

# Ethnic variations in internal migration in the UK, 2009-2015

Migration is of great public and policy interest with much focus on how many migrants are entering the country. However, movement within the country is also of critical social and political importance. Low mobility by particular groups can indicate disadvantage. Understanding the different rates of internal movement by different ethnic groups can help us to improve social cohesion and target services to reduce poverty.

## Key Points

- How much you move around within the UK is highly influenced by your ethnicity.
- Those of African ethnicity have the highest rate of internal movement.
- Caribbean and Pakistani ethnic groups have the lowest rate of internal movement.
- In young adulthood (age 16-30) those of White or African ethnicity display the highest internal mobility rates.
- During mid-life, African ethnicities continue to have the highest internal migration.
- Ethnic minorities are becoming less internally mobile over time.

## Introduction

There is very little recent evidence about internal migration movements of ethnic minorities within the UK. This lack of information can lead to unrealistic projections of ethnic diversity and cultural richness at various geographical scales. Knowledge about internal mobility is essential for successful long term urban planning and effective public policy. Public planners, policy makers and institutions involved in assessing population change need information on internal migration to tailor social services.

## The Study

The data used in this analyses is the UK Household Longitudinal Study data (UKHLS) which spans 2009 to 2015. To increase the representativeness of the survey the UKHLS contains an ethnic minority boost sample which is used for this study. The ethnicities in the ethnic minority boost sample are; African, Caribbean, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Indian. The White ethnicity denotes individuals who are classified as either British, English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish. We calculate the internal migration rate for each year during the period of 2009-2015. The internal migration rate measures the number of moves between regions within the UK (per 100 population).

**Main findings**

There are distinct differences in internal migration rates by ethnicity (Figure 1). During 2009-2015 Africans in our sample had the highest internal migration rate.

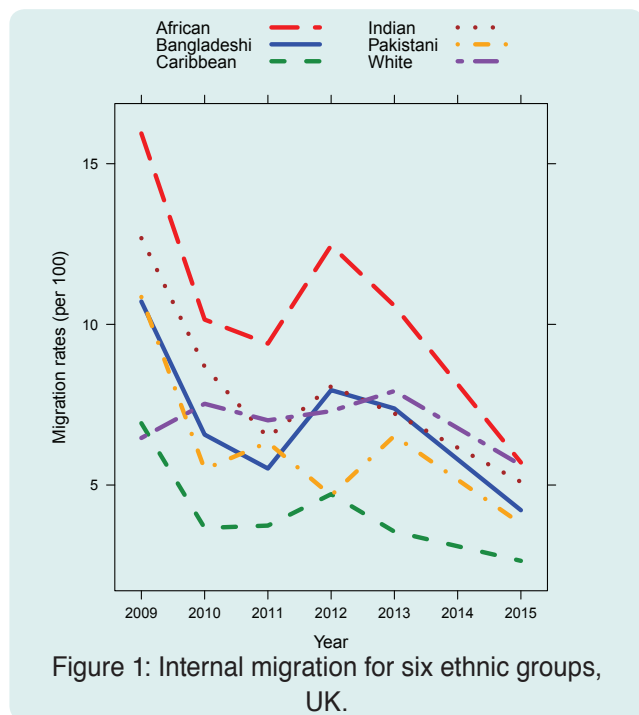


Figure 1: Internal migration for six ethnic groups, UK.

Identify as African have the highest movement. In the unemployed category, the observed rates for both African and White ethnicities are high compared to the other ethnic groups.

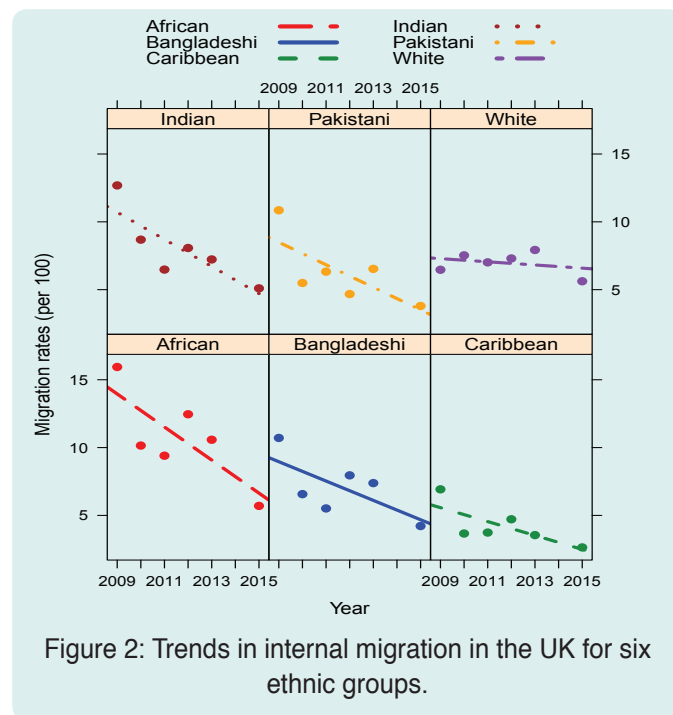


Figure 2: Trends in internal migration in the UK for six ethnic groups.

Figure 2 shows that internal migration for White ethnicities has varied the least over time. For all other ethnicities internal migration has declined between 2009 and 2015, and especially since 2013. In addition, all ethnic minority groups except Caribbean have higher internal migration rates in 2009 than that of White ethnicities. Possible reasons for this include cultural and economic differences.

**What's economic activity got to do with it?**

The likelihood of making a move from one place to another can be influenced by economic activity. For example, students are traditionally thought of as being highly mobile due to the temporary status of their place of residence. Employed people are also thought of as more mobile since they have higher access to resources in order to move, for example more money to be able to afford to move house.

For each ethnic group we looked at the differences by economic activity; full-time student, unemployed, employed, not seeking employment (nse), and retired. Among students, those who

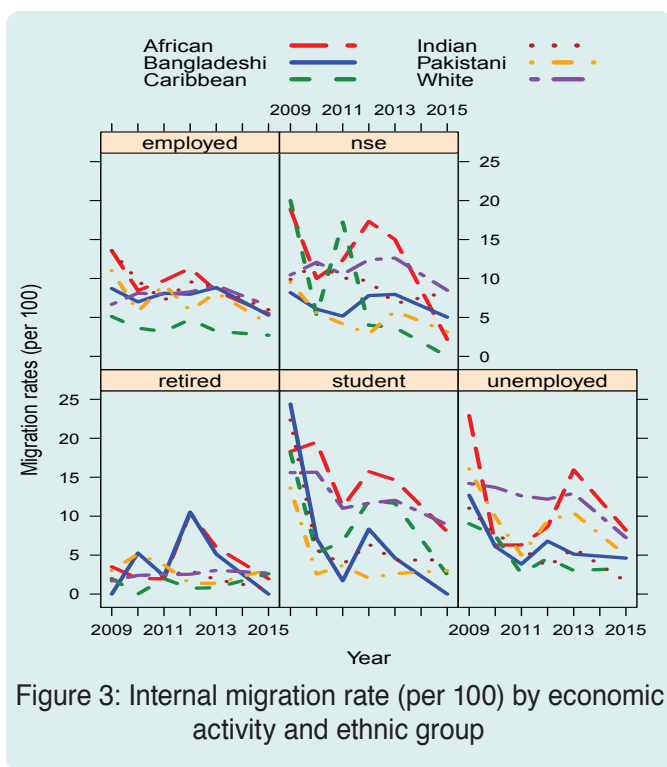


Figure 3: Internal migration rate (per 100) by economic activity and ethnic group

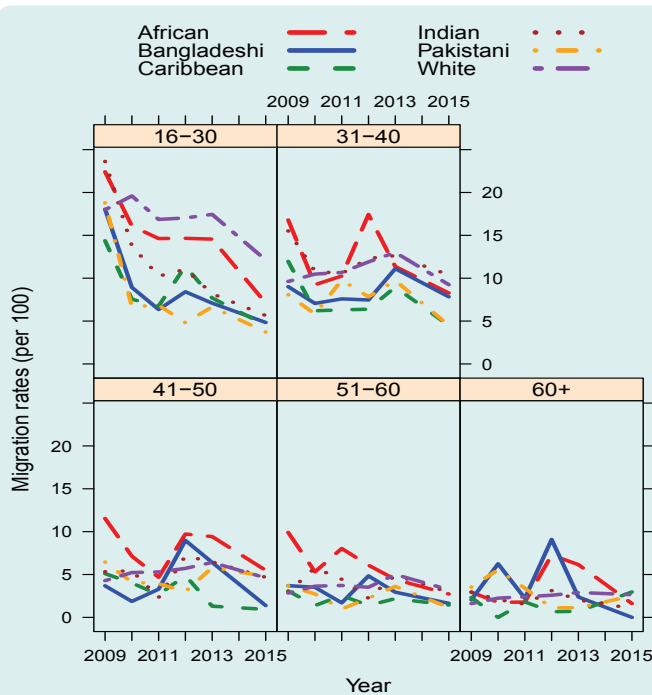


Figure 4: Migration rates (per 100) by age group and ethnicity

### What's age got to do with it?

In general younger people are more likely to be mobile than older people as they frequently move for study and jobs. In mid-life movements tend to decrease and then in older ages people become more mobile again as they make moves for retirement and out of their own homes into residential care. But how does this vary by ethnicity? We were interested in this question because cultural differences are highly likely to affect the age profile of mobility. The results shown in Figure 4 indicate that differences in internal migration rates between the ethnic groups decline with age (the lines on the charts are closer together for those aged 51-60 than those at younger ages). For the 16-30 age group White and African individuals show the highest migration rates; for the 60+ age group African and Bangladeshi ethnicities have the highest migration rates.

In 2012 African and Bangladeshi ethnic groups show a peak in internal movement among those ages 31-40 and 60+. We are carrying out further research to unpick why this occurred but it may be due to new immigrants and/or refugees coming to the UK that are not yet settled into a long-term residential plan.

### Policy implications

People of different ethnicities within the UK have different levels of internal movement across time and according to their age and employment status. Our research highlights relatively high migration rates for African ethnicities and lower rates for Caribbean and Pakistani ethnicities. These observed differences may be attributed in part to the age profile of the movers in each ethnic group and potentially due to cultural or other reasons

Age differences in internal mobility has traditionally been attributed to the changes along the life course such as transitions from living at home to going to University, getting one's first job, starting one's family and retirement. Consistent with this, we have shown that relatively high internal migration rates are observed amongst the younger age groups, regardless of ethnicity, who are likely to be moving to find jobs or for study purposes. However, we have also found some ethnic groups (Bangladeshi, Caribbean, and Pakistani) are relatively less likely to move at young ages than others.

Overall, this study highlights the relatively high migration rate of White ethnicities at ages 16-30, high migration rates for African ethnicities in the ages 41-50 and 51-60, and overall downward trend in migration by ethnic minorities.

Evidence on the different rates of internal migration by ethnicity found in this research is important for policy makers. The findings are relevant for use in making population projections, housing, urban planning for public services, and planning for the different needs of our aging population. These findings are also critical in debates around ethnic segregation and social cohesion.

Finally this study serves to stimulate further research into the reasons why ethnic minorities differ in terms of internal migration rates and identify differential barriers to mobility.

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