

Working Group 17. Demographic issues of Rural Subpopulation: Fertility, Migration and Mortality

The occupational structure and mobility of migrants in the Greek rural labour markets

Charalambos Kasimis, *Professor, Agricultural University of Athens* (kasimis@aua.gr)

Apostolos G. Papadopoulos, *Assistant Professor, Harokopio University of Athens* (apospapa@hua.gr)



Introduction

- As Europe undergoes a rapid demographic change which is expected to drastically increase the ratio of retired to working people, migrant workers are going to become more and more important.
- Structural rigidities in European labour markets imply that shortages of both skilled and unskilled labour in most countries are likely to coexist not only with large pools of unemployed and/or inactive people (both nationals and migrants) but also with continuous inflows of new migrants.

- In acknowledgement of all this the EU Commission issued a Green Paper in 2005, in which it is clearly stated that the EU will need 20 million migrants between 2010 and 2030 to cover the decline of its economically active population.

The demographics of rural Europe

- Today more than 450 m people live in the 'new' EU. Approximately 56% of that population live in rural regions.
- The decline of fertility rates, the ageing of the rural and farm population and the need to accommodate or reduce the flow of young people out of the countryside are a serious challenge to the sustainability of the European rural regions.
- This development reveals the complexity of the rural labour markets and the social mismatch of the demand and supply of labour.

- Almost 17% of rural population in Europe is over retirement age.
- In Southern Europe the proportion of retired people is over 20% and dependency ratios are higher.
- Only 10% of farm holders in EU are younger than 35 and more than 25% are over 65 years old.

Migration to European rural regions

- Some of these demographic imbalances in rural regions have, over the past few years, been halted by two independent developments :
“counterurbanisation” and international migration.
- Strong migration flows to rural regions are a relatively new phenomenon in the European context that has had a significant and growing impact on peripheral and rural areas.

Causes of the expanding employment of migrants in rural regions:

- The demographic decline that followed the rural exodus and the urbanization process.
- The restructuring of agriculture.
- The restructuring of rural areas and the development of new economic activities.
- The social rejection of rural work by indigenous labour.
- The social security payments not always paid by the employers.

Two models of migration in rural Europe

a. The Northern European model

- expanded rapidly after the 2004 enlargement and concerns widely Accession 8 nationals
- is mostly legal and seasonal
- concerns wage labour in a predominantly entrepreneurial agriculture and the food processing industry
- has become a structural factor of rural labour markets extended to hospitality and manufacturing
- shows national differentiations and geographical concentrations

b. The Southern European model

- expanded in the 1980s and early 1990s
- is extensively illegal and seasonal
- provides wage labour for both entrepreneurial and family farms
- comes mainly from Africa and the Balkans
- concerns widely agriculture, rural tourism and construction
- often plays a multifunctional role in rural regions
- shows important national differentiations

Migrants in Greece

- In Greece, a country of the European South, migrants are estimated at almost 1.2 m. (10 percent of the total population).
- They originate from the Balkan countries of Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania which make up two-thirds of the total. Albania accounts for nearly 60% of the total migrant population.
- They are mainly employed in construction (24.5 percent), in services -mostly domestic- (20.5 percent), agriculture (17.5 percent), and commerce, hotels, and restaurants (15.7 percent).

Migrants in rural Greece

- 17% of total migrant population in rural areas
- A structural factor in rural labour markets
- Majority Albanians but recently they are gradually replaced by irregular Asians, Bulgarians and Romanians
- Exclusive contributors of wage labour in agriculture which reached $\frac{1}{4}$ of total labour expended in the sector

Recent research findings

Methodology

- Empirical research was carried out in **two paradigmatic regions** in the context of an INTERREG programme with Italy looking at the regional labour markets and the role of migration (Map 1):
- *A region with dynamic and intensive agriculture* in the Prefecture of Elia (Municipality of Vouprassia), where dynamic and intensive agriculture is, eminently, developing over the past few years involving exclusively migrants as wage labourers
- *A region with a complementary-mixed economy involving agriculture, tourism and construction* in the Prefecture of Zakynthos (Municipality of Arkadion). The large share of migrants in this Prefecture makes the study of migrant flows and complementarity of labour markets particularly interesting.

- The empirical material presented was collected in October 2007 (Prefecture of Elia, Municipality of Vouprassia) and in January 2008 (Prefecture of Zakynthos, Municipality of Arkadion).
- 103 questionnaires were collected in Vouprassia and 102 in Arkadion with the method of 'snow-balling'.
- The sample was drawn by the information provided by the data base of migrants' work permits, and was stratified by nationality.

A quick overview of the data in both regions:

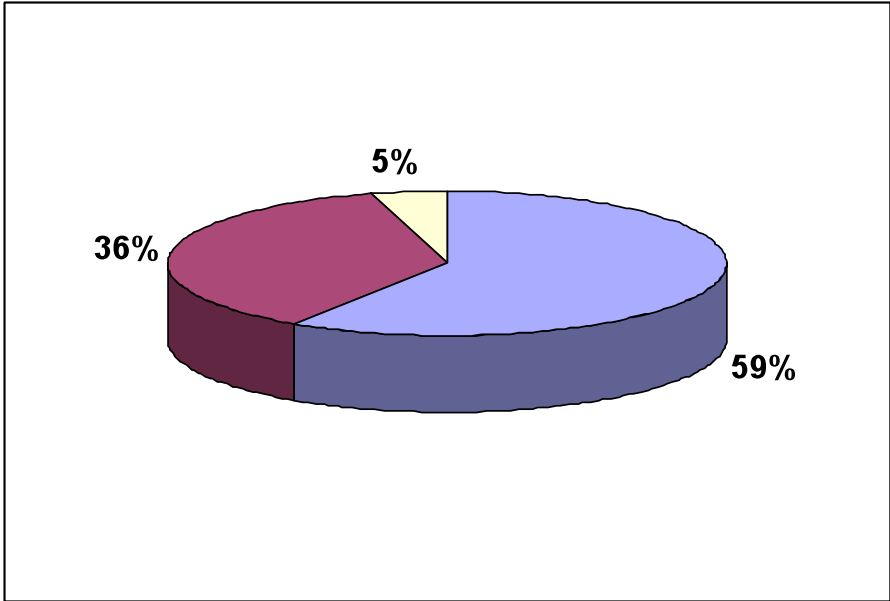
- Almost 74 per cent of the migrants are of Albanian nationality followed by Bulgarians (9 per cent), Romanians (4 per cent), Bangladeshi (8 per cent) and other nationalities (6 per cent).
- Albanians have an average of 10.7 years of stay in Greece compared to 5.3 for Bulgarians, 5.4 for Romanians, 3.9 for Bangladeshi and 5.6 of other nationalities. As time of arrival is related to the status of legality, Albanians, as early comers, have a better record of both family reunification and legalisation.

- Over half of these migrants have lived in the country for more than 10 years. However, there is a steady inflow of newcomers (26.3 per cent have less than 5 years in the two regions), particularly in Vouprassia.
- Nearly 50% of them in Vouprassia are undocumented, badly paid and working and living in terrible conditions.
- In Arkadion 80% are documented, nearly half of them pluriactive and much better paid.

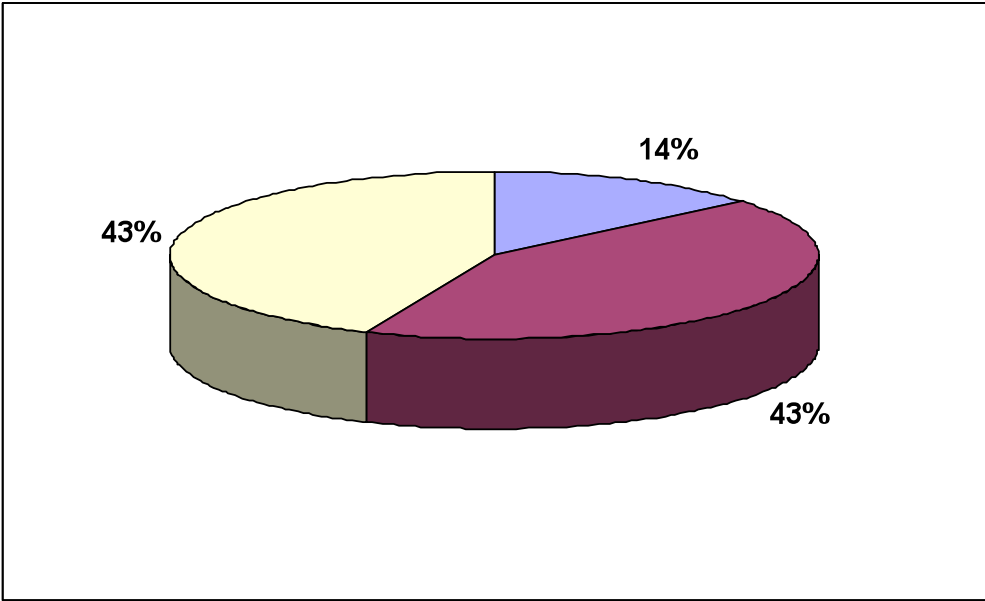
- In Arkadion migrants enjoy better incomes-a reflection of legality-longer stay and better pay.
- Albanians show the best income levels explained again by better employment positions and status of legality.
- Bulgarians and Bangladeshi have low incomes because of their seasonal employment pattern and illegal status in terms of work permit.

- The **employment structure of migrants varies significantly** in the two regions:
- In Vouprassia predominates the primary sector (59%), followed by the secondary (36%).
- In Arkadion the situation is more balanced with the secondary and the tertiary taking 43% of the employment each followed by the primary with 14% (see Figure 1).
- In the secondary sector predominant is construction and in the tertiary tourism.
- 27.6 per cent of respondents in Vouprassia are **pluriactive** while in Arkadion the percentage is a lot higher (41.6%) (*in both areas Albanians are the majority of multiple job holders – 88.9 per cent and 95.2 per cent respectively*).

Figures 1a and 1b. Employment structure



Vouprassia



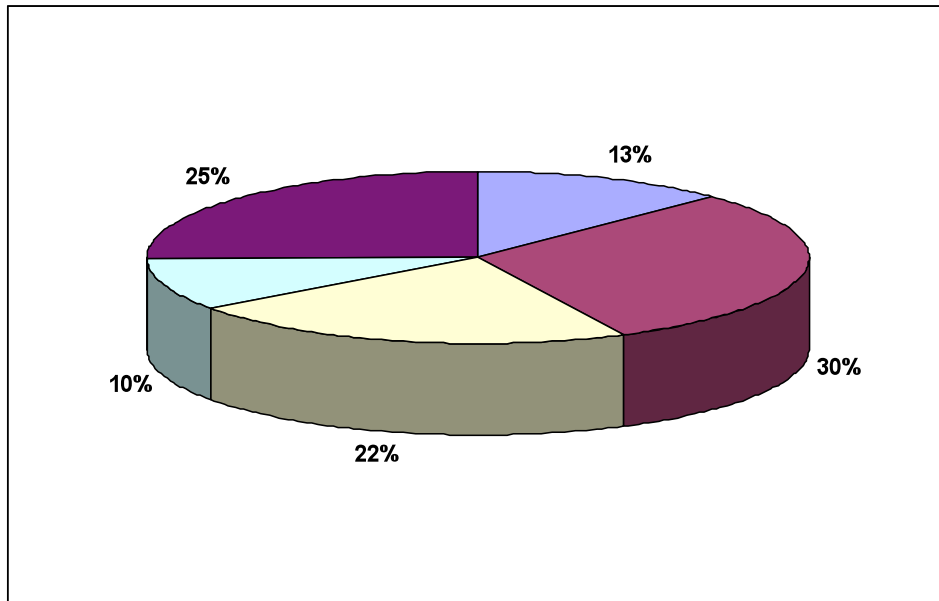
Arkadion

- Primary sector
- Secondary sector
- Service sector

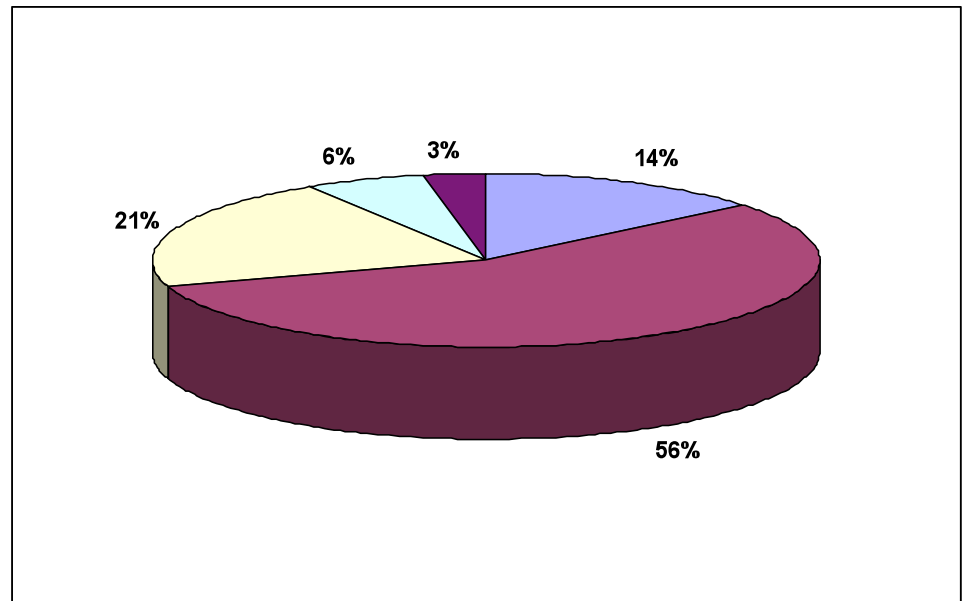


- Different employment conditions in the two regions are reflected in the **satisfaction of migrants from employment**.
- Arkadion shows a significantly higher job satisfaction of migrants:
 - Less than half (43 per cent) are very satisfied with their current employment in Vouprassia, whereas 70 per cent are very satisfied in Arkadion.
 - Almost 25 per cent are not satisfied at all in Vouprassia and only 3 per cent in Arkadion (Figure 2a,2b).

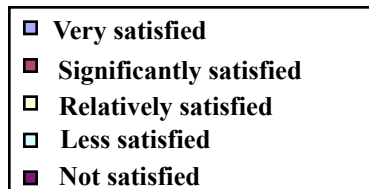
Figures 2a and 2b. Satisfaction from current employment



Vouprassia



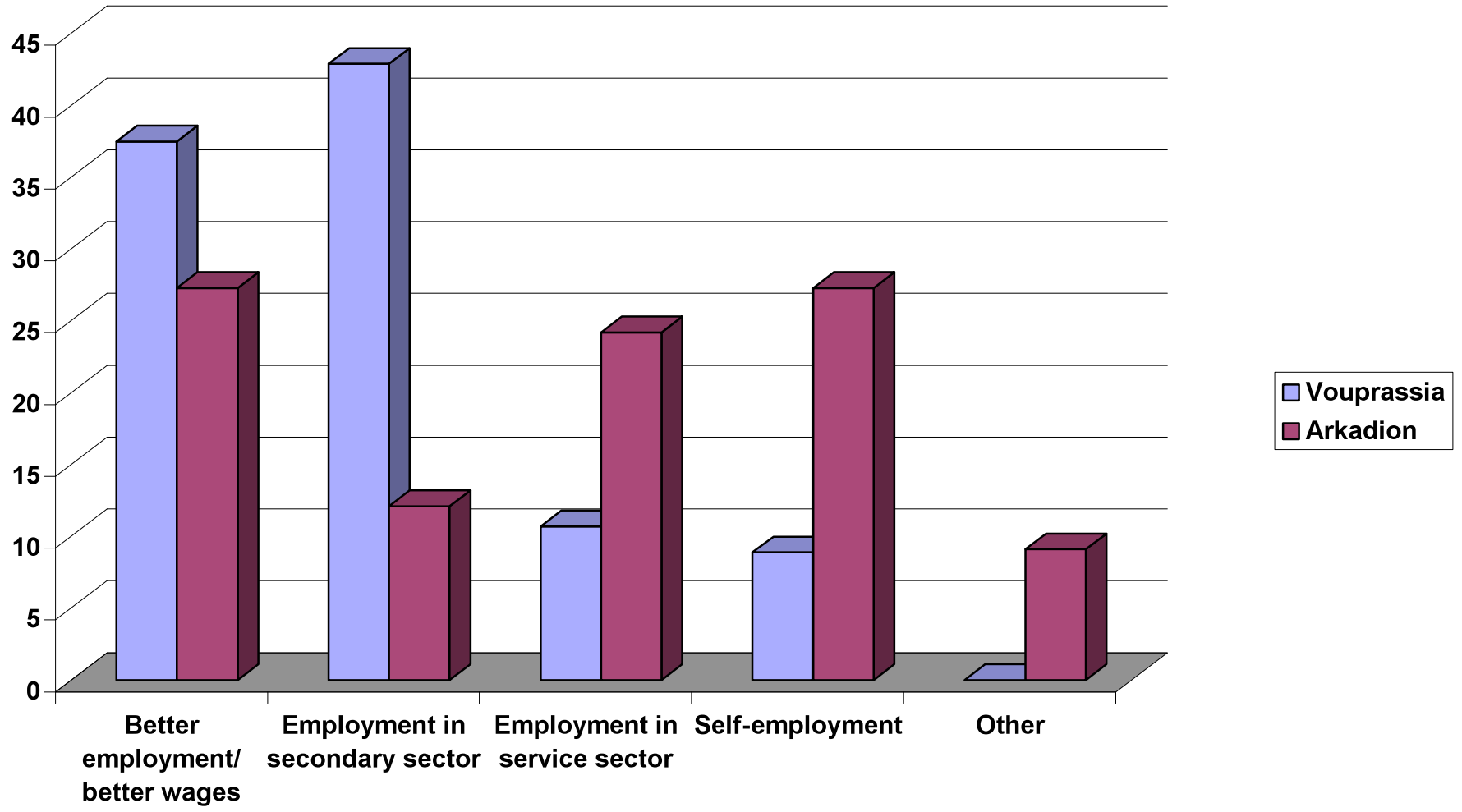
Arkadion



- The differences in the satisfaction from employment are reflected in migrants' inclination to change occupation and place of work:
 - Over 54 per cent are thinking of changing occupation in Vouprassia and about 32 per cent in Arkadion.
 - A significant proportion (20.4 per cent) of respondents in Vouprassia plan to move to another area in search for better employment, while in Arkadion only 2 respondents declared the same.

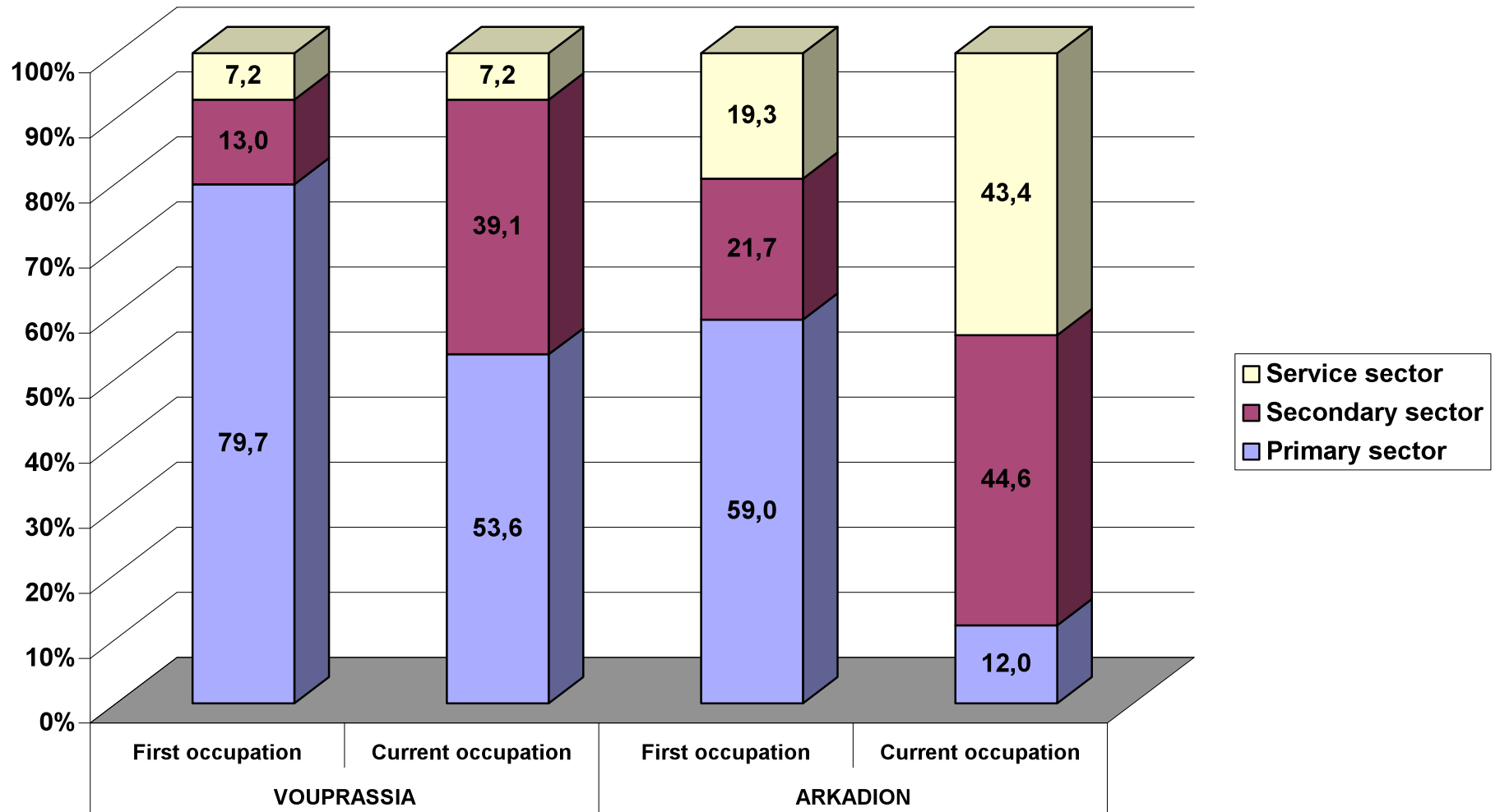
- The preferred occupational change mirrors not only the different employment conditions but the occupational aspirations of migrants in the two regions as well.
- In Vouprassia migrants mostly seek to move out of agriculture and to get better pay while those in Arkadion seek independent employment, work in tourism and even better pay (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Preferred occupational change



- In both regions there is a movement out of the primary sector (agriculture) to the secondary (construction) and the tertiary (tourism).
- In the case of Arkadion the mobility out of agriculture is larger and faster between the first and the present employment compared to that of Vouprassia.
- This mobility is to construction and tourism with a parallel maintenance of agriculture as seasonal employment (Fig. 4).

Figure 4. First and current occupation of immigrants



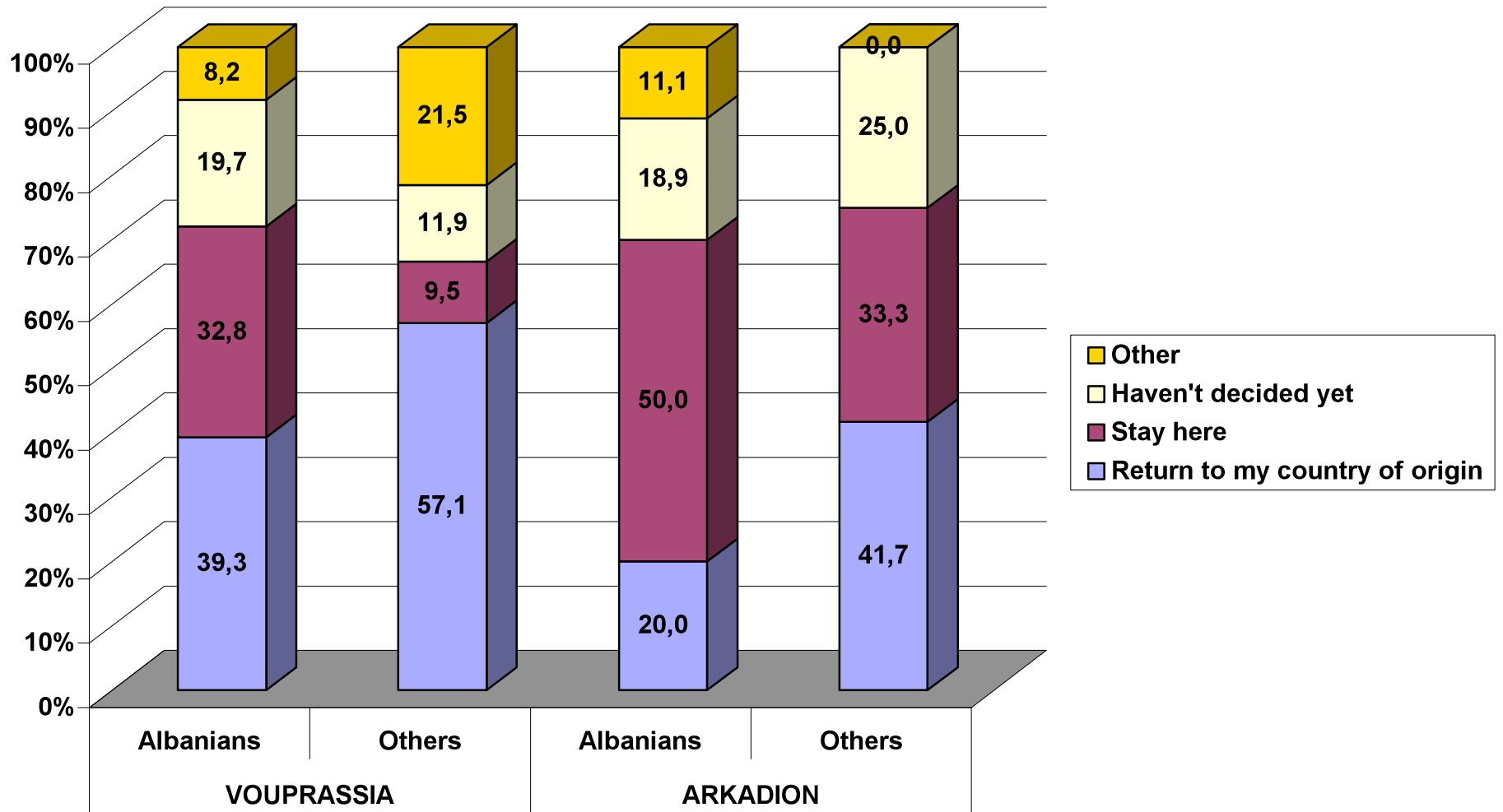
- In Vouprassia occupational mobility is slower compared to Arkadion because of lower duration of stay and limited labour market opportunities. Further, mobility is rather ethnic (Albanian) and within the agricultural sector. Sectoral mobility is lower but when it occurs it reflects longer stay in the country and concerns the Albanians.

Better occupational positions are also reflected in improved integration prospects

- In both regions, the Albanians a better integration record compared to other nationalities due to the following factors:
 - They mostly have their families in Greece
 - They have a longer presence in both areas
 - Their majority (nearly 80%) is documented and has social security
 - They have on average higher incomes compared to the other nationalities
 - They have developed friendly relations with the indigenous population
 - They have better competence of the Greek language and higher flexibility

- The relatively better integration record of Albanians can be seen in their responses regarding their future plans, where a significant proportion of them states that they would like to stay in Greece (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Future plans



CONCLUSIONS

- Migrants have provided a highly flexible labour force.
- They have not supplanted native wage labourers.
- They have rather complemented family labour, improving the organization and management of farms, relieving family members of manual tasks, and facilitating the search for off-farm employment.

- They have contributed to farm preservation, farm expansion and modernization.
- The most appreciated economic effects have been on large-scale farms' expansion, agricultural intensification, and modernization.
- For smaller and pluriactive farms, they have offered the opportunity to preserve the farm while the farm operator and/or family members hold off-farm jobs.

- They have offered great services to other forms of rural economic activities such as construction, tourism, and personal/domestic services.
- There is a generally positive view of migrants' contributions to the local economy further strengthened through migrants' support for the maintenance of social and economic continuity in the Greek countryside.

- The occupational structure, mobility and integration of migrants depends widely upon the legal status, duration of stay, marital status and family life cycle of the migrant.
- Newcomers are mostly irregular, single, badly paid and working in bad conditions. This results in extreme pressure upon older migrants pulling their wages down and often re-orientating their strategies.

- The findings discussed above raise a number of issues related to the structural importance of migrant labour for the peripheral economies and societies and the still unresolved regularisation and integration process.
- Ten years after the first policy initiative nearly half of the migrant population in the country remain in a state of illegality since only $\frac{1}{2}$ a million are holding a work and residence permit in an estimated number of 1.2 million.

- Integration of migrants is still an individual rather than an institutional/policy issue despite the formation of a National Integration Committee from which, however, migrant representatives are excluded.
- Despite the importance of migrants for the Greek economy and demography, Greece has still a long way to go with regards to the design and implementation of a satisfactory migration policy.

- In order for Greece and the EU to resolve the contradiction between the acknowledged needs for labour hands and the designation of restrictive migration policies we need to design and implement flexible policies for legal migrant employment. If that does not happen, rural Greece and Europe will always have to coop with irregular migration and extreme human exploitation.