

# Absence may (not) make the heart grow fonder:

Investigating marital non-cohabitation and divorce in Canada's immigrant population

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## Background

Canada is set to face unique challenges in the coming decades due to population aging and a declining workforce.

The Canadian government has sought to recruit more immigrants to address this issue.

Policy focus on short-term economic gains, however, may have unintended consequences for immigrant integration.

### Express Entry System

The system assesses both the applicant and the spouse. Applicants may be inclined to leave their spouse off of the application if it strengthens it and sponsor them in the future, leading to temporary non-cohabitation.

## Research Questions

- 1) How many immigrant couples arrive without their spouse?
- 2) Does this "lagged migration" affect their relationship?

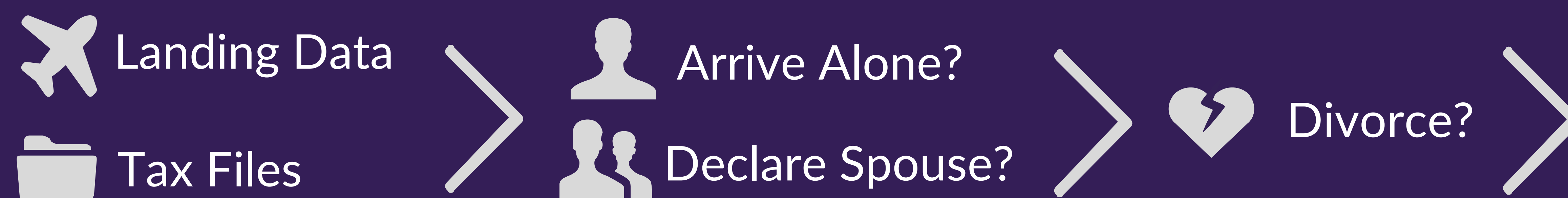
## Data

Longitudinal Immigrant Database (IMDB) gives the following information:

- If they migrated alone or with a spouse
- If they report having a spouse the year they landed
- If they report being divorced from their spouse at a later date

# Lagged migration between immigrant couples—that is, when one person comes to Canada before the other—is associated with higher probabilities of divorce.

## Analysis & Results



20% IMDB Sample  
 $n = 55,899$   
Landed 2001 - 2007

26.37% of couples arrive without partner  
(See Figure 1)

Random Effects Probit Model  
(See Figure 2 & 3)

Figure 1. Percentage of transnational couples and how long they spend living apart before reuniting in Canada

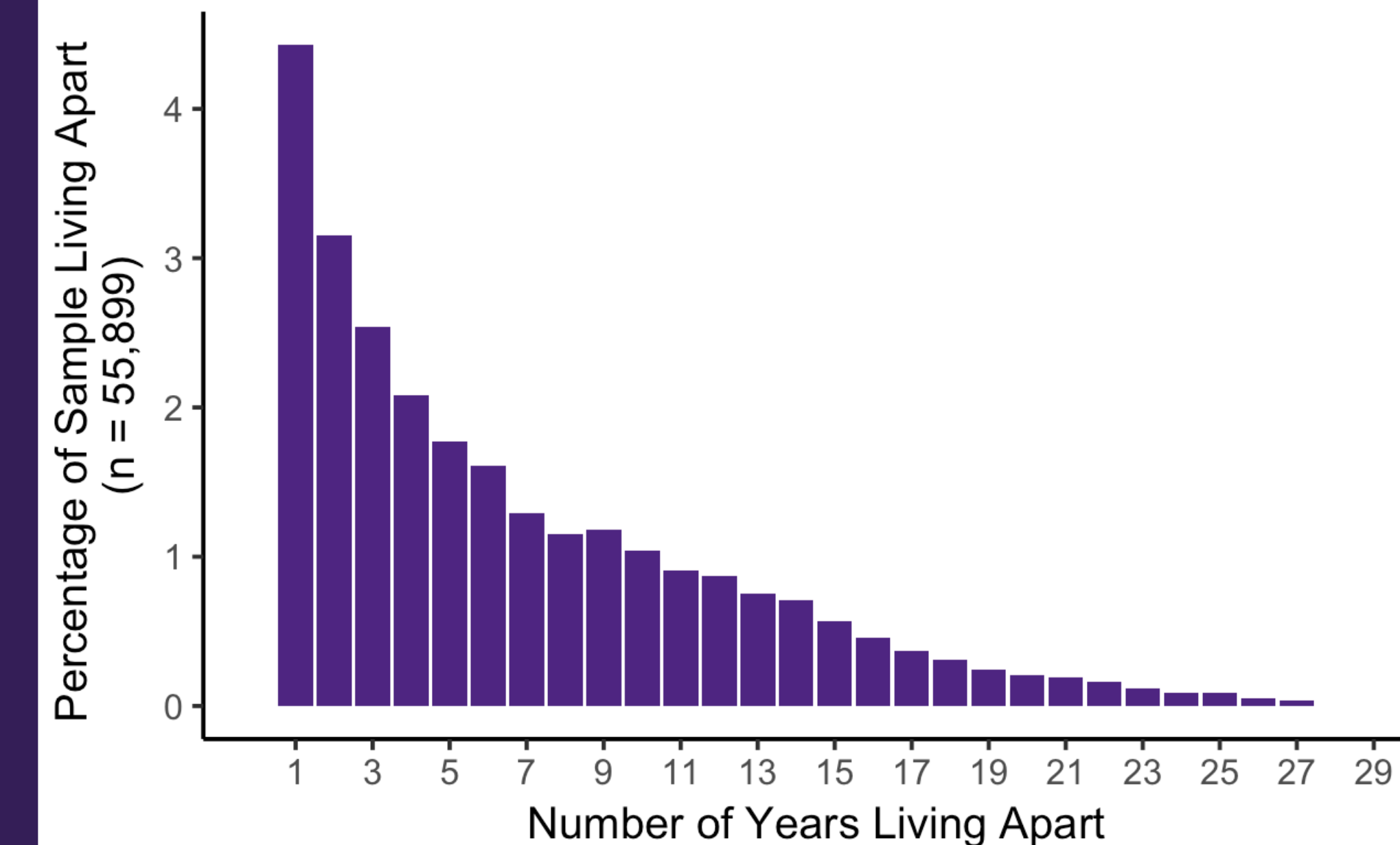


Figure 2. Percent change in the probability of divorce by various predictor variables

Predictor	Est.
Lagged Migration	1.08
Years Apart	0.07
Wife Migrates First	0.63
Wife's Income Share (25 - 50%)	-0.82
Wife's Income Share (51 - 75%)	-0.55
Wife's Income Share (76 - 100%)	1.21
Presence of Children	-0.87

Figure 3. Cumulative percent increase in the probability of divorce per year spent living apart, with other all variables held at their mean value

