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Transnational families between Ghana, The Netherlands and the U.K.

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1. Introduction

Both methodologically and theoretically, modern families are still predominantly conceived of as nuclear, living together, and bounded by the nation state (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). Therefore, transnational families — in which members live in different nation states — have been treated as a temporary phenomenon, with family reunification in the host society as the preferred outcome for all family members (Landolt & Da, 2005). However, because of a scarcity of quantitative evidence caused by the lack of academic and policy attention to this phenomenon, the exact prevalence and composition of transnational family arrangements is unknown, especially where sub-Saharan African families are concerned. Using the MAFE-Ghana data, the objective of this working paper is to provide information on transnational family life in the context of international migration between Ghana and Europe.

In Section 2, we discuss the literature on family systems in Ghana, and the literature on transnational family life between Ghana and Europe (i.e. The Netherlands and the U.K.). In the following Sections 3, 4, and 5 we discuss the results of our analyses. Each section focuses on a different element of family life in relation to international migration. To analyse these specific topic, we use a different set of data from the MAFE-Ghana project for each section (Beauchemin, 2012).

In Section 3 we examine the family arrangements of Ghanaian households and their relationships with migrants overseas. This allows us to assess to what extent households in Ghana are involved in transnational relationships, with both nuclear and extended family members. To do so, we will use the data from the *household survey*, which was carried out among households in two urban areas: Ghana's capital, Accra, and the second largest city, Kumasi. The survey collected information on household members that currently live within the household, but also those people who are considered as members but who are currently living abroad. With this data, we identify the prevailing family arrangements in these two urban areas, as well as the functioning of family life across borders.

In Section 4, we change our perspective from Ghana to Europe. Using the *individual biographic survey*, carried out among current migrants in The Netherlands and the U.K., we examine how nuclear family life takes shape in the context of international migration. We hereby evaluate the prevalence of transnational nuclear family arrangements among these Ghanaian migrants in Europe. We show the different types of family arrangements that prevail among these Ghanaian migrants, and we study to what extent migrants in transnational families differ from migrants who formed families abroad or who reunified with their families concerning several socio-demographic, socio-economic and migration-related characteristics. The focus in this section is on the nuclear family members, as these are mainly the people who are eligible for family reunification.

Finally, in Section 5, we examine patterns of family formation for migrants in The Netherlands and the U.K., by studying their marital and parental situation at the time of departure to their current destination. Similarly to Section 4, we use the *individual biographic survey.* We also look at the time that families take to reunify, if at all. We

examine how many couples and how many parent-child dyads reunify, how long the separation lasts and importantly, where they reunify—whether in Europe or in Ghana.

2. Migration and the Family in Ghana

2.1 Family Systems in Ghana – the importance of the extended family

Before presenting our findings it is important to understand the kinds of family systems that prevail in Ghana, how these are changing and the norms that guide familial relationships. These can be important elements in interpreting the findings that follow. In Ghana, as elsewhere in Africa, 'the family' extends beyond immediate nuclear members to include other relations to whom one has 'extensive reciprocal duties, obligations and responsibilities' (Nukunya, 1992 p. 47). These members include grandparents, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews and cousins among others. Additionally, polygamous marriages in the form of a male with multiple spouses are socially accepted and comply with traditional customary law although they are officially illegal according to national state law. They are particularly prevalent in among rural inhabitants and the less educated.

Linked to kinship, family descent systems in Ghana are patrilineal or matrilineal with members tracing their descent through the father or mother's lineage, respectively. The type of descent system one belongs to has implications for inheritance, responsibilities within the family and relationships with its members. In patrilineal descent systems, the offspring, particularly the male children, are the direct beneficiaries while in a matrilineal situation, the nephew through a man's sister directly inherits from the man to the detriment of the man's own children. These trends leave the children of a deceased man in disadvantaged positions with gender dimensions. The conscious efforts in recent times lie in the preparation of one's will and the Intestate Succession Law (PNDCL 111) of 1985 which are intended to attenuate negative effects on the children of a deceased parent (Mensa-Bonsu and Dowuona-Hammond, 1994). In the matrilineal system, there is more family support for a married woman on dissolution of her marriage than in the patrilineal situation. Upon divorce, a woman with a matrilineage is welcomed 'back' to the family and does not lose access to land or her children. The strength of this family support from the matrikin has been identified as a primary contributory factor to the high incidence of divorce among the Ashanti people, for example (Fortes, 1950). This picture is the opposite within the patrilineal system, which offers less attractive options for divorce, including a return of the bride price and a separation of the children from the mother on dissolution of a marriage (Takyi and Gyimah, 2007).

The importance of the extended family system has been significantly affected by modern trends such as urbanization and technological development, though it continues to be important. The effects include a change in the family structure with a tendency towards nuclear family focus, a reduction in family size and the use of paid house helps instead of family members (Oppong, 1974; Ardayfio-Schandorf, 1994). Other functions of the family such as sanctions for socially deviant behaviours have been taken over by the state and other agencies, which have also lessened the influence of the extended family. In spite of all these effects, the extended family

system in Ghana continues to play effective social welfare roles on occasions such as a birth of a child, education of its members, marriage, sponsoring foreign travels and particularly in times of crisis such as ill-health and death.

2.1.1. Marital Relationships in Ghana

The extended family role in the institution of marriage in Ghana cannot be over-emphasized particularly because marriage is perceived to be between the two families of the couple involved. This extended family role includes going to ask for the hand of the woman in marriage on the man's side while on the woman's side, they are key in deciding whether to accept the offer/proposal being made by the man. In the context of marriage, the extended family also mediates in marital problems and able to a large extent assist in arriving at amicable solutions without resorting to the courts or divorce. In recent times, however, the role of the extended family in finding a marriage partner has reduced. While in public discourse this reduced role has been said to contribute to an increase in divorce rates in Ghana, others argue that divorce has always been prevalent in Ghanaian society, especially among Akans. Bleek (1987) describes divorce among the Akans as easy and frequent – so normal an occurrence it is likely to befall anyone at least once or probably twice, therefore making loyalty to lineage more secure than to one's marriage.

2.1.2. The Child in the Ghanaian Family: Fostering and Social Parenthood

The birth of the child to a Ghanaian family is seen as a communal affair. Responsibilities such as the rites of passage for the children in the family and the whole socialization process of the child rest squarely with the extended family. The upbringing of a child is seen as the responsibility of all. This belief, though losing currency in recent times, accounts for the practices of child fostering and social parenthood. Fostering involves the giving of children to other relatives apart from their biological parents to be raised. In this regard, relatives from both maternal and paternal sides are the likely foster parents who have a claim to the child or children involved. This practice is an informal arrangement and unlike adoption, fostering does not have the legislation backing its practice. Ardayfio-Schandorf and Amissah (1996) enumerated the reasons for the practice of fostering to include high fertility, marital disruption through death or divorce and economic constraints. In effect, fostering can be practised due to crises (such as death of a parent) or voluntarily or with a specific purpose (such as giving a rural child to an urban family member to further educational or apprenticeship possibilities) (Goody, 1982). In contrast to Western societies, where child fosterage tends to occur in response to an extraordinary familial crisis, the care of children by relatives and nonrelatives is widespread and is not stigmatized in many parts of West Africa, including Ghana (Alber 2003; Bledsoe 1990,1993; Goody 1982). It is important to take these family norms into account when interpreting our findings. For example, the fact that divorce is quite common in Ghanaian society means we need to be cautious in associating migration with divorce.

Likewise, the common practice of fostering children, may facilitate parents' decisions to migrate, as they can ask someone at home to take care of their children while they migrate to Europe—a receiving context that is restrictive with regards to family migration for many potential Ghanaian migrants. At the same time, however, international migration presents quite different conditions than the traditional child

fostering situations where parents continue to be involved in the upbringing of their children at a distance, and where economic opportunities abroad create a different set of expectations on the migrant parent to remit and on the caregiver to provide top quality care giving (Mazzucato 2011), than is typical of traditional fostering. It is therefore important in studies of the effects of migration on family life to be able to compare those families with migration experience to those without. The MAFE dataset provides this kind of comparative context.

2.2. Ghanaian Transnational Families in The Netherlands and the U.K.

On January 1st, 2011, 21,376 Ghanaians were registered in The Netherlands, but because there are also large numbers of undocumented migrants, this number is underestimated. The percentage of registered women (50.3%) and men (49.7%) is almost equal. Of these 21,376 Ghanaians 62% belongs to the first-generation immigrants. The other 38% was born in The Netherlands and therefore belongs to the so-called second-generation. The Ghanaian population in The Netherlands is young, with 37% being younger than 20 years old. 60% of the population is between 20-60 years of age and only 3% is 60 years or older (ACB, 2011).

Migration from Ghana to The Netherlands is a quite recent phenomenon, mostly situated in the last decades of the 20th century. Ghanaian migrants are essentially economic migrants. They started arriving in the 1980s when the economies of Ghana as well as of Nigeria, where many were working, were experiencing an economic downturn. From the '90`s onwards, network migration and family reunification become the most important factors for migration to The Netherlands (Mazzucato, 2008a).

As all new migrant groups arriving from the 1980's in The Netherlands, the Ghanaian community faced a state that was increasingly trying to restrict international migration. Especially family reunification has become a major concern and policies have consequently become increasingly restrictive. In a study on Ghanaian migrants from 2001 (BZ, 2001) respondents state as one of their main problems in The Netherlands the difficulties they experience with family formation and reunification and the related difficulties in verifying and legalizing documents such as birth acts and school diplomas from Ghana. Since documents are often not accepted due to the stringent legalization procedures there is a feeling amongst Ghanaian migrants that the Dutch government mistrusts them and many spend a great deal of their time on legal issues related to residence and work permits and family reunification (Mazzucato, 2008a).

In 2010, around 84,000 Ghanaians were registered as living in the United Kingdom and as such; the United Kingdom has the largest population of Ghanaian migrants in Europe. Due to colonial ties, Ghanaian migration to the UK has a longer history than Ghanaian migration to The Netherlands and other European countries. There are more students and professional workers such as nurses and doctors among the Ghanaians in the UK than The Netherlands. More information on the general characteristics of Ghanaian migration to the two European countries can be found in Schans, Mazzucato *et al.* (2013).

Very little quantitative data however exist on transnational family life both in The Netherlands and the United Kingdom. There are no figures on the number of people who have nuclear family members in the country of origin or even third countries. The MAFE data make it possible to give a more complete picture of the various family arrangements amongst migrants and family members both in Europe and back home in Ghana.

2.2.1. Remittances between Ghana and Europe

While remittances are normally discussed in relation to home country development, they are also a way that families enact family life across borders. Remittances are used to fulfil gendered kinship obligations (Wong, 2006) and intergenerational reciprocity (Mazzucato 2008b). Mazzucato et al. (2008) in analysing nationally representative data, found that in the case of Ghanaian migrants, most senders of remittances are children and siblings of the household head. However, those who remitted the greatest amounts of money were spouses of the household head. Remitters from outside Africa donated the largest yearly average amount. MAFE data allow us to look more into the details of remittance receiving for the two urban populations surveyed (Kumasi and Accra). Looking at remittances that Ghanaian households receive from migrants can tell us something about the functioning of these transnational families.

2.3. Family Reunification between Ghana and Europe

Family-related migration has become one of the main legal means for people to gain admission to Europe. Yet, in countries such as The Netherlands and the United Kingdom family-related modes of migration are more and more subject to restrictions (Kraler, 2010). Family related forms of migration gained importance after the 1973 oil crisis, when labour recruitment in European countries was brought to a halt and increased restrictions were placed on labour migration. However, after an initial relaxation of family migration criteria (for example, permitting partnerships and same-sex couples to apply for family formation), new family reunification restrictions have been imposed in the last decades including higher income and language requirements for new migrants.

Two main types of family migration can be distinguished: (1) Family reunification, in which pre-existing family members join migrants in the host country and (2) family formation in which a new migrant joins a settled migrant to form a new family (marriage migration). In general, family-related admission is limited to nuclear family members: spouses, and dependent children below a certain age. However, differences in criteria exist between countries, but admission can also change within countries over time. For example, whereas in the UK a potential spouse needs to be 18 years old, in The Netherlands this threshold was raised to 21 and there is an on-going discussion to rise the age to 24.

Moreover, assumptions underlying state policies do not always do justice to the complex reality of family migration. For example, as described in section 2.1 above, extended family members may be just as important as nuclear family. Although in the UK, elderly parents and other extended family members might be granted family

reunification, criteria are stricter than for nuclear family and based on dependency on the sponsor.

In Dutch political debates, the migrant family is seen as a potential barrier to integration and since 2006, family members are required to take a computerised test on language proficiency and knowledge of Dutch society at the Dutch embassy/consulate in their home country as part of the visa application for family migration (Integration Abroad Act) (Bonjour, 2008). Combined with other recent requirements such a high-income requirement (120 % of the minimum wage) for the migrant, family reunification and formation have become increasingly difficult in The Netherlands.

In the UK, family migration policies have been very restrictive during the 1980s and 1990s (Bhabba and Shutter 1995) but experienced a period of relative liberalization in the late 1990s. More recently, instead, the UK has become stricter again. Debates on family migration currently focus on the abuse of the system, particularly through 'scam marriages' and policies have been implemented to impede such marriages (for example Immigration and Asylum Act 1999). Furthermore, since 2010, a pre-entry test has been instituted for family migrants (Kraler 2013).

In general, nation-states tie family reunification rights to a series of conditions, most importantly the legal status of the sponsor and their ability to provide secure income and housing. As such, family migration polices are socially selective, particularly excluding more vulnerable groups from the right to family reunion and formation (Kraler and Kofman, 2009). Moreover, the consequences of requirements are highly gendered. Kraler (2010) shows that in all European countries covered by his study, it was more difficult for women to meet family migration requirements such as the income criteria than for men.

3. Ghanaian Households & Their Migrant Family Members

In this section, we examine the prevalence and composition of transnational families from the perspective of the migrant sending country, Ghana. We explore the extent to which households in Ghana are transnational (see Box 1 for definitions) by looking at which family members are currently living abroad and where these family members reside. Furthermore, we examine which type of transnational practices are common (sending remittances, being in contact, via which means), and which of the households' contacts (nuclear family members, extended family, and non-kin) are involved in transnational relationships. We will see that in order to understand the degree to which households in Ghana are involved transnationally and the potential benefits they can derive from these contacts, it is necessary to consider extended family members and also non-kin relations, hereby emphasising the importance of looking beyond the nuclear family.

Section 3.1 describes the Ghanaian household, how it is related to migrants that are abroad, and the whereabouts of these migrants. In Section 3.2 we discuss the functioning of these transnational families, hereby looking at the support migrants received from the household, as well as the contribution migrants make to the households, in the form of monetary and in-kind remittances. Additionally, we

present the different modes and frequency of contact between Ghanaian households and migrants abroad.

Box 1. Definitions of households, transnational families and migrant members

A **household** is a group of people who live in the same house or compound and share their resources to satisfy their essential needs (housing and meals) under the authority of the household head. By definition, all members of a household live in the same country.

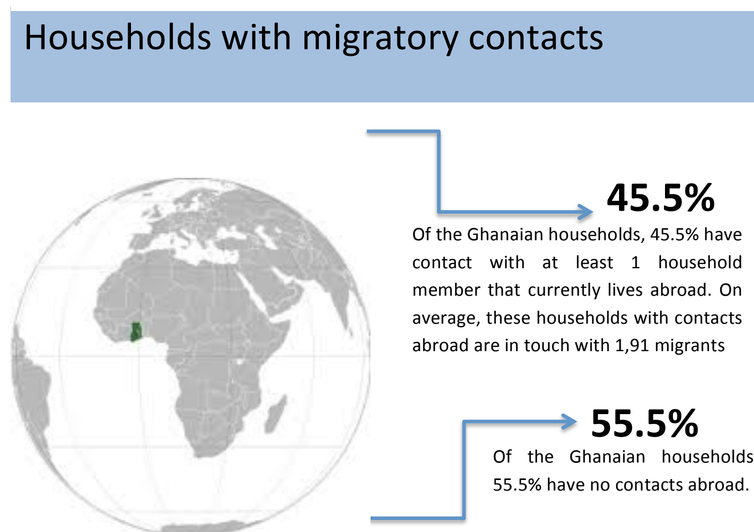
A **transnational family** is composed of a group of persons who are related to one another by a consanguine or marital tie and who live in different countries from one another. In the MAFE household survey transnational families are defined as those households who declared having at least one migrant living abroad who is a: (1) child of the head; (2) partner(s) of a member of the household; or (3) relative of the household head or of his/her partner and who has been in regular contact with the household over the past 12 months. Any person fitting into one of the three categories above is a **migrant member**.

A **nuclear family** is a group made of at least two of the following people: a husband, a wife and their children under the age of 18. If any two people are not living in the same country, they are considered to be a **transnational nuclear family**.

3.1 Ghanaian families: living arrangements and migrant members

In total, 1,246 Ghanaian household heads, living in Kumasi and Accra were interviewed. Of these, 45.5% had at least one migrant that currently lived abroad (see Figure 1). The average number of migrants abroad was 1.96 per household. We examine the composition of these migrants by distinguishing between three different kinds of relationships with the household head: 1) migrant spouses, 2) migrant children, focusing on biological children, and 3) extended family members that currently live abroad, who can be both kin and non-kin.

Figure 1. Ghanaian households with migrant members

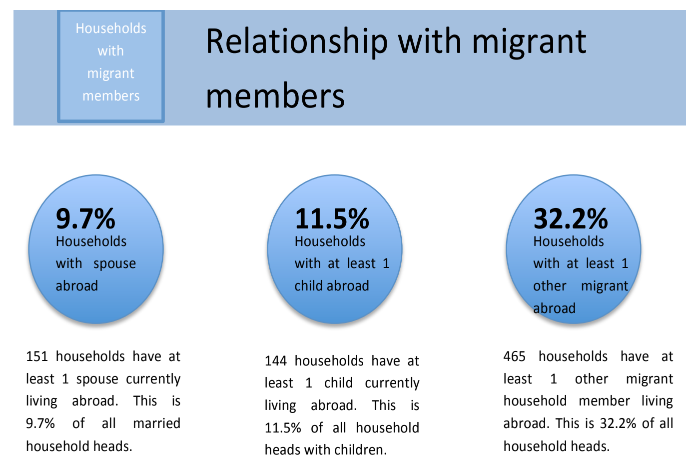


Note: weighted percentages & unweighted frequencies
Time of survey: 2008; *Population*: Ghanaian households (n=1,246)
Interpretation: Of all Ghanaian households, 45.5% has a contact abroad

Of the 1,246 household heads interviewed, 71.6% (868) were currently married or in a consensual union. Of these, 9.7% (151) had a spouse that currently lives abroad (see Figure 2).

A total of 80.0% (997) of all households had at least one child. This includes children of all ages. Of these, the majority had all their children living in Ghana (88.5%), while 11.5% had at least one child living abroad (Figure 2). These households with children abroad have on average more than one child currently living abroad (1.87). Importantly, most of the contact with migrants abroad has been with non-nuclear family members (32.2%).

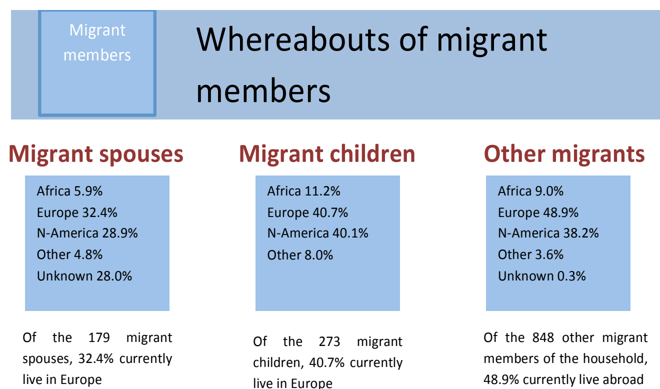
Figure 2. Ghanaian households and their migrant members, by relationship to the household head



Note: weighted percentages & unweighted frequencies; *Time of survey*: 2008; *Population*: Ghanaian households (n=1,246)
Interpretation: Of all Ghanaian households, 45.5% has a contact abroad

Europe and North America are the most important destinations where migrants reside (Figure 3). This varies slightly according to who the migrant is.

Figure 3. Whereabouts of migrant household members, by relationship to the household head



Note: weighted percentages & unweighted frequencies; *Time of survey*: 2008; *Population*: Ghanaian migrants (n=1,272)
Interpretation: Of all Ghanaian migrant spouses, 5.9% lives in Africa

This section reveals that it is important, when studying Ghanaian families, to take into account the often-complex nature of these families. Migrant family members go beyond immediate nuclear family relationships; they are often extended, encompassing other relatives as well as non-kin. Moreover, these families are not necessarily bounded by a particular geographical space. On the contrary, we see that a large share of family and non-kin are living dispersed within Ghana, but also across the world. In the next section, we examine the functioning of these families across borders.

3.2. Families functioning across borders: support, remittances and visits

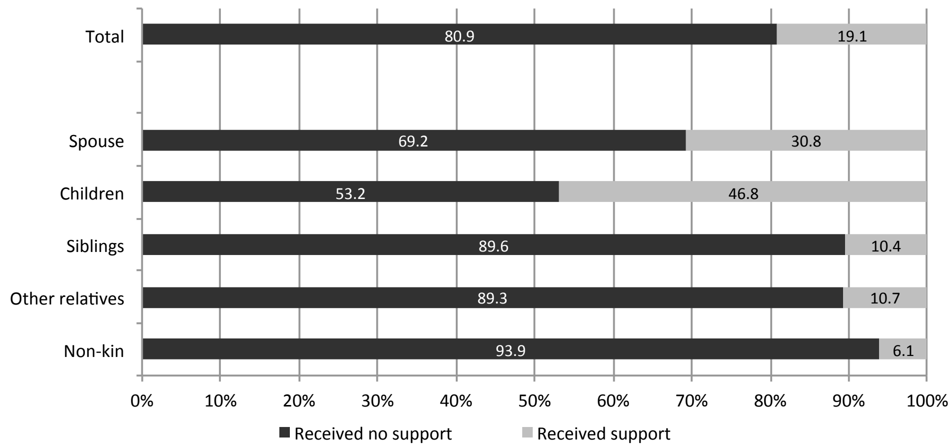
It is one thing to declare having a migrant member overseas, it is another, to have an active relationship with this person. We therefore turn to what kind of contact households have with migrants overseas to gain insight into the kinds of benefits households in Ghana may derive from having migrants overseas as well as the ways in which transnational family life is practiced. Two points emerge from the analysis that follows: 1) contributions from migrants to households in Ghana are not exclusively from the nuclear family, nor only from kinship relations, thereby again emphasising the importance of looking at benefits from migration and transnational family practices beyond the nuclear family; and 2) migrants stay in touch with households in Ghana in more ways than only through remittances. It is through such contacts that migrants and their households can influence each other in non-material ways, such as via ideas, norms and ways of doing things, which are often termed 'social remittances'.

At the same time, it is important to pay attention to what household members in Ghana do for migrants, or 'reverse remittances'. Remittance literature tends to emphasize the remittances that migrants send home. Yet equally important is the 'help' that migrants receive from their families back home especially in the first phase of their migration (Mazzucato 2009). Below, we examine one particular type of 'help' migrants receive from households in Ghana: the assistance they receive in making their trip abroad (Section 3.2.1). We also examine the financial contributions migrants make to the household in the form of remittances (Section 3.2.2) and bring these two forms of remittances in relation to each other by investigating the extent to which remittance sending (material and non- material) is related to the support migrants received from the household for their migration journey. Finally, Section 3.2.3 looks into the non-material ways households and migrants maintain contact.

3.2.1. Household contributions to migrant's departure(s)

Migrants often received some form of support from their households in Accra and Kumasi for their migration trip. In this section we study the prevalence of support migrant household members received, and the types of support they received. Support was defined as provding the migrant with assistance with preparations for the trip, or by paying for the trip, or both.

Figure 4. Migrant members receiving support from the household



Note: weighted percentages; *Time of survey*: 2008; *Population*: Ghanaian migrant members (n=1,272)
Interpretation: Of all Ghanaian migrant spouses, 31% received support from the household for their migration

Receiving support from family members seems not to be common practice. Looking at 1,272 migrants in our sample, only 18.6% indicated having received support. A difference between male and female migrants exists when it comes to receiving support. Of all male migrants, 16.0% received support, compared to 22.9% of all female migrants. This shows that even though in general, most migrants do not receive support from their households, being a female migrant increases the chances of having received some form of assistance with their migration trip.

We also examine whether the support varies by migrant household member. We make a distinction between spouses, children, siblings, other relatives, and non-kin (this latter category is small, and should thus be interpreted with caution). As Figure 4 reveals, not all household members are equally supported. Children are most likely to be supported (47%) followed by spouses (31%). Therefore, while support for migratory trips from the household is low, those that receive such support are overwhelmingly from the nuclear family. However, extended family members are not necessarily excluded from support. Of all siblings, 10% received support and of all other relatives, 11% received support with their migration trip.

Overall, the low number of migrants receiving some form of support suggests, contrary to some conceptualizations in migration theories of remittances as a ‘pay back’ for the initial investments families make in a migrant’s trip, that remittances are sent by migrants for other reasons. To investigate this further, we turn to remittance sending behaviour of migrants to see whether those that did receive support are more likely to remit.

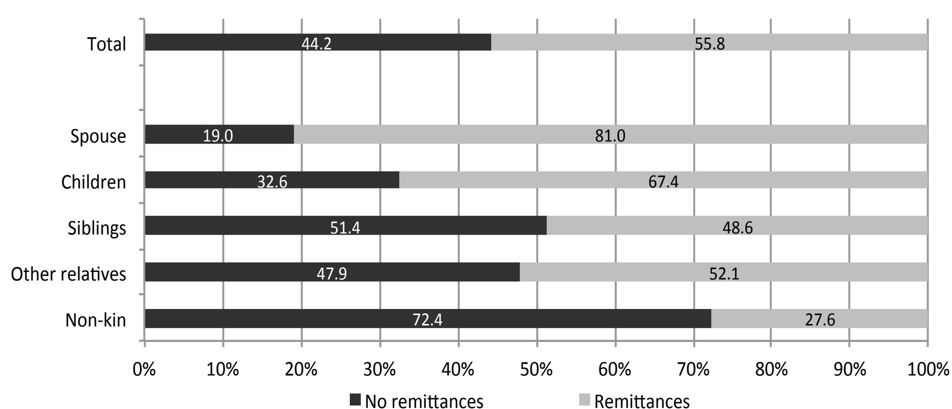
3.2.2. Economic Remittances

Sending remittances is a more common phenomenon than receiving support. A little more than half of all migrants sent monetary remittances to the household in the past 12 months (55.7% versus the 18.6% who received support). While female migrants were more likely to have received support, there is little difference in remittance sending behaviour between migrant men and women, although slightly more female

migrants sent remittances compared to male migrants: 56.3% and 55.4%, respectively.

When we examine remittance behaviour by the type of relationship (Figure 5), we see some clear differences. Spouses are the most likely to remit (81%), followed by children (67%). Even though nuclear family members are the most likely remitters, the importance of remittances from extended family members should not be underestimated. Almost half of all siblings abroad remitted (49%) and just over half of all other relatives did so (52%).

Figure 5. Migrant members sending remittances to the household



Note: weighted percentages; *Time of survey*: 2008; *Population*: Ghanaian migrant members (n=1,272)
Interpretation: Of all Ghanaian migrant spouses, 81% sent remittances to the household in the past 12 months

Sending monetary transfers is not the only form of remittances. Migrants often also send remittances in the form of goods, so-called 'in-kind remittances'. In our case, in-kind remittances are sent a little less than monetary remittances, but still a large share of migrants has remitted in-kind (41.5%). When it comes to sending in-kind remittances, we do again see a gender difference. Female migrants are more inclined to remit in-kind than their male counterparts: 49.4% and 36.8%, respectively.

Next we examine the magnitude of remittances as measured by the share of household expenditures they accounted for. When we look at both monetary and in-kind remittances simultaneously, we find that in total, 64.7% of all migrants remitted monetary and/or in kind in the past 12 months.[1] Remittances from male migrants accounted for more than twice as large a share of household expenditures (35.5%) than female migrants (17.2%). While men seem mostly to account for either a large or a small share, women tend more to account for a moderate share. Spouses and children are most likely to remit large shares of the household expenditures (57.6%

[1] There is only a little difference between male and female migrants in this respect: 62.3% of the male migrants remitted and 68.7% of the female migrants remitted.

and 33.0%, respectively). This notwithstanding, remittances from extended family are also often substantial: 22.5% of the siblings and 21.7% of the other relatives remit large shares.

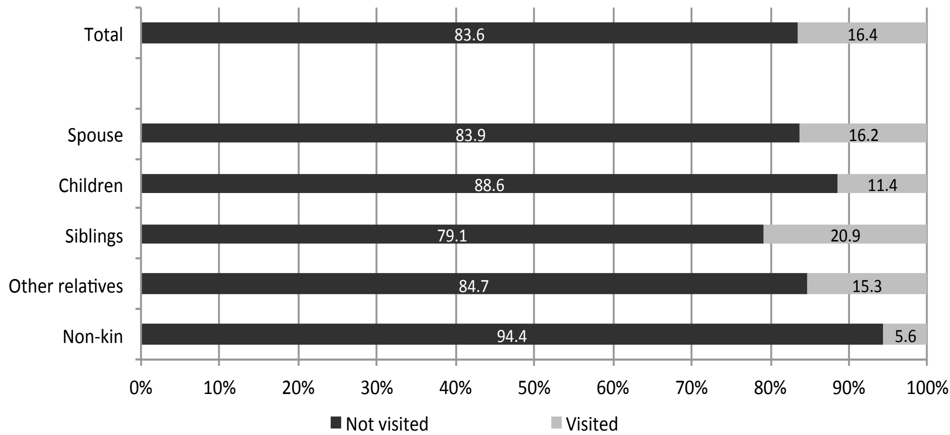
We now examine whether migrants who received support are also those more likely to send remittances. Even though households received remittances from more migrants than those who they supported with their migration, it still seems that supporting a migrant significantly increases the chance of receiving remittances. Of all migrants who received support, 71.2% remitted, and this relationship is significant ($p \leq 0.00$). Yet, having received support is not a necessary condition for migrants to send remittances, as 64.1% of the migrants who did not receive support, also remitted. Again, referring to migration theories that conceptualize remittances as 'pay back' or 'risk insurance' for a houshold's initial investment made in a migrant's trip, it seems that more is involved in explaining remittance sending behaviour than household investments in facilitating migration of a household member.

3.2.3. Contact between Ghanaian households and migrants

Migrants are in contact with their households 'back home' in a variety of ways, in addition to sending monetary or in-kind remittances. We examine here visits migrants make to their households, and the means and frequency of contact while they are abroad. Through these contacts, migrants and their households can share information, ideas, norms and ways of doing things that affect the way families function across borders. This non-material exchange is therefore important to take into account when studying the functioning of families across borders.

Ghanaian migrants seem to be quite mobile in terms of the visits they make to their home country. Despite the large distances and considerable costs, about one in six households received a visit from a migrant member within the past 12 months. Male migrants are more likely to have visited the household (17.8%), compared to females (14.1%). Looking closer at the different relationships (Figure 6), we see that only 16% of spouses visited the household, and 11% of children. The difference between nuclear and extended family members is small when it comes to visiting: 21% of the siblings visited the household, and 15% of the other relatives.

Figure 6. Migrant members visiting the household



Note: weighted percentages; *Time of survey*: 2008; *Population*: Ghanaian migrant members (n=1,272)
Interpretation: Of all Ghanaian migrant spouses, 16.2% visited the household in the past 12 months

Contact can also be maintained through telephone calls and virtual communication. In fact, only 1.0% of all migrants did not have contact with the household in the past 12 months. Contact by means of telephone calls is by far the most common way of staying in touch. Other means of contact, such as mail or Internet, are less used. This reflects the more developed cellular telephone infrastructure in Ghana as well as the fact that many migrants overseas are not conversant with computer technologies. This contact is also often of a regular and frequent nature: 40.3% is in contact at least once a week, and 34.9% at least once a month. Spouses (80.5%) and children (52.2%) are in most often in weekly contact. Although a little less, extended family members are also in contact on a weekly basis: 27.1% of siblings and 39.7% of other relatives.

In summary, Section 3.2 has shown that despite the fact that most migrants did not receive support in any form for their migration trip, a large majority did send remittances, either monetary or in-kind. This remittance sending behaviour is not only restricted to nuclear family members. Even though spouses and children seem to be the most likely remittance senders, the majority of siblings and other relatives also remit. In the same vein, while nuclear family members remit the largest share of household expenditures, most extended family members also remit large or moderate shares.

Supporting a migrant with his or her trip is no guarantee for receiving remittances, but there is a significant positive relation, in that the majority of those who were supported are also sending remittances. To some extent, this might reflect a 'pay-back' mechanism between the migrant and his/her family, but not exclusively so, since many migrants did not receive support, but did send remittances. Finally, while visiting is rare, staying in touch seems important, especially through (cellular) telephones.

4. Family Life: Ghanaian Migrants in Europe

In the previous section, we focused on families in the Ghanaian cities of Accra and Kumasi, and their relations to migrants. In this section, we will focus on Ghanaian migrants in two European countries: The Netherlands and the U.K.. First, we will evaluate the prevalence and composition of transnational nuclear families of Ghanaian migrants in Europe, using the European biographic surveys from The Netherlands and the U.K. Secondly, we will examine whether transnational nuclear families differ from nuclear families that live together in the European country, concerning some key demographic, socio-economic and migration experience characteristics. In this section, we will compare the characteristics of the different family arrangements.

Table 1. Overview key demographic characteristics, by survey country

	Full sample		Netherlands		U.K.		
Variable	f	%	f	%	f	%	Sig.[+]
Sex (% men)	410	51%	263	53%	147	52%	-
Age (mean)	410	42.15	263	42.92	147	42.02	-
Education							
Primary	410	27%	263	19%	147	28%	**
Secondary	410	8%	263	46%	147	3%	***
Tertiary	410	65%	263	35%	147	69%	***

[+] Sig. = significance, based on t-tests: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10
Note: unweighted numbers & weighted percentages; *Time of survey:* 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in Europe (n=410)
Interpretation: In total, we have 410 Ghanaian migrants in our European sample, and of those, 51% are male. There is no significance difference between the proportion males in The Netherlands and the U.K.

In Table 1 above we show an overview of three key demographic characteristics: sex, age and education, for the total migrant sample and for each survey country separately. These characteristics are important to keep in mind when analyzing the results reported below. Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands and in the U.K. are similar in terms of sex and age but they significantly differ in terms of education, with migrants in the U.K. being more highly educated than those in The Netherlands. For a full overview of demographic, socio-economic and migration characteristics, and the differences between Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands and the U.K., see Table 1A in Appendix 1.

4.1. Living arrangements of Ghanaian migrants in Europe

Although the full complexity of African family forms is difficult to take into consideration in quantitative research, in the analysis that follows we use a typology of nuclear families to allow for the different forms that these can take across nation-state borders. The typology is based on the combination of two variables: 1) the whereabouts of the interviewed migrant's children, sub-divided in four categories, and 2) the whereabouts of the interviewed migrant's spouse, again sub-divided in four

categories.[2] For an overview of the distribution of these two variables, see Table 2A in Appendix 2. Combining these two variables, we arrive at the following typology shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Transnational nuclear family arrangements typology

Ego's Spouse*	Ego's Children** No child(ren) <18	Cohabitating child(ren) (always unified)	Cohabitating child(ren) (after period of separation)	Non-Cohabitating child(ren)
No spouse	1. No nuclear family	2. Totally unified family	3. Reunified	5. Transnational family
Cohabitating spouse *(always unified)***	2. Totally unified family	2. Totally unified family	3. Reunified	4. Partially transnational family
Cohabitating spouse (after period of separation)	3. Reunified	3. Reunified	3. Reunified	4. Partially transnational family
Non-cohabitating spouse	5. Transnational family	4. Partially transnational family	4. Partially transnational family	5. Transnational family

* Informal unions are not considered, i.e. "spouse" always refers to marriage, and conversely, "no spouse" also includes those with an informal union; ** We look at cohabitation/non-cohabitation of ego with his/her spouse from the time they were married (i.e. not from the time the union started); *** Children over-18 (and their whereabouts) are not considered, i.e. "no child" also includes those with only children over-18; In the case of migrants with children under-18 who are living at different locations, we consider this migrant as "non-cohabiting" when at least 1 child under-18 is not living with ego.

Box 2. Explanation of the typology of Table 2

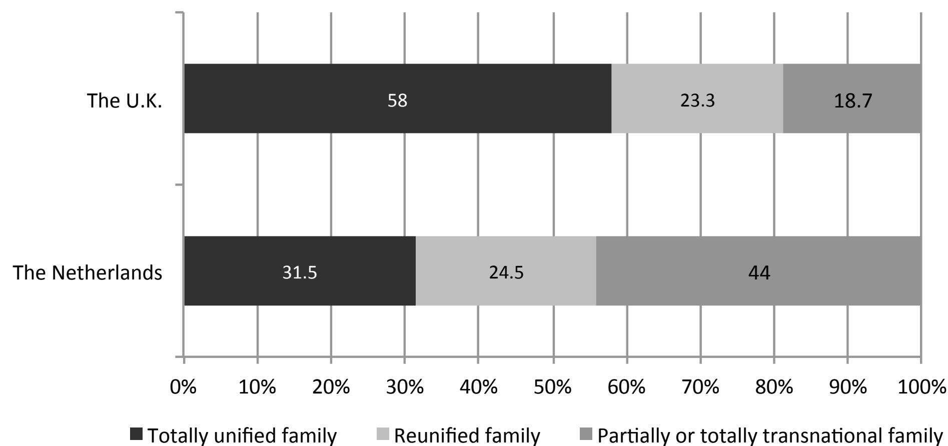
Some immigrants in Europe are neither married, nor do they have children, and as such are considered as having (1) "no nuclear family". When migrants have a spouse and/or children, and they are all living with them at the time of survey, without having lived apart, they are considered a (2) "totally unified family". Migrants who live together with their spouse and/or children at the time of survey, after having lived apart transnationally for at least one year, are considered a (3) reunified family. When migrants have either their spouse or at least one of their children not living with them at the time of survey, or when migrants have none of their family members living with them at the time of survey, they are considered a (4) "partially or totally transnational nuclear family".

In Table 2B, in Appendix 2, we present an overview of this typology for all Ghanaian migrants and by survey country. It is important to note that 26.5% of the total sample of migrants in the U.K. and The Netherlands do not have a nuclear family (Table 2B) as they are neither married, nor have children. The remainder of the analysis below will focus on migrants who are in a family. Because of the differences between the two survey countries, and in order to better interpret the findings, we focus the analysis of this section on the two countries separately. Additionally, because we are concentrating on all types of transnational families, and to the extent they differ from

[2] In the total sample of Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands and the U.K., there are 7 polygamous unions in 2008. None of them consist of marriages with more than 1 spouse. In the case of polygamy with one marriage and one union, the marriage is included in our analysis as these are the only ones that would qualify for reunification under U.K. and Dutch family reunification laws. In the case of polygamy where both unions are informal, we include only the last relationship in the analysis.

unified or reunified families, we have combined the category *partially transnational family* with *transnational family*. The definition of a transnational family thus is *that at* least *one of the nuclear family members lives in a country different from the migrant*. In Figure 7 below we present the distribution of these three family types for migrants in The Netherlands and the U.K. While Ghanaian families in the U.K. are predominantly totally unified, those in The Netherlands are for the majority transnational. Below we will further explore what characterizes such family types.

Figure 7. Distribution of family arrangement typology of Ghanaian migrants in Europe

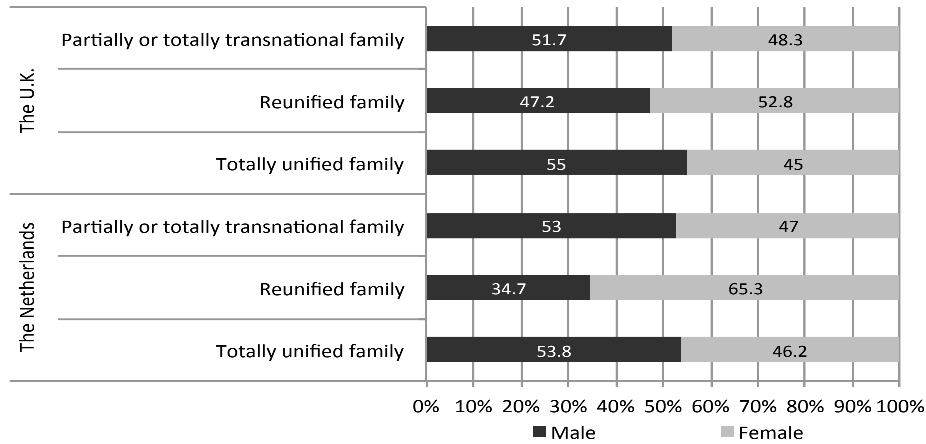


Notes: weighted percentages & unweighted numbers
Time of survey: 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: In total, 32% of the Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands live in a totally unified family, and 58% of the Ghanaian migrants in the UK

4.2. Characteristics of Ghanaian transnational families in Europe

The migrants who live in these different family types may be characterized by their demographic, socio-economic and migration experience characteristics. In this section, we will examine the demographic characteristics – age and sex – of the Ghanaian migrants at the time of survey, and whether these differ significantly by family type. Figure 8 shows that in both The Netherlands and the U.K., migrants in totally unified families are mostly male. Similarly, the majority of migrants in partially or totally transnational families are male. Women, instead, are in greater proportions in reunified families. For The Netherlands, the difference in female migrants in reunified families compared to the other two family types is statistically significant ($p \leq 0.10$).

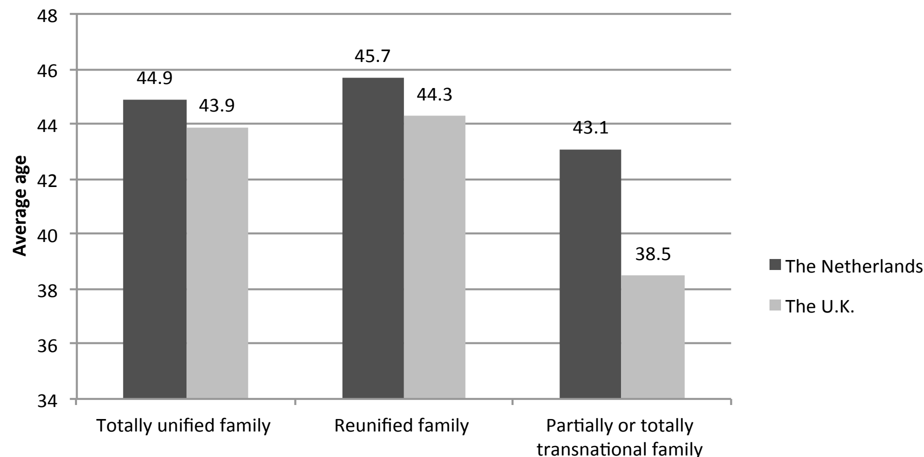
Figure 8. Family arrangement typology, by sex of the migrant



Notes: weighted percentages & unweighted numbers
Time of survey: 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: In the Netherlands, 54% of the Ghanaian migrants in a totally unified family are male

Figure 9 shows that in both countries, migrants in transnational families are on average younger. In The Netherlands, migrants in transnational families are significantly younger than migrants in reunified families ($p \leq 0.10$). In the U.K., migrants in transnational families are significantly younger than both unified and reunified families ($p \leq 0.05$). In general, migrants in The Netherlands are on average older than migrants in the U.K. across all three family types. [3]

Figure 9. Family arrangement typology, by average age of the migrant



Notes: weighted percentages & unweighted numbers; *Time of survey:* 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: In the Netherlands, the average age of Ghanaian migrants in a totally unified family is 44.9 years

Next, we examine whether migrants in these family types differ according to the following socio-economic characteristics: education, occupational status

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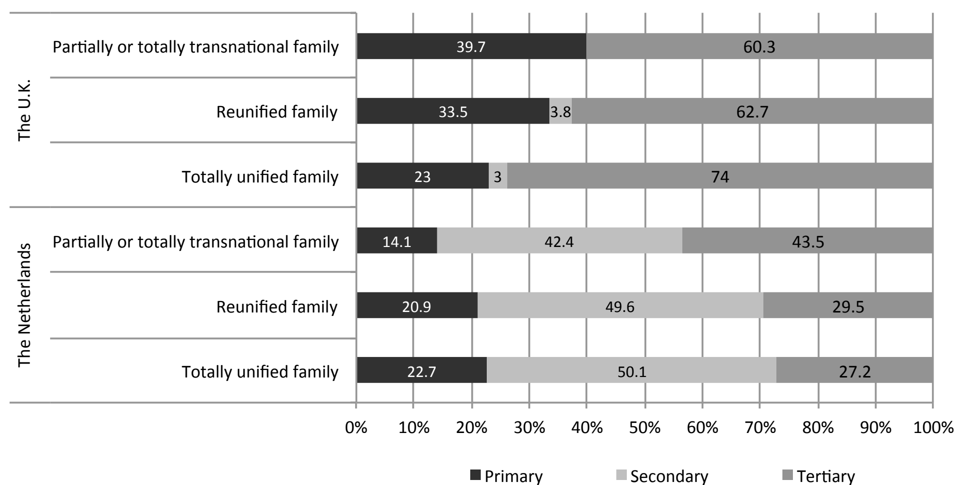
[3] Migrants without a nuclear family, as defined above in section 4.1 are not included in these comparisons.

(International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI)) and subjective wealth status. For education, we examine the highest level completed by the migrant in the year of the survey (2008). We distinguish between *primary*, *secondary*, and *tertiary* education. In Figure 10, we see that the most highly educated are predominantly living in transnational families in The Netherlands while they are living in totally unified in the U.K. While the differences in education between the family types are statistically significant in The Netherlands (those who live in transnational families are significantly more likely to have obtained tertiary education than those in totally unified families ($p \leq 0.05$)), in the U.K., none of the differences between family types are significant.

Figure 10. Family arrangement typology, by educational level of the migrant

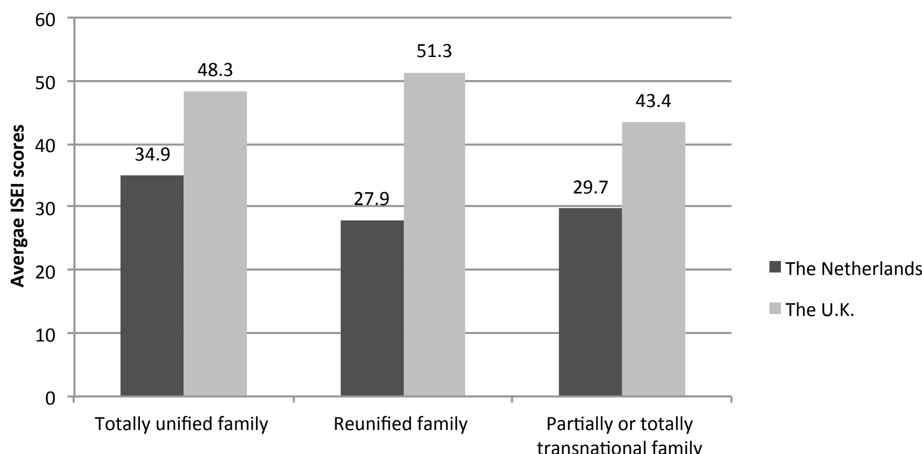


Notes: weighted percentages & unweighted numbers
Time of survey: 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: In the Netherlands, 23% of Ghanaian migrants in a totally unified family have primary education

It is important to keep in mind the structure of the respective Ghanaian populations in the two European countries that was shown in Table 1, where there are large differences in their educational background. In the U.K., the migrant population seems very polarised in terms of education: there are more migrants that are highly educated, and simultaneously, also more migrants with no or primary education. In The Netherlands, most migrants have a secondary education.

Occupational status is measured using the ISEI-index. ISEI is a continuous indicator of occupational status, with index scores derived from education and income, and with higher scores referring to higher occupational status. Among migrants in The Netherlands, the range of ISEI scores lies between 16 and 71, and in the U.K. between 16 and 76. We use average ISEI-scores per family type to examine differences. Figure 11 shows that migrants in The Netherlands have, on average, much lower ISEI scores compared to migrants in the U.K. Furthermore, reunified families have the lowest ISEI score of all three family types in The Netherlands, while they have the highest ISEI score in the U.K. The difference between families in The Netherlands is statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$) whereas in the U.K. it is not.

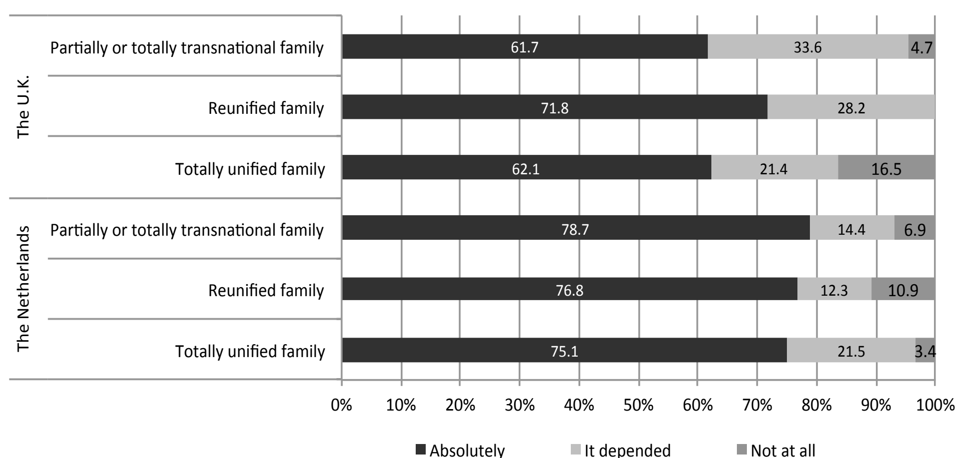
Figure 11. Family arrangement typology, by ISEI score of the migrant



Notes: weighted percentages & unweighted numbers; *Time of survey:* 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: In the Netherlands, the average ISEI score of Ghanaian migrants in a totally unified family is 34.9

Migrants were asked to give a subjective evaluation of their wealth status by answering whether they felt that they currently had enough to live on. The response categories were *'Yes, absolutely', 'It depended*', or *'No, not at all*'. Figure 12 shows that most migrants in both countries feel they absolutely have enough to live on. For both countries, the differences between family types are small and not significant. While migrants in the U.K. are higher educated and have higher occupational status on average, they appear to be less satisfied with what they have to live on, probably reflecting the higher costs of living in the U.K. with respect to The Netherlands.

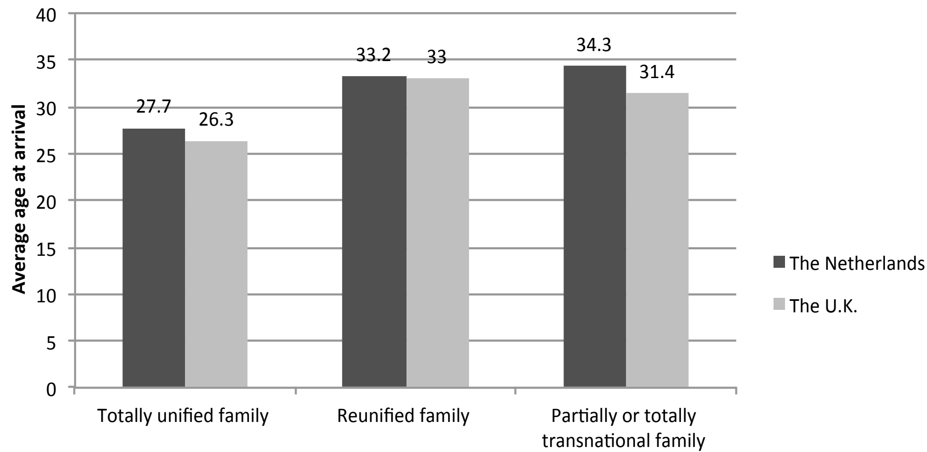
Figure 12. Family arrangement typology, by subjective wealth status of the migrant



Notes: weighted percentages & unweighted numbers
Time of survey: 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: In the Netherlands, 75% of Ghanaian migrants in a totally unified family feel that they have absolutely enough to live on.

We look at migration experience as the age when entering the current country of residence, the duration of the current stay abroad, and legal status in the country of current residence. Figure 13 shows that migrants in unified families arrived in The Netherlands or the U.K. when they were quite young, especially compared to migrants in the other two family types: on average 27.7 years for migrants in The Netherlands ($p \leq 0.01$) and 26.3 for migrants in the U.K. ($p \leq 0.01$). We also see that migrants in general, arrived in The Netherlands at a later age than in the U.K., and this between-country difference is significant (Table 1A in Appendix 1).

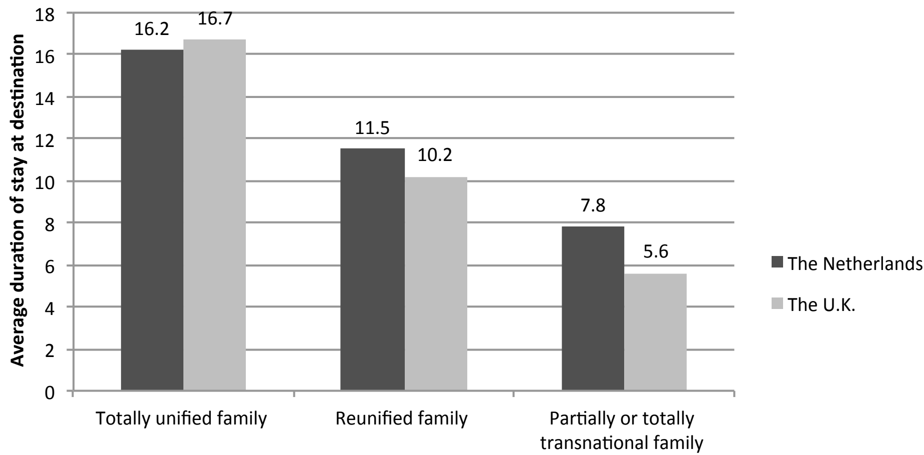
Figure 13. Family arrangement typology, by age at arrival in Europe



Notes: weighted percentages & unweighted numbers; *Time of survey:* 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: In the Netherlands, the average age at arrival of Ghanaian migrants in a totally unified family is 27.7 years

Figure 14 shows the duration of the current stay in The Netherlands and the U.K. On average, migrants have been in The Netherlands longer than in the U.K. (Table 1A in Appendix 1). And if we look at the differences between family types, we see that those in unified families have, on average, the longest stay compared to the other family types. Transnational families are at the current destination for the shortest amount of time. For both The Netherlands and the U.K., these differences between family types are significant ($p \leq 0.01$).

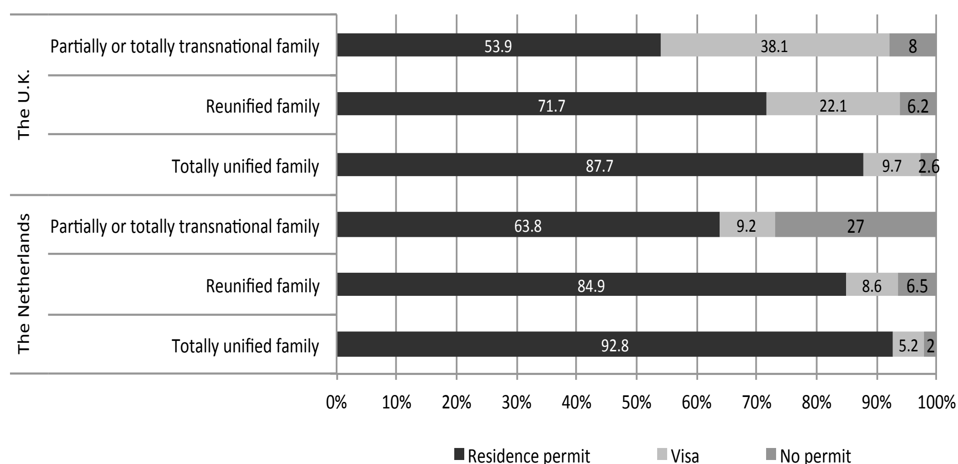
Figure 14. Family arrangement typology, by duration of stay in Europe



Notes: weighted percentages & unweighted numbers
Time of survey: 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: In the Netherlands, the average duration of stay of Ghanaian migrants in a totally unified family is 16.2 years

We investigate migrants' legal status by distinguishing between 1) migrants who do not need a permit (e.g. due to citizenship), or who have a longer-term permit (such as a residence permit), 2) migrants who have a temporary permit, such as a visa, and 3) migrants who have no residence permit at all. Figure 15 shows that in both countries, the majority of migrants do not need a residence permit or they have a long-term permit. Similarly, we see in both countries that there is a difference between family types, and that migrants in a transnational family are more likely to have no residence permit. In The Netherlands, this is even 27% of those in a transnational family. These differences are significant ($p \leq 0.01$). Generally, we see that more migrants in The Netherlands lack a permit compared to the U.K., yet in the U.K it is more common to have a temporary permit, such as a visa.

Figure 15. Family arrangement typology, by legal status of the migrant



Notes: weighted percentages & unweighted numbers; *Time of survey:* 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: In the Netherlands, 93% of Ghanaian migrants in a totally unified family have a residence permit

Finally, for each country, we explored these relationships in a logistic regression, which assesses the likelihood of being in a transnational family. For this purpose, we combined the categories 'totally unified' and 'reunified' families, and compared them with transnational families. In this regression, we explore several relationships simultaneously, which allows us to see the relative importance of each characteristic while controlling for the others.[4]

We modeled the odds of being a transnational family for the pooled sample (uniting the data from the two countries together) in models 1, 2 and 3 and for each survey country separately (models 4-9). The results are presented in Table 3 below. For both the pooled sample and the survey country samples, we examined three models, and with each model, more variables were included in a step-wise fashion. As described above, our dependent variable is a dichotomous variable that represents whether or not a migrant is part of a transnational family. The first models show the independent variables age (single years) and gender (1 is male, and 2 is female). In the second model, we included education (measured as years of schooling), occupational status (measured using ISEI-scores), and subjective wealth status. In the third model, we added migration specific characteristics: period of arrival at current destination (single years) and residence permit (with three options: a residence permit/citizenship, a visa, or no residence permit/citizenship (i.e. undocumented). Finally, in the pooled sample, we also included a variable representing the country of survey.

In Table 3 we see that Ghanaian migrants living in a transnational family are on average younger, less educated, and have a lower occupational status. However, these differences are not significant compared to migrants that are not in a transnational family, while controlling for all characteristics (see Model 3 in Table 2). Most Ghanaian migrants in a transnational family arrived at a later period compared to those in a unified or reunified family. They also are more likely to have no residence permit. Unified and reunified families on the other hand arrive at a younger age, reside for a longer period of time in the country of destination and more often have legal status. Since Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands and in the U.K. showed different trends in our analyses above, we also examined the odds of being in a transnational family for the two countries separately, as is shown in Models 4-6 for The Netherlands, and Models 7-9 for the U.K. Here we see that in The Netherlands, an undocumented status is strongly related to being in a transnational family, while this association is not significant in the U.K., although we need to be careful in interpreting this result as the lack of significance might be due to a small sample size (in the U.K., we have only few migrants with undocumented status).

In both countries, we see that migrants in a transnational family arrived more recently. In The Netherlands, transnational family life is associated with a higher education, while we see the opposite relationship for the U.K. Although our data cannot fully explain the differences between these two countries, based on our findings we can speculate that migrants in The Netherlands are less inclined to bring their families

[4] These analyses show relationships but not causality. Few variables are used to account for small sample sizes. We include only period of arrival at current destination and exclude duration of stay and age at arrival, since these three variables are too strongly correlated.

over due to the difficulties children might have in school – not speaking the Dutch language – the fact that it is more difficult to have one's educational credentials acknowledged in The Netherlands than in the U.K. (Mazzucato, 2008a), and the difficulty with which family formation and reunification requirements can be met in The Netherlands.

Table 3. Logistic estimation of being in a transnational family – Ghanaian migrants in Europe (odds ratios shown)

	Pooled sample			The Netherlands			U.K.		
	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4	Model5	Model6	Model7	Model8	Model9
Female	0.63**	0.75	0.72	0.60**	0.74	0.77	0.79	0.90	0.73
	(0.16)	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.18)	(0.26)	(0.33)	(0.41)	(0.54)	(0.63)
Age	0.96***	0.96***	1.02	0.96***	0.96**	1.01	0.94***	0.96	1.12
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.10)
Education		1.01	1.03		1.04	1.08*		0.93	0.87*
		(0.04)	(0.05)		(0.05)	(0.06)		(0.08)	(0.09)
Occupational status		0.97***	0.99		0.97***	0.99		0.98	0.96
		(0.01)	(0.01)		(0.01)	(0.02)		(0.02)	(0.03)
Subjective wealth									
Absolutely (ref.)									
It depended		0.78	0.85		0.70	0.85		1.22	0.78
		(0.30)	(0.38)		(0.34)	(0.48)		(0.81)	(0.72)
Not at all		1.24	1.00		2.19	0.69		0.71	1.19
		(0.83)	(0.85)		(2.08)	(0.82)		(0.87)	(1.77)
Period of arrival			1.16***			1.13***			1.62***
			(0.04)			(0.04)			(0.28)
Residence permit									
RP (ref.)									
Visa			0.88			0.36			1.98
			(0.49)			(0.32)			(1.96)
No RP			3.97***			6.73***			0.17
			(2.17)			(4.36)			(0.28)
Country									
U.K. (ref.)									
Netherlands			2.18**						
			(0.94)						
Constant	3.60***	8.29***	0.00***	4.68***	5.19*	0.00***	4.29	12.03	0.00***
	(2.25)	(8.14)	(0.00)	(3.67)	(6.17)	(0.00)	(5.31)	(23.47)	(0.00)
Observations	289	228	223	189	154	153	100	74	70
ll	-181.7	-140.3	-112.4	-125.7	-100.4	-81.95	-47.03	-37.39	-21.50
df_m	2	6	10	2	6	9	2	6	9
chi2	10.66	16.05	65.12	6.642	8.348	44.10	6.024	4.988	29.74

Notes: Results are unweighted; standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

5. Transnational Families: Family Formation and Reunification

In this section, we take a closer look at the relationship between international migration and family formation. We examine how transnational families are formed and to what extent they reunify. We study couples and parent-child dyads separately. The starting point of our analyses in this section is the time of the first migration to the current destination of these migrants, which is either The Netherlands or the U.K.

5.1. Marriages

In this first section, we examine transnational marriages (i.e. marriages whereby partners are separated by international borders) from the perspective of Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands and the U.K. Since marriage is a criterion for eligibility for family reunification, we include only married couples (i.e. we exclude here those that are engaged in informal unions). As mentioned, we examine couples at the time of their first migration to The Netherlands or the U.K.

First, we show in Table 4 below the distribution of marital status of Ghanaian migrants at the **time of their first migration to the current destination**, either The Netherlands or the U.K.[5] When departing for either The Netherlands or the U.K., less than half of the migrants were married (41.8%), with little difference between migrants in The Netherlands (46.2%) and migrants in the U.K. (41.1%). A significant proportion was in a consensual union (26.7%). In the U.K., this relationship status is much more common: 28.8% compared to 12.8% in The Netherlands. For migrants in The Netherlands, divorce rates are higher: 9.7% compared to 1.8% in the U.K.

Table 4. Marital status at the time of their 1st migration to current country of destination

			Survey country			
	Total		The Netherlands		The U.K.	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Single	130	27.5	88	30.0	42	27.2
Union	80	26.7	36	12.8	44	28.8
Married	172	41.8	115	46.2	57	41.1
Divorced	24	2.9	21	9.7	3	1.8
Widowed	4	1.1	3	1.3	1	1.0
Total	410	100	263	100	147	100

Notes: unweighted frequencies & weighted percentages
Time of survey: 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: Of all Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands, 27.5% was single at the time of their first migration to The Netherlands

Since we are interested in the extent to which migrants have transnational marriages and the extent to which families reunify, we will first examine the living arrangements of the married migrants when they left Ghana for The Netherlands or the U.K. Table 5 shows that in a many cases, the spouse was already at destination (48.8%), with hardly a difference between countries (47.1% for The Netherlands and 49.1% for the U.K.). Migrating together is not very common (11.3%), but more common in the U.K. (12.5%) than in The Netherlands (4.5%). While in The Netherlands, it is much more common for migrants to arrive there and leave their spouse in Ghana: 42.4% of the migrants in The Netherlands did so, compared to 26.8% for migrants in the U.K.

[5] In the case of polygamous marriages we included first marriages in the category “marriage”. When the first relationship is a union, and the second a marriage, we include the marriage. In the case of polygamous unions (so no marriages), we include the first union in the category “union”.

Table 5. Living arrangements with spouse at the time of their 1st migration to current country of destination

	Total		Survey country: The Netherlands		The U.K.	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Married, spouse in Ghana	66	29.1	51	42.4	15	26.8
Married, moved with spouse	12	11.3	5	4.5	7	12.5
Married, spouse already at destination	80	48.8	52	47.1	28	49.1
Married, spouse somewhere else	14	10.8	7	5.9	7	11.7
Total	172	100.0	115	100.0	57	100.0

Notes: unweighted frequencies & weighted percentages
Time of survey: 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: Of all Ghanaian migrants that were married at the time of their first migration to The Netherlands, 27.5% was single at the time of their first migration to The Netherlands (see Table 3), 29.1% left their spouse in Ghana

Migration processes can be highly gendered. Table 6 shows some strong gender differences, as well as differences between countries.[6] Migrating and leaving your spouse behind is more common practice among male migrants. This difference is especially prevalent in The Netherlands, where 69.9% of the male migrants arrived leaving their spouses behind, and 30.1% of the female migrants did so. In the U.K. too, male migrants (57.3%) are more likely to leave a spouse behind than female migrants (42.7%). At the same time, reunifying with your spouse at destination is more common for female migrants: 78.0% of the female migrants in The Netherlands migrated to reunify with their husbands at destination, and 69.2% in the U.K.

Table 6. Living arrangement with spouse at the time of their 1st migration to current country of destination, by sex of the migrant

	The Netherlands: Male		The Netherlands: Female		The U.K.: Male		The U.K.: Female	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Spouse left-behind in Ghana	36	69.9	15	30.1	8	57.3	7	42.7
Moved with spouse	2	57.1	3	42.9	4	62.1	3	37.9
Spouse already at destination	13	22.0	39	78.0	7	30.8	21	69.2
Spouse somewhere else	2	30.5	5	69.5	4	61.0	3	39.0
Total	53	44.4	62	55.6	23	45.3	34	54.7

Notes: unweighted frequencies & weighted percentages
Time of survey: 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: Of all Ghanaian migrants that were married at the time of their first migration to The Netherlands (see Table 3), and who left their spouse behind in Ghana (see Table 4), 69.9% were male.

5.2. Couples: time to reunification

In this section, we examine the time couples spent living apart, and the proportion of couples that reunite at destination. Kaplan-Meier survival functions are used to examine spousal separation from the perspective of migrants in The Netherlands and the U.K., seeing to what extent Ghanaian migrants reunify with their spouse in Europe, and how long they stay separated from their spouses.[7] Using the Kaplan-

[6] These findings seem to point to interesting differences between both gender and between countries, but the U.K. results especially should be read with great caution due to the small sample size.
[7] All Kaplan-Meier estimates in this Chapter are shown using sampling weights.

Meier survival estimates to examine the proportion reunited, we show plots with the *failure functions*, which consist of a series of horizontal steps of increasing magnitude. This line represents the proportion reunited, and this proportion increases as time passes, since more migrants reunite.

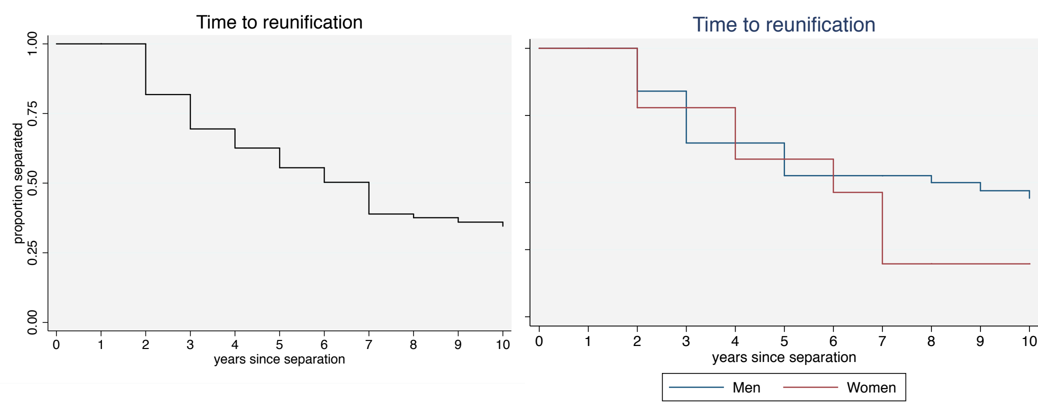
In order to carry out this analysis, we defined our sample by looking at who is 'at risk' for reunification. Therefore, the analysis was restricted to Ghanaians currently living in Europe, who, at the time they started their current migration, were married and had their spouse living in Ghana or in another country (n = 82, 22 *failures*). The event is defined as *reunification*, when couples start living together at the current destination. When individuals have not reunited before the occurrence of the year of survey (2008) or when they divorce or become widowed, they are no longer considered in the analysis. In the plots shown below, we present the total proportion of reunited migrants after a 10-year period of separation.

Figure 16 shows the time to reunification in current destination country for Ghanaian migrants in Europe (The Netherlands and the U.K.) with their left-behind spouses in Ghana. After 5 years, 45.5% of the couples reunited in Europe. And after 10 years, we see that in total 65.5% reunified, and % of the migrants never reunited with their spouse.

In Figure 17 below we examine the same probabilities, but distinguish by sex of the migrant. Both men and women follow similar patterns, although more male migrants have reunited with their spouse, but this difference is not significant.

Figure 116. Time to reunification between Ghanaian couples

Figure 17. Time to reunification between Ghanaian couples, by sex of the migrant

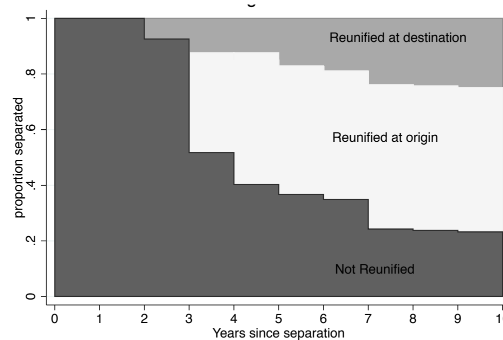


While the above figures concentrate on reunification in the country of destination, we also investigate whether reunification also takes place in the origin country (Figure 18). To examine this, we add to our sample, those migrants who have returned to Ghana and who, at the time they started their first migration to the U.K. or The Netherlands, were married and had their spouse living in Ghana or in another country (n = 103). The event is defined as *reunification*, when couples start to live together at *either* the destination country or the country of origin. For each situation, we

estimated a separate survival function, using a *competing risks* approach. When we examine reunification at origin, reunification at destination is censored, and vice versa.

In Figure 18 we see the difference between Ghanaian migrants who reunite at destination and those who reunite at origin. After 10 years, 25.4% of Ghanaian migrants reunited at destination, while 51.9% reunited in Ghana. This shows that reunification at the destination might not always be the preferred or feasible option, and reunification can also occur through the migrant returning home.

Figure 118. Time to reunification, for destination and origin country reunification



5.3. Children

In this section, we will examine characteristics of parent-child separations and reunifications. Since children need to be 18 years or younger to be eligible for family reunification, we focus on parents with children 0-18 at the time of their first migration.[8] First, Table 7 below shows how many parents had children under and above 18 in our sample, at the **time of their first migration to the current destination**, either The Netherlands or the U.K. On average, most migrants migrated to their current destination without having children (60.8%). This holds especially for migrants currently in the U.K. (62.9%), but less for migrants in The Netherlands (47.7%).

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[8] This means that migrants with no children and migrants with *only* children over-18 are excluded here. Migrants with *at least* 1 child under-18 are included.

Table 7. Parental status at the time of their 1st migration to current destination

	Survey country					
	Total		The Netherlands		The U.K.	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
No children	234	60.8	141	47.7	93	62.9
Only children <18	69	15.0	48	19.9	21	14.3
Only children >18	88	21.3	58	23.7	30	20.9
Both children <&> 18	19	2.9	16	8.7	3	2.0
Total	410	100.0	263	100.0	147	100.0

Notes: unweighted frequencies & weighted percentages
Time of survey: 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: Of all Ghanaian migrants, 60.8% started their first migration to current destination while having no children

Next, we examine the living arrangements of migrants and their children under-18. Table 8 shows that most migrants leave their children in Ghana (75.9%). In The Netherlands, more parents reunited with their children (8.9%, compared to 0.0% in the U.K.), while in the U.K. it is more common for migrants to bring along their children when migrating (25.8%, compared to 10.6% for The Netherlands).

Table 8. Living arrangements between parents and children at the time of their first migration to current destination

	Survey country					
	Total		The Netherlands		The U.K.	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
All children (0-18) Ghana	53	75.9	38	77.8	15	71.3
At least 1 child (0-18) at destination	4	6.4	4	8.9	0	0.0
At least 1 child (0-18) elsewhere	3	2.7	2	2.6	1	3.0
At least 1 child (0-18) moved with ego	9	15.0	4	10.6	5	25.8
Total	69	100.0	48	100.0	21	100.0

Notes: unweighted frequencies & weighted percentages
Time of survey: 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands and the UK (n=410)
Interpretation: Of all Ghanaian migrants, who had children under-18 at the time of their first migration to The Netherlands, 75.9% left their children in Ghana

5.4. Children: time to reunification

In this section, we will examine the time parents and children spent living apart, and the proportion of parent-child dyads that reunify at destination. Kaplan-Meier survival functions will be used to examine parent-child separation from the perspective of migrants in The Netherlands and the U.K., seeing to what extent Ghanaian migrants get reunified with their child (0-18) in Europe, and how long they stay separated from their children (0-18).[9]

The analysis was restricted to Ghanaians currently living in Europe, who, at the time they started their current migration, left their children behind in Ghana. The sample was further restricted in that these children were under-18 at the time the migration started. Each parent-child dyad is one observation (n = 226, 41 *failures*). The event is defined as *reunification*, with parent-child dyads living together at the current

[9] From this point onwards, 'children' refers to migrants' biological children under-18 only.

destination. When parents have not reunited with their children before the occurrence of the year of survey (2008) or when the child has deceased, they are treated as censored. In addition to censoring with the child's death or when year of survey occurs, when the child reaches the age of 18, it is also treated as censored, since s/he is no longer eligible for official family reunification. Similar to the plots on couple reunification presented above, we show in the plots below the total proportion of reunited migrants after a 10-year period of separation.

Figure 119. Time to reunification between Ghanaian parent-child dyads

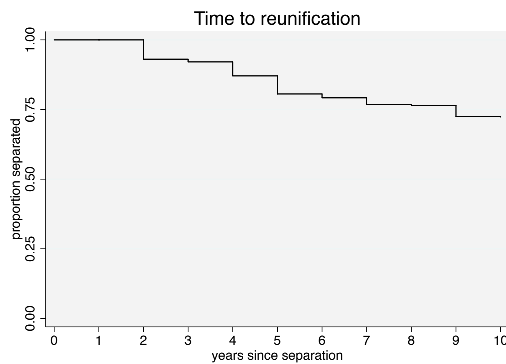


Figure 20. Time to reunification between Ghanaian parent-child dyads, by sex of the migrant parent

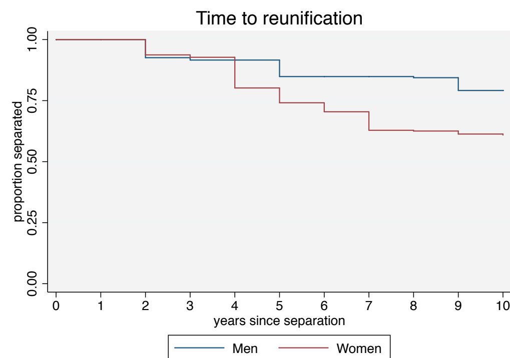
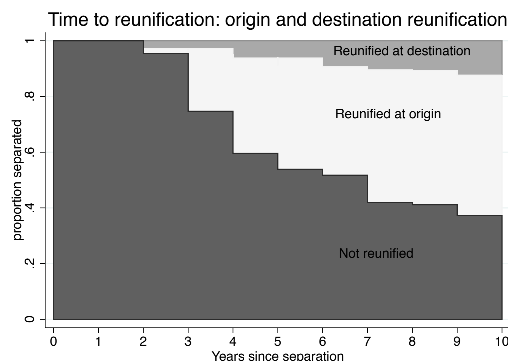


Figure 19 shows the time to reunification in current destination country for Ghanaian immigrants in Europe (The Netherlands and the U.K.) with their left-behind children in Ghana, who were under-18 at the time of the migrant's departure. After 5 years, 19.4% reunified with their child, and after 10 years 27.7%. Figure 20 shows the same unconditional probabilities, but by sex of the migrant parent. Women (mothers) were somewhat more likely to reunite with children compared to fathers, but this difference is not significant ($p \leq 0.15$).

Again, reunification can take place both at country of origin and destination. So also for parent-child dyads we examined these competing 'risks', by including returned migrants from the two survey countries, The Netherlands and the U.K, see Figure 21. We see that 12.4% of migrant parents reunified with their child at destination, compared to 50.4% that reunited at origin.

Figure 21. Time to reunification between Ghanaian parent-child dyads, at destination and at origin



6. Conclusion & Discussion

The extended family has always been important in Ghanaian family systems. Even though changes in the roles of the extended family exist due to modernization processes, the extended family continues to play an important role in marriages, child raising and in the rights and responsibilities that govern familial relationships. Ghanaian families have also been characterized by geographic dispersal. Even at the nuclear family level, it is common for family members to live dispersed due to high levels of internal migration and also to the practices of child fostering and social parenthood where children are placed outside the household to be raised by extended family members. With this as background, it therefore comes as no surprise that almost half of the urban households surveyed had at least one member overseas. These members were for a large part from the extended family, attesting to the importance of extended family members in understanding relationships between migrants and households back home. Nuclear family members were particularly important in terms of receiving support for their migratory trips yet, more people than those supported actually sent remittances to the household. This is an important finding in light of migration theory because it indicates that not all, and not even the majority of migration behaviour (remittances and goods received) can be explained as a 'pay back' strategy. Most migrants moved without help from their households yet they send remittances irrespective of whether they received help to migrate. Transnational family life, therefore, takes place within a diversity of relationships within the extended family.

A second part of our analysis focused on the nuclear family as this is the unit at which family reunification can take place according to European migration laws. We investigated if, when and where families separate geographically and reunify. There are several salient findings in this regard. First, of all Ghanaians who migrated to The Netherlands and the U.K. in their lifetimes, until the year of the survey, 2008, 54.2% were not married and therefore do not fall under the category of migrants who can potentially move as a family or reunify after one member migrates. This indicates that family migration/reunification may not be as important a factor as it is sometimes made out to be.

Second, it is important to take into account when migration takes place in the life course. It seems that if migration takes place early in life, migrants are more likely to form a family in the host country, while migrants who migrate when they are older mostly have formed families already, and their migration results in either reunified or transnational families.

Third, our data show that the destination of migration makes a difference for family life. Being in a transnational family is more common amongst Ghanaians in The Netherlands than in the U.K. In the U.K., being in a transnational family is related to low levels of education and having arrived recently. In The Netherlands, migrants in transnational families have higher educational attainment and have also arrived more recently. In both countries we see a relation between legal status and family types, with those being undocumented or with a visa (short term permit) mainly in transnational families, indicating that migrants – and especially migrants in the U.K. – who are in transnational families are more vulnerable.

There are two contending explanations to the differences we find between countries. Ghanaian migrants in the U.K. have different characteristics, with the U.K. attracting more highly skilled migrants. The U.K. also offers greater educational possibilities for migrants' children as the official language in Ghana is English allowing children to more easily enter at different levels of the U.K. educational system. It may therefore be a more preferable solution for Ghanaian migrants to try to migrate together as a family or to reunify in the U.K. In The Netherlands, where Ghanaian migrants are on average less educated than their U.K. counterparts and where the school system is in Dutch, it may be preferable for them to operate as transnational families. This explanation highlights that migrants *have choices* and they may make different decisions given the different contexts they are in.

A second explanation is that migrants' choices are constrained by laws in the receiving countries. In both the U.K. and The Netherlands the past decade has been one of increasing restrictions in the form of more and higher criteria one has to meet to be able to reunify with one's family. In both countries, we see that migrants in transnational families have arrived within the past decade. The short time that they have been in the country might not have given them yet the chance to settle and reunify, but it could also be a reflection of increasing restrictions imposed by both countries. Family reunification rights are tied to a series of conditions, most importantly the legal status of the sponsor and their ability to provide a secure income and housing. This makes family migration polices socially selective, particularly excluding more vulnerable groups from the right to family reunion and formation. This explanation highlights that some migrants, especially the most newly arrived and most vulnerable, may *not have a choice*.

Finally, focusing on those that do reunite, our multi-sited data collection allows us to look at where families reunite. This has been previously undocumented as most research on reunification only focuses on the migrant receiving-country side. Importantly we show that reunification between migrants and their spouses and/or children can happen also in the migrant sending-country side.

Further research is needed to investigate these relationships. It is important to study the changes over time in terms of both period effects (for example do we see differences when family reunification policies were less strict or not?) as well as life course effects (can we better disentangle how migration interacts with life events such as marriage and getting children).

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Appendix 1. Key characteristics of Ghanaian migrants in Europe

Table 1A. Overview of the key characteristics of Ghanaian migrants in Europe

Variable	Full sample f	Full sample %	Netherlands f	Netherlands %	U.K. f	U.K. %	Sig.[+]
Labor force status							
Studying	410	9%	263	7%	147	14%	**
Economically active	410	78%	263	81%	147	71%	**
Unemployed	410	7%	263	8%	147	4%	*
Other inactive[‡]	410	6%	263	4%	147	11%	***
Occupational Status							
Unemployed	406	23%	261	19%	145	29%	**
Higher-level	406	9%	261	4%	145	18%	***
Skilled employee	406	25%	261	23%	145	30%	*
Unskilled employee	406	34%	261	45%	145	15%	***
Employer/Self-employed	406	9%	261	9%	145	8%	-
Occupational status – ISEI (mean status)	308	36.09	204	30.12	104	47.79	***
Subjective well-being							
Yes, absolutely	404	73%	259	77%	145	65%	***
No, not at all	404	9%	259	8%	145	10%	-
It depended	404	18%	259	15%	145	25%	***
Age at arrival current stay (mean age)	409	29.92	263	30.74	146	28.46	***
Duration of current stay (mean years)	409	10.43	263	9.77	146	11.62	**
Sending remittances (% yes)	409	88%	263	87%	147	89%	-
Motivation for current migration							
Family	400	29%	255	29%	145	28%	-
Work	400	14%	255	15%	145	12%	-
Study	400	17%	255	11%	145	28%	***
Better Life	400	27%	255	30%	145	21%	*
Other	400	14%	255	16%	145	11%	-
Support for the migration trip							
By parents	410	22%	263	19%	147	26%	-
By spouse	410	25%	263	24%	147	25%	-
By siblings	410	13%	263	14%	147	11%	-
By other	410	23%	263	22%	147	26%	-
Residence permit							
Need no permit	405	39%	261	36%	144	42%	-
Visa	405	19%	261	11%	144	32%	***
Residence permit	405	35%	261	41%	144	24%	***
Have no permit	405	15%	261	20%	144	6%	***
Other permit	405	3%	261	0%	144	7%	***

Other inactive includes the response categories "Homemaker"/"Retired"/"Other inactive"; [+] Sig. = significance, based on t-tests: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Note: unweighted numbers & weighted percentages; *Time of survey:* 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in Europe (n=410)

Interpretation: In total, we have 410 Ghanaian migrants in our European sample, and of those, 9% are currently studying. In The Netherlands, this is 7%, and in the U.K., this is 14%. This difference is significance.

Appendix 2. Living arrangements of Ghanaian migrants in Europe

Table 2A. Living arrangements of Ghanaian migrants in Europe, children & spouses

Ego's children	f	%	Ego's spouses	f	%
Full sample					
No children (under-18)	200	43.2%	No spouse	187	45.7%
Cohabiting children (always unified)	123	39.3%	Cohabiting spouse (always unified)*	98	31.3%
Cohabiting children (after period of separation)	23	6.6%	Cohabiting spouse (after period of separation)	66	14.8%
Non-cohabiting children abroad	64	11.0%	Non-cohabiting spouse abroad	59	8.2%
Total	410	100.0%	Total	410	100.0%
Netherlands					
No children under-18	128	40.7%	No spouse	113	39.3%
Cohabiting children (always unified)	70	30.5%	Cohabiting spouse (always unified)	53	20.3%
Cohabiting children (after period of separation)	15	7.2%	Cohabiting spouse (after period of separation)	47	19.6%
Non-cohabiting children	50	21.6%	Non-cohabiting spouse	50	20.8%
Total	263	100.0%	Total	263	100.0%
U.K.					
No children under-18	72	43.6%	No spouse	74	46.7%
Cohabiting children (always unified)	53	40.7%	Cohabiting spouse (always unified)	45	33.0%
Cohabiting children (after period of separation)	8	6.5%	Cohabiting spouse (after period of separation)	19	14.0%
Non-cohabiting children	14	9.3%	Non-cohabiting spouse	9	6.3%
Total	147	100.0%	Total	147	100.0%

* We look at cohabitation/non-cohabitation of ego with his/her spouse from the time they were married (i.e. not from the time the union started)

Notes: weighted percentages & unweighted numbers; *Source*: MAFE-Ghana data; *Time of Survey*: 2008; *Population*: Ghanaian immigrants in UK/NL (n=410)

Interpretation: 43.2% of Ghanaian migrants have no children (no children at all, or no children under-18), and 39.3% have cohabiting children.

Table 2B. Family arrangements typology of Ghanaian migrants in Europe

Ego's Spouse*	Ego's Children** No child(ren) <18	Cohabitating child(ren) (always unified)	Cohabitating child(ren) (after period of separation)	Non-Cohabitating child(ren)
Full sample				
No spouse	121 (26.5%)	31 (11.2%)	8 (2.4%)	27 (5.6%)
Cohabitating spouse *(always unified)***	27 (7.4%)	61 (21.2%)	4 (0.8%)	6 (2.0%)
Cohabitating spouse (after period of separation)	28 (6.1%)	20 (4.8%)	9 (3.3%)	9 (0.6%)
Non-cohabitating spouse	24 (3.2%)	11 (2.1%)	2 (0.2%)	22 (2.8%)
Netherlands				
No spouse	74 (22.6%)	15(6.3%)	5 (2.6%)	19 (7.8%)
Cohabitating spouse *(always unified)***	15 (5.2%)	32 (12.9%)	3 (1.5%)	3 (0.8%)
Cohabitating spouse (after period of separation)	19 (6.2%)	14 (6.8%)	5 (1.9%)	9 (4.7%)
Non-cohabitating spouse	20 (6.7%)	9 (4.5%)	2 (1.2%)	19 (8.4%)
U.K.				
No spouse	47 (27.1%)	16 (12.0%)	3 (2.3%)	8 (5.3%)
Cohabitating spouse *(always unified)***	12 (7.7%)	29 (22.5%)	1 (0.6%)	3 (2.1%)
Cohabitating spouse (after period of separation)	9 (6.1%)	6 (4.4%)	4 (3.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Non-cohabitating spouse	4 (2.7%)	2 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (1.9%)

* Informal unions are not considered, i.e. "spouse" always refers to marriage, and conversely, "no spouse" also includes those within an informal union; ** We look at cohabitation/non-cohabitation of ego with his/her spouse from the time they were married (i.e. not from the time the union started); *** Children over-18 (and their whereabouts) are not considered, i.e. "no child" also includes those with only children over-18; In the case of migrants with children under-18 who are living at different locations, we consider this migrant as "non-cohabiting" when at least 1 child under-18 is not living with ego.

Note: unweighted numbers & weighted percentages; *Time of survey:* 2008; *Population:* Ghanaian migrants in Europe (n=410)
Interpretation: In total, we have 410 Ghanaian migrants in our European sample, and of those, 26.5% have no spouse and no children. 11.2% have children with whom they are living together, but they do not have a spouse.