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Conflict and Migration Decision: Empirical Evidence from the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon

Giyoh Gideon Nginyu[1], Dobdinga Cletus Fonchamnyo[2], Gildas Dohba Dinga[1] & Exidor Ngala Ndifon[3]

[1] Ph.D Candidate, Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, The University of Bamenda, Cameroon

[2] Associate Professor, Vice Dean in Charge of Teaching and Programming, The University of Bamenda, Cameroon

[3] MSc Candidate, Chester Business School, University of Chester, UK

Correspondence: Giyoh Gideon Nginyu, Ph.D Candidate, Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, The University of Bamenda, Cameroon.

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Abstract

Numerous pathways exist to explain people's inherent motive to migrate from one place to another and multiple factors may be at play simultaneously. The objective of this work was to explore the role of income, psychological and family ties in the non-migration decision in the English speaking regions of Cameroon. Based on data collected primarily from 510 individuals regarding migration decisions and it's determinant based on a Snowball approach. It was found that individuals with low income had higher tendency of migrating. It was also found that people refused to migrate despite the risk because of family ties. On the other hand, psychological factors have no significant effect on migration decision. Policy recommendations are also discussed.

Keywords: conflict, migration decision

1. Introduction

Human migration involves the movement of people from one place to another with intentions of settling, permanently or temporarily, at a new location. The movement often occurs over long distances and from one country to another as well as internally (within the same country). Migration is basically for improvement in welfare and mainly depend on pull factors from the destination. However, forced migration, that is, forced movement or an involuntary, evacuation or relocation of persons, which does not depend on the people desire to migrate, is now a major problem in the world both internally and internationally. Force migration can be as a result of conflict or environmental hazards. The world migration report (WMR, 2020) posit that the scales and pace of migration is extremely difficult to predict given that it is intertwined on the one hand with sensitive events like conflict, economic crisis, severe instability and on the other hand, long term trends like technological advancement and demographic changes.

The management of international and regional governance of forced migration is one of the major complex global problems of our time. The complexity increases in the context of Africa due to the multiple forms and trends of internal displacement, and its plentiful argumentative impacts on various aspect of life and economic activities. The large number of forced migrants and their grim life situation makes it even more problematic. In Africa, forced migration takes varied forms and trends. Apart from forced migrants due to conflicts, there are spontaneous migrations of peasant farmers as a result of drought and seasonal traditional migrations of Agro-pastoralists communities in search of water and grazing lands (Maru, 2011).

There has recently been an increase of interest in the likely impact of conflict on population movements. Despite the lack of precise figures, on the number of people displaced by conflict, there is no doubt that some areas of

the world are less habitable due to conflict. The number of conflict has remained stagnating with a very high conflict migration. Most of this conflict areas are African countries, making Africa the most fragile compared to other parts of the world (Center for Systemic Peace, 2014). Conflict therefore forces people to migrate locally as IDP's or international as refugees.

IDPs being within their sovereign state, are under the responsibility of their state of origin. It is therefore quite important that each state with IDPs should take the necessary measures for the wellbeing and hopefully, the subsequent return of IDPs to their roots, if possible, or assist in their settlement and integration in a new area (Kampala Convention, 2009, Art 5(4)). States therefore have the full responsibility of taking measures to protect and assist IDP's within its territory, the Kampala Convention also stipulates that, states have the obligation to cooperate with each other and to respect the mandates of the African Union, the United Nations Organization and the role of international humanitarian organizations, so as to provide assistance to the internally displaced persons (Kampala Convention, Art 5(1, 2, 3). We can therefore understand from the above-mentioned articles of the Kampala Convention that there is a clear obligation for states to facilitate and ease the inter-relation between its organs and non-state stakeholders in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons and for other states to provide assistance to refugees.

While some empirical evidence for the relationship between conflict and migration remains inconclusive (Lozano-Gracia N., Piras, Ibáñez, & Hewings, 2012), (Schon J., 2019), (Segal, 2021), it is in fact the case that policymakers, public institutions, and scholars often argue that conflict is expected to lead to migration. Despite the growing idea of conflict leading to migration, it is however not in all cases that people facing conflict do migrate. The inconclusiveness of the literature about the effect of conflict on migration is due to the fact that, most of this works focus on already migrated population. It is therefore important to equally focus on the left back population in order to investigate their non-migration decision.

Similarly to climate induced migration, some of these individuals may be considered "trapped" population because they lack the means to relocate or "stayers" because they have the means to relocate but do not move because of family ties, place attachment among other socio-economic factors (Black & Collyer, 2014). "Trapped" population and "stayers" are the two main extreme groups of non-migrants. Non migration is often treated as neither a default state when migrants are not feasibly "strapped" nor "stayers".

Recent literature claims that more affluent people, who can bear more of the expenses and challenges of migration, also migrate for better economic opportunities. Conflict-migration as well as climate migration literature explains that people migrate for better livelihood options like, sustained food supply, to diversify the risk of losing their lives among others (Lozano-Gracia N., Piras, Ibáñez, & Hewings, 2012) (Schon J., 2019) (Segal, 2021). As earlier mentioned above, not everyone in conflict zones do migrate, therefore there is both a push factor (sustained food supply, to diversify the risk of losing their lives among others) from the conflict zone and a pull factor (family ties, place attachment and other socio-economic factors) in conflict zones, making conflict induced migration a very context-specific process. Despite the numerous literatures on conflict induced migration, there is yet no conclusion on the subjectivity and effect of social, economic as well as environmental factors on conflict induced migration around the world.

Traditional migration models are based on "pull" theories and predict that the main driver of migration is income differentials between the point of origin and the destination (deprivation approach). People with low income always have a higher tendency to migrate (Harris & Todaro, 1970) (Massey, et al., 1993) as they seek to improve their standard of living. This theory seems not to take into consideration the push factors of migration like environmental changes and conflict. There is therefore no conclusive evidence to support this as there are other incentive for migration as migration does not necessarily lead to relatively higher wage returns (Flippen, 2013). Advocates of "push" theories of migration argue that the propensity to migrate is not necessarily highest among the poorest communities; it is in fact highest in communities with the highest social inequality (Stark & Yitzhaki, 1988) (Stark, 1984) (Stark & Taylor, 1991). In the context of conflict-related migration just like climate related migration, household-level approaches appear to be more pertinent. Migration is identified as a risk diversification strategy for households and therefore a push factor. Stress from conflict is considered as a constraint for the household to engage in migration, since it limits household resources.

Empirically, in the context of sub-Saharan Africa in particular, numerous pathways exist to explain people's inherent motive to migrate from one place to another and multiple factors may be at play simultaneously. While researchers are in agreement that migration may be driven by both "push factors" in the origin such as social inequality and poverty, and "pull factors" in the destination such as better economic opportunities and social safety, the migration literature has not yet come to a compromise on whether the push nor the pull factor has a greater influence on migration decision or non-migration decision or they reinforce each other as well as their subjectivity around the world as regard to conflict induced migration is concerned.

Cameroon is one of the countries that is currently facing a high level of fragility and migration due to conflict

with mass displacement of persons due to the "Boko Haram" insurgency in the North and due to the crisis in the North West and South West regions, which is our main focus in this academic work. Even though a great number of people have migrated internally and internationally, it can be seen that many people have not been able to migrate despite the increasing tension of the crises.

Despite the prevalence of these conflicts, many people still find it difficult to migrate. It is therefore not clear if the non-migration decision along this area is due to whether they are "trapped" or "stayers". It is for this reason that this study therefore concentrates on the environmental non-migration decision in the North West and South West region of Cameroon. The objective of this work is therefore to examine the socio-economic and demographic factors affecting non-migration in the North West and South West Region?

2. Literature Review

Lee's Theory **(**1966**)** of intervening opportunities attempts to describe the likelihood of migration. Its hypothesis posits that likelihood is influenced most by the opportunities to settle at the destination, less by distance or population pressure at the starting point.

Mallick et al. (2020) Investigated the relationship between socio-ecological systems (SES) and livelihood conditions and determined how a sustainable livelihood influences non-migration decisions of people living at risk. The field study employed a mixed-methods approach in five villages in southwest coastal Bangladesh. Findings revealed that livelihood options differ across SES settings and that (non-)migration aspirations mostly depend on livelihood adaptation options which shape the individual's sustainable livelihood status in the face of future disaster risk. Thus, understanding the SES settings will help in advocating for livelihood options regarding non-migration aspirations for people at risk.

Reuveny (2007) used a descriptive analysis to argue that it is possible to predict the effects of climate change on migration by exploring the effects of environmental problems on migration for the pass decades. To him, people can therefore adapt to these problems by either staying in place or doing nothing, leaving the affected areas or staying in place and mitigating the problems. The choice between these different options will depend on the extent of problems at hand as well as the mitigation capabilities of the choice maker. People living in lesser developed countries may be more likely to leave affected areas, which can cause conflict in receiving areas.

Schon (2019) explained role of violence on civilian migration decisions by arguing that violence fits within broader considerations of motivation and opportunity to migrate. During violence, people trigger post-traumatic growth that delays narrative ruptures and the subsequent migration that they motivate. He used around 170 structured questionnaires administered to Syrian refugees in Turkey to test this argument. Using a descriptive analysis approach, respondents who did not witness violence (early motivation) left their homes seven months earlier, on average. Respondents with opportunity left their homes averagely one full year earlier. Respondents who both did not witness violence and had opportunity left their homes averagely one and a half years earlier. Using the Cox proportional hazard model, he found that the respondents migrated earlier in conflict if they had both early motivation and opportunity.

Nathalie (2013) studied the micro-level variability in migration during armed conflict in Nepal. His analysis was based on a multi-dimensional model of individual out-migration which examines the social, economic, as well as the political consequences of conflict and how community organizations condition the experience of these consequences and systematically alter migration patterns. Detailed data on individual behaviour and violent events during the Maoist revolution in Nepal and multi-level event-history analysis was used to test the model. He found that community organizations reduced the effect of conflict on outmigration by providing resources that helped people cope with danger of conflict, as well as with the social, economic as well as political consequences of the conflict. The evidence suggested that conflict caused the population to be systematically redistributed in a way that will probably affect its future socio-demographic composition and the extent of the redistribution depending on the resources available in each community.

Lozano-Gracia et al., (2009) analysed modelling the interregional migration behaviour of individuals internally displaced by conflicts by investigating why households forced to leave their residence because of violent conflicts in Colombia. The results found shed light on the main determinants of what they called the *journey to safety.* Violence appears to be one of the most relevant pushing factors together with the absence of institutions and the dissatisfaction with the provision of basic needs. For regions with very extreme violence, individuals appear to be willing to relocate to far distant locations. On the destination side, most of the populated places are more attractive as well as paces with a sufficient level of basic needs.

In the same light, Nudé (2010) investigated the determinants of migration for 45 sub–Saharan African countries from 1965 to 2005. The outcome indicated that the key determinant of migration is arm conflicts and lack of jobs.

Mallick et al. (2020) explained that individual migrate to improve their quality of life, and therefore, adopts

strategies to cope with the adverse situation of their livelihood. To them, the decision to migrate or to stay is one of such strategies to fight unexpected disturbances to their livelihoods and diversify risk. Their objective was therefore to analyse the relationship between socio-ecological systems and livelihood conditions so as to determine to what extent to which sustainable livelihood influences non-migration decisions of people living at risk zones. Their field study employed a mixed-methods approach the coastal regions of Bangladesh. Their findings revealed that livelihood options differ across socio-ecological systems settings and that (non-)migration aspirations mostly depend on livelihood adaptation options which shape the individual's sustainable livelihood status in the face of future disaster risk.

According to Mallick & Schanze (2020) Millions of people impacted by climate change really want to remain in a given area, these aspirations and respective capabilities need more attention in migration research and climate adaptation policies. Residents at risk zones may voluntarily stay, as opposed to being involuntarily trapped due to lack of resources to migrate, understanding such subjectivity if people are not migrating because they are trapped or because the voluntarily want to stay remains an issue. And this research gap remains unfilled in migration literature no matter the underlying motive of migration decision.

Within the backdrop of this identified gap that this study seeks to comprehend whether people are not migrating because they are trapped or because the voluntarily want to stay remains an issue.

3. Methodology

The data used for this study will be collected primarily by administering structured questionnaires which will be administered to individuals regarding migration decisions and their determinant. The questionnaires will be made up of close ended questions to be answered by our respondents concerning migration decisions in the North West and south west region of Cameroon among some other related questions concerning the determinant of migration decisions using a Snowball approach (nonprobability sampling technique where by existing study subjects recruit other subjects due to their acquaintances). The study area chosen is equally of essence, giving the upsurge of civil unrest in the two Anglophones regions of Cameroon since 2016.

3.1 Empirical Specification

The starting point of the model specified in this study is based on the inspiration of the Foresight frame work (Foresight, 2011). According to the framework, the decision to migrate is mainly a function of six broad categories of 'drivers' that is, Environmental (Exposure to hazard, Ecosystem services, land productivity habitability food/energy/ water security), social (Seeking education, Family/kin obligations), Economic (Employment opportunities, Income/wages/well-being Producer prices e.g. Agriculture Consumer prices), Demographic (Population size/density Population structure, Disease, prevalence), Political (Discrimination/persecution Governance/freedom conflict/insecurity Policy incentives Direct coercion), Personal/household characteristics (Age, Sex, Education, Wealth, Marital Status, Preferences, Ethnicity, Religion, Language) Intervening obstacles and facilitators (Political/legal framework Cost of moving Social networks Diasporic links Recruitment agencies Technology).

This model therefore expresses the decision to migrate (MG) as a function of its determinants. This functional relationship can be expressed as follows:

$$\mathrm{MG}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \mathrm{Env}_i + \beta_2 \mathrm{Soc}_i + \beta_3 \mathrm{Econ}_i + \beta_4 \mathrm{Dem}_i + \beta_5 \mathrm{Pol}_i + \beta_6 \mathrm{PChar}_i + \beta_7 \mathrm{Inter}_i + €_i \quad (1)$$

Env =Environmental, Soc =Social, Econ =Economic, Dem =Demographic, Pol =Political, PChar =Personal/household characteristics, Inter = Intervening obstacles and facilitators, i denotes the individual respondents.

To examine the socio-economic and demographic factors affecting non-migration, we are going to employ a probit model. This is because the dependent variable (migration decision) is a categorical variable (with two categories: migrant or non-migrant). The purpose of using this model is to estimate the factors that determines the probability of an individual's decision to migrate.

Before proceeding to the regression analysis which will help us verify our hypothesis, we first commence by presenting a summary statistics of the variables based on the administered questionnaires. The table below presents the descriptive statistics of the constructed index of different variables and other control variables employed.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Migrate	505	.624	.485	0	1

Income	510	.433	.186	0	1
Psychological stress	510	.494	.148	0	1
Family ties	510	.527	.199	0	1
Sex	510	.578	.494	0	1
Worker	510	.51	.5	0	1

Source: computed by author from field work data

From table 1, we observe that the mean of migration is 0.624 with standard deviation below the mean, this indicates that on average, about 62.4% of individuals in the conflict striking Anglophone regions of Cameroon migrate. Equally, with regards to the different index of Income, Psychology and family, they each present respective mean of 0.433, 0.494, and 0.572, with respective standard deviations all below the mean.

In order to examine the determinants of non-migration choices, we first start by constructing an index for our latten variables. This is because, each variable outcome is based on a set of question. The index is constructed using the multiple correspondence analyses (MCA) approach since the set of sub questions are categorical variables. The outcome of the MCA predicted index is presented in table 2 below.

Table 2. Percentage of MCA principal inertia

variable	**Cum percent**
Income	74.33
Family ties	69.04
psychological	76.43

Source: computed by author from field work data

The cumulative percentage of the first principal inertias from the MCA presented in table 2, Indicates that the different variables employ to construct the different index gives high explanatory power of the predicted components for income 73.33%, family ties 69.04%, and psychology 76.04%. we then normalise each index to solve the problems of possible outliers. The normalisation procedure is based Minmax method as presented below.

$$Y_i = \frac{X_i - MinX_i}{MaxXi - MinXi}$$

Where Yi is normalized variable, Xi is the variable to be normalized and MaxXi and MinXi the maximum and minimum values of Xi. The normalisation of the different variables permits each value to lie between 0 and 1. This can be seen from the maximum and minimum values presented in table 1, for the different constructed index.

3.2 Pairwise Correlations

In order to have an appropriate appraisal of the nature of the relation between the variables, we run a pairwise correlation between the different variables. The outcome of this is presented in table 3 below.

Table 3. Pairwise correlations

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) Migrate	1.000					
(2) Income	0.059	1.000				
(3) Psychological stress	0.066	0.158	1.000			
(4) Family ties	0.127	-0.143	0.159	1.000		
(5) Sex	0.034	-0.020	-0.017	-0.215	1.000	
(6) Workers	0.049	0.193	0.225	0.073	0.116	1.000

Source: computed by author from field work data

From the pairwise correlation results, we observe that there is a positive relationship between the decision to migrate or not to migrate and variables like income, psychological stress, Family ties, sex and being a worker.

3.3 Regression Analyses

With the presentation of the empirical approach adopted and the different descriptive statistics and correlation relation, we then proceed with the regression analyses.

Table 4 below presents the regression result of our work. Before interpreting the regression results, it will be important to look at the post estimation tests to see if our results are BLUE. From the result of the McFadden R2 and adjust McFadden R2 test statistics, the coefficient of the R2 and the adjusted R2 all lies between 0.2 and 0.4, this shows goodness of fit in all the different estimated results and hence implying the results are good for inferencing.

Table 4. Estimated result

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
VARIABLES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Income	-0.368***			-0.391***			-0.289***
	(0.0902)			(0.0917)			(0.0960)
Psychological Stress		-0.0722			-0.0919		-0.0668
		(0.116)			(0.116)		(0.111)
Family ties			-0.262***			-0.236***	-0.198**
			(0.0713)			(0.0734)	(0.0767)
Sex				0.00587	0.0240	0.00469	-0.0204
				(0.0439)	(0.0446)	(0.0436)	(0.0450)
Workers				0.0755*	0.0510	0.0750*	0.110**
				(0.0433)	(0.0439)	(0.0442)	(0.0449)
Constant	0.782***	0.660***	0.855***	0.750***	0.630***	0.802***	0.933***
	(0.0424)	(0.0612)	(0.0391)	(0.0536)	(0.0695)	(0.0537)	(0.0860)
Observations	505	505	440	505	505	440	440
R-squared	0.033	0.001	0.024	0.039	0.004	0.031	0.056
Prob > chi2	0.0001	0.0000	0.0003	0.0002	0.0000	0.0006	0.0000
McFadden’s R2	0. 23	0. 24	0.27	0. 40	0. 25	0. 22	0. 24
McFadden’s Adj R2	0.21	0. 23	0. 26	0. 31	0. 23	0. 21	0. 20

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: computed by author from field work data

From table 4, we present a result of the effect of income, psychological and family ties on non-migration decision in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. The results are presented in 7 different regressions to check for robustness of the results. From the table above we can conclude from the Chi2 statistics that the estimated model is good for inferencing since all the Chi2 p values are significant, we can therefore conclude that our models were globally significant.

From our results, income has a negative and significant effect on migration decisions with coefficient -0.289. this means that if income increase by 1 unit, the likelihood of migration will reduce by 0.289. This therefore mean that, individuals with low income have higher tendency of migrating. This is because low-income individuals have difficulties to live in the risk zone since the goods and services are so expensive. It is therefore important for the poor in other to look for survival strategies. Migration is therefore a means of diversifying risk for the poor.

From our results, psychological factors have a no significant effect on migration decisions with coefficient

-0.0668. this means that if psychological factor increases by 1 unit, the likelihood of migration will reduce by 0.0668. The reason why psychological factors have no significant effect on migration is the fact that most if not all the migrant have adapted themselves to the stress attached to the crises.

From our results, family ties have a significant effect on migration decisions with coefficient -0.198. This means that if family increase by 1 unit, the likelihood of migration will reduce by 0.198. This shows how important family ties mitigate the probability of migrating from the risk areas despite the risk faced. Most non-migrant refuse to migrate because of family ties such as love for their family as well as love for their place.

We also found that those who were working had higher chances of migration than those who were not working. our results were robust after permutation of the different variables of the models and checking for the robustness. Despite the fact that income place a negative role in migration decision, there is a minimum threshold of income that is needed to migrate. Those who have been working are therefore able to afford this minimum level of income which helps them to migrate. More so, those who have been working have the work experience which can help them gain employment in their destination areas.

4. Summary of Findings and Conclusion

The objective of our work was to examine the socio-economic and demographic factors affecting non-migration in the North West and South West Region of Cameroon. Specifically, to investigate the role of income, psychological stress and the role of family ties in the non-migration decision in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon.

We used the ex-post facto research design because the events captured by the variables have already occurred. The data used for this study was collected primarily by administering structured questionnaires which was administered to individuals regarding migration decisions and their determinant in the North West and south region of Cameroon.

To examine the socio-economic and demographic factors affecting non-migration, we are going to employ a probit model. This is because the dependent variable (migration decision) is a categorical variable (with two categories; migrant or non-migrant). The purpose of using this model is to estimate the factors that determines probability of an individual's decision to migrate.

From our results, income has a negative and significant effect on migration decisions. This therefore mean that, individuals with low income have higher tendency of migrating. This is because low-income individuals have difficulties to live in the risk zone since the goods and services are so expensive. It is therefore important for the poor to look for survival strategies. Migration is therefore a means of diversifying risk for the poor.

From our results, psychological factors do not significantly affect migration decisions. This is the reason why psychological factors has no significant effect on migration is the fact that most if not all the migrant has adapted themselves to the stress attached to the crises. More so how this is also due to the fact that no matter how you are stress up it does not directly make you to migrate excepts you have the income to migrate.

From our results, family ties have a negative and significant effect on migration decisions. This shows how important family ties mitigate the probability of migrating from the risk areas despite the risk faced. Most non-migrant refuse to migrate because of family ties such as love for their family as well as love for their place.

We also found that those who were working had higher chances of migration than those who were not working. our results were robust after permutation of the different variables of the models and checking for the robustness.

5. Recommendation

There's a need for policy makers, government as well as NGO's to provide financial as not everyone can't afford to migrate so as to help individuals migrate from the risk zone as well as support those who are willing to stay with financial support so that they can be able to make a living. This is because those with higher income have higher chances of migrating and them supporting them with finances can help them to migrate in other to diversify the risk of losing their life's.

It's more important for the government to look for the solution to the crises since people staying due to the fact that they love the place tan to migrate. Solving the crises peacefully can therefore increase the happiness of individuals.

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Appendix A

Descriptive Statistics

Have you change your usual place of resident?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No	195	38.2	38.2	38.2
Yes	315	61.8	61.8	100.0
Total	510	100.0	100.0	

Where have you migrated to?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Out of the Region	135	26.5	26.7	26.7
To a nearby Town	370	72.5	73.3	100.0
Total	505	99.0	100.0	
System	5	1.0		
Total	510	100.0		

In what age group are you?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<=25 years	115	22.5	22.5	22.5
26-35 years	310	60.8	60.8	83.3
36-45 years	65	12.7	12.7	96.1
46-55 years	10	2.0	2.0	98.0
Above 55 years	10	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	510	100.0	100.0	

What is your gender?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	215	42.2	42.2	42.2
Male	295	57.8	57.8	100.0
Total	510	100.0	100.0	

What is your level of education?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
First School Living Certificate	5	1.0	1.0	1.0
O-Level	10	2.0	2.0	2.9
A-level	35	6.9	6.9	9.8
Bachelor	200	39.2	39.2	49.0
Masters	235	46.1	46.1	95.1
PhD	25	4.9	4.9	100.0
Total	510	100.0	100.0	

What is your marital Status?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Single	360	70.6	70.6	70.6
Married	150	29.4	29.4	100.0
Total	510	100.0	100.0	

Were you working before the Anglophone crisis?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	250	49.0	49.0	49.0
	Yes	260	51.0	51.0	100.0
	Total	510	100.0	100.0	

Which of the following activities?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No economic activity	160	31.4	31.4	31.4
Self employed	115	22.5	22.5	53.9
Was an employee	174	34.1	34.1	88.0

Was doing voluntary services	60	11.8	11.8	99.8
Was helping in a family enterprise	1	.2	.2	100.0
Total	510	100.0	100.0	