

British Academy & British Society for Population Studies

Policy Forum: Diverse Britain

21st July 2015

This is a summary of a discussion on Diverse Britain held at the British Academy under the Chatham House Rule. Presentations were given by Paul Vickers, Dr Nissa Finney and Professor Ibrahim Sirkeci on ONS data on measuring migration, ethnic diversity and labour market outcomes of education among Britain's ethnic and religious minorities.

Migration Statistics – Making sense from the data

Migration is high on the political agenda, so it is important to understand how data sources differ and show us different patterns. Current ONS reconciliation work is aimed at clarifying these differences. In the mid-2000s, the ONS began a migration statistics improvement program towards creating a more coherent picture of migration, which led to the Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, gathering data from the Home Office, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Office for National Statistics.

The conceptual framework for labour market migration includes four main influx groups: students, migrants, accompany/join and asylum. The International Passenger Survey (IPS) is the key source for this, and an indication can be derived from National Insurance (NI) registrations.

The IPS screens approximately 800 000 travellers every year. There are 200 000 000 flows of passengers through UK ports, approximately 0.2% are migrants so the effective sample size is 5 000. This is somewhat akin to looking for 'a needle in a hay stack', however it gives us good data at the national level, broken down by different categories. As with a lot of data, this tends to weaken the closer you break down the data.

Caution is advised when comparing different data sources such as the IPS to new registration for NI numbers. Differences arise because NI numbers do not distinguish between short and long stays, and do not necessarily measure a flow because people do not necessarily apply for them at the point of arrival. Comparing Bulgarian and Romanian migrants for the year ending 2014, the IPS lists a figure of 26 000 total, but new NI registrations over a similar period from both groups gives 193 000. The difference can be explained by those who arrived before and registered once accession rules changed.

In terms of student migration data, there are sources: the IPS, Home Office student visas, and Home Office sponsorship data. This data may not overlap with the IPS due to length of stay, or if visas are for stays of less than a year. The ONS introduced a question to emigrants on the IPS to find out what happened to students when they finish their studies, in order to find out how many people stay or leave. According to the IPS, approximately 180 000 student migrants entered the UK in 2011. Assuming an arbitrary two year time lag, 50 000 of those leaving UK at 2013 were non-EU students according to the IPS; whilst at the same time 112 000 Home Office extensions were granted to students (for any reason).

Ethnic diversity

Britain has become considerably more diverse over the last two decades, however it cannot be said that integration has been achieved as there are still significant levels of inequality.

Parsing the data

There are three types of data source for analysing ethnic groups: the Census, large scale social surveys such as 'Understanding Society', and administrative data such as GP and school registration records. 'Understanding Society' is an exception amongst social surveys in that it has adequate sample sizes. The Census categories for measuring ethnic groups has become the common standard since 1991 when this question was first included in the survey. The Census question leads us to ambiguous categories, however, because it includes dimensions of race, national identity, and world region of origin. People can currently self-identify from 18 options in the 2011 Census, although they can only choose one, meaning categories are mutually exclusive. The idea of an ethnic group as a measure of this mix between minority status and migration history has become encapsulated by these Census categories.

Key differences between ethnic groups

In demographic terms, one important aspect of the differences between these groups is their age structure, which is a product of their immigration history. For example, there are far larger proportions of the Bangladeshi population amongst the younger age groups, compared to the White British population. This has implications for the experiences of these groups; it affects our interpretation of the patterns across all social dimensions, and therefore affects the policy responses that might be appropriate.

Today we have a larger population of ethnic minority groups than we did 10 and 20 years ago, and there is also a greater diversity within the ethnic minority population. Approximately 1/5th of England and Wales identifies as an ethnic minority. For example, Newham is the most diverse district in England and Wales, and in the UK. White British is the largest group, but is still just 17%, closely followed by the Indian population at 14%, and African and Bangladeshi populations, both around 12%. On top of increased ethnic diversity in a lot of urban areas around the UK, notably London, 1 in 8 households is also now ethnically mixed.

Counter-urbanisation

The index of dissimilarity is one measure of segregation, showing evenness and geographic spread of ethnic groups. For all groups that can be compared over 1991, 2001 and 2011, there is a spreading out, showing reduced segregation. This trend of counter-urbanisation, away from cities towards more rural areas, is happening over time in both inner and outer London, and in Metropolitan areas and other large cities, for all ethnic groups. This demonstrates that processes of residential social mobility, which are common across the population, may have more of a role than ethnicity or migrant history.

There is also movement away from areas of ethnic minority concentration, which may in itself be counter-urbanisation because of the close correlation between diverse and urban areas. This is happening in both the White (including White Other such as recent migrants from A8 countries) and ethnic minority groups around the country.

Integration versus inequality

Increasing diversification, ethnic mixing and spatial dispersion can be seen as signs of integration, however, it is not happening for everybody - there are significant levels of inequality between ethnic groups. Amongst the Indian and White groups, higher managers and professionals have a higher chance of moving out of diverse areas. The rates at which these populations move out of diverse areas also decrease with a decrease in socio-economic group.

There are similar patterns of outward movement for professionals from Black and Bangladeshi groups (in London), whilst at the same time White professionals are moving into areas of minority concentration, which can be viewed as a form of gentrification.

Housing deprivation is an associated aspect of inequality. Approximately 40% of recent immigrants are living in housing deprivation, compared to 20% of UK born. Looking at the population as a whole, over 40% of Black and Bangladeshi groups, compared to just under 10% of White British, are living in housing deprivation.

Approximately 30% of the Black and Bangladeshi populations live in over-crowded accommodation, compared to about 6% for the White British population. Also the degree to which minorities are living in overcrowded accommodation compared to the White population has worsened since 2001 throughout England and Wales. Overcrowding appears to have improved in urban centres, but given the complexity of inequality, this does not necessarily mean that the situation is better for either minorities or the White population. The most unequal and crowded areas are Newham (the most diverse Local Authority), Waltham Forest, and Barking & Dagenham in London, as well as Boston, Lincolnshire and Arun, West Sussex.

There are also great differences between ethnic groups in terms of rates of home ownership and private renting. There has been a very marked increase in private renting over the last two decades for all ethnic groups, with Chinese and African groups having significantly higher rates at all three Census time points. The rate of increase for the Indian and Pakistani groups is particularly sharp. At the same time, home ownership has decreased for all groups, proportionally greater for Chinese and Pakistani groups, with a much smaller effect on White and Bangladeshi groups.

Labour market outcomes of education among Britain's ethnic and religious minorities

It is still inconclusive whether we can discuss ethnic (or colour, cultural or religious) penalties in the labour market with conviction. It is perhaps easier to discuss disadvantage, rather than outright discrimination, and choice, albeit less frequently. Migration in itself, and particularly free movement as it applies to European citizens, has inherent features, which encourages people taking up jobs which do not match their skill levels or educational level. When we look at over-education, over-qualification and under-employment, we look at the mismatch in the skill level across certain groups and the majority population across geographies.

Despite much reporting and public debate, the number of migrants crossing international borders is still relatively low, including the UK - which is somewhere between 13 and 14% for the UK - migration is an exception, not the norm. A8 migrants in the UK make up approximately 2% of the total migrant population, and 85% of those A8 migrants are of working age. 58% of A8 nationals are based in London and the Southeast. There are similar patterns for EU15 migrants.

The share of A8 nationals has increased between 2005 and 2012, after the accession changes once the probation period for Eastern European citizens had come to an end. The overall structure is the same across 2005, 2008 and 2012 with the Indian group remaining fairly dominant, with the Irish and Black groups also not far behind.

In the UK, key factors leading to over-education are:

1. knowledge of national labour markets
2. language skills

3. skills specific to certain occupations
4. licensing barriers
5. and accreditations.

Concerning skills mismatch, it is possible to classify and compare the skill levels of occupational groups and educational levels. Unemployment is critically high for Black Caribbeans and Black Africans, as well as Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims, as well as Other Muslims. Overall unemployment levels are 2-3 times as worse. It is also extremely high amongst women in these groups.

Looking particularly at skill levels in 2012, the White EU group is over-represented in the highly educated category of degree or above at 65%, compared to about 40% for the White British population, whilst the whole population average is 42%. The Indian group is not far behind at 62%, and Black African/Other Black at 59%. Similarly, 45% of White A8 nationals have GCSEs or equivalent, compared to about 31% for the White British population, which is also about the national average.

In regression analysis using the LFS, the White A8 group displays the same disadvantage (over-education) throughout 2005 to 2012, covering the probation period for free movement of labour from new EU countries and the financial crash. For the White EU group, there were only 2 years with statistically significant results, and they were in fact not disadvantaged but doing better than the White British category. The Black Caribbean group was statistically significant for only 4 years - 2005, 2009, 2010 and 2012. For Muslim groups, the same pattern of ethnic penalties as shown in the Census analysis was not present here. 2011 and 2012 were significant for the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, but other than that no penalties or disadvantage appears to be present.

For the Black African and Other Black group, all findings were significant showing consistent disadvantage, at a higher rate than all other groups. Age was also significant, with migrants facing fewer penalties or being less disadvantaged as they mature. There is no clear pattern to disadvantage by gender difference. In other variables, public sector workers experience a change toward becoming advantaged in 2011, which may be the result of legislative changes. Part-time workers are also fairly consistently disadvantaged. Comparing London to all of Scotland and Wales, London is a significantly fairer place to work, and Scotland is the least fair.

Discussion

It is difficult to determine with LFS or Census data whether, for example, Polish migrants, are experiencing less disadvantage over time. Some qualitative research does highlight the strategies they're implementing to enhance their language fluency, although this is taking some time. Arrival periods can help determine the affect over time. It is suspected that they will do better over time, but it is not yet known. One possible explanation is adaptation or learning of the system, considering the data shows that older migrants experience less disadvantage. Other analysis on pension protection shows that the number of years in the UK was strongly significant for employee status and pension membership.

Wage disparities between the UK and other countries are another example of why there is potentially strong acceptance of any level of occupation in the first few years in residence, which tapers off as outgoings begin to match earnings and higher levels of employment are sought. Many migrants also still send money home so are possibly willing to accept any job because of the knowledge that whatever it sent home makes such a huge difference in relative terms.

Looking at the intake of A8 migrants around 2004 and 2005 early in the probation period, it is difficult to map out where their qualifications fit in the UK spectrum of qualifications. This potentially hides part of the disadvantages they faced and continue to face, because it is quite surprising that all other groups are over-represented in highly educated categories, yet this group seems to rest somewhere in the A-level or GCSE equivalent categories.

Understanding the mechanisms through which these disadvantages are taking place, such as the route or stream of migration, refugee versus labour, can help to clear up some of these questions, and also by looking at how these mechanisms intersect with factors such as ethnicity.

Different scales of integration are very important - interventions cannot be aimed solely at the individual level, for example, helping the individual to understand labour market access. Interventions need to look also at some of the inherent structural problems, for example with housing issues.

Some feel that the data indicates that discrimination and anti-racism should be back on the agenda as part and parcel of the debate on integration and inequality. ONS analysis of Sheffield in 2006-2007 showed that disabled people and people with long-term health problems were in deprived areas. This may indicate that the problem is wider than just ethnicity, and that there is inherent discrimination against those who struggle in society. It is not clear whether they end up moving to deprived areas by necessity, but there is data to indicate that health, as well as general wellbeing, in deprived areas deteriorates faster.

There are also methodological issues with analysing migrant data as there is not at present a longitudinal survey which follows a particular cohort of immigrants, and other sources such as the Samples of Anonymised Records, require a license and a secure terminal for access. Both the ONS and the Home Office have considered a migrant survey but there are difficulties in getting a decent sampling frame. One potential solution would be to bolster the Labour Force Survey to identify a sample of migrants for key Local Authorities that have need for policies focused on the migrant population, not all Local Authorities will require this.

Going forward, it would be useful to consider whether the ethnic dimension to skills mismatch analysis, as well as the evidence of integration without equality, can offer policy-makers significant new insights into the current productivity debate. Other life outcomes such as health and wellbeing suffer because a focus on productivity does not include or account for them. Furthermore, talking about integration, ethnic minority employment and community cohesion in terms of national security undermines local efforts to integrate by branding it negatively, and also undermines serious local counter-terrorism and counter-extremism efforts which appear to be directed from this central government programme.