

WAR AND MIGRATION OF RURAL YOUTH

(A Study of Ross County, Ohio)

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## War and Migration of Rural Youth

### INTRODUCTION

Young people of military and working age are rapidly being drained away from Ohio farms and from rural villages to be absorbed into urban industries and into the armed services of the United States. Concrete evidence of this rural migration has become available through a study just completed for Ross County, Ohio. Field work for this study was completed as a phase of the Ross County Rural Youth Project, an action program for young people past high school age, financed by the National Youth Administration for Ohio, and the American Youth Commission of the American Council on Education.

The present investigation is in the nature of a follow-up of the whereabouts in March, 1942, of the rural youth included in a county-wide survey of Ross County during the last 9 months of 1940. During that period interviews were held with 1,602 of the youth 18-27 years of age who were then residing in the rural areas of the County. The purpose of the original survey was to discover realistic information about young people which might be used in program planning for rural boys and girls who were beyond high school age. Several reports on the findings have been prepared. <sup>1/</sup> It was as a result of that survey that the Ross County Rural Youth Project was organized and developed under the direction of Mr. Christopher Sower, sociologist in charge. In March, 1942, a quick check was made to determine the current location of those

<sup>1/</sup> The Rural Youth of Ross County, Ohio, Their Education and Training, Department of Rural Economics and Rural Sociology, Mimeograph Bulletin No. 140, August, 1941.

The Rural Youth of Ross County, Ohio, Their Home and Family and Community Life, Department of Rural Economics and Rural Sociology, Mimeograph Bulletin No. 141, August, 1941.

The Rural Youth of Ross County, Ohio, Their Employment and Occupations, Department of Rural Economics and Rural Sociology, Mimeograph Bulletin No. 142, September, 1941.

Whither Rural Youth, Ohio Agricultural Extension Service, Mimeograph Bulletin, Columbus, Ohio, April, 1942.

The Rural Youth of Ross County, Ohio, Their Level of Living and Social Achievement. Forthcoming bulletin of The Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station.

rural youth. This check was made through personal interviews with youths and with their relatives and friends still in the County. It covered 4 of the 11 rural school districts of the County 2/ and included a sample of 560 of the survey schedules taken for individual youths in 1940. The sample was representative with respect to age, sex, farm or nonfarm residence, and social and economic status.

#### EXTENT OF MIGRATION

From lists of names of rural youth residing in Ross County in 1940 and who were then 18-27 years old, 560 were selected to constitute a representative sample for the follow-up study of migration. Of these, 250 or about 45 percent had moved away from the rural areas of the County and were residing elsewhere in March 1942. The rate of departure of these older rural youths was greater for men than for women and was greater for rural-nonfarm than for farm youths. The study indicates that one-half (50 percent) of the men, and 38 percent of the women had moved away from the farms and villages of the County. Included among the male migrants were those who entered the armed services, and those who moved to take jobs in urban industries. Of those living in nonfarm homes in 1940 it was found that 57 percent of the men and 40 percent of the women had departed. Of those who were living in farm homes 43 percent of the men and 37 percent of the women had moved away.

Table 1.- Number and Percent of Migrant Youth  
by Residence and Sex, Ross County, 1940-1942

Residence 1940	Both sexes			Male			Female		
	Total	Migrants	Percent	Total	Migrants	Percent	Total	Migrants	Percent

All youth	560	250	44.6	309	154 <u>1/</u>	49.8	251	96	38.2
Rural farm	271	110	40.6	159	69	43.4	112	41	36.6
Rural nonfarm	289	140	48.4	150	85	56.7	139	55	39.6

1/ 61 in the armed services. Those in the armed services comprised 39.6 percent of all male migrants and 19.7 percent of all male youths in the sample.

2/ School districts included in the follow-up: Buckskin, Clarksburg, Huntington, and Kingston.

The Federal Census of April 1940 enumerated 4,629 youths 18-27 years old in the rural areas of Ross County including all farms and all villages up to 2,500 population as rural. Of these 2,418 were men and 2,211 were women. Considering their residence, 2,675 lived on farms and 1,954 lived in rural nonfarm homes. The 1940 survey was not completely representative of all Ross County rural youths enumerated by the 1940 Census, for the survey included disproportionately large numbers of unmarried persons and persons in the earlier years of the age period 18-27 years. After these discrepancies were taken into account it was estimated from the 1942 sample that about 2,000 rural youths who were 18-27 years old in April 1940 left the rural parts of that County during the period of defense and war activities up to April 1942. Included in this total volume of migration it is estimated that there were 1,200 men, including those who were inducted into the armed forces, and 800 women. It is probable that at least one-half of the migrants were farm youths who left their farm homes.

#### AGE OF MIGRANTS

All of the persons involved in the 1942 migration survey of Ross County rural youth were past 19 years of age and most of them were 20-29 years old. Had all those who were 18 and 19 years old also been included it is certain that the average departure rates would have been higher, for the younger persons were much more mobile than the older persons of the age period here considered. This was particularly true of women.

In order to determine the effect of age on departure rates of rural youth, those involved in the migration study made in March 1942 were divided into 3 age groups. These groups were comprised of those youths 18-19 years old in 1940, those 20-23 years old at that time, and those 24-27 years old when enumerated in the original survey. It was found that only 33 percent of the oldest group had moved as compared to 50 percent of the youngest group and 48 percent

of the middle group 20-23 years old in 1940. While the rate of departure was 38 percent for all women, it was only 26 percent for the oldest group (24-27 in 1940) but was 48 percent for the youngest group (18-19 in 1940), and 39 percent for those 20-23 years old in 1940. For men the departure rates were 52, 56, and 39 percent respectively for the youngest, middle, and oldest age periods indicated above (table 2).

Table 2.- Number and Percent of Migrant Youth  
by Age and Sex, Ross County, 1940-1942

Age	Both sexes		Male				Female		
	Total	Migrants		Total	Migrants		Total	Migrants	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
All ages	559	250	44.7	308	154	50.0	251	96	38.2
18-19 years	175	87	49.7	95	49	51.6	80	38	47.5
20-23 years	240	116	48.3	135	75	55.6	105	41	39.0
24-27 years	144	47	32.6	78	30	38.5	66	17	25.8

#### DESTINATION OF MIGRANTS

Of all the rural men included in this study and who left Ross County between 1940 and April 1942 about 40 percent were inducted into the armed forces of the United States. Of those inducted about 30 percent enlisted while the remainder were drafted.

Apart from the rural men who entered the armed forces the majority of migrants from rural areas of Ross County moved to nearby industrial centers. About 2 of each 3 women migrants whose destination was determined went to one or another of the 4 cities of Chillicothe, County seat of Ross County, Columbus, Dayton, or Springfield, Ohio. Barring those inducted into the armed services and those whose places of residence outside rural areas of Ross County in 1942 could not be determined, more than 6 out of every 10 of the male migrants had settled in those same 4 Ohio cities. Only 4 women and 10 civilian men moved outside the State (table 3).

Table 3.- Destination of Migrant Rural Youth from Ross County, 1940-1942

Destination	Number in sample			Percent distribution		
	All			All		
	Migrants	Male	Female	Migrants	Male	Female
Total	250	154	96	100.0	100.0	100.0
Chillicothe	37	14	23	14.8	9.1	24.0
Columbus	31	14	17	12.4	9.1	17.7
Dayton	21	14	7	8.4	9.1	7.3
Springfield	9	7	2	3.6	4.5	2.1
Other place in Ohio	40	18	22	16.0	11.7	22.8
Other State	14	10	4	5.6	6.5	4.2
Armed forces	61	61	-	24.4	39.6	-
Unknown	37	16	21	14.8	10.4	21.9

## OCCUPATION

The effect of migration of rural youth on the available supply of farm labor is well illustrated by the Ross County study. For instance, 30 percent of all the male migrants were engaged in farm work in 1940 before they moved. In 1942 after they had moved, only 4 percent were known to have continued in agriculture in their new locations (table 4). Other information available indicates that <sup>of</sup> those who moved to enter nonfarm industries, 23 percent left farm employment, and 33 percent of those who entered the armed forces left farm jobs.

Table 4.- Employment Status of Rural Male Youth in Ross County, 1940-1942

Employment	Number				Percent			
	Migrants		Nonmigrants		Migrants		Nonmigrants	
	1940	1942	1940	1942	1940	1942	1940	1942
Total	154	154	155	155	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Engaged in farm work	46	6	66	79	29.9	3.9	42.6	51.0
Engaged in nonfarm work	96	57	77	65	62.3	37.1	49.7	41.9
In school	9	5	4	1	5.8	3.2	2.6	0.6
Unemployed	3	-	4	-	2.0	-	2.5	-
Unknown	-	25	4	10	-	16.2	2.6	6.5
In armed forces	-	61	-	-	-	39.6	-	-

The loss of farm workers through migration of male youth was compensated for in part by a shift from nonfarm to farm jobs by those who remained in rural areas. While 43 percent of the nonmigrant men were engaged in farm work

in 1940 it was found that 51 percent were working on farms in 1942 (table 4). It was found that nonmigrant men engaged in farm work in March 1942 about 32 percent were working at nonfarm jobs or were unemployed or in school in 1940. On the other hand it was found that 17 percent of those nonmigrants engaged in nonfarm jobs in 1942 had shifted from farm employment.

Only 3 percent of male migrants were known to be attending school, including college and special defense classes.

The occupational status of the women involved in the 1942 survey may be briefly summarized as follows:

Of each 100 migrant women -

29 were employed at nonfarm work,  
39 were homemakers,  
8 were in school, and  
24 were of unknown status.

Of each 100 nonmigrant women -

30 were employed at nonfarm work,  
65 were homemakers,  
4 were of unknown status, and  
1 was engaged in farm employment.

#### LEVEL OF LIVING

Rural youth from the more well-to-do homes moved away in greater proportions than did those from less well-to-do homes. In the analysis of levels of living the rural youth of Ross County were classified into social and economic advantage groups on the basis of the number of items of household conveniences in the homes in which they lived in 1940. The items, 10 in number, were telephone, electric lights, radio, daily newspaper, washing machine, refrigeration, separate dining room, piano, bathroom, and central furnace heating. These youth living in homes having fewer than 5 of these items were designated "disadvantaged" while those having from 5 to 10 of them were called "advantaged".



The departure rate for the advantaged male youth was somewhat higher than the disadvantaged. While 52 percent of the one class had moved only 47 percent of the other had done so. For women, level of living as a selective factor in migration was of much greater importance. The rate of departure for the advantaged group was 42 percent but for the disadvantaged group it was only 34 percent (table 5).

Table 5.- Number and Percent of Migrant Youth by Level-of-Living Class and Sex, Ross County 1940-1942

Level-of-living class	Both sexes			Male			Female		
	Total	Migrants	Percent	Total	Migrants	Percent	Total	Migrants	Percent
All youth	558	249	44.4	307	153	49.8	251	96	38.2
Advantaged	279	133	47.7	151	79	52.3	128	54	42.2
Disadvantaged	279	116	41.6	156	74	47.4	123	42	34.1

#### SCHOOL GRADE ATTAINMENT

Level of living as a selective factor in migration was further reflected in school grade attainment of the migrant and nonmigrant rural youth. For women the highest rate of departure from rural areas of Ross County was found among those who had graduated from high school, the lowest rate among those who did not go to high school. About 40 percent of the women who were high school graduates moved between 1940 and April 1942, but only 36 percent of those who did not go to high school at all, and 37 percent of those who went to high school but dropped out before graduating, moved.

Amount of education was a more important factor in migration of men than of women. For the men the highest departure rate (64 percent) was found among those with some high school training but short of graduation. In comparison only 49 percent of the male high school graduates, and only 39 percent of those who did not go to high school had departed from the rural areas of the County (table 6).

Table 6.- Number and Percent of Migrant Youth by Highest Grade Completed in School 1940 and by Sex, Ross County, 1940-1942

Highest grade completed	Both sexes			Male			Female		
	Total	Migrants		Total	Migrants		Total	Migrants	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
All youth	558	248	44.4	307	152	49.5	251	96	38.2
12 or more grades	275	121	44.4	136	66	48.5	139	55	39.6
9 - 11 grades	148	76	51.4	78	50	64.1	70	26	37.1
8 grades or less	135	51	37.8	93	36	38.7	42	15	35.7

#### MARITAL STATUS

As was to be expected the rate of departure of rural youth was much greater for those who were single in 1940 and who had remained single in 1942, than for those already married in 1940. More recent marriage was, however, associated with high rates of departure.

Of the men who continued single during the period of study 56 percent had moved, and of those who married since 1940 about 48 percent left the rural areas of Ross County. On the other hand, only 34 percent of those who were married when interviewed in 1940 changed their place of residence. This is, however, a very high rate of migration for men with family attachments. Of the women who married since 1940 about 57 percent joined the migrant stream as did 38 percent of the single women and 28 percent of those who were already married in 1940 (table 7).

Table 7.- Number and Percent of Migrant Youth by Marital Status and Sex, Ross County, 1940-1942

Marital status	Both sexes			Male			Female		
	Total	Migrants		Total	Migrants		Total	Migrants	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
All youth	523	224	42.8	291	140	48.1	232	84	36.2
Single 1940-1942	241	120	49.8	157	88	56.1	84	32	38.1
Married in 1940	203	63	31.0	90	31	34.4	113	32	28.3
Married since 1940	79	41	51.9	44	21	47.7	35	20	57.1

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms the general observation that as a result of migration rural areas are rapidly losing their young people who pass the age of high school graduation. The loss is particularly great among single youths and among those recently married, including the men inducted into the armed forces. The rate of loss is surprisingly high, however, for these young people who have been married for sufficient time to have already established families of their own.

The great movement of youth from rural areas into the armed services, and into urban war industries may be expected to continue for the duration of the war. This movement of rural youths makes it necessary for rural families and communities to make important social and economic adjustments to their absence. Such adjustments are now being made to growing shortages of farm help, to broken family ties, to loss of leadership among youth groups, and to other phases of rural life in which young people have played important roles. Though attention is now centered on the immediate effects of the migration far-sighted leaders are interested also in possible post-war trends. When the war ends large numbers of youths are likely to find it necessary or desirable to return to rural communities. They will return after having adopted new modes of behavior, and with new habits, new attitudes, new ideas, with different standards of living and perhaps with different moral beliefs and practices. Their reabsorption into the life of the rural community will call for careful social and economic planning.

