



BRIEFING

Children of Migrants in the UK

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This briefing looks at the children of migrants, including those born abroad and those born in the UK to foreign-born parents.

Key Points

In 2024, more than one in three children born in England and Wales had a foreign-born mother and this share has been rising.

This rising share is mostly the result of declining fertility rates among UK-born women.

The changing composition of the migrant population could also have increased births to migrants in the post-Brexit period.

Most children of migrants have both parents born abroad.

In 2021, 38% of non-British children living in England and Wales were born in the UK.

In 2021, there were 876,000 foreign-born children living in England and Wales, 9% of the total – foreign-born population.

Most foreign-born children living in England and Wales moved before they turned 5 years old.

As of 2021, 37% of foreign-born children living in England and Wales were UK nationals.

Between 2016 and 2024, children made up 38% of people coming on asylum, resettlement and refugee family reunion routes compared with 15% of those on immigrant visa routes.

Between 2021 and 2024, over 1 in 4 foreign-born children on visas arrived in the UK as dependants of Health and Care workers.

In 2024, at least half a million children in the UK did not have access to public funds.

In 2021, nearly one third of foreign-born people who had dependant children in their household faced housing deprivation.

The performance gap between children of migrants and children of UK-born parents is significantly smaller in the UK and Ireland than in most other EU-14 countries.

Understanding the policy

This briefing looks at the children of migrants—both those born abroad and those born in the UK to foreign-born parents. Importantly, being born in the UK does not automatically make a child a British citizen. Unlike countries such as Canada or the United States, which use the *jus soli* system (birth right citizenship) and grant citizenship to people born on their territory, the UK—like most European countries—follows *jus sanguinis* citizenship, where citizenship is based on descent. This means that at least one parent must be a British citizen or hold settled status at the time of the child's birth for the child to automatically acquire British citizenship. As a result, some children may be foreign nationals despite not being migrants in the usual sense, that is, without ever having left the UK.

A child born in the UK will generally have the same immigration status as their parents. If neither parent is a British citizen or holds settled status at the time of the child's birth, the child may be able to apply to become a British citizen if: (a) they were born in the UK and a parent later became British or settled, (b) they were born and lived in the UK for their first 10 years, or (c) they were born in the UK, have always been stateless, have lived in the UK for five years, and are under 22 when they apply.

In some cases, the Home Secretary also has the power to grant citizenship at their discretion, but these applications are [more complex and often require legal help](#).

Most policies that specifically focus on children of migrants tend to be implemented as education policies affecting those of school age. In England, schools collect information on children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL), many of whom are foreign born. Having a low proficiency in English is one of the main factors explaining children of migrants' disadvantage in education, particularly of those arriving when they are older, who are [likely to require](#) intensive help with language.

Children of migrants are also indirectly affected by immigration policies which apply to their parents. For example, children whose parents have the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) condition attached to their immigration status—which applies to most non-EEA citizens who are subject to immigration control—cannot, for example, receive Child Benefit support, Universal Credit, disability-related benefits, or live-in social housing. They are also ineligible for the most comprehensive free childcare support schemes, such as the Working Parents Fund, which provides 30 hours per week of free childcare for children over 9 months old. However, all children aged 3 and 4, as well as disadvantaged 2-year-olds with NRPF status are still entitled to 15 hours of free childcare. In 2022, The UK government also extended free school meal eligibility to children in all households with NRPF, provided they qualify based on their income.

Children of unauthorised migrants, a share of whom might be eligible to become UK citizens, also face restrictions on accessing public services, such as secondary healthcare, although they can still register with GPs and get emergency treatment. Their exact number is unknown due to a lack of accurate data on both the number of non-UK citizens in the UK and the number with a right to remain (see Migration Observatory briefing [Unauthorised Migration to the UK](#) for information on estimates of the unauthorised population living in the UK).

It is important to clarify that having NRPF is not the same as facing financial hardship—only a small share of those with NRPF will be in this situation. It is not possible to know precisely how many families with NRPF are at significant risk of falling into poverty or destitution with the current data. Recent [research](#) has, however, highlighted that children in families on the Family and Private Life ten-year routes to settlement are particularly at risk due to their NRPF condition, as they are more likely to be in low-income households.

The NRPF condition may be lifted if specific criteria are met—such as when a family faces imminent risk of destitution or when exceptional circumstances affect their income and expenditure. This process, known as a “Change of Conditions,” is overseen by the Home Office. However, [research](#) indicates that many families are either unaware of their right to apply or are deterred by fears that doing so could negatively impact their future immigration status.

In addition to the “Changes of Conditions” process, Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 places a general duty on local authorities to provide services to children in need or at risk of destitution regardless of whether their families have NRPF or are unauthorised. [Estimates](#) suggest that in 2021/22, around 18,000 destitute migrants were supported by local authorities, including 5,400 families and 10,500 children. This represents a 50% increase in the number of families receiving local authority support compared with 2012/13.

Local authorities have discretion to judge what the child’s needs are. Previous [research](#) has shown that there is substantial variation across local authorities in their assessments and services provided to children in need from families with NRPF, which can be explained by factors such as the strength of local advocates or the existence of dedicated NRPF teams. As in the case of the Change of Conditions process, many families are [unaware](#) of their right to apply for local authority support.

Understanding the evidence

There is no single source of data which can be used to generate statistics on migrant children or the children of migrants. Information on these groups must be estimated from a range of sources, each with limitations.

Data on the number of births to UK-born and non-UK-born parents come from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and refer only to births in England and Wales. The number of births to migrant mothers depends mainly on two factors: how many women of childbearing age (between 15 and 50) are living in England and Wales, and how many children, on average, each woman has. The most widely used measure of fertility is the Total Fertility Rate (TFR), which estimates the average number of children a woman would have over her lifetime if current birth rates at each age stayed the same. To calculate the Total Fertility Rate (TFR), Age-Specific Fertility Rates (ASFRs) are estimated first. These rates show the number of births per 1,000 women in specific age groups—typically in five-year bands such as 15–19, 20–24, and so on—within a given year. ONS has only published total fertility rate (TFR) estimates up to 2021.

This briefing also brings data from the 2021 England and Wales Census on the characteristics and citizenship status of migrant children. It is important to note that these data are not representative of the entire UK. However, according to [ONS](#), 93% of the foreign-born population in the UK lived in England and Wales in 2021. This means that the other nations’ Census results are not likely to alter the trends significantly.

This briefing includes proxy data on children’s citizenship status, based on responses to the 2021 Census of England and Wales. The Census does not ask directly about citizenship but collects information on passports held and national identity. The passport question includes both valid and expired passports or travel documents which individuals are entitled to renew. However, not all citizens hold a passport from their country of citizenship—this is particularly common among UK-born children. The national identity question reflects self-identification and is answered by the adult completing the questionnaire; it may not align with a child’s formal legal citizenship status.

Data on children granted asylum-related protection come from Home Office immigration statistics, while data on children issued immigrant visas is based on responses to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, as the Home Office does not routinely publish visa data disaggregated by age and sex. In this briefing, “children” refers to people aged 17 and under. Home Office data is for the UK as a whole.

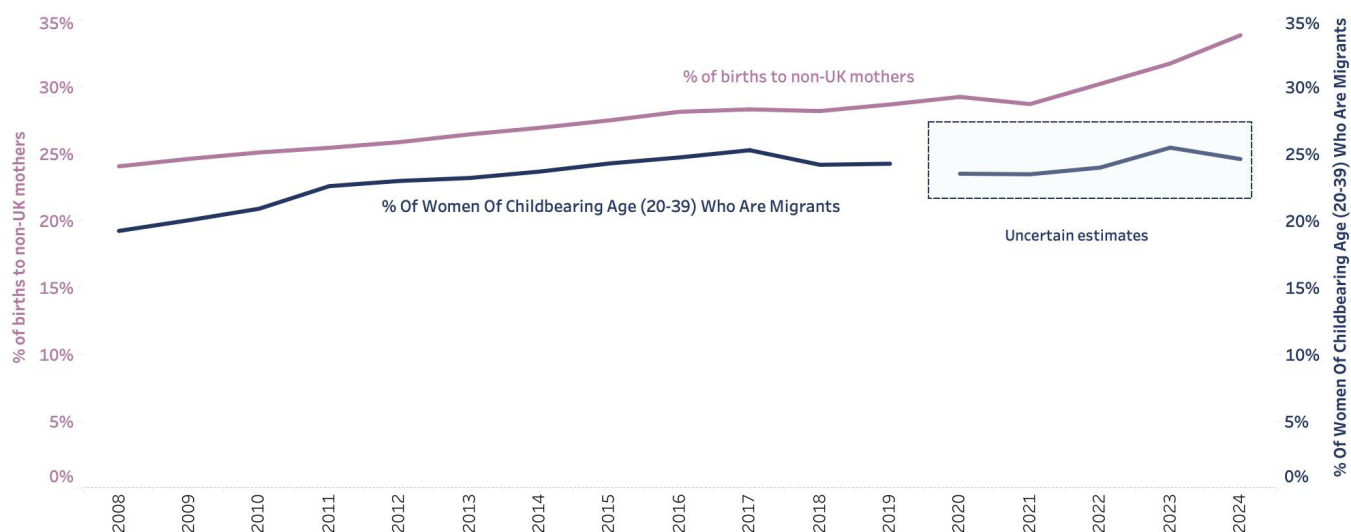
How many children born in England and Wales have a foreign-born mother?

In 2024, more than one in three children born in England and Wales had a foreign-born mother—up from around one in four in 2008 (Figure 1). While this partly reflects a significant share of women being of childbearing age are migrants, the percentage of births to foreign-born mothers has continued to rise, even though the share of foreign-born women within the 20-39 age group has stayed relatively stable between 2017 and 2024. This suggests that, over the years, there has been a growing gap in the average number of children per woman—also known as the fertility rate—between UK-born and non-UK-born women. As will be explained, this is largely the result of declining fertility rates among UK-born women. It is also possible that estimates since 2020 undercount the number of foreign-born persons, including women, among recent arrivals (see the Understanding the Evidence section).

Figure 1

Share of births to foreign-born women and share of women of childbearing age (20-39) who are foreign-born, by year

England and Wales



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of ONS parent's country of birth statistics (Table 6a), 2024 and Annual Population Survey, 2008-2024 datasets. Notes: Women aged 15-49 are classified as being of childbearing age; however, most births in the UK occur among women aged 20-39. The APS data contains known limitations in estimating the foreign-born population after 2020, particularly for recent arrivals. For more details, see the *Understanding the Evidence* section.



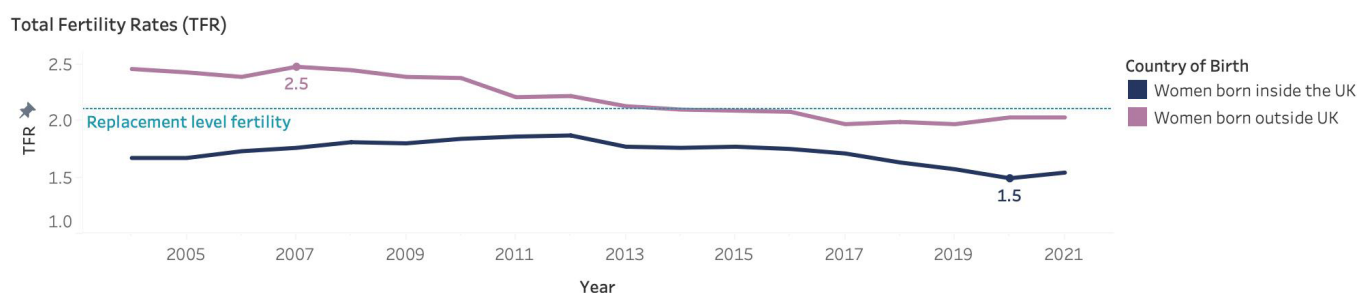
Why is the share of children born to migrants increasing?

The relationship between the fertility rates of UK-born and migrant mothers has shifted notably over the past two decades. In the early 2000s, migrant women tended to have significantly higher fertility rates than their UK-born counterparts. But between 2004 and 2012, the gap narrowed. Fertility among UK-born women edged upward, while the fertility rates of migrant women fell quite sharply. For several years after that, from 2012 to 2017, this balance held relatively steady (Figure 2).

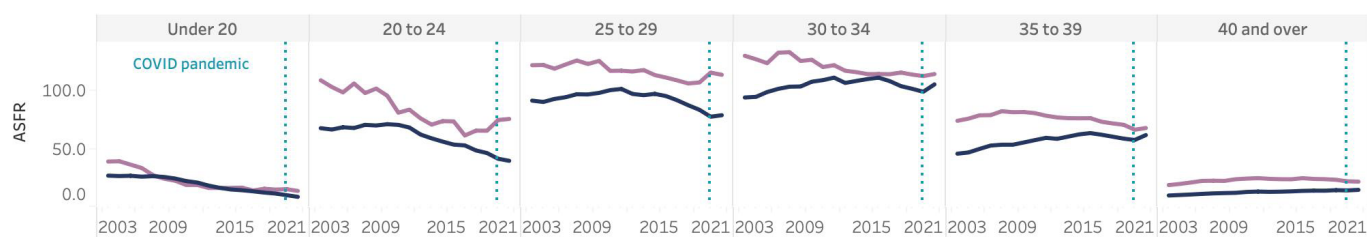
From 2017 onwards, the picture changed again. Fertility among UK-born women began to decline more rapidly, while rates for migrant women held stable. As a result, by 2021—the most recent year for which we have official estimates—the growing proportion of births to migrant mothers was not due to rising fertility among migrants, but rather to a sustained decline among UK-born women. This trend is particularly pronounced in the age group 25–29, historically peak childbearing years, where UK-born women have experienced the steepest drop in fertility (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Fertility Rates, by country of birth of the mother and year 2004-2021



Age-specific Fertility Rates (ASFR), by age group



Source: ONS parent's country of birth statistics, 2021. Total Fertility Rates (TFR) are calculated by dividing the number of live births to women in 5-year age groups (typically from ages 15 to 49) by the number of women in each of those age groups. The age-specific fertility rates are then summed and multiplied by 5 (reflecting the width of the age band) to produce the TFR. This gives an estimate of the average number of children a woman would have over her lifetime, assuming current age-specific fertility rates remain constant.



Why have these trends become more noticeable since Brexit?

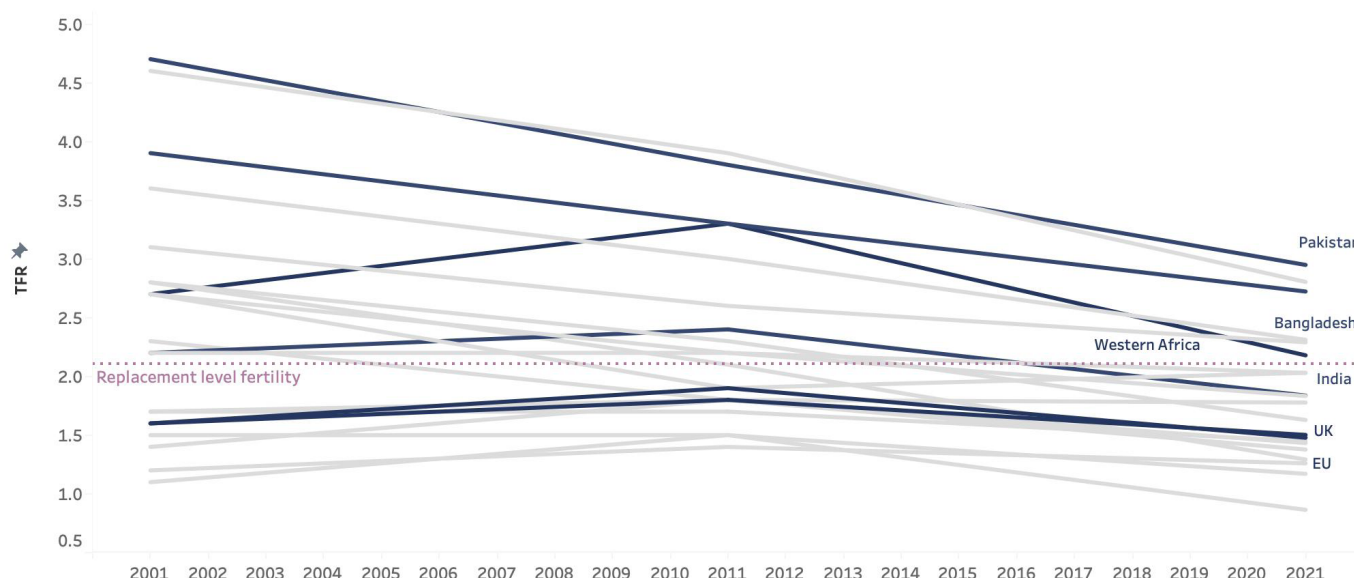
There are no fertility rate data available after 2021, but Figure 1 shows that the share of births to migrant mothers has increased more steeply in the 2021-2024 period when compared with previous years. Besides rapidly declining fertility rates among UK-born women, one likely explanation is that there has been more migration to the UK in recent years from parts of the world with higher fertility rates. Since Brexit, the UK has seen rising net migration levels among non-EU nationals, while net migration of EU nationals has fallen sharply (see our briefings on [Who migrates to the UK](#) and why and [Net Migration to the UK](#)).

Much of the post-Brexit rise in net migration is accounted for by people arriving from areas with higher fertility rates, such as Southern Asian and Western African communities. At the same time, EU nationals—who in 2021 had lower fertility rates than the UK-born (Figure 4)—have been leaving the country in greater numbers than they are arriving. This shift means that migrants will account for a larger share of births, even if fertility rates within each nationality remain stable or decline.

Despite some countries of birth being associated with higher fertility rates, these rates have been declining across the board for at least the last two decades. This mirrors fertility rates steadily falling too in most of these countries of origin. As Figure 3 shows, the sharpest falls between 2001 and 2021 occurred in communities that once had the highest fertility levels. For instance, the fertility rate among Pakistani women in the UK dropped by 38% over two decades, from 4.7 to 2.9 children per woman. Still, it remained almost twice as high as the fertility rate among UK and EU-born women in the same year.

Figure 3

Total fertility rates (TFR) in the UK, by country or region of birth of the mother
2001, 2011 and 2021*



Source: for Total Fertility Rates by country of birth of the mother in 2001 and 2011: ONS parent's country of birth statistics, 2022, Table 5. For Total Fertility Rates in 2021: Migration Observatory analysis of ONS parent's country of birth statistics (Table 6a) 2021 and Census 2021. 2021 Total Fertility Rates (TFR) were calculated by dividing the number of live births to women in 5-year age groups (typically from ages 15 to 49) by country or birth by the number of women in each of those age groups and country of birth, as estimated by the 2021 Census. The age-specific fertility rates were then summed and multiplied by 5 (reflecting the width of the age band) to produce the TFR. This gives an estimate of the average number of children a woman would have over her lifetime, assuming current age-specific fertility rates remain constant. There are no official TFR estimates for nationalities not shown in the chart.



What share of children have both parents born abroad?

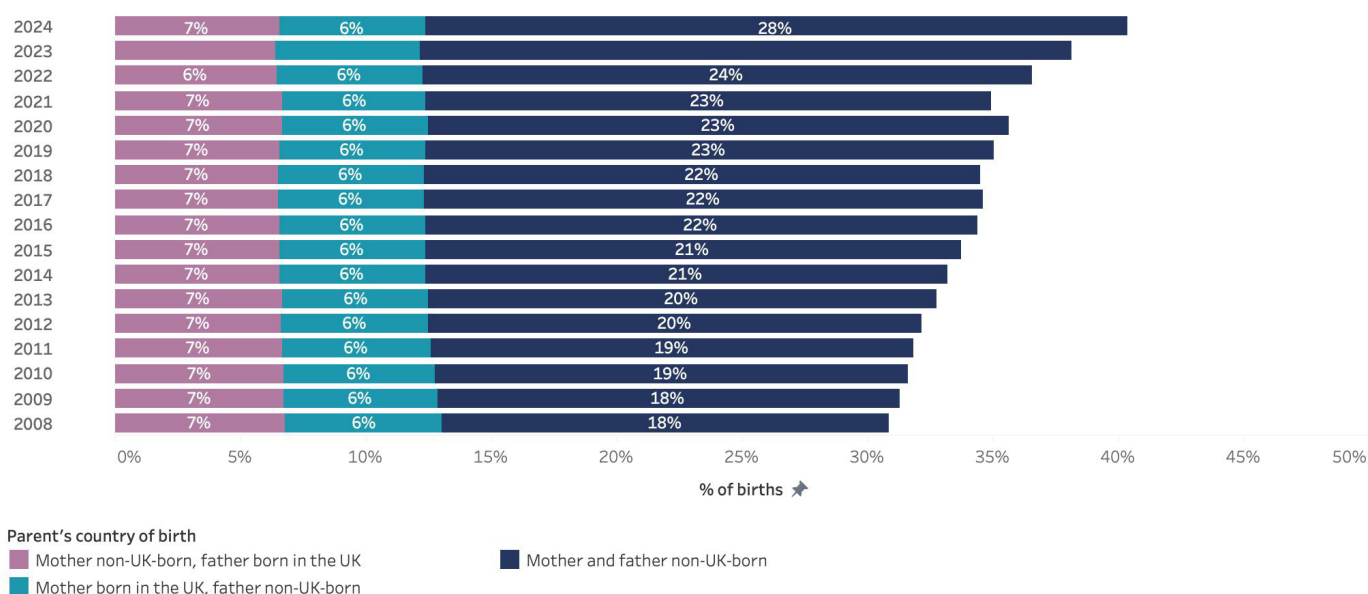
The share of children with one UK-born and one foreign-born parent in England and Wales has remained relatively stable over time, at around 13%, with slightly more children being born to migrant mothers than migrant fathers (Figure 4).

The most notable increase since 2021 has been in births to two foreign-born parents (Figure 4). This indicates that the rising share of births to migrant parents is being driven primarily by partnerships between migrants themselves, rather than by mixed partnerships between the UK-born and migrants. Importantly, children born to two foreign-born parents are less likely to be British at birth and may have more limited access to public funds (see the Understanding the Policy section).

Figure 4

Births in England and Wales, by mother's and father's country of birth and year

2008 to 2024



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of ONS parent's country of birth statistics (Table 6b), 2024.

Notes: The chart excludes births where the mother's or father's country of birth was not recorded. In cases of same-sex female couples, one parent is classified by the ONS as the "father" for statistical purposes.



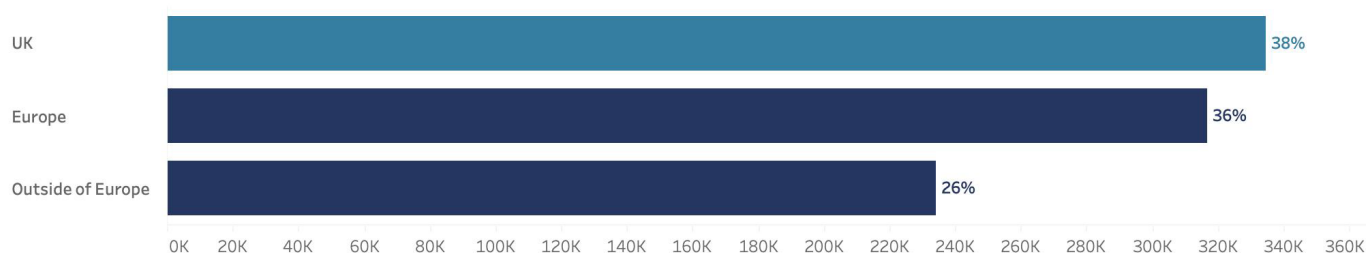
What share of non-British children were born in the UK?

Children born in the UK are not automatically British citizens (see Understanding the Policy, above). In fact, as of 2021, 38% of non-British children living in England and Wales were born in the UK (Figure 4). Within this group, 57% were EU citizens, while 43% held non-EU citizenship.

Figure 5

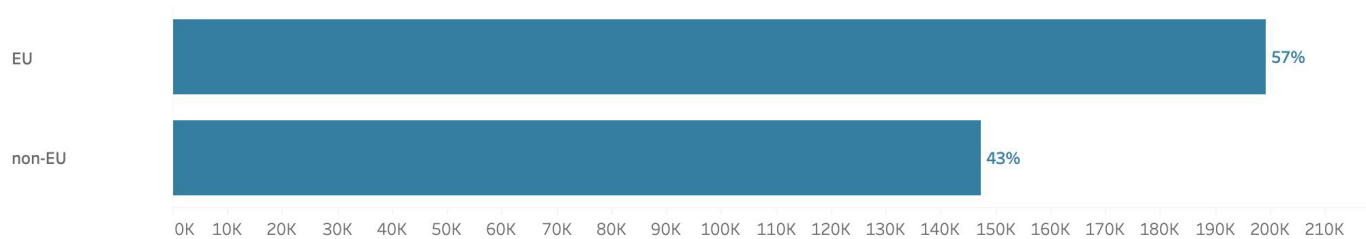
In 2021, over one third of all non-British children living in England and Wales were UK born

Non-British children aged 17 and under living in England and Wales, by place of birth



Of these, 57% were EU nationals

National identity of Non-British children born in the UK



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of 2021 England and Wales Census. Note: These nationality figures are based on national identity and may not correspond to someone's official nationality. A child's national identity is reported by the adult filling out the Census questionnaire. In the first chart, "Europe" includes children born in European countries outside the European Union; this categorisation follows census non-disclosure policies.



How many foreign-born children live in England and Wales?

Another important subgroup within the broader category of children of migrants are those born abroad—in other words, children who are migrants themselves. In 2021, there were 876,100 children aged 17 and under living in England and Wales who were born outside the UK. Of these, 46% (403,400) were born in EU countries (Figure 1). Among the 472,400 non-EU born children, the largest numbers came from India (71,700, or 18%), Pakistan (41,000, or 10%), and other Asian countries (84,400 or 21%).

Children make up about 9% of the total foreign-born population in England and Wales. The highest proportion of children relative to other age groups is among those born in the Middle East, where 15% are under the age of 18. Overall, the share of children is lower among migrants than among the UK-born population (23%). This is largely because most migrants arrive as working-age adults rather than as part of family units. Many go on to have children after arriving in the UK, as discussed earlier.

Table 1

Number of children aged 17 and under and % of children in relation to all age groups by country of birth
England and Wales Census 2021

Place of Birth	Number of children	% in relation to all age groups
UK	11,500,000	23%
Total non-UK	876,117	9%
EU	403,446	11%
Africa	87,296	6%
Asia	84,389	6%
India	71,753	8%
The Americas and the Caribbean	66,731	8%
Middle East	60,498	7%
Other Europe	42,953	9%
Pakistan	41,001	15%
Oceania/Antarctica	18,050	10%

Source: Migration Observatory analysis of the 2021 England and Wales Census. Note: Figures for "Asia" exclude people born in India and Pakistan.



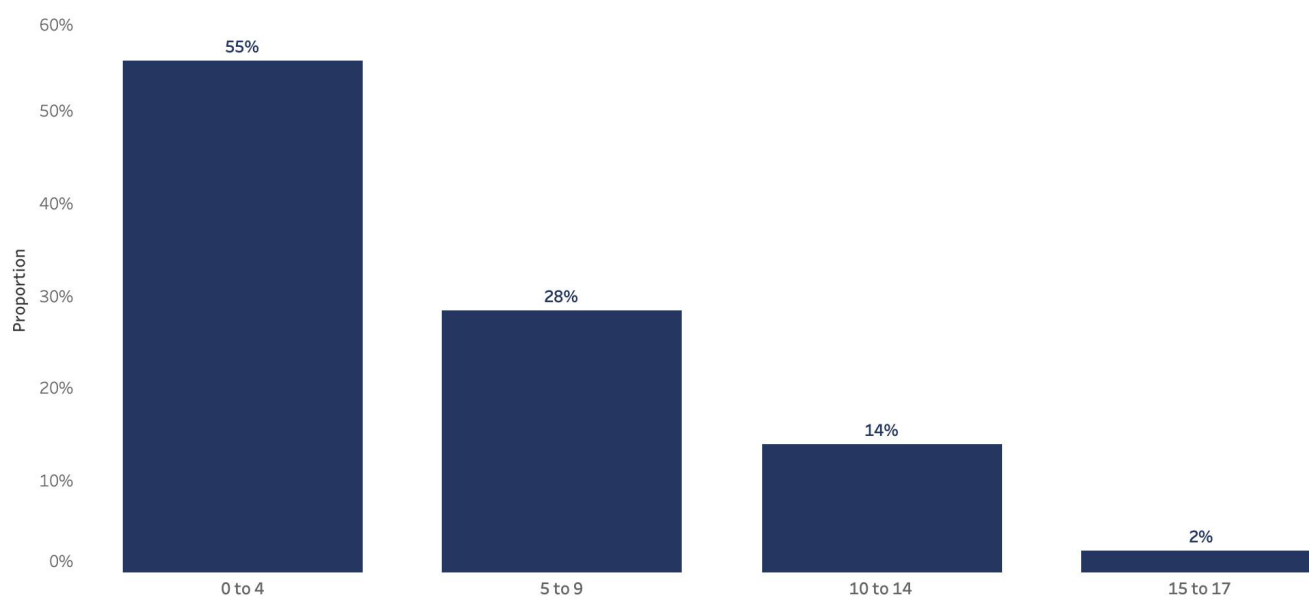
At what age did they move?

Children who arrive in a destination country when they are younger tend to [find it easier](#) to learn the language, if necessary, and to adapt to the new environment. For example, in 2018, children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) who started school in England before age 9 have [a similar average attainment](#) at the end of Key Stage 4 compared to non-EAL students. By contrast, those arriving after age 12 and, especially, after age 14, performed worse than their non-EAL peers. As of 2021, about 55% of foreign-born children in England and Wales had moved at age 4 or younger (485,000). Only 16% had moved at age 10 or above.

Figure 6

Share of foreign-born children, by age at arrival in the UK

Children aged 17 and under. England and Wales Census 2021



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of the 2021 England and Wales Census.



What is their nationality?

The England and Wales Census does not ask respondents directly about their citizenship. Instead, it collects information on passports held and self-identified national identity. Both of these measures are imperfect, particularly in the case of children: national identity is reported by the adult completing the census form, and children are generally less likely to hold a passport.

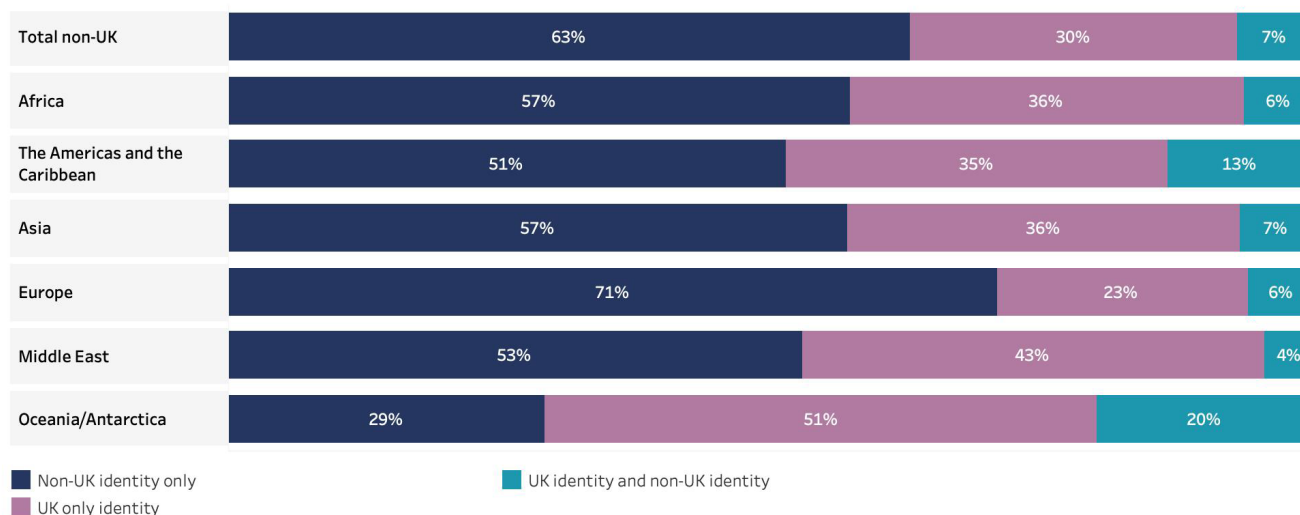
Nonetheless, the data show a strong alignment between passport possession and reported identity (Figure 7). Specifically, the proportion of children with a non-UK identity only closely matches the proportion with a non-UK passport, while the proportion of children with both UK and non-UK identities is similar to the share of those holding multiple passports. This suggests that most children who do not hold a passport are identified as having UK identity only.

Figure 7

Nationality of foreign-born children, by place of birth

Children aged 17 and under. England and Wales Census, 2021

● National Identity
○ Passports Held



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of the 2021 England and Wales Census. Passport data and national identity are reported by the adult filling out the Census questionnaire. People may be entitled to a passport and not hold one. "Europe" includes children born in European countries outside the European Union; this categorisation follows census non-disclosure policies.



In 2021, about two thirds of foreign-born children were not UK nationals (63% self-identified and 67% held a non-UK passport only) and one third were UK nationals (Figure 2). Children born outside the UK can be British citizens if, for example, they have at least one parent who is a British citizen or settled in the UK at the time of their birth, or if they were later registered as British citizens (See the "Understanding the policy" section).

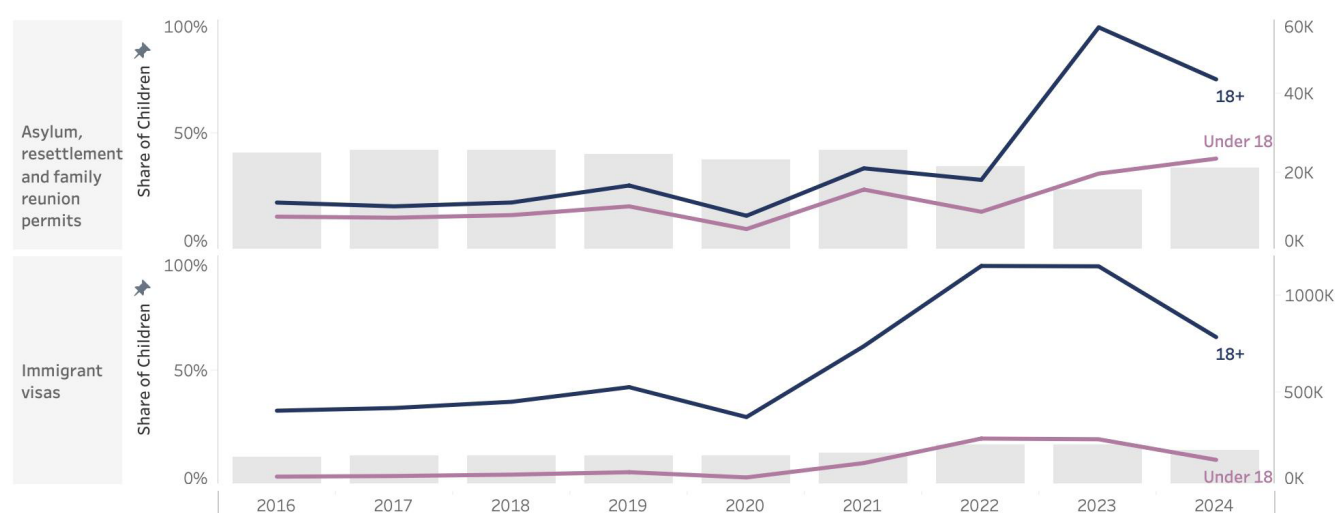
The data also indicate that EU-born children are less likely to be British than those born in other regions. This reflects historically lower rates of citizenship acquisition among EU citizens compared to non-EU nationals. For more information on differences in citizenship acquisition across migrant groups, see our briefing on [Citizenship and naturalisation for migrants in the UK](#).

How do migrant children arrive in the UK?

Children who are not British citizens require permission to come and live in the UK. This may take the form of a visa, Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR), or protection-related permission. The proportion of children is consistently higher among those granted protection via asylum, resettlement, and family reunion pathways than among those granted immigrant visas. Between 2016 and 2024, children represented between 35% and 42% of all people given protection via asylum, resettlement and family reunion routes (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Number of immigrant visa and protection-related grants, by age and year
2016 to 2024. Children aged 17 and under



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics. For asylum: Table Asy_D02 (Year ending March 2025), Table Res_D01 (Year ending March 2025), and Table Fam_D01 (Year ending March 2025). For visas: Freedom of Information Request, 2025. Excludes a small number of people with "Unknown age". Grants of asylum-related permission include refugee status, authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons, or any other kind of permission to stay, in addition to resettlement and family reunion visas. Immigrant visa figures exclude "Short-term study," "Frontier worker," "Transit," and "Visitor" categories, as well as "Family: other," which is primarily made up of refugee family reunion visas. Immigrant visas include people on Ukraine visas and Hong Kong BN(O)s.



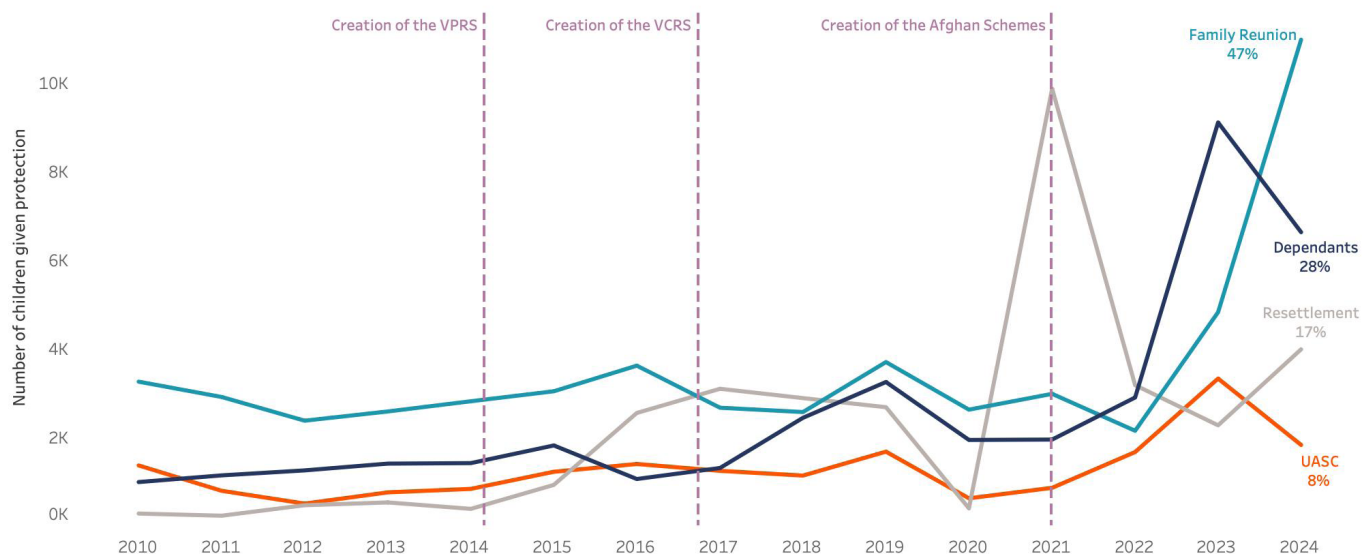
The ways in which children granted protection have entered the UK have varied significantly over time. Overall, refugee family reunion visas have been the most common way children in need of protection arrive (Figure 9). From 2015 onwards, however, resettlement accounted for a larger share of child arrivals, following the introduction of targeted programmes such as the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS), aimed at those displaced by the Syrian conflict and broader crises in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. In 2021, resettlement figures rose again with the launch of Afghan relocation programmes, focused on people who had worked with British forces before the Taliban's takeover of Kabul, along with their families and other vulnerable Afghans (Figure 9).

In 2024, the number of refugee family reunion visas issued to children reached a record high of 11,000, reflecting the high number of asylum grants in 2023 (see our briefings on [Asylum and Refugee Resettlement in the UK](#), and on [Family Migration to the UK](#)) (Figure 9). In September 2025, the government announced a temporary suspension of the Refugee Family Reunion route. This decision is likely to affect the number of asylum seeking or refugee children arriving in the UK and the routes they may take to reach the country (see our [Q&A: the UK's new approach to Refugee Family Reunion](#)).

Figure 9

How many children are given protection in the UK by route?

Grants of protection to unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), dependants, family reunion visa recipients, and resettled children. 2010 to 2024



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics. For asylum: Table Asy_D02 (Year ending March 2025), Table Res_D01 (Year ending March 2025), and Table Fam_D01 (Year ending March 2025). Excludes a small number of people with "Unknown age". Grants of asylum-related permission include refugee status, authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons, or any other kind of permission to stay.



The share of children arriving without an accompanying adult has declined over the years: in 2010, unaccompanied minors accounted for around one quarter of protection permits given to children, compared to just 8% in 2024 (Figure 9). Nonetheless, the number of UASC visa grants has nearly doubled between 2019 and 2023, in line with the overall increase in asylum claims, going from 1,675 in 2019 to 3,332 in 2023.

What is the most common visa category among migrant children?

Between 2021 and 2024, most children arriving in the UK on visas came as dependants of Health and Care Workers (27%), Sponsored Students (23%), and Skilled Workers (10%). Excluding child students—defined as people aged 4 to 17 who come to study at licensed independent schools—the highest proportion of visas granted to children was among Health and Care Worker routes (Table 2). This group is also more likely to bring dependants than those on other types of visas (see our briefing on [Family Migration to the UK](#)). As of March 2024, new care workers applying under the Health and Care route were banned from bringing dependants. Care workers applying from outside the UK became no longer eligible for the route as of July 2025.

Children were also highly represented among visa recipients arriving through the Ukraine Schemes, the British National (Overseas) route, and the EU Settlement Scheme Family Permit (Table 2).

Although children make up a relatively small share of all Sponsored Study visa recipients (9%), children on Sponsored Study visas accounted for 23% of all visas issued to children during this period. This reflects the high volume of Sponsored Study visas issued overall (Table 2).

From 2021, a growing number of international students began bringing dependants (see our briefing on Family migration to the UK), which also contributed to rising numbers of children arriving on student dependant visas. In 2022, 56,000 children entered the UK as student dependants—up from just 6,800 in 2016. However, numbers fell again in 2024, following the introduction of a ban on student dependants in January of that year. Notably, in 2024, almost as many children were granted Sponsored Study visas as main applicants, likely just before they turned 18 (10,900), than as dependants of students (11,400).

Table 2

Annual average number of immigrant visas granted to children (aged 17 and under), and their share (%) among visa holders by visa type
2021 to 2024

Visa type	Annual average	% of children in relation to all visa holders	% of all immigrant visas granted to children
Health and Care Worker	53,186	31%	27%
Sponsored Student	45,934	9%	23%
Skilled Worker	20,301	20%	10%
Other immigrant visas	18,255	12%	9%
Ukraine Schemes	17,613	26%	9%
Child Student	13,440	100%	7%
BNO Route	11,400	26%	6%
EU Settlement Scheme Family Permit	7,869	27%	4%
Family	6,812	13%	3%
Intra-company Transfer	2,429	25%	1%
Global Talent	1,084	19%	1%

Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office Immigration Statistics. Freedom of Information Request, 2025. Immigrant visas exclude "Short-term study", "Frontier work", "Visitor", "Transit", and "Family:other".



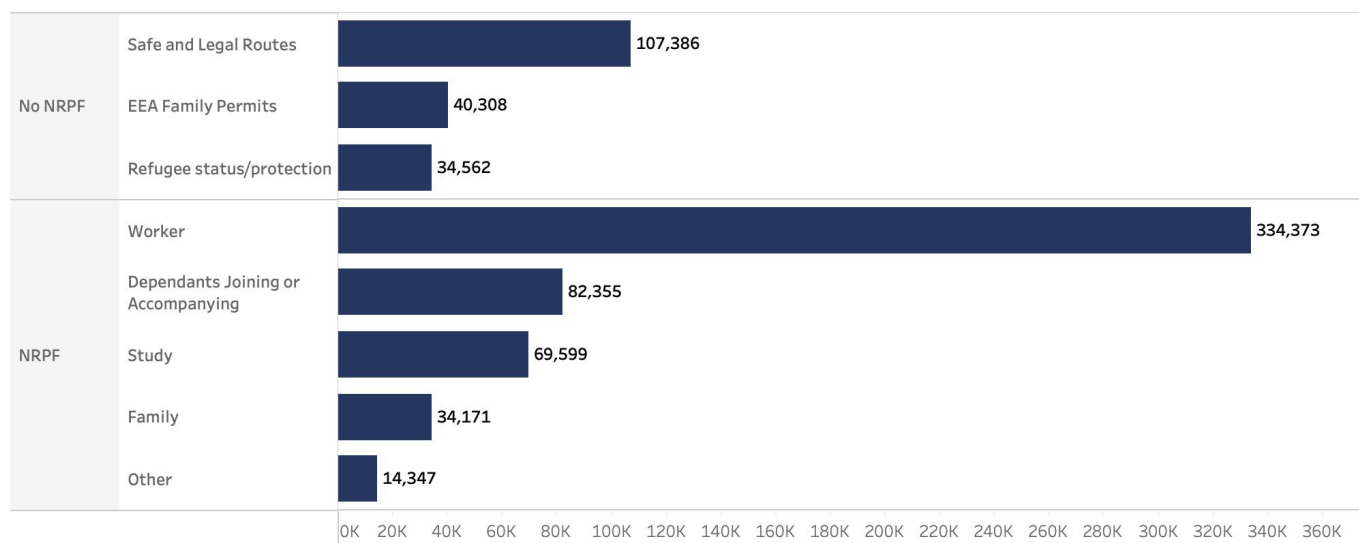
How many children living in the UK have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) status?

Most migrant children on temporary visas have valid leave to remain with the 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF) condition attached to their immigration status, which prevents them from accessing most state-funded benefits, tax credits and housing assistance. Most children without access to public funds will also have parents with the NRPF condition. This means they will be [ineligible](#) for several early education and childcare benefits (see the Understanding the Evidence section).

By the end of 2024, there were over half a million children under age 18 (541,000) who would be expected to have NRPF based on their visa status (Table 2). This represents more than a twofold increase from 2021, when there were approximately 224,600 NRPF children. The rise is largely attributed to the increase in children on Work dependant visas, particularly in the Health and Care route.

Figure 10

Children with valid leave to remain other than ILR or citizenship at the end of 2024 (for those issued visas from 2004 onwards), by NRPF status



Source: Migration Observatory Analysis of Home Office Migrant Journey: 2024 report data, table MJ_D01 and underlying datasets. Note: this table only includes children who were initially granted an out-of-country entry visa and those who have been granted protection (asylum, humanitarian protection or alternative forms of leave or resettlement). It is not possible to tell from the data whether individuals are currently in the UK. Note that some of these children might have had their NRPF condition lifted. Within the PBS, a child will be recorded as a dependant under the tier of the main applicant. However, some visas act as a catch-all for dependants; these are included within 'Dependant' category.



Children with the NRPF condition include those on student visas (69,600), work visas (334,400), family visas (34,200), and 'other' visas categories (14,300).

Note that some of these children might have had their NRPF condition lifted as a result of a change of conditions application (which allows for the removal of the NRPF condition when visa holders are at risk of becoming destitute). Between 2017 Q3 and 2025 Q2, 5,200 children had their NRPF status lifted by the Home Office (UK Visa & Immigration Transparency Data, CoC_04, June 2025).

The total number of 541,000 children likely to have NRPF does not include children of parents who cannot access public funds or services because they do not have a legal immigration status. The exact number of children without immigration status is unknown because there is no administrative data on the number of people without leave to remain who have not naturalised (see our briefing on [Unauthorised migration to the UK](#)).

These figures also exclude British children—such as those born in the UK and resident in the country until 10 years of age—whose parents have NRPF status. In practice, many of these children will also have limited access to public funds, since most applications for social benefits are made on behalf of adults.

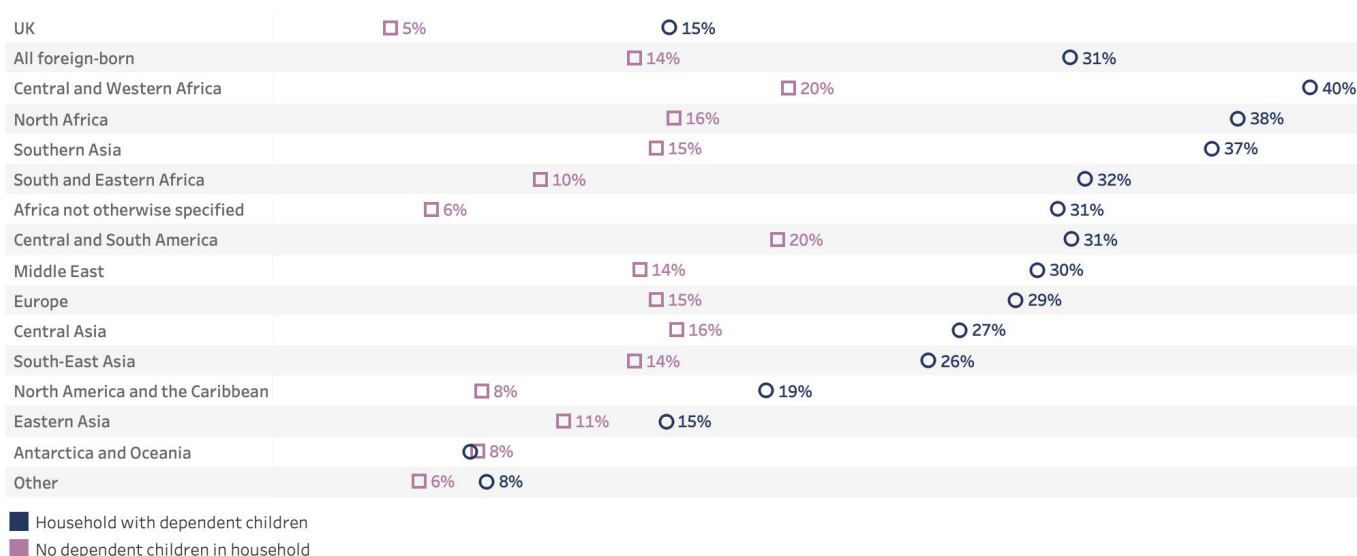
How many children of migrants face housing deprivation in the UK?

The 2021 Census data shows that foreign-born people living in households with dependant children are particularly likely to live in accommodation that is overcrowded, lacks central heating, or is a shared dwelling, a situation the ONS describes as ‘housing deprivation’. This pattern is especially pronounced among certain migrant groups. For example, among people born in Central and Western Africa, 40% of those in households with children lived in deprived housing, compared to 20% of those without children. Similar gaps are observed among migrants from Southern Asia (37% vs. 15%) and North Africa (38% vs. 16%). By contrast, the UK-born population shows a smaller gap of 10 percentage points (15% vs. 5%).

While the reasons for this pattern are not clear, the disparities may reflect a combination of higher living costs faced by families with children and more limited access to public funds among migrants.

Figure 11

Share of people who faced housing deprivation, by presence of dependant children in the household and country of birth



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of 2021 Census data. Children are defined as people aged 0-15, or 16-18 if they are in full-time education and live with their parents.



How does the academic performance of children of migrants compare with that of children of UK-born parents?

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to evaluate 15-year-old students' performance in maths, science and reading. The PISA tests allow us to compare students' skills in these three subjects across multiple countries over time. In most OECD countries, children with non-migrant parents outperformed children born abroad as well as those born in the country with parents born abroad (Figure 12).

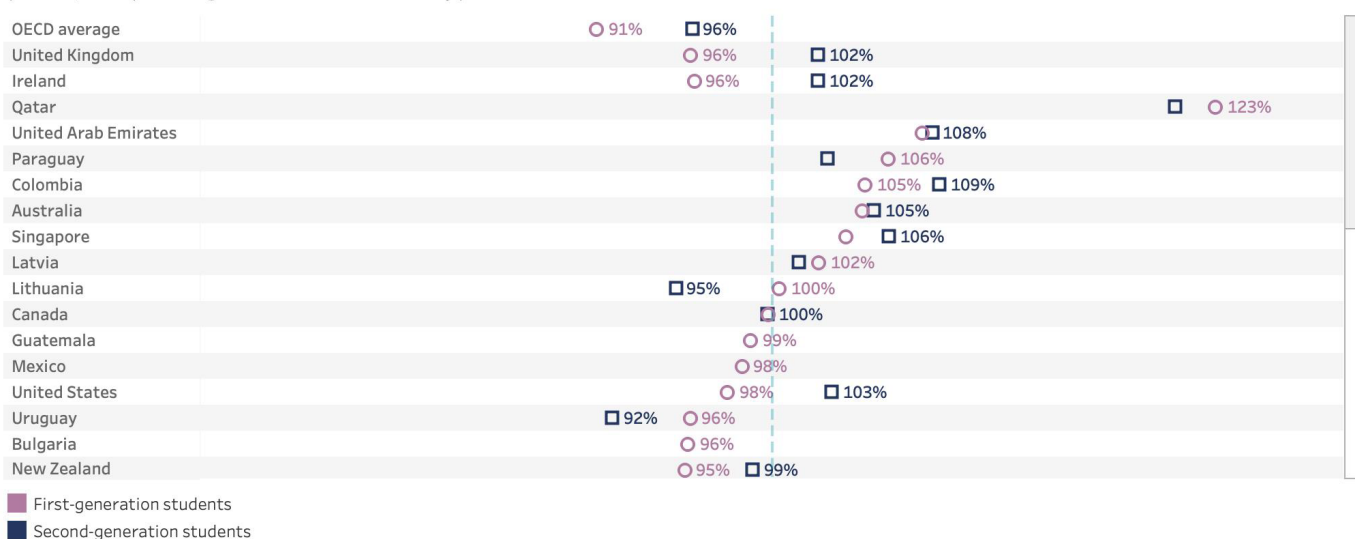
The gap in performance is, however, much smaller in the UK and Ireland compared to EU-14 countries, such as the Netherlands, Germany or France (Figure 12). In fact, in the UK, children born in the country to migrant parents tend to outperform children with non-migrant parents.

Countries that separate students into different academic and vocational paths at an early age, such as Germany, Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands, tend to have larger gaps in performance between migrant and non-migrant students at age 15 simply because migrants are more likely to be in vocational schools. However, migrant students are also heavily disadvantaged in other EU-14 countries with educational systems that do not separate students before age 16, such as Norway and Spain.

Figure 12

How do children of migrants perform in school in relation to others?

Average Scores in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), 2022, by country. The scores of migrant children were standardised relative to children of native-born parents, whose scores are set at 100%. Percentages above 100% indicate that children of migrants outperform children of native-born parents, while percentages below 100% indicate they perform worse.



Source: OECD, Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), 2022. Notes: Average scores across mathematics, reading and science, for children aged between 15 and 16 years old. First-generation students refer to children born outside of their country of residence. Second-generation students refer to children born in their country of residence to foreign-born parents.





The Migration Observatory

Based at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford, the Migration Observatory provides independent, authoritative, evidence-based analysis of data on migration and migrants in the UK, to inform media, public and policy debates, and to generate high quality research on international migration and public policy issues. The Observatory's analysis involves experts from a wide range of disciplines and departments at the University of Oxford.



COMPAS

The Migration Observatory is based at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford. The mission of COMPAS is to conduct high quality research in order to develop theory and knowledge, inform policy-making and public debate, and engage users of research within the field of migration.

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