

# Reunifying or leaving a child behind: how official and unofficial state selection shape family immigration in France

Julia Descamps<sup>a,b,c</sup> and Cris Beauchemin<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Université Paris 8, Saint-Denis, France ; <sup>b</sup>Centre de Recherches Sociologiques et Politiques de Paris (CRESPPA), France ; <sup>c</sup>Institut National d'Études Démographiques (INED), France

## Abstract (191 words)

This paper aims to analyse how state policies shape family reunification. Using a quantitative approach with a nationally representative French survey, we analyse to what extent and in what circumstances migrants take one or the other of three paths: bringing their children to France through the administrative channel of family reunification (de jure reunification), turning to an alternative channel of child migration (de facto reunification), or leaving their children behind in their birth country. Studying the trajectories of 988 children who were left behind by at least one of their parents during the period 1973-2009, we show that de jure reunification is not the predominant option. Regarding de jure reunification, in addition to an official state selection based on socioeconomic criteria enshrined in law, we find evidence of an unofficial state selection in policy implementation (discriminatory treatments and regional inequalities). We show that, in response to these restrictions, families adapt either by changing their migration schedule (inter-temporal deflection effect) or by somehow turning to de facto reunification (categorical deflection effect). Non-reunification is also a significant option for migrants. It results from both policy constraints and personal choices based on sociocultural preferences.

## Keywords

Family reunification, migration policies, France

## Word count:

8472 (including references, not including tables and diagrams)

## Introduction

In line with supranational institutions<sup>1</sup>, European liberal democracies theoretically guarantee migrants and their children the right to family life. In practice, however, previous research has shown that family reunification is not systematically available as an option (Blanchet, 1985; Mazzucato et al., 2015). For some groups in particular, non-reunification is a frequent and durable phenomenon, which can have important consequences for both parents and their children (White et al., 2019). It remains unclear, however, whether these transnational family arrangements are the result of policy constraints and/or individual and family choices. Research on family migration has so far been segmented into two separate strands. On the one hand, socio-anthropological works focused on the European side of migration have studied the making of migration policies and how migrants may potentially exert their agency to circumvent legal rules that theoretically prevent reunification (Block, 2015; Bonizzoni, 2015; Fresnoza-Flot, 2015; Kofman, 2018). On the other hand, inspired by ethnographic works on transnational families, sociodemographic studies have studied both origin and destination countries together in order to measure the extent of “living apart together across borders” (LATAB) family arrangements and to analyse the factors that explain why some migrants choose to leave their relatives behind (Baizán et al., 2014; Beauchemin et al., 2015; González-Ferrer et al., 2012). In this paper, we intend to bring together these two strands of literature by studying how migrants adapt to family migration policy frameworks and choose either to bring their relatives to the destination country through the administrative channel of family reunification (de jure reunification), to reunify their families using an alternative administrative track (de facto reunification), or to adopt a transnational family life. We focus on child reunification, taking a quantitative approach to testing a set of four hypotheses. First, we hypothesize that only a minority of migrant families use the channel of de jure reunification, with many either leaving their child behind in their origin country or organizing a de facto reunion. Second, we test the hypothesis that de jure family reunification is shaped by the discretion of street-level bureaucrats during the administrative process, in addition of the implementation of official selection criteria grounded in the law. Third, we hypothesize that in face of both official and unofficial state selection, migrants’ reactions involve two deflection effects (Czaika & de Haas, 2013): either they adapt their migration schedule to make de jure reunification possible (inter-temporal deflection); or, excluded from de jure reunification, they turn to de facto reunification channels (categorical deflection effect). Finally, our fourth hypothesis is that living apart together across borders (LATAB) may result from official and unofficial policy constraints, although it may also reflect migrants’ own sociocultural preferences. We test this set of hypotheses in the French context, drawing on a unique data set from the “Trajectories and Origins” survey (TeO, 2008-09)<sup>2</sup>. The dataset is from a large nationally representative sample and provides an exceptional wealth of information on the characteristics of migrants and their families. It covers an extended period, from the time of the formalization of the right to family reunification in France (1973) to 2009. We use this data to carry out discrete-time survival analyses of the children reunification process in France. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. We first provide an outline of the literature on state control of family migration and on how migrants and their families cope with this legal framework. The second section presents our data and methods. The last section before the conclusion presents and discusses the results of our descriptive and multivariate analyses.

### 1. The state of knowledge on state control of reunification and migrants’ agency

Family reunification, the process through which pioneer migrants are joined in their host country by their relative(s) who stayed behind, is the joint result of the drive of migrants and their families to live in the same place and of states’ drive to regulate migration flows. As such, we conceptualize family reunification as a multi-layered process based on a multi-level selection decision, in which migrants, their families, and states interact (Beauchemin et al., 2015). We also conceptualize family reunification migration as a multi-channel migration flow, which can occur either following the legal procedure of family reunion (de jure

---

<sup>1</sup> European Convention on Human Rights, article 8, 1953; United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> The TeO Survey has received a formal approval from CNIL (Commission nationale informatique et liberté, Délibération n°2008-055).

reunification), or through other channels which allow pioneer migrants and their relatives to begin living together again in the same country (de facto reunification, including through irregular migration). Disentangling the respective roles of states, migrants and their families in the process of reunification is a challenging task. So far, the literature has either taken a top-down approach to family immigration by focusing on legal texts and state selection channels (1.1) or a bottom-up approach based on migrants' agency in reuniting with their relatives (or not) (1.2). Both approaches help to identify a framework of determinants to explain migrants and their child(ren) either continuing to live apart together across borders, or reuniting on a de jure or to de facto basis in the destination country.

### 1.1. Official and unofficial state control over family migration

Although family migration is not a recent phenomenon, it was only institutionalized in Europe in the second half of the 20th century. Over time, and especially since the 1990s, reunification policies have become increasingly restrictive in all European countries (Kraler & Bonizzoni, 2010). In the explicit aim of ensuring the social integration of immigrants, states have adopted stricter selection criteria to decide which migrants are eligible to bring their family members. These regulations have been conceptualized by some authors as a “politics of belonging” (Block, 2015; Bonjour & de Hart, 2013), in which states recognize membership rights to sponsor migrants and their relatives. Block (2015) distinguishes three different membership dimensions. While two constitute official criteria (legal status and socioeconomic resources), the third (ethno-cultural belonging) is not officially stated as such in legal texts and can be contested in the context of family migration policies (Block, 2015). Unquestionably, the right to family life is stratified according to the sponsor's legal status (*legal membership*). In most European countries, national or EU citizen sponsors receive preferential treatment compared to other sponsors; they usually enjoy a distinct, and much easier procedure. On the contrary, obviously, undocumented migrants are not eligible for family reunification. Apart from migrants' legal status, their socioeconomic resources represent the other major selection criterion for accessing the right to family reunification. In all European countries, income and housing requirements are key to determining whether or not migrants are permitted to bring their relatives through family reunification policy (*socioeconomic membership*). These requirements are challenging for the poorest migrants, and thus determine a class selection of migrants (Staver, 2014). However, families are differently affected depending on other characteristics: Wray (2009), for example, concluded that class selection intersects with ethnicity. Migrant families are required to prove that they meet the cultural standards of the host country (*ethnocultural membership*). This adequacy is broadly assessed by language and civic integration tests, but it also includes compliance with European standards of family life, and especially the nuclear family model, which serves as a line of separation between “us” (those eligible for family reunification) and “them” (Block & Bonjour, 2013). Extended families are excluded from family reunification in two ways: first, by the prohibition on reuniting polygamous families, and second by the restriction of child reunification to biological children. Some European countries, such as Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, use DNA tests to verify the biological relationship between children and parents who apply for family reunification. In France, a law was passed in 2007 to introduce DNA testing, but the decree needed to put this procedure in place was never adopted. Proof of the relationship between parents and children is given by the *livret de famille*, an administrative document certifying parenthood, which the applicant parent must provide. In any case, family reunification policies do not take into account that, depending on migrants' origin, “young people's understanding of family goes beyond the nuclear family, including both extended family members and other caregivers” (Anschütz & Mazzucato, 2021).

In practice, policies on paper leave significant room for interpretation in the course of administrative procedures. This is even more the case when soft criteria, such as those related to ethno-cultural norms, are at play. The administrative opacity of public policies leaves room for discretion (Lipsky, 1980). In France, the state administrations in charge of migration management have engaged in “street-level discrimination” (Spire, 2008). And the fact that the introduction of Algerian families was subject to a specific and tedious procedure until the 1980s was used by some French mayors as a means to restrict the local presence of foreigners (Cohen, 2020). In Belgium, ethnographic studies on the implementation of family reunification in court rulings (Orsini et al., 2021) and their subsequent administrative interpretation (Mascia, 2020) have shown that the practical application of the law is a mixture of collective interpretation

and anticipation of legal appeals. They concluded that family reunification procedures are marked by institutional racism. In short, there seems to be a consensus in the socio-anthropological literature that states practice ethnic selection either due to the structural framing of the right to family reunification in law or to discrimination based on racial or national stereotypes held by street-level bureaucrats or a Western-centric conception of the family. However, quantitative research thus far has failed to identify the effects of policies, both on paper and in practice, on reunification patterns (Czaika & de Haas, 2013).

## 1.2. Migrants' agency to reunite (or not) with their relatives

States are not the only players in matters of family reunification. Migrants and their families are obviously at the core of this process: first, it is they who wish to reunify or not; and second, they exercise some degree of agency in navigating the rules.

Policy restrictions are one possible explanation for the fact that some migrants delay or forego reunification. However, non-reunification can also result from a personal or family choice, especially in contexts where it is quite common, and in keeping with family norms, for spouses or parents and children to live separately in different places. This line of ethno-cultural interpretation has especially developed to explain low rates of reunification in Europe among African migrants in sociodemographic studies (Baizán et al., 2014; Barbiano di Belgiojoso & Terzera, 2018; Eremenko & González-Ferrer, 2018). In France, for instance, one study showed striking variations by origin (González-Ferrer et al., 2012): 10 years after separating from their parent(s) due to migration, approximately 60% of the children of migrants from Senegal were still residing in their country of origin, versus 30% for children from the Maghreb and 5% from Southeast Asia. The ethno-cultural interpretation of these figures echoes ethnographic works on transnational families, which have shown that these family arrangements are an international extension of domestic arrangements grounded in extended family systems where children belong to their lineage, not just to their biological parents, and are commonly cared for by other family members for long periods (Bledsoe & Sow, 2011). Nevertheless, in the case of African families, leaving children behind is also interpreted as a parental strategy to avoid discrimination in Europe (Bledsoe & Sow, 2011) or overcome economic difficulties in the host country (Grysole & Beauchemin, 2013). In these cases, it is not the ethno-cultural characteristics *per se*, but the anticipation of their indirect effects, that lead to different patterns of family (non-)reunification. Thus far, analyses in existing quantitative research have relied mainly on variables based on migrants' origin that were interpreted in ethno-cultural terms. Studies in this area that take into account the possible discouragement of reunification by these anticipated effects and better measurement cultural preferences are still needed.

Facing policy restrictions, difficulties complying with state selection criteria, and long and uncertain procedures, migrants who wish to reunite with their child(ren) may choose to take a *de facto* route to do so (Ambrosini, 2014). Some bring their children using unauthorized pathways (Donato & Perez, 2017) or have them overstay on a tourist visa (Fresnoza-Flot, 2015; González-Ferrer, 2011; Vickstrom, 2014), and may benefit subsequently from regularization programs (Eremenko & González-Ferrer, 2018). *De facto* family reunification can also occur through other legal channels (with children coming as refugees, students, etc.). Although, the literature confronts an issue of statistical identification of children arriving through procedures other than *de jure* reunification, several authors suggest that *de facto* reunification is a common phenomenon (Bonizzoni, 2015; Garrison & Weiss, 1979). They attribute it to the non-coincidence of the definitions of family "from above" (i.e. in the legal framework) and "from below" (i.e. the practical conception of family ties). For some family members, *de facto* family reunification occurs when - and because - *de jure* family reunification is usually limited to nuclear family (spouse and children under 18) under the requirements mentioned above. Overall, there seems to be a consensus that restrictive policies do not necessarily discourage migrants from reunifying, and can deflect them into alternative channels of migration, in what Czaika and de Haas (2013) refer to as a "categorical substitution effect." In the same line, other works showing that reunification in Europe paradoxically tends to become more likely in times of growing policy restrictions on reunification (Beauchemin et al., 2015) suggest an "inter-temporal substitution effect" (Czaika & de Haas, 2013), wherein migrants attempt to avoid further restrictions by organizing their relatives' migration before rules become even more restrictive.

Given their circumvention of the state requirements associated with de jure reunification, it might be thought that migrants using de facto channels are not subject to socioeconomic selection. But this view is not supported by the literature. Migrants' ability to "navigate the rules" (Tuckett, 2015) and develop strategies to bypass obstacles to de jure reunification depends on their resources (Geoffrion & Cretton, 2021). Family migration is "a class matter" (Kofman, 2018) – class being a multi-faceted situation involving different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Migrants with greater cultural capital – especially institutionalized cultural capital as manifested by educational qualifications – are better equipped to overcome rigid income conditions, either to access formal reunification or to use alternative channels (Kofman, 2018). Family ties and social capital in the destination country are also a crucial resource to understand and navigate legal frameworks. Social ties especially are a strategic resource to address housing and employment requirements (Bonizzoni, 2015). Finally, because migration is costly, economic resources are also crucial to allow for de facto reunification. Migrants' willingness to undertake reunification is expected to be lower when they lack economic resources to pay for the journey, to find appropriate accommodation for their family, and to ensure that their children will not be at risk of economic insecurity in a foreign country.

The existing literature on family reunion is divided into two separate fields. One part, which uses mainly institutional and qualitative approaches, is concerned with the definition of policies around family migration, their implementation, and migrants' adaptations to them. This branch of the literature, which focuses on the European side of migration, thus attends to both de jure and de facto reunification. Another part of the literature adopts a broader geographic view of family migration, attending not only to migrants but also to relatives left behind in origin countries. Inspired by the socio-anthropological literature on transnational families, sociodemographic approaches have attempted to measure non-reunification and to quantitatively study the factors that explain why migrants "live apart together across borders," or, on the contrary, bring their relatives together in Europe. A limitation of this strand of research is that it does not distinguish between de jure and de facto reunification, which impedes our understanding of migrants' adaptation to policy constraints. To the best of our knowledge, no study has ever systematically compared all outcomes of periods of child-parent separation due to migration<sup>3</sup>. As a result, both the extent to which migrants use alternative options to de jure reunification – either by leaving their children behind for extended periods (if not permanently) or by bringing them to the destination country using other authorized or unauthorized channels of migration – and the reasons why they do so remain unclear. The objective of this article is to advance our understanding of how migrants and their relatives cope with policy frameworks around family migration, taking into account all possible outcomes of a separation due to migration. We aim to quantitatively test the four following hypotheses:

**H1** – Migrants who use de jure reunification are a minority: leaving one's child behind or de facto reunion are frequent options for migrant families;

**H2** – De jure reunification depends not only on official selection criteria, but on unofficial state selection practices;

**H3** – Facing policy restrictions, migrants wishing to reunite with their children navigate the rules by **(a)** modifying their migration schedules (inter-temporal deflection effect) and/or **(b)** choosing other legal or illegal pathways (categorical deflection effect). Given the demanding nature of children's immigration, de facto reunification is socioeconomically selective **(c)**.

**H4** – Although living apart together across borders (LATAB) may result from official and unofficial policy constraints, it may also reflect sociocultural preferences.

## 2. Data and method

Our methodology consists in following migrants who migrated to France, leaving at least one child behind, over time. We measured the duration until reunification (if it occurs) and analysed the associated characteristics. To do so we used data from Trajectories and Origins (TeO), a survey with an exceptionally large sample that is nationally representative of the immigrant population living in France (8,000 immigrants, aged 18 to 60 in 2008-2009). This survey is also distinguished by the wealth of variables that

---

<sup>3</sup> The return of parent to the country of origin is also a possible outcome for parent-child reunification, but as the survey was carried out in France, the sample does not include return migrants.

it covers. One aspect that is of particular interest for us here is the possibility of distinguishing de jure and de facto reunification, as well as family situations where the children left behind in the origin country at the time of the survey. Furthermore, the questionnaire includes questions that allowed us to analyse factors influencing reunification such as family norms and street-level policy implementation, in addition to more classical determinants of family reunification. Using this retrospective data, we performed longitudinal analyses on a period beginning with the formalization of the contemporary framework for family reunification in France and ending at the time of the survey (1973-2009).

We constructed a subsample that includes only immigrants with foreign-born children who are eligible for the family reunification procedure. We thus excluded migrants who are able to freely reunify (those in mixed couples or who were born in the EU). Among all children born before their parent(s) outmigrated, we focused on those who were left behind by at least one of their parents at some point between 1973 and 2009, thus excluding those who migrated with their parents. Interestingly, the former situation is the most common one: two thirds of all children were left behind at the time of departure of their parent(s), whereas only one third moved with their parent(s). We included in the sample only parent-child dyads where the interviewed parent was the pioneer migrant in the couple. To study the migration timing of parent-child pairs, we constructed a year-by-year family history from the date of parent-child separation up to the date of reunification, or the date of the survey if reunification in France had not occurred by then. A child enters the risk set when the sponsor parent migrates, or (for children born after the first parental migration) at birth. The observation is truncated in the following cases: the child migrates to France, turns 18, the parent acquires citizenship, or the parent's country of origin enters the EU. **Figure 1** exemplifies different typical periods of observation. The final sample size was 7,140 person-years, representing 988 children (including 288 children born after their father's departure) and 534 different families (as a single migrant may leave behind more than one child).

+++ Figure 1 about here +++

Our dependent variable corresponds to three child migration patterns:

- 1) Left-behind children;
- 2) De jure reunification, when children were reunified through the so-called family reunification procedure, restricted to non-EU country foreigners who have a residence permit in France, under specific eligibility conditions;
- 3) De facto reunification, when children were reunified without the use of the family reunification procedure, either through irregular migration (including overstaying) or through other legal pathways (as refugees, students, on a work permit, etc.).

Descriptive statistics are provided for each of these outcomes at the end of the observation period. We also conducted multivariate analyses: a series of time-varying logistic regressions. Our discrete-time competing risk model assumes that the log odds of experiencing an event of type  $j$  rather than an event of type  $r$  (the reference category) at time  $t$  are given by

$$\log\left(\frac{\pi_{jti}}{\pi_{rti}}\right) = \alpha_{jt} + \beta_{j,1}X_{1jti} + \beta_{j,2}X_{2jti} + \beta_{j,3}X_{3jti} + \beta_{j,4}X_{4jti} + \varepsilon$$

where  $\pi_{jti}$  is the probability, for each parent-child pair  $i$ , of an event of type  $j$  occurring at time  $t$ , given that no event has occurred prior to time  $t$ . In this model,  $\alpha_{jt}$  is the hazard function for an event of type  $j$ , and for each  $k$ ,  $X_{kjt}$  is a vector of covariates which has different values at each time  $t$ . Left-behind children are treated as the reference category, and the reunification patterns (de jure reunification, de facto reunification) are distinguished as separate events.  $X_{1jti}$  represents a vector of *sociodemographic variables* that include family configuration characteristics as well as the migrants' country of origin.  $X_{2jti}$  assembles two proxies of (non-)conformity to small nuclear *family norms* (desired number of children and regular remittances to the origin country). *Official institutional selection* ( $X_{3jti}$ ) is captured through three types of variables: (a) indicators of potential class selection of migrants (activity status, diploma, and housing type); (b) refugee status; and (c) period of arrival, which is a proxy for the policy environment. The time after

1994 represents a period of more restrictive reunification policy: a 1994 law increased the requirements for family reunification in terms of income and the duration of legal residence (from 1 to 2 years), and prohibited reunification in case of polygamy. Finally,  $X_{4jti}$  is meant to capture possible *unofficial state selection* through two variables. The region of destination in France indicates whether the migrant forerunner parent's first destination was the Parisian region or another region. Although legal texts are defined at the national level, the procedures are processed at the regional level. This variable is therefore meant to be a proxy for the discretionary application of migration policies in regional administrations. The other variable indicates whether the interviewee reported at least one experience of administrative discrimination (whether in the reunification procedure or some other procedure)<sup>4</sup>. Because this variable concerns only the five years prior to the survey, it may underestimate administrative discrimination. **Table 3** (in the appendix) describes all independent variables in detail.

We ran a set of nested models, in which  $X_{1jti}$ ,  $X_{2jti}$ ,  $X_{3jti}$ ,  $X_{4jti}$  were progressively added (**Table 2**). We also ran another series of models wherein we separately added each set of covariates, in order to estimate how much of the origin effect each of them captures (**Table 4**, in appendix). All models take into account the fact that the data are clustered (as the sample includes siblings from the same family group), and the standard errors of the regression coefficients were adjusted accordingly. All model results are presented as average marginal effects (AMEs), calculated by computing the marginal effect of a given predictor for each case with other predictors set at observed values and then averaging the marginal effects over all cases.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Descriptive patterns of reunification

A first important result is that de jure reunification is *not* the predominant outcome of separation between migrants and their children. Among all children who were left behind by at least one of their parents at some point between 1973 and 2009, only a third were reunited in France through the legal procedure of family reunification (**Table 1**). Another third were reunified using alternative channels of migration. And the last third consists of children who were still living in their origin country when they reached 18 or at the time of the survey, while their parent(s) were still in Europe.<sup>5</sup> **Figure 2** provides further information on the timing of each reunification pathway. It shows how long it took (in years) for children to join their parents in France. The observation starts at the moment of separation: at 0 on the X-axis, 100% of children were separated from their parents. After approximately three years of separation, 50% of all children who were ultimately de jure reunited were still in their home country. After eight years, one child out of five in this group was still left behind. These results confirm that de jure reunification is a lengthy process. Strikingly, the time course of de facto reunification is similar. The interpretation of this similarity is not straightforward. If de facto reunification were a second choice after de jure reunification, it would occur later, which is not what we observed. On the contrary: after one year of separation, who would ultimately be de facto reunified children were slightly more likely to have been reunified than those who would go on to be reunified de jure. This could mean that migrants do not necessarily wait for the result of an administrative reunification procedure before turning to an alternative channel of child migration. The expected “categorical substitution effect” (Czaika & de Haas, 2013) from de jure to de facto reunification may occur in anticipation of an administrative procedure, or a period before meeting official criteria, that parents expect to be too long.

---

<sup>4</sup> Migrants applying for family reunification are sent to three types of administrations: the French Office for Immigration and Integration (FOII), and the prefecture and municipal administration (*mairie*) of their place of residence. FOII and municipal services carry out an evaluation to support or oppose each family reunion application. The positive or negative decision is delivered by the local prefecture. The TeO survey provides information on whether respondents experienced discrimination in their dealings with the prefecture and municipal services. We therefore used these two variables to construct a proxy of administrative discrimination in migration services.

<sup>5</sup> The percentage of left-behind children may be underestimated due to the fact that migrants who left France to return to their origin country are not included in the sample.

The descriptive bivariate results in **Table 1** provide initial insights into the extent to which de jure reunification is selective compared to alternatives (non-reunification and de facto reunification). As expected in relation to official criteria for access to de jure reunification, migrants who followed the administrative reunification procedure were socioeconomically selected: compared to the overall population, they were more likely to be in full-time employment (60.2% vs. 58.1%) and individual housing (47.1% vs. 43.1%). However, a striking result is that forerunner parents who reunified through a de facto pathway with their children were also positively selected. They were as likely to be in full employment as de jure reunifiers (60%), and even reported higher levels of education (50.9% vs. 39.7% with a secondary or a tertiary degree). However, they were also more frequently hosted by family members (45.2% vs. 34.9%). These results suggest that educated migrants use de facto reunification to circumvent housing requirements which block their access to de jure reunification. This apparent deflection effect was also observed in relation to unofficial state selection practices. Among those who reunified de jure, the percentage who settled in the Paris region was only 44.9%, against 57.1% for de facto reunification and 58.7% for LATAB. On the one hand, slower and more selective policy implementation in the Parisian region due to congestion in immigration services may deflect migrants from the de jure to the de facto track. On the other hand, specificities in the profiles of migrants to the capital city region may explain their greater likelihood of leaving children behind. Multivariate analysis is needed to disentangle these potentially confounded effects.

+++ Figure 2 and Table 1 about here +++

### 3.2. Multivariate analysis

**Figure 3** displays the results of the multinomial logit model that includes the whole set of predictors (the values correspond to those of Model 4 in **Table 2**). Compared to the descriptive figures, these results have two advantages. First, as the model is time-varying, they take into account the fact that the characteristics of children and parents may change over time; second, they measure the net effect of each variable while controlling for all other characteristics included in the model.

Here again, in line with official state selection criteria and our descriptive results, we found that de jure reunification is influenced by migrants' socioeconomic situation. Cultural capital (being educated) and economic capital (living in individual housing rather than collective or family housing, being in full-time employment rather than inactive, unemployed or sporadically employed) are positively associated with the fact of bringing one's child through the administrative procedure of family reunification. Interestingly, **Figure 3a** clearly shows how similar are the socioeconomic determinants of de facto reunification. Reuniting with one's child out of the administrative reunification procedure is almost systematically as selective as using the de jure path. The only exception concerns housing conditions, which have a higher negative effect on de jure reunification than de facto reunification. This echoes our previous descriptive results, and supports the hypothesis that de facto reunification may be an alternative solution when de jure housing requirements cannot be met. In any case, **Figure 3a** also clearly shows how both reunification pathways contrast with the left-behind option in socioeconomic terms. Having no educational qualifications, no individual housing, or no job (or only sporadic employment) strongly increased the probability that migrants would leave their children in their birth country. Considering migrants' two alternatives to de jure reunification at once (i.e., positive selection into de facto reunification, and negative selection into LATAB family arrangements) supports the hypothesis that their willingness or ability to undertake reunification is lower when they have fewer economic resources to take care of their children in France, whatever the regulatory framework.

Apart from official State selection on socioeconomic criteria, do the model results confirm the existence of unofficial selection of candidates for reunification by street-level bureaucrats? This type of phenomenon was confirmed in at least two ways by our results. First, *ceteris paribus*, parents settling in the Parisian region were 1.6 percentage points less likely to reunite with their child(ren) through the legal family reunification procedure than parents settling elsewhere in the country (**Figure 3b**). The coefficient for the region of destination remains significant after controlling for socioeconomic characteristics and all other variables, which makes it less likely that this effect is due only to the geographical segmentation of migration



patterns. As expected, there seems to be a regional effect in the administrative treatment of family reunification applications. Second, at a micro level, in a multivariate setting the experience of administrative discrimination is still negatively related to de jure reunification. How do migrants react? After controlling for all other variables, de facto reunification is no longer significantly associated to experiences of discrimination, suggesting that migrants who have suffered from discrimination are not more likely to turn to de facto reunification. In contrast, reported discriminatory treatment is associated with a higher likelihood of leaving a child in the home country. Migrants' choice to live apart together across borders with their children may thus result in part from their experiences of negative treatment in France.

These results on discrimination resonate with those on the effects of migrants' origin. **Figure 3c** shows that the migrants who were most likely to leave their children behind and the least likely to reunify de jure were precisely migrants from Africa, who also generally experience the most discrimination in France (Beauchemin et al., 2018). Although administrative discrimination is accounted for in the model, this origin effect might still partly reflect other unfair treatments that migrants encountered in the administration in previous periods (as the discrimination variable refers only to the five years before the survey). It may also capture specific difficulties that African migrants encounter when they must assemble their administrative file for the reunification procedure, because of poorly functioning administrative structures in their country of origin. In particular, these can be deficient in establishing and providing children's vital records (Mikkelsen et al., 2015; Setel et al., 2007), thus slowing or preventing their reunification with their parent(s).

Could these results be interpreted in terms of unofficial state selection based on ethnicity? Taken together, the effects on de jure reunification of both the discrimination and origin variables suggest that the answer may be yes. However, it is important to keep in mind that the origin variable captures many other features. First, administrative discrimination is only a part of the racism and discriminatory treatment experienced by African migrants and their children in France: nationally representative results of the TeO survey show that they are the groups that suffer the most discrimination in all domains: at work, in housing, schools, health services, etc. (Beauchemin et al., 2018). African migrants' greater probability of opting for their children to remain in their country of origin may reflect their intention to protect them from these negative experiences, as suggested by previous qualitative works (Grysole & Beauchemin, 2013). The African origin effect on the left-behind option might also capture a sociocultural context in which family norms facilitate parents and their children living in disparate locations. Some variables included in Model 4 to control for this possible effect sociocultural context (**Figure 3d**) do in fact capture a significant part of the African origin effect (compare Models 1 and 2a in **Table 4**, in the Appendix). As expected, migrants whose characteristics suggest attachment to extended family norms (reporting a desired number of children above two, and sending regular remittances to their origin country) were more likely to opt for living apart together across borders<sup>6</sup>. Interestingly, these variables did not have a significant effect on de jure reunification, and had a negative effect on de facto reunification, suggesting that migrants who are attached to extended family norms tend to exclude themselves from reunification. However, these variables (larger numbers of children and remittance practices) are only imperfect instruments for measuring family norms, which remain partly embedded in the origin variable itself. In any case, the results on migrants' origins do not confirm the deflection hypothesis, according to which migrants whose characteristics are not favourable to de jure reunification turn to other channels for reunification (comparing de jure reunification and de facto reunification in **Figure 3c**, the confidence intervals overlap for sub-Saharan Africa, and to a lesser extent for North Africa).

Three other results have interesting policy implications and are indicative of migrants' ability to navigate policy regulations in the context of reunification. First, paradoxically, parents who arrived after 1994, when reunification policies became more restrictive, were less likely to leave their children in their home country and more likely to engage in and obtain de jure reunification (**Figure 3b**). This counter-intuitive result has

---

<sup>6</sup> A limitation of this result is circular causality: remittances might also be a consequence of the child staying behind, rather than an expression of a preference that causes it. However, the questionnaire does not specify that these remittances are sent specifically to left-behind children: they could be sent to other family members, or other people.

already been observed in another study, based on the MAFE surveys, dedicated to family reunification among three sub-Saharan migrant groups (from DR Congo, Ghana, and Senegal) in six European countries (Beauchemin et al., 2015). This could be explained to a “now or never” effect, or an “inter-temporal substitution effect” (Czaika & de Haas, 2013), according to which migrants bring forward migration in expectation of future restrictions. In other terms, our results suggest that migrants accelerate reunification processes in anticipation of more complex and time-demanding procedures. Second, children aged 16-17 years had a higher probability of de jure reunification and a lower probability of staying behind than their younger counterparts (Figure 3c). This looks like another inter-temporal deflection effect: when children come close to the legal age of majority – i.e., when they are about to be excluded from the possibility of legal reunification in Europe – this results in a push towards de jure reunification (Mazzocchi, 2011). Third, there is a very strong parental gender effect. Mothers who moved first were less likely than fathers to leave their children behind (-9.1%). To bring them into France, women were much more likely than men to use a de facto channel rather than the de jure track. Although de jure reunification seems to be gender blind (with no significant difference between men and women), the difference between mothers and fathers in de facto reunification is noteworthy. This result suggests that state selection criteria may push women into other tracks, with possible negative effects on them and their children (Bonizzoni, 2015).

+++ Figure 3 and Table 2 about here +++

## Conclusion

Our objective in this article was to advance our understanding of how migrants cope with the policy framework for family reunification, in order to better understand to what extent and under what circumstances they turn to de facto reunification or decide to leave their children in their birth country. Our results confirm all four of our hypotheses. First, de jure reunification is not the path followed by most migrants who are separated from their children through migration. Equal numbers of migrants choose de facto reunification, following alternative administrative paths (including irregular migration). And equal numbers decide to leave their child(ren) behind. The fact that de jure reunification is not the systematic outcome of child-parent separations is certainly important to accurately conceptualizing family migration policies. Second, de jure reunification is not only constrained by official state selection criteria. Migrants are also subject to unofficial selection practices due to policy implementation, either at the regional level (due to the administration congestion in the Parisian region) or at the individual level (due to discriminatory practices). Third, in the face of both official and unofficial policy restrictions, migrants adapt their migration strategies. On the one hand, some adapt their migration schedule, either by organizing their children’s migration just before they reach the age of majority or by accelerating their reunification process when policies become more restrictive. On the other hand, the fact that de facto reunification is slightly less socioeconomically selective than de jure reunification (especially with respect to housing conditions) confirms the hypothesis of a categorical deflection from the latter to the former. However, this deflection effect does not apply to all characteristics, and particularly not to those that concern experiences of discrimination (including migrants’ origin). In this case, migrants who are disadvantaged in the de jure track tend instead to turn to living apart together across borders (fourth hypothesis). It would be excessive, however, to consider LATAB situations merely as the result of restrictive policies intended to reduce migration. Some migrants prefer this type of family arrangement, for at least two reasons. One concerns the living conditions of African minorities in France: previous research has already shown that some parents prefer to leave their children behind to protect them against racism (Grysole & Beauchemin, 2013). Another relates to family norms in their origin country. Differences in family structures in Africa enable parents to leave their children behind for extended periods of time (Anschütz & Mazzucato, 2021; Boubakri & Mazzella, 2011; Gonzalez-Ferrer et al., 2012; Grysole, 2018). Even though our work is the first, in our knowledge, to provide a measure of the effects of family norms and administrative discrimination on non-reunification, one of its limitations is that we are still not able to completely disentangle the effects of self-selection and state selection in this process. Our findings also do not offer any insights into intra-family negotiations around reunification. Compared to previous research, another contribution of the present study consists in the distinctions we were able to establish in the propensities and factors associated to de jure and de facto reunification. However, our

analysis of the deflection effect from the former to the latter is limited by the absence of information on sequences (whether de facto reunification followed failed attempts at de jure reunification) and by the heterogeneous nature of de facto reunification (ranging from irregular migration to alternative legal channels of immigration). More complete and fine-grained data on migrants' legal trajectories are needed to better understand the effects of migration policies on migrants' family arrangements. Comparative analyses with other nationally representative data are also needed to assess to what extent the French case is specific, and to measure how variations in policy restrictiveness, both on paper and in practice, change the propensities and logics of LATAB and de facto reunification.

### **Acknowledgments**

The authors are grateful for the insightful comments from Tatiana Eremenko and Yasmine Siblot, the statistical support from Marc Thévenin and Arnaud Bringé, and the editing from Christopher Leichnetm and Paul Reeves.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest is reported by the authors.

## References

- Ambrosini, M. (2014). Parenting from a distance and processes of family reunification : A research on the Italian case. *Ethnicities, 15*(3), 440-459. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796814547059>
- Anschütz, S., & Mazzucato, V. (2021). Reconceptualizing family reunification from a youth mobilities perspective : Transnational youth between Ghana and Belgium. *Children's Geographies, 1*-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2021.1919998>
- Baizán, P., Beauchemin, C., & González-Ferrer, A. (2014). An Origin and Destination Perspective on Family Reunification : The Case of Senegalese Couples. *European Journal of Population, 30*(1), 65-87. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10680-013-9305-6>
- Barbiano di Belgiojoso, E., & Terzera, L. (2018). Family reunification – who, when, and how? Family trajectories among migrants in Italy. *Demographic Research, 38*, 737-772. <https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2018.38.28>
- Beauchemin, C., Hamel, C., Simon, P., & SpringerLink (Online service). (2018). *Trajectories and Origins : Survey on the Diversity of the French Population*.
- Beauchemin, C., Nappa, J., Schoumaker, B., Baizan, P., González-Ferrer, A., Carls, K., & Mazzucato, V. (2015). Reunifying versus Living Apart Together across Borders : A Comparative Analysis of sub-Saharan Migration to Europe. *International Migration Review, 49*(1), 173-199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12155>
- Blanchet, D. (1985). Intensité et calendrier du regroupement familial des migrants : Un essai de mesure à partir de données agrégées. *Population, 249*-266. Persée <http://www.persee.fr>.
- Bledsoe, C. H., & Sow, P. (2011). Back to Africa : Second Chances for the Children of West African Immigrants. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 73*(4), 747-762. JSTOR.
- Block, L. (2015). Regulating Membership : Explaining Restriction and Stratification of Family Migration in Europe. *Journal of Family Issues, 36*(11), 1433-1452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X14557493>
- Block, L., & Bonjour, S. (2013). Fortress Europe or Europe of Rights? The Europeanisation of Family Migration Policies in France, Germany and the Netherlands. *European Journal of Migration and Law, 15*(2), 203-224. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718166-12342031>
- Bonizzoni, P. (2015). Uneven Paths : Latin American Women Facing Italian Family Reunification Policies. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 41*(12), 2001-2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1037257>
- Bonjour, S., & de Hart, B. (2013). A proper wife, a proper marriage : Constructions of 'us' and 'them' in Dutch family migration policy. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 20*(1), 61-76. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506812456459>
- Boubakri, H., & Mazzella, S. (2011). L'horizon transnational d'une famille tunisienne élargie. *Autrepart, 57-58*(1), 111. <https://doi.org/10.3917/autr.057.0111>
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of capital. In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (Greenwood, p. 241-258).
- Cohen, M. (2020). *Des familles invisibles. Les Algériens de France entre intégrations et discriminations (1945-1985)*. Éditions de la Sorbonne.
- Czaika, M., & de Haas, H. (2013). The Effectiveness of Immigration Policies. *Population and Development Review, 39*(3), 487-508. JSTOR.
- Donato, K. M., & Perez, G. (2017). Crossing the Mexico-U.S. Border : Illegality and Children's Migration to the United States. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences, 3*(4), 116. <https://doi.org/10.7758/rsf.2017.3.4.07>
- Eremenko, T., & González-Ferrer, A. (2018). Transnational families and child migration to France and Spain. The role of family type and immigration policies : Transnational families and child migration to France and Spain. *Population, Space and Place, 24*(7), e2163. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2163>
- Fresnoza-Flot, A. (2015). The Bumpy Landscape of Family Reunification : Experiences of First- and 1.5-generation Filipinos in France. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 41*(7), 1152-1171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2014.956711>
- Garrison, V., & Weiss, C. I. (1979). Dominican Family Networks and United States Immigration Policy : A Case Study. *The International Migration Review, 13*(2), 264-283. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2545032>
- Geoffrion, K., & Cretton, V. (2021). *Bureaucratic Routes to Migration*. 26.

- González-Ferrer, A. (2011). Spousal reunification among recent immigrants in Spain: In A. Kraler, E. Kofman, M. Kohli, & C. Schmoll (Éds.), *Gender, Generations and the Family in International Migration* (p. 193-218). Amsterdam University Press; JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46n1jm.11>
- González-Ferrer, A., Baizán, P., & Beauchemin, C. (2012). Child-Parent Separations among Senegalese Migrants to Europe : Migration Strategies or Cultural Arrangements? *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 643(1), 106-133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716212444846>
- Gonzalez-Ferrer, A., Baizan, Pau, & Beauchemin, Cris. (2012). Child-Parent Separations among Senegalese Migrants to Europe : Migration Strategies or Cultural Arrangements? *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 643(1), 106-133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716212444846>
- Grysole, A. (2018). *Placer et déplacer ses enfants : Stratégies transnationales de mères sénégalaises aux États-Unis, en Italie et en France*. École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.
- Grysole, A., & Beauchemin, C. (2013). Les allers-retours des enfants de l’immigration sub-saharienne : « Les filles ou les garçons d’abord »? *Migrations Société*, 147-148(3-4), 127-142. Cairn.info. <https://doi.org/10.3917/migra.147.0127>
- Kofman, E. (2018). Family Migration as a Class Matter. *International Migration*, 56(4), 33-46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12433>
- Kraler, A., & Bonizzoni, P. (2010). Gender, civic stratification and the right to family life : Problematising immigrants’ integration in. *International Review of Sociology*, 20(1), 181-187.
- Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street Level Bureaucracy*. Russell Sage Foundation; JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7758/9781610447713>
- Mascia, C. (2020). How bureaucracies shape access to rights : The implementation of family reunification in Belgium. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1726734>
- Mazzocchetti, J. (2011). Fermeture des frontières et liens transnationaux : Un terrain auprès de primo-migrants africains en Belgique. *Autrepart*, 57-58(1), 263. <https://doi.org/10.3917/autr.057.0263>
- Mazzucato, V., Schans, D., Caarls, K., & Beauchemin, C. (2015). Transnational Families between Africa and Europe. *International Migration Review*, 49(1), 142-172. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12153>
- Mikkelsen, L., Phillips, D., Abouzahr, C., Setel, P., de Savigny, D., Lozano, R., & Lopez, A. (2015). A global assessment of civil registration and vital statistics systems : Monitoring data quality and progress. *Lancet*, 386. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)60171-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)60171-4)
- Orsini, G., Smit, S., Farcy, J.-B., & Merla, L. (2021). Institutional racism within the securitization of migration. The case of family reunification in Belgium. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.1878249>
- Setel, P., Macfarlane, S., Szreter, S., Mikkelsen, L., Jha, P., Stout, S., & Abouzahr, C. (2007). Who Counts? 1—A scandal of invisibility : Making everyone count by counting everyone. *Lancet*, 370. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(07\)61307-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(07)61307-5)
- Spire, A. (2008). *Accueillir ou reconduire : Enquête sur les guichets de l’immigration (Raison d’agir)*.
- Staver, A. (2014). Hard Work for Love : The Economic Drift in Norwegian Family Immigration and Integration Policies. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(11), 1453-1471. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X14557491>
- Tuckett, A. (2015). Strategies of Navigation : Migrants’ Everyday Encounters with Italian Immigration Bureaucracy. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 33(1). <https://doi.org/10.3167/ca.2015.330109>
- Vickstrom, E. (2014). Pathways into Irregular Status among Senegalese Migrants in Europe. *International Migration Review*, 48(4), 1062-1099. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12154>
- White, A., Dito, B. B., Veale, A., & Mazzucato, V. (2019). Transnational migration, health and well-being : Nigerian parents in Ireland and the Netherlands. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 7(1), 44. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-019-0147-1>
- Wray, H. (2009). Moulding the migrant family. *Legal Studies*, 29, 592-618.

## Appendix

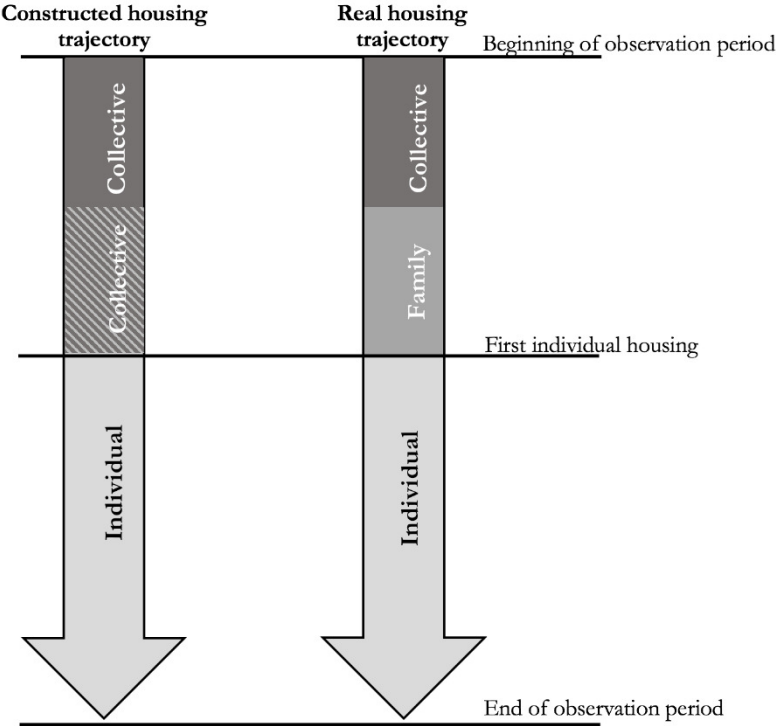
**Table 3. Summary of Independent Variables**

Type	Name	Categories	Time-varying	
Migration timing	Time since separation between pioneer parent and child	Numeric	Yes	
		Europe (ref.) North Africa Sub-Saharan Africa Asia Turkey Other country	No	
Family configuration	Sponsor parent	Father (ref.) Mother	No	
	Parents still in couple at the time of the survey	Dummy	No	
	Spouse location	Abroad (ref.) France No spouse Unknown	Yes	
		Child's gender	Male (ref.) Female	No
			Age of child	< 10 years (ref.) 11-15 years 16-17 years
	Child has siblings in France	Dummy	Yes	
	Child born after parental migration	Dummy	No	
	Sociocultural characteristics	Desired number of children	0-2 (ref.) 3-5 >6	No
			Financial aid to foreign country	Dummy
Policy	Pioneer parent's period of arrival	Pre-1994 (ref.) Post 1994	No	
	Pioneer parent had refugee status	Dummy	No	
Policy implementation	Pioneer parent experienced administrative discrimination	Dummy	No	
	Pioneer parent's region of settlement in France	Rest of the country (ref.) Parisian region	No	
Socioeconomic	Pioneer parent's activity status	Fully employed (ref.) Sporadically employed Unemployed/inactive	Yes	
		Pioneer parent's level of education	None/primary (ref.) Secondary Higher education	No
	Housing type in France	Individual (ref.) Collective Family Unknown	Yes/partially (see <b>Fig. 4</b> )	

**Figure 4. Construction of housing variable. Two possible biases.**

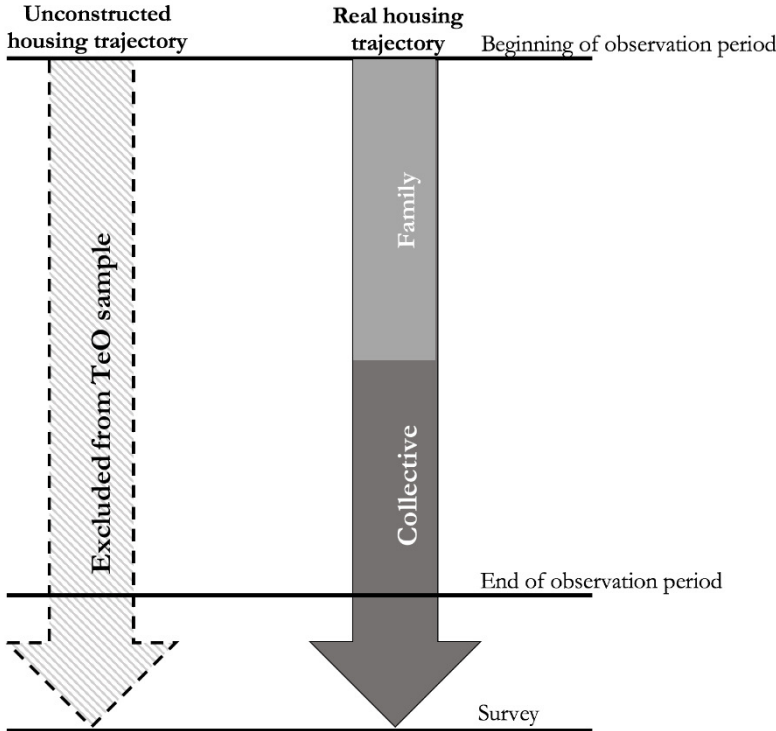
This variable is time-varying and roughly summarizes the pioneer parent’s housing trajectory by indicating their first housing in France and their housing at the time of the survey. On arrival in France, respondents either lived in individual housing, collective housing, or stayed with relatives (family housing). In some cases, initial housing was impossible to determine (unknown housing). However, this measure is imperfect due to two possible biases: incomplete housing trajectories (Figure 4a) and invisible housing trajectories (Figure 4b)

**Figure 4a.**



The TeO dataset only provides information on the pioneer parent’s first housing in France and the year of entry into individual housing, if applicable. Real trajectories containing more than two types of housing (i.e. involving intermediate housing between first housing in France and housing at the time of the survey) are therefore incomplete in our construction.

**Figure 4b.**



We also draw attention to the fact that results on housing might be biased given that the survey sample only includes migrants in ordinary housing (individual or family housing). For instance, parents still living in collective housing at the time of the survey are not included in the TeO sample. This type of housing trajectory is thus invisible in our model, and not constructed.

**Table 4. Detailed Results of Multinomial Logit Analyses – Block Models**

	Model 1			Model 2a			Model 2b			Model 2c		
	Left behind	De jure	De facto	Left behind	De jure	De facto	Left behind	De jure	De facto	Left behind	De jure	De facto
Time since separ.	-0.001	0.0008	0.0006	-0.002	0.0009	0.0009	-0.001	-0.0007	-0.0003	-0.002	0.0009	0.0006
Region of origin (ref. Europe)												
North Africa	0.070**	-0.065**	-0.006	0.059*	-0.058**	-0.001	0.036	-0.046*	0.010	0.071**	-0.067**	0.004
Sub-Sah. Afr.	0.080**	-0.064**	-0.016	0.058*	-0.056*	-0.002	0.072***	-0.058**	-0.014	0.075**	-0.066**	-0.015
Asia	0.007	-0.023	0.016	-0.007	-0.017	0.023	0.019	-0.022	0.003	0.026	-0.019	0.017
Turkey	-0.021	0.018	0.003	-0.016	0.016	0.0002	-0.052*	0.042	0.011	-0.014	0.007	0.006
Other country	0.040	-0.066**	0.025	0.017	-0.060*	0.042*	0.033	-0.060**	0.027	0.039	-0.069**	0.030
Sponsor mother (ref. father)	-0.080***	0.009	0.067***	-0.071***	0.010	0.061***	-0.092***	0.014	0.079**	-0.078***	-0.011	0.068***
Parents still in couple	-0.066***	0.030***	0.036***	-0.071***	0.030***	0.041***	-0.072***	0.034***	0.038***	-0.068***	0.032***	0.036***
Male child (ref. Female)	0.003	-0.006	0.003	0.0009	-0.006	0.005	0.007	-0.009*	0.002	0.003	-0.006	0.003
Child's age (ref. <10 yo)	-0.056***	0.038***	0.017									
11-15 yo	-0.016*	0.022***	-0.006	-0.054***	0.036***	0.018	-0.002	0.012*	-0.009	-0.016*	0.022***	-0.006
16-17 yo							-0.035**	0.023**	0.012	-0.056***	0.038**	0.017
Child has siblings in France	-0.054***	0.022***	0.031***	-0.054***	0.022***	0.032***	-0.050***	0.022***	0.028***	-0.053***	0.021***	0.032***
Child born after parental migration	-0.010	0.006	0.003	-0.012	0.008	0.004	-0.012	0.010	0.001	-0.011	0.008	0.004
Desired nb. of children (ref. 0-2)												
3-5				0.0006	-0.0008	0.0001						
>6				0.024	0.008	-0.032***						
Unknown				0.029	-0.009	-0.020						
Financial aid to foreign country				0.030***	-0.011	-0.019***						
Activity status (ref. Employed)												
Sporadic employment				0.036***	-0.020**	-0.016*						
Unemployment/inactivity				0.016	-0.009	-0.007						
Diploma (ref. None/primary)												
Secondary				-0.033***	0.018**	0.014*						
Higher educ.				-0.031*	0.017	0.014						
Type of housing in France (ref. Individual)												
Collective				0.074**	-0.052***	-0.022**						
Family				0.080***	-0.051***	-0.029***						
Unknown				0.016	-0.009	-0.016						
Arrival post-1994				-0.016	0.021**	-0.005						
Refugee				-0.047***	0.020*	0.027**						
Experiences of administrative discrimination										0.015	-0.010	-0.005
Destination is Paris region (ref. Rest of country)										0.013	-0.017**	0.003

\*\*\* p < 0.01, \*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.1, N = 7140 person-years. *Source:* Trajectories and Origins survey (2008-2009), average marginal effects (AME).

*Sample:* Children left behind when parent migrated to France after 1973, from a country outside the EU at the time of the migration. *Interpretation:* Children whose parents reported having experienced administrative discrimination were 1.7 percentage points (0.017) less likely to be de jure reunified compared to those whose parents did not report such discrimination (Model 2c).



## Tables

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics by Child Reunification Status.**

Migratory and legal status	Child reunification status at end of observation period			
	Left behind (N = 354) 35.8%	De jure (N = 331) 33.5%	De facto (N = 303) 30.7%	Total (N = 988) 100%
<b>Region of origin</b>				
North Africa	30.6	21.6	34.6	29.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	49.1	30.0	30.6	37.6
Europe	6.6	11.1	6.1	7.8
Asia	4.0	9.9	5.8	6.3
Turkey	1.8	22.4	7.7	9.9
Other country	8.0	5.0	15.3	9.3
<b>Asylum status</b>				
No request	74.1	73.0	76.1	74.4
Refugee	16.3	19.5	18.2	17.9
Refused asylum	9.6	7.5	5.6	7.7
<b>Experience of administrative discrimination</b>				
Region of destination	15.6	14.4	19.7	16.5
Parisian region	58.7	44.9	57.1	54.0
Rest of the country	41.3	55.1	42.9	46.0
<b>Family configuration</b>				
<b>Sponsor parent</b>				
Father	69.8	76.1	52.9	66.6
Mother	30.2	23.9	47.1	33.4
<b>Spouse location</b>				
Abroad	40.4	65.6	59.7	54.0
France	14.6	17.4	12.2	14.7
No spouse	36.4	12.8	18.1	23.6
Unknown	8.6	4.2	10.0	7.7
<b>Age of child at separation</b>				
< 10 years old	80.0	88.2	88.9	85.2
11-15 years old	13.8	9.5	9.6	11.2
16-17 years old	6.2	2.2	1.6	3.6
Child has siblings in France	34.3	57.4	66.8	51.3
<b>Sociocultural characteristics</b>				
<b>Desired number of children</b>				
0-2	23.7	18.9	23.8	22.2
3-5	55.4	56.6	65.7	58.9
>6	6.7	8.3	3.9	6.3
Unknown	14.2	16.2	6.7	12.5
Remittances	49.5	28.8	28.1	36.6
<b>Sociodemographic characteristics</b>				
<b>Activity status</b>				
Full employment	54.6	60.2	60.4	58.1
Sporadic employment	22.5	17.9	15.2	18.9
Unemployed/inactive	22.9	21.8	24.4	23.0
<b>Educational qualification</b>				
None/primary	48.2	54.3	49.1	50.3
Secondary	35.3	28.9	32.5	32.5
Higher education	16.5	16.9	18.4	17.2
<b>First housing in France</b>				
Individual	43.2	47.3	38.6	43.1
Collective	22.2	14.6	15.7	17.9
Family	33.9	34.9	45.2	37.6
Unknown	0.7	3.2	0.5	1.4

*Source:* Trajectories and Origins survey (2008-2009). *Note:* Children left-behind at the beginning of the observation period, parent migrated to France after 1973, from a country outside the EU at the time of the migration; weighted column percentages.

*Interpretation:* 58.7% of children who were still left behind at the end of the observation period were children whose parents migrated to the Parisian region, versus 54% in the total sample.

**Table 2. Detailed Results of Multinomial Logit Analyses – Embedded Models**

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	Left behind	De jure	De facto	Left behind	De jure	De facto	Left behind	De jure	De facto	Left behind	De jure	De facto
Time since separ.	-0.001	0.0008	0.0006	-0.002	0.0009	0.0009	-0.001	-0.0008	-0.0005	-0.002	0.001	0.0005
Region of origin (ref. Europe)												
North Africa	0.070**	-0.065**	-0.006	0.059*	-0.058**	-0.001	0.032	-0.041*	0.009	0.035	-0.045*	0.011
Sub-Sah. Afr.	0.080**	-0.064**	-0.016	0.058*	-0.056*	-0.002	0.056*	-0.053**	-0.003	0.052*	-0.050**	-0.002
Asia	0.007	-0.023	0.016	-0.007	-0.017	0.023	0.010	-0.020	0.010	0.007	-0.018	0.010
Turkey	-0.021	0.018	0.003	-0.016	0.016	0.0002	-0.04	0.036	0.002	-0.029	0.024	0.005
Other	0.040	-0.066**	0.025	0.017	-0.060*	0.042*	0.016	-0.057**	0.040	0.015	-0.056**	0.041*
Sponsor mother (ref. father)	-0.080**	0.009	0.067**	-0.071**	0.010	0.061**	-0.089**	0.015	0.074**	-0.091**	0.017	0.074**
Parents still in couple	-0.066**	0.030**	0.036**	-0.071**	0.030**	0.041**	-0.076**	0.034**	0.042**	-0.078**	0.037**	0.042**
Male child (ref. F)	0.003	-0.006	0.003	0.0009	-0.006	0.005	0.004	-0.008	0.004	0.005	-0.009*	0.004
Child's age (ref. <10 yo)	-0.056**	0.038**	0.017									
11-15 yo	-0.016*	0.022**	-0.006	-0.054**	0.036**	0.018	-0.003	0.011*	-0.009	-0.002	0.010	-0.009
16-17 yo							-0.035**	0.022*	0.013	-0.033**	0.020*	0.013
Child has siblings in France	-0.054**	0.022**	0.031**	-0.054**	0.022**	0.032**	-0.048**	0.020**	0.029**	-0.048**	0.019**	0.029**
Child born after parental migration	-0.010	0.006	0.003	-0.012	0.008	0.004	-0.012	0.010	0.003	-0.026	0.013	0.003
Desired nb. of children (ref. 0-2)												
3-5				0.0006	-0.0008	0.0001	-0.010	0.005	0.005	-0.007	0.003	0.005
>6				0.024	0.008	-0.032**	0.016	0.011	-0.027**	0.017	0.010	-0.027**
Unknown				0.029	-0.009	-0.020	0.007	0.002	-0.010	0.009	0.0002	-0.010
Financial aid to foreign country				0.030**	-0.011	-0.019**	0.034**	-0.013	-0.021**	0.034**	-0.014	-0.021**
Activity status (ref. Employed)												
Sporadic employment				0.039**	-0.021**	-0.018**				0.037**	-0.019*	-0.012**
Unemployment/inactivity				0.018	-0.009	-0.009				0.017	-0.009	-0.008
Diploma (ref. None/primary)												
Secondary				-0.028**	0.018**	0.010				-0.030**	0.021**	0.009
Higher education				-0.027*	0.018	0.009				-0.030*	0.020	0.009
Type of housing in France (ref. Individual)												
Collective				0.077**	-0.052**	-0.024**				0.076**	-0.052**	-0.024**
Family				0.081**	-0.051**	-0.029**				0.080**	-0.050**	-0.030**
Unknown				0.010	-0.002	-0.012				0.017	-0.005	-0.012
Arrival post-1994				-0.017	0.019*	-0.003				-0.019	0.022**	-0.002
Refugee				-0.048**	0.018	0.030**				-0.050**	0.019*	0.030**
Experiences of administrative discrimination										0.019*	-0.014*	-0.005
Destination is Paris region (ref. Rest of country)				0.012						-0.016**		0.004

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1, N = 7140 person-year. *Source:* Trajectories and Origins survey (2008-2009), average marginal effects (AME).

*Sample:* Children left behind when their parent migrated to France after 1973, from a country that was outside the EU at the time of the migration. *Interpretation:* Children whose parents reported having experienced administrative discrimination were 2 percentage points (0.019) more likely to be left behind compared to those whose parents did not report such discrimination (Model 4).

Figures

Figure 1. Different types of observation period, with three examples of right-truncated data

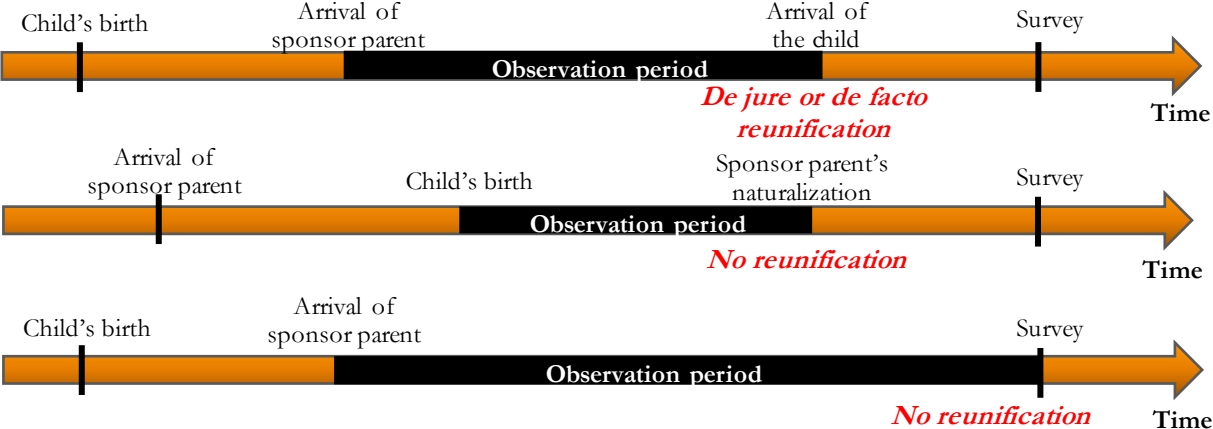


Figure 2. Timing of child-parent reunification by pathway

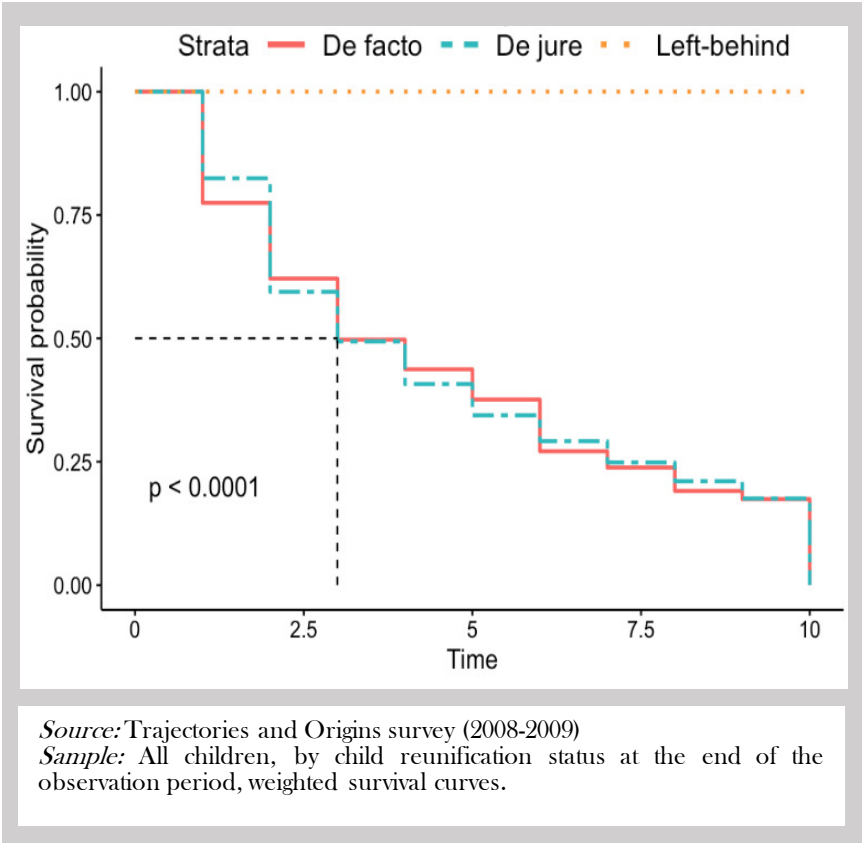
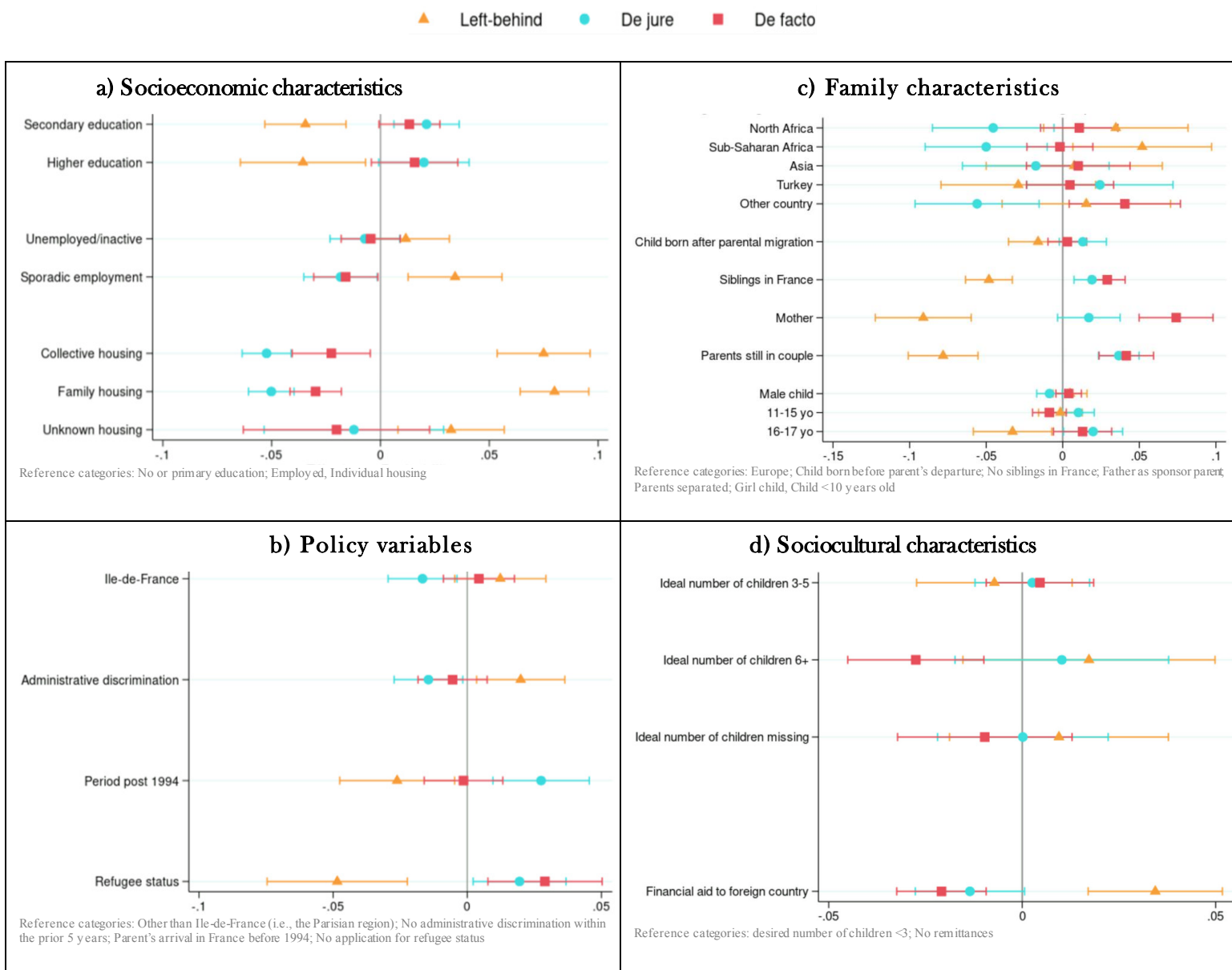


Figure 3. Left behind vs. de jure reunification vs. de facto reunification: AMEs of Model 4



*Source:* Trajectories and Origins survey (2008-2009). Model 4, Table 2, AME with 90% confidence interval.

*Interpretation:* Children whose parents lived in collective housing were 5.2 percentage points (0.052) less likely to be reunified de jure compared to those whose parents lived in individual housing (Model 4).

## Figure captions

**Figure 1.** Different types of observation period, with three examples of right-truncated data.

**Figure 2.** Timing of child-parent reunification by pathway. *Source:* Trajectories and Origins survey (2008-2009). *Sample:* All children, by child reunification status at the end of the observation period, weighted survival curves.

**Figure 3.** Left behind vs. de jure reunification vs. de facto reunification: AMEs of Model 4. *Source:* Trajectories and Origins survey (2008-2009). Model 4, Table 2, AME with 90% confidence interval. *Interpretation:* Children whose parents lived in collective housing were 5.2 percentage points (0.052) less likely to be reunified de jure compared to those whose parents lived in individual housing (Model 4).

**Figure 4.** Construction of housing variable. Two possible biases.

## **Bibiographical notes**

Julia Descamps is a PhD student at the University Paris 8. She is affiliated to the CRESPPA (Center for Sociological and Political Research in Paris) and INED (French Institute for Demographic Studies). She is a former student of the École Normale Supérieure Paris-Saclay in France. Combining ethnographic and demographic analyses, her research examines how migratory policies shapes family immigration in France and how migrant families deal with migratory administrations.

Dr Cris Beauchemin is research director at INED (Institut National d'Études Démographiques / French Institute for Demographic Studies). He holds his PhD from the University Paris 8. Prior to joining INED, he spent 3 years at the University of Montreal (Demography Department). Most of his research is about migration and connections between places of origin and destination. Covering both domestic and international migration, especially in the African context, his works relate especially to trends of migration, migrants' investments, return migration, transnational families, integration and transnationalism. Most of his work relies on large scale surveys that he conducted: the Migration between Africa and Europe project (MAFE) and the Trajectories and origin survey in France (TeO).