

The effects of siblings on the migration of women in two rural areas of Belgium and the Netherlands, 1829–1940

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This study explores the extent to which the presence and activities of siblings shaped the chances of women migrating to rural and urban areas in two rural areas of Belgium and the Netherlands during the second half of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth century. Shared-frailty Cox proportional hazard analyses of longitudinal data from historical population registers show that siblings exerted an additive impact on women's migration, independently of temporal and household characteristics. Just how siblings influenced women's migration depended on regional modes of production and on employment opportunities. In the Zeeland region, sisters channelled each other into service positions. In the Pays de Herve, where men and women found industrial work in the Walloon cities, women were as much influenced by their brothers' activities. Evidence is found for two mechanisms explaining the effects of siblings: micro-economic notions of joint-household decision-making and social capital theory.

Keywords: siblings; migration; joint-household decision-making; social capital theory; social networks; life course; the Netherlands; Belgium; event-history analysis