

(Why) have women left East Germany more frequently than men?

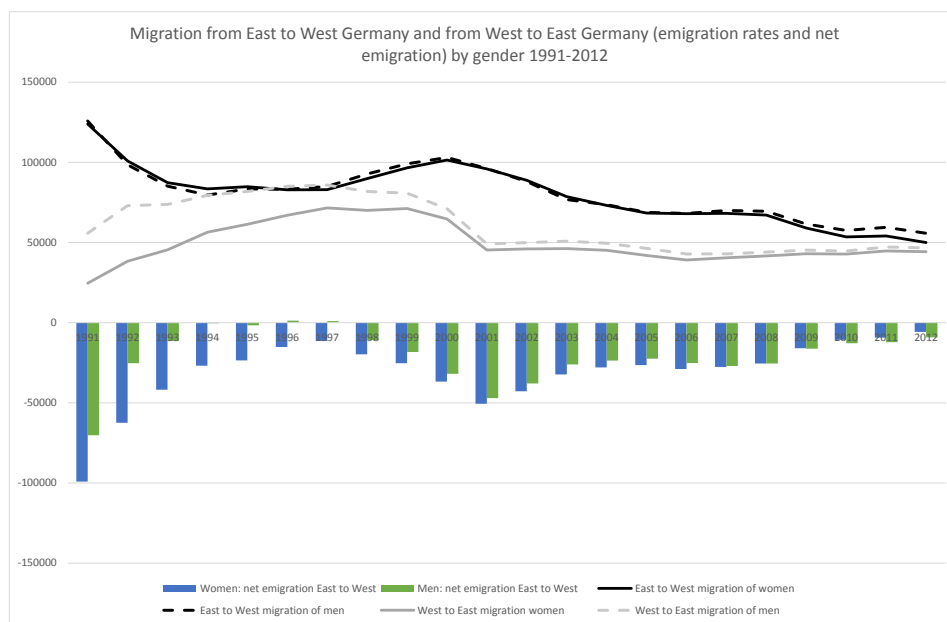
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One secure knowledge about German demography is that there has been a massive internal migration from East to West Germany after German reunification in 1990. Especially, it seems apparently secure that more women – and especially young women – than men have gone West. Most previous analyses focus on the labor market as the crucial determinant of gender specific internal migration, stating that high unemployment and an especially low demand for female attributed jobs have pushed women more than men to leave East Germany.

As figure 1 shows, this empirical diagnosis is superficial, because it is based on *net* emigration rates. For net emigration, we actually find higher rates for women than for men, especially in the early nineties. But the gender difference in net emigration results from the behavior of four populations: East German women and men moving to West Germany and West German women and men moving to East Germany. In contrast, the theoretical diagnosis focuses exclusively on the behavior of East German women and men. If we compare the number of women who moved from East to West Germany with the respective men, we find no significant difference. Instead, less women than men from West Germany went to East Germany. Thus, the difference in the net migration rate is the result of a different behavior of West German women and men, and theoretical explanations should concentrate more on the gender selective push- and pull-factors for West Germans!

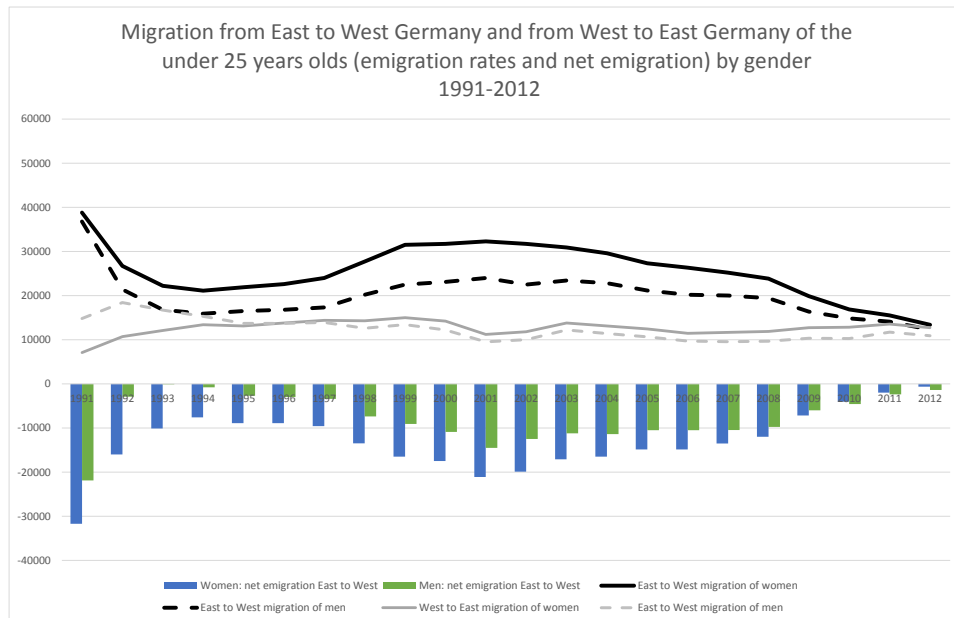
Figure 1



Source: German Statistical office, Fachserie 1, Reihe 1.2 1991-2012, Tabelle 2.8

Only when we focus on women and men younger than 25 years, we actually find more women than men migrating from East to West Germany. In contrast to common explanations, many women and men in this age group are not yet looking for a job on the labor market. Instead, the main push and pull factors in this age group might be linked to education and family events. Especially, from previous research we know that young women leave the parental household earlier than young men do.

Figure 2



Source: German Statistical office, Fachserie 1, Reihe 1.2 1991-2012, Tabelle 2.8

Against this background, using the German Socioeconomic Panel, the talk will describe gender specific internal migration from East to West Germany and from West to East Germany between 1991 and 2012 in more detail. Thereby, I will separate migration for labor market reasons, migration for educational reasons and migration with a purely familial purpose. In addition, the description will differentiate original migration vs. re-migration and highly educated vs. lower educated women and men.

The results will show that Eastern born women migrate earlier in the life-course than Eastern born men, but that the latter catch up in the later life-course. The results show further, that the low migration of women from West to East Germany is not the result of gender selective remigration of born East Germans who went back to their home region. Instead, it is the result of the reluctance of born West German women to go East. Results about different reasons for migration will show that – even in the early twenties of the life-course - there is only little gender difference in the propensity to migrate from East to West Germany *for job reasons*. In later life, men have even a higher propensity than women to have left East Germany for a job. Only for the selective group of highly educated women, we find a higher propensity to migrate from East to West than men due to starting or ending a job. But, in the early life-course, East German women have moved more often from East to West Germany than men, *because they have started or finished an educational track!* This is true for both, lower and higher educated women and men, but the difference is stronger for the more highly educated.

As a central conclusion, future research on internal migration in Germany should pay more attention to education and the family as push- and pull-factors and to migration from West to East Germany.