The influence of flexible working arrangements on the change of residence in the Lombardy region

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Abstract

The paper explores the probability of knowledge workers (KW), living in Lombardy, to relocate in the medium-term (5 years), considering the impact of flexible working arrangements (FWA) and "twin transitions". Data come from a MOBI-TWIN Horizon project survey involving 566 Italian workers and from the REMAKING Horizon project.

The survey aimed to gather responses from approximately 7,000 participants at the EU level and over 1,000 respondents per pilot region (NUTS 2). The pilot regions included Lombardy (Italy), Central Macedonia (Greece), Groningen (The Netherlands), Castilla-La Mancha (Spain), and North and East Finland (Finland). By December 2023, a total of 11,622 complete responses were collected. These responses were cleaned and geocoded with assistance from Mobi-Twin consortium members, who assigned regional codes. After quality checks and data cleaning, the final sample size was reduced to over 9,000.

The survey was developed based on a literature review of green and digital transitions and spatial mobility. The project partners created a standardized questionnaire to assess citizens' mobility decisions regarding life events, types of mobility, regional attractiveness, and factors causing immobility. Input from all partners helped refine the questionnaire, which was then translated from English into Greek, Finnish, Italian, Spanish, and Dutch by the pilot region partners.

The survey's findings provide valuable insights into the factors influencing mobility, both in traditional and non-traditional contexts. By considering factors such as digitalisation and green transition elements, the research offers a nuanced understanding of how work arrangements, quality of life, and regional characteristics affect relocation decisions. Moreover, the data gathered helps policymakers identify key drivers of mobility and immobility, providing a foundation for informed decision-making. These

insights can also guide future initiatives aimed at improving regional attractiveness and supporting flexible work policies to enhance citizens' well-being and overall satisfaction with their living conditions. The results of this survey can also serve as a reference for future studies on spatial mobility, helping to track evolving trends and the impact of ongoing societal shifts.

The survey consists of close-ended questions, including multiple choice and Likert scale options, divided into seven sections plus an introductory "Welcome note":

1. **Demographic Data**: Questions cover socio-economic background such as income, household composition, employment status, and urban/rural residence, along with cultural, regional, and technological factors.

2. **Residence History**: Questions explore current and past residences, migration patterns, preferences, and the effects of work arrangements and COVID-19.

3. **Intention to Relocate**: This section evaluates factors influencing relocation, such as career prospects, quality of life, and social networks.

4. **Traditional Mobility Factors**: Focuses on how factors like employment, education, social circles, and amenities influence mobility, in comparison to non-traditional influences like green and digital transitions.

5. **Digitalisation Factors**: Investigates the role of digitalisation in mobility, covering internet access, social networks, e-services, e-commerce, and remote work options.

6. **Green Transition Factors**: Looks at how green transition factors, such as air quality, renewable energy, green spaces, infrastructure, and community support, influence mobility.

7. **Attitudes Towards Life Satisfaction and Corruption**: Focuses on societal values, ethical governance, and transparency.

The survey data was analyzed using an ordered logit model, with the dependent variable being the willingness to change residence in the medium term (5 years). This variable is categorized on a Likert scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).

Independent variables include flexible working arrangements in the past 12 months, flexible remote work support (part of the Mobi-Twin digital transition dataset), life satisfaction, worker age, gender, number of children, and daily commuting time. To address multicollinearity, flexible working arrangements and remote work support were estimated in separate specifications. As a robustness check, remote work support was

also estimated as a dummy variable, where 0 represents low importance for flexible working arrangements and 1 represents moderate to high importance.

The findings reveal that 49.29% of workers assign a very low probability to relocating in the next five years, 13.43% assign a low probability, 15.55% assign a moderate probability, 11.66% assign a high probability, and 10.07% assign a very high probability.

The sample mainly consists of knowledge workers, as shown by the high percentage of respondents with a tertiary education. Only 5.48% of workers lack a high school diploma, and 42.76% hold one. Over 50% of the respondents have at least a bachelor's degree, with 17.14% holding a bachelor's degree, 29.68% a master's degree, and 4.95% a PhD.

Occupational classifications, based on the ISCO-08 system, show the following distribution: 10.46% are managers; 15.43% are professionals; 8.16% are technicians and associate professionals; 44.33% are clerical support workers; 10.11% are service and sales workers; 0.35% are skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers; 6.38% are in crafts and related trades; 0.71% are plant and machine operators; 3.9% are in elementary occupations; and 0.18% work in armed forces occupations.

The results of the ordered logit model show that the main determinants for residential relocation are: (i) being a young and cisgender man; (ii) having less than 2 children; (iii) experiencing low life satisfaction in the current location, (iv) and high commuting time. The willingness to change residence is connected to FWA, and the remote working support offered by the destination area, while the green transition does not show any significance. Furthermore, a cluster analysis was conducted to identify distinct typologies of 370 respondents based on their relocation preferences, revealing specific profiles of workers who are more inclined to move to particular types of locations, such as capital metropolitan regions, large cities, small towns, and rural villages.

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