Family Migration:

Understanding the Drivers, Impacts and Support Needs of Migrant Families in Scotland

Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population

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Executive Summary

Background

Families play a crucial role in migration and settlement decisions, and in longer-term integration. Decisions to migrate, settle or return are typically made as part of a household unit, taking into account the welfare of the family as a whole. The presence of partners, children and parents can also make a huge difference to how migrants fare in their country of destination, often facilitating integration in health and social systems, education, housing and local communities. However, migration can also create a range of financial, social and cultural pressures for families, which can put strains on relationships and family life, undermine the well-being of children, and limit the capacity of all family members to flourish. These challenges can also stem from poorly designed migration policies, which often produce impediments to keeping families together and to supporting their integration. It therefore matters a great deal how host countries design and implement policies to support migrant families.

The question of family migration has gained significance in Scotland over the past decade. The Scottish Government's population strategy aims to increase net migration to Scotland, and to encourage settlement, especially in areas facing depopulation. This goal has become more urgent given the continued decline in in-migration from EU countries following the end of free movement. Previous EAG reports have argued that long-term integration and settlement across Scotland are key to achieving this goal, and have suggested that supporting families to settle and integrate in areas facing depopulation is a central part of this approach.

Family migration is defined through national policy frameworks and may vary between countries. In general, family migration falls into three main categories of admission:

- **Family formation** occurs where a resident national or foreigner with residency rights marries, forms a civil partnership or other recognised family relationship with a foreigner, and sponsors that individual for admission or status change.
- **Family reunification** refers to family members, also referred to as 'dependants', who migrate after the arrival of a principal migrant who sponsors their admission. The family ties predate the arrival of the principal migrant.
- **Accompanying family** refers to family members (dependants) admitted together with the principal or main applicant (OECD 2017: 8).

The role of families in migration

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the dynamics of family migration, and the challenges and opportunities it creates for migrants and host societies. Families and relationships play a central role in decisions relating to migration and settlement. Families often move in a sequence: a 'pioneer' migrant may migrate first, to reduce uncertainties related to the move. This may imply protracted periods of separation, with negative effects on relationships and especially children. Once in the country of destination, migrant families often face greater challenges in integrating than single migrants. They are likely to bear greater financial costs; may struggle to navigate childcare and schooling systems; and may require additional support in forging connections and friendships in local communities. A particular challenge is finding affordable childcare to enable both parents to work, especially as families will be cut off from their normal family and friendship networks.

Where there are challenges with childcare and finding suitable work for both parents, women are most likely to forego employment. In cases where women are highly qualified, this may trigger a decision to return to the country of origin where childcare is more accessible. Migration can also create strains in family relationships, including through creating dependencies within couples. This is especially the case where residence is contingent on sustaining a relationship, which may make partners (typically women) unwilling or unable to leave an exploitative or abusive relationship. However, migration may also be an emancipatory experience for many people, for example, in relation to norms on gender or sexuality.

Rules on family migration

Migration rules in countries of destination determine which migrant family members can move and settle, and under what conditions. Policies on entry define which family members are eligible for family migration, and who can serve as a 'sponsor' for family reunification or to be joined by a partner from overseas. Such rules often set attainment requirements (e.g. income thresholds), and various conditions such as age requirements (e.g. a maximum age for children to join their parents). National policies also determine the rights of migrants and their families once they have arrived, including length of stay, access to work, access to social and public services, and pathways to permanent settlement and citizenship.

In comparison to other OECD countries, the UK has relatively generous provisions on who may apply to enter or remain in the UK as family members, with the scope including unmarried/cohabiting partners as well as same-sex couples. However, the UK has a minimum income requirement of £18,600 for sponsors to form or reunite with family from overseas policies on family migration; this rises to £22,400 for a partner and one child, and a further £2,400 for each additional child. This requirement has been widely criticised as infringing on the rights of children and on family life. Moreover, as we shall see in Chapter 3, it raises equalities issues, creating disparities in opportunities for family migration across income groups, and thus across different parts of Scotland. Settlement can also be very expensive: the fees associated with applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain and citizenship make it challenging for families to acquire a more stable status in their host country.

According to the widely respected Migrant Integration Policy Index, out of the 58 countries included, the UK ranks second from the bottom for provisions on family reunification. The countries ranking highest are Sweden, Finland, Portugal and Canada.

Migrants in Scotland

The report then turns to an analysis of available data on migrant family in Scotland. Most migrants in Scotland (60%) live in families – in a union and/or with children. This is higher than the proportion for the Scottish-born population, and reflects the younger age structure of migrants.

Migrants in Scotland are significantly less likely to own their own homes, and also enjoy less space in their accommodation than the Scottish-born population. The tendency to rent, rather than purchase, a home is likely to reflect uncertainty over length of stay, and lack of familiarity with the UK housing market. Migrants in the younger and older age groups have slightly lower deprivation levels than UK-born comparators, because of good education, high activity rates and good health. However, single-parent non-EU migrants with children have relatively high deprivation, a pattern of disadvantage that requires further analysis.

Families are more than twice as likely to move to cities in Scotland, compared to rural and remote areas – indeed, family migration has been disproportionately focused on the larger cities and the Central Belt. This means that the contribution of family migration to slowing population decline in remote and rural areas is relatively weaker. While most non-UK births in Scottish cities are from non-EU-born families, in rural areas, EU-born mothers account for a larger share of births. This reflects patterns of settlement by EU migrants, with more flexible free movement rules encouraging migration across all parts of Scotland.

Family migrants in Scotland and the UK since 2000

The report then turns to an analysis of survey data on migrant families across the UK. This data suggests that of those migrant households that have moved to the UK since 2000, the majority are 'mixed': 68% of households that include at least one foreign-born national also include one or more UK-born national. This confirms census-based data that migrant households are more likely to include children; and also that migrant households rely more on rented accommodation than non-migrant households.

Around 60% of migrants currently living in the UK arrived in the UK as single individuals (with many marrying or becoming parents later). However, the share of those arriving as single has declined slightly over time, which may reflect a change in immigration rules. Women are significantly less likely to arrive as single and childless than men – they are more likely to be already married with children when they arrive. EU migrants were more likely to arrive as family migrants than those who came from other countries, reflecting more lenient rules on family migration under EU free movement.

A high proportion of migrants who arrived after 2000 hold a degree-level qualification. Moreover, for migrant households, and especially those with two or more members born abroad, there is a greater likelihood that more than one member holds a degree – suggesting a greater proportion of highly qualified couples. However, migrant households are also less likely to have *all* members employed. Instead, they are more likely to see 50% of the household working, typically reflecting a pattern of a male bread-winner and a female staying at home to care for children. This finding appears to confirm analysis presented earlier about the challenges for women in sustaining work, especially when they have children.

Migrant households are less likely to have no-one employed at all, reflecting the fact that most post-2000 migrants entered as labour migrants. However, despite higher qualifications, migrant households enjoy slightly lower incomes than non-migrant households. Explanations for this difference might include lack of recognition of skills and qualifications, less knowledge of the labour market, or limited access to public funds.

Supporting migrant families

In the final chapter of the report, we set out ten suggestions on how policy at UK, Scottish and local authority level could better support migrant families.

1. Enable family migration to remote and rural areas through bespoke schemes, drawing on good practice from Canada (as outlined in previous EAG reports).
2. Facilitate family reunion and reduce inequalities across income groups and areas of Scotland, by removing the minimum income requirement.
3. Provide better information for family members pre-arrival, so that they can start identifying potential employment, childcare or schools and accommodation.
4. Support family members (and especially 'dependent' partners) to find suitable work, including through enabling flexible working, entrepreneurship, skills recognition and training.
5. Facilitate access to childcare, through providing better information, support networks, and ensuring migrant families access Early Education and Childhood support.
6. Establish advice hubs, providing a range of services and support to migrants, including tailored integration plans. Such hubs could also support non-migrant residents based on need.
7. Promote community and migrant peer networks, building on good practice with English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) networks.
8. Help find suitable accommodation, including providing interim access to appropriate rental accommodation.
9. Reduce the costs of applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain and citizenship, which can hinder families from securing more stable status in Scotland/the UK.
10. Join up pockets of good practice, in order to link up and expand successful initiatives. Relatively small investments can make a significant different to migrant families, helping to provide support for them to thrive.

Introduction

1. Goals of the report

Families play a crucial role in migration and settlement decisions, and in longer-term integration. Decisions to migrate, settle or return are typically made as part of a household unit, taking into account the welfare of the family as a whole. The presence of partners, children and parents can also make a huge difference to how migrants fare in their country of destination, often facilitating integration in health and social systems, education, housing and local communities. However, migration can also create a range of financial, social and cultural pressures for families, which can put strains on relationships and family life, undermine the well-being of children, and limit the capacity of all family members to flourish. These challenges can also stem from poorly designed migration policies, which often produce impediments to keeping families together and to supporting their integration. It therefore matters a great deal how host countries design and implement policies to support migrant families. The right kinds of policies and programmes can help migrants to thrive and realise their potential, and can facilitate integration.

Given the importance of families in migration and integration, it is striking how rarely immigration policies across OECD countries have designed policies that put families at their centre. Indeed, most European countries, including the UK, have viewed family migration largely as a secondary or unintended consequence of labour migration and something to be closely controlled and even restricted. This is often linked to a general goal of restricting levels of immigration, as well as to a view of migration as primarily driven by labour markets needs in the receiving country. Indeed, since the mid-1970s, many European countries have seen family reunion as a form of migration 'by the back door', and as encouraging patterns of longer-term settlement that go against the grain of the state's immigration policy goals.

The question of family migration has gained significance in Scotland over the past decade. The Scottish Government's population strategy[i] aims to increase net migration to Scotland, and to encourage settlement, especially in areas facing depopulation. This is a key part of the Government's goal of mitigating population ageing and decline. This goal has become more urgent given the continued decline in in-migration from EU countries following the end of free movement. Previous EAG reports have argued that long-term integration and settlement across Scotland are key to achieving this goal[ii] [iii], and recognise that supporting families to settle and integrate in areas facing depopulation is a central part of this approach[iv].

This report analyses the role of families in migration and settlement, and considers ways in which policies at local, Scottish and UK level might support and promote immigration and settlement in Scotland. The aim is to highlight the kinds of policies and contexts that can enable migrants to flourish and realise their potential. Among the questions the report addresses are:

- how can Scotland attract families to come and live in Scotland?
- how can the UK Government, Scottish Government and local authorities encourage families to put down roots, especially in regions facing demographic pressures or labour shortages?
- what kinds of support can help migrants realise their potential, whether in terms of developing education and skills, finding appropriate employment, accessing housing and health and social services, or fostering connections with local communities?

2. Definitions

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in its article 16(3)[v] that '[t]he family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State'. This definition leaves open the question of precisely which relationships define membership in a family and on which grounds (biological, legal, economic) they are to be established. Spouses, civil partners, unmarried (*de facto*) partners, parents and children, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren and other 'near' relatives are all part of everyday understandings of family. Yet the question of whether and how these relationships confer rights to live in the same country in a situation of migration is more complex.

Family migration is defined through national policy frameworks and may vary between countries depending on the broader aims of immigration and citizenship policies. In general, family migration falls into three main categories of admission.

- **Family formation** occurs where a resident national or those with residency rights marries, forms a civil partnership or other recognised family relationship with an overseas national and sponsors that individual for admission or status change.
- **Family reunification** refers to family members, also referred to as 'dependants', who migrate after the arrival of a principal migrant who sponsors their admission. The family ties predate the arrival of the principal migrant.
- **Accompanying family** refers to family members (dependants) admitted together with the principal or main applicant (OECD 2017: 8)[vi].

We adopt these definitions in the report, unless otherwise stated. The report also uses the term 'family migration' to refer to processes of migration and integration that implicate families in decision-making and movement; and 'migrant families' to denote couples, their dependents, and wider family networks that include at least one member who has migrated to the host country. We define migrants as people who have been resident for at least a year in the country of destination (ONS). This group is therefore distinguished from, for example, seasonal workers who provide short-term labour over a period of less than 12 months.

It is important to recognise that the categories outlined above are shaped by national policies on migration, which limit the extent to which families can determine the people who constitute their families (Kofman 2004: 245)[vii]. Indeed, state definitions of 'family' in migration policy often lag behind new 'ways of living together' which have evolved for settled populations, imposing more restrictive definitions on migrant households and relationships. Policies that assume the primacy of the nuclear family, headed by a male bread-winner, ignore more extended ties, step-families and friendships which can play a key role in migration, adaptation and settlement (Bonizzoni 2009: 88)[viii].

3. Outline of the report

The report starts with a brief overview of existing studies on family migration, explaining the role of families in migration and settlement, and how migrant families have been shaped, supported or disrupted by contexts in countries of destination. It argues for an approach focused on ensuring that migrant families flourish and realise their potential. This sets the scene for Chapter 2, which reviews different policies adopted across immigration countries in the OECD, exploring the kinds of approaches that have supported or hindered migrant families. Chapter 3 analyses census and administrative data on family migration in Scotland, identifying key patterns and trends. Chapter 4 draws on more extensive survey data on migrant families in the UK to explore how migrant families fare in terms of qualifications, employment, housing and well-being. Finally, Chapter 5 draws on the analysis of the preceding chapters to set out possible options for Scotland, focusing on policies and programmes at the level of local authorities and Government (at both a Scottish and UK level).

1

Understanding Family Migration

There is extensive social scientific research exploring the role of families in migration decision-making and patterns of movement, and how families and relationships affect migrant integration and settlement in host countries. These questions have been debated from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives, focusing on different levels and agents of decision-making (Massey et al. 1993)[ix]. In this chapter, we provide a concise overview of key literature, presenting findings that are relevant to designing policies on family migration. We start by reviewing research on the role of families in migration decision-making; section two examines studies on families and integration, and considers some of the conditions under which migrant families are likely to flourish.

1. Families and migration

Sociological and anthropological studies of migration have demonstrated the central role of family relations, responsibilities and ties in decisions relating to migration. As Eleonore Kofman notes, 'the decision to migrate is seldom the product of individual decision-making; its timing is closely related to the family life cycle and major events in the life-course of the first and second generation of immigrants, and not necessarily understood as a direct response to labour market opportunities' (Kofman 2004: 248-9)[x]. The importance of life-course has also been highlighted in demographic research exploring the interplay between family change and migration (Kulu and Milewski 2007)[xi]. Power relations and hierarchies within the family relating to different family members' roles and responsibilities play an important part in determining who can move, when and how, often leading to highly gendered and age-specific trends in migrant cohorts (Bonizzoni 2009: 83)[xii]. This means that regardless of whether individuals migrate alone, households move together, or family members migrate in sequence, families are often involved in making decisions, which are driven not only by economic considerations but also by social, cultural and emotional expectations and aspirations.

Studies of networked migration have shown the significant role that both immediate family and wider networks of extended family, friends and acquaintances can play in facilitating subsequent moves, both practically and psychologically, as 'pioneer' migrants reduce some of the uncertainties involved, providing information and practical support to new migrants. Moreover, for certain social groups and/or sending locales (countries, regions or sometimes towns and villages) the ubiquity of migration experiences can lower cultural and social barriers to migration as it becomes an 'expected' feature of life (Kõu et al 2017)[xiii]. Networks should not however be seen as automatically forming, or as leading to an ongoing flow of increased migration. Work on migration systems has shown that over time, a combination of positive *and* negative experiences and consequences of migration can feedback into decreasing patterns movement and settlement (De Haas 2010)[xiv].

The importance of families in migration decision-making have also been increasingly recognised in economic theories of migration. Neoclassical economic models have traditionally treated migrants as individual decision-makers, maximising utility by making rational choices driven by a combination of largely economic push and pull factors in sending and receiving countries (Massey et al 1993; Sjaastad 1962; Todaro 1976)[xv]. However, the theoretical neatness of these models has been at odds with the empirical evidence of migrant behaviour (Abreu 2010: 10; Boswell 2008)[xvi], not least in relation to the importance of families and wider social networks in influencing decisions to migrate (Mincer 1978)[xvii]. New Economics of Labour Migration theories sought to bridge this gap by acknowledging the role of households in decision-making (Massey et al 1993)[xviii]. Such theories also recognise the incompleteness of information available to potential migrants concerning economic conditions in both sending and receiving contexts, which might undermine 'rational' decision-making (Stark and Bloom 1985; Stark 1991)[xix]. This new set of theories therefore paid attention to the ways in which migration decisions are deeply influenced both by concerns for and needs of other family-members and by the transfer of information and provision of support through migrant networks.

Family decisions on migration are also deeply influenced by policy frameworks for migrant workers. The clear-cut categories of family formation, family reunification and accompanying family members defined by policy often become blurred from the perspective of the migrant families, and how they themselves manage and experience migration. Moreover, rights and opportunities across these categories can vary within tiered migration systems. Those moving through more highly skilled routes to longer-term and better-paid posts are more likely to be supported by employers who often provide family relocation packages and support to assist with the practical aspects of a move (Ryan and Mulholland 2014: 257)[xx]. This assists families to plan moves in line with policy categories and to put their plans into practice in relatively straightforward ways, based on fuller knowledge of the consequences for a range of family members. For example, Kõu et al's study of highly skilled Indian migrants moving to the UK or the Netherlands, found that consideration of a spouse's future prospects for employment and career progression played an important role in migration choices and decisions for this group of migrants.

For instance, Sonali (26, NL) estimated that her career would have had a long delay without the spousal benefits of her husband's high-skilled migrant visa. Shashi (39, UK) had previously lived in the USA with his family, where his wife was willing to work, but could not do so due to restrictive visa regulations and experienced concurrent staying at home as a semi-voluntary prison sentence (Kõu et al. 2017: 2798).

For those moving on more restrictive visas to lower paid or more temporary forms of employment, a family's intention to move or not often evolves over time, and may not align neatly with policy categories. Many families, for example, send a 'pioneer' first to test the waters, without making an explicit decision on whether other family members will follow. This decision to join the pioneer family member may depend on whether practical issues of securing income, accommodation and so on have been resolved. However, initial plans for a short separation, followed by return or family reunification, do not always match realities. New configurations of family and protracted periods of separation – what Bonizzoni terms the 'transnational phase' – are a common experience and have considerable repercussions for family relationships, caring arrangements and emotional ties (Bonizzoni 2009; Ryan 2011)[xxi]. The strains that prolonged separation places on families both emotionally and practically can lead migrants to seek ways to reunite, within a migration system if they can, or circumventing it if they must. This may involve pioneer migrants working to build up sufficient income to act as sponsors and/or seeking to switch visas to more accommodating routes. It may mean other family members visiting on tourist or family visitor visas and then seeking ways to stay for longer or to find employment and apply for a working visa in their own right. Overly restrictive rules may lead migrants to find ways of reuniting family through irregular migration, which can in turn store up bigger problems for the future including poverty and precarity, inequality, and irregular status of adults who arrived as children.

Studies have also shown that families are involved not only in the initial decision to move, but also in migrant experiences and decisions once a family is spread across national borders. Indeed, many migrant families can be described as transnational families, meaning that nuclear and extended family members 'live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, in short, "familyhood, even across national borders"' (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002: 3)[xxii]. Members of such transnational families can be included in decisions regarding remittances, divisions of labour, the emotional and practical aspects of caring for family members, choices and dynamics relating to integration, length of stay, and decisions to return (Kay and Trevena 2018)[xxiii].

In more open migration regimes, such as the framework for free movement of EEA nationals, families could migrate together or in a chain which expanded over time to include more extended family and a wide variety of relationships. This may not have been the only (or even the primary) reason given for migration, but it was often an important aspect of deciding both where to go and in supporting processes of longer-term settlement. As Kay and Trevena found in their largescale study of EEA nationals in Scotland, many migrants followed this pattern. The authors describe the situation of Ewa from Poland, who moved to a small town in rural Scotland with her husband and children, motivated by the desire to join her parents and siblings who had moved to Scotland a few years earlier:

> As far as [coming to] Scotland is concerned, my whole family lives here. They all came one after the other. I was the last to join. All my siblings... My parents... (…) We were on our own there [in Poland] so we wanted to come here... (…) Why shouldn't you take advantage of the opportunity to be together? (Ewa, 37, married, 3 children, Poland) (Kay and Trevena 2018: 22)

Less obviously migration-related areas of policy can also play an important role in migrant decision-making. A study of LGBT migrants from Central and Eastern Europe to Scotland found that state recognition of non-heterosexual relationships, equalities provisions and anti-discrimination legislation could influence decisions surrounding migration and settlement. Participants in the study explained that opportunities to form families, to marry, to adopt children, as well as perceived lower rates of homophobia and more prominent anti-discrimination legislation played a role, alongside economic and other motivations, in their decisions to move to and stay in Scotland (Stella et al. 2018)[xxiv]. Dilemmas and considerations of this nature indicate the importance of holistic policy-making which takes account of the conditions and support which migrant families need in order to settle and flourish. Thus, where there is a policy desire to encourage migration and settlement to a particular region or areas, more generous policies not only facilitating entry for family members but also supporting migrant families to settle successfully can play an important role.

2. Families, integration and settlement

Clearly, the integrity of family life is a crucial aspect of well-being, and the ability to form and sustain the family can be a key part of integration in host countries. However, as the OECD has noted, family migrants 'tend to face more integration challenges and have usually less favourable outcomes' than economic migrants who enter and stay on their own (OECD 2017: 6)[xxv]. In this context, we define integration as a 'two-way process where societal actors and institutions as well as individuals and groups "take part in" and "become part of" society' (Eggebo and Brekke 2018)[xxvi]. This process is multi-dimensional, spanning many domains of a migrant's life: the structural, social, cultural, civic/political domains, as well as intersecting aspects of a migrant's identity (Charsley et al 2016)[xxvii]. It is important to highlight that this process of integration is not linear. Changes in an individual migrant's and a migrant family's life, as well as changes in the country and community in which they live, may affect how they engage and the outcomes that they experience. In particular, societal inequalities and barriers such as discrimination can drive poor integration outcomes, as much as or even more so than the characteristics or actions of the individual migrant or migrant family (Charsley et al 2016).

The dynamics of integration for families are strongly shaped by policy frameworks regulating migrants' rights and conditions of stay, as well as programmes to support incorporation. In this respect, migrant families have distinct and additional needs from those of lone migrants (who are often assumed to be male, labour migrants). Such support may include assistance with finding work, suitable housing, education (for both children and adult family members), health, or welfare

support, especially for those in lower-earning jobs. Migrant families may also be in greater need of financial assistance or advice than native-born families since, even where they are employed at similar wage levels, they may face additional costs associated with migration. For example, remittances and a lack of accumulated wealth to invest in other forms of income generation often put them at a relative disadvantage with regard to overall household income (see Chapter 4 below).

For migrant families with children, the processes of immigrating, integrating and settling can be especially complicated and challenging. There is strong evidence that aspirations for their children's future employment and prosperity can be the primary motivator for family migration (COFACE 2012)[xxviii]. When children become embedded in a new environment, and particularly where parents assess that they are well integrated into the education system, this can also be a strong reason for families to extend their stay and settle long-term in an area (Ryan and Sales 2013; Kay and Trevena 2018)[xxix]. However, children also often require a degree of tailored support and assistance to adapt to a new school environment, to forge connections and friendships and to improve their English (Sime and Fox 2015)[xxx]. This can be overlooked, on the assumption that children will adapt more quickly and easily than adults. Parents may also be anxious about a new and unfamiliar system of schooling and early years care, and require additional support and culturally sensitive and linguistically accessible information and guidance.

Moreover, immigration rules and charges often make it difficult or impossible for primary migrants to move with their children, or to reunite soon after their move. Thus, children may only be able to join parents once they are sufficiently financially secure or have met accommodation or other requirements of immigration rules. This can create challenging relationships between parents and their children as well as between partners, even after family reunification (Sime 2018; Bonizzoni 2009)[xxxi]. It can also make the process of adaptation and language learning more difficult, as children need to adjust to a new cultural context, schooling system, and so on.

Families can also face a lack of family support and affordable childcare. Migrant families are often cut off from the family members 'who are generally crucial' to provide childcare needs (Bonizzoni, 2009, 90)[xxxii]. The absence of grandparents and other extended networks of family and friends can make the difficulties of arranging child care particularly acute and a barrier to women entering the workforce. While dual-earner migrant couples without children might be able to manage their working lives quite flexibly, with one or both partners potentially commuting considerable distances to work or even living away from home during the week, after the birth of children this becomes more difficult. In such scenarios, migrant women are much more likely to give up their jobs (Kõu et al 2017: 2791)[xxxiii]. Indeed, studies of highly skilled migrants in dual-earner families have found that inter-generational patterns of care can prompt return migration of families, especially where spouses (usually wives) are also highly educated (Kõu et al. 2017: 2791; Saarela and Finnäs 2013)[xxxiv]. Such return migration commonly occurs either following the birth of a child or when a grandparent is no longer able to care for themselves.

Other solutions include (temporary) migration of grandparents (mainly grandmothers) to assist with childcare, especially of very young children and infants (Plaza 2000; Barglowski et al. 2015; Bojarczuk and Muehlau 2017)[xxxv]. In these situations, the opportunity to apply for a visitor visa allowing for a relatively long stay of family members, especially in periods of intensive care requirements, for example immediately after a birth or during periods of prolonged ill-health of a family member, can make a difference in experiences of and decisions regarding longer term settlement, as well as in supporting women's labour market participation (Kõu et al. 2017: 2795)[xxxvi]. Kõu et al. found that the six-month family visitor visa available in the UK was welcomed by highly skilled Indian migrants, whilst the three-month parental visa available in the Netherlands was negatively evaluated and prompted some to consider leaving (Kõu et al. 2107: 2796)[xxxvii].

Conversely, the tightening of UK regulations regarding the rights of settled migrants to bring over elderly or infirm relatives since 2012 has caused tensions and stress, and may also lead long-settled professionals and others to leave. A survey undertaken by the British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (BAPIO) and Association of Pakistani Physicians of Northern Europe (APPNE) in August 2020 found that, '91% of the respondents reported having feelings of anxiety, stress and helplessness due to this issue. Nearly 60% felt that this adversely affected their work and professionalism and 80% have thought about relocating [either to their home countries or to other countries with more flexible rules]' (BAPIO 2021)[xxxviii].

The common (and often internalised) trope of the 'hardworking migrant' can also have significant repercussions for family life. A widespread experience amongst migrant families is for both parents to work long hours, sometimes in shifts, creating challenges in achieving a work/life balance. Under these circumstances, and in the absence of wider networks of relatives and friends living locally (Sime 2018)[xxxix], children will be in particular need of after school provision but also of youth services, clubs and facilities for teenagers and older young people. Where families have been separated for a significant period of time, this can also create challenging relationships between parents and their children as well as between partners, even after family reunification (Sime 2018; Bonizzoni 2009)[xl].

It is also important to recognise the particular relationship challenges faced by migrant families. For couples, migration can raise issues of power and access, disrupt identity, and upset gender norms and expectations since the migrant spouse or partner usually has fewer legal, social and professional resources and opportunities than the sponsoring spouse or partner (Bonjour and Kraler 2015)[xli]. Migration can reinforce or exacerbate dependencies and tensions within couples (Strasser et al 2009)[xlii]. Income requirements can prove especially taxing on a couple if the destination country's migration or labour market policies limit or prevent the migrant spouse or partner from access to paid work. In systems where residence permits are contingent on sustaining the relationship, this creates a further form of dependency on the sponsor, which may make them unwilling or unable to leave an abusive or exploitative relationship (Bonjour and Kraler 2015). More generally, policy approaches that focus predominantly on labour migration have been criticised for separating the economic sphere, typically associated with males and the world of work, from the social, 'linked with females and the private sphere' (Kofman 2004: 256)[xliii]. This false separation may overlook the impacts and contributions of other members of migrant families and households to the labour market and wider economy, making false assumptions about the education levels and employment activities of spouses (Kofman 2004: 248)[xliv].

In order for integration policies and support services to meet the needs of migrant families effectively, consideration needs to be given to the diverse experiences of families, and their understandings of family life. This can be particularly significant in regard to family-related caring roles and responsibilities, and how they are divided amongst members of both immediate and more extended family, as well as how such division of roles articulates with opportunities and (in) equalities in other areas of life. Migrant experiences of 'family migration' often go beyond what is formally recognised by migration policies as 'family'. These may include relationships with friends or significant others which are not (yet) formalised, or relationships with extended family both in the UK and in the country of origin. A wide variety of culturally embedded expectations of intergenerational care, support and household membership of extended family members underpin migrant definitions and experiences of family (Kõu et al, 2017)[xlv]. Importantly, these vary depending not only on the country of origin, but also levels of education, religious beliefs and ethnicity, rural/urban background of different groups of migrants. Family responsibilities and divisions of labour can be significant for decision-making regarding patterns of migration and for experiences of settlement.

While host country support measures should be aware of varied cultural expectations and practical aspects of family lives, this should not become a mono-dimensional, universalising or romanticised view of migrant families. Understanding the importance of and facilitating extended family caring and support can be crucial to successful integration and the ability of families to thrive in a new country. But it should also be recognised that escaping some of the constraints and expectations of family can be a reason for and benefit of migration for some, as has been shown for example in recent studies with LGBT migrants (Stella et al. 2018)[xlvi]; and with women migrants at different stages in the family life cycle (Kõu et al 2017: 2797; Kay and Trevena 2018)[xlvii]. As argued by Kõu et al., 'Migration can therefore be viewed as a pathway towards individualism, especially in the gender dimension' (Kõu et al 2017: 2801)[xlviii]. Policies and practical training and support for service providers need to allow time and resource to be invested in 'getting to know' different groups of migrants living in an area and tailoring support and services to their needs and aspirations.

The many challenges of new economic, social and cultural contexts, as well as time-consuming processes of establishing and maintaining working lives and meeting family responsibilities leave many migrant families with very little time or energy for the work of integration and engagement with civic and community activities or even language learning and professional development (SSAMIS 2016)[xlix]. These realities feed into equalities issues and can reinforce social distance between, and mutually negative assumptions about, host and new migrant populations (Kay and Trevena 2021)[l].

Summary

- Families and relationships play a central role in decisions relation to migration and settlement. Such decisions are driven not only by economic considerations (enhancing the economic well-being of the family), but also by social and cultural expectations and aspirations – for example, the desire to give children a better education.
- Families often move in a sequence: a 'pioneer' migrant may migrate first, to reduce uncertainties related to the move, followed by other family members, once the 'pioneer' has found work, housing, and a better understanding of the place of destination. This may imply protracted periods of separation.
- Family decisions are deeply influenced by policy frameworks for migrant workers; these define which family members may move, what their rights will be, and what kind of support they will receive. Where such frameworks do not accommodate family structures and needs, migrant families may attempt to circumvent the rules.
- Migrant families often face greater challenges in integrating. They are likely to bear greater financial costs; may struggle to navigate childcare and schooling systems; and may require particular support in forging connections and friendships in local communities.
- A particular challenge is finding affordable childcare to enable both parents to work, as families will be cut off from their normal family and friendship networks. In many cultures, grandparents play a crucial role in childcare, and this will not be available for most migrants – noting that EU migrants were an exception, as free movement rights allowed migrants to be accompanied by extended family.
- Where there are challenges with childcare and finding suitable work for both parents, women are most likely to forego employment. In cases where women are highly qualified, this may trigger a decision to return to the country of origin where childcare is more accessible.
- Migration can also create strains in family relationships, including through creating dependencies within couples. This is especially the case where residence is contingent on sustaining a relationship, which may make partners (typically women) unwilling or unable to leave an exploitative or abusive relationship.
- The many challenges of new economic, social and cultural contexts, and the time-consuming task of maintaining working lives and meeting family responsibilities, leave many migrant families with very little time or energy for integration and engagement with local communities.

2

The Policy Context

Opportunities for families to migrate, settle and integrate are strongly shaped by migration regimes operating in countries of destination. Migration rules determine which family members can move and settle, and under what conditions. They establish the rights of migrant family members in relation to the labour market, access to social and health services. And they set the criteria for families to transition to longer-term residence, settlement and citizenship. At the same time, a range of other regulations and programmes in host countries affect families more generally, including in the spheres of employment, childcare, school systems and welfare. This makes it challenging to unravel the effects of specific regulations on family migration from the impact of the overall portfolio of immigration regulations (Bratsberg and Raaum 2010)[li].

Such rules often act as a barrier and constraint to the well-being and flourishing of migrants. This chapter discusses some of the most significant barriers and opportunities that migrant families face. We start by setting out the relevant international human rights frameworks in which family migration policies need to be located. We then adapt the classification introduced by Eggebø and Brekke (2018)[lii], distinguishing between regulations that impact family migrants at pre-entry and entry, and once they have arrived in the host country[1]. These phases may overlap at different points and migrant families may have members who are in different phases of immigration. We use this framework to outline current UK regulations, and place these in comparative perspective.

1. International and European human rights frameworks

Several human rights frameworks that the UK and Scotland are parties to include articles relevant for migrants and migrant families[2]. As such, Scottish family migration policies should take these into account. Two significant ones are:

- **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).** The UNCRC is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people (aged 17 and under) a comprehensive set of rights to help fulfil their potential. These include rights relating to health and education, leisure and play, fair and equal treatment, protection from exploitation and the right to be heard. The UK signed the convention on 19 April 1990, ratified it on 16 December 1991 and it came into force on 15 January 1992[liii]. On 16 March 2021, the Scottish Parliament unanimously voted for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill to become law, meaning public authorities will need to comply with children's rights. The Bill will come into effect six months from Royal Assent. Only a handful of nations have directly incorporated the UNCRC into domestic law, and should the Scottish Parliament succeed in passing this Bill, it would become the first country in the UK to do so[liv].
- **European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).** The ECHR is an international treaty between the 47 states that are members of the Council of Europe. It sets certain standards of behaviour and protects basic human rights and freedoms. The UK signed the ECHR in 1950 and ratified it in 1951. The rights and freedoms enshrined also became part of UK domestic legislation via the Human Rights Act 1998[lv]. ECHR Article 8 (protection of private and family life) and Article 12 (right to marry and start a family) may be particularly

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1 It should be noted that while many of these policy regulations, such as attainment requirements and attachment tests, have been introduced to facilitate better integration of family migrants into the destination country, research does not support this claim. In many cases, it shows that family migration regulations have had a deleterious effect on integration.

2 This is not an exhaustive list as arguably other human rights frameworks and UK and Scottish domestic legislation may apply to migrant families, especially in regards to racial, ethnic and cultural discrimination. A more expansive listing of human rights frameworks and domestic legislation in this regard can be found at the Equality and Human Rights Commission's website: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/what-are-human-rights/history-human-rights-britain#:~:text=1950%3A%20the%20European%20Convention%20on%20Human%20Rights&text=The%20Convention%20was%20signed%20in,in%20a%20court%20of%20law.

germane to consider when setting policies for migrant families. It should be noted that Brexit could impact the protection of human rights in the UK due to the government's decision to end the effect of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights upon leaving the EU, although it is worth noting that there is no direct connection between the UK's membership of the ECHR and membership of the EU[lvi].

These conventions make clear that the treatment of the family and of children are important objects of the international human rights framework, and these considerations should (continue to) act as the cornerstone of UK and Scottish approaches.

The European Union has also adopted relevant legislation on family migration, including the 2003 Directive on Family Reunification. This directive established rules governing which non-EU nationals could bring their family members to the EU member state in which they were legally residing, although the UK (along with Ireland and Denmark) decided not to opt into the directive. The directive is applicable if the sponsor has been legally residing in a Member State for a certain period of time, holds a residence permit valid for one year or more, and has 'reasonable prospects of obtaining the right of permanent residence'.
The directive does not apply to family members of EU citizens, whose rights are governed by free movement rules (set out in Directive 2004/38). The UK's membership of the EU meant that EU/EEA nationals benefited from a more expansive set of rules on family reunion, compared to those applicable to third country (non-EU/EEA) nationals. The free movement framework enabled EU/EEA nationals to constitute and re-constitute family and household arrangements across borders in a variety of configurations. Studies revealed a wide range of relationships and flexible patterns of migration with extended family members coming and going, moving more gradually towards settlement, bringing over other relatives and close friends with whom they might share households, caring responsibilities, monetary and material resources (Kay and Trevena 2018)[lvii].

2. Policies on entry

We now consider the range of national regulations that govern family migration, distinguishing two phases. The first phase covers pre-entry conditions, as well as the procedures for ascertaining eligibility for entry. The key areas of regulation are outlined below.

- **Scope.** This aspect of regulation determines which people are eligible as family migrants. At stake here are the kinds of relationship that states recognise as constituting 'family' and thus confer eligibility for family migration. The UK has taken a relatively liberal approach in determining who may apply to enter or remain in the UK as family members of British citizens or non-British settled residents. The scope includes spouses or civil partners; fiancé(e)s or proposed civil partners; unmarried partners (including same-sex partners); children; and, in a smaller number of cases, adult or elderly dependent relatives (Walsh 2021: 2)[lviii]. Cohabiting or same-sex couples are allowed to enter so long as they can prove that they form 'relationships akin to a family' (Kofman 2004: 246)[lix]. Other adult family members may enter only under considerable restrictions. In the overwhelming majority of cases, they must, 'demonstrate that they require long-term personal care to perform everyday tasks and that such care can be provided only in the UK by their sponsor, and without recourse to public funds' (Walsh 2021: 2).
- **Sponsor status.** This determines who can serve as a sponsor. Many systems, including that of the UK, permit certain categories of labour migrants to be joined by their spouse or partners and children under a certain age. For example, under the UK Skilled Worker route, primary migrants can be joined by dependants. Student migrants in the UK whose course lasts longer than nine months may also be accompanied by dependants.

Beneficiaries of international protection (including refugees) are permitted to apply for family reunification. By contrast, in most countries, migration programmes covering lower-earning or lower-skilled employment, or temporary or seasonal programmes, are far less likely to allow migrant workers to be accompanied by their families. 'Sponsor status' also covers rules on which residents of the host country can act as sponsors of overseas partners or other family members coming to live with them. UK citizens, and residents with indefinite leave to remain (ILR), may sponsor a spouse from overseas to come and live in the UK, if they meet the relevant attainment requirements (see below).

- **Attainment requirements.** This dimension concerns the conditions that need to be met by sponsors or members of migrant families in order to qualify for entry. It may cover factors such as income, education, housing and employment. In the UK, sponsors have to meet income and housing requirements before they are entitled to bring family members into the country. Since July 2012, those sponsoring family members must show that they meet the minimum income requirement of £18,600 for a partner; £22,400 for a partner and one child, plus £2,400 for each additional child. This is in addition to visa charges, and the NHS surcharge (see below). Primary migrants entering under work or student routes seeking to bring dependants with them also have to demonstrate they have enough money to support each dependant. For migrants entering under the Skilled Migrant programme, primary migrants need to have maintenance funds of £285 for a partner, £315 for one child, and £200 for each additional child.

- **Attachment requirements.** Many immigration systems have introduced measures that 'test' whether a migrant's or a migrant family's ties to a country are stronger than to any other country. Such tests are controversial (Bonjour and Kraler, 2015, p.1413)[lx]. In the UK, those seeking to bring in dependants require proof that the main applicant and dependant have been living together in a relationship for at least two years at the time of application, and marriage and civil partnerships must be legally recognised in the UK. There must also be an intention to live together for the entire period of stay in the UK.

- **Age requirements.** These requirements set the age at which family members may be admitted to the country, typically as part of regulations on family union or re-unification. They can refer to the ages of spouses and parents who are admitted as the dependants of primary migrants. Most commonly, such requirements govern the maximum age at which children are allowed to reunite with their parents or carers. For example in the UK, parents may be accompanied by or reunite with children under the age of 18. However, for children aged 16 or 17, the sponsor will need to demonstrate that the child is not living an independent life, for example is not married or in a civil partnership.

- **Assessment of integration potential.** Many countries have introduced pre-entry tests, which are a condition of permission for families or family members to move to the host country. Such tests often aim to assess the 'integration potential' of migrants, for example through language tests, or demonstrating factual knowledge about the host country. In the UK, non-EU/EEA nationals applying to enter or extend their stay as a partner of a British resident need to demonstrate a level of English language proficiency (there are some exceptions to this – see Walsh 2021).

- **Procedural barriers.** Host countries may impose a range of other conditions on entry, including fees, in-person interviews, the requirement to apply from the country of origin, or a six-month waiting period, for example in the case of refugees. The UK requires sponsors being joined by dependants to pay £475 for a visa for each child. Almost all categories of migrants have to pay an annual healthcare surcharge of £624 per year for adult family members, and £470 for students or children.

3. Policies on stay

This phase covers both the rights and restrictions imposed on migrant families once they have been admitted, and the rules governing the length of stay and transition to longer-term residence and citizenship acquisition. The key dimensions that states regulate cover:

- **length of stay.** Where families accompany a primary migrant who is moving for the purpose of work or study, they will typically be permitted to stay for the full duration of that person's residency. For example, in the case of skilled migrants, spouses and children may join the primary migrant, and any subsequent extension of their stay will also mirror that of the primary migrant. Typically, migrants and their families who enter through immigration routes can apply for indefinite leave to remain after five years of residence.

  Similarly, family members joining a UK resident from overseas will need to have been in the UK for five years before they can apply for ILR. This status allows them to stay independent of their relationship to the sponsor, thus ending their legal dependency on the sponsor.

- **work.** Families joining a primary migrant may have restricted access to the labour market. In the UK, family members permitted to enter generally have the right to work. Indeed, the UK allows spouses of students, work permit holders and migrants undertaking training to enter with the right to work, setting it apart as 'more liberal' than many other European states (Kofman, 2004: 247)[lxi]. Migrants entering the UK on a family visa are in fact less restricted in their choice of employment than a principal migrant entering for example on a Skilled Worker (formerly Tier 2) visa, since the jobs which they take up do not have to meet skills or salary thresholds.

- **social and public services.** Typically, migrants entering to form or reunite with family do not have recourse to public funds, meaning that they cannot access benefits (except those based on National Insurance contributions), until they receive Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). Children in migrant families typically have access to (and are expected to attend) school, although access to further or higher education and training may be limited for those without ILR. In the UK, migrants are required to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge (see above).

- **citizenship.** Access to citizenship is typically enabled after a period of several years, although this depends on the programme through which migrants entered. In the UK, those who have ILR may apply for citizenship one year after being granted this status. Applicants need to prove that they are of 'good character' (in relation to aspects such as debt, criminal offenses, or unpaid tax); demonstrate that they understand English (unless they are under 18 or over 65 years of age); and pass the Life in the UK test. There is a charge to apply for citizenship of £1,330 for adults, and £1,012 for children. It is worth noting that this charge was recently deemed unlawful by the Court of Appeal, as it failed to comply with the Home Secretary's statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children[3].

3 The decision can be accessed here: https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2021/193.html

4. UK policies in comparative perspective

UK regulations on family migration are generally designed to allow migrants to move or be joined by their families; but they are also oriented to ensuring that migrant families are economically stable, and to preventing perceived abuse of family migration routes. For this reason, rules on entry are generally fairly rigorous, setting a range of conditions and fees that can make family migration or reunion unfeasible for many migrants.

In particular, the minimum income requirement for sponsors to form or reunite with family from overseas has been criticised as conflicting with family and children's rights. Analysis by the Migration Observatory suggested that around 43% of 'white' employees and 51% of 'non-white' employees in the UK did not earn enough to sponsor a non-EEA partner. The figure rose to 51% and 59% (respectively) employees unable to sponsor a spouse with one child (Sumption and Vargas-Silva)[lxii].

The UK also charges relatively high fees for ILR and citizenship compared to other countries. While a number of European countries have introduced more stringent criteria for permanent residency and citizenship over the past decade (Stadlmair 2018)[lxiii], the UK stands out as one of the most expensive. These hurdles to entry and settlement imply that less financially secure families enjoy more restricted rights to family reunification. Such differentials are likely to exacerbate existing geographical disparities in patterns of migration, as we shall see in Chapter 3. Residents or families in remote and rural areas, where salaries tend to be lower, will be less likely to be able to bring over families, or to achieve more stable residency status.

More generally, as we saw in Chapter 1, many of the assumptions about family migration underlying policy frameworks do not accommodate their characteristics and needs. For example, spouses may want or need to work, but can be impeded by limited support and being cut off from their childcare networks. Families may not be able to afford the fees for applying for ILR or citizenship, especially if they have several children. This can have the counter-productive effect of discouraging people from applying for more stable status, thereby impeding integration and settlement.

One way of gaining an overview of UK policies in comparative perspective is through the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPX)[lxiv], which is used to evaluate and compare what governments are doing to promote the integration of migrants in 58 countries across 8 policy areas: access to nationality, anti-discrimination, education, family reunification, health, labour market mobility, permanent residence, and participation. In its 2020 ranking, the MIPX assesses the UK immigration system as 'halfway favourable' for overall migrant integration, classifying its approach as 'Temporary Integration', putting it in the same category and ranking range with countries such as France, the Netherlands, Italy and Germany[lxv].

However, in relation to provisions on family reunification, the UK ranks second from the bottom among MIPX countries, scoring a 'slightly unfavourable' rating. The MIPX notes in its assessment that migrants 'face unfavourable, restrictive requirements and definitions of family. Family-reunited migrants do not enjoy a fully secure future.'[lxvi] In contrast, the four highest-ranking countries in the MIPX all score strongly in the family reunion policy area with either 'favourable' or 'slightly favourable' family reunification policies, as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPX) 2020 Top Four Highest-Ranking Countries for Migrant Integration[lxvii]

Country and overall MIPX rank	MIPX overall score (out of 100)*	MIPX classification of country's approach to migrant integration**	MIPX family reunion score (out of 100)*	MIPX family reunion categorisation***
Sweden	86	Comprehensive integration	71	Slightly favourable
Finland	85	Comprehensive integration	67	Slightly favourable
Portugal	81	Comprehensive integration	87	Favourable
Canada	80	Comprehensive integration	88	Favourable

It is worth noting the types of policies that have contributed to higher ratings for these countries.

Sweden has more generous policies on family reunification. Sponsors do not need to be citizens or permanent residents, but only need to have a right to reside of one year or more. Moreover, the income threshold for sponsors is much lower: Swedish citizens or residents sponsoring non-EU family members do not need to demonstrate they can economically maintain incoming family members, but only that they can support themselves (Bech et al 2017)[lxviii]. The intention of this measure was to 'promote integration by increasing incentives for people to obtain work, earn their own living and move to municipalities where they have a good chance of obtaining work and a place of their own to live' (cited in Bech et al 2017). Sweden, like the UK, has a universal health system, and migrants are not required to pay a healthcare surcharge.

Canada has a more expansive definition of the scope of family members who can join a relative in the country. This includes a higher cut-off age for children (under 22, rather than under 18 as in the UK), although reunification may be subject to caps. Canada also has an unusual provision whereby citizens and permanent residents may sponsor one extended family member (of any age) if the sponsor does not have a close relative who is a Canadian citizen or resident, and they do not have a close living relative they could sponsor instead, such as a spouse, child or parent (Hooper and Salant 2018)[lxix]. Policies also allow adult residents to be joined by parents or grandparents, although there is an income requirement and a commitment to support dependants for 20 years. There is also an annual quota for this route, which typically becomes exhausted very rapidly. However, there are long waiting times for family reunification, with the implication that immigrant families often remain separated for prolonged periods. As in the case of Sweden, rules on income thresholds are also less restrictive. Sponsors must assume financial responsibility for family members for three years for a partner, or longer for a child until they turn 22. However, there are no income requirements for sponsors.

Portugal has developed widely praised approach to migrant families, within its wider package of support for migrant integration. Local Centres of Migrants' Integration Support (CLAIM) consist of 99 information and support offices across the country, which are partnerships between central government and regional government, local authorities, and civil society groups. They cover issues such as regularisation, citizenship, family reunification, housing, work and entrepreneurship, social security, health and education.

In Chapter 5, we consider in more detail possible lessons learned and recommendations for supporting family integration at Scottish and local authority level. Before doing so, Chapters 3 and 4 provide data on the situation of migrant families in the UK and Scotland.

Summary

- Migration rules in countries of destination determine which migrant family members can move and settle, and under what conditions. Such rules should align with international and European human rights framework. Notably, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child codifies rights on health and education, leisure and play, fair and equal treatment, protection form exploitation and the right to be heard. The European Convention on Human Rights (which is not an EU instrument, but a treaty between 47 member states of the Council of Europe) enshrines the right of protection of private and family life, and the right to marry and start a family.
- National policies on entry determine which family members are eligible for family migration, and who can serve as a 'sponsor' for family reunification or to be joined by a partner from overseas. Such rules often set attainment requirements (e.g. income thresholds), and various conditions for family members to migrate such as age requirements (e.g. a maximum age for children).
- National policies also determine the rights of migrants and their families once they have arrived, including length of stay, access to work, access to social and public services, and pathways to permanent settlement and citizenship.
- In comparison to other OECD countries, the UK has relatively generous provisions on who may apply to enter or remain in the UK as family members, with the scope including unmarried/cohabiting partners as well as same-sex couples, and (dependent) children under 18. Family members can generally access work, indeed partners joining a primary migrant under the skilled workers programme can access work at any salary or skills level.
- However, the UK has a minimum income requirement of £18,600 for sponsors to form or reunite with family from overseas policies on family migration; this rises to £22,400 for a partner and one child, and a further £2,400 for each additional child. In addition, families need to pay visa charges and the NHS surcharge. This requirement has been widely criticised as infringing on the rights of children and on family life. Moreover, as we shall see in Chapter 3, it raises equalities issues, including across different parts of Scotland.
- Settlement can also be very expensive; the fees associated with applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain and citizenship making it challenging for families to acquire a more stable status in their host country. For example, the charge to apply for citizenship is £1,330 per adult, and £1,012 per child.
- On the widely respected Migrant Integration Policy Index, out of 58 countries, the UK ranks second from the bottom for provisions on family reunification. The countries ranking highest are Sweden, Finland, Portugal and Canada.

3

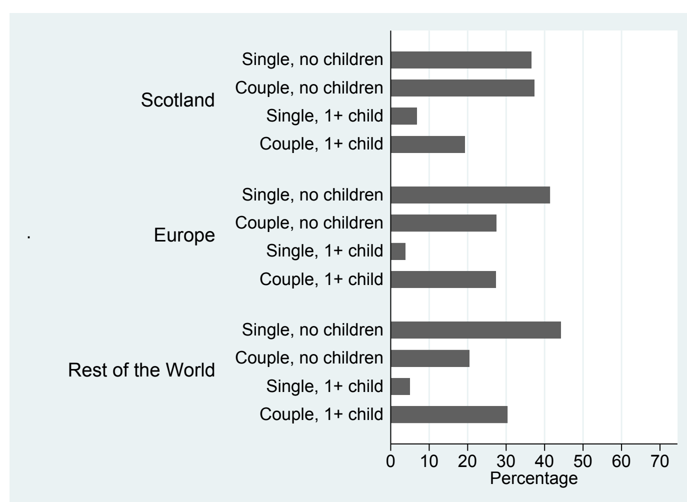
Migrant Families in Scotland

This chapter provides an overview of migrant families and households in Scotland. It starts by examining what we know about migrant families in Scotland, including the family profile of those who arrived in Scotland between 1990 and 2011, and the distribution of migrant families across Scotland. In part two, we analyse migrant households in Scotland and the UK, comparing them to non-migrant households.

1. Migrant families in Scotland

We start by drawing on the 2011 census to provide an overview of family type in Scotland, comparing immigrants to the Scottish-born population. We use the 2011 census microdata on individuals aged 19 and older who were born outside Scotland. We focus on so-called 'lifetime migrants' who arrived in Scotland between 1990 and 2011.

Figure 1. Migrants and non-migrants in Scotland by country of birth and family type, 2011



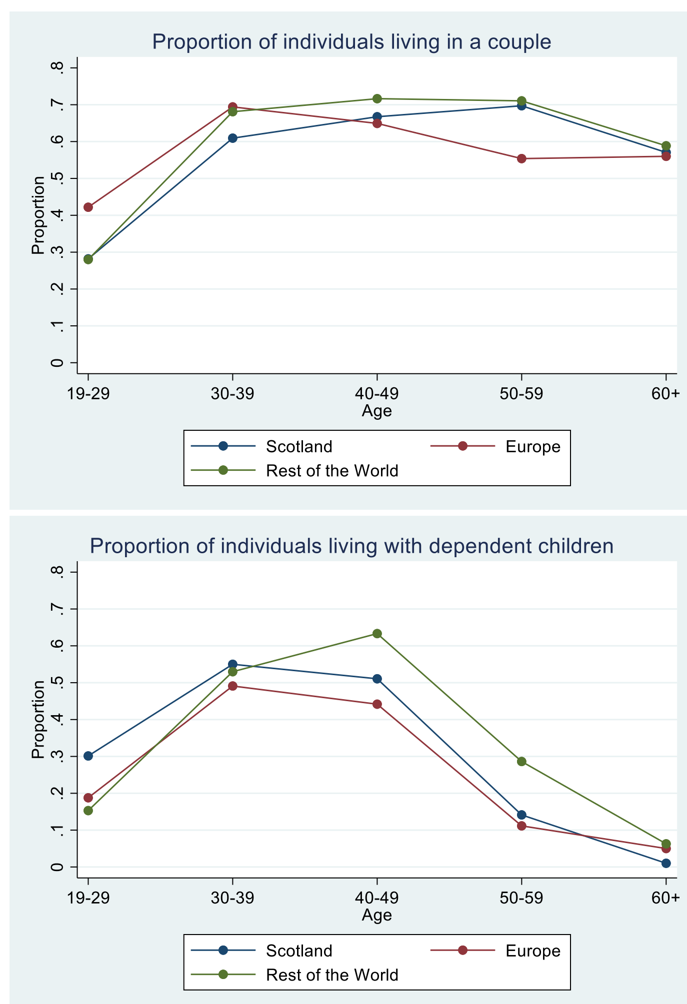
Note: The classification is based on the following 2011 census variables: living arrangements (LARPUK11) and dependent children (DPCFAMUK11).

Source: The 2011 census microdata, individuals aged 19 and older; N= 267,072[lxx]

Most (adult) people born in Scotland are either singles or couples without children (Figure 1). The family profile of migrants is somewhat different. There are fewer childless couples and more couples with one or more children. This result is largely expected, as on average immigrants are younger than the Scottish-born population; many of them are at the typical age for people to form a family or have dependent children. Most importantly, if we included individuals who either are in a union and/or have dependent children, then about 60% of immigrants are living in families.

The analysis of individuals living in unions and those living with dependent children by age suggests that overall the patterns are very similar among immigrants and the Scottish-born populations, and the differences we observe (in Figure 1) are mostly attributed to the younger age structure of immigrants. The share of people in Scotland living either in a co-residential or marital union increases with age and it is the highest among people aged 30 to 59: 70% of them are living in unions (Figure 2). Most migrants from the rest of the world have a slightly higher proportion of partnered individuals than those born in Scotland. But overall, the partnership patterns are not that different across population subgroups. The same is true when we look at the share of individuals (partnered or not) who have one or more (dependent) children. This share is the highest among individuals aged 30 to 49 and it is slightly higher among immigrants from the rest of the world than for the Scottish-born population or immigrants from Europe.

Figure 2. Proportion of individuals living in a couple or with dependent children by migrant status, 2011

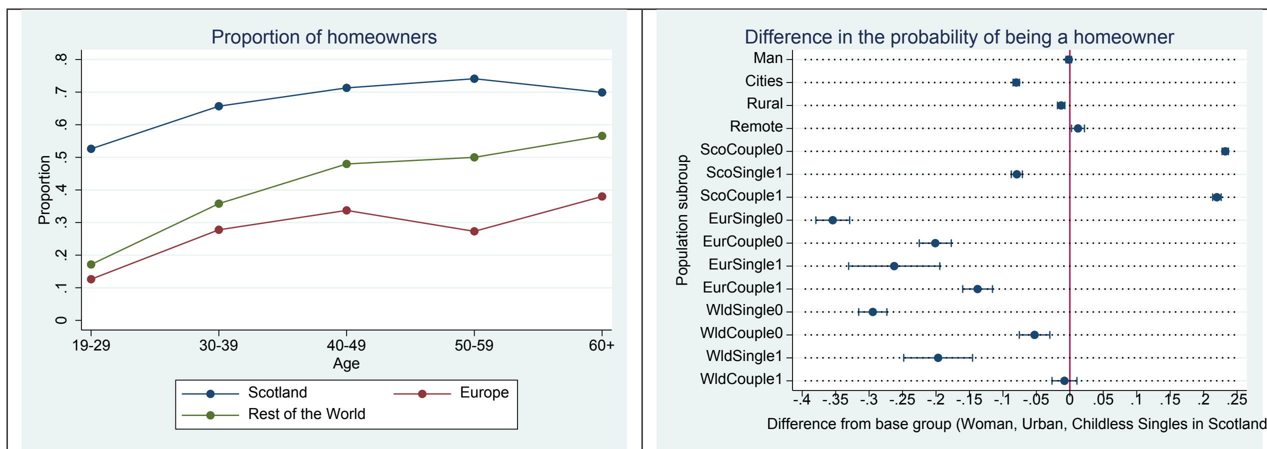


Source: The 2011 census microdata

The census data can also tell us about home ownership among migrant families. Home ownership in Scotland and the UK is considered an important investment, a source of financial security and a status symbol. About 65-70% of Scottish-born population aged 30 and older were homeowners in 2011. Immigrants are significantly less likely to own a home than the non-migrant population in Scotland across all age groups, although the differences decline by age (Figure 3). Among immigrants, those from Europe have lower home ownership rates than migrants from the rest of the world. The analysis of patterns by family type shows that the proportion of homeowners is the lowest among singles and the highest for couples, especially with children for all groups, as expected, but overall this is lower for overseas migrants than the Scottish-born population and it is the lowest among (continental) European migrants (Figure 3).

Several factors may explain this pattern of ownership. First, migrant households will generally have had less experience of the UK housing market. Second, they may not wish to fully commit to remaining in the UK: rental accommodation provides more flexibility should they wish to return to their country of origin.

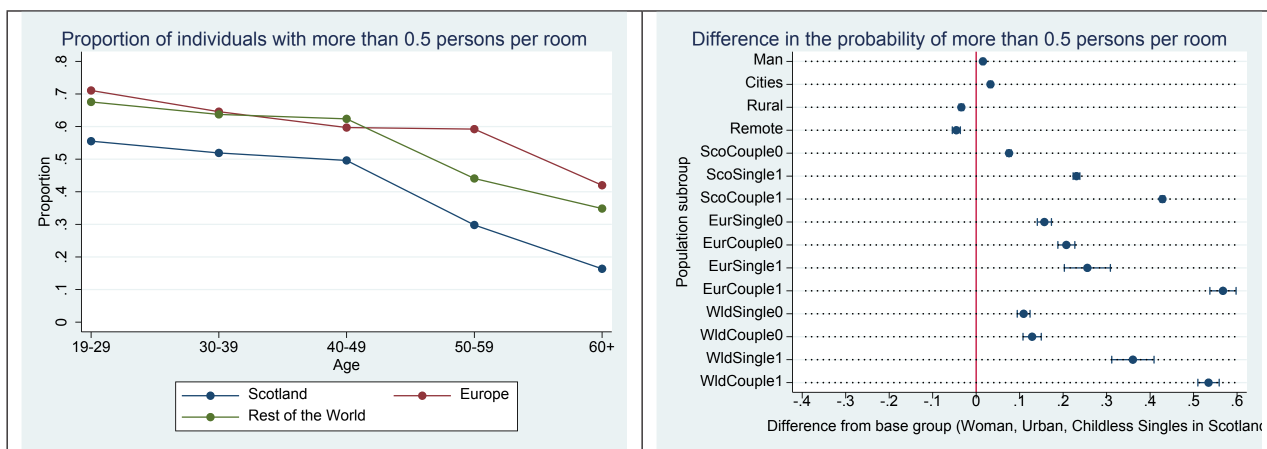
Figure 3. Homeownership by migrant status, 2011



Source: The 2011 census microdata

The census data also provide information on the number of persons per room for each household as a measure of (over)crowdedness. Two categories can be distinguished: individuals living in households with less than 0.5 persons per room and those with more than 0.5 persons per room. About 54% of Scotland's population belong to the former and 46% to the latter category. The proportion of individuals living in a household with more than 0.5 persons per room is the largest among the 19-29 age group and it declines by age as expected (Figure 4). Migrants from Europe and the rest of the world have a slightly higher share of individuals living in households with more than 0.5 persons per room (or less space per person) than the Scottish-born population. In terms of family type, couples with children have less space per person than other families for all three groups.

Figure 4. Households with more than 0.5 persons per room by country of birth, 2011



Source: The 2011 census microdata

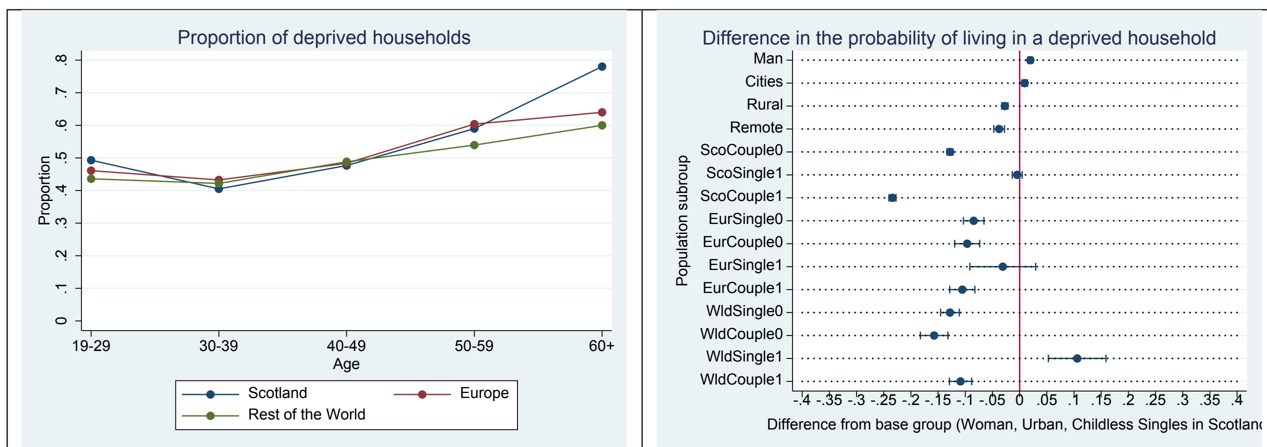
Finally, the share of deprived households is used to compare migrant families with non-migrants in Scotland. Deprivation is a summary measure, based on census data; according to this measure, a household can be deprived in any of the following four dimensions: employment, education, health and disability, housing. Although a high deprivation score should not be interpreted as a direct indicator of poverty, the measure still highlights households that face socio-economic challenges and potential issues.[4] The proportion of individuals living in deprived households increases by age (Figure 12). This pattern is largely driven by poorer health and housing conditions (e.g. the lack

4 A household was considered deprived in a dimension if they met one or more of the following conditions: any member of a household was either unemployed or long-term sick; no person in the household had at least Level 2 education (Highers or A Levels); a person in the household had 'bad' or 'very bad' general health or a long-term health problem; household's accommodation was either overcrowded or had no central heating.

of central heating) among the older population compared to younger people. Lower qualifications among older people may also play a role. There seems to be no significant difference between migrants and non-migrants in Scotland in the deprivation score, despite migrants having slightly poorer housing conditions in terms of space. A closer look at the patterns reveals that all migrant groups have lower deprivation levels in the youngest (19-29) and oldest age groups (60+); although on average, this group has a lower share of deprived individuals than the Scottish-born population.

Previous EAG analysis has shown that migrants have a larger share of individuals with degrees, and they are more likely to be in employment and have better health (EAG 2021)[lxxi]. However, as we have seen, they have slightly poorer housing conditions. Deprivation patterns vary across family type. The differences are the smallest among European immigrants, whereas they are larger among Scottish-born population and immigrants from the rest of the world. It is notable that single-parent migrants from the rest of the world exhibit the highest deprivation levels. Clearly, this pattern of disadvantage among single-parent migrant families' needs attention and also further investigation, including establishing whether this finding is related to specific groups (e.g. asylum-seekers and refugees) and/or dimensions (e.g. unemployment, poor housing conditions).

Figure 5. Deprived households by migrant status, 2011



Source: The 2011 census microdata

2. Distribution of migrant families across urban and rural Scotland

In this section we examine available statistical evidence on patterns of overseas migration of families and young people into different parts of Scotland. Understanding the distribution of families across parts of Scotland is important, given the particular challenges faced by rural and remote areas. In previous reports we have drawn attention to the fact that remote rural areas exhibit both the most negative demographic trends, and the strongest ageing processes (EAG 2019)[lxxii]. The explanation lies in long established age selective out-migration dynamics, which have reduced the capacity for natural increase. In-migration (both domestic and international), with a particular focus upon young people and families, is a crucial part of mitigating this negative cycle. Unfortunately, the stand-out finding is that overseas migration of young people and families is disproportionately focused upon the cities, and that remote rural areas, where the need is greatest, receive relatively smaller numbers of migrant families.

The most comprehensive source of data on overseas migrants is still the 2011 Census, which allows us to analyse urban and rural patterns. Using data-zone data aggregated to the 2016 Scottish Government urban/rural classificationit is possible to show (Table 2) that in the larger cities 113 persons per 1,000 head of population had been born outside the UK. In small towns and rural areas the ratio was much lower, generally below 45 per 1,000. It is worth noting that the

data shown in Table 2 excludes students living in halls of residence. If it were possible to include overseas students living in such accommodation this would likely increase the contrast between city and small town/rural Scotland.

Table 2: The distribution of migrant families across urban and rural areas of Scotland

	One-Person Household (HH)	Multi-Person HH Without Children	Multi-Person HH With Children	Student HH	Other Multi-Person HH	Total Migrant HH
	Per 1,000 head of population					
Large Urban Areas	17.44	32.32	44.79	11.39	7.38	113.33
Other Urban Areas	5.34	14.64	20.87	1.47	2.11	44.44
Accessible Small Towns	4.65	14.31	20.31	0.19	1.05	40.51
Remote Small Towns	5.62	16.54	21.93	0.28	2.48	46.85
Very Remote Small Towns	6.30	15.11	17.40	0.22	2.66	41.69
Accessible Rural Areas	4.68	16.04	18.76	0.28	1.14	40.91
Remote Rural Areas	5.29	18.45	17.92	0.22	1.65	43.52
Very Remote Rural Areas	6.20	16.97	15.01	0.16	1.68	40.02
Scotland	**9.36**	**21.00**	**28.43**	**4.48**	**3.69**	**66.95**

Source: 2011 Census Table LC 2409SC, aggregated to eightfold Scottish Government urban/rural classification2016

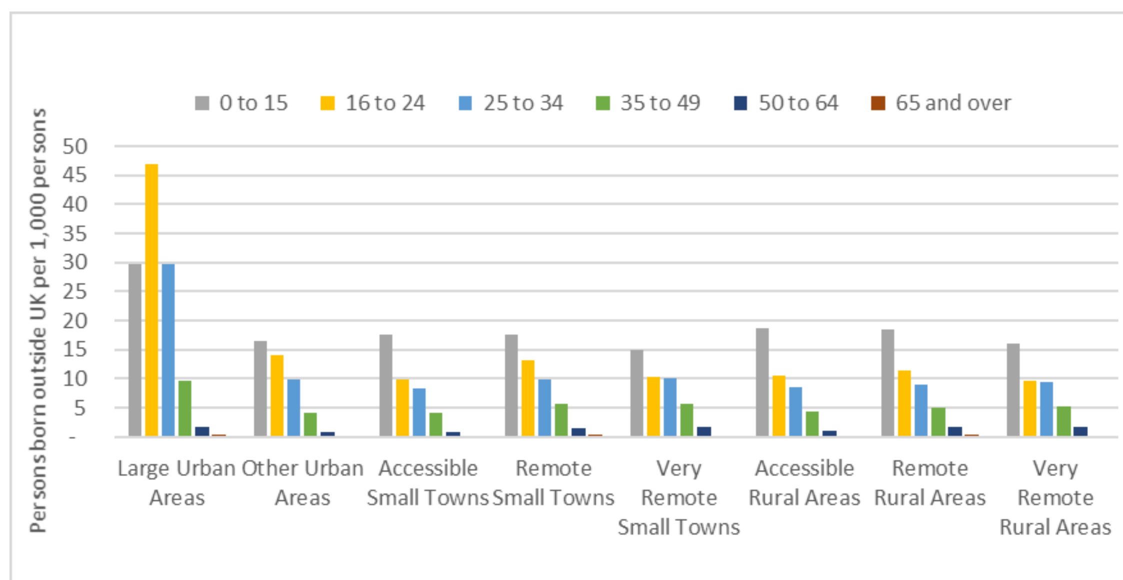
Notes: These data include only people living in households; those living in communal accommodation (including student halls of residence) are excluded. Same-sex civil partnerships included in column two.

Disaggregation of the population into different types and sizes of household reveals that in the cities the highest ratio (almost 45 per 1,000) was among multi-person households with children (married couples, co-habitees, and single-parent households). Multi-person households without children accounted for another 32 per 1,000, and single person households for 17 per 1,000. Persons born outside the UK in all-student households accounted for just over 11 per thousand.

It is striking that in the Other Urban Areas and the Small Towns the incidence of families (multi-person households with/without children) were consistently about half those in the large cities, and those for students were considerably lower. In the remote rural and very remote rural parts of Scotland the incidence of migrant multi-person families was even lower, and those without dependent children outnumbered those with.

The 2011 Census also provides data on the age of arrival of all persons born outside the UK, expressed as a proportion of the total population (Figure 6). These data relate to the entire population (not only those living in households), and show very clearly the different order of magnitude of in-migration to the large cities compared with the rest of Scotland. Figure 6 reveals more clearly the importance of student migration to University cities – more than 45 persons per thousand, born outside the UK, arrived when they were between the ages of 16 and 24.

Figure 6: Age of arrival of persons born outside the UK, in 2011, by urban-rural category



Source: 2011 Census Table LC 2802SC, aggregated to eightfold Scottish Government Urban/rural classification2016

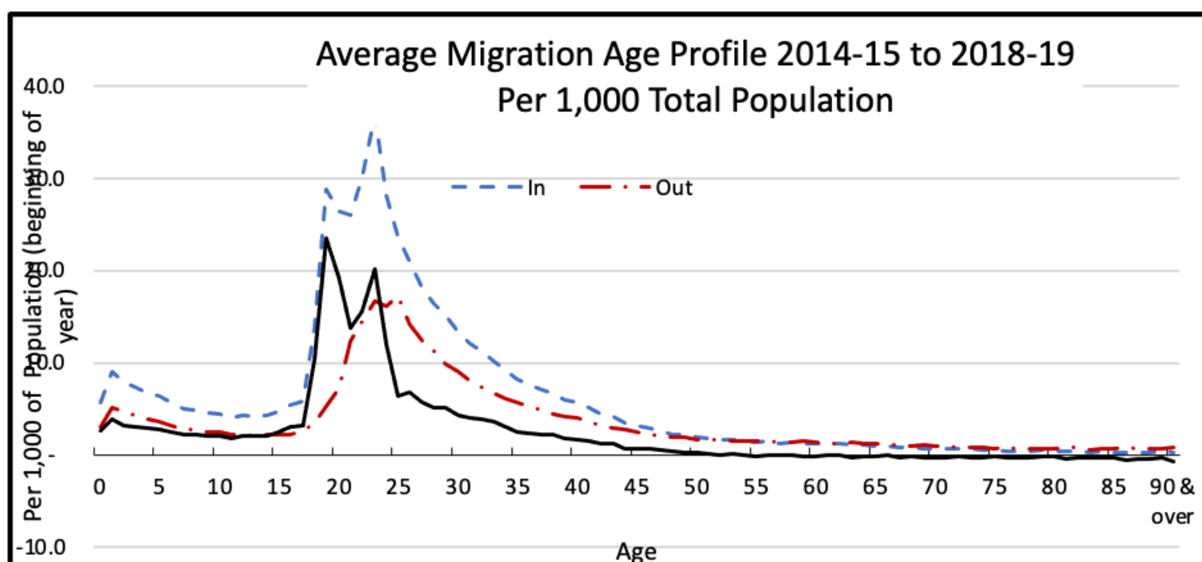
The striking thing about the parts of the graph representing the other seven urban/rural categories is the similarity of the age of arrival profiles. Those arriving as children (0-15) are consistently the largest group, with each successive age group accounting for smaller numbers. This underlines the importance that families play in migration outside the large urban areas of Scotland. However, the overall incidence of migrants within the population is consistently about half that of the large cities. Numbers are particularly low in the very remote small towns and very remote rural areas, and slightly higher in the accessible small towns, accessible rural, and remote rural areas. While such small differences should not be over-interpreted, they may reflect employment opportunities and perceptions of the challenges of integration within very small communities. Whatever the explanation, it is worth noting again that such areas are exactly those in which family migration could have the greatest impact upon age structures and demographic sustainability.

More recent data is available from National Records of Scotland, although this is not broken down by urban/rural categories. This data shows us the age profile of in, out, and net migration during the five years 2014-15 to 2018-19[5]. During this (pre-COVID) period, children (0-15) accounted for around 14% of (overseas) in-migrants and 13% of out-migrants. It is not really possible to estimate the number of families from this, but if we assume that each child is accompanied by at least one parent this perhaps suggests that at least one third of all migrants arrive as part of a family.

Expressed as a ratio to the total child population of Scotland (Figure 7), overseas in-migrant children account for roughly 6 per 1,000. Net migration of children equates to roughly 2.5 per 1,000. The number of migrants increases dramatically in the 16-24 age group – in-migrant numbers peaking at 2,500 per year, at age 23, and out-migrant numbers at about 1,100 at 26. It seems reasonable to assume that this is primarily the effect of student migration, but may also be employment-related. Expressed as a share of the total population, the in-migrant peak is 37 per 1,000, and that of out-migrants is (less than) half of that, at 17. Net migration has two peaks, at 19 years (24 per 1,000) and 23 (20 per 1,000). There is a long ‘tail’ through the older age cohorts, net migration turning negative at around 60 years.

5 Data for 2019-20 is now available. It shows that COVID19 substantially disrupted the flow of overseas migrants. The previous five year’s data illustrate the pre-COVID pattern.

Figure 7: Age profile of overseas migrants per 1,000 head of population 2014-15 to 2018-19



Source: NRS Spreadsheet: [Migration between Scotland and overseas by age]

There are two sources which can give us some indirect impressions of the differential impact of recent migration across Scotland. They relate to the number of applications to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) (Table 3), and the number of births to mothers born outside the UK (Table 4). Both of these are based on Council Area data, which we have aggregated to the RESAS urban-rural classification[lxxiii].

Approximately 14% of EUSS applications between August 2018 and December 2019 related to children under 18 (Table 3). This is very similar to the proportion of children (under 16) in Figure 7. This equates to just over 18 applications per 1,000 persons in the 0-18 cohort of the population. The 'incidence' of EUSS applications (for both children and adults) is substantially higher in the larger cities (36 per 1,000 for children) than in other parts of Scotland. In the 'urban with substantial rural' council areas (across the Central Belt), the ratio falls to about 12 per 1,000, whilst in Mainly Rural Council Areas it is just under 14. The lowest ratio (less than 9) is found in the Islands and Remote Rural areas.

Table 3: EUSS applications August 2018-December 2019 by age group

	EUSS applications per 1,000				% of EUSS applications		
	Under 18	**18 to 64**	**65+**	**Total**	**Under 18**	**18 to 64**	**65+**
Larger Cities	35.57	60.74	5.07	48.21	12.72	85.67	1.55
Urban with Substantial Rural	11.74	19.29	1.72	14.38	16.22	81.46	2.32
Mainly Rural	13.98	25.60	2.17	18.13	14.67	82.60	2.69
Islands and Remote Rural	8.55	18.98	2.56	13.06	11.65	83.50	4.85
Scotland	18.36	33.66	2.61	24.86	13.92	84.01	2.00

Source: NRS Spreadsheet [Local Area Migration: EUSS by Age Group and NRS mid-year population estimates]

The vital events data (Table 4) suggests a similar pattern. 32% live births in the larger cities are to mothers born outside the UK. In the two 'mixed' groups of Council Areas the percentage falls

to about 11%, and in the Remote Rural and Islands to less than 10%. Interestingly, in the Larger Cities non-EU born mothers account for a substantially larger share, whilst elsewhere in Scotland the EU is the more common birthplace for mothers born outside the UK. This is likely to reflect the fact that EU migrants were more evenly distributed across all parts of Scotland, including rural areas (EAG 2019)[lxxiv]. This contrasts with non-EU migrants, most of whom entered through Tier 2 or Tier 4 (skilled migrant and student routes), and were thus more likely to settle in urban areas where higher-skilled jobs and universities were located. It supports earlier EAG findings that skills and income thresholds are likely to lead to a concentration of migrants (and their families) in urban areas (EAG 2019).

Table 4: Percentage of live births to mothers overseas 2019

	% of live births		
	EU	**Non-EU**	**Total overseas**
Larger Cities	12.49	19.95	32.44
Urban with Substantial Rural	5.96	5.11	11.07
Mainly Rural	7.33	4.18	11.51
Islands and Remote Rural	5.17	4.52	9.69
Scotland	**8.25**	**9.29**	**17.54**

Source: NRS Vital Events 2019: Table 3.09: Live births, by country of birth of mother and administrative area, Scotland, 2019

The above analysis suggests that family migration from overseas has been, in recent years, a significant contributor to Scotland's demographic sustainability, though it is not easy to distinguish it from the apparently much larger effect of migration for higher education. The evidence suggests that family migration has been disproportionately focused on the Larger Cities and Central Belt, and that its contribution to slowing decline in rural areas, especially remote and island areas, is relatively weaker.

3. Comparing migrant households in Scotland and the UK

We now draw on survey data to explore in more detail the characteristics of migrant households in Scotland and the UK. In line with the definition of migrant families in the Introduction, we take a migrant household to be one where at least one of the adults within the household was born outside the UK. A tighter definition would require all adults to be foreign-born. As we shall see, this latter category covers a much smaller group than does the looser definition.

Most quantitative analysis of the impact of migration on the UK economy uses either the Labour Force Survey (LFS) or the Annual Population Survey (APS). These are regular quasi-panel studies that collect information on country of birth and year of entry to the UK. Most researchers use the individual version of the APS. However, it is a household survey which collects information on all household members within the sample. The APS household files also contain household rather than individual weights to ensure that household population aggregates are reproduced by the dataset. We use the APS to provide some estimates of broad aspects of the population of migrant households within the UK.

What household information can be gleaned from this data source? What follows is drawn from a combination of the 2018 and 2019 APS data files. Together, they comprise 654,613 individual

records of which 86,057 relate to residents in Scotland (the Scottish data is over-sampled). Within the Scottish sample, 5,594 individuals were born outside the UK. In the rest of the UK (rUK), there were 68,421 whose birthplace was outside the UK. Around 11% of those responding to the APS in the rest of the UK were foreign-born, whereas only 6.5% of respondents resident in Scotland were born outside the UK. The APS suggests that Scotland has a much smaller proportion of foreign-born residents than is the case in rUK.

Figure 8 uses the APS to show when migrants arrived in Scotland and in the rest of the UK (rUK). Migration from the rest of the world into Scotland was more concentrated in recent years compared to migration into rUK. More than 70% of those born overseas arrived in Scotland between 2000 and 2019, while only 60% of those moving to rUK did so over this period.

Figure 8: Migrant households: shares by time of arrival in the UK

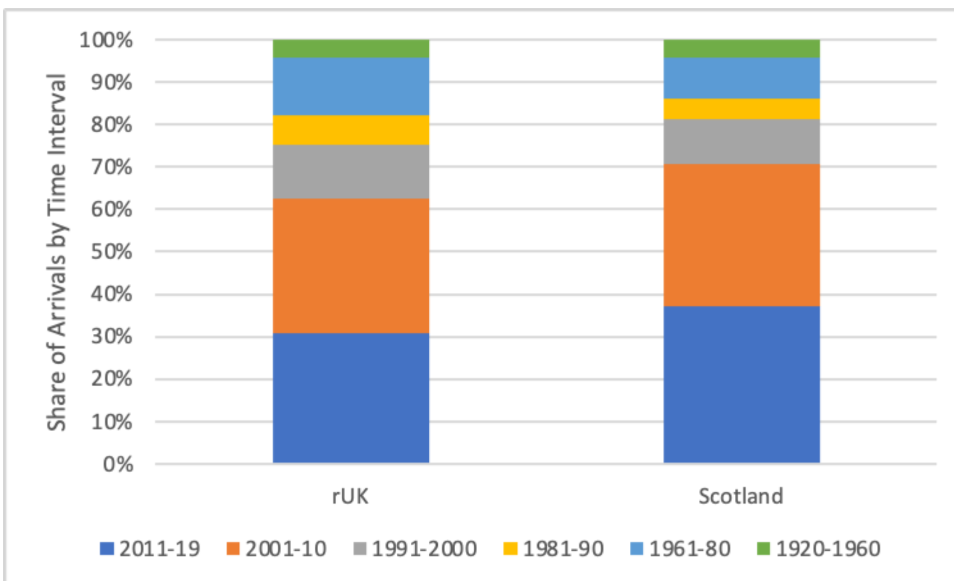
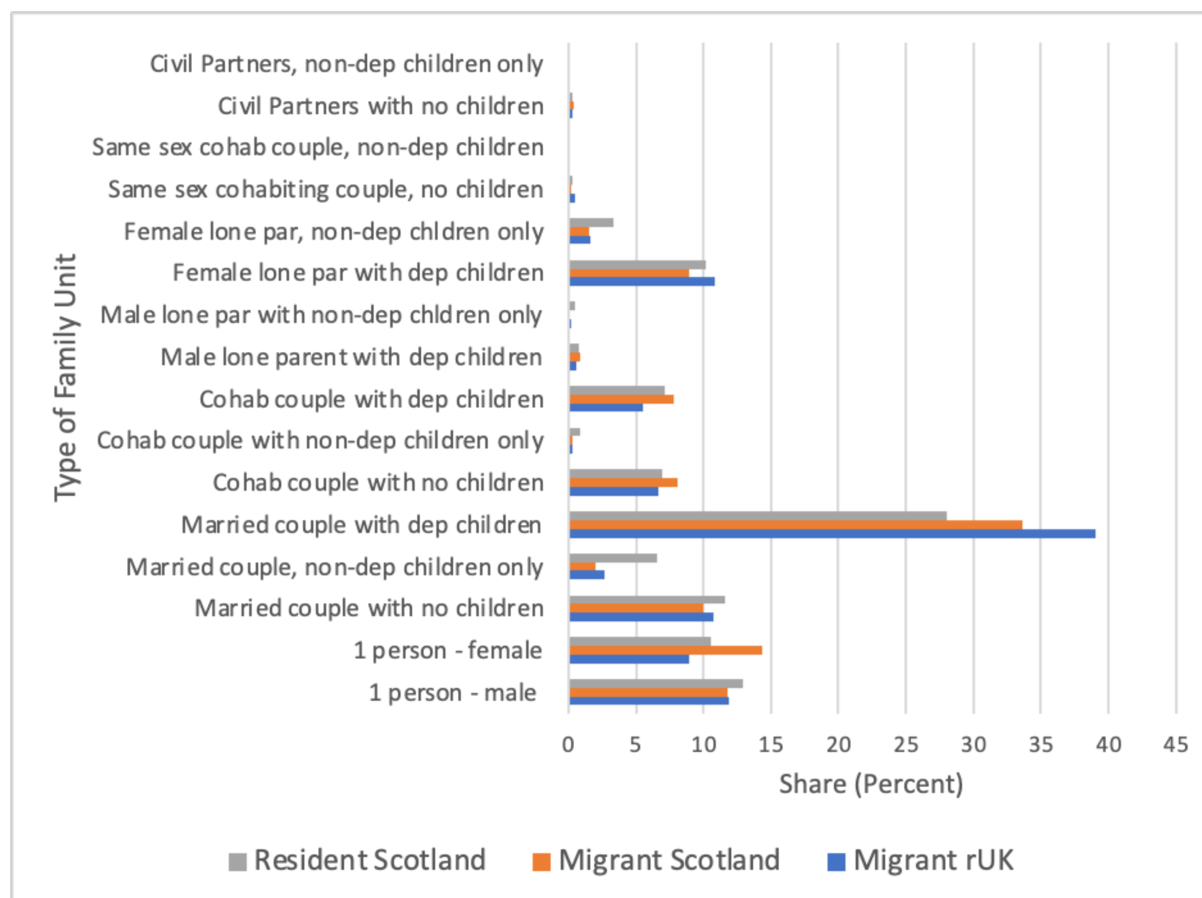


Figure 9: Distribution of types of family unit by migrants to Scotland and rUK since 2000 and comparator resident population in Scotland



The APS also contains information on households and families. Households may comprise more than one family unit. Households share some living accommodation, but more than one family can exist within a household if they are largely economically independent of each other. Figure 9 compares the distribution of native-born and migrants to Scotland and migrants to rUK by type of family unit. Reflecting the concentration of migration to Scotland since 2000, we define migrant households from the APS dataset as those where the person responsible for the accommodation (the household reference person, or HRP) has come to the UK since 2000. This person was aged between 24 and 57 in 95% of cases. We constructed comparator groups of resident Scottish and rUK households by similarly restricting the age of the person responsible for the accommodation in rUK to between 24 and 57.

It is evident that there are no substantial differences in the distribution of types of family unit between migrants to Scotland, migrants to rUK and the Scottish resident population. Migrant family units in Scotland are somewhat more likely to have dependent children than non-migrant residents, but less likely than migrants to other parts of the UK. Family units comprising single females are more likely to be migrants to Scotland than the resident population or migrants to other parts of the UK. Overall, aside from these relatively small differences that may not be statistically significant, it appears that the types of family established by migrants coming to Scotland does not differ substantially from that of the resident population, nor that of residents coming to other parts of the UK.

Summary

- According to survey data, 60% of migrants in Scotland live in families – in a union and/or with children. This is higher than the proportion for the Scottish-born population, reflecting the younger age structure of migrants.
- Migrants in Scotland are significantly less likely to own their own homes, and also enjoy less space than the Scottish-born population. The tendency to rent, rather than purchase, a home is likely to reflect uncertainty over length of stay, and lack of familiarity with the UK housing market.
- However, migrants in the younger and older age groups have slightly lower deprivation levels, because of good education, high activity rates and good health. By contrast, single-parent non-EU migrants with children have relatively high derivation, a pattern of disadvantage that warrants further analysis.
- Families are more than twice as likely to move to cities in Scotland, compared to rural and remote areas – indeed, family migration has been disproportionately focused on the Larger Cities and Central Belt. This means that the contribution of family migration to slowing population decline in rural areas, especially remote and island areas, is relatively weaker.
- However, while most non-UK births in Scottish cities are from non-EU born families, in rural areas, EU-born mothers account for a larger share of births. This reflects patterns of settlement by EU migrants, with the more flexible free movement rules encouraging migration across all parts of Scotland.
- Comparing family migrants to Scotland and rUK since 2000, we find no substantial differences in types of family unit. Migrant families in Scotland are somewhat less likely to have dependent children than migrants in other parts of the UK, but the difference is not great. Moreover, the types of families established by migrants coming to Scotland does not differ substantially from that of the resident population.

4

Migrant Families in the UK: Survey Data

This chapter explores in more detail the trajectories or life-courses of migrant families and their members. It draws on two main surveys: Understanding Society, and the UK Labour Force Survey. In both cases, we analysis cohorts of migrants and households who migrated to the UK after 1990 or 2000. As discussed in Chapter 3, this increases the relevance of the analysis to migrants in Scotland, given the concentration of migration to Scotland over this more recent period.

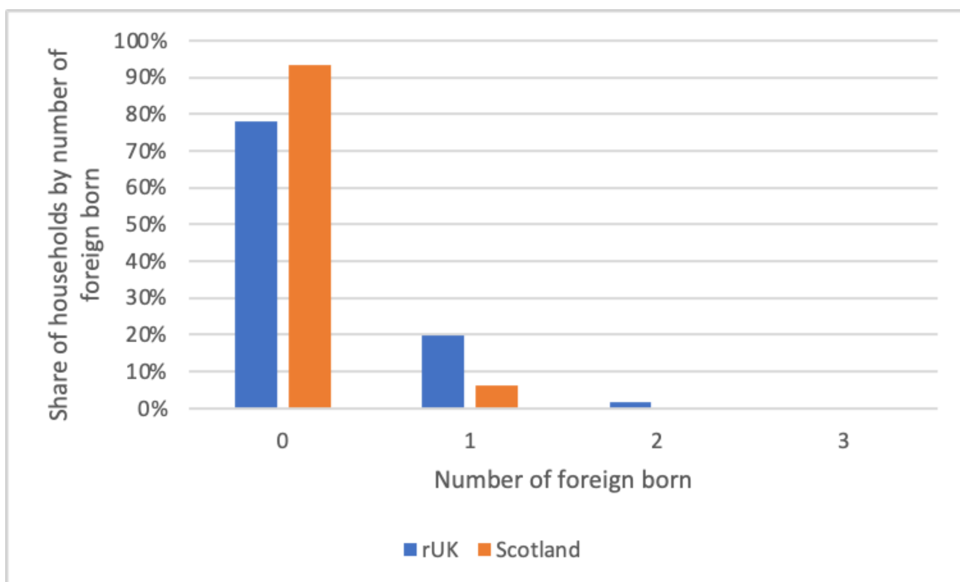
1. Migrant households

In this section we draw on data from the Understanding Society (US) longitudinal survey (University of Essex 2020). Although this is one of the largest longitudinal surveys in the world, it contains a relatively small sample of migrant households (around 50) in Scotland. But given that the evidence from the APS suggests strong similarities between migrants to Scotland and to other parts of the UK at least since 2000, the statistics which follow focus on the characteristics of migrant households that have moved to the UK since 2000. Note that in what follows, we concentrate on households rather than families, but this distinction should be borne in mind when interpreting the results, noting that the number of multi-family households is relatively small.

Understanding Society allows for more detailed analysis of household characteristics, and its various waves allow us to analyse the economic and social trajectories of migrants after their arrival in the UK. It also enables us to better understand how adults belonging to migrant families comprise a mixture of foreign-born and UK-born individuals. This is illustrated in Figure 10 which shows how foreign-born individuals are distributed across the 30,000 households which comprise Wave A of US. The lower share of foreign-born individuals in Scotland recorded in the APS is reflected in the lower share of households with any foreign-born individuals in US.

Also evident from Figure 10 is that the overseas born are more likely to live alone or in households with native-born individuals, than they are to live with other foreign-born individuals. Among the 5,300 households that include at least one foreign-born individual, around 1,160 (22%) comprise a single individual with or without children, while around 3,600 (68%) households include one foreign-born individual and one or more UK-born. A further 9.8% of migrant households comprise two or more individuals of whom two or more have been born outside the UK. Overall, among the relatively small share of UK households that include foreign-born individuals, those that comprise a mixture of foreign-born and UK-born are in a considerable majority.

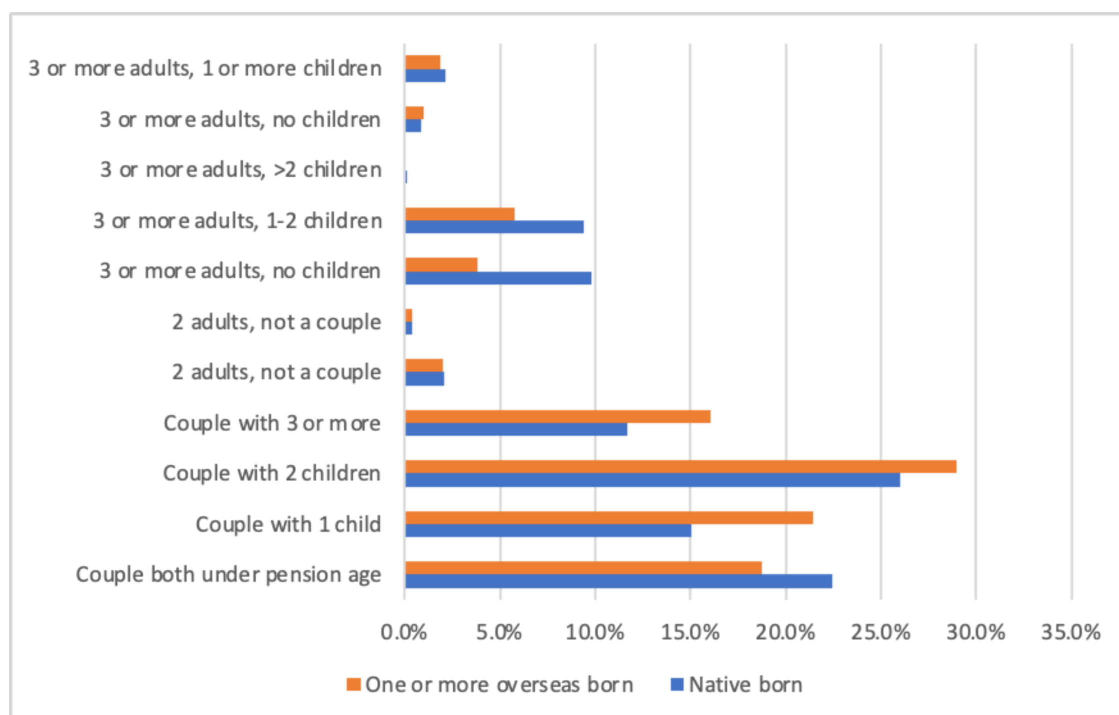
Figure 10: Share of households by number of foreign-born individuals



Source: Understanding Society Wave A

Figure 11 compares the distribution of household types for the native-born with those of at least one migrant that has arrived since 2000. This is the Understanding Society equivalent of Figure 9, which showed the distribution of household structure using the APS. Again, because relatively few of those that have migrated since 2000 include pensioners, the 'native-born' category only includes individuals where the first two adults are aged between 24 and 57.

Figure 11: Shares of migrant and native households by household type

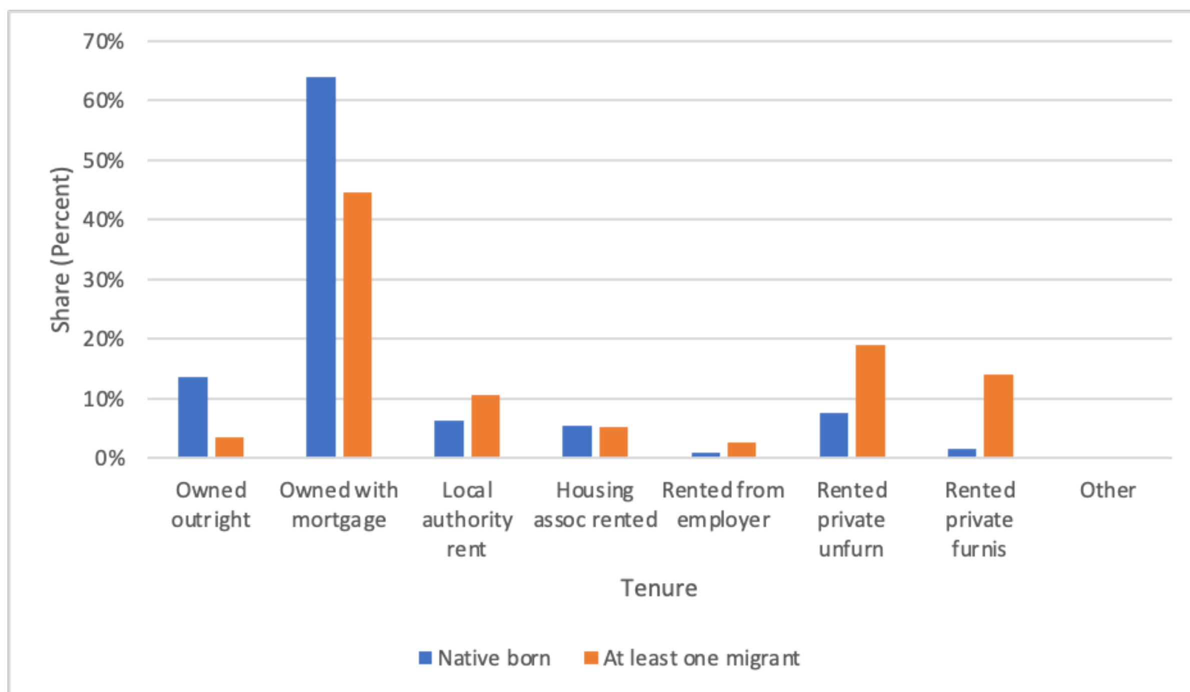


Source: Understanding Society Wave G

Single-person households and couples with no children are more common among the native-born, while Understanding Society confirms the APS finding that migrant households are more likely to include children. Their greater fertility may reflect fertility rates at their country of origin, or it may be that couples with children are more likely to migrate, motivated by the desire to provide better life opportunities for their children (see Chapter 1). Further analysis would be required to explore these hypotheses. Non-migrant households are more likely to include three or more adults.

Figure 12 shows that migrant households tend to rely more heavily on rented accommodation than do native households, confirming the findings of Chapter 3. Only a relatively small share of migrant households own their accommodation outright. The reliance on renting increases with the number of adults born outside the UK: the larger the number of family members born outside the UK, the greater the reliance on rented accommodation. Rental accommodation is concentrated on private (both furnished and unfurnished) and local authority rentals. The proportion buying their accommodation with a mortgage is broadly the same, irrespective of country of birth.

Figure 12: Housing tenure by country of birth (Wave G)



Source: Understanding Society Wave G

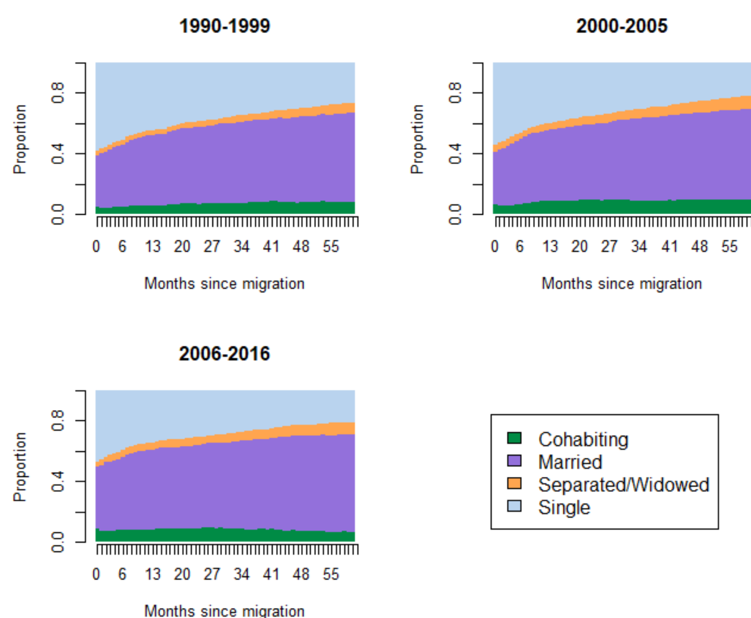
2. Family trajectories

In order to understand patterns of family mobility and integration in Scotland and the UK, it is important to analyse the life trajectories of migrant families (Kulu and Gonzalez-Ferrer 2014)[lxxv]. This section investigates partnership and childbearing changes among immigrants in the UK. We use data from the Understanding Society study. As we saw above, Understanding Society is a large annual longitudinal study that was launched in 2009. The main immigrant and ethnic minority groups were over-sampled in the study, thus providing a sufficient sample size to study ethnic differences in attitudes and behaviour. Information was also collected on individuals' partnership, fertility and employment histories, allowing us to investigate immigrant employment and family changes in the UK over a long time period.

We focus on a sample of 4,982 foreign-born individuals in the UK who arrived in the UK between 1990 and 2016. Their trajectories can be followed for five years since immigration to the UK. We analysed the evolution of their partnership and childbearing histories after migration. To increase the sample size for longitudinal analysis we also included those who arrived in the 1990s. Our further analysis showed that the patterns with and without arrivals in the 1990s were very similar.

Around 60% of immigrants currently living in the UK arrived in the UK as single individuals, and 40% came as married (Figure 13). However, there has been a small change over the years. The share of individuals who arrived as unpartnered has slightly declined, whereas the proportion of married individuals has increased. This is likely to reflect changes in entry rules, notably the increased prominence of EU migration which allowed much greater flexibility for family migration, as well as the importance of Skilled Worker routes which allowed entrants to bring dependants (see Chapter 2). Although most people arrived as single or married, there are also individuals in non-marital unions and people who are separated, suggesting that immigrants reflect wider changes in partnership patterns that have taken place in the origin and destination societies, such as an increase in non-marital unions, separation and re-partnering.

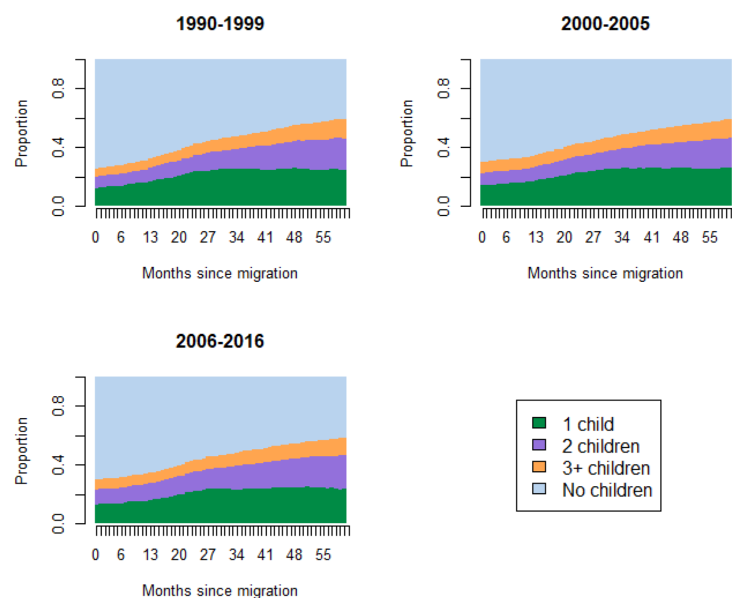
Figure 13: Immigrants in the UK by partnership status, time since migration and immigration cohort



Note: time since migration in months; N=4,982.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the UKHLS data

Childbearing histories provide additional information on immigrant families at arrival in the UK and following migration. Unsurprisingly, most people moved to the UK as childless individuals and became parents only later (Figure 14). The share of childless migrants seems to have slightly declined over the years (a few percent points), whereas those with children has slightly increased, which corresponds to observed partnership changes.

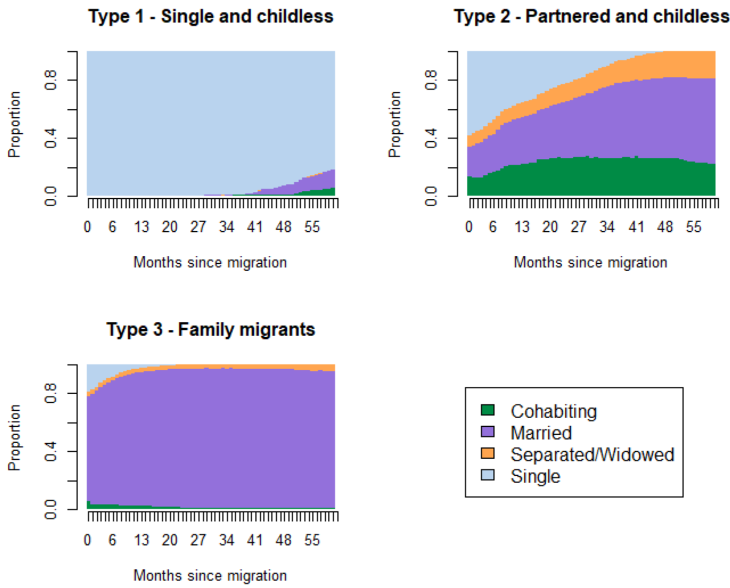
Figure 14: Immigrants in the UK by number of children, time since migration and immigration cohort



Note: time since migration in months.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the UKHLS data

Classification of immigrants' family trajectories provides the opportunity to investigate the heterogeneity within the migrant population and to also determine factors that have shaped migrant family trajectories in the UK. Based on their partnership status and family size at arrival and trajectories after migration we can classify immigrants into three broad groups (Figures 15 and 16). The first group (Type 1) consists of individuals who arrived in the UK as singles and childless and stayed unpartnered (and childless) in the first five years after migration (and formed unions and had children later, five to ten years after migration; not shown). These are individuals who came to the UK as young adults (in their late teens and early twenties) to study or work; they formed more than a quarter (28%) of migrants who arrived between 1990 and 2016. We can call this group 'single and childless'.

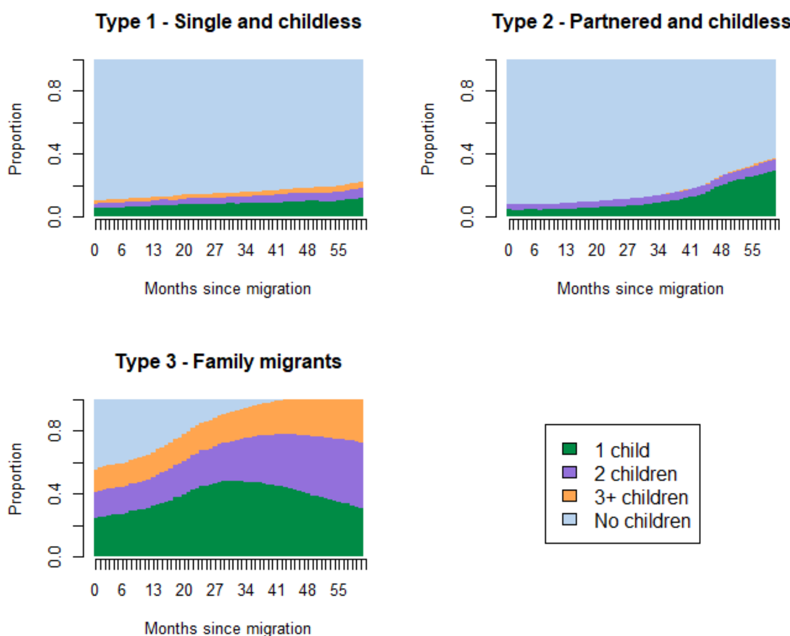
Figure 15: Immigrant groups in the UK by partnership status



Note: time since migration in months.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the UKHLS data

The second group (Type 2, 30%) includes immigrants who arrived as single or partnered individuals, but experienced significant partnership changes during the first two to three years following migration: many formed non-marital unions, some of which became later marriages, some of which dissolved. They arrived as childless; most of them stayed childless for the first three years and some had children thereafter. They are the 'partnered and childless' group. The third group (Type 3, 42%) consists of migrants who were already married when they arrived in the UK. They came with children; some had another child in the next three to five years. We call them 'family migrants'.

Figure 16: Immigrant groups in the UK by number of children

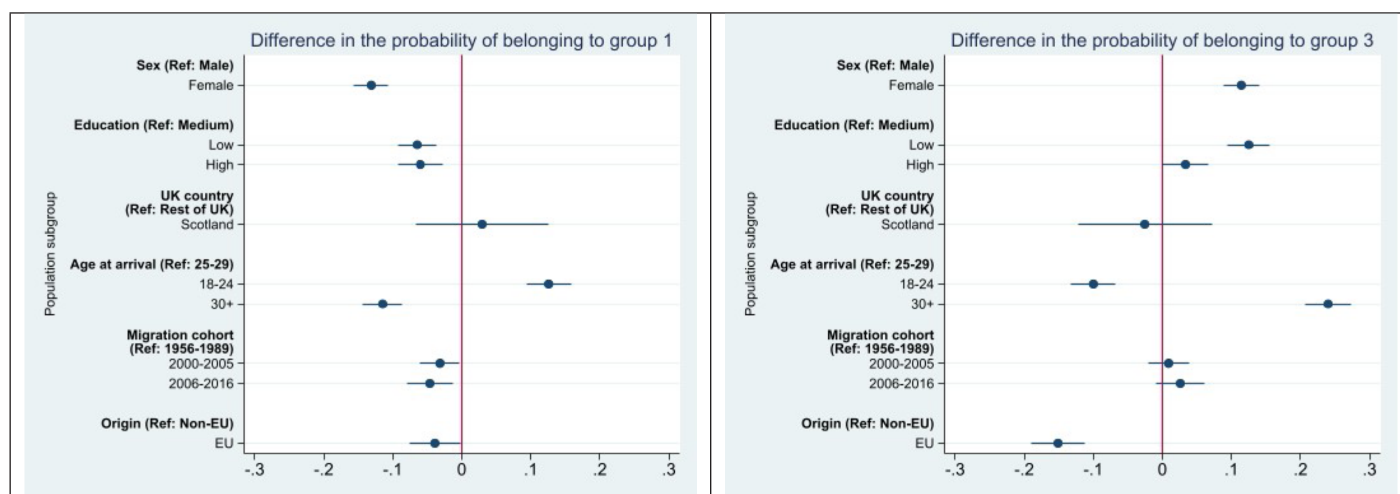


Note: time since migration in months.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the UKHLS data

Next, we investigate how individual characteristics predict belonging to one of the three partnership and fertility groups. We report determinants of the 'single and childless' (Type 1) and 'family migrants' (Type 3) groups. Women were significantly less likely to arrive as single and childless than men and more likely to be married and have children at arrival (Figure 17). (The value of -0.1 means that they were 10 per cent points less likely to arrive as unpartnered and childless, everything else being equal.) This is not surprising given that (traditional) labour migration with family reunification has been an important trend in immigration to the UK over the last decades. The age gradient is as expected: unpartnered childless migrants were younger, whereas family migrants were older at arrival.

The educational differences are less clear, although there were more individuals with low levels of education among family migrants. The analysis by immigration cohort supports that the single and childless group has slightly declined over time, although the change has been small. Interestingly, non-EU migrants were more likely to arrive as family migrants and less likely to arrive as single and childless than those who came from EU countries. Finally, the patterns seem to be relatively similar in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Figure 17: Probability of belonging to group who arrived as single childless (1) or married with children (3)

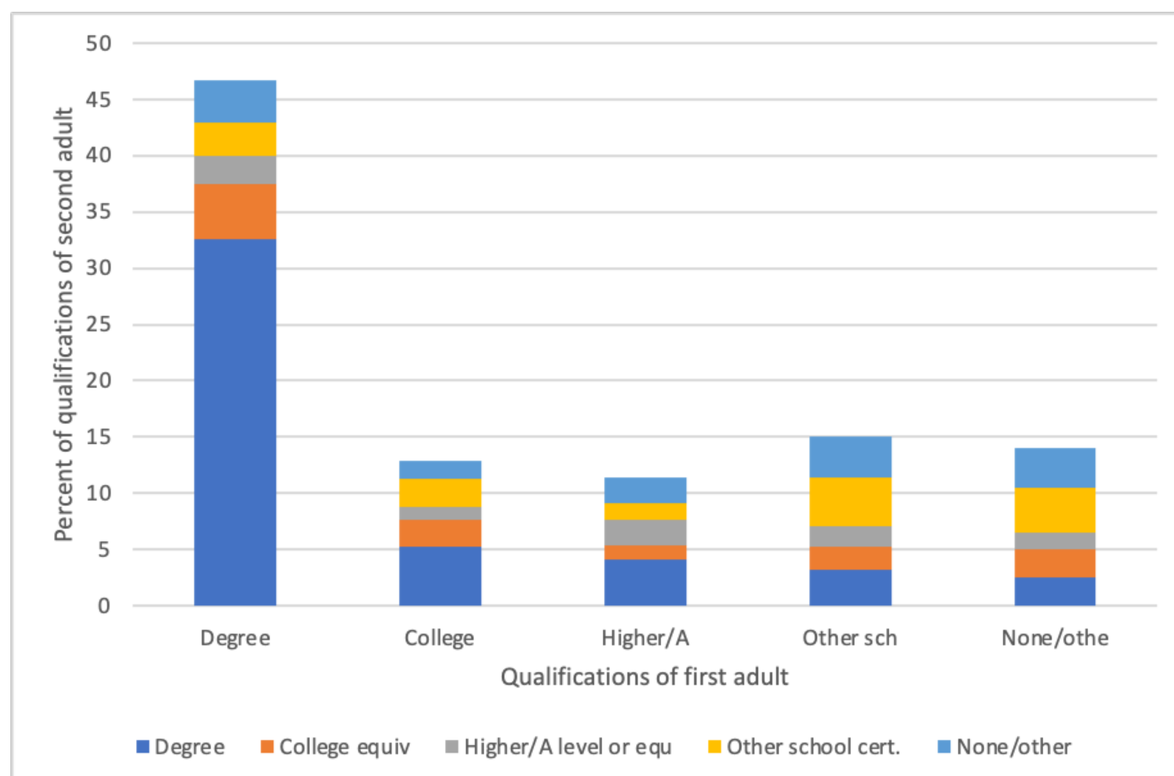


Source: Authors' calculations based on the Understanding Society data

3. Qualifications and employment

The Understanding Society data we introduced earlier in the chapter allows us to analyse the highest educational qualification held by adult respondents. And because qualifications held by all adult family members are recorded, it is possible to determine the mix of qualifications within the household. Thus, for example, we can determine the proportion of households in which at least two adults hold degrees, or in which one holds a degree and the other has no educational qualification. These combinations are portrayed in a 3D chart where the height of each column represents the proportion of adults 1 and 2 who hold each combination of highest educational qualification. Figure 18 shows two such charts, one for households with either no-one born abroad or where an adult was born abroad but came to the UK before 2000, and one for those households where at least one individual was born abroad and has come to the UK since 2000.

Figure 18: Educational qualifications of first and second adults in a household and country of birth (Wave G)



Source: Understanding Society Wave G

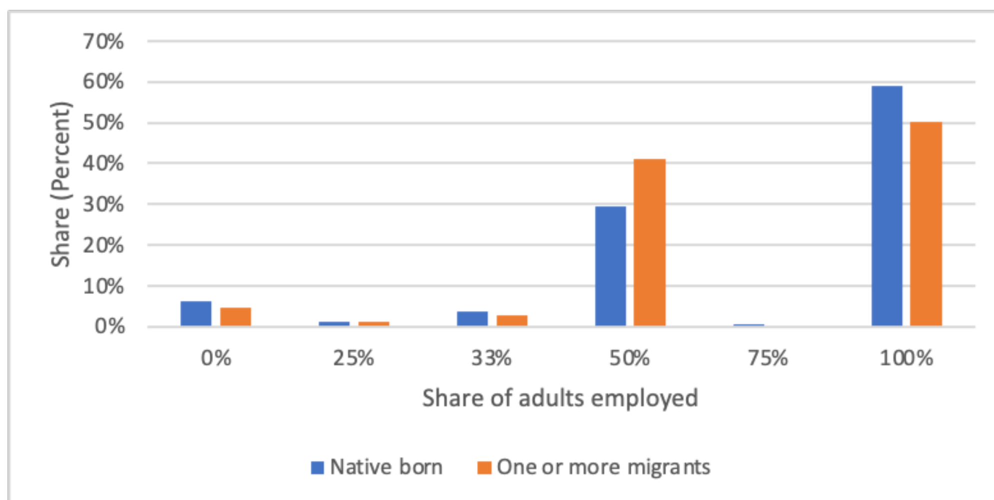
The charts show that not only do a high proportion of migrants hold degrees, it is also likely that other members of the household also hold a degree. This is particularly true for migrant households with two or more members born abroad. For natives, it is almost as likely that households have two members with no qualifications as it is to have two members with degrees. Figure 18 shows clearly how the UK has benefited from an influx of well-qualified migrants since 2000. This data also indicates the importance of ensuring adequate childcare for migrant families, given that these households are more likely to include two highly qualified parents.

Another implication that can be drawn from these results is that 'educational mixing' is not more prevalent among migrants than among the native-born: around 42% of migrants share their household with an adult with the same highest qualification. For migrant households, the likelihood of two adults having the same level of qualification is slightly higher at 45%. Educational sorting has implications for the evolution of inequality: increased migrant flows are unlikely to reverse the trend towards reduced educational mixing which is a driver of inequality.

Employment status can also be analysed using US. Focusing again on those who have migrated since 2000, Figure 19 shows the distribution of the number of adults employed as a share of all adults within a household. Again, native-born households are restricted to those where the first two adults are aged between 24 and 57. In just under 60 per cent of native-born households, all (100%) of adults are employed. Only 50% of migrant households fall into this category. Having one employed adult is more common among migrant households, with 40 per cent of migrant households falling into this category, compared with around 30 per cent of native households. Less than 5% of migrant households have no-one working, compared with 6% of the native-born.

As we saw in Chapter 1, these difficulties may be reinforced by reduced availability of support from a wider family network which may be available to natives but less so to migrants. Given the high levels of qualification within migrant households as shown in Figure 18, there is a case for investigating the impediments to raising employment levels within migrant households.

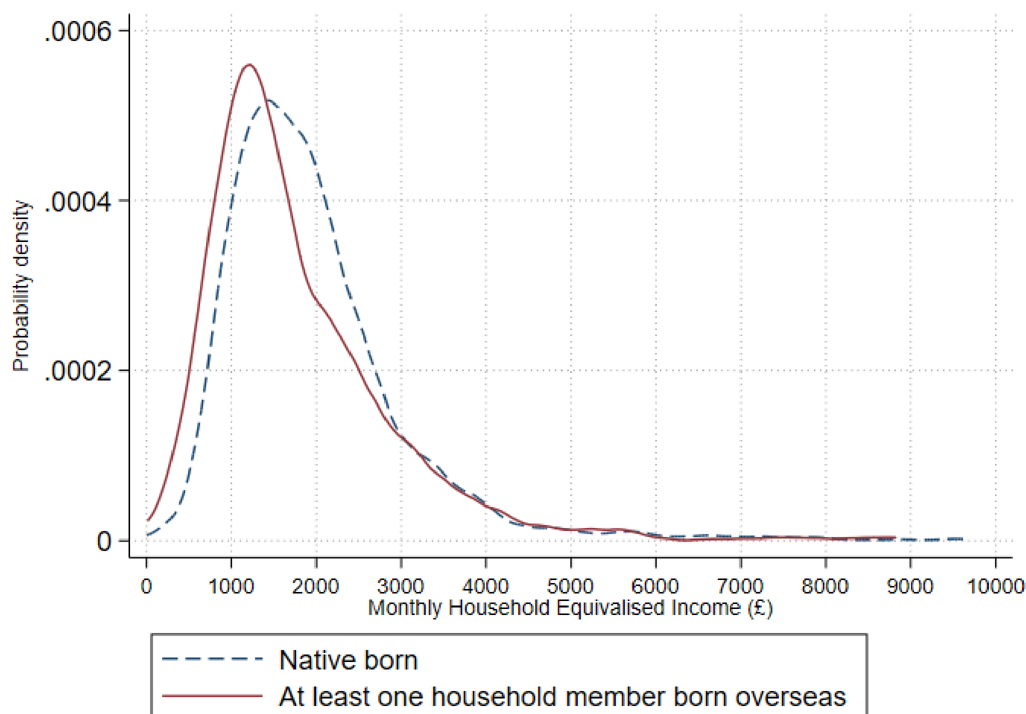
Figure 19: Share of adults employed within households by migrant status



Source: Understanding Society Wave G

Understanding Society also contains a detailed analysis of household income sources before and after tax – including wages, benefits, investments and rental income. Measures of net income are the usual source of comparisons of living standards. Comparisons of net income are generally adjusted for household composition using OECD equivalence scales. The resultant distributions of net income for native-born and households where at least one household member was born overseas and has come to the UK since 2000 are shown in Figure 20. It uses kernel densities to approximate the monthly distribution of net equivalised income for both types of household. Again, only those native-born households where the first two adults are aged between 24 and 57 have been included in the comparisons.

Figure 20: Equivalised net household income (Wave G)



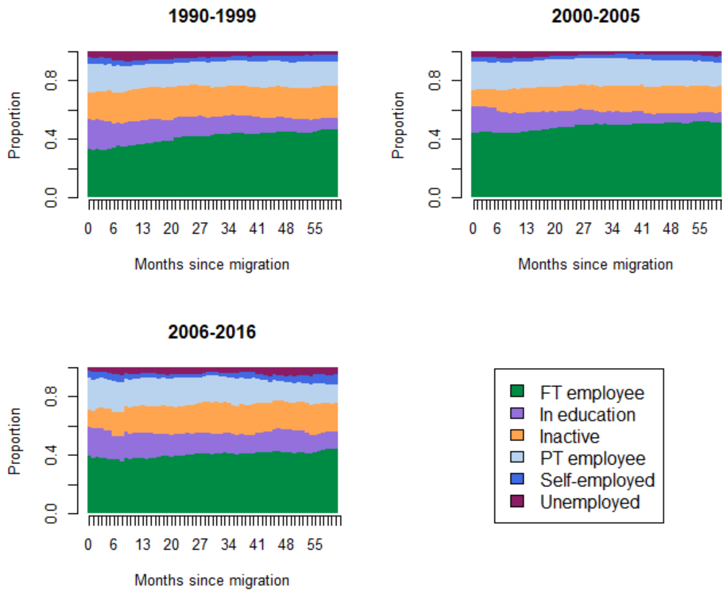
Source: Understanding Society Wave G

The distributions of net equivalised income is broadly similar, but both the mode and median income are slightly lower among migrant households. There are several possible explanations. Firstly in relation to wage income, migrants are less likely to benefit from a career history accepted by UK employers. Secondly, it may be the case that migrants are 'under-employed', meaning that they accept employment for which they are overqualified and in consequence earn less than their educational qualifications might suggest. Thirdly, migrants are likely to have less access to social support because of migration rules restricting access to public funds, and their lack of UK-based employment history. Finally, migrants are unlikely to come to the UK with a store of wealth which could be used to generate investment or rental income. Thus, in comparison to native-born households, there are plausible explanations of the differences in the distributions of net household income.

Employment trajectories

We can also analyse employment patterns by exploring how migrants' employment trajectories have evolved in the UK since arrival, comparing these trajectories across different family statuses. This analysis of employment is based on the Understanding Society data, though using a smaller sample (N=1,828), given that information on employment histories was only collected for part of the Understanding Society sample. Drawing on this data, we first of all derive a general picture of employment patterns across all types of family status. We can see that more than a half of immigrants who arrived since 1990 commenced work after arrival (either full- or part-time). Around one-fifth began their studies, and the remaining portion stayed out of the labour market. Regarding the time since migration, the proportion of individuals employed full-time increases at the expense of students (and also part-time employees), suggesting that some migrants came to study first, and then subsequently entered the labour market.

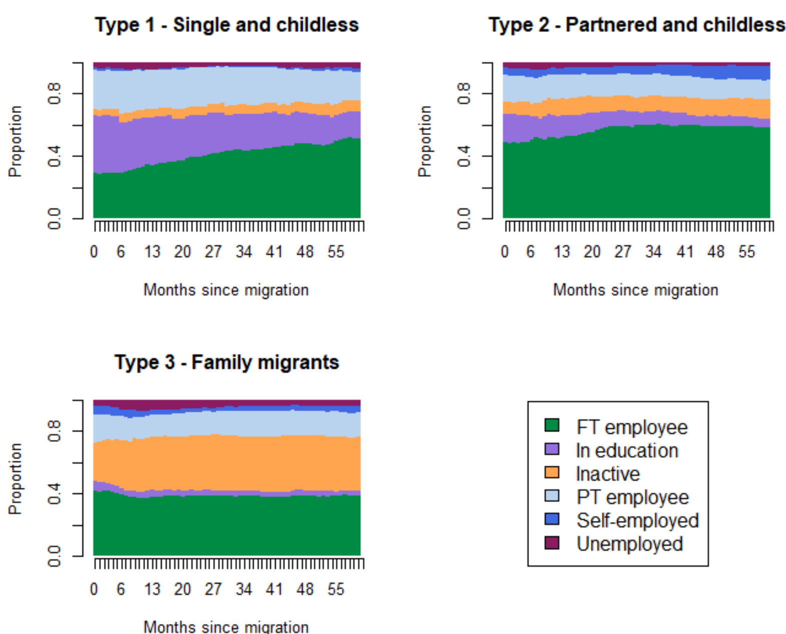
Figure 21: Immigrants in the UK by employment status, time since migration and immigration cohort



Note: time since migration in months; N=1,828.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the Understanding Society data.

We now classify the employment trajectories of immigrants after arrival in the UK according to family status (see section 2). Type 1 describes individuals classified as 'single and childless'; Type 2 refers to 'partnered and childless' immigrants, who arrived as single or partnered individuals, but experienced significant partnership changes over the first two or three years following migration; and Type 3 are 'family migrants' who were already married when they arrived in the UK. The groups and their determinants are very similar to those obtained when using a larger sample (see Chapter 3) – hence, we only show and briefly discuss employment histories for the three migrant groups.

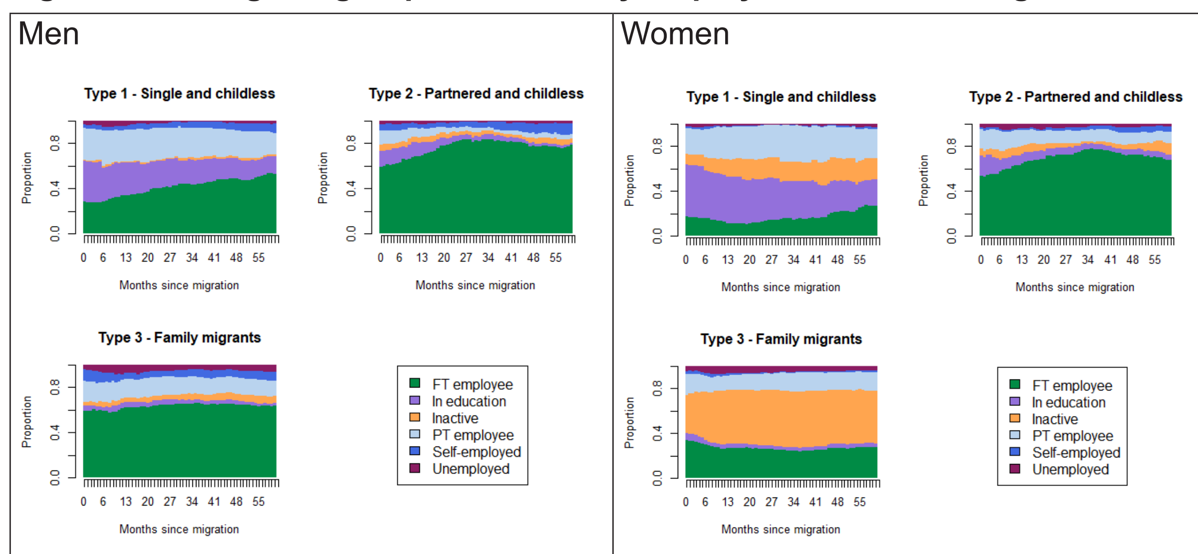
Figure 22: Immigrant groups in the UK by employment status



Note: time since migration in months.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the Understanding Society data.

Most individuals classified as 'single and childless' (Type 1) arrived in the UK to study, as expected (Figure 22). This group shows a very high share of students and part-time workers. However, this share gradually declines as many become employed full-time after their studies. Among the 'partnered and childless' group, full-time employment is the dominant category, although there are also part-time employees and students within this group. The 'family migrants' (Type 3) also exhibit diversity in their employment patterns. However, two categories dominate: some people work full-time, but many have stayed out of the labour market. Our further analysis shows that most women in Type 3 are not active in the labour market or education, whereas most men work full-time (Figure 23). This corroborates the findings from the first part of this chapter about the higher propensity for migrants to have one partner working (usually the man), with the woman staying at home. Interestingly, among unpartnered childless migrants a significant portion of women arrived because of studies.

Figure 23: Immigrant groups in the UK by employment status and gender



Note: time since migration in months.
Source: Authors' calculations based on the Understanding Society data

4. Well-being

Finally, we consider whether migrant households' well-being differs from those of native-born families. Migration is often perceived to offer a route to enhanced well-being, through increasing income and more general life opportunities for migrants and their families. However, the link between migration, income and increased well-being is not strong (Olgiati, Calvo and Berkman 2013)[lxxvi]. Migration is a stressful event that can have a negative impact on well-being, especially where there is a significant difference between pre-migration expectations and post-migration outcomes.

Using Understanding Society, we compared a standard measure of well-being – life satisfaction – for migrants and UK-born using the same definitions for these categories as previously described. We were also able to calculate average well-being within each household since the life satisfaction question is asked of all adults. We also examined the variation of well-being *within* households. The results show no significant differences between average life satisfaction in native-born and migrant households or in its variance. However, we note that there may be important cultural differences in relations to understandings and perceptions of life satisfaction (Lau, Cummins and McPherson 2005)[lxxvii]. For these reasons, these survey findings need to be treated with caution.

For the native-born, well-being has been relatively stable over time. We do not know whether the same is true of those who have migrated to the UK. They may have experienced a substantial increase in well-being since their arrival – or a substantial fall. Although this finding is interesting and may suggest that migrants gradually reflect the characteristic of the native-born population, it does not imply that migration has not been beneficial for the well-being of those who have migrated to the UK.

Summary

- Survey data suggests that of those migrant households that have moved to the UK since 2000, the majority are 'mixed': 68% of households that include at least one foreign-born national also include one or more UK-born national.
- The data confirms our analysis in Chapter 3 that migrant households are more likely to include children; and also that migrant households rely more on rented accommodation than do non-migrant households.
- Around 60% of migrants currently living in the UK arrived in the UK as single individuals (with many marrying or becoming parents later); 40% arriving as married. However, the share of those arriving as single has declined slightly, which may reflect a change in immigration rules. Women are significantly less likely to arrive as single and childless than men – they are more likely to be married with children at arrival.
- EU migrants were more likely to arrive as family migrants than those who came from other countries, reflecting more lenient rules on family migration under EU free movement.
- A high proportion of migrants who arrived after 2000 possess degrees. Moreover, for migrant households, and especially those with two or more members born abroad, there is a greater likelihood that more than one members who hold degrees – suggesting highly qualified couples.
- However, migrant households are also less likely to have all members employed. Instead, they are more likely to see 50% of the household working, typically reflecting a pattern of a male bread-winner and a female staying at home to care for children. This finding appears to confirm analysis presented in Chapter 1 about the challenges for women in navigating limited childcare possibilities with sustaining work.
- Migrant households are less likely to have no-one employed at all, reflecting the fact that most migrants enter as labour migrants. However, despite higher qualifications, migrant households enjoy slightly lower incomes than non-migrant households. Explanations for this difference might include impediments in having skill and qualifications recognised by employers, less knowledge of the labour market, or limited access to public funds.

5

Practice in Supporting Migrant Families

The Scottish Government is committed to supporting families by ensuring that children and young people ‘grow up feeling loved, safe and respected’ and ‘realise their full potential’[lxxviii]. Furthermore, the Government’s vision is to create a fairer Scotland where people across all communities ‘are healthier, happier and treated with respect, and where opportunities, wealth and power are spread more equally’. These commitments underline the importance of supporting all families, including migrant families, to realise their potential and thrive, enabling them to make a positive contribution to society. Moreover, supporting families can help to meet Scotland’s population goals, by encouraging permanent settlement in areas facing depopulation.

In this chapter, we draw on the analysis in the previous chapters to consider what kinds of lessons can be learned about effective policies to support family migration and migrant families. We set out ten suggestions on how policy at UK, Scottish or local authority level could better support migrant families. We also provide some examples of good practice which could help inform such approaches.

1. Enable family migration to remote and rural areas through bespoke schemes

Remote and rural areas of Scotland are in particular need of family migration to help mitigate the effects of population ageing and decline. However, as we saw in Chapter 2, families are less likely to settle in remote areas compared to cities, exacerbating the challenges for these areas in mitigating population ageing and decline.

In previous EAG reports, we explored a range of approaches to recruiting migrants to settle in different areas of Scotland, including remote and rural areas. Our reports on immigration policy and demographic change (2019)[lxxix], and on migration to remote and rural areas (2021)[lxxx], summarised examples of good practice from Canada, Australia and European countries. Some key findings were:

- the importance of job offers or viable employment opportunities in places of destination
- the need to offer a generous package of rights and pathways to permanent settlement
- the need to work with stakeholders, including local authorities, employers and community groups, to develop support packages to facilitate settlement
- the feasibility of schemes that involve differentiated approaches across regions, to accommodate diverging demographic, social and labour market contexts.

A number of schemes represent good practice in promoting settlement of families, including engaging local communities in facilitating migration to remoter areas. For example, the recently launched Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Program in Canada involves local communities in recruiting and facilitating migrant employment in a localised context[lxxxi]. The Canadian Atlantic Immigration Pilot Programme offers a similar model through its partnership approach. Both of these schemes build in support for migrant families.

We suggest that the Scottish Government continue to explore options for a pilot scheme to facilitate migration to remote and rural areas, which would place emphasis on attracting and supporting the settlement of migrant families.

2. Facilitate family reunion by removing the minimum income requirement

The current minimum income requirement for UK residents wishing to be joined by a non-UK partner creates a range of social and economic challenges. As we saw in Chapter 2, not only does it create differential rights across earning groups, it also impacts the spatial distribution of migration across Scotland. Since higher-earning employment is disproportionately concentrated in urban areas, residents in remote, rural and post-industrial towns are far less likely to meet the minimum income requirement for family reunion. This may exacerbate existing disparities in the geographic spread of migration across different types of areas.

There are also compelling social reasons for rethinking the minimum income requirement. The requirement can lead to a lag in family reunion, implying that children only arrive in the UK/ Scotland after a number of years. As the OECD has argued, such a lag can negatively affect children's language learning, school attainment and longer-term educational and labour market performance in the host country (OECD 2017)[lxxxii]. Research shows that children who arrive in the host country and enter the school system at an earlier age have much greater prospects of success (Hou and Bonikowska, 2016)[lxxxiii]. The OECD also suggests allowing young children to accompany their migrating parents upon admission, through shortening administrative procedures or waiting periods for children to join their parents; and providing clear information to sponsors about possibilities to reunite with their families (OECD 2017).

From a labour market perspective, we note that the Swedish approach specifically rejects income thresholds as a condition for family reunion, on the assumption that partners will be incentivised to become economically active to supplement household income. In line with this approach, discontinuation of the minimum income requirement could be accompanied by more proactive support for dependants in finding suitable employment when they arrive (see below).

3. Better information for family members pre-arrival

We saw in Chapters 1 and 3 that family members, and especially 'dependent' partners, are often under-employed in the labour market. Although migrant families where both partners are non-nationals are more likely to have multiple household members with degrees, they are less likely to see both partners working. Typical constraints to work are likely to be lack of affordable or accessible childcare, difficulties navigating the labour market, or a failure of employers to recognise or value qualifications and skills.

In its 2021 population strategy, the Scottish Government committed to **'explore how we and partners can offer a support package to those who wish to move and work in Scotland, including support around housing, spousal recruitment and family support where needed'** (Scottish Government 2021)[lxxxiv]. There are a range of approaches that could contribute to this goal.

The OECD recommends that institutions, organisations and stakeholders in the host countries (whether local authorities, employers or NGOs) provide information about life in the new country prior to entry. This could include helping family members to understand the labour market and job opportunities, find out about language learning and training opportunities, and navigate childcare and schooling facilities, all of which can help 'dependent' migrants enter the labour market when they arrive. Such an approach is proposed in the recent Population Strategy, which notes that Scottish Government is developing a Talent Attraction and Retention Service for Scotland, providing information and advice to support migrants before (and after) arriving in Scotland (Scottish Government 2021).

There are a variety of examples of good practice already available within Scotland where this type of information and support is provided, for example, by larger employers or local authorities. As discussed in Chapter 1, employers are more likely to provide such services for highly skilled workers and professionals coming to work, for example in oil and gas companies in Aberdeen, or Scottish universities. These employers often offer 'induction' or support packages, and can also put migrants in touch with other employees, or with other employees' migrant family members, to create a network that provides informal advice (e.g. on housing, local nurseries or schools, registering with doctors and dentists, career pathways and volunteering or training opportunities) as well as opportunities for socialising and peer support.

For smaller employers, it may be helpful to establish wider networks, which might be coordinated by local authorities and involve NGOs and relevant citizens advice and careers service. In our previous EAG report 'Internal migration in Scotland and the UK' we discussed the example of Inverclyde Local Authority's 'Inverclyde Living' campaign (EAG 2020: 40-41)[lxxxv]. While this campaign focused primarily on attracting new residents to the area from within the UK (or even Scotland), it offers some useful lessons on how to provide families with pre-arrival information, helping them to plan moves better, and understanding the implications for various aspects of family life and the opportunities and career prospects of family members. The campaign was launched with the creation of a website and branding for the general promotion of Inverclyde. As well as offering financial incentives and support for new start-up businesses, the campaign included a package of information and support for individuals and families. Families interested in moving to Inverclyde were offered relocation assistance, including tours of local amenities and services (e.g. schools, leisure facilities).

Innovative tools and information services that are available more generally might also be combined with locally tailored support packages to assist with job search, application and interview skills. For example, the WORKEEN app developed by the EU-funded Sirius project with the aim of supporting labour market integration of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, as well as young unemployed people of any background, is designed to help with soft skills development and understanding of the expectations and etiquette linked to seeking employment in a number of European countries, including the UK[lxxxvi]. The app is currently available in English and in six other languages: Arabic, Czech, Farsi, Finnish, French, Italian. Although focused on entry-level and lower skilled/manual jobs, the app could be expanded and adapted to include other languages and cater for a wider range of potential applicants and jobs.

4. Support family members to find suitable work

Once they have arrived, migrant families should have access to bespoke advice on employment, so that partners/dependants have an opportunity to use their skills in the labour market. One of the impediments to accessing suitable work is recognition of skills and qualifications. The recent Scottish Government population strategy commits to delivering Skills Recognition Scotland, to support the recognition of skills and qualifications, and support employers in recruiting migrants with suitable qualifications. We would encourage the Scottish Government to ensure this scheme also covers dependant family members of sponsors or primary migrants who have moved to Scotland to join their family.

Such support may also involve fostering entrepreneurship, including advice on accessing finance and support services, and training and mentorship to encourage business acumen and marketing skills. One example of such support is found in the 'Stepping Stones to Small Business' programme in Australia, which provides micro-enterprise support to migrant women[lxxxvii]. In the context of Scotland's refugee resettlement programme, Argyll and Bute local authority have offered a best-practice model of support for migrant enterprise, in collaboration with the local Business

Gateway advisement services. The model is grounded in a 'person-centred' approach to ensure that people are provided with all the necessary assistance in understanding the financial and regulatory landscape and assisting them to develop viable business plans, to clearly identify and fill gaps in local markets, and to access funding and premises. As part of their engagement with researchers exploring governance and local integration of migrants and refugees across four European countries, including Scotland, Scottish Government enterprise policymakers noted that they intended to use the 'Bute model' to inform entrepreneurial support elsewhere'[lxxxviii].

Another option is to facilitate or fast-track skills recognition or training, to allow migrants to transition to skilled work. Such an initiative could draw on the experience of the recent fast-track initiatives developed by the Scottish Government in response to rising un/underemployment as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. This included a range of measures to match skills to vacancies, to allow for retraining and upskilling of those with relevant experience and qualifications and to work with employers to support apprenticeships and placements[lxxxix]. With suitable adaptation, similar schemes could be developed to tackle un/under employment amongst 'dependent' migrant family members and might represent a short-term investment to yield a longer-term gain in terms of their potential contribution to Scotland's economic, social and cultural development.

Given expanding opportunities for flexible and remote working, local authorities could also consider establishing physical hubs with office spaces. This could facilitate both partners being able to work, while being based in remoter areas of Scotland – thereby supplementing household incomes, and also making life in rural areas more viable. The Scottish Government has proposed that groups of employers across public and private sector could establish such work hubs in disused buildings in town centres, providing a base for people working remotely (Scottish Government, 2021).

Support should be provided in a flexible way to accommodate childcare responsibilities – for example, by offering parent and child sessions, or offering crèche care to children while courses or advice sessions are being offered. A good example of such an approach is found in Germany and France, where language courses are offered to parents at schools where their children attend[xc].

5. Facilitate access to childcare

As we saw in Chapter 1, finding suitable childcare can be a major impediment to employment, especially for women who move as 'dependants'. Migrant families will be cut off from their extended family and support networks, and inability to access such childcare will be a decisive factor in the ability of partners to work, and even in decisions to stay. One key way of facilitating access to childcare is to provide more information on the range of services available in the area. Such information may be best provided through informal networks, whether these are colleagues in larger organisations, networks of migrants for example through ESOL groups.

Also critical is the issue of childcare costs. Scotland offers subsidised childcare for 3 and 4 years olds as well as some 2 year olds[xci] under the Early Learning and Childcare entitlement (currently 16 hours per week, rising to 30 hours from August 2021). In Scotland, this provision is universal, in contrast to England, where migrants with no recourse to public funds only have access to 15 hours, not the full 30 hours; access is contingent on a residency requirement, which typically involves ILR, pre-settled or settled status, or refugee leave. We suggest that Scottish employers, local authorities and support agencies could work together better to ensure that information about this universal entitlement is actively signposted to those planning a move, as well as to newly arrived migrant families. This would facilitate both partners staying economically active, and also encourage earlier reunification with children in the host country.

All working families with young children face challenges navigating childcare arrangements around their work, and migrant families may find this especially difficult. As noted above, employers, local authorities and other citizen/NGOs can play an important role in providing advice and support to migrant families, for example through making them aware of their right to request flexible working arrangements, understanding part-time work and job-share opportunities, and exploring options for remote working.

6. Establish advice hubs

A number of countries have established networks of hubs to provide comprehensive support and services for migrants. Such hubs could provide a package of support for integration, including legal support, advice on access to public services and welfare, assistance with language and other skills development, finding employment and entrepreneurship, and potentially office space with wifi for remote working (see point 4 above). They could also be the source of more co-ordinated pre-arrival information (as recommended under point 3 above). In order to be successful, such hubs would need involvement of multiple agencies – employers, education, welfare rights, office space/pop-up offices.

Such hubs could help migrant families to develop a personalised plan for integration. This could build on the Scottish Refugee Council toolkit, which engages refugees in developing and implementing a personalised integration plan[xcii]. This could potentially be adapted and extended for all migrant families.

There are also a range of schemes in other OECD countries which could be further examined, to learn relevant lessons for Scotland. For example, Portugal has 'one-stop-shop' integration centres, some of which are mobile for migrants who are transitory or on the move, to connect them with a variety of services and provide a welcoming presence[xciii]. Australia runs a national network of community hubs to support migrant and refugee parents and children navigate the education system[xciv]. Such hubs could be open to both migrants and long-term residents/citizens and families, depending on need.

7. Promote community and migrant peer networks

Isolation, loneliness and difficulties establishing networks and social ties can be particularly challenging issues for family migrants who arrive into Scotland without a job and without the routines, sociality and networks that jobs provide. They may also fall under the radar of integration services targeted at benefit recipients, due to rules on no recourse to public funds (OECD 2017: 6)[xcv]. It is therefore important to provide services and initiatives tailored to ensure that family migrants access opportunities to meet others in their community and to develop networks with both other migrants and long-term residents.

Scotland already has a good network of ESOL provision, and many community-based classes are available free of charge to migrants with any visa status. However, bursaries for college-based ESOL courses previously available to EU migrants are at risk and accredited courses working towards more advanced qualifications or combining ESOL with vocational courses can be costly. As Scotland's ESOL strategy is now being integrated into a wider strategy for adult learning it will be important to ensure that sufficient funding is still available to maintain provision, including in more rural locations, and a new system of bursaries for college-based courses could usefully be developed.

Community-based ESOL cafes and classes tailored to employability needs have been developed in a number of areas, including for example in Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, Angus and Argyll

and Bute[xcvi]. These provide opportunities for learner-led programmes of discussion and learning, and often include information about local facilities and services and trips to places of interest. Such initiatives usually involve native speakers and longer-settled migrants as volunteers, thereby supporting social integration and the cultivation of social networks. At both local and national government levels, more could be done to support such community-based initiatives through platforms for sharing information and best-practice and facilitating access to funding, which is currently often short-term and insecure.

8. Help find suitable accommodation

Finding suitable accommodation can be a major challenge for families, who will have particular needs related to children and proximity to childcare and schools and may have limited knowledge of local housing markets. This can place families under pressure when they arrive, and may hinder migrants from finding suitable accommodation especially in less densely populated areas. For these reasons, swift access to suitable and affordable rental accommodation can make a big difference to families.

As we saw in Chapter 3, migrant families are more likely to rent housing over a number of years, rather than purchasing. This may reflect uncertainty about future plans, limited capital for deposits, as well as cultural differences in patterns of rental/purchase (noting that it is far more the norm to rent accommodation in most European countries). This implies the need to focus on making appropriate rental accommodation accessible to families.

The Orkney Gateway programme offers an example of an innovative solution in this regard. The local authority identifies empty homes to be offered as secure 12- to 18-month lets and matches these with new residents' needs and preferences, allowing them an initial period to get used to Island life before making a longer term commitment through, for example, purchasing property. Community refurbishment and renovation schemes also assist the owners of empty properties to prepare them for rental and/or sale, thus helping to balance housing supply and demand on the island[xcvii].

9. Reduce the costs of settlement

As we saw in Chapter 2, the costs of applying for indefinite leave to remain and/or citizenship can be prohibitive for families, especially those with children. Yet providing this form of stability can greatly enhance their sense of security, local integration, and likelihood to settle. As we saw in Chapter 1, citizenship status is also associated with higher earnings of migrants.

Current ILR and citizenship fees are very high in comparison to other OECD countries. While there is a case for such fees covering administrative processing costs, the evidence offers a compelling case for significantly reducing such fees, from the perspective of both migrant families and host societies. The case for reducing fees is especially compelling for Scotland, given the goal of encourage settlement and integration across all areas of Scotland.

10. Join up pockets of good practice

As we have seen above, there is a wealth of good practice in supporting migrant families across local authorities and local communities in Scotland. However, all too often, localised good practice is fragmented, informal, and not joined up as part of national or LA practice.

While it is important to retain a local flavour and to tailor information and advice to local realities, there is a role for more national level co-ordination, pooling and guidance regarding best practice and allocation of funding and resource to support such schemes. This aligns with

recommendations in our previous report ‘Designing a Pilot Remote and Rural Migration Scheme for Scotland: Analysis and Policy Options’ where we argued for the role of national government in resourcing and co-ordinating locally based multi-agency and stakeholder partnerships to support migrant integration (EAG 2021). It also reflects the findings of research into support for labour market integration of migrants and refugees in Scotland[xcviii].

We would encourage Scottish Government and local authorities to analyse and learn from pockets of good practice, and seek ways to join up, expand and effectively resource successful initiatives. Relatively small investments can make a significant different to migrant families, helping to provide support for them to thrive.

Summary

We have set out ten suggestions on how policy at UK, Scottish or local authority level could better support migrant families.

1. Enable family migration to remote and rural areas through bespoke schemes
2. Facilitate family reunion by removing the minimum income requirement
3. Better information for family members pre-arrival
4. Support family members to find suitable work
5. Facilitate access to childcare
6. Establish advice hubs
7. Promote community and migrant peer networks
8. Help find suitable accommodation
9. Reduce the costs of settlement
10. Join up pockets of good practice

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