

The Often Invisible Challenges Posed by Employment-Related Geographic Mobility: A Comparative Qualitative Study of Nova Scotian Health Workers



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Project Background

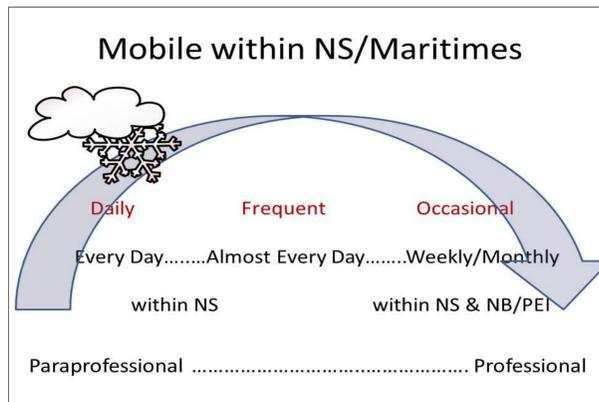
- *On the Move: Employment-related Geographical Mobility (ERGM) in the Canadian Context* is a SSHRC-funded partnership grant. It is a comprehensive exploration of the full spectrum of employment-related geographic mobility from international to local mobility.
- **ERGM is defined** as extended travel from places of permanent residence for the purpose of, and as part of, employment. For example, ERGM can include commuting to work (more than 1 ½ hours each way), traveling as part of work (e.g. homecare workers) and traveling away from your permanent residence to work for a period of time.
- The Nova Scotia sub-component examines: *The Employment-Related Geographical Mobility of Professional and Paraprofessional Healthcare Workers*.
- It focuses on the mobility and working conditions of **professional** (i.e. physicians and nurses, social workers) and **paraprofessional** (i.e. continuing care assistants) healthcare workers in Nova Scotia.

Key Objectives

- There is some literature on ERGM that focused on its impact on the wellbeing of workers. However, relatively little is known about the impacts of ERGM on healthcare workers who are mobile providing home care, home visits, and working at regional clinics.
- **The key objective of this poster is to outline some key issues related to ERGM**
 - (e.g., challenges & benefits), comparing and contrasting professional and paraprofessional healthcare workers, and those involved with ERGM with varying degrees of frequency.

Methods

- Individual qualitative interviews (telephone or face-to-face) were conducted with 23 professional (i.e., nurses, MDs and social workers) and paraprofessional (i.e., continuing care assistants) health workers who travel as part of their work in Nova Scotia and/or the Maritime provinces.
- Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were coded using the AtlasTI software programme, and analyzed for key concepts using the constant comparison method of analysis.

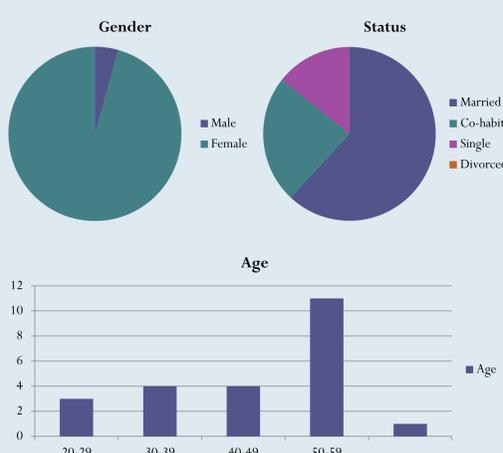


Take Home Messages

- Participants identified a number of benefits of ERGM, as well as a number of challenges.
- Given that mobility is not typically viewed as 'work' the challenges are often invisible, but not to the workers
- Formal care work done in homes by paraprofessionals resonates with the history of the undervaluing of women's domestic labour
- Neoliberal policies as placed more of a burden on paraprofessional workers to cover their costs, etc.
- There is a need to address these challenges by employers and regulatory bodies
 - **Develop more realistic evaluations of the true cost of employees using personal vehicles OR**
 - **Develop a fleet of agency vehicles**
 - **Develop contingencies and risk management strategies for inevitable bad weather in Canada: how can patients' homes be better set up to bridge bad weather days?**

Demographics

Profession	N=23
Professionals	n=15
MD	1
RN	5
LPN	1
Social Worker	8
Para-professionals	N=8
CCA	8



Results

A key difference between many para-professionals and professionals is control over their schedule, and when and where to travel. For example, paraprofessionals who do daily home visits and do NOT have an office or institutional base, often travel even in bad weather as they are not paid if they do not do home visits. In contrast, the **professionals** often have the option of canceling home visits/clinics because they are still paid if they can travel to their office/institutional base.

One of the reasons that I decided to come to (organization), is because I knew there was a lot of driving involved, and I enjoy driving.

There are **some benefits** experienced by both professional and paraprofessional health workers include such as enjoyment of driving, feeling independent, etc.

Especially if I'm driving around all day mobility-wise, I find it does cause...it's a whole lot more energy expended than if I was sitting in my office.

HOWEVER, there are a number of **challenges** which affect **some professional and paraprofessional healthcare workers**:

- Travelling in poor weather conditions
- Traveling on difficult roads, at night etc.
- Economic costs of using personal vehicle (e.g., wear on car, car depreciation, costs of snow tires)
- Fatigue
- Health problems from driving
- Isolation from co-workers
- Negative impacts on social life (e.g., do not want to drive anywhere when get home)

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