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## The impact of union dissolution on moving distances and destinations in the UK

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IZA DP No. 5628

**The Impact of Union Dissolution on Moving Distances  
and Destinations in the UK**

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April 2011

# The Impact of Union Dissolution on Moving Distances and Destinations in the UK

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## ABSTRACT

### **The Impact of Union Dissolution on Moving Distances and Destinations in the UK**

The number of people who have ever experienced a divorce, or a split up of a non-marital union, is rising every year. It is well known that union dissolution has a disruptive effect on the housing careers of those involved, often leading to downward moves on the housing ladder. Much less is known about the geographies of residential mobility after union dissolution. There are reasons to expect that those who experienced a union dissolution are less likely to move over longer distances, which could negatively influence the spatial flexibility of the labour force. This study contributes to the existing literature by investigating the occurrences of moves, distances moved and the destinations of moves after union dissolution. The paper also contributes to the literature by not only investigating the effect of divorce, but also splitting up, and repartnering on mobility. Using longitudinal data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) and logistic regression models we found that union dissolution has a significant effect on the occurrence of moves and moving distances.

JEL Classification: J12, J61, R21, R23

Keywords: union dissolution, splitting up, divorce, housing career, spatial mobility, longitudinal data, BHPS, United Kingdom

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960s there has been a dramatic increase in divorce rates in most of the Western world. In the United Kingdom, the annual number of divorces increased from 25,000 in 1960 to almost 150,000 in 1980. The number has stayed around this level ever since. Although the number of divorces has been relatively stable over the last 30 years, the number of people who ever experienced a divorce increases year by year. Divorce can have serious consequences for divorcees and their children. Most consequences reported in the literature are for the well-being and school performance of children, and for the economic consequences for men and women. The rise in divorce rates since the 1960s is accompanied by a rise in remarriage rates. Of all men who married in the UK in 2007, 27% were previously divorced, against 22% in 1980 and 9% in 1970 (ONS, 2007a).

In this study, we take a broad view on union dissolution, and include both divorce and the dissolution of non-marital unions, which we will refer to as ‘splitting up’. For many people, unmarried cohabitation has become a precursor to marriage. The majority of cohabiters whose cohabitation is successful will eventually proceed to marriage. A smaller group remains unmarried, and these cohabitations are more permanent and have the same durable character as a marriage (Kiernan & Estaugh, 1993). Although there are no official statistics available on the number of cohabiting unions (and subsequently their split ups), we know that the number of unmarried cohabiters has increased dramatically. This can be illustrated by the sharp rise in live births to unmarried mothers as a percentage of all live births, from about six per cent in 1960 to more than 41 per cent in 2005 (ONS, 2007b). Unmarried cohabitation has now partly replaced marriage as a durable form of living together.

In the 1980s and 1990s, when divorce rates were peaking, a number of studies investigated the effects of divorce on housing careers (Sullivan, 1986; Schouw & Dieleman, 1987; Clapham *et al.*, 1990; Jackson, 1990; Murphy, 1990; Symon, 1990; Wasoff & Dobash, 1990; Watchman, 1990; McCarthy & Simpson, 1991; Van Noortwijk *et al.*, 1992). These studies showed that divorce has a disruptive effect on the housing careers of those involved, often leading to downward moves on the housing ladder (Feijten, 2005ab): moves from large to smaller and lower quality dwellings, moves from owner-occupation into rented housing and from single-family dwellings into multi-family dwellings (see Feijten & van Ham, 2010 for a recent study using UK data). Similar effects were found for the split up of non-marital unions, although the effects were less severe than for the divorced (Feijten, 2005ab).

An aspect of post-divorce and post-split up housing careers that received much less attention is the spatial mobility of those involved in union dissolution (recent exceptions are Flowerdew and Al-Hamad, 2004 for the UK; and Feijten & van Ham, 2007 for the Netherlands). There are good conceptual reasons to believe that union dissolution has an effect on distances moved and the moving destinations of those involved, because moves triggered by divorce are deviant compared to moves triggered by other life events: They are urgent, financially restricted and spatially restricted (Feijten & Van Ham, 2007). These factors are likely to cause those who divorced or split up to move to different residential environments and over different distances than other households. Because the number of people who have ever experienced a union dissolution is increasing, and many of these people re-partner, an increasing number of people has links with previous households. These links can be expected to be especially important for spatial mobility when people have children from a previous union. In such a situation, people are likely to have a desire to stay in

close proximity to their ex-partner for the sake of (contact with) their children. Repartnering can lead to complicated spatial arrangements and constraints when both partners in a household have children from previous unions. Such situations may seriously reduce the willingness of people to move over longer distances, and therefore reduce the spatial flexibility of workers.

This paper will contribute to the existing literature on the effects of union dissolution on housing careers in three ways. First, it will uniquely focus on spatial aspects of housing careers, including the occurrence of moves, distances moved, and the destinations of moves after union dissolution. Second, we will take into account the rise in cohabitation and study both the effect of splitting up and divorce on spatial mobility. Third, we will look at the effect of repartnering on spatial careers.

## **BACKGROUND**

### *Union dissolution, housing and mobility*

The effects of divorce on housing careers are well documented. Clapham and colleagues (1990) found that after separation and divorce, men were more successful in staying in owner-occupation than women (50 versus 44 per cent, see also Symon, 1990). Helderma (2007) showed that for the Netherlands over the period 1981-2002, the most common reason for moving from owner-occupation into rented housing was divorce/separation, especially for women. Twice as many moving divorcees reported a decrease in the number of rooms than reported an increase (Wasoff&Dobash, 1990). Lack of amenities was twice as common among divorced women compared to married women (Murphy, 1990); those divorced women were often childless, and the lack of amenities was often associated with living in the private rented sector. Divorced people were also reported to live less often in single family dwellings than married families, even if the presence of dependent children was controlled for (Sullivan, 1986; Murphy, 1990). A recent study using data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) confirmed that union dissolutions in the UK have severe implications for housing careers (Feijten & van Ham, 2010)

Several studies have shown that it takes a series of moves before divorced people live again in housing they see as suitable (McCarthy & Simpson, 1991; Watchman, 1990; Jackson 1990). McCarthy & Simpson (1991) found that 20% of their sample of 1,122 people made more than two moves in the period after separation (up to three years after divorce). Divorcees with dependent children made fewer moves (a maximum of five) than those without dependent children (some of whom made more than eight moves). Wasoff and Dobash (1990) found different effects of union dissolution on housing at the moment of separation, the period between separation and divorce, the moment of divorce, and the post-divorce period. The initial separation was found to lead to a move by one of the partners, and in some cases by both. In the period between separation and the divorce settlement, the majority of people moved house at least once, and often more than once.

A limited number of studies has also investigated the spatial aspects of housing careers after union dissolution. Feijten and Van Ham (2007) showed for the Netherlands that directly after a union dissolution people move more often than people in other living arrangements. Although their mobility rate decreased over time, it remained higher than the mobility rate of their married counterparts for several years after the event. A study by South and Crowder (1998) used data from the US to show that children in post-divorce families moved to significantly poorer

neighbourhoods than children in intact two parent families. These were often moves from suburbs to city centres (which in the American context often signifies moves to poorer areas). This was mainly attributable to differences in economic resources between these types of families. A study by Feijten et al. (2008) showed for the Netherlands that those who were divorced, or who had split up, were more likely to move to cities than people with other marital statuses, and less likely to move to rural areas. An older study for Germany (Kemper, 1985) also found that divorced men and women were more likely to move to city centres than others. Feijten and Van Ham (2007) found for the Netherlands that after a union dissolution people moved over shorter distances than others, especially shortly after the break up. They also found that after a union dissolution people were more likely to move into cities, and to stay in cities once they lived there, than married people (Feijten & Van Ham 2007).

#### *Why divorce and splitting up can be expected to affect spatial mobility*

There is a close relationship between household and housing careers in the life course. Life events such as getting married, and getting children often coincide with upward moves on the housing ladder (Rossi, 1955; Brown & Moore, 1970; Michelson, 1977; Mulder & Hooimeijer, 1999; Feijten, 2005b). The split up of unmarried couples or the divorce of married couples inevitably results in major changes in the household configuration and subsequently in changing requirements with regard to the dwelling and the location of the dwelling. There are several reasons why splitting up and divorce can be expected to have implications for the housing career. This is because moves triggered by union dissolution are deviant compared to moves triggered by other life events. Moves triggered by union dissolution are: 1) urgent, 2) financially restricted, and 3) spatially restricted (Feijten & Van Ham, 2007; see also Feijten & van Ham, 2010). Because those involved in a decision to split up or to have a divorce usually want to effectuate that decision as soon as possible, subsequent moves are urgent. As a result, most people simply have to accept the first available housing option, which is often suboptimal. It can then take several moves before they are able to live in a dwelling they see as suitable. Moves triggered by union dissolution are also financially restricted because they often coincide with a decline in resources, especially when the personal income is lower than the prior household income (Jarvis & Jenkins, 1999; Poortman, 2000; Aassveet *al.*, 2006).

Moves triggered by union dissolution can also be expected to be spatially restricted (Feijten & Van Ham, 2007). A study by Symon (1990) reported that after a union dissolution, some people were intentionally looking for accommodation in a different area, to make a fresh start, to move back to the area where family and (old) friends live, to avoid contact with the ex-spouse and/or his/her family, or to move away from a place filled with bad memories (see also Jackson, 1990; Watchman, 1990). Anthony (1997), on the other hand, found that some people desperately wanted to stay in the matrimonial home because they said it was filled with memories of better times. Others prefer to stay close to the former matrimonial home because of employment reasons and nearness to friends and family. Location specific capital (DaVanzo, 1981) can be a lifeline for people who are suddenly on their own after a union dissolution, and feelings of place attachment (Feldman, 1990; Winstanley *et al.*, 2002) may be particularly strong after a divorce.

When a couple has (young) children, and both parents are committed to taking shared responsibility for the upbringing, moves after a union dissolution are severely spatially restricted. Usually, the custody of the children is granted to one of the partners (mostly the mother), and some meeting arrangement is agreed for the other

parent. For the sake of the children, the couple often decides that the partner who gets custody stays in the matrimonial home. But if that is not possible, the preference to stay close to the matrimonial home is often very strong, in order to change as little as possible in the children's daily life. For non-custody parents, living close to where the children live can be essential for keeping a close bond with them. It has been found in Danish data that non-custody fathers live at significantly closer distance to their children than childless men live to the house of their ex-partner (Gram-Hanssen, 2006). In a study for the Netherlands it was found that the mean distance moved by divorced people is shorter compared to never married and people in a first relationship. In particular divorced men with children were found to move over short distances (Feijten & Van Ham, 2007). A recent quantitative study from Sweden found that many divorcees whose children live with the other parent, remain living close to their children. Of all non-residential fathers, 84% lived within 50 kilometres from their children (Stjernström, 2009a). An accompanying qualitative study (Stjernström, 2009b) showed that parents of young children often found it important to live at very close distance (walking distance). Feelings of guilt towards the child(ren) was a major motivation behind this, together with a longing to maintain a very close bond with the children. Evidence from Norway (Barlindhaug&Skjørten, 2007) suggests that joint custody arrangements (where the children live one half of the week with their mother and the other half of the week with their father) lead to residential nearness of ex-partners, where in 50% of the cases they live within walking distance (and within a travel time of maximum half an hour in 96% of cases). This seriously limits the residential choice set for joint-custody parents, and even more so for those who have repartnered with someone who also has children from a previous relationship (Barlindhaug&Skjørten, 2007).

Lastly, entering a new household type after union dissolution may generate a shift in preferences concerning the residential environment. Many married couples, especially with children, live in suburban neighbourhoods, with a mono-residential function, where attributes such as generous dwelling and garden space, easy access to schools and convenience shops, and easy access to motorways, are important. These elements may become less important after a divorce. Elements such as the availability of affordable (rented) housing (smaller in size), a lively and anonymous living environment, closeness to a large supply of jobs and a large pool of potential new partners may become more important. Urban environments offer these attributes, and thus cities can be expected to attract divorcees, in favour of suburbs and rural areas. When after splitting up or divorce people find a new partner, their circumstances, desires and needs change again. Repartnering often leads to an increase in household resources, especially for women (Dewilde&Uunk, 2008; Coleman et al., 2000). Residential preferences may change due to increased household size, and partly due to lifestyle changes. This leads us to expect that the location choices of those who repartner after union dissolution will resemble that of married people, but that their spatial behaviour will be restricted if there are children from the previous relationship.

### *Hypotheses*

The above lead us to formulate four hypotheses:

1. *Divorced and split up people move more often than married and cohabiting people.* The union dissolution itself leads to moving, and then a number of 'adjustment moves' may be needed to obtain suitable housing again.
2. *Divorced and split up people move over shorter distances than married and cohabiting people; this is expected to be especially true for divorced/split up*



*parents*. Place attachment and location specific capital are likely to be strong for people who just experienced a union dissolution. Those who have children are particularly keen not to move far, to disturb children's lives as little as possible, and non-custody parents will often want to stay close to where their children live.

3. *Divorced and split up people move more often to cities than married and cohabiting people*. Cities are attractive places for those who are alone after a divorce or split up, because cities offer affordable and small housing, jobs and leisure facilities, and ample meeting opportunities with potential partners.
4. *The behaviour of people in a new relationship lies between that of first-time married and divorced people*. We expect that people in a new relationship move more often than the first-time married, but not as often as the divorced/separated; that they move over longer distances than the divorced/separated; and that they move less often into cities/less often stay in cities than the divorced/separated.

## DATA AND METHOD

### *Data*

The data analysed are from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), which is a nationally representative stratified sample of 5,500 households (10,300 interviewed individuals) drawn in 1991 from 250 areas in Great Britain. Additional booster samples for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were added later, but for this study we only use the original 1991 sample. Since 1991, the same individuals have been re-interviewed each successive year on many topics. For our analyses we have used a panel of 14 years and we have only used respondents who were head of the household or the partner of the head of the household. We excluded person-years over age 70, person-years of widowhood, and person-years when people were in full-time education. Lastly, we excluded respondents on whom too much background information was missing (such as income and housing tenure), or whose move status was unknown<sup>1</sup>. The remaining sample contains 74,711 person-years representing 8,800 respondents. The number of years respondents in our sample are observed ranges from one year (9.7% of respondents) to 13 years (34.1% of respondents).

In the first few waves of the BHPS, people were interviewed about their life histories, such as their fertility and relationship history. This allowed us to calculate the duration of the marital status they had in the first wave. Completed fertility histories meant that we could identify parents whose children do not live in their household (mostly non-custody fathers and a few non-custody mothers). A potential problem when studying mobility with panel data is that those who move are more likely to leave the panel compared to those who stay. Buck (2000) has shown that although this problem is present in the BHPS, its effect on the study of residential mobility and migration is limited because only a small percentage of movers disappear without leaving any information. However, there is a risk that those who disappear from the panel are disproportionately people who recently separated/divorced or split up. This would lead to an undercount of divorcees/split-up people, but it does not necessarily bias the results because there is no obvious reason to think that divorcees who leave the panel behave differently than divorcees who stay in the panel.

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<sup>1</sup> Because mover status is derived by comparing current and previous (one year ago) place of residence, move status was unknown for everyone in the first year of the panel. As a result of this, all 1991-observations were discarded.

### *Method*

We study the following aspects of housing and mobility after union dissolution: Occurrence of moving (how often do people in certain living arrangements move?); and for those who move the distance moved and the likelihood of moving to a city. For each aspect, we first analyse the association with living arrangement in a base model, which does not control for other factors. We then add duration of living arrangement and then control for the usual individual and household background variables. The risk of moving is analysed in a logistic panel model, because panel models are apt to capture the time dimension of being at risk to experience a move. Once we know the risk structure of moving for people in different living arrangements, we subsequently analyse movers only. Distance moved is analysed using OLS regression. The event of moving to the city (for those living in non-urban Local Authority Districts) is analysed using a logistic regression model. Because of the possibility of several moves per person in the sample, the standard errors in our models are corrected for non-independent observations, using the Huber-White estimator (Huber, 1967).

### *Variables*

The table in Appendix 1 lists all the variables used in the analyses and gives selected summary statistics. A few of these variables need some additional explanation. The living arrangement variable was created by using marital status, which includes separate categories for ‘living as a couple (unmarried)’ and ‘separated’ (legally married but living apart). By comparing marital status in each wave with the relationship history, we were able to determine dissolutions of cohabiting unions and married unions. It also allowed us to determine when people entered a new union after a spell of being alone after a split up or a divorce. This category is called ‘new relationship’ in the tables.

For those who were married at the time of the first wave, relationship duration was calculated using the reported start year of the marital status. If people changed marital status during the panel, the duration count started again at zero. For the never married people it was not possible to calculate a duration. The start date of their living arrangement could be regarded as the moment they left the parental home, but this information is not available in the BHPS data. To solve this problem statistically, we created a dummy indicating a missing value on duration, and we substituted the actual missing duration score by the mean duration of all other cases (Cohen & Cohen, 1975). We used the same technique for the handful of people who did not report the starting date of their current marital status.

The lowest geographical level that can be analysed using the BHPS without a special licence are the 434 Local Authority Districts (LADs). For reasons of data confidentiality, LADs were aggregated if their population was below 120,000, which resulted in 277 LAD areas that can be analysed in the BHPS. We assigned each LAD a code ‘urban’ or ‘rural’ based on a multiple-item area classification developed by the Office of National Statistics. We have also attached the variable ‘distance moved’ to our data. Distance was calculated by the BHPS team using distances between centroids of wards (low spatial level units (N=8855), each comprising on average 600 people), and is expressed in kilometres.

## **RESULTS**

### *Moving occurrence*

We expected that divorced people would move more often than their married counterparts, and that people who split up move more often than their cohabiting counterparts (hypothesis 1). The results from Model 1 in Table 1 support the first part of the hypothesis, but not the second part. Those who have split up are as likely to move as those who cohabit. Once we control for duration of the living arrangement in Model 2, the main effects become smaller, but remain positive and significant. Duration of living arrangement has a negative effect on the probability of moving: the longer one is in a certain living arrangement, the lower is the likelihood of moving. After controlling for durations in Model 2, divorced people are still 1.5 times more likely to move than married people ( $\exp(0.42)$ ).

To check whether the effect of duration on the probability of moving works out differently for people in different living arrangements, we interacted living arrangement with duration (see Model 3 in Table 1). This model also controls for a range of variables known to affect the probability of moving. All the effects of these control variables are as expected based on the relevant residential mobility literature. The main effects and interaction effects of living arrangement and duration are plotted in Figure 1. It can be seen that the pace at which moving probability decreases with duration is very different for the five relationship types. The split up and divorced start off higher than those cohabiting and married, but the probability of moving decreases quickly with duration, especially for those who split up. The probability of moving for the divorced goes down much slower, and as a result, it is one of the highest at durations over three years. Only cohabiters have a higher, and remarkably stable-over-time, moving probability, much higher than for those who split up. The findings lend support to our hypothesis that after divorce, many people enter a period of frequent mobility. Even eight years after the divorce, the estimated moving probability for the divorced is still higher than for the married. Re-partnering after divorce lowers the moving probability, though not immediately: the probability of moving for those in a ‘new relationship’ is very high at the start and only drops below that of divorcees after four years, and reaches the same level as the married after almost eight years.

[PLEASE INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

[PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

### *Distance moved*

We hypothesised that divorced/split up people move over shorter distances than married/cohabiting people (hypothesis 2). Model 1 in Table 2 shows that, on average, divorced people move over approximately 15 km less than their married counterparts. Hypothesis 2 is not confirmed for split up people compared to cohabiters. On the contrary, split up people move over longer distances than cohabiters.

We had particular expectations about the distance moved by divorced or split up parents with children. Figure 2 shows the mean moving distances by living arrangement, for four parental statuses: not a parent; custody parent (parent of resident children); non-custody parent (parent of non-resident children); and stepparent (not a parent, but living with partner’s children in the household). Firstly, we compare bars between the categories ‘married’ and ‘divorced’. This comparison

confirms that divorced parents with children move over much shorter distances than their married counterparts. This is true for both custody and non-custody parents. Divorced custody and non-custody parents also move over shorter distances than their divorced counterparts who are not a parent. We then turn to a comparison of the categories ‘cohabiting’ and ‘split up’, where a more complex picture emerges. We see that split-up custody parents move over shorter distances than cohabiting custody parents, which confirms our hypothesis. But the hypothesis is not confirmed for non-custody parents.

The question is whether the results found in Figure 2 are caused by living arrangements and parental statuses, or whether there are other underlying causes. In Model 3 in Table 2 we included an interaction effect between living arrangement and parental status, and we controlled for a range of background variables. To make the total regression effects easier to interpret, we plotted them in Figure 3 (distances are all compared to the moving distance of married parents living with their children, whose distance is set at 0 km). The figure shows that divorced parents, whether or not they live with their children, are estimated to move over much smaller distances than their married counterparts. As in the bivariate result, this does not hold for cohabiting versus split-up non-custody parents, but it does for custody parents. Thus, the effects of living arrangement and parental status on moving distance are fairly robust.

People in a new relationship also move over relatively short distances. In Model 1 of Table 2, they were actually found to move over the shortest distances of all living arrangements, on average 17 kilometres shorter than the average moving distance of married people. When we control for the interaction between living arrangement and parental status, and for background variables (Model 3 of Table 2), the main effect of living in a new relationship decreases, but for all parent statuses the moving distances remain relatively short (Figure 4). This may mean that either the move in with the new partner is over a short distance, and/or any subsequent moves together with the new partner are over short distances. This may partly be due to one or both of the new partners having local ties to children from a previous relationship (or other local ties such as work).

[PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

[PLEASE INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

[PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

#### *Direction of moves*

We expected that people who split up or divorce move more often to cities than those who cohabit and are married (hypothesis 3). Table 3 shows the results of an analysis of the moving direction for movers who lived in non-urban Local Authority Districts (LADs) before union dissolution. The coefficients express the probability of moving to an urban LAD (called ‘city’ hereafter) compared to moving within the same or to another non-urban LAD. Model 1 shows that compared to the married, the probability of moving to a city rather than within the non-urban area is significantly higher for all groups. Controlling for duration of living arrangement in Model 2 shows that with increasing duration, the probability of moving to a city decreases, and that only cohabiters are more likely than the married to move to a city.

In Model 3 we also controlled for background variables and we introduced interaction terms between duration and living arrangement. This reduces the main effects of living arrangement even further and all are now insignificant. Of the interaction effects only the effect of splitting up and duration is significant, indicating that for those who split up, the probability that they move to a city increases over time. Overall, we have to conclude that living arrangement is a poor predictor of moving to the city (or, alternatively, our operationalization of ‘city’ is poor). The control variables show that the probability of moving to the city is strongly influenced by other factors: level of education and housing tenure of the destination dwelling. The former is probably due to the concentration of high-skill jobs in cities, and of the urban lifestyle often appreciated by the higher educated. The strong effect of tenure supports our argument that cities are attractive because of their ample supply of affordable (rented) housing.

In short, hypothesis 3 which states that divorce and separation lead to an increased probability of moving to the city, is confirmed only in the model where we do not control for background variables. The only effect that remained after controlling for background was that for ‘split up’. After splitting up, former cohabiters are effectively singles again, of whom it is well-known that they are concentrated in cities (Hall & Ogden, 2003).

People who form a new relationship after divorce or splitting up are also more likely to move to a city than married people (Model 1 in Table 3). In Models 2 and 3, when duration of the living arrangement is added, it can be seen that the main effect of ‘new relationship’ becomes insignificant, and that the duration effects (main and interaction) are negative. This indicates that especially at the beginning of a new relationship re-partnered people have a higher chance of moving to a city than married people, but not after some time. It seems that the move made to join the new partner is often into a city, but not any subsequent moves. We also modelled the probability of moving out of the city, but the effects did not differ much between living arrangements. The only effect worth mentioning is that divorced movers had a significantly lower probability of moving to the countryside right upon separation than married people.

[PLEASE INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

## **CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

In this paper we showed that union dissolution has a significant effect on the mobility rate and the moving distance of those involved. At the moment of divorce or split up, a period of frequent moving begins for many. The move out of the communal home is the first but often not the last move. For many, the first move is into temporary accommodation, which means that one or more follow-up moves have to be made before finding suitable more permanent housing. A (sharp) decrease in resources, a change in housing preferences, and the disappearance of economies of scale all contribute to the need for making adjustment moves before a new satisfactory housing situation is obtained. On the national level, this leads to increased mobility in the divorced population compared to the married population. Those who split up are also very mobile, but so are those cohabiting, and therefore the difference between these two categories is smaller than between the divorced and the married.

The spatial behaviour of divorced movers is distinctly different than that of married movers. Firstly, the average moving distance is shorter for divorcees than for the married. We attributed this to a preference to stay in the same area, as this causes the least disruption of daily life in a time that is already stressful. Divorced parents with children were estimated to move over the shortest distances, both when background characteristics were and were not controlled for. Parents have a strong incentive to stay close to where they lived before the break-up, probably to expose the children to as little change in their daily life as possible. A short moving distance was also found for non-custody parents after the separation. If they want to maintain close contact with their children, physical proximity is essential, and this is reflected in the short moving distance we found for this group. As expected, moves to the city were found to be made more often by divorced than by married people, although this was largely attributable to composition effects in terms of education and tenure. Among split up cohabiters, the probability of moving to the city remained high, but this was also the case for cohabiters.

When people start a new relationship after a split up or a divorce, their mobility remains quite high (compared to when they were divorced). But with increasing duration of the new relationship, the mobility rate decreases rapidly, starting to resemble that of first-time married people. This corresponds to our expectation. Concerning distance moved, the results showed that the average moving distance of those in a new relationship is among the shortest of all types of living arrangements. Perhaps new partners are often found locally, which takes away the necessity to move over a longer distance to move in with the new partner. Also, once the new relationship is formed, long moving distances are rare. This may be because divorced and split up people who form a new relationship still have local ties, especially when there are children from a previous relationship. When the new partner is also divorced/split up, the new couple is even more restricted in where they can move, because they both have local ties (see also Stjernström 2009ab). Concerning moving direction, it was found that at the start of the new relationship, moves to the city are more often made than by people in a first marriage, but the likelihood of moving to the city quickly drops, gradually approaching the level of the first-time married. This confirms our hypothesis. However, people in a new relationship also move more often to cities than divorced and split up people, which we did not expect (although for divorced and split up people, the likelihood does not decrease much with duration, which it does for people in a new relationship). Our hypothesis is thus partly confirmed.

Distinguishing between marriages and cohabitations, and the dissolution of these two types of unions led to some interesting results. Whereas divorcees behaved very different than their married counterparts, those who split up from their cohabitation partner did not differ much from those who cohabited. Both cohabitation and splitting up signal a highly mobile life phase (even after controlling for age), where people are exploring their possibilities and shaping their identity in terms of housing and residential location. It seems that breaking up is not so much a disruption of the housing career, but merely one event in a series of life events that opens up new opportunities. Because the commitment made to a cohabiting partner is on average weaker than to a married partner, the consequences of splitting up are less severe in many respects, and our analysis confirms this for the spatial career.

The results of this study have wider implications for our understanding of residential mobility and migration on the level of households and society. Those involved in divorce are more mobile than those who are married. A high level of

divorce in a society therefore results in higher levels of residential mobility, and increased housing demand. Those involved in divorce are less likely to move over longer distances because of local ties, especially when there are children from a previous marriage. These local ties are likely to restrict the willingness of workers to accept jobs over longer distances, potentially hampering occupational mobility. For society as a whole, a high level of divorce, and an ever increasing category of people who have ever experienced a divorce, is likely to reduce the spatial flexibility of the labour force.

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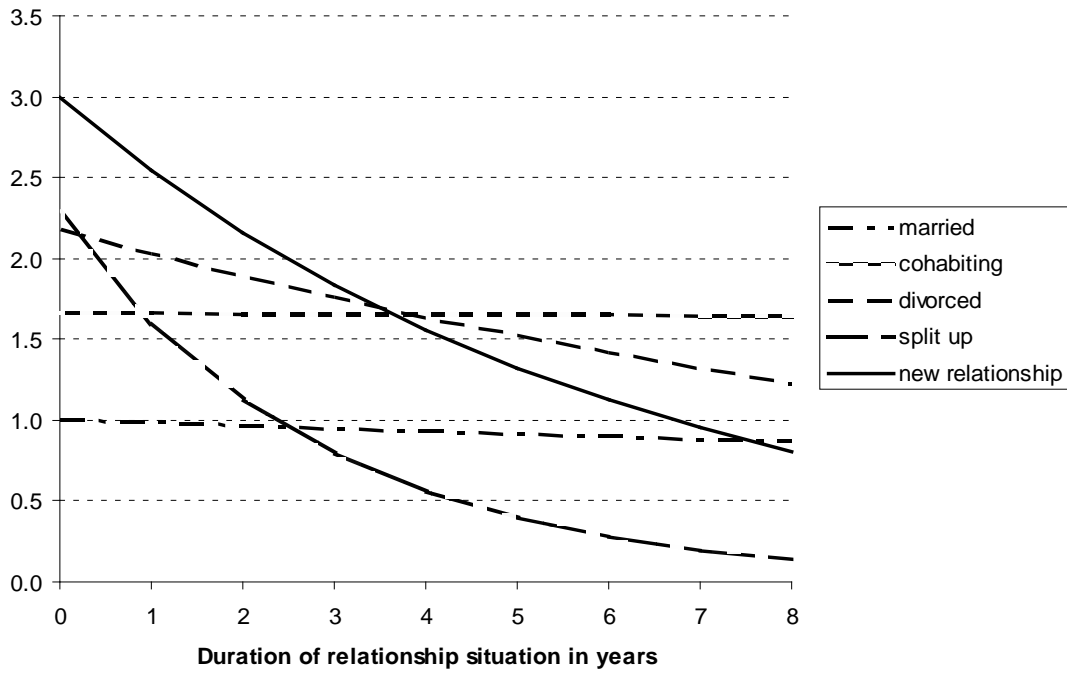
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**TABLE 1.** Logistic regression of the annual probability of moving (ref = not moving) (N = 74,711).

|  | Model 1      |     |      | Model 2      |     |      | Model 3      |     |      |
|--|--------------|-----|------|--------------|-----|------|--------------|-----|------|
|  | Coef.        |     | S.e. | Coef.        |     | S.e. | Coef.        |     | S.e. |
| <i>Living arrangement (ref = married)</i>                        |              |     |      |              |     |      |              |     |      |
| never married  | 1.87         | *** | 0.05 | 1.96         | *** | 0.05 | 0.38         |     | 0.43 |
| cohabiting   | 2.08         | *** | 0.05 | 1.29         | *** | 0.05 | 0.51         | *** | 0.05 |
| divorced   | 1.05         | *** | 0.06 | 0.42         | *** | 0.06 | 0.78         | *** | 0.07 |
| split up   | 2.07         | *** | 0.09 | 1.17         | *** | 0.09 | 0.82         | *** | 0.11 |
| new relationship   | 1.43         | *** | 0.06 | 0.58         | *** | 0.06 | 1.10         | *** | 0.08 |
| <i>Duration of living arrangement</i>                            |              |     |      |              |     |      |              |     |      |
|  |              |     |      | -0.06        | *** | 0.00 | -0.02        | *** | 0.00 |
| <i>Interaction living arrangement with duration</i>              |              |     |      |              |     |      |              |     |      |
| never married  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.03        |     | 0.02 |
| cohabiting   |              |     |      |              |     |      | 0.02         | *** | 0.00 |
| divorced   |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.05        | *** | 0.01 |
| split up   |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.33        | *** | 0.05 |
| new relationship   |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.15        | *** | 0.02 |
| <i>Dummy missing duration (ref = not missing)</i>                |              |     |      |              |     |      |              |     |      |
| missing  |              |     |      |              |     |      | 0.22         | *** | 0.06 |
| <i>Age</i>   |              |     |      |              |     |      |              |     |      |
|  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.08        | *** | 0.00 |
| <i>Sex (ref = man)</i>   |              |     |      |              |     |      |              |     |      |
| woman  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.13        | *** | 0.03 |
| <i>Income quartile (ref = lowest)</i>                            |              |     |      |              |     |      |              |     |      |
| 2nd  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.20        |     | 0.04 |
| 3rd  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.16        | *** | 0.04 |
| highest  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.09        | *   | 0.05 |
| <i>Level of education (ref = no qualifications)</i>              |              |     |      |              |     |      |              |     |      |
| secondary or vocational  |              |     |      |              |     |      | 0.17         | *** | 0.05 |
| professional or higher   |              |     |      |              |     |      | 0.36         | *** | 0.05 |
| other and unknown  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.17        | *   | 0.09 |
| <i>Birth cohort (ref = before 1930)</i>                          |              |     |      |              |     |      |              |     |      |
| 1930-1939  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.14        |     | 0.14 |
| 1940-1949  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.51        | *** | 0.15 |
| 1950-1959  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.87        | *** | 0.16 |
| 1960-1969  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.97        | *** | 0.18 |
| 1970 or later  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.65        | *** | 0.20 |
| <i>Work status (ref = not working)</i>                           |              |     |      |              |     |      |              |     |      |
| working  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.23        | *** | 0.04 |
| <i>Presence of children in the household (ref = not present)</i> |              |     |      |              |     |      |              |     |      |
| present  |              |     |      |              |     |      | -0.51        | *** | 0.03 |
| <i>Tenure (ref = owner-occupied)</i>                             |              |     |      |              |     |      |              |     |      |
| social rented  |              |     |      |              |     |      | 0.36         | *** | 0.04 |
| private rented   |              |     |      |              |     |      | 1.52         | *** | 0.04 |
| <i>Urbanity of place of residence (ref = urban)</i>              |              |     |      |              |     |      |              |     |      |
| non-urban  |              |     |      |              |     |      | 0.26         | *** | 0.05 |
| Intercept  | -3.18        | *** | 0.03 | -2.08        | *** | 0.04 | 1.65         | *** | 0.28 |
| N  | 74,711       |     |      | 74,711       |     |      | 74,428       |     |      |
| Wald chi2 (df)   | 2,775.24(5)  |     |      | 3,414.78(6)  |     |      | 7,064.66(30) |     |      |
| Rho(s.e.)  | 0.248(0.008) |     |      | 0.212(0.008) |     |      | 0.077(0.007) |     |      |

Source: BHPS, own calculations; \* = p < 0.10; \*\* = p < 0.05; \*\*\* = p < 0.01.

**FIGURE 1.** *Estimated annual risk of moving, by relationship type and duration(based on Model 3 of Table 1) (N=3,242).*



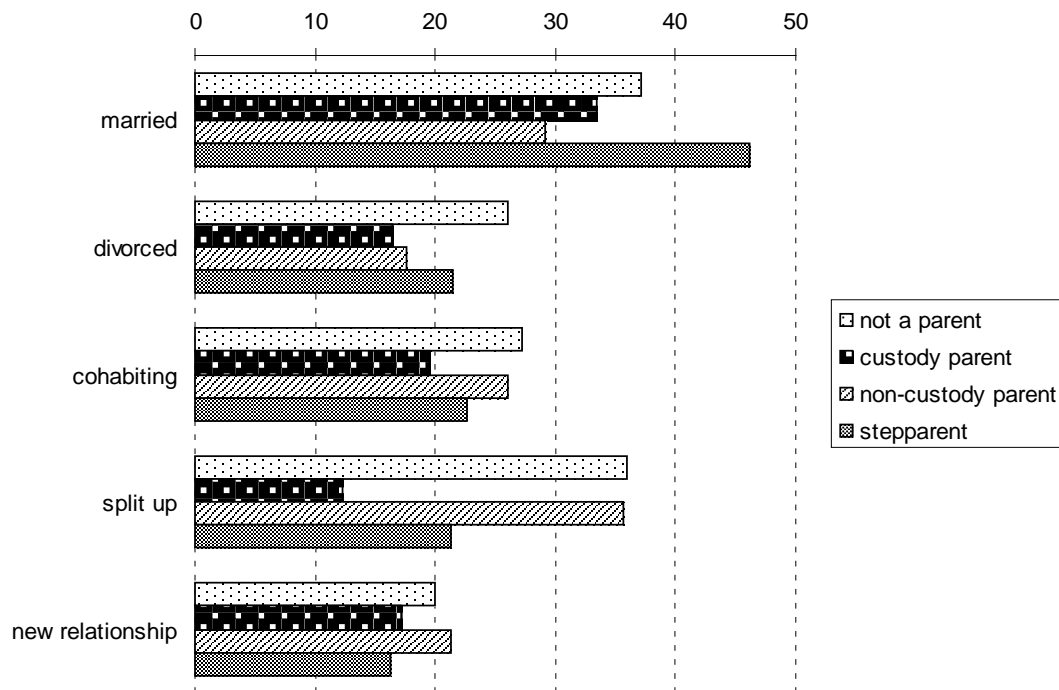
Source: BHPS, own calculations.

**TABLE 2.** OLS regression of distance moved in kilometres; movers only (N = 6,945).

|   | Model 1 |     |      | Model 2 |     |      | Model 3 |     |       |
|---|---------|-----|------|---------|-----|------|---------|-----|-------|
|   | Coef.   |     | S.e. | Coef.   |     | S.e. | Coef.   |     | S.e.  |
| <i>Living arrangement (ref = married)</i>               |         |     |      |         |     |      |         |     |       |
| never married   | 18.76   | *** | 3.31 | 14.66   | *** | 3.36 | -26.02  | *** | 5.13  |
| cohabiting  | -10.68  | *** | 2.99 | -12.96  | *** | 3.08 | -11.98  | *   | 7.24  |
| divorced  | -14.55  | *** | 3.11 | -14.74  | *** | 3.20 | -17.05  | *** | 5.47  |
| split up  | -3.76   |     | 5.17 | -6.62   |     | 5.15 | -20.97  | *** | 8.07  |
| new relationship  | -17.37  | *** | 2.95 | -17.34  | *** | 3.00 | -13.23  | *** | 5.23  |
| <i>Parental status (ref = custody parent)</i>           |         |     |      |         |     |      |         |     |       |
| Not a parent  |         |     |      | 9.54    | *** | 2.55 | 2.73    |     | 4.03  |
| Non-custody parent                                      |         |     |      | 1.36    |     | 4.34 | -2.43   |     | 10.82 |
| Stepparent  |         |     |      | 2.59    |     | 4.28 | 13.00   |     | 8.73  |
| <i>Interaction living arrangement * parental status</i> |         |     |      |         |     |      |         |     |       |
| never married, not a parent                             |         |     |      |         |     |      | 40.34   | *** | 6.12  |
| never married, non-custody parent                       |         |     |      |         |     |      | 1.60    |     | 12.41 |
| never married, stepparent                               |         |     |      |         |     |      | 3.93    |     | 11.99 |
| cohabiting, not a parent                                |         |     |      |         |     |      | 0.92    |     | 8.03  |
| cohabiting, non-custody parent                          |         |     |      |         |     |      | 1.37    |     | 15.56 |
| cohabiting, stepparent                                  |         |     |      |         |     |      | -9.36   |     | 12.29 |
| divorced, not a parent                                  |         |     |      |         |     |      | 7.06    |     | 7.06  |
| divorced, non-custody parent                            |         |     |      |         |     |      | 2.16    |     | 12.57 |
| divorced, stepparent                                    |         |     |      |         |     |      | -8.27   |     | 12.33 |
| split up, not a parent                                  |         |     |      |         |     |      | 18.22   | *   | 10.15 |
| split up, non-custody parent                            |         |     |      |         |     |      | 25.91   |     | 25.32 |
| split up, stepparent                                    |         |     |      |         |     |      | -2.34   |     | 15.31 |
| new relationship, not a parent                          |         |     |      |         |     |      | -3.32   |     | 6.61  |
| new relationship, non-custody parent                    |         |     |      |         |     |      | 5.84    |     | 12.74 |
| new relationship, stepparent                            |         |     |      |         |     |      | -11.50  |     | 10.67 |
| Age   |         |     |      |         |     |      | -0.99   | *** | 0.28  |
| <i>Sex (ref = man)</i>                                  |         |     |      |         |     |      |         |     |       |
| woman   |         |     |      |         |     |      | -1.37   |     | 2.27  |
| <i>Income quartile (ref = lowest)</i>                   |         |     |      |         |     |      |         |     |       |
| 2nd   |         |     |      |         |     |      | -3.02   |     | 2.68  |
| 3rd   |         |     |      |         |     |      | 6.46    | *   | 3.34  |
| highest   |         |     |      |         |     |      | 9.52    | *** | 3.70  |
| <i>Level of education (ref = no qualifications)</i>     |         |     |      |         |     |      |         |     |       |
| secondary or vocational                                 |         |     |      |         |     |      | 9.49    | *** | 3.14  |
| professional or higher                                  |         |     |      |         |     |      | 23.86   | *** | 3.46  |
| other and unknown                                       |         |     |      |         |     |      | 12.02   |     | 8.59  |
| <i>Birth cohort (ref = before 1930)</i>                 |         |     |      |         |     |      |         |     |       |
| 1930-1939   |         |     |      |         |     |      | 9.53    |     | 9.68  |
| 1940-1949   |         |     |      |         |     |      | -6.84   |     | 9.55  |
| 1950-1959   |         |     |      |         |     |      | -18.73  | *   | 11.27 |
| 1960-1969   |         |     |      |         |     |      | -32.43  | *** | 13.25 |
| 1970 or later   |         |     |      |         |     |      | -36.69  | *** | 14.71 |
| <i>Work status (ref = not working)</i>                  |         |     |      |         |     |      |         |     |       |
| working   |         |     |      |         |     |      | -17.83  | *** | 2.73  |
| <i>Tenure (ref = owner-occupied)</i>                    |         |     |      |         |     |      |         |     |       |
| social rented   |         |     |      |         |     |      | -3.34   |     | 3.13  |
| private rented  |         |     |      |         |     |      | 14.59   | *** | 2.88  |
| <i>Urbanity of place of residence (ref = urban)</i>     |         |     |      |         |     |      |         |     |       |
| non-urban   |         |     |      |         |     |      | 21.22   | *** | 3.62  |
| Intercept   | 35.97   | *** | 2.05 | 31.39   | *** | 2.53 | 87.15   | *** | 22.32 |
| N   | 6,945   |     |      | 6,945   |     |      | 6,921   |     |       |
| R2  | 0.02    |     |      | 0.06    |     |      | 0.06    |     |       |

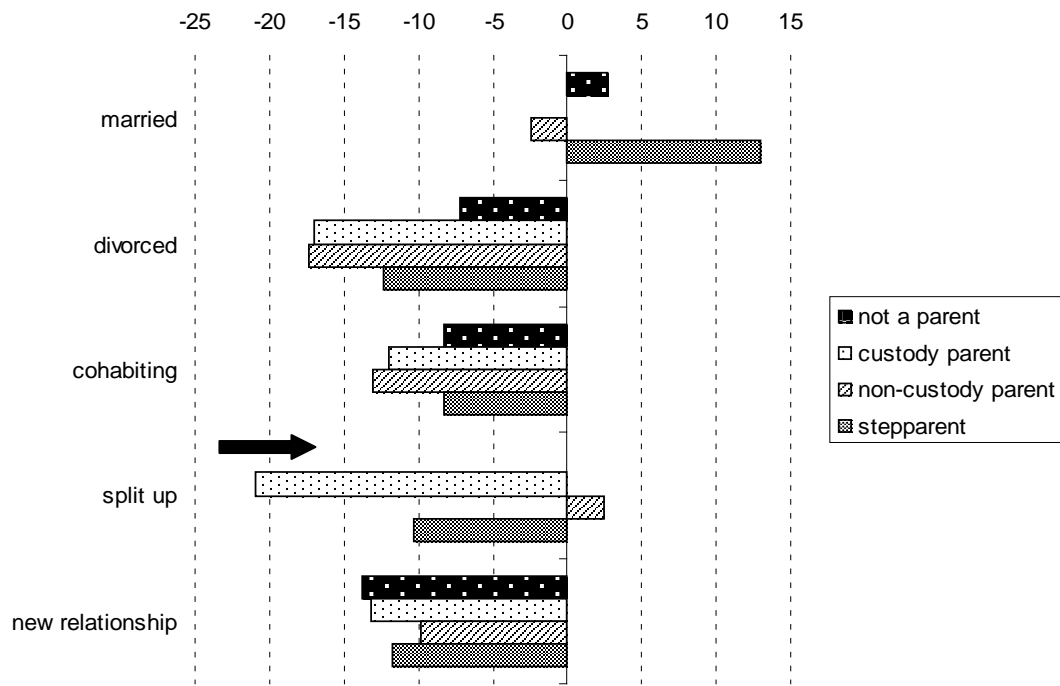
Source: BHPS, own calculations; \*= $p < 0.10$ ; \*\*= $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*= $p < 0.01$ .

**FIGURE 2.** Mean moving distance in kilometres per parental status; by living arrangement ( $N = 6,921$ ).



Source: BHPS, own calculations.

**FIGURE 3.** *Estimated moving distance in kilometres per parental status by living arrangement (based on Model 3 of Table 2) (all distances relative to the base category “married, custody parent”) (N=6,921).*



Source: BHPS, own calculations.

**TABLE 3.** Logistic regression of probability of moving to the city (ref = moving within the non-urban area); movers living outside the city only (N = 3,340).

|  | Model 1   |      | Model 2   |      | Model 3  |      |   |
|--|-----------|------|-----------|------|----------|------|---|
|  | Coef.     | S.e. | Coef.     | S.e. | Coef.    | S.e. |   |
| <i>Living arrangement (ref = married)</i>                        |           |      |           |      |          |      |   |
| cohabiting   | 0.84 ***  | 0.22 | 0.56 **   | 0.26 | 0.19     | 0.32 |   |
| divorced   | 0.54 **   | 0.26 | 0.31      | 0.28 | -0.11    | 0.38 |   |
| split up   | 0.82 ***  | 0.31 | 0.51      | 0.35 | -0.55    | 0.46 |   |
| new relationship   | 0.76 ***  | 0.25 | 0.47      | 0.29 | 0.40     | 0.33 |   |
| <i>Duration of living arr.</i>                                   |           |      | -0.02 **  | 0.01 | -0.04 *  | 0.02 |   |
| <i>Interaction living arrangement with duration</i>              |           |      |           |      |          |      |   |
| cohabiting   |           |      |           |      | 0.04     | 0.05 |   |
| divorced   |           |      |           |      | 0.01     | 0.04 |   |
| split up   |           |      |           |      | 0.43 *** | 0.12 |   |
| new relationship   |           |      |           |      | -0.06    | 0.13 |   |
| <i>Dummy missing duration (ref = not missing)</i>                |           |      |           |      |          |      |   |
| missing  |           |      |           |      | 0.29     | 0.43 |   |
| <i>Age</i>   |           |      |           |      | -0.02    | 0.03 |   |
| <i>Sex (ref = man)</i>   |           |      |           |      |          |      |   |
| woman  |           |      |           |      | 0.10     | 0.18 |   |
| <i>Income quartile (ref = lowest)</i>                            |           |      |           |      |          |      |   |
| 2nd  |           |      |           |      | -0.03    | 0.25 |   |
| 3rd  |           |      |           |      | -0.34    | 0.29 |   |
| highest  |           |      |           |      | 0.11     | 0.28 |   |
| <i>Level of education (ref = no qualifications)</i>              |           |      |           |      |          |      |   |
| secondary or vocational  |           |      |           |      | 0.85 **  | 0.38 |   |
| professional or higher   |           |      |           |      | 1.04 *** | 0.37 |   |
| other and unknown  |           |      |           |      | -        | -    | - |
| <i>Birth cohort (ref = before 1930)</i>                          |           |      |           |      |          |      |   |
| 1930-1939  |           |      |           |      | -0.51    | 1.13 |   |
| 1940-1949  |           |      |           |      | -0.31    | 1.07 |   |
| 1950-1959  |           |      |           |      | -0.41    | 1.15 |   |
| 1960-1969  |           |      |           |      | -0.96    | 1.30 |   |
| 1970 or later  |           |      |           |      | -0.98    | 1.41 |   |
| <i>Work status (ref = not working)</i>                           |           |      |           |      |          |      |   |
| working  |           |      |           |      | -0.30    | 0.23 |   |
| <i>Presence of children in the household (ref = not present)</i> |           |      |           |      |          |      |   |
| present  |           |      |           |      | -0.33 *  | 0.20 |   |
| <i>Tenure (ref = owner-occupied)</i>                             |           |      |           |      |          |      |   |
| social rented  |           |      |           |      | 0.48 *   | 0.26 |   |
| private rented   |           |      |           |      | 0.56 *** | 0.21 |   |
| Intercept  | -3.49 *** | 0.15 | -3.16 *** | 0.21 | -2.39    | 1.93 |   |
| N  | 3,340     |      | 3,340     |      | 3,264    |      |   |
| Wald chi2(df)  | 18.58(4)  |      | 22.25(5)  |      | 66.2(26) |      |   |

Source: BHPS, own calculations; \* = p < 0.10; \*\* = p < 0.05; \*\*\* = p < 0.01.

**APPENDIX 1. Variable descriptives and statistics (Total N = 74,711).**

|  | <b>N</b>    | <b>%</b>    |
|--|-------------|-------------|
| <i>Move out of owner-occupation</i>                          |             |             |
| not at risk  | 18,570      | 24.9%       |
| at risk  | 52,806      | 70.7%       |
| move from owner-occupation to rent                           | 2,572       | 3.4%        |
| person-years after moving out of owner-occupation            | 763         | 1.0%        |
| <i>Move status</i>   |             |             |
| no move  | 66,439      | 88.9%       |
| Move   | 8,272       | 11.1%       |
| <i>Move to city status</i>                                   |             |             |
| previous place of residence unknown                          | 5,143       | 6.9%        |
| not at risk  | 20,174      | 27.0%       |
| no move  | 45,476      | 60.9%       |
| move to city   | 3,655       | 4.9%        |
| move within countryside                                      | 263         | 0.4%        |
| <i>Living arrangement</i>                                    |             |             |
| single (never married)                                       | 8,410       | 11.3%       |
| married  | 49,479      | 66.2%       |
| cohabiting   | 5,716       | 7.7%        |
| divorce/separation from marital partner                      | 6,237       | 8.3%        |
| separation from cohabitation partner                         | 1,213       | 1.6%        |
| new relationship   | 3,656       | 4.9%        |
| <i>Sex</i>   |             |             |
| male   | 35,013      | 46.9%       |
| female   | 39,698      | 53.1%       |
| <i>Income quartiles (disposable annual household income)</i> |             |             |
| lowest (< £14,000)   | 19,003      | 25.4%       |
| 2nd (£14,000 - £23,000)                                      | 18,646      | 25.0%       |
| 3rd (£23,000 - £34,000)                                      | 18,020      | 24.1%       |
| highest (> £34,000)  | 19,042      | 25.5%       |
| <i>Highest completed level of education</i>                  |             |             |
| below secondary / no education                               | 15,469      | 20.7%       |
| secondary or vocational                                      | 27,847      | 37.3%       |
| professional or higher                                       | 28,637      | 38.3%       |
| other or unknown   | 2,758       | 3.7%        |
| <i>Birth cohort</i>  |             |             |
| before 1930  | 2,891       | 3.9%        |
| 1930-1939  | 9,773       | 13.1%       |
| 1940-1949  | 16,770      | 22.4%       |
| 1950-1959  | 17,667      | 23.6%       |
| 1960-1969  | 18,034      | 24.1%       |
| 1970 or later  | 9,576       | 12.8%       |
| <i>Labour market status</i>                                  |             |             |
| not working  | 22,025      | 29.5%       |
| working  | 52,686      | 70.5%       |
| <i>Parent and child-in-household status</i>                  |             |             |
| no children in household, not parent                         | 43,808      | 58.6%       |
| no children in household, parent                             | 2,360       | 3.2%        |
| children in household, not parent                            | 5,018       | 6.7%        |
| children in household, parent                                | 23,525      | 31.5%       |
| <i>Tenure</i>  |             |             |
| owner-occupied   | 57,084      | 76.4%       |
| social rented  | 12,155      | 16.3%       |
| private rented or other                                      | 5,472       | 7.3%        |
| <i>Urban indicator</i>                                       |             |             |
| urban  | 20,437      | 27.4%       |
| non-urban  | 49,131      | 65.8%       |
| unknown  | 5,143       | 6.9%        |
|  | <b>Mean</b> | <b>s.d.</b> |
| <i>Distance</i>  | 35.4        | 83.1        |
| <i>Living arrangement duration</i>                           | 17.0        | 14.6        |
| <i>Age</i>   | 43.7        | 13.3        |

Source: BHPS, own calculations.