

“A Longitudinal Analysis of Family Migration and the Gender Gap in Earnings in the United States and Great Britain”

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Abstract: This article uses longitudinal data for the United States and Great Britain to examine the impact of residential mobility and childbirth on the earnings of women, their family earnings, and the related division of earnings by gender. This project is the first to compare explicitly the impact of childbirth and family migration on women's earnings, and it extends prior cross-sectional and longitudinal studies on isolated countries by providing a direct contrast between two major industrialized nations, using comparable measures. The results indicate that families respond in similar ways in both countries to migration and childbirth. In response to both migration and childbirth, women's earnings fall at the time of the event and recover slowly afterward, but the magnitude of the impact is roughly twice as large for childbirth as for migration. However, migration—but not the birth of a child—is also associated with a significant increase in total family earnings because of increased husbands' earnings. As a result, the effect of migration on the relative earnings of wives to husbands is similar to the effect of childbirth. These results suggest that family migration should be given consideration in the literature on the gender earnings gap.