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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Closest family in the household or in the community? The role of family in residential satisfaction among intended stayers in Iceland

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Abstract

The salience of family in residential satisfaction and staying in rural communities has been well established. However, the relative importance family in the households and wider networks of family ties remains unclear, as well as the extent to which such associations can be found across the urban–rural continuum. This study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the role of family in residential satisfaction and residential decision-making processes by distinguishing between satisfied, ambivalent, and dissatisfied stayers in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. Drawing on several large-scale surveys conducted in Iceland, we use binomial and multinomial logistic regression models to show that both having family in the household and having the closest family in the community predict intentions to stay, net of residential satisfaction. The odds of being a stayer are significantly higher if living with a spouse, with or without children in the household. Interestingly, this effect is found in all non-metropolitan types of communities but not in the metropolitan Reykjavík capital area. Familial factors relate differently to the odds of being a satisfied, ambivalent, or dissatisfied stayer and vary significantly between urban, exurban, micro-urban, and farming communities. Living with a spouse and children in the household increases the odds of being a stayer, regardless of residential satisfaction. Living in a household as a couple without the presence of children is only associated with higher odds of being a dissatisfied stayer. Beyond the household, respondents are significantly more likely to be stayers if most or all closest family live in the community, regardless of being a satisfied, ambivalent, or dissatisfied stayer. This is true for all types of communities. These results contribute to the cross-cultural evidence base and suggest several possible avenues for future research relevant to policy and practice in the field of regional development.

KEYWORDS
community, exurban, (im)mobility, rural, staying, urban

1 | INTRODUCTION

A long and venerable tradition in the social sciences identifies strong family ties as a major defining characteristic of close-knit rural communities, contributing to a strong sense of belonging, and providing long-standing and unconditional emotional, informational, and instrumental support (see Cobb, 1976; Cohen & Wills, 1985; House et al., 1988). As early as 1887, Tönnies argued that traditional rural communities are grounded in family ties. "Community by blood, indicating primal unity of existence, develops more specifically into community of place, which is expressed first of all as living in close proximity to one another" (Tönnies, 1887, p. 27). In contrast, Tönnies argued that in modern urban societies based on impersonal transactions and fleeting encounters "…the family is no more than a cooperative society for the reproduction of the labour force and the consumption of food" (p. 170). Contemporary theories of social capital emphasise the role of long-term interpersonal bonds and family ties in the household and in the community results in developing mutual trust and support which benefits all members of the community (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000).

From earlier research, we know that family roots, collective memories, and having family around contribute to people's place attachment and senses of belonging, and that a strong place attachment plays an important role in staying (Clark et al., 2017; Glendinning et al., 2003; Hjälm, 2014; Kloep et al., 2003; Leopold et al., 2012; Rye, 2011; Thissen et al., 2010; Tucker et al., 2013). Specifically, family roots and family members currently living in the community are associated with greater residential satisfaction and less out-migration (Clark et al., 2017; Morse & Mudgett, 2018). Research has also shown that having family in close proximity constrains out-migration (Ermisch & Mulder, 2019; Mulder & Malmberg, 2014). Family ties and obligations may therefore play an important role in residential satisfaction among stayers. Having family in the household and family networks in the community may thus contribute to being content with staying rather than feeling stuck in place.

Staying in place is increasingly interpreted as a deliberate choice rather than the result of a more passive process that "just happened" or even as a "failure to leave" (Gruber, 2021; Hjälm, 2014; Schewel, 2020; Stockdale & Haartsen, 2018; Stockdale et al., 2018; Thomassen, 2021). Staying as an active choice, however, does not necessarily imply being satisfied with one's place of residence. For some individuals, it may indeed represent the fulfilment of a desire to stay, while others may have reluctantly chosen to stay in place because of personal obligations or other restrictions on mobility, despite feeling less satisfied with the residential environment.

While the importance of family for residential satisfaction and staying in the community can thus be considered a well-established fact, it is not clear to what extent this involves having family in the community at large or only specifically having family members in the household (Mulder, 2018). Living with a spouse and/or children in the household and having close family members living in the community are both likely to increase residential satisfaction. However, having family members in the household may relate differently to migration intentions than having family members in the community. As households generally stay or move together, the residential mobility of individuals is constrained by the willingness of other household members to stay or move, but by the same token out-migration does generally not involve the costs of leaving household members behind. The collective decision-making of such tied (im)mobility thus generally involves the evaluation and prioritisation of the interests and preferences of each household member but not the costs of disrupted family relations. Moreover, moving away generally involves leaving family members outside the household behind in the community. The prospect of less interaction and weakened relations with family members in the community may thus loom large in the decision-making process but does not threaten the integrity of the household as such. Yet, selection effects can also be expected as those who have good relations with their extended family in the community are more likely to become stayers, while those who have little or bad relations with their extended family are more likely to leave.

While much of the contemporary literature on stayers has focused on rural communities (Barcus & Brunn, 2009; Hofstede et al., 2022a, 2022b; Morse & Mudgett, 2018; Stockdale & Haartsen, 2018), the underlying processes can be expected to differ across the urban-rural continuum (Albrecht & Scheiner, 2022). Family in the household and in the community may have a more positive effect on residential satisfaction in sparsely populated rural communities with thin labour markets and limited services than in metropolitan, exurban or micropolitan areas. This, in turn, is likely to be affected by the residential histories of individuals as the salience of having family in the community may be different for those who grew up in the community than recent arrivals. It may also be different for recent arrivals from remote rural villages in the bustling city than for their counterparts who recently moved from the crowded city to the idyllic rural village.

The primary objective of this paper is to investigate the influence of having family in the household and the presence of close family members in the community on residential satisfaction among intended stayers across the rural–urban continuum. Our analysis is based on survey data from Iceland, where the relatively well-defined distinction between the metropolitan Reykjavík capital area, the Southwest exurban region, and provincial towns, villages, and farming communities around the coast enables us to analyse similarities and differences across the urban–rural continuum. We employ binomial logistic regression models to show how family in the household and in the community predict intentions to stay, both directly and indirectly through residential satisfaction, controlling for community type, residential history, and sociodemographic characteristics. We then use multinomial logistic regression to distinguish between the effects of family in the household and in the community on the odds of being a satisfied, ambivalent, or dissatisfied stayer. In conclusion, we contextualise our findings within previous research and propose directions for future investigation.

2 | RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION, FAMILY AND INTENTIONS TO STAY

Residential satisfaction is defined as "the feeling of contentment when one possesses or achieves what one needs or desires at home and in its neighbourhood" (Maleszyk & Kędra, 2020, p. 342; see also Mohit & Azim, 2012; Speare, 1974). It encompasses both physical and social characteristics of a place (Aksel & Imamoğlu, 2020; Mesch & Manor, 1998), including both community atmosphere and people's involvement and interactions with community members. Following Speare (1974), research has found residential satisfaction to predict intentions to stay (e.g., Fang, 2006; Maleszyk & Kędra, 2020). This relationship is not always straightforward and may be moderated or counteracted by factors such as age, life course changes, work, income, and family considerations (Ginsberg & Churchman, 1984; Landale & Guest, 1985). Moreover, decisions to stay or leave are not made once in a lifetime, but are renegotiated and reconsidered over and over again in relation to life events or changes in residential satisfaction (Mata-Codesal, 2018; Stockdale & Haartsen, 2018; Ye, 2018). Staying or leaving is a multi-stage process, which includes several phases, from initial wishes to move, to making plans and to actually make a decision.

Decisions about staying and leaving are usually made within the context of the household and the linked lives of partners and resident children (Bailey et al., 2004; Coulter et al., 2016; Settersten, 2015). Women who move because of their husbands' career needs are referred to as "tied migrants" or "trailing wives" (Stockdale, 2017). This dynamic may be reversed in later life when people retire and children move away and women take the lead in residential decisions and men become "trailing husbands" (Stockdale, 2017). Tied staying, however, is a more common phenomenon, and men are as likely to be tied stayers as women (Cooke, 2013).

Beyond the household, family members in the community also play a role in migration decisions (Mulder, 2018; Stockdale, 2002; Thomassen, 2021). Family networks of care and support thus contribute to a greater sense of attachment and feeling rooted in place (Barcus & Brunn, 2009; Jamieson, 2000; Morse & Mudgett, 2018). Living close to parents, in particular, increases the likelihood to stay, in part because of the emotional and instrumental support parents can give to their children and grandchildren, and the local insider advantages of having parents around (Fischer & Malmberg, 2001; Hünteler & Mulder, 2020). This care and support role can also work the other way around with adult children taking care of their ageing parents (Fernandez-Carro & Evandrou, 2014). More generally, being a satisfied stayer in the countryside is often associated with wanting to be close to family networks (Dufhues et al., 2021), and some stayers may choose lower work-life aspirations and lifestyle aspirations to maintain such proximity (Jamieson, 2000; Ravn, 2021).

Despite the growing literature on stayers in rural areas (Adams & Komu, 2022; Cook & Cuervo, 2020; Dufhues et al., 2021; Haartsen & Stockdale, 2018; Hofstede et al., 2022a, 2022b; Mærsk et al., 2021; Stockdale & Haartsen, 2018), there has been little research on stayers in urban areas. The "mobility turn" in urban studies (Sheller & Urry, 2006) may have directed attention away from processes of staying towards the flows of mobility in contemporary urban spaces, emphasising dynamic urban cosmopolitanism. As a result, it remains somewhat unclear to what extent findings on rural stayers are specific to rural areas or can be generalised to settlements of varying size and density. As a notable exception, Clark et al. (2017) found family roots, community connections, and satisfaction with the neighbourhood to be associated with immobility in metropolitan Spain.

Factors such as education levels, perceived affluence, and ethnic background may also influence satisfaction among stayers in rural and urban settings. In many Western countries, lower educational attainment has been found to be associated with less geographical mobility (Morse & Mudgett, 2018). However, while young people in Iceland are likely to move to obtain higher education, those with a university education in rural areas do not appear to be more likely to leave than those with lower educational attainment (Bjarnason & Edvardsson, 2017; Bjarnason, 2022). As rural areas are frequently characterised by a relative lack of jobs requiring higher education, professional jobs may have a greater impact on social standing and residential satisfaction in rural than in urban areas. Similarly, perceptions of one's economic situation may have a stronger effect on residential satisfaction among stayers in rural than in urban areas. Being economically worse off than others in rural areas may thus compound other deficiencies in rural areas, in particular with regard to social services.

3 | ICELAND AS A CASE STUDY

Historically, Icelandic society was based on family farmsteads organised into small geographical communities (Icelandic: *Hreppar*) that were legally responsible for the minimum sustenance of community members. Although Danish merchants operated summer trading posts in all regions of the country, there were no towns or villages in Iceland before the establishment of the village of Reykjavík in 1751 (Bjarnason, 2022).

Reykjavík became the capital of the sovereign Icelandic nation state in 1918 and served as the centre of economic, political, social, and cultural life throughout the 20th century. Reykjavík and the adjacent municipalities in the capital area grew to 65,000 by mid-century and 240,000 by 2022, representing almost two-thirds of the national population of Iceland (Statistics Iceland, 2023a, 2023b).

Due to natural population growth, the ascendance of the Reykjavík capital area shown in Figure 1 was not accompanied by absolute population decline in other regions. On the contrary, while the relative share of the nonmetropolitan population declined from 89% to 36% between 1901 and 2000, its absolute numbers grew from 69,000 in 1900 to 135,000 in 2022 (Statistics Iceland, 2023a, 2023b). There was nevertheless substantial urbanisation within non-metropolitan Iceland as well.

The towns and villages within 45–60 min driving distance from Reykjavík grew from a total population of 1000 at the beginning of the 20th century to 52,000 by 2022 (Statistics Iceland, 2023b). In other regions of the country, the total population of the five provincial centres grew from a total of 2000 inhabitants in 1900 to

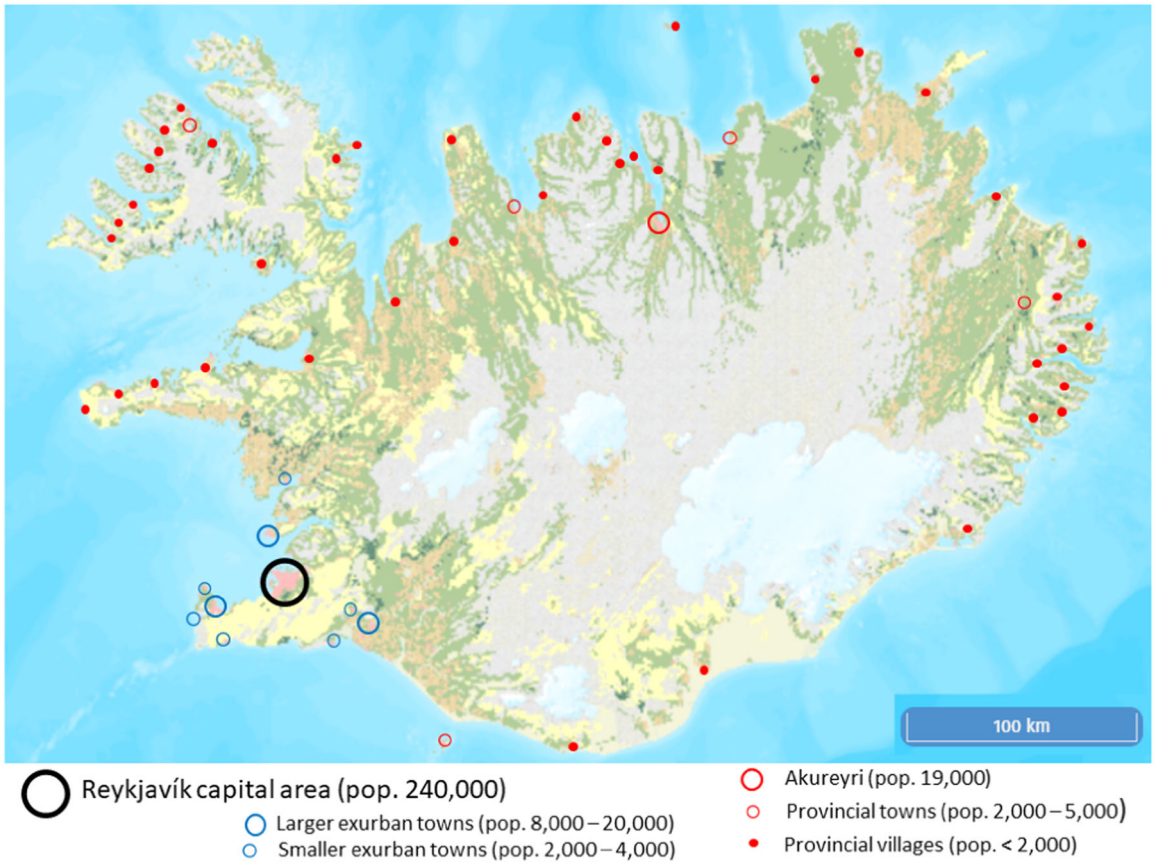

FIGURE 1 Settlement structure of Iceland.

15,000 in 2022 (Statistics Iceland, 2023a, 2023b). In northern Iceland, the larger town of Akureyri grew from a population of 1000 in 1900 to 8000 in 1950 to a micropolitan centre of about 20,000 inhabitants in 2022. The total population of these six larger provincial towns is thus about 34,000.

The 50–60 smaller provincial villages around the coast also grew from a total population of about 6000 inhabitants in 1900 to a zenith of 27,000 in the mid-1980s (Statistics Iceland, 2023a). In large part due to large-scale technological and organisational changes undermining the fishing industry in smaller villages, their combined population had dwindled to about 23,000 by 2022 (Statistics Iceland, 2023b).

Finally, due to technological advances in farming and various socioeconomic changes the population of farming communities declined steadily from 55,000 in 1900 to 31,000 in 1950 and 17,000 in 2022 (Statistics Iceland, 2023a, 2023b). The proportion of farmers in traditional farming communities has also declined to just under half the adult population, and among farmers almost half are now also engaged in non-agricultural activities (Bjarnason, 2022).

The first decades of the 21st century were characterised by several interrelated demographic trends (Garðarsdóttir et al., 2021). First, there was a substantial increase in employment-driven immigration from abroad in all regions of the country, pushing the proportion of the immigrant population from about 2% in 1996 to about 15% in 2021 (Statistics Iceland, 2023c). Second, there has been a steady decrease in long-distance domestic migration from the provinces to the Reykjavík capital area, resulting in net migration rates of close to parity. Third, there has been a massive increase in migration from the Reykjavík capital area to the larger exurban towns within commuting distance from the city. Finally, as in most other Western countries, there has been a steady decline in fertility in Iceland, although there is still natural population growth due to a still relatively youthful population.

In the early 20th century, the majority of urban dwellers in Iceland were first- or second-generation immigrants from the homesteads in the farming communities. As a result, there were frequently complex geographical patterns in family ties and urban dwellers commonly identified with their region, valley, or fjord of origin. Over time, such complex geographical family ties have been eroded by successive generations born in urban areas, changing internal migration patterns and the growing immigrant population.

4 | DATA AND METHODS

4.1 | Data collection

The study is based on 13,444 responses to three surveys conducted in all regions of Iceland as part of the Icelandic *Byggðafesta og*

búferlaflutningar (Residential stability and migration) project, funded by the Icelandic Regional Development Institute (Bjarnason, 2022). The main objective of the project was to provide reliable data to study patterns and correlates of both migration and migration intentions. A standardised questionnaire was used with a few modifications in each type of community, such as, for instance, questions relevant to farming being asked in the farming communities and questions about commuting patterns being asked in exurban communities.

The relatively well-defined settlement structure of Iceland allowed us to divide all communities into five discrete categories. The *Reykjavík capital area* includes the municipality of Reykjavík and the adjacent suburban municipalities of Kópavogur, Garðabær, Hafnarfjörður, and Seltjarnarnes. The *Southwest exurban region* includes the larger towns with more than 2000 inhabitants within 60 km from the Reykjavík capital area, that is, Borgarnes and Akranes towards the northeast, Hveragerði, Selfoss, and Þorlákshöfn towards the southeast, and Grindavík, Reykjanesbær, and Suðurnesjabær towards the west. *Provincial towns* include the six regional centres, each with a population of about 3000 inhabitants at a distance of 300–600 km from Reykjavík (Ísafjörður in the Westfjords, Sauðárkrókur in the Northwest, Húsavík in the Northeast and Egilsstaðir in the East). This category also includes the larger micropolitan northern centre of Akureyri with about 20,000 inhabitants and the Westmann islands approximately 10 km off the south coast of Iceland with a population of about 4000 inhabitants. *Provincial villages* include 56 towns and hamlets beyond the Southwest exurban region with a population of less than 2000 inhabitants each. Finally, the *Farming communities* include all inhabitants of the sparsely-populated traditional farming communities around the country.

In the larger communities, quota sampling was used to yield a fixed number of responses from each targeted community with the aim of obtaining at least 1000 responses from each of the three sub-areas within the Reykjavík capital area, 1000 responses from each of the three areas within the Southwest exurban region, 1000 from the northern micropolitan centre of Akureyri, and a total of 2000 responses from the other five provincial towns. An online panel survey conducted by a commercial survey company yielded 3594 valid responses in the Reykjavík capital area, 3038 valid responses from the southwest exurban region, 1073 responses from Akureyri, and 1959 responses from the five provincial towns.

The survey panels of commercial survey companies do not include a sufficient number of respondents in villages and farming communities to make meaningful distinctions based on, for example, community size, distance from urban centres, or dominant economic activities. Furthermore, 56 provincial villages with an average of 410 inhabitants and the 16 pre-defined areas of farming communities with an average population of 1062 inhabitants are too small to make probability sampling feasible. Online population surveys were therefore conducted with the aim of obtaining a sufficient number of responses from the adult population in villages and farming communities. In each of the two population surveys, a letter of invitation was sent via regular mail to all households in the relevant communities, inviting everyone 18 years or older to participate in online surveys. The survey in the 56 provincial villages was conducted in 2018 and yielded 5449 valid responses, representing 27% of all registered residents. The survey in 16 rural areas of traditionally farming communities was conducted in 2019 and resulted in 1925 valid responses, representing 13% of all registered residents.

4.2 | Measures

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of residential intentions and residential satisfaction, closest family in the household and in the community, and socio-demographic factors across community types in Iceland.

4.2.1 | Intended stayers

Residential intentions to leave or stay were measured by the question, "How likely is it that you will permanently move from [name of community inserted] in the future?", with a 5-point answer scale from "*very unlikely*" to "*very likely*." Respondents who live in provincial villages more often reported that it is rather or very likely that they will leave in the future, and less often that it is very or rather unlikely that they will move, compared to respondents in more urban community types. To a lesser extent, this is also the case for respondents living in farming communities. In the binomial logistic regression model, those who find leaving rather unlikely or very unlikely are considered to be *Stayers*, while other respondents serve as the reference category of leavers.

4.2.2 | Residential satisfaction

Residential satisfaction was measured by the question, "In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with living in [name of community inserted]?", with a 5-point answer scale from *very satisfied* to *very dissatisfied*. The majority of the respondents reported to be rather or very satisfied, in all different community types. The share of respondents being rather or very dissatisfied was larger in provincial villages and farming communities (12%–13%, compared with 3%–4% in more urbanised settlement types). For the regression analyses, this variable was recoded into three categories: satisfied (very and rather satisfied), ambivalent (neither nor), and dissatisfied (very and rather dissatisfied).

4.2.3 | Satisfied, ambivalent, and dissatisfied stayers

For the purposes of the multinomial logistic regression analysis, Residential intentions and Residential satisfaction were used to further divide intended stayers into *Satisfied stayers*, *Ambivalent Stayers*, and *Dissatisfied stayers*. Leavers were treated as the omitted reference category in the multinomial logistic regression analysis.

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics of residential intentions and residential satisfaction, closest family in the household and in the community, and socio-demographic factors across community types in Iceland.

	Reykjavík capital area	SW exurban region	Provincial towns	Provincial villages	Farming communities
Intention to leave					
Very unlikely	50%	45%	44%	33%	39%
Rather unlikely	20%	22%	22%	23%	25%
Neither nor	17%	20%	22%	21%	18%
Rather likely	7%	7%	6%	12%	11%
Very likely	6%	6%	5%	11%	7%
Residential satisfaction					
Very dissatisfied	1%	1%	1%	7%	8%
Rather dissatisfied	3%	2%	2%	6%	4%
Ambivalent	11%	8%	6%	10%	5%
Rather satisfied	46%	38%	41%	36%	30%
Very satisfied	39%	51%	50%	41%	53%
Family in household					
Spouse only	42%	40%	39%	42%	46%
Spouse and children (ref.)	28%	36%	33%	32%	27%
Single parent	5%	7%	6%	6%	7%
Alone or other	25%	17%	22%	20%	20%
Closest family in community					
Most or all in community	70%	42%	43%	34%	26%
Some in community	23%	35%	38%	43%	37%
None in community (ref.)	7%	23%	19%	23%	33%
Residential history					
Never lived elsewhere	24%	14%	16%	18%	19%
Grew up in community	58%	41%	52%	56%	50%
Sociodemographic characteristics					
Female (weighted to population)	49%	49%	49%	49%	49%
Average age (weighted to population)	46.8	46.8	46.8	46.8	46.8
Immigrant parent(s)	5%	5%	6%	8%	7%
University degree	54%	33%	34%	25%	34%
Perceived affluence (1–5)					
Mean (SD)	3.7 (0.9)	3.8 (0.9)	3.8 (0.9)	3.7 (0.9)	3.6 (0.9)
N	**3594**	**3038**	**3032**	**5449**	**1925**

4.2.4 | Family in the household and in the community

Four combinations of *family in the household* were coded from a checklist of responses to the question, "Who of the following live in the same household as you?": *Spouse and children* and *Spouse only* indicate living with a spouse with or without children under the age of 18, respectively. *Single parent* indicates living with children under the age of 18 but not with a spouse. *Alone or other* is a residual category of living alone or sharing a home with others than one's spouse or children. The majority of all respondents lived with a spouse with or without children. No distinct differences are found between the community types, except slightly more respondents living with their spouses and children

in the Southwest exurban region and slightly fewer respondents living alone or with others.

Closest family in the community was measured with responses to the question, "How many of your closest family members (Icelandic: *Nánasta fjölskylda*) live in [name of community inserted]?". The definition of who constitutes one's "closest family members" was left to the respondents. As the effects of family in the community on residential satisfaction are not expected to be linear, the five response categories were recoded as the binary variables *Most or all in community*, *Some in community*, and *None in community*. Interestingly, 70% of the respondents in the Reykjavík capital area reported having most or all family members in the community, and only 7% have no family in the community. Respondents in provincial villages and farming communities less often had most or all families in the community.

4.2.5 | Residential history

Two measures of *residential history* were employed. First, those who have *Never lived elsewhere* responded to the question, "Have you ever lived elsewhere than in [name of community inserted] or surrounding area?" with the option "No, I have never lived elsewhere". Second, those who *Grew up in the community* responded to the question, "Where did you grow up until the age of sixteen?", with the response options of having "Mostly" or "Exclusively" grown up in [name of community inserted] or surrounding area. These two measures overlap, as those who have never lived elsewhere inevitably grew up in the community, but nevertheless the majority of people living in the community where they grew up have lived elsewhere. Respondents in the Reykjavík capital area were most likely to be living in the community where they grew up, and they were also most likely to have never lived elsewhere. Respondents in the Southwest exurban region, in contrast, were least likely to have grown up there and least likely to have never lived elsewhere.

4.2.6 | Sociodemographic variables

According to the 2021 census, there are about 96 females for every 100 males in Iceland (Statistics Iceland, 2023c). This imbalance is less pronounced in the Reykjavík capital area (98 females per 100 males) than in the Southwest exurban region (94 females per 100 males) and other, more rural regions (93 females per 100 males). This skewed gender distribution is in part due to greater domestic out-migration among females and in part due to greater international immigration among males (Bjarnason, 2022). In our samples, women were overrepresented in all types of communities, ranging from 111 females for every 100 males in the provincial towns to 134 in the Reykjavík capital area and 153 females for every 100 males in the provincial villages.

The age distribution of the Icelandic population is also markedly different across regions with proportionately fewer children and more elderly people in rural areas (Statistics Iceland, 2023c). As a result, residents in the Reykjavík capital area and the Southwest exurban region are on average about 2 years younger than residents in more rural regions. In our surveys, both respondents 30 years or older and females over the age of 70 were under-represented. In particular, the younger respondents were under-represented in the quota surveys in more densely populated communities, while older women were under-represented in the population surveys in the less densely populated communities.

The distribution of age and gender in each type of community reflects both actual regional differences between populations and sampling differences across types of communities and modes of survey administration. We hold these demographic differences between the populations and methodological differences between the samples constant by assigning weights to each gender-age group within each type of community, corresponding to the size of that group in the country as a whole in the 2021 census.

The variable *Immigrant parent(s)* was constructed from the question, "Are/were your parents of Icelandic or foreign background?" with the response categories "Both of Icelandic background", "One of foreign background", and "Both of foreign background". Those with at least one parent of foreign background were coded 1 and those with both parents of Icelandic origin were coded 0. This measure corresponds to Statistic Iceland's definition of immigrant background. The 5%–8% prevalence of respondents with immigrant parent(s) compared with 17% according to the 2021 census (Statistics Iceland, 2023c) indicates that immigrants were considerably underrepresented in the sample.

The question, "What education have you completed?" was used to identify those with a *University degree*, which in Iceland includes various professional groups such as teachers, nurses, and police officers. Many younger farmers also have completed a university degree, in many cases an applied degree from the Agricultural University of Iceland. The prevalence of 54% among respondents in the Reykjavík capital area and 25%–34% in the provinces can be compared to the 2021 census (Statistics Iceland, 2023c), where the prevalence of university education among working-age people was 39% in the capital area and 22% in the provinces. People with a university degree thus appear to be over-represented in our samples.

Perceived family affluence is measured by the question, "What is the financial situation of your household?", with response categories ranging from (1) "Very poor" to (5) "Very good". This variable is treated as a continuous variable in the statistical analysis.

5 | RESULTS

5.1 | The role of family in being a stayer

Binomial logistic regression models (see Pampel, 2020) estimated the odds of being a stayer rather than a leaver based on having family in the household or in the community, community type, residential history, and residential satisfaction. The sociodemographic

characteristics gender, age, and social background (education, perceived affluence, and immigrant background) were also included as controls but not discussed in detail. The presented coefficients are odds ratios (OR) (exp(B)) or the odds of being a stayer given a particular characteristic, compared with the odds of being a stayer in the absence of that characteristic. An OR of 1.0 thus indicates no association, while an OR of 2.0 would indicate a positive association of twice the odds and an OR of 0.5 a negative association of half the odds given a certain characteristic, compared to the absence of that characteristic. Interaction effects were also calculated between types of communities and each of the family residence measures, but only statistically significant results are reported. A statistically significant interaction effect between characteristic X and community type A indicates that the effect of X is different in community type A than in the omitted reference type of community.

The first model in Table 2 shows the main effects of having family in the household or in the community, community type, and residential history. With regard to having family in the household, living with one's spouse and children under the age of 18 was associated with substantially higher odds of staying (OR: 2.54). Those who lived with a spouse only were also somewhat more likely to stay (OR: 1.63), but intentions to stay were not significantly different between single parents and those living alone or in other arrangements.

Those who had most or all of their closest family in the community were twice as likely to be stayers as those with none of their closest family in the community (OR: 2.05). Interestingly, those who only had some of their closest family in the community were significantly less likely to be stayers than those with most or all of their family in the community or indeed those who did not have any family in the community (OR: 0.62). This may suggest that having family ties both within and outside the community has a negative effect on residential stability.

Respondents in the provincial towns and villages were significantly less likely to be stayers than respondents in the Reykjavík capital area, but no significant differences were found for residents of the Southwest exurban region and the farming communities. Those who had never lived elsewhere were more likely to be stayers (OR: 1.30), but having grown up in the community was not an independent predictor of staying.

Respondents in the younger age groups (18–25 and 26–30 years old), those with immigrant parents and those with a university degree were less likely to be stayers. Respondents in the oldest age groups (61–70 and 71 years or older) and those who perceive their family affluence to be good, were more likely to be stayers.

The second model in Table 2 examines the extent to which the effect of family and community on intentions to stay operates indirectly through residential satisfaction. As could be expected, a strong association existed between the intention to stay in the community and being satisfied with one's residence (OR: 5.57). Those who were ambivalent about living in the community, were not significantly more likely to be stayers than those who were dissatisfied with their residence.

TABLE 2 Binomial logistic regression model: Odds ratios of being a stayer based on community, family, and residential satisfaction (leavers as reference).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Family in the household			
Spouse and children	2.54***	2.50***	1.41
Spouse only	1.63***	1.67***	0.95
Single parent	0.91	0.83	0.87
Alone or other (ref.)	1	1	1
Closest family in the community			
Most or all in community	2.05***	2.03***	2.02***
Some in community	0.62***	0.68***	0.69**
None in community (ref.)	1	1	1
Type of community			
Exurban region	0.83	0.73**	0.70**
Provincial towns	0.64***	0.55***	0.35***
Provincial villages	0.43***	0.47***	0.33***
Farming communities	0.80	0.77*	0.52***
Reykjavík capital area (ref.)	1	1	1
Residential history			
Never lived elsewhere	1.30**	1.39***	1.39***
Grew up in community	1.11	1.02	1.04
Sociodemographic characteristics			
Female	1.08	0.99	1.00
Age group			
18–25 years old	0.21***	0.17***	0.17***
26–30 years old	0.47***	0.44***	0.44***
31–40 years old	0.96	0.90	0.89
41–50 years old (ref.)	1	1	1
51–60 years old	1.19	1.19	1.18
61–70 years old	1.34*	1.27*	1.23
71 years or older	2.87***	2.47***	2.43***
Immigrant parent(s)	0.64***	0.63***	0.63***
University degree	0.81**	0.74***	0.73***
Perceived family affluence	1.12***	1.01	1.01
Residential satisfaction			
Satisfied		5.57***	5.63***
Ambivalent		1.20	1.20
Dissatisfied (ref.)		1	1
Interactions			
Spouse and children by Type of community			
Exurban region			3.22***
Provincial towns			2.21**

TABLE 2 (Continued)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Provincial villages			1.56*
Farming community			2.25**
Spouse only by Type of community			
Exurban region			2.18**
Provincial towns			1.91**
Provincial villages			2.13***
Farming community			1.72*
Model fit			
Cox and Snell	0.08	0.12	0.12
Nagelkerke	0.17	0.24	0.24
Incremental Chi-square (*df*)	1247.2 (21)***	563.8 (2)***	32.5 (4)***
***N*: 14,360**			

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

Interestingly, while the inclusion of residential satisfaction substantially increased the fit of the model ($\chi^2 = 563.8$, *df* 21, $p < 0.001$), this did not render other predictors non-significant. The estimated effects of family in the household, having closest family in the community, and residential history were essentially unchanged, while the estimated effects of living outside the Reykjavík capital area were generally higher and became significant for all types of community. Residential satisfaction can thus statistically be seen as suppressing the association between type of community and intentions to stay. Respondents in the Reykjavík capital area were generally more satisfied in their communities but also more likely to stay.

In the third model, interaction terms were added to estimate potential differences in the effects of family factors on staying due to community type. Each block of interaction terms was tested separately before inclusion in the full model. The effects of having a spouse and children or spouse only on the odds of being a stayer differed significantly by community type, but no significant interaction effects were found for being a single parent or having the closest family in the community. Only the significant blocks of interaction terms were included in the full model.

Significant positive interactions were found between all types of non-metropolitan communities and living either with a spouse and children or only with one's spouse, while the main effects of these predictors became non-significant. This indicates that such living arrangements were associated with being a stayer in non-metropolitan communities but not in the Reykjavík capital area. Being a single parent did not have a significant main effect on staying and no significant interactions were found with community type.

5.2 | Family and being a satisfied, ambivalent, or dissatisfied stayer

Figure 2 presents the total share of satisfied, ambivalent, and dissatisfied stayers as well as the proportion of Intended leavers across the five types of communities. Overall, 77% of Icelanders were satisfied with living in their current community, and only 14% expected to move permanently away in the future. However, there were statistically significant differences between community types ($p < 0.001$) with 78%–83% classified as *Satisfied intended stayers* in the Reykjavík capital area, Southwest exurban region, and the Provincial towns but only 64%–69% in the smaller villages and farming communities. The proportion of leavers was conversely only 11%–13% in the more densely populated types of communities compared to 18%–23% in the villages and farming communities ($p < 0.001$). The majority of the Intended leavers were rather or very dissatisfied.

About 9% of the population was estimated to be *Ambivalent* or *Dissatisfied* stayers, but the relative proportion of each group differed between types of communities. Only 1%–2% of the respondents in the more densely populated capital area, exurban region, and provincial towns were *Dissatisfied* stayers compared with 8%–10% of the respondents in the more sparsely populated provincial villages and farming communities. The proportion of *Ambivalent* stayers was much more evenly distributed, with 7% in the capital area and 3%–5% in all other types of communities.

Multinomial logistic regression analysis (see Pampel, 2020) distinguished between *Satisfied stayers*, *Ambivalent stayers*, *Dissatisfied stayers*, and intended *Leavers* across all types of communities. *Leavers* were the omitted reference category, and the odds ratios can thus be interpreted as the odds of being a *Satisfied stayer*, *Ambivalent stayer*, or a *Dissatisfied stayer* rather than a *Leaver* given a particular characteristic, compared to the odds of having that outcome in the absence of that characteristic. Table 3 shows the OR calculated as exp(B) and the 95% confidence interval (CI) for each OR. The statistical significance of differences between two ORs for the same predictor can be gauged by comparing their CIs. If the confidence intervals between two ORs do not overlap the difference between the ORs is interpreted as statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

With regard to having family in the household, the results of the earlier binomial logistic regression suggested that living with a spouse was associated with staying, with an additional effect of having both a spouse and children in the household. The multinomial model, however, revealed significant differences by level of residential satisfaction. Having both a spouse and children in the household significantly predicted being satisfied (OR: 1.68, $p < 0.001$), ambivalent (OR: 1.34, $p < 0.05$), and dissatisfied (OR: 1.59, $p < 0.05$) stayer while having only one's spouse in the household predicted dissatisfied staying (OR: 1.33, $p < 0.01$), compared with living alone or in other arrangements. Similar to the results of the binomial model, single parents were not significantly different from those living alone or in other arrangements.

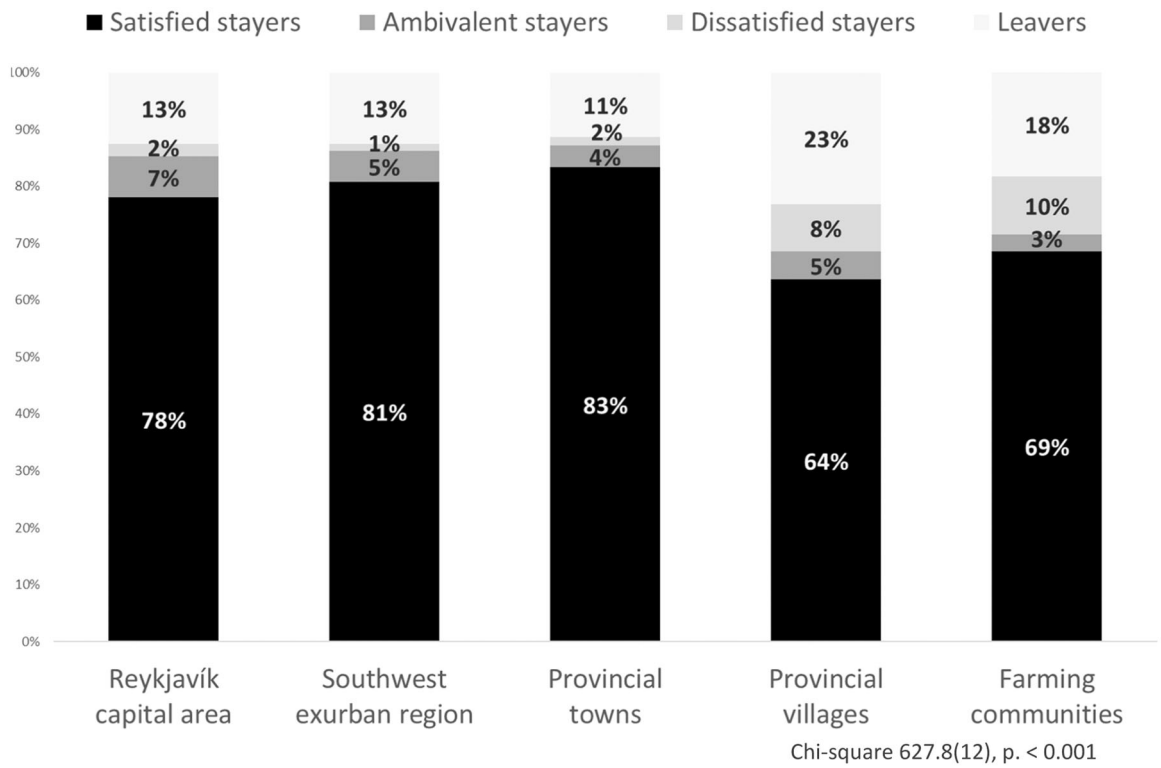

FIGURE 2 Proportion of satisfied, ambivalent, dissatisfied stayers, and intended leavers in different types of communities in Iceland.

Consistent with the results of the earlier binomial model, Table 3 shows that having most or all the closest family in the community predicted being a stayer. This effect was not significantly different between satisfied (OR: 2.03, $p < 0.001$), ambivalent (OR: 1.85, $p < 0.001$), and dissatisfied stayers (OR: 1.70, $p < 0.001$). Also consistent with earlier results, the multinomial model showed that having some but not most or all of one's closest family in the community was significantly associated with being less likely to be a satisfied (OR: 0.49, $p < 0.001$) or dissatisfied stayer (OR: 0.57, $p < 0.01$). A similar albeit non-significant pattern was found with being an ambivalent stayer OR: 0.72, $p > 0.05$).

The earlier analysis showed that once differences in residential satisfaction and interactions with family composition are taken into account, respondents in the Southwest exurban region are less likely to be stayers than respondents in the Reykjavík capital area. However, Table 3 shows that there were no significant differences in the odds of being a satisfied ($OR_{95\%}$: 0.83–1.34) or ambivalent stayer ($OR_{95\%}$: 0.60–1.04) between these two groups. Exurban respondents were significantly less likely (OR: 1.40, $p < 0.05$) to be dissatisfied stayers than their counterparts in the capital area.

Respondents in the provincial towns were, in contrast, significantly more likely to be satisfied stayers (OR: 1.25, $p < 0.05$) but significantly less likely to be ambivalent stayers (OR: 0.62, $p < 0.001$) than respondents in the capital area. There were no significant differences in the odds of being a dissatisfied stayer in the provincial towns compared to the capital area ($OR_{95\%}$: 0.51–1.20). Finally, while the earlier analysis showed that respondents in provincial villages and farming communities were significantly less likely to stayers than their urban counterparts, the results of the multinomial model suggest that they were also less likely to be satisfied (OR: 0.44, $p < 0.001$ and OR: 0.66, $p < 0.001$, in villages and farming areas, respectively) or ambivalent stayers (OR: 0.34, $p < 0.001$ and OR: 0.26, $p < 0.001$, respectively). Respondents were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied stayers in the provincial villages (OR: 1.78, $p < 0.001$) and, in particular, the farming communities (OR: 3.17, $p < 0.001$), compared to the Reykjavík capital area.

The earlier binomial logistic regression results suggested that while stayers were more likely to have never lived elsewhere, having grown up in the community did not have any additional predictive value. According to the more nuanced multinomial regression model shown in Table 3, both never having lived elsewhere and having grown up in the community did predict being a satisfied stayer (OR: 1.62, $p < 0.001$ and OR: 1.98, $p < 0.001$, respectively), an ambivalent stayer (OR: 1.53, $p < 0.001$ and OR: 1.76, $p < 0.001$, respectively), and a dissatisfied stayer (OR: 1.91, $p < 0.001$ and OR: 1.71, $p < 0.001$, respectively). In other words, long-standing ties with the community predicted all three types of staying to a similar degree.

6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Family relationships can constitute a vital source of unconditional and reciprocal social support, encompassing emotional support in difficult times, informational support for decision-making, instrumental support

TABLE 3 Multinomial logistic regression model: Odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals for levels of (dis) satisfaction among stayers based on community and family residence (leavers as reference).

	Satisfied stayers	Ambivalent stayers	Dissatisfied stayers
Family in the household			
Spouse and children	**1.68** (1.45–1.95)	**1.34** (1.04–1.73)	**1.59** (1.17–2.15)
Spouse only	1.14 (0.99–1.29)	0.88 (0.70–1.11)	**1.33** (1.04–1.69)
Single parents	0.91 (0.74–1.11)	0.58 (0.39–0.87)	0.79 (0.48–1.30)
Alone or other	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)
Closest family in the community			
Most or all in community	**2.03** (1.62–2.53)	**1.85** (1.33–2.58)	**1.70** (1.15–2.52)
Some in community	0.**49** (0.39–0.62)	0.72 (0.51–1.02)	0.**57** (0.38–0.85)
None in community	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)
Type of community			
Southwest exurban region	1.13 (0.95–1.34)	0.79 (0.60–1.04)	0.**57** (0.36–0.91)
Provincial towns	**1.25** (1.05–1.48)	0.**62** (0.47–0.82)	0.79 (0.51–1.20)
Provincial villages	0.**44** (0.38–0.51)	0.**34** (0.27–0.44)	**1.78** (1.31–2.43)
Farming communities	0.**66** (0.55–0.79)	0.**26** (0.18–0.37)	**3.17** (2.25–4.47)
Reykjavík capital area	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)
Residential history			
Never lived elsewhere	**1.62** (1.38–1.91)	**1.53** (1.18–1.98)	**1.91** (1.49–2.46)
Grew up in community	**1.98** (1.78–2.21)	**1.76** (1.46–2.13)	**1.71** (1.41–2.08)
Sociodemographic characteristics			
Female	**1.17** (1.06–1.29)	0.88 (0.74–1.04)	0.**71** (0.60–0.86)
Age group			
18–25 years old	0.**52** (0.44–0.62)	0.**39** (0.28–0.54)	0.**11** (0.07–0.19)
26–30 years old	0.**71** (0.59–0.86)	0.**63** (0.46–0.88)	0.**43** (0.29–0.65)
31–40 years old	1.05 (0.89–1.24)	0.84 (0.63–1.11)	0.79 (0.57–1.10)
41–50 years old (ref.)	1	1	1
51–60 years old	1.12 (0.94–1.34)	1.10 (0.82–1.49)	1.28 (0.93–1.76)
61–70 years old	**1.31** (1.08–1.59)	0.94 (0.66–1.32)	**1.51** (1.06–2.13)
71 years or older	**3.71** (2.91–4.74)	**1.52** (1.02–2.28)	**3.74** (2.56–5.46)
Immigrant parent(s)	0.**69** (0.58–0.82)	0.76 (0.54–1.07)	0.90 (0.64–1.28)
University degree	0.**86** (0.77–0.95)	0.**64** (0.52–0.78)	0.**53** (0.43–0.67)
Perceived affluence	**1.21** (1.15–1.28)	0.**72** (0.65–0.79)	**1.20** (1.08–1.33)
Model fit			
Cox and Snell	0.14		
Nagelkerke	0.17		
Chi-square (*df*)	2110.5 (63)	$p < 0.001$	
N	**17,038**		

when specific tasks need to be completed, and financial support in times of need (Coleman, 1988; House et al., 1988). Such familial social support can be an important factor when weighing the advantages and disadvantages of staying or leaving the community of residence (Clark et al., 2017; Ermisch & Mulder, 2019; Morse & Mudgett, 2018; Mulder & Malmberg, 2014). While prior research has demonstrated the importance of family for residential satisfaction and staying in the community, it is not clear to what extent such effects can be attributed to either living in a household with other family members or having family in the community at large (Mulder, 2018).

This study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the role of family in residential satisfaction and residential decision-making processes. First, we showed that both families in the household and family in the community predict staying, net of residential satisfaction. Second, we showed that these familial factors relate differently to the odds of being a satisfied, ambivalent, or dissatisfied stayer rather than a leaver. Third, we showed that these patterns also vary between respondents in the city, the exurban region, and provincial towns, villages, and farming communities. Finally, we expanded the cross-cultural evidence base by studying these processes in Iceland, a small, geographically isolated European country with somewhat unique settlement patterns.

Our findings are in line with earlier research demonstrating that residential satisfaction is the strongest predictor of staying (Erickson et al., 2012; Oh, 2003; Stewart et al., 2011; Stinner & Van Loon, 1992) and that most people expect to stay in their current community (Cooke, 2013; Morse & Mudgett, 2018; Thissen et al., 2010). However, we found that residents of the provincial villages and farming communities were both significantly less likely to be satisfied or ambivalent stayers, and significantly more likely to be dissatisfied stayers. Although people in the Reykjavík capital area were most likely to be stayers in general, they were also more likely to be ambivalent or dissatisfied stayers than respondents in non-metropolitan communities. These findings are in line with earlier research on the appeal of smaller urban centres in rural spaces in different countries (Bjarnason et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2004; Geyer & Geyer, 2017; Gkartzios et al., 2017; Halfacree, 2008; Sandow & Lundholm, 2020; Vias, 2012) and prior. In addition, our results show that while both family in the household and family in the community predict staying net of residential satisfaction, such familial factors relate differently to being a satisfied, ambivalent, or dissatisfied stayer across the urban–rural continuum.

The odds of being a stayer were significantly higher among those living with their spouse, with or without children in the household. Interestingly, this effect was found in all non-metropolitan types of communities but not in the capital area. It is not entirely clear why we only found the positive effects of living with a spouse on residential satisfaction and staying in non-metropolitan areas. Johannesdottir (2023) has argued that the social life of rural areas in Iceland is dominated by a "couples' culture" where those who are single, divorced, or widowed are marginalised. Future research could assess the role of such marginalisation in our pattern of findings and to what extent this holds true for non-metropolitan areas in other countries.

Our results furthermore show that having one's spouse and children in the household increased the odds of being a stayer, regardless of residential satisfaction. Living in a household as a couple without the presence of children was only associated with higher odds of being a dissatisfied stayer. This is somewhat consistent with earlier research on tied migration, highlighting the necessary compromises involved in parenthood, marriage and cohabitation (Cooke, 2013). Joint residential decisions in a household with adults and children may involve a myriad of different and conflicting needs and preferences, which may simply lead to a certain degree of inertia, independent of residential satisfaction. A couple without children may be more likely to be faced with a decision where "compromise" involves one spouse simply yielding to the residential preferences of the other, hence being more likely to be a dissatisfied stayer. Interestingly, single parents were not more likely to be satisfied, ambivalent, or dissatisfied stayers than those living alone or in other arrangements, perhaps reflecting that they were not residentially tied with a spouse.

Beyond the household, we found respondents significantly more likely to be stayers if most or all their closest family live in the community, net of the effects of having one's spouse and/or children in the household. This was true for all types of communities, ranging from the metropolitan Reykjavík capital area to the most sparsely populated farming communities. In our sample, having most or all family members in the community was more strongly associated with being a satisfied stayer than being an ambivalent or dissatisfied stayer, but this observed difference was not statistically significant.

Somewhat unexpectedly, we found that those who have some of their closest family members in the community were less likely to be stayers than either those with none or most or all their closest family members in the community. This effect is observed for all three types of stayers, although it is found to be statistically significant for satisfied and dissatisfied stayers. While further research is needed to confirm and explain this pattern, it is possible that people are more torn between staying and leaving when some of their closest family lives in the community, and others live elsewhere.

Our approach towards family factors has several important limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, our measure of "children in the household" does not take into account differences in the size and complexity of households. The logistics of moving as well as strategic decisions regarding the well-being of children may, for instance, be quite different for a young family with one baby than an older family with several moody teenagers and perhaps children from a previous relationship in the household on a part-time basis. Second, the category of "closest family in the community" is somewhat opaque and may include parents and grandparents, siblings, adult children and grandchildren, as well as uncles, aunts, cousins, and a whole host of more distant relatives. Furthermore, this category refers exclusively to the proportion of closest family members in the community and "most or all family members" can, for instance, in some cases refer to both parents, 8 of 10 siblings, and three of four grown children, while in other cases it may refer only to an elderly aunt as the only living relative. Third, the group of people with no family in the community is likely quite mixed. Some may have been left behind when other family members moved away, others might be newcomers in the community, and yet others may have returned to their place of origin after an absence of many years. Some people in this comparison group may have a large family elsewhere, while others may simply not have any living family members. Finally, our approach focuses exclusively on the presence or absence of people in the household or the community and ignores differences in the quality of social relationships. The effects of living with a spouse on residential satisfaction are, for instance, likely to be

quite different in a happy marriage than in a relationship on the brink of dissolution. Moreover, having close family members in the community may have very different implications for people who enjoy strong and supportive relations with their extended family than those who have suffered substantial estrangement, conflict, or even violence and abuse.

We also found that respondents in urban areas are not only more likely to be stayers, but also more likely to be dissatisfied stayers with most of their closest family in the community. This contradicts the dominant image of the highly dynamic and mobile urban populations and suggests that urban people may be more likely than their rural counterparts to be immobile and "stuck" in their home communities. Future research should examine if this holds in cities in other countries as well, and explore possible explanations for this pattern. Results may also be different in less developed countries, where mechanisms behind the influence of family on (im)mobility may be different. Examples are left behind children with grandparents so that parents can out-migrate (e.g., Ye et al., 2013), and the push out of some children from large farming families because of a lack of non-agricultural jobs (e.g., Eshetu & Beshir, 2017). Future research can explore these and similarly complex situations.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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