

Moving Up Together:

**Promoting equality and integration among the
UK's diverse communities**

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Executive summary and recommendations

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Although international migration has always been a feature of national life in Britain, this aspect of population change has increased substantially since the early 1990s, caused by greater migration for reasons of asylum-seeking and increased labour migration from inside and outside the European Union. In today's Britain migrants from many different countries often live side by side. These communities are different not only in their national origin, but also in terms of their residency status, ethnicity, language, household composition, employment experiences and educational qualifications, as well as factors such as religious and political affiliations.

Much research about the UK's migrant communities has highlighted the immense diversity between and within migrant and minority communities in relation to their labour market experiences and thus their wealth. However, there is little research that has examined the reasons for these inequalities. *Moving Up Together* aims to fill some of this gap in knowledge. It addresses the question of why some migrant and minority communities are falling behind and assesses which policy interventions will promote greater equality and integration.

The focus of this report is on migrants born outside the UK, although we recognise that many migrants have British citizenship and have been resident in the UK for many years.

The research focused on four communities of people born in:

- Bangladesh
- Iran
- Nigeria
- Somalia.

We chose these four communities to reflect the way perceptions about the success of each differ among the wider population, as well as for the fact that each has a different period of establishment in the UK. For example, Bangladeshis are a long settled community while Somalis comprise a larger number of new arrivals.

Our research examined labour market participation, qualifications and progress towards equality. In particular we aimed to find out answers to the following:

- Are some communities more successful than others and how is socio-economic success manifested?
- What factors influence socio-economic outcomes of immigrant communities, and to what extent? What influence do residency status, gender, age, education levels and length of settlement have on integration?
- Are the children of migrants securing better educational and economic outcomes than their parents?
- What are the aspirations of the four communities? Are they concerned with integrating into the UK or with aspirations linked to their country of origin, such as remittances?
- How did members of the four communities understand their integration and interpret present media debates about integration?

- What policy interventions will be most effective in promoting the equality and the socio-economic integration of less successful migrants?

Our research methodology comprised:

- An analysis of quantitative data drawn from sources that included the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the Census and the National Pupil dataset
- Focus group interviews with members of the four communities
- Key informant interviews.

The research was carried out in three areas of England: Birmingham, London Borough of Brent and Manchester.

Migrants' perceptions of their integration

Our interviewees were asked what they thought integration constituted, whether they felt 'integrated', how they viewed current debates about integration, and about their long-term aspirations.

Interviewees defined their own integration largely as comprising three facets:

- Their labour market experiences
- How their experiences measured up to what they saw as 'equal opportunities'
- Their local social interactions.

Many of them expressed the opinion that the barriers they encountered in finding work and the fact that they were in prolonged low-skilled, poorly-paid employment, did not make them 'integrated'.

Almost all of those we interviewed spoke of the complexity of the process of their own integration. Integration was a lengthy process that involved constant negotiation, both internally as individuals, and within households, about issues such as whether to remain in the UK or not, as well as 'downs' where people experienced setbacks to their integration into life in the UK. For example, several participants stated that the 2001 and 2005 terrorist atrocities in the US and London and the increased profile of Islam had left them feeling less certain about their identity, less integrated than previously, more conspicuous and more uncomfortable.

Many interviewees also felt that the responsibility for social integration was placed on migrants, but that the problem lay with the unwelcoming majority community.

The economic profiles of the four communities

There were many differences in the labour market experiences between and within the four communities. Overall, the Nigeria-born population is enjoying a measure of economic success. However, the Somalia-born population, newly-arrived Iranians and Bangladesh-born women in particular experience high levels of unemployment as well as economic inactivity and their employment rates are much lower than the UK average, in contrast to the Nigeria-born community.

There is a marked difference between male and female employment rates among Somali- and Bangladesh-born migrants. For both communities, childcare obligations partly account for low levels of employment among women.

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There is a very strong relationship between length of residence in the UK and employment for the Iran-born group, which was not apparent in other communities: the employment levels of Iranian immigrants present in the UK in 1991 were a great deal higher than for post-1991 arrivals.

The employment rates for Iran- and Nigeria-born populations have remained fairly constant since 1997, and there has been some improvement in the employment rate in the Bangladesh- and Somalia-born populations, although not among older members of these two groups. Among the Somalia-born population, employment rates have increased since 2003 but the employment gap between this group and UK-born people is still very large. The healthier economy and a contracting UK-born workforce account for some of this change.

Our analysis also shows significant labour market segregation. The Bangladesh-born population is concentrated in the distribution, hotels and catering sector. Nigerians and Somalis are concentrated in the public administration, education, health and social care sector.

Average gross hourly pay for Nigeria-born workers exceeds that of the UK-born population, but for the three other communities it is below that of the UK-born population. The Somalia-born population has particularly low gross hourly earnings.

Our research findings challenged some of our initial perceptions about the economic success of these communities. We perceived the Iran-born community to be enjoying much greater economic success than was indicated by the data. Bangladesh-born women who are in work have higher gross hourly earnings than UK-born women, which also challenged perceptions that we had about this group.

Education and skills profiles among the four migrant communities

Our research indicated that English language fluency was the single most important factor affecting interviewees' ability to find work, their type of employment, promotion prospects and earning potential, their social integration, and their ability to be involved in their children's education. All interviewees without fluent English were unemployed.

The extent of a person's English language fluency was determined by their contact with the English language in the country of origin, previous educational experiences, length of residency in the UK and ability to access English language classes. Those who lacked fluent English usually expressed a strong desire to learn the language, but often experienced difficulty in finding courses.

The possession of qualifications influences labour market outcomes for all groups. Bangladesh-born and Somalia-born populations were most likely to have no qualifications at all and least likely to possess qualifications at Level Three and above (A-level equivalent).

Other factors affecting economic integration

Our research suggested that eight additional factors determined a migrant's likelihood of finding work and progressing in their employment:

- Employer discrimination
- Knowledge of job-seeking processes in the UK
- Length of residence in the UK

- The willingness to move within the UK for work
- Childcare obligations
- Poor health among some Iranians and Somalis
- Fear of loss of state benefits
- Immigration status and employer uncertainties about the documents of non-EU migrants.

There was a widespread perception among interviewees that they faced workplace discrimination. They felt that their qualifications and prior employment experiences were not valued in the UK, a finding supported in much other research on migrant employment.

Our research showed the length of time in the UK affects earnings and employment outcomes. Migrants may need time to establish themselves, rebuild their careers and perhaps undertake some requalification or training. Recent arrivals are less likely to be familiar with job-seeking methods.

Fear of loss of Housing Benefit acted as a disincentive to seeking work among the Somali community in particular. We also concluded that Iranians and Nigerians were much more willing to move home to find work than were Bangladeshis or Somalis, who feared the loss of social housing tenancies.

Interventions to enable adults to find and stay in work

In the last ten years, government has placed much greater emphasis on improving adult basic skills and on welfare-to-work interventions, most recently with a Green Paper on welfare reform, Employment Zones and the announcement of the new Flexible New Deal programme targeted at the least job-ready. Many of our interviewees had been beneficiaries of interventions to help them improve qualifications or enter the labour market.

Many found it difficult to find an ESOL course, although once enrolled, interviewees were generally satisfied with the quality of provision. Somali interviewees had used the services of community organisations and many valued the informal nature of advice offered by these groups. Bangladeshi, Iranian and Nigerian interviewees were much less likely to use the services of migrant and refugee community organisations.

Interviewees expressed a great deal of dissatisfaction with Jobcentre Plus provision for the lack of tailoring of services to individuals and the lack of understanding among staff of the background of migrant groups. Our research findings concurred with much current criticism of welfare-to-work programmes, for their inflexibility and for failing those with multiple social needs.

Intergenerational mobility

Although there is no data on migrant children's educational achievement, there is some data that relates to school achievement in England measured by ethnic group. This shows that Iranian and Nigerian children are securing test and GCSE results above the national average percentages in England. Bangladeshi children secure results slightly below the national average. Somali children tend to achieve far below the national average, although there has been some improvement in GCSE results among this group since 2002.

In common with all ethnic groups in England, there is a substantial gender gap between girls' and boys' achievement for all four groups, with girls securing better test and GCSE results than boys.

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New migrant students who undertake post-16 education are much less likely to study for a two year A-level course followed by university than are UK-born students. For them, the post-16 education pathways are much more diverse, longer and more likely to be interrupted.

A number of factors that contributed to under-achievement among Bangladeshi and Somali students. These included entering the school system at 4 or 5 without speaking English, living in overcrowded housing, and the inability of parents, caused by their own lack of fluency in English, to provide guidance and support for their children. Additionally, some Somali children entered secondary education in the UK having never before received any primary education.

Limited English as an Additional Language (EAL) support at school was also a key barrier to educational success.

Our research suggests that Bangladeshi students will secure better economic outcomes than their parents. We are very concerned about the long-term educational and employment outcomes of the Somali community: there appears to be little evidence that the poor economic and employment outcomes of today's Somali adults will improve over a generation. Social exclusion is becoming entrenched in this group.

Conclusions

We found success stories in all four communities, as well as considerable variation. Overall, the Nigeria-born population is enjoying a measure of economic success, a condition that does not extend to the three other national groups. The Bangladesh-born and Somalia-born populations experience high levels of unemployment and low earnings. Newly-arrived Iranians also have poor labour market outcomes.

Two key issues emerged from the research. First, for migrants, integration was a lengthy process that involved constant debate and negotiation, both internally as individuals, and within households, about whether to stay in the UK or not, how much money to remit and so on, as well as high and low points. For example, interviewees talked about making sacrifices now for the long-term goals, such as performing a number of jobs in order to pay for private tutoring for their children.

People felt integrated in some places and not in others. This finding has great bearing on the direction of present government policy, which has tended to see migrant integration as an immediate and easy solution to the achievement of stable and cohesive communities. In formulating integration policy, government needs to proceed with caution and listen to the everyday experiences of migrants themselves.

Second, labour market participation remains a key route to integration, although not all sectors of our four migrant communities are equally job-ready. Present welfare-to-work programmes are not sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of migrant communities with complex or multiple needs, although the planned Flexible New Deal programme offers greater opportunity for more personalised interventions. Moving away from an inflexible one-size-fits-all model of welfare-to-work could target greater help at those with the most complex problems. This might involve a package of support provided by a far broader range of agencies than at present, including migrant and refugee community organisations (MRCOs) and Further Education colleges. It is essential that future programmes, including the Flexible New Deal, are adaptable enough to meet the needs of these least job-ready migrants.

Recommendations

Our research points to a range of public policy interventions that could promote socio-economic integration among the four communities. Although specific to the four groups we examined, many of our recommendations may also benefit other migrant and minority communities.

Integration policy

- Government needs to acknowledge the long-term nature of migrant integration and therefore interventions should not focus unduly on the integration of new arrivals.
- Government integration policy needs to acknowledge that migrant groups are highly diverse. There are major differences between and within communities in relation to qualifications and employment experiences. Integration policy needs to support flexible and personalised approaches to integration.
- Central and local government need to better communicate the two-way nature of integration to the whole UK population.

Regional and local planning of services

- Government should review the role of Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships (RSMPs), perhaps with the intention of transferring their funding and direction to Communities and Local Government. These bodies should be funded to promote the economic aspects of integration among migrant communities that experience high levels of unemployment.
- Communities and Local Government should send out a short guidance document to each Local Strategic Partnership suggesting how it can address migration issues.
- Communities and Local Government and the Department for Work and Pensions should work together to promote stronger local partnerships of welfare-to-work (WTW) providers. The provision of WTW programmes, including the planned Flexible New Deal programme, should be better integrated with other services, such as college-based ESOL, to ensure a more holistic response to individuals with multiple needs.

Adult courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

- In England, Local Learning Partnerships should be given greater freedom to set ESOL priorities and targets. Local priorities should reflect the greater need in many parts of the UK for ESOL courses for those with little or no prior education.
- Government should allow asylum-seekers and newly-arrived spouses/civil partners to enrol on ESOL courses up to Level 2 at a concessionary fee. European Social Fund (ESF) funding regulations should not bar asylum-seekers from attending ESF-funded courses.

Employment

- Government, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, trades unions, employers, and community organisations should collaborate on a campaign to tackle widespread prejudice about the employability of migrants. Such a campaign should build on and extend existing work undertaken by the Employability Forum and others.

The employment needs of older migrants

- The Department for Work and Pensions should draw on international best practice in getting older migrants into work, for whom there are greater barriers to finding work than for younger migrants.
- The Home Office, through the Refugee Integration and Employment Service, should allocate additional funds to provide greater support to older refugees.

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- Welfare-to-work (WTW) schemes should recognise the additional barriers to finding work faced by some older migrants in the UK and be flexible enough to meet these needs.

Welfare-to-work (WTW)

- Government should continue with its attempts to make WTW programmes more flexible and personalised, drawing on the experiences of recent European Social Fund programmes that seek to deliver personalised services to migrants.
- Eligibility for different WTW programmes should be determined by need, not by criteria based on length and types of benefits claimed.
- Government should consider interventions such as foyers services¹ to support the employment of more vulnerable migrants.
- The planned Flexible New Deal programme must engage a broader range of WTW providers, including further education colleges and NGOs with expertise on migrant communities.

In-work poverty

- Central, regional and local government should work with community groups to ensure better uptake of Working Tax Credits among migrants who are entitled to these benefits.
- Government should request the Low Pay Commission to investigate an appropriate minimum wage level for London when it sets the National Minimum Wage in its next report.

Housing Benefit

- The Benefits Agency, local housing authorities and MRCOs need to improve the awareness of entitlements to Housing Benefit for those migrants in low-paid employment.
- Government should consider allowing the long-term unemployed to continue to claim Housing Benefit for a period after they move into paid employment.

Supporting migrant and refugee community organisations (MRCOs)

- Government, in collaboration with community groups, should implement a national strategy to build capacity in the MRCO sector, bringing groups together and improving the quality of formal education, training and welfare-to-work interventions.

Schooling

- Central government should recognise that increased international migration to the UK means that increased funding for English as an Additional Language (EAL) teaching is needed.
- The funding mechanism for EAL teaching needs to better respond to the unpredictable nature of refugee migration, as well as high levels of pupil mobility in the UK.
- The funding formula for EAL teaching should recognise the educational needs of older migrant children and those who have received little or no prior education.
- Central government should encourage local authorities to develop intensive induction programmes for young refugees and migrants who have received little or no prior education before arrival in the UK.

1. Combined housing, training, welfare-to-work support and sometimes other forms of intervention

- Government should review the current 14-19 qualifications system from the perspective of young migrants, especially those who arrive in the UK late in their educational careers, or with little prior education. Such a review should aim to ensure that young refugees leave school with qualifications and clear progression pathways.
- The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority should grant permission for an examination board to develop a GCSE examination in Somali.

More nuanced data and interventions

- The Equalities and Human Rights Commission should work with central government in order to improve the collection of ethnicity data, increasing the number of ethnicity categories to reflect the more complex composition of the UK population.
- Government interventions to promote the integration of newcomers should target particular migrant groups or sub-groups that are experiencing high and sustained levels of social exclusion. For example, a cross-departmental working group could be convened to improve the labour market participation, educational achievement and other aspects of Somali integration in the UK.