the moving patterns of separated mothers for the overall sample as well as for the six moving patterns. A considerable proportion (38%) of separated mothers moved several times in the three-year period following separation. Among the mobile mothers, within-municipality moves were common: between 31% and 44% of the mothers who moved across municipalities (patterns 3–6) also moved at least once within municipalities. Among mothers who moved across provinces (patterns 5–6), about one in three had also moved across municipalities within the same province.

Overall, about half of the mothers did not move at the time of separation, which confirms prior studies (e.g., Thomas, Mulder, and Cooke 2017a). Looking at mobile mothers only, the percentage of women who did not move at the time of separation is much lower, especially for women in the very mobile patterns 4 and 6. However, even in these patterns, 15% and 18% respectively first remained at their address when separating and only moved later. This stresses the importance of taking an extended time window when studying residential mobility after separation.

Apart from the number and destination of moves, Table 1 also displays how often mothers returned to their pre-separation location. Surprisingly, 46% of women who had several moves within the same province and 42% of those who had several cross-province moves eventually moved back to their pre-separation municipality. This also becomes apparent when comparing the total distance moved and the distance between the pre-separation address and the last observed place of residence. Mothers who moved several times moved more kilometres in total than other mothers, but more often found themselves close to their pre-separation municipality towards the end of the observation window.

Table A-1 describes the moving patterns of separated mothers (for the overall sample as well as for the six moving patterns) by the characteristics of the woman, the characteristics of the place of residence at the time of separation, the characteristics of the ex-couple, and by whether separated mothers have formed a new coresidential relationship (either at the time of separation or thereafter). In the next section we compare women with different mobility patterns to each other, using multinomial logistic regression.

6. Multivariate results

6.1 High, moderate, or low levels of location continuity

Figure 2 shows the results of the first multinomial logistic regression model, where we estimate the likelihood of separated mothers belonging to one of the six mobility patterns: staying at the same address, moving only within the same municipality, moving to another municipality in the same province (once or several times), or moving to a different province (once or several times). The results are displayed as average marginal effects (with 95% confidence intervals; see *Notes* below the Figure for more information on how to interpret these figures). The results are shown as predicted probabilities in Table A-2 and as relative risk ratios in Table A-4 in the Appendix.

Figure 2: Average marginal effects of six mobility patterns

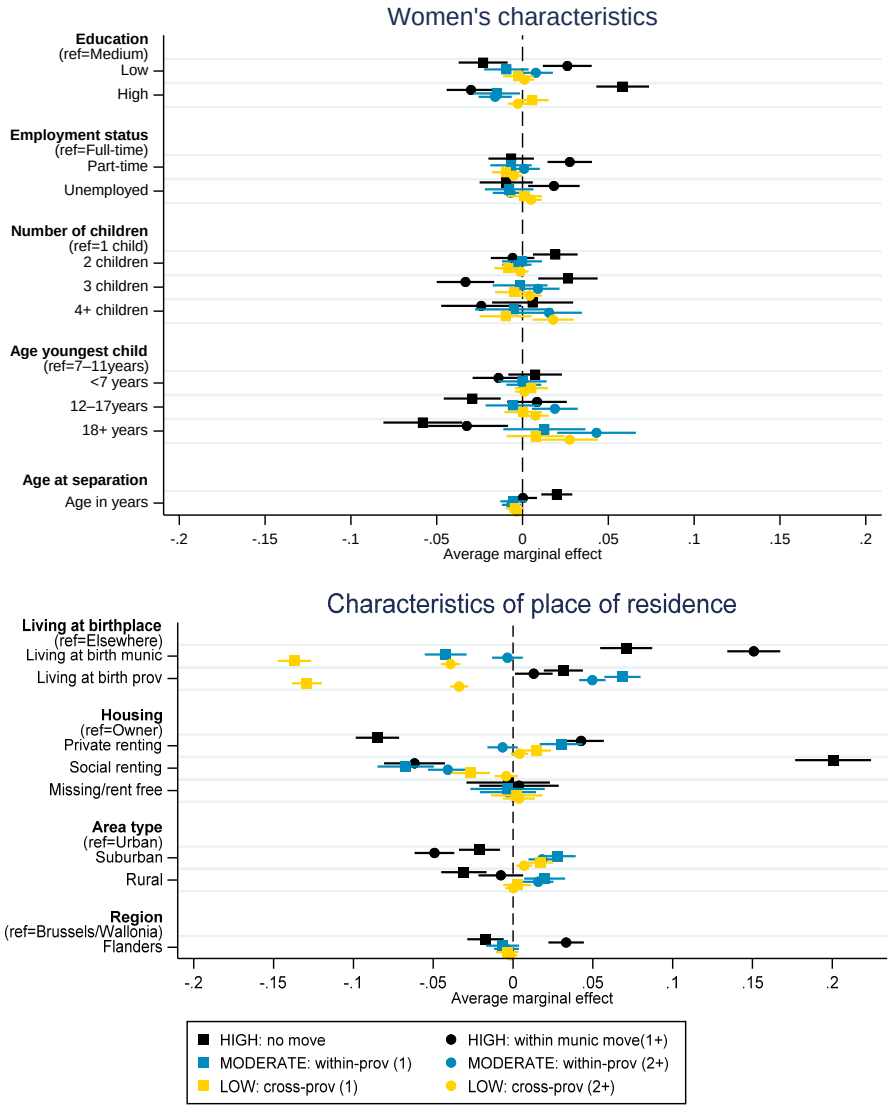
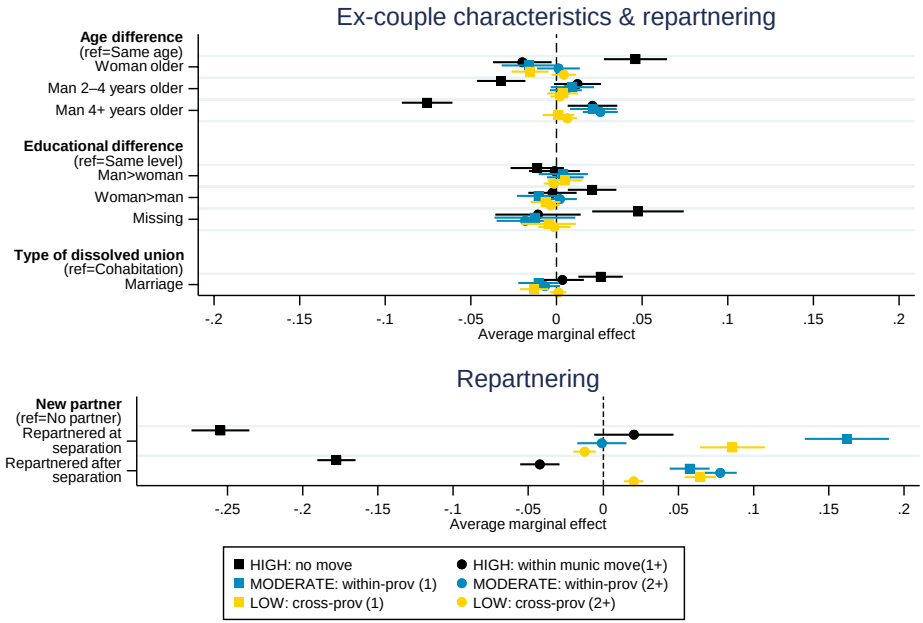


Figure 2: (Continued)



Source: Authors' own calculations using linked Belgian Census (2001) and Population Register data (2001–2006).
Notes: The Figure illustrates average marginal effects. Average marginal effect of a variable is the average change in the predicted probability of a category compared to the reference category. Taking the example of woman's education, we predict that 31% of women with medium educational level, 28% of women with low educational level and 37% of women with high educational level do not move (see predicted probabilities in Table A-2). In terms of marginal effects, we thus observe that compared to medium educated women, the predicted probability of not moving is 3 percentage points lower for low educated women and 6 percentage points higher for high educated women (black squared boxes in Figure 2). The maximum range of change in predicted probabilities goes from -26 percentage points to +28 percentage points. The strength of the effect size varies across variables and is strongest for birth place, housing and repartnering. Beyond comparing variables, the Figure allows to capture characteristic-specific moving patterns. When comparing marginal effects across outcomes, it is however important to consider that the rarer the outcome the closer the marginal effects are.

6.1.1 Woman's characteristics

We expected the degree of location continuity to be high if mothers have socioeconomic resources (measured using level of education and employment status) (Hypothesis 1.1). We find that net of other characteristics, education is positively related to the propensity to stay in the family home and negatively related to the propensity to move within the municipality. By contrast, women's education and employment status are not strong predictors of the probability to move once or several

times within or across provinces (except that highly educated women have a somewhat lower probability than those who are less educated of moving once to a different municipality within the same province, and moves within the same municipality are more likely when not working full-time). We also speculated that mothers with a higher than average number of children would find it more difficult to remain in the pre-separation municipality. Mothers with four or more children are indeed more likely than mothers with one child to change municipalities multiple times or even to move to a different province, and they are less likely to only move within their pre-separation municipality. Women with two or three children have a higher probability of staying in the family home (but having three children decreases the probability of moving only within the municipality). Beyond that, we find that the older the youngest child is, the lower separated mothers' propensity to stay in the family home and the higher the likelihood that they will move to another municipality in the same or another province (even several times). Mother's age at separation is positively related to the probability of staying in the family home, but it is not a significant predictor of other mobility patterns. In sum, the results suggest that children's characteristics are related to separated mothers' degree of location continuity, whereas mothers' characteristics predict the likelihood of staying in the family home.

6.1.2 Characteristics of the place of residence

We expected that mothers who have location-specific capital in the pre-separation location (measured using information on their birthplace and access to social housing) would have a high degree of location continuity following separation (Hypothesis 1.1). Figure 2 shows that location-specific capital is indeed an important predictor of women's post-separation moving patterns. In line with Hypothesis 1.2, ties to another municipality within the pre-separation province (i.e., being born in the province) increase women's likelihood of moving within the province, thereby keeping a moderate degree of location continuity. If women lack these ties they are more likely to leave the province and hence experience a low degree of location continuity (confirming Hypothesis 1.3). Living in the birth municipality or birth province especially decreases the probability of a single move to another province. Furthermore, social renting seems to be a strong indicator of structural local ties: the propensity of mothers who lived in social housing at the time of separation to stay in the family home is very large. Compared to homeowners, mothers living in a rental dwelling have a higher probability of moving within the pre-separation municipality or of moving once to another municipality in the same province. In addition, women who lived in suburban areas at the time of separation have the highest probability of moving within

and across provinces. Women who lived in an urban area or in Flanders at the time of separation are the most likely to remain in their municipality.

6.1.3 Ex-partner characteristics and repartnering

Finally, we speculated that mothers who are in an advantageous bargaining position relative to their ex-partner (i.e., older or more educated than their ex-partner) would be especially likely to remain in the family home. Indeed, we observe that women who were older than their ex-partner at the time of separation have the highest probability of not moving at all. The (relatively) older the ex-partner, the less likely it is that the woman stays in the family home. Women who are better educated than their ex-partner have a higher probability of remaining at the same address, but the influence of educational differences between ex-partners is less pronounced than that of age differences. Furthermore, we find that mothers who were married are somewhat more likely to remain in the family home than those who cohabited prior to separation, but we find no differences between their probability of belonging to any of the other moving patterns. Repartnering is an important predictor of mothers' moving behaviour. It decreases the probability of remaining in the family home and increases the probability of moving to another municipality or province. The timing of repartnering is also important for moving: women who had a new partner at the time of separation have a higher probability of only changing the municipality or province once, whereas women who repartnered after separation are more likely to move several times both within and across provinces.

6.2 Returning to the pre-separation municipality

In this part we analyse how separated mothers' characteristics, the characteristics of their place of residence at the time of separation, the characteristics of the ex-couple, and whether they formed a new relationship influence separated women's likelihood of returning to their pre-separation municipality. We estimate a multinomial logistic regression model and present average marginal effects (with 95% confidence intervals see *Notes* below the figure for more information on how to interpret these figures) for each outcome (Figure 3). The results are shown as predicted probabilities in Table A-3 and as relative risk ratios in Table A-5 in the Appendix.

Figure 3: Average marginal effects of leaving, remaining in, or returning to the pre-separation municipality

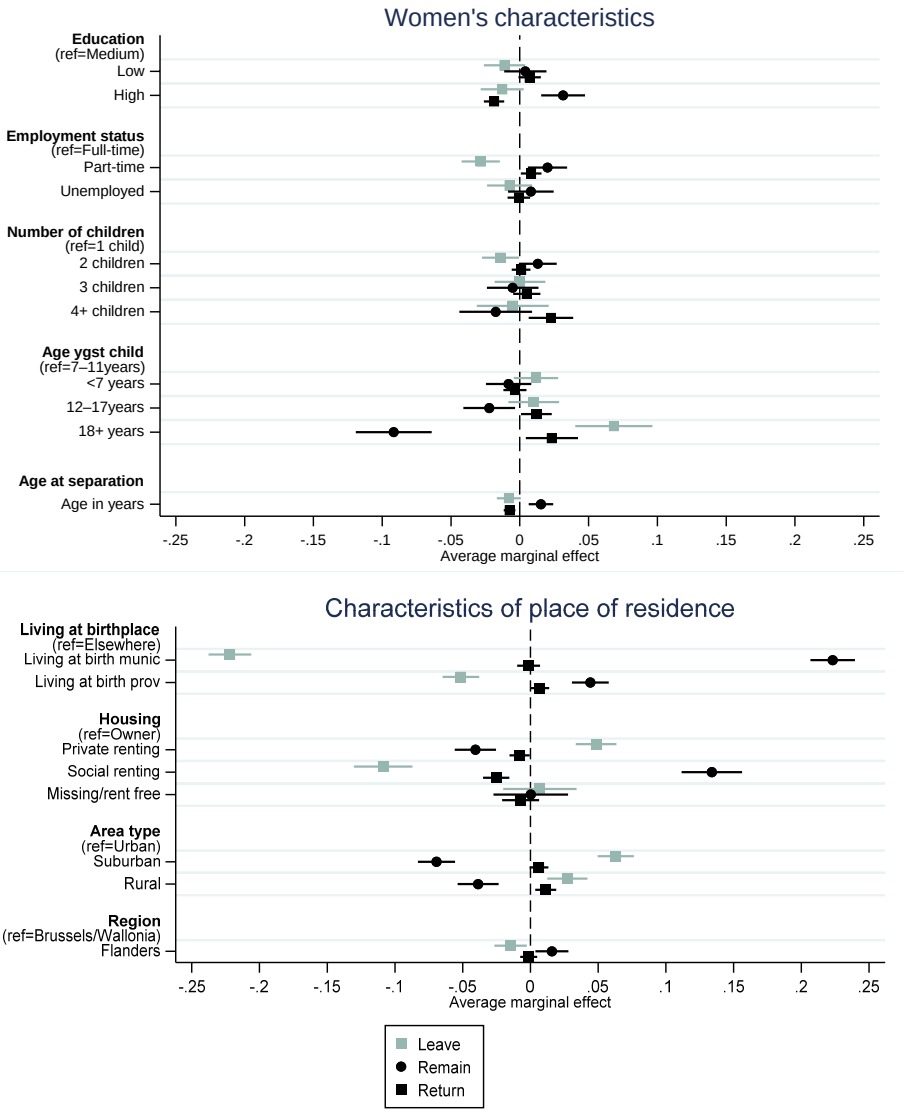
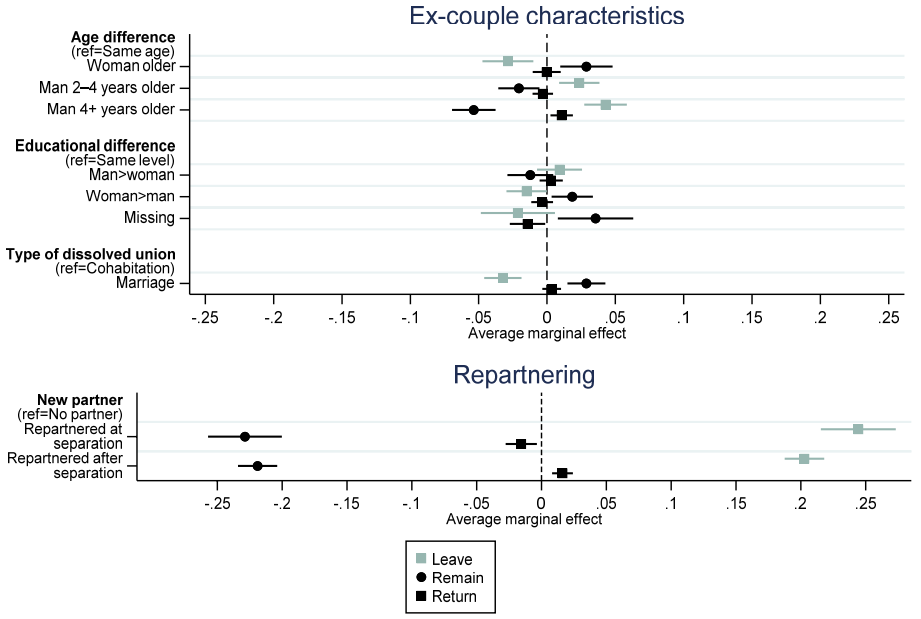


Figure 3: (Continued)



Source: Authors' own calculations using linked Belgian Census (2001) and Population Register data (2001–2006).
Notes: The Figure illustrates average marginal effects. Average marginal effect of a variable is the average change in the predicted probability of a category compared to the reference category. Taking the example of woman's education, we predict that 36% of women with medium educational level, 35% of women with low educational level and 35% of women with high educational level leave their municipality (see predicted probabilities in Table A-3). In terms of marginal effects, we thus observe that compared to medium educated women, the predicted probability of leaving is 1 percentage point lower for low educated and high educated women (grey squared boxes in Figure 3). The maximum range of change in predicted probabilities goes from -25 percentage points to +26 percentage points. The strength of the effect size varies across variables and is strongest for birth place, housing and repartnering. Beyond comparing variables, the Figure allows to capture characteristic-specific moving patterns. When comparing marginal effects across outcomes, it is however important to consider that the rarer the outcome the closer the marginal effects are.

6.2.1 Woman's characteristics

Women who leave their neighbourhood following separation may temporarily move away until they can move back to their pre-separation neighbourhood. We hypothesized that especially women who are in a disadvantaged position in the housing market (measured using level of education, employment status, and number of children) follow this strategy, whereas advantaged women will remain in the same municipality (Hypothesis 2.1). Women with low education have a somewhat higher probability of returning to their pre-separation municipality, whereas the highly educated are more

likely to stay there in the first place. We find no educational differences in the propensity to leave the pre-separation municipality and not return to it.

Women who work part-time are less likely to leave their municipality than women who work full-time, but we find no significant differences in the probability of returning to the pre-separation municipality. The number of children is not a significant predictor of the probability of leaving or remaining in the pre-separation municipality, but having four or more children increases the propensity to return to the pre-separation neighbourhood. Women who have adult children (18+) have the lowest probability of remaining in their pre-separation municipality and the highest probability of leaving or returning to it. Overall, it is the characteristics of the children rather than those of the mother that determine the separated mother's propensity to return to the pre-separation place.

6.2.2 Characteristics of the place of residence

In sum, we find that the characteristics of the place where the woman lived at the time of separation are associated with the probability of remaining or leaving, but they do not seem to influence the probability of returning to that place. We expected local ties to increase women's probability of either remaining in their neighbourhood or returning to it. Consequently, the absence of local ties should be linked to an increased likelihood of leaving the pre-separation municipality and not returning to it (Hypothesis 2.2). Women who at the time of separation lived in the same municipality they were born in (our proxy for local ties) have the highest probability of staying in the pre-separation municipality and the lowest probability of leaving it. Living in the birth province is also linked to a higher probability of staying in and a lower probability of leaving the pre-separation municipality. However, local ties do not seem to matter for the probability of returning to the pre-separation municipality. Women who lived in social renting were most likely to remain in the pre-separation municipality, the least likely to leave it, and the least likely to return to it. Living in a non-urban area increases women's probability of leaving the municipality, but the probability of returning does not vary by area type.

6.2.3 Ex-couple characteristics and repartnering

The ex-couple's characteristics are related to the separated mother's probability of staying in and leaving the pre-separation municipality. Repartnering is linked to a higher probability of leaving the pre-separation municipality and a reduced probability of staying. Additionally, those who repartnered sometime after separation have a higher

probability of returning to the pre-separation municipality than those who either did not repartner or already had a new partner at the time of separation.

7. Conclusion

Partnership dissolution can mark the beginning of a period of residential instability for mothers and their children. Location continuity, i.e., the ability to stay in the same neighbourhood, is essential to reduce the negative consequences of parental separation for mothers and their children. However, not all mothers and their children can stay in the neighbourhood they lived in prior to separation: some of them leave at the time of separation, others leave some time thereafter. Previous studies have focused on the distance of moves among those who move following separation (e.g., Mulder and Malmberg 2011; Thomas, Mulder, and Cooke 2017b; Ferrari, Bonnet, and Solaz 2019), but the aspect of location continuity following separation has not been explicitly addressed.

Using large-scale population data and an extended observation period of three years following separation, we studied separated mothers' mobility patterns in more detail than before. We also analysed separated mothers who returned to their pre-separation neighbourhood after a temporary absence, an aspect that has not previously been addressed empirically. Our study provides a new perspective by introducing the concept of post-separation location continuity. Location continuity is defined based on whether separated mothers remain in the pre-separation neighbourhood (by not moving or by moving within the same neighbourhood) or return to it in the first three years after separation. We assumed that location continuity is the preferred option for separated mothers, unless they have ties to another location. Our research questions asked to what extent separated mothers experience location continuity and whether and how their degree of location continuity depends on certain factors. Whether staying in or returning to the pre-separation neighbourhood is feasible should depend on the mother's socioeconomic resources (e.g., educational level and employment status), her relative bargaining position in the ex-couple, her position in the housing market, and her local ties.

Within the first three years following separation, about half (58%) of the mothers remained in the pre-separation municipality: 26% moved within this municipality and about one-third (32%) even stayed in the family home. In addition, 7% of the separated mothers returned to their pre-separation municipality after a temporary absence. These mothers and their children are assumed to experience a high degree of location continuity. Among those who moved to another municipality, two-thirds remained in the same province, thereby maintaining a moderate degree of location continuity.

Although only a minority of mothers experienced a low degree of location continuity because they left the province, a considerable proportion (38%) of separated mothers moved several times during the observation window. This finding shows that many families experience an extended period of residential instability after separation, , confirming prior findings for the United Kingdom (Mikolai and Kulu 2018a, 2018b, 2019) and other industrialised countries (Kulu et al. 2017, Mikolai et al. 2019).

Even when the move is within the same municipality, changing homes may mean the loss of a familiar environment (e.g., a change in the route to school, friends, leisure activities), which can negatively influence the well-being of children. Experts believe that a change in context extenuates the negative effects of parental separation in children (Austin 2008; Gindes 1998). Overall, mothers who moved several times across municipalities or across provinces move more kilometres than other mothers, but more often find themselves close to or even at their pre-separation municipality towards the end of the observation window. This suggests that mothers strive to achieve some degree of location continuity. However, if they do not find appropriate housing nearby they may be forced to leave their neighbourhood temporarily.

We found that mothers' socioeconomic situation and local ties play a role in their degree of post-separation location continuity and their probability of moving several times. In line with our hypothesis, local ties are linked to a higher probability of remaining in the pre-separation municipality. Socioeconomic resources also predict high location continuity: mothers with more resources are more likely to remain in the family home. A higher relative age of the woman has a similar effect, suggesting that it is associated with a higher bargaining power in the discussion of which ex-partner remains in the family home. In addition, structural local ties, such as living in social housing, increase the likelihood of staying in the family home. Contrary to what we expected, separated mothers' lack of resources is not associated with an increased probability of leaving the pre-separation municipality. However, women with a more than average number of children are more likely to move several times both within and across provinces. Moreover, women with local ties are more likely to move within the province than those who do not have local ties. We found that women with a disadvantaged profile in the housing market are more likely to leave their pre-separation municipality and return to it later: low-educated women and those with four or more children have a higher probability of returning to their pre-separation neighbourhood than other women. Local ties are a significant predictor of separated mothers' probability of staying in their municipality but – contrary to our expectations – they are not linked to the probability of return moves.

To summarise, five profiles emerged based on separated mothers' characteristics. The first group consists of socioeconomically advantaged women and those in an advantageous bargaining position in the ex-couple who stayed in their pre-separation

home during the entire observation period. Next, we identified three groups of socially disadvantaged women who have high location continuity but differ with respect to their local ties and their mobility patterns: women who remain in the family home because they live in social housing; those who move within their pre-separation municipality as they were born there; and those who return to their pre-separation municipality after a temporary absence. The latter group tends to have more children. This finding suggests that these mothers had difficulties finding accommodation near the family home immediately after separation. The last group consists of women who lack local ties, have a weak bargaining position in the ex-couple, and have adult children: these women leave their (often suburban) neighbourhood following separation and settle down elsewhere. It may be that other locations are more suitable or offer better opportunities for these women. Socioeconomic resources did not play a role for this group of women.

The lack of location continuity is likely to lead to adverse consequences for children. Mothers who are likely to move several times shortly after separation should be targeted in policy programmes. Future research should further investigate this group and gather more information on the reasons for their discontinuous and interrupted residential careers. We especially encourage studying sequences of moves depending on the women's characteristics. Studying the timing, order, and combination of moves can reveal under which conditions a woman first left and then returned to her pre-separation location and whether the return is temporary or followed by other moves. This study provides a first insight into the complexity of Belgian mothers' post-separation residential biographies.

Belgian post-separation families may be more exposed to residential instability than families in other countries. Recent cross-national research shows that in contrast to other European countries, the risk of a residential move after separation remains high in Belgium (Kulu et al. 2017). We argue that Belgium's inflexible rental market is likely to accentuate the negative consequences of separation for separated mothers' housing careers. It remains for future research to compare the post-separation residential mobility of mothers and their children across countries.

Women's moving behaviour after separation reflects a complex combination of changes in their preferences, opportunities, and housing needs as well as their social and economic constraints. Moving back to the pre-separation municipality may be a response to the preference for being close to kin in emotionally difficult times, to the opportunity to use living space offered by the family, or to the need for cheap accommodation. Previous research has showed that well-off men are often the winners and socially marginalised men are the losers when it comes to deciding who remains in the family home after separation (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen 2007). Focusing on women and distinguishing between different degrees of location continuity, this study has shown that disadvantaged mothers (and their children) also have less

favourable moving outcomes than those who are well off. Future research should investigate whether and how children are affected by residential mobility and housing outcomes related to parental separation.

It is important to note that separated individuals are a specific group and their residential mobility behaviour seems to be driven by different processes and underlying mechanisms than the residential mobility decisions of the general population. For example, we argue that those with fewer socioeconomic resources will be more likely to move following separation than those who are in a more advantageous position. Our analysis supports this claim, at least regarding who remains in the family home. However, for the general population a lack of resources was found to be related to reduced opportunities for individuals to move or to migrate over longer distances (Feijten and van Ham 2007). Taking the two arguments together, this might explain the lack of educational gradient in location continuity in this study.

This research has some limitations. First, we were restricted in the measurement of local ties, as we were not able to identify the place of residence of mothers' family of origin. Although in the Belgian context the place of birth is a proxy for family and social relations to a location, future research with more information on family ties is needed. Second, we did not analyse fathers' moving behaviour but focused only on mothers because they are the main custodian of children in Belgium. As information on custody arrangements is not available in administrative data, future research may benefit from using survey data to investigate custodial fathers. Third, temporary housing solutions, such as staying with friends or relatives, are likely to be underreported in register data (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen 2007). Nevertheless, we observe a substantial proportion of (multiple) moves.

Taken together, this study is the first to highlight that location continuity is an important aspect of separated mothers' residential mobility outcomes. We have shown that the degree of location continuity following separation is mainly related to separated mothers' local ties. However, a lack of socioeconomic resources is linked to experiencing (repeated) moves. This should concern policymakers, because residential instability has implications for the well-being of separated mothers and their children. To ensure that children have equal opportunities, policymakers have the responsibility to develop measures that can offset the negative effects of separation for mothers and their children (Mooney, Oliver, and Smith 2009). Our results suggest that social housing helps separated mothers with fewer resources to avoid post-separation moves. However, only a small share (7%) of separated mothers lived in social housing at the time of separation. Inequalities in separated mothers' moving opportunities highlight the need for policies that support separated mothers with fewer resources to find accommodation close to their pre-separation family home; for example, by increasing the availability of social housing.

8. Acknowledgements

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Appendix

Table A-1: Six mobility patterns by separated mother's characteristics, the characteristics of the woman's place of residence at the time of separation, the characteristics of the ex-couple, and by whether the woman formed a new coresidential relationship, N = 25,802, column percentages (for total sample and by mobility patterns)

	Mobility pattern					
	High degree of location continuity: Remaining in same municipality		Moderate degree of location continuity: Remaining in same province, but moving to different municipality		Low degree of location continuity: Moving to different province	
Total	**(1) No move**	**(2) Within-municipality move(s)**	**(3) One cross-municipality move**	**(4) Several cross-municipality moves**	**(5) One cross-province move**	**(6) Several cross-province moves**
Woman's characteristics						
Education						
Low (34%)	32%	38%	34%	36%	34%	38%
Medium (39%)	37%	40%	42%	43%	38%	39%
High (23%)	29%	19%	22%	18%	26%	19%
Missing (3%)	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%
Employment status 12 months prior to separation						
Full-time (44%)	44%	41%	46%	44%	47%	42%
Part-time (27%)	27%	28%	27%	27%	24%	21%
Unemployed (19%)	19%	20%	19%	18%	20%	24%
Missing (10%)	10%	11%	9%	11%	10%	12%
Mean age at separation (years)						
36	39	36	36	34	36	35
Number of children at separation						
1 child (36%)	31%	38%	38%	42%	40%	40%
2 children (41%)	43%	41%	41%	38%	39%	35%
3 children (16%)	18%	14%	15%	15%	15%	15%
4+ children (7%)	8%	7%	6%	6%	6%	10%
Age of the youngest child at separation						
< 7 (46%)	41%	46%	47%	53%	51%	56%
7–11 (25%)	27%	25%	25%	22%	23%	19%
12–17 (20%)	22%	21%	19%	17%	18%	16%
18+ (9%)	10%	9%	10%	8%	9%	9%
Characteristics of the place of residence at the time of separation						
Living at the place of birth						
Elsewhere (31%)	30%	27%	27%	23%	62%	56%
Birth municipality (19%)	21%	29%	12%	14%	9%	9%
Birth province (50%)	49%	45%	61%	64%	29%	35%
Housing						
Owner (65%)	68%	62%	65%	65%	62%	57%
Private renting (23%)	16%	27%	26%	25%	28%	30%
Social renting (7%)	12%	6%	5%	5%	5%	7%
Missing/rent free (5%)	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%

Table A-1: (Continued)

	Mobility pattern					
	High degree of location continuity: Remaining in same municipality		Moderate degree of location continuity: Remaining in same province, but moving to different municipality		Low degree of location continuity: Moving to different province	
Total	**(1) No move**	**(2) Within-municipality move(s)**	**(3) One cross-municipality move**	**(4) Several cross-municipality moves**	**(5) One cross-province move**	**(6) Several cross-province moves**
Characteristics of the place of residence at the time of separation						
Area type						
Urban (43%)	44%	45%	35%	37%	34%	37%
Suburban (34%)	34%	30%	40%	37%	40%	42%
Rural (22%)	22%	26%	25%	26%	27%	21%
Region						
Flanders (55%)	52%	58%	56%	56%	52%	50%
Brussels/Wallonia (45%)	48%	42%	44%	44%	48%	50%
Ex-couple characteristics						
Type of dissolved union						
Cohabitation (28%)	24%	28%	29%	31%	31%	31%
Marriage (72%)	76%	72%	71%	69%	69%	69%
Age difference						
Same age (28%)	32%	28%	28%	25%	27%	24%
Woman older (14%)	19%	13%	12%	11%	12%	13%
Man 2–4 years older (31%)	29%	31%	32%	31%	32%	30%
Man 4+ years older (26%)	20%	28%	28%	33%	29%	33%
Educational difference						
Same level (49%)	49%	50%	50%	49%	50%	51%
Man > Woman (18%)	16%	19%	18%	19%	18%	18%
Woman > Man (25%)	28%	24%	25%	25%	24%	22%
Missing (8%)	8%	8%	7%	7%	7%	9%
New Partner						
Repartnered at time of separation (4%)	1%	5%	8%	4%	7%	2%
Repartnered after separation (19%)	10%	17%	23%	33%	29%	29%
Not repartnered (76%)	88%	78%	69%	63%	64%	69%

Note: all differences were tested using chi^2 test (categorical variables) or F-test (continuous variable) and found to be significant at $p < 0.001$ level.
Source: Authors' own calculations using linked Belgian Census (2001) and Population Register data (2001–2006).

Table A-2: Predicted probability (with 95% confidence intervals) of belonging to different mobility patterns among separated mothers, N = 25,802

	Mobility patter					
	High degree of location continuity: Remaining in the same municipality		**Moderate degree of location continuity:** Remaining in same province, but moving to a different municipality		**Low degree of location continuity:** Moving to a different province	
	(1) No move	**(2) Within-municipality move(s)**	**(3) One cross-municipality move**	**(4) Several cross-municipality moves**	**(5) One cross-province move**	**(6) Several cross-province moves**
Woman's characteristics						
Education						
Low	0.28 [0.27; 0.29]	0.30 [0.29; 0.31]	0.21 [0.20; 0.22]	0.11 [0.10; 0.11]	0.07 [0.07; 0.08]	0.03 [0.02; 0.03]
Medium	0.31 [0.30; 0.32]	0.27 [0.26; 0.28]	0.22 [0.22; 0.23]	0.10 [0.09, 0.11]	0.08 [0.07; 0.08]	0.03 [0.02; 0.03]
High	0.37 [0.36; 0.38]	0.24 [0.23, 0.25]	0.21 [0.19; 0.22]	0.08 [0.07; 0.09]	0.08 [0.07; 0.09]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
Missing	0.18 [0.15; 0.22]	0.31 [0.27; 0.36]	0.25 [0.20; 0.29]	0.16 [0.12; 0.20]	0.07 [0.04; 0.09]	0.03 [0.02; 0.05]
Employment status 12 months prior to separation						
Full-time	0.31 [0.30; 0.32]	0.26 [0.25; 0.27]	0.23 [0.22; 0.23]	0.10 [0.09; 0.11]	0.08 [0.07; 0.08]	0.03 [0.02; 0.03]
Part-time	0.30 [0.29; 0.31]	0.29 [0.28; 0.30]	0.22 [0.21; 0.23]	0.10 [0.09; 0.11]	0.07 [0.06; 0.08]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
Unemployed	0.30 [0.29; 0.31]	0.28 [0.27; 0.29]	0.22 [0.20; 0.23]	0.09 [0.09; 0.10]	0.08 [0.07; 0.09]	0.03 [0.03; 0.04]
Missing	0.32 [0.30; 0.34]	0.29 [0.27; 0.31]	0.20 [0.18; 0.21]	0.10 [0.08; 0.11]	0.07 [0.06; 0.08]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
Number of children at separation						
1 child	0.29 [0.28; 0.30]	0.28 [0.27; 0.29]	0.22 [0.21; 0.23]	0.10 [0.09; 0.10]	0.08 [0.07; 0.09]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
2 children	0.31 [0.30; 0.32]	0.28 [0.27; 0.29]	0.22 [0.21; 0.23]	0.09 [0.09; 0.10]	0.07 [0.07; 0.08]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
3 children	0.32 [0.31; 0.34]	0.25 [0.23; 0.26]	0.22 [0.20; 0.23]	0.11 [0.10; 0.12]	0.08 [0.07; 0.08]	0.03 [0.02; 0.03]
4+ children	0.30 0.28; 0.32]	0.26 [0.24; 0.28]	0.22 [0.19; 0.24]	0.11 [0.10; 0.13]	0.07 [0.06; 0.08]	0.04 [0.03; 0.05]
Age of the youngest child at separation						
< 7	0.32 [0.31; 0.34]	0.27 [0.26; 0.28]	0.22 [0.21; 0.23]	0.09 [0.08; 0.10	0.08 [0.07; 0.08]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
7–11	0.32 [0.30; 0.33]	0.28 [0.27; 0.29]	0.22 [0.21; 0.23]	0.09 [0.08; 0.10]	0.07 [0.07; 0.08]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
12–17	0.28 [0.27; 0.30]	0.29 [0.28; 0.31]	0.21 [0.20; 0.23]	0.11 [0.10; 0.12]	0.07 [0.06; 0.08]	0.03 [0.02; 0.03]
18+	0.25 [0.23; 0.27]	0.25 [0.22; 0.27]	0.24 [0.21; 0.26]	0.14 [0.12; 0.16]	0.08 [0.07; 0.10]	0.05 [0.03; 0.06]
Missing	0.26 [0.11; 0.41]	0.29 [0.13; 0.44]	0.18 [0.05; 0.31]	0.16 [0.03; 0.29]	0.09 [–0.01;0.18]	0.03 [–0.03; 0.09]
Characteristics of the place of residence at the time of separation						
Living at the place of birth						
Birth municipality	0.34 [0.33; 0.36]	0.39 [0.38; 0.40]	0.14 [0.13; 0.15]	0.07 [0.06; 0.08]	0.04 [0.04; 0.05]	0.01 [0.01; 0.02]
Birth province	0.30 [0.29; 0.31]	0.25 [0.24; 0.25]	0.26 [0.25; 0.27]	0.12 [0.12; 0.13]	0.05 [0.05; 0.05]	0.02 [0.02; 0.02]
Elsewhere	0.27 [0.25; 0.28]	0.23 [0.22; 0.24]	0.19 [0.18; 0.20]	0.08 [0.07; 0.08]	0.18 [0.17; 0.19]	0.05 [0.05; 0.06]

Table A-2: (Continued)

	Mobility pattern					
	High degree of location continuity: Remaining in the same municipality		**Moderate degree of location continuity:** Remaining in same province, but moving to a different municipality		**Low degree of location continuity:** Moving to a different province	
	(1) No move	**(2) Within-municipality move(s)**	**(3) One cross-municipality move**	**(4) Several cross-municipality moves**	**(5) One cross-province move**	**(6) Several cross-province moves**
Housing						
Owner	0.32 [0.31; 0.32]	0.27 [0.26; 0.27]	0.22 [0.21; 0.22]	0.10 [0.10; 0.11]	0.07 [0.07; 0.08]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
Private renting	0.23 [0.21; 0.24]	0.31 [0.30; 0.32]	0.25 [0.24; 0.26]	0.10 [0.09; 0.11]	0.09 [0.08; 0.10]	0.03 [0.02; 0.03]
Social renting	0.54 [0.51; 0.56]	0.20 [0.18; 0.22]	0.14 [0.12; 0.15]	0.06 [0.05; 0.07]	0.05 [0.04; 0.06]	0.02 [0.01; 0.02]
Missing/rent free	0.31 [0.29; 0.34]	0.27 [0.25; 0.30]	0.21 [0.19; 0.24]	0.10 [0.08; 0.12]	0.08 [0.06; 0.09]	0.03 [0.02; 0.04]
Area type						
Urban	0.32 [0.31; 0.33]	0.30 [0.29; 0.30]	0.20 [0.19; 0.21]	0.09 [0.08; 0.09]	0.07 [0.06; 0.07]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
Suburban	0.30 [0.29; 0.31]	0.24 [0.23; 0.25]	0.23 [0.22; 0.24]	0.11 [0.10; 0.11]	0.09 [0.08; 0.09]	0.03 [0.03; 0.03]
Rural	0.29 [0.28; 0.30]	0.29 [0.27; 0.30]	0.22 [0.21; 0.23]	0.10 [0.10; 0.11]	0.07 [0.07; 0.08]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
Region						
Flanders	0.32 [0.31; 0.33]	0.25 [0.25; 0.26]	0.22 [0.21; 0.23]	0.10 [0.10; 0.11]	0.08 [0.07; 0.08]	0.03 [0.02; 0.03]
Brussels/Wallonia	0.30 [0.29; 0.31]	0.29 [0.28; 0.30]	0.21 [0.21; 0.22]	0.10 [0.09; 0.10]	0.07 [0.07; 0.08]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
Ex-couple characteristics						
Age difference						
Same age	0.33 [0.32; 0.35]	0.27 [0.26; 0.28]	0.21 [0.20; 0.22]	0.09 [0.08; 0.10]	0.08 [0.07; 0.08]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
Woman older	0.38 [0.37; 0.40]	0.24 [0.23; 0.26]	0.19 [0.18; 0.21]	0.09 [0.08; 0.10]	0.06 [0.05; 0.07]	0.03 [0.02; 0.03]
Man 2–4 years older	0.30 [0.29; 0.31]	0.28 [0.27; 0.29]	0.22 [0.21; 0.23]	0.10 [0.09; 0.10]	0.08 [0.07; 0.09]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
Man 4+ years older	0.25 [0.24; 0.26]	0.29 [0.28; 0.30]	0.24 [0.23; 0.25]	0.12 [0.11; 0.13]	0.08 [0.07; 0.08]	0.03 [0.02; 0.03]
Educational difference						
Same level	0.30 [0.29; 0.31]	0.28 [0.27; 0.28]	0.22 [0.21; 0.23]	0.10 [0.09; 0.10]	0.08 [0.07; 0.08]	0.03 [0.02; 0.03]
Man > Woman	0.29 [0.27; 0.30]	0.27 [0.26; 0.29]	0.23 [0.21; 0.24]	0.10 [0.09; 0.11	0.08 [0.07; 0.09]	0.03 [0.02; 0.03]
Woman > Man	0.32 [0.31; 0.34]	0.27 [0.26; 0.29]	0.21 [0.20; 0.22]	0.10 [0.09; 0.11]	0.07 [0.06; 0.08]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
Missing	0.35 [0.32; 0.38]	0.26 [0.24; 0.29]	0.21 [0.18; 0.23]	0.08 [0.06; 0.10]	0.07 [0.06; 0.09]	0.03 [0.02; 0.03]
Type of dissolved union						
Cohabitation	0.29 [0.28; 0.30]	0.27 [0.26; 0.28]	0.23 [0.22; 0.24]	0.10 [0.10; 0.11]	0.08 [0.08; 0.09]	0.02 [0.02; 0.03]
Marriage	0.32 [0.31; 0.32]	0.27 [0.27; 0.28]	0.22 [0.21; 0.22]	0.10 [0.09; 0.10]	0.07 [0.07; 0.08]	0.03 [0.02; 0.03]
New partner						
Not repartnered	0.36 [0.36; 0.37]	0.27 [0.27; 0.28]	0.19 [0.19; 0.20]	0.08 [0.08; 0.09]	0.06 [0.06; 0.07]	0.02 [0.02; 0.02]
Repartnered at time of separation	0.10 [0.08; 0.12]	0.29 [0.27; 0.32]	0.37 [0.34; 0.40]	0.09 [0.07; 0.10]	0.14 [0.12; 0.16]	0.01 [0.01; 0.02]
Repartnered after separation	0.18 [0.16; 0.19]	0.23 [0.22; 0.24]	0.26 [0.25; 0.27]	0.17 [0.16; 0.18]	0.12 [0.11; 0.13]	0.04 [0.04; 0.05]

Source: Authors' own calculations using linked Belgian Census (2001) and Population Register data (2001–2006).

Table A-3: Predicted probability (with 95% confidence intervals) of leaving, remaining in, or returning to the pre-separation municipality, N = 25,802

	LEAVE (N = 14,744)	REMAIN (N = 9,463)	RETURN (N = 1,595)
Woman's characteristics			
Education			
Low	0.35 [0.34; 0.36]	0.58 [0.57; 0.59]	0.07 [0.06; 0.07]
Medium	0.36 [0.35; 0.37]	0.57 [0.56; 0.58]	0.06 [0.06; 0.07]
High	0.35 [0.33; 0.36]	0.61 [0.59; 0.62]	0.04 [0.04; 0.05]
Missing	0.41 [0.36; 0.46]	0.49 [0.44; 0.54]	0.10 [0.07; 0.13]
Employment status 12 months prior to separation			
Full-time	0.37 [0.36; 0.38]	0.57 [0.56; 0.58]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
Part-time	0.34 [0.33; 0.35]	0.59 [0.58; 0.60]	0.07 [0.06; 0.07]
Unemployed	0.36 [0.35; 0.38]	0.58 [0.56; 0.59]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
Missing	0.33 [0.31; 0.35]	0.62 [0.59; 0.64]	0.06 [0.05; 0.07]
Number of children at separation			
1 child	0.36 [0.35; 0.38]	0.58 [0.57; 0.59]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
2 children	0.35 [0.34; 0.36]	0.59 [0.58; 0.60]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
3 children	0.37 [0.35; 0.38]	0.57 [0.56; 0.59]	0.06 [0.05; 0.07]
4+ children	0.36 [0.34; 0.39]	0.56 [0.53; 0.59]	0.08 [0.06; 0.09]
Age of the youngest child at separation			
< 7	0.36 [0.34; 0.37]	0.59 [0.58; 0.60]	0.05 [0.05; 0.06]
7–11	0.34 [0.33; 0.36]	0.60 [0.59; 0.61]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
12–17	0.36 [0.34; 0.37]	0.58 [0.56; 0.59]	0.07 [0.06; 0.08]
18+	0.42 [0.39; 0.45]	0.50 [0.47; 0.53]	0.08 [0.06; 0.10]
Missing	0.39 [0.22; 0.56]	0.55 [0.37; 0.72]	0.06 [–0.02; 0.15]
Characteristics of the place of residence at the time of separation			
Living at the place of birth			
Birth municipality	0.20 [0.19; 0.21]	0.75 [0.73; 0.76]	0.05 [0.05; 0.06]
Birth province	0.38 [0.37; 0.39]	0.56 [0.55; 0.57]	0.06 [0.06; 0.07]
Elsewhere	0.44 [0.42; 0.45]	0.55 [0.50; 0.52]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
Housing			
Owner	0.36 [0.35; 0.36]	0.58 [0.57; 0.59]	0.06 [0.06; 0.07]
Private renting	0.41 [0.39; 0.42]	0.54 [0.52; 0.55]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
Social renting	0.24 [0.22; 0.26]	0.72 [0.70; 0.75]	0.04 [0.03; 0.05]
Missing/rent free	0.36 [0.33; 0.39]	0.58 [0.55; 0.61]	0.06 [0.04; 0.07]

Table A-3: (Continued)

	LEAVE (N = 14,744)	REMAIN (N = 9,463)	RETURN (N = 1,595)
Area type			
Urban	0.33 [0.32; 0.34]	0.62 [0.61; 0.63]	0.05 [0.05; 0.06]
Suburban	0.40 [0.39; 0.41]	0.54 [0.53; 0.55]	0.06 [0.06; 0.07]
Rural	0.36 [0.34; 0.37]	0.58 [0.56; 0.59]	0.07 [0.06; 0.07]
Region			
Flanders	0.37 [0.36; 0.38]	0.57 [0.56; 0.58]	0.06 [0.06; 0.06]
Brussels/Wallonia	0.35 [0.34; 0.36]	0.59 [0.58; 0.60]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
Ex-couple characteristics			
Age difference			
Same age	0.34 [0.33; 0.35]	0.60 [0.59; 0.61]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
Woman older	0.31 [0.30; 0.33]	0.63 [0.61; 0.65]	0.06 [0.05; 0.07]
Man 2–4 years older	0.37 [0.36; 0.38]	0.58 [0.57; 0.59]	0.05 [0.05; 0.06]
Man 4+ years older	0.39 [0.38; 0.40]	0.54 [0.53; 0.55]	0.07 [0.06; 0.07]
Educational difference			
Same level	0.36 [0.35; 0.37]	0.58 [0.57; 0.59]	0.06 [0.06; 0.07]
Man > Woman	0.37 [0.36; 0.39]	0.56 [0.55; 0.58]	0.06 [0.06; 0.07]
Woman > Man	0.35 [0.33; 0.36]	0.60 [0.58; 0.61]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
Missing	0.34 [0.31; 0.37]	0.62 [0.59; 0.64]	0.05 [0.04; 0.06]
Type of dissolved union			
Cohabitation	0.38 [0.37; 0.40]	0.56 [0.55; 0.57]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
Marriage	0.35 [0.34; 0.36]	0.59 [0.58; 0.60]	0.06 [0.06; 0.06]
New partner			
Not repartnered	0.31 [0.30; 0.31]	0.64 [0.63; 0.64]	0.06 [0.05; 0.06]
Repartnered at time of separation	0.57 [0.54; 0.60]	0.39 [0.36; 0.42]	0.04 [0.03; 0.05]
Repartnered after separation	0.52 [0.51; 0.54]	0.40 [0.39; 0.42]	0.07 [0.07; 0.08]

Source: Authors' own calculations using linked Belgian Census (2001) and Population Register data (2001–2006).

Table A-4: Relative risk ratio (standard error) of belonging to different mobility patterns among separated mothers. Base outcome: moving within the same municipality (pattern 2), N = 25,802

	Base outcome: Moving within the same municipality (2)				
	Remaining in municipality	Remaining in province, but moving to different municipality		Moving to different province	
	No move (1)	One move (3)	Several moves (4)	One move (5)	Several moves (6)
Woman's characteristics					
Education (ref = Medium)					
Low	0.83***	0.87***	0.98	0.88*	0.94
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.10)
High	1.38***	1.05	0.94	1.20***	1.02
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.12)
Missing	0.52***	0.96	1.39*	0.76	1.07
	(0.07)	(0.14)	(0.25)	(0.15)	(0.29)
Employment status 12 months prior to separation (ref = Full-time)					
Part-time	0.88***	0.86***	0.90*	0.79***	0.73***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.08)
Unemployed	0.90**	0.89**	0.86**	0.94	1.08
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.11)
Missing	0.92	0.77***	0.83**	0.79**	0.76**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.11)
Age at separation	1.07**	0.97	0.93**	0.94*	0.88**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Age at separation^2	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Number of children at separation (ref = One child)					
2 children	1.09**	1.02	0.98	0.92	0.97
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.09)
3 children	1.26***	1.14**	1.25***	1.09	1.32**
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.17)
4 or more children	1.12	1.08	1.28**	0.99	1.81***
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.29)
Age of youngest child at separation (ref = < 7 years)					
7–11	1.08	1.06	1.07	1.13	1.11
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.13)
12–17	0.87***	0.95	1.17**	0.98	1.26*
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.18)
18+	0.91	1.24**	1.72***	1.30**	2.46***
	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.21)	(0.16)	(0.47)
Missing	0.81	0.80	1.71	1.18	1.45
	(0.38)	(0.43)	(0.97)	(0.82)	(1.56)
Characteristics of the place of residence at the time of separation					
Living at the place of birth (ref = Elsewhere)					
Birth municipality	0.77***	0.44***	0.53***	0.13***	0.15***
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Birth province	1.07	1.29***	1.51***	0.26***	0.35***
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.09)	(0.01)	(0.03)

Table A-4: (Continued)

	Base outcome: Moving within the same municipality (2)				
	Remaining in municipality	Remaining in province, but moving to different municipality		Moving to different province	
	No move (1)	One move (3)	Several moves (4)	One move (5)	Several moves (6)
Housing tenure (ref = Owner)					
Private renting	0.61***	0.99	0.82***	1.02	0.99
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.10)
Social renting	2.30***	0.86*	0.77**	0.88	1.07
	(0.16)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.18)
Missing	0.98	0.97	0.96	1.01	1.12
	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.20)
Area type at separation (ref = Urban)					
Suburban	1.13***	1.42***	1.49***	1.52***	1.58***
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.14)
Rural	0.92*	1.14***	1.22***	1.07	1.05
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.11)
Living in Flanders	0.82***	0.85***	0.84***	0.84***	0.82**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.07)
Ex-couple characteristics					
Marriage	1.08*	0.93	0.92	0.84***	1.01
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.09)
Age difference (ref = Same age)					
Woman older	1.25***	0.99	1.09	0.89	1.24
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.17)
Man 2–4 years older	0.85***	1.00	1.02	1.00	1.03
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.11)
Man > 4 years older	0.70***	1.03	1.20***	0.95	1.16
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.12)
Educational difference (ref = Same level)					
Man > Woman	0.96	1.03	1.06	1.07	0.96
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.11)
Woman > Man	1.09*	0.96	1.02	0.93	0.89
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.09)
Missing	1.23**	0.97	0.84	0.98	0.99
	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.12)	(0.18)
New partner (ref = Not repartnered)					
Repartnered at time of separation	0.25***	1.77***	0.96	2.15***	0.53**
	(0.03)	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.23)	(0.14)
Repartnered after separation	0.58***	1.60***	2.37***	2.40***	2.29***
	(0.03)	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.15)	(0.21)
Constant	0.23***	1.35	2.21	2.66	4.03
	(0.12)	(0.71)	(1.38)	(1.82)	(3.97)

Note: *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1
Source: Authors' own calculations using linked Belgian Census (2001) and Population Register data (2001–2006).

Table A-5: Results of multinomial logistic regression, relative risk ratio (standard errors) of remaining in or returning to the pre-separation municipality. Base outcome: leaving the pre-separation municipality and not returning to it, N = 25,802

	Base outcome: LEAVE (N = 9,463)	
	REMAIN	**RETURN**
	N = 14,744	**N = 1,595**
Woman's characteristics		
Woman's education (ref = Medium)		
Low	1.04	1.15**
	(0.04)	(0.08)
High	1.11***	0.73***
	(0.04)	(0.06)
Missing	0.76**	1.44*
	(0.08)	(0.31)
Age at separation	1.06**	0.91**
	(0.02)	(0.04)
Age at separation squared	1.00	1.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Number of children (ref = One child)		
2 children	1.07**	1.06
	(0.04)	(0.07)
3 children	0.99	1.09
	(0.04)	(0.10)
4 or more children	0.98	1.40***
	(0.06)	(0.17)
Age of youngest child (ref = < 7 years)		
7–11	0.95	0.91
	(0.04)	(0.07)
12–17	0.93*	1.17
	(0.04)	(0.11)
18+	0.68***	1.16
	(0.04)	(0.16)
Missing	0.80	0.97
	(0.30)	(0.74)
Employment status at separation (ref = Full-time)		
Part-time	1.13***	1.23***
	(0.04)	(0.08)
Unemployed	1.04	1.01
	(0.04)	(0.08)
Missing	1.23***	1.14
	(0.07)	(0.12)
Characteristics of the place of residence at the time of separation		
Housing tenure (ref = Owner)		
Private renting	0.80***	0.77***
	(0.03)	(0.05)
Social renting	1.87***	0.89
	(0.12)	(0.11)
Missing	0.98	0.87
	(0.06)	(0.11)

Table A-5: (Continued)

	Base outcome: LEAVE (N = 9,463)	
	REMAIN	**RETURN**
	N = 14,744	**N = 1,595**
Living at the place of birth (ref = Elsewhere)		
Living at birth municipality	3.19***	2.03***
	(0.14)	(0.18)
Living at birth province	1.25***	1.28***
	(0.04)	(0.08)
Area (ref = Urban)		
Suburban	0.72***	0.93
	(0.02)	(0.06)
Rural	0.85***	1.11
	(0.03)	(0.08)
Living in Flanders (ref = Brussels/Wallonia)	1.08**	1.02
	(0.03)	(0.06)
Ex-couple characteristics		
Married (ref = Cohabiting)	1.16***	1.16**
	(0.04)	(0.08)
Age difference (ref = Same age)		
Woman older	1.16***	1.09
	(0.05)	(0.11)
Man 2–4 years older	0.90***	0.89*
	(0.03)	(0.06)
Man 5 years or more older	0.79***	1.05
	(0.03)	(0.08)
Educational difference (ref = Same level of education)		
Man > woman	0.95	1.02
	(0.04)	(0.08)
Woman > man	1.09**	0.99
	(0.04)	(0.07)
Missing	1.14**	0.82
	(0.08)	(0.12)
New partner (ref = Not repartnered)		
Repartnered at separation	0.33***	0.41***
	(0.02)	(0.06)
Repartnered after separation	0.37***	0.77***
	(0.01)	(0.05)
Constant	0.34***	1.55
	(0.13)	(1.08)

Note: *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1.
Source: Authors' own calculations using linked Belgian Census (2001) and Population Register data (2001–2006).