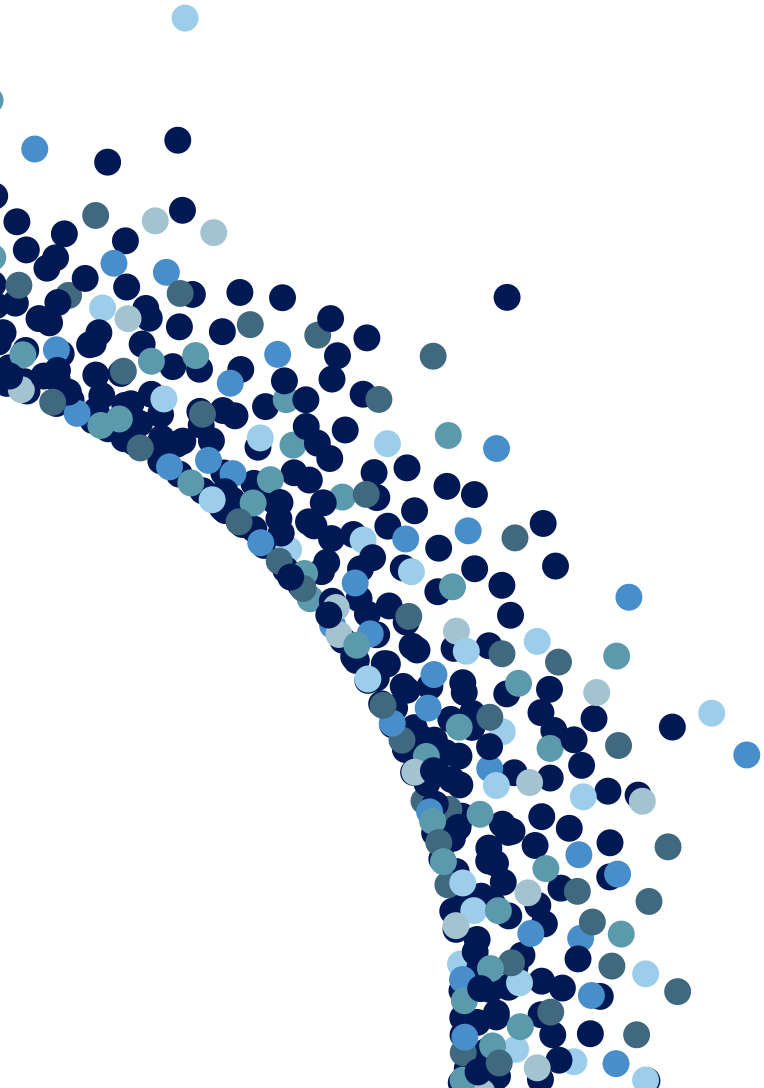
THE MIGRATION OBSERVATORY
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

REPORT

Integration in the UK: Understanding the Data



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Integration has far reaching implications across multiple dimensions of life in the UK, and not only for migrants. The Migration Observatory has undertaken a programme of work looking at different dimensions of integration in the UK. A range of outputs was produced on such topics as the use of English language, discrimination and social participation, all of which can be found here. This report gives an overview of this work and draws out its key findings.

Understanding the Evidence

The briefings synthesized here make use of a multitude of data sources, each of which has its own strengths and limitations. These caveats are not discussed below. Refer to the original briefings which are cited throughout for information about the data sources themselves.

Why focus on integration?

The effects of integration are felt by communities of all types and concern government decision-making at all levels. It has been said that "immigration only works when integration works" (Katwala et al., 2014: 20). Yet, compared to immigration, integration receives relatively little attention in political and public debates and there is no UK-wide integration policy. In part this is because the types of policies and services that support integration, such as health care, housing and education, span departmental boundaries and specialist knowledge areas, which makes it difficult to position within government and develop a comprehensive programme of work or strategy. In the UK, many of these policy areas are within the remit of the devolved administrations and local authorities, however responsibilities are often unclear.

For more detail on integration governance in the UK, see the Migration Observatory's Policy Primer: Integration.

What is integration?

There is no universally accepted definition of integration. Historically, integration was taken to mean newcomers and other minority groups becoming more like the majority or 'host' population (Alba and Nee, 1997). Academic research over the past two decades has largely rejected this 'one-way' or assimilationist view as overly simplistic, arguing instead that all members of society – long-standing and native-born residents as well as newcomers and migrants – and its institutions take part in and are affected by integration, what is often referred to as a 'two-way process of mutual accommodation' (Charsley and Spencer, 2016; Home Office, 2019; Council of the European Commission, 2004). However, due to the data sources available, the indicators in this report primarily reflect outcomes from the migrant side of the engagement.

Integration happens in many dimensions of life and regardless of whether policy interventions take place. Spencer and Charsley (2021, forthcoming) identify five dimensions where integration processes occur:

1. Structural (participation in the labour and housing market, education and training)
2. Social (social interaction, relationships, marriage)
3. Cultural (changing values, attitudes, behaviour and lifestyle)
4. Civic and political participation (in community life and the democratic process)
5. Identity (the processes through which individuals develop at some level a shared identity and sense of belonging with the place, nation, communities and people among whom they live).

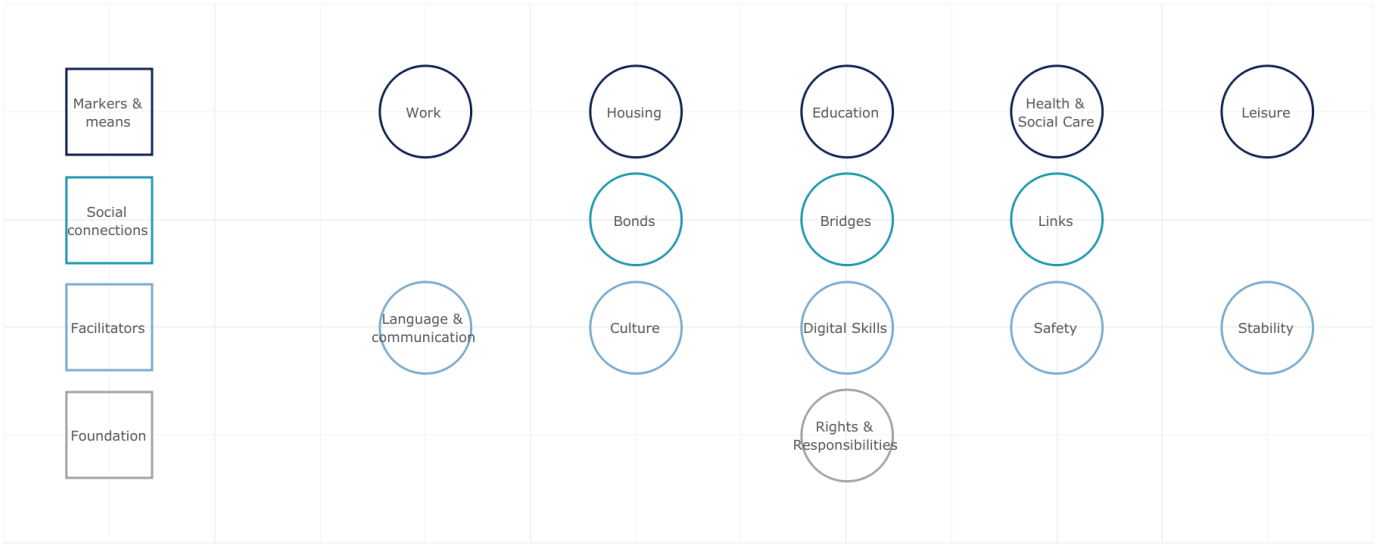
In each case, it is not only migrants who are engaged in the integration processes but other individuals and organisations, such as employers, neighbours and service providers. The outcomes of the processes are the result of that engagement. Thus, in the Cultural dimension, for instance, the attitudes and behaviour of non-migrants may change as well as those of those who have migrated to the UK.

What are the enablers and barriers to integration?

The most recent major initiative to lay out the different domains in which integration takes place was conducted as part of the Home Office's Indicators of Integration framework in 2019 (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Indicators of Integration framework



Source: Adapted from Ndofor-Tah at el., 2019; based on Ager and Strang, 2008.

The Migration Observatory's integration work has focused on areas in which there are available data and the key findings from these outputs are presented below.

Employment outcomes differ significantly amongst the UK's migrant population

The share of foreign-born workers, many of whom have lived in the UK for long periods, increased steadily between 2004 and 2019, reaching 18% of the total workforce in 2017, 2018 and 2019 (Fernández-Reino and Rienzo, 2021). This figure declined to 16% in Q3 of 2020, most likely in response to the coronavirus pandemic with other factors, such as the UK's departure from the EU, also playing a role. However, difficulties in data collection over this period have reduced the reliability of this estimate. See the Migration Observatory commentary, Where did all the migrants go? Migration data during the pandemic, and project page, COVID-19 and migration to the UK, for more information.

As migrants are a major and dynamic part of the UK workforce, there is a need to better understand the enablers and barriers of labour market integration, which affect certain migrants more than others. Most migrants in the UK, with the notable exception of asylum-seekers and irregular migrants, are permitted to engage in some form of employment. The labour market is viewed as one of the most important domains of integration and as a facilitator of integration in other domains. For example, among both newcomer migrants and longer-standing communities (including the UK-born), employment has been found to boost economic independence, future planning, relationships with others in the community, language skills, confidence and well-being (Ager and Strang, 2008: 170). While the overall employment

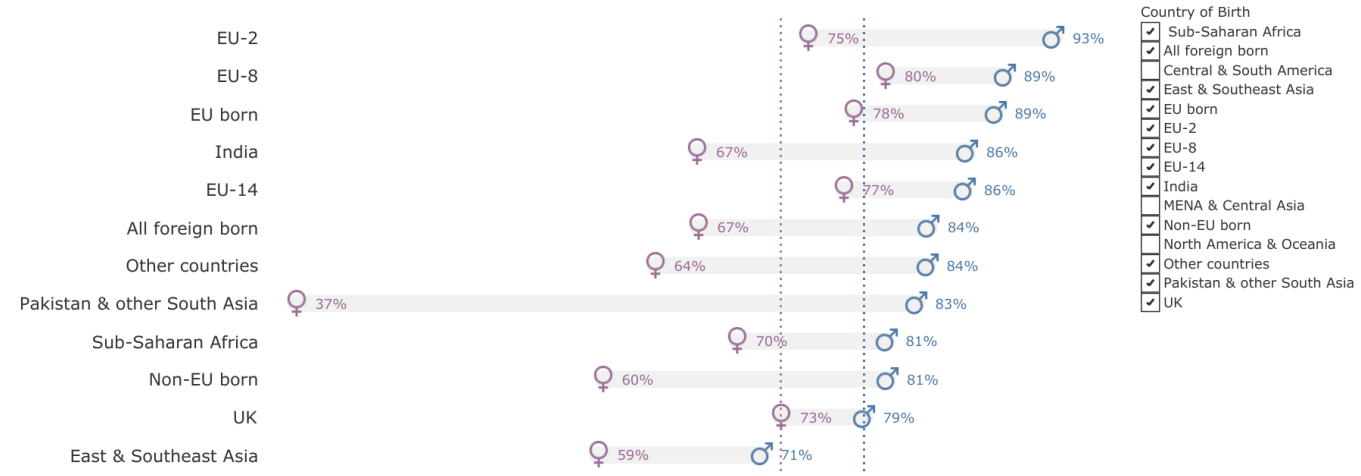
rate of workers in the UK is roughly the same for foreign-born and UK-born workers, labour market experiences vary significantly according to factors such as reason for migration, length of stay in the UK, gender and country of birth (Fernández-Reino and Rienzo, 2020).

Amongst men who are of working age, migrants have in recent (pre-pandemic) years been more likely to be employed than the UK born. In 2019, 84% of foreign-born working age men in the UK were employed, compared to 79% of their UK-born counterparts. For women of working age, the opposite is the case: 67% of foreign-born women and 73% of UK-born women were employed in 2019.

Significant gaps exist between male and female employment rates according to country of birth. Migrants from countries that joined the EU in 2004 or earlier had relatively high employment rates among both men and women, and a narrow gap between the two. The gender gap was the largest among migrants from Pakistan and other South Asian countries (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Employment rate by country of birth and gender, 2019
Age 16 to 64



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of the Annual Population Survey 2019.
Note: the employment rate is the share of working age population (16 to 64) who are in employment (employees, self-employed, in government training programmes and unpaid family workers)

While average employment rates are roughly similar among the total UK and migrant populations, the latter typically experience higher rates of *un*employment, in particular those from non-EU countries (Fernández-Reino and Rienzo, 2020). Between April and September 2020, the unemployment rate for migrants increased sharply – from 3% to 6% for EU born and 5% to 7% for non-EU born – compared to the UK-born (4% to 5%).

The types of jobs migrants undertake and the conditions they face in them may go some way to explaining these differential outcomes and have an impact on migrants' integration in UK society.

In 2019, 15% of foreign-born workers were in low-skilled jobs (i.e. jobs not requiring substantial formal training) compared to 9% of the UK born. Considering region of birth, 45% of workers born in India and 42% of those born in EU-14 were in high-skilled jobs. Workers born in new EU accession countries were over-represented in occupations typically classified as low-skilled. (For an explanation of what constitutes high and low skilled jobs and occupations, see Fernández-Reino and Rienzo, 2020.)

Migrants are more likely than the UK born to take up jobs for which they are overqualified, especially if they have foreign qualifications (Chiswick and Miller, 2008). There are several reasons for this, including employers' suspicion or lack

of familiarity with their qualifications, as well as some migrants' lack of English language proficiency, professional and social networks, or knowledge about the job searching process and resources in the UK. In 2019, over-qualification was greatest among people born in EU countries (50%), Romania and Bulgaria (48%) and in Pakistan and other South Asian countries (36%) (Fernández-Reino and Rienzo, 2021). These are also the groups who experience the lowest earnings.

Work outside of typical work hours, such as night shifts, is thought to affect access to services, such as courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), as well as social integration outside of work and workers' mental and physical health (Banulescu-Bogdan, 2020; Jensen, 2017; The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 2018). Shift work is typically undertaken in sectors in which migrants are overrepresented: those that operate 24 hours a day or at odd hours, such as health and social care, transport, and hospitality (Fernández-Reino and Rienzo, 2021). In 2019, 24% of foreign-born workers had jobs involving some kind of shift work, compared to 17% of UK-born workers.

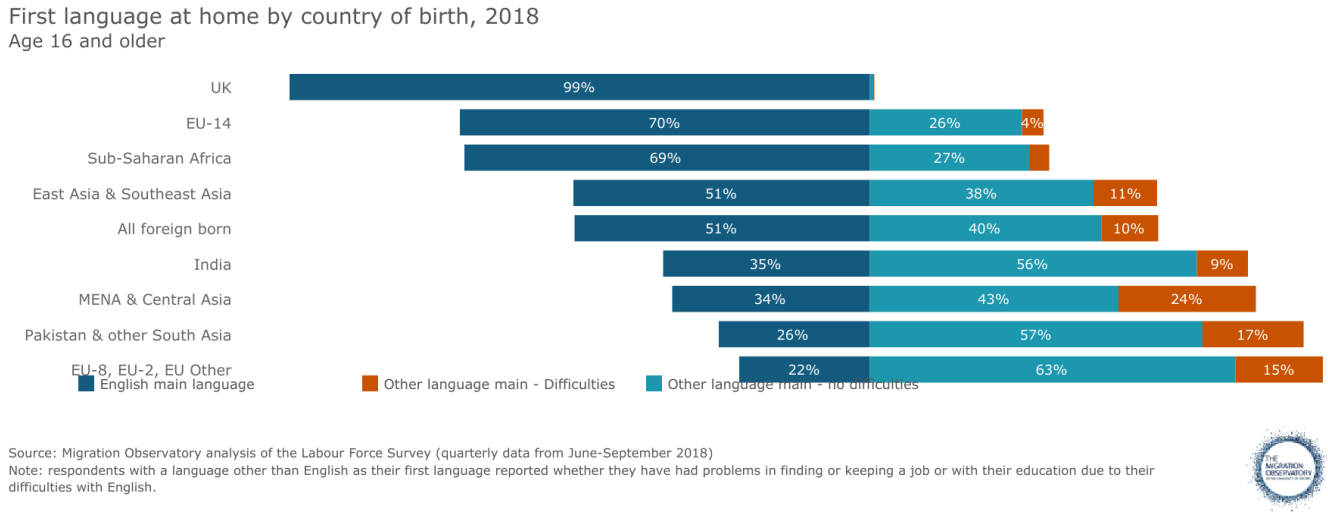
For more information, see the Migration Observatory briefing, Migrants in the UK Labour Market: An Overview.

Most migrants report speaking English well or very well, with about half of adults using it as their main language at home

Speaking English is a critical factor in the social and economic integration of migrants in the UK. According to the 2011 Census, 89% (7,086,000) of the UK's foreign-born population said they spoke English well or very well (Fernández-Reino, 2019). Just over half of the foreign-born population reported they had English as their main language, with 11% reporting limited English language skills.

More recent data on household main language corroborate these findings. In 2018, about half of foreign-born adults said they spoke English as their first language at home, although these rates differ according to country of birth. Migrants from EU-14 countries and Sub-Saharan Africa are the most likely to speak English as a first language at home (70% and 69%, respectively), while those from newer EU countries (EU-8, EU-2 and Malta, Croatia and Cyprus) were the least likely (combined 22%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of the Labour Force Survey (quarterly data from June-September 2018)
Note: respondents with a language other than English as their first language reported whether they have had problems in finding or keeping a job or with their education due to their difficulties with English.

Several interrelated factors lead to differential outcomes in English language proficiency among migrant sub-groups. Migrants who have had more exposure to the English language through education or from having spent more time in the UK living and working among English speakers typically report higher rates of proficiency. They also appear to have better labour market outcomes. A study looking at non-white migrants in the UK found that English language fluency

increased the likelihood of employment by 22 percentage points and boosted earnings by 18% to 20% (Dustmann and Fabbri, 2003). English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision in the UK has suffered from funding cuts and the lack of an ESOL strategy in England (Casey, 2016: 97; MHCLG, 2018: 38; NATECLA, 2016). COVID-19 also forced many providers to move courses online or suspend them (Kierans, 2020).

For more information, see the Migration Observatory briefing, English language use and proficiency of migrants in the UK.

Educational outcomes for children with English as an additional language typically improve over time

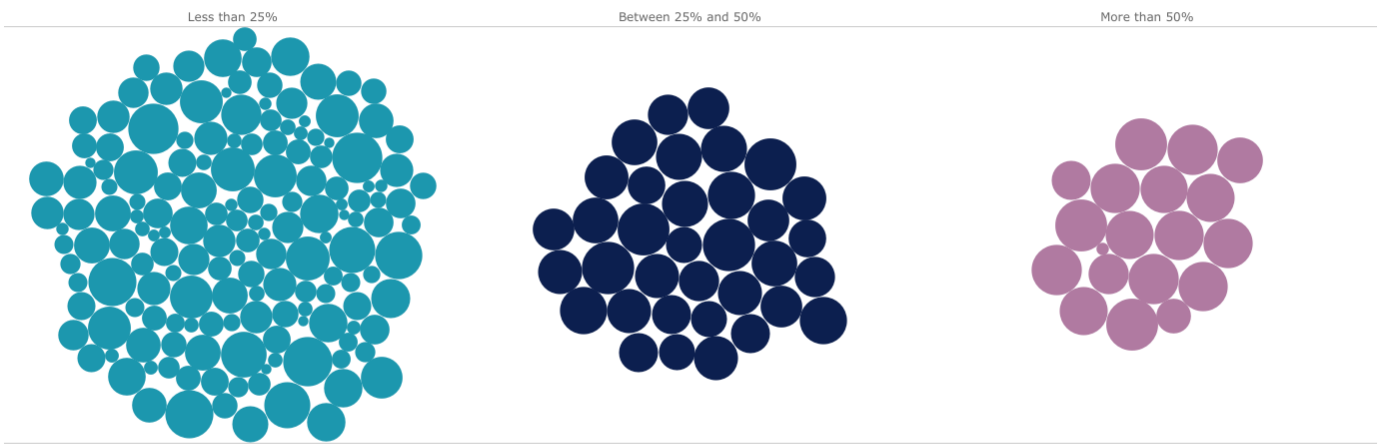
Data on the educational outcomes of migrant children are limited, although figures are collected for those with English as an additional language (EAL). This is an imperfect measure that will include many children who are in fact bilingual; it also excludes migrant children who grow up speaking English at home.

The share of students with English as an additional language (EAL) varies by region and local authority. In the school year 2019/20, only 18 local authorities for which data were available had a majority of EAL primary pupils, dropping to 9 amongst secondary pupils (Figure 4). While EAL students tend to have lower achievement rates than their non-EAL counterparts, there is no evidence to suggest that EAL students negatively impact the achievement of non-EAL students (Strand, 2016). The achievement gap between these two groups diminishes over time and has largely been closed by the age of 16. Key to determining educational outcomes is the age at which the child arrives in the UK as well as their prior knowledge of English – often influenced by their country of origin and socio-economic background. Other factors, such as being identified as having special needs, ethnicity, entitlement to free school meals, neighbourhood deprivation and area of residence also influence educational achievement.

Figure 4

Share of primary and secondary pupils with English as an additional language, 2019/20

No items highlighted



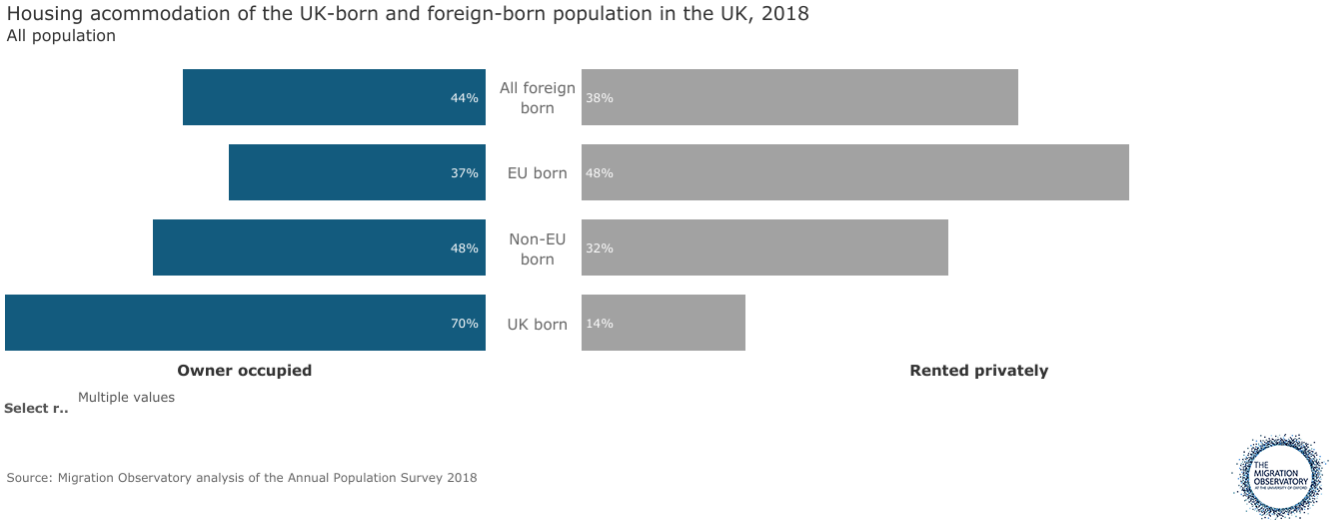
Note: data do not indicate proficiency in English; children with a first language other than English may also be fluent in English. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, Welsh data did not undergo the usual final validation process. Northern Irish data refer to newcomers: "A newcomer pupil is one who has enrolled in a school but who does not have the satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum, and the wider environment, and does not have a language in common with the teacher, whether that is English or Irish". Data include both UK and non-UK born children. Indigenous UK languages (e.g., Gaelic) are not counted as additional languages. Suppressed and unavailable data are zeroed.
Source: Northern Ireland Department of Education, Data on Pupils attending primary schools in Northern Ireland 2019/20: newcomers and Data on Pupils attending post primary schools in Northern Ireland 2019/20: newcomers; Department for Education (England), Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2020, spc_pupils_fsm_eth_lang; Stats Wales, Pupils by English Language Acquisition in Primary and Secondary Schools by Local Authority, 2020; Scottish Government, Pupils with English as an additional language, by local authority and sector, 2019 and Pupils in Scotland 2019: Tables 6.2 and 7.2.

Migrants are more likely than the UK-born to live in low-quality and rental accommodation

Research into the type of accommodation people live in has shown that private renting (versus home ownership or social housing) has often been associated with high costs. This can lead to household poverty and low living standards,

which can negatively impact well-being (Bailey, 2020; Turnstall et al., 2013; Kemp, 2011). In 2018, migrants were nearly three times more likely to be in private rented accommodation than the UK born, a gap which is particularly pronounced among the EU born (Figure 5).

Figure 5



As with other indicators of integration, such as English language proficiency, the length of time spent in the UK brings the accommodation type of migrants and the UK born into closer alignment (Vargas-Silva and Fernández-Reino, 2019). Recently arrived migrants are far more likely than the UK born to rent privately, while those who have been in the UK for 20 years or more have similar rates of private rental, social housing and home ownership. Overall, foreign-born and UK-born populations occupy social housing at similar rates (in 2018, 18% and 16%, respectively).
Another issue affecting migrant households is overcrowding. Between 2016 and 2018, 6% of households with at least one foreign-born adult reported overcrowding, compared to 2% among households with only UK-born adult members.

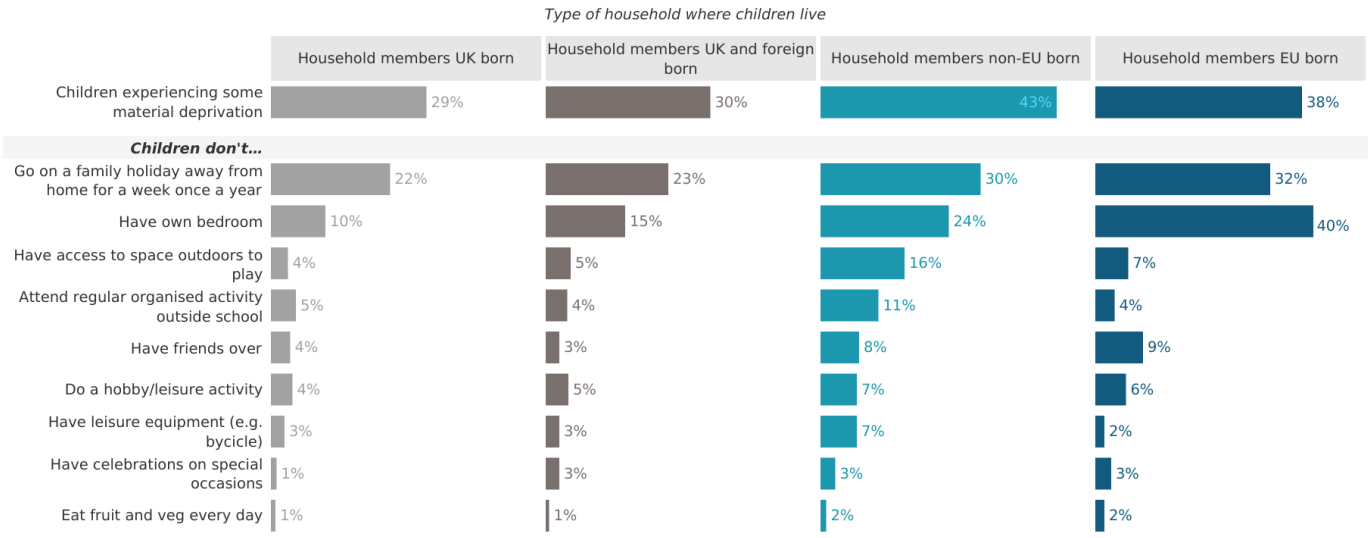
For more information, see the Migration Observatory briefing, Migrants and Housing in the UK: Experiences and Impacts.

Migrant children experience greater levels of material deprivation than children born in the UK

The experience of material deprivation in early life is thought to negatively impact well-being in the long-term, including life chances, health (Duncan and Brooks-Gun, 1997) and "cognitive and emotional competencies" (Kiernan and Huerta, 2008: 783). Based on the material deprivation index, which looks at the inability of households to afford particular goods and activities that are typical among children, irrespective of whether they would choose to have these items, children in migrant households are more likely to experience some form of material deprivation than children in households comprised entirely of UK-born family members. Between 2016 and 2018, 43% of children in non-EU households and 38% of children in EU households sustained material deprivation, compared to 29% of children in households where all family members are UK-born (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Share of children under age 16 who experience some degree of material deprivation, by household composition, 2016-2018
Children under age 16



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of the UK Household Longitudinal Survey/Understanding Society, wave 8.
Note: material deprivation index for children (under age 16) measures living standards and refers to the *inability of households to afford* particular goods and activities that are typical among children at a given point in time, irrespective of whether they would choose to have these items, even if they could afford them. The household composition takes into account the country of birth of all household members aged 16 and above. The 'EU born' category includes a small number of mixed EU and non-EU born households.

For more information, see the Migration Observatory briefing, Children of migrants in the UK.

Migrants in the UK are on average healthier than the UK-born population

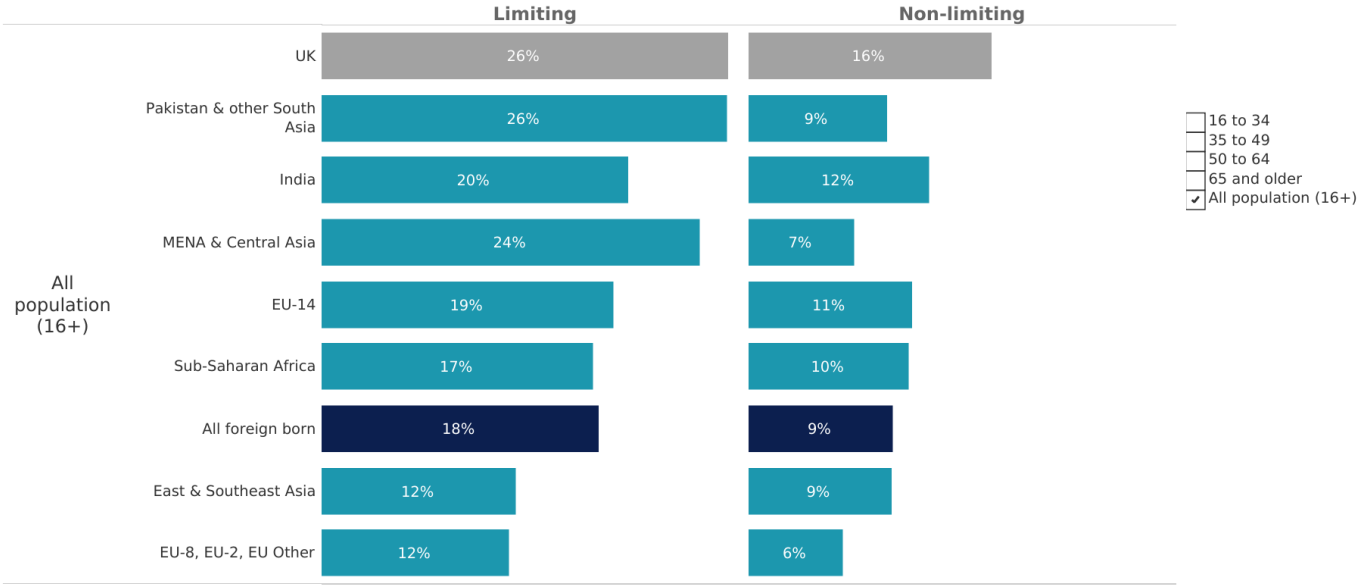
In 2019, 27% of the UK's foreign-born population said that they had a long-lasting health problem, compared to 42% of the UK born (Fernández-Reino, 2020b). There are various reasons for this. For example, migrants are younger than the UK-born population, on average. However, even when comparing the same age groups, migrants retain their health advantage.

Health outcomes for migrants differ according to their reason for migration, country of birth, duration of stay in the UK and the type of work they undertake in the UK. For example, those who migrated for employment, family and study reasons have better health than the UK born, while those who migrated to seek asylum have worse health outcomes (Giuntella et al., 2018). So while most migrants report good health outcomes, there are nonetheless small groups with more acute health needs.

Migrants from EU-8, EU-2 and EU Other countries are the least likely of all population groups to have health problems, according to official survey data (Fernández-Reino, 2020b). In 2019, only 12% of this group reported health problems that limited daily life and 6% reported problems that did not (Figure 7). In comparison, 26% of the UK born and Pakistani and other South Asian populations described having limiting health problems, with a further 16% and 9% of these groups noting non-limiting health problems, respectively.

Figure 7

Population with limiting and non-limiting health problems by country of birth and age, 2019
Age 16 and older



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of the Labour Force Survey 2019 (average of four quarters)
Note: data on health problems lasting or expected to last at least 12 months. A health problem is considered *limiting* if it constrains respondents' ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Percentages may not sum up due to rounding.

Migrants' length of stay in the UK is also an important factor. Although recently arrived migrants are less likely than the UK born to report a health problem that limits daily life, this advantage decreases over time. After 15 years in the UK, foreign-born and UK-born populations report similar health outcomes across all age groups.

Although migrants are typically overrepresented in jobs that are classified as 'low-skilled' (because they have short training requirements), they are less likely than their UK-born counterparts in these jobs to report health conditions that limit their daily life. In 2019, among 35-49 year old workers in jobs with short training requirements, 11% of migrants reported a limiting health condition, compared to 20% of the UK born.

COVID-19 poses greater risks to certain sub-groups of migrants, such as asylum-seekers, than the overall population (Migration Exchange, 2020).

For more information, see the Migration Observatory briefing, The health of migrants in the UK.

Social mixing between migrants and the UK born is a key element of integration

Social relationships among and between migrants and non-migrants affects the well-being of both groups and shapes many dimensions of the integration process, particularly at the local and community level (August and Rook, 2013; Tolsma et al., 2009). For migrants, interactions with longer-standing members of their community can lead to less isolation and important 'insider' insights into how to adapt to and navigate UK society, such as the job market. Under certain conditions, contact between migrants and UK-born residents has been shown to reduce discrimination and hostilities, thereby facilitating other integration processes amongst both foreign and UK-born populations (Allport, 1954; Hewstone and Stewart, 2011; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). Diverse communities, however, do not necessarily lead to greater trust amongst neighbours, oftentimes due to an absence of meaningful contact (Amin, 2002; Laurence, 2017).

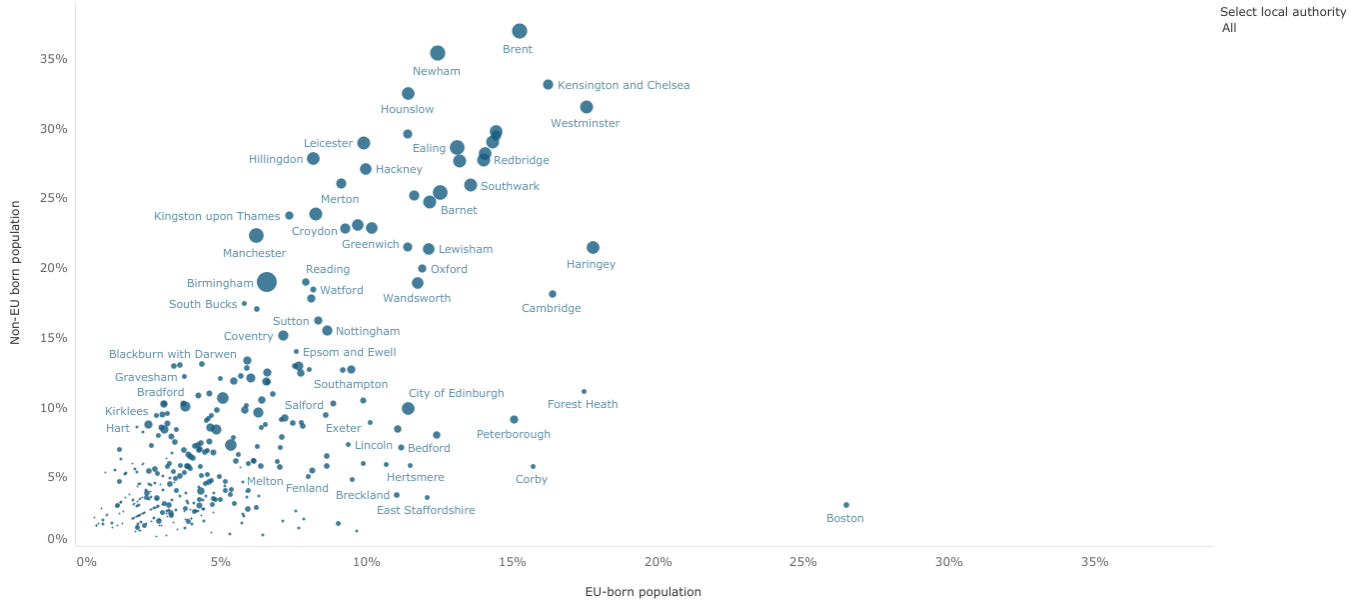
The migrant population is not distributed evenly across the UK. London is home to about one third of the UK's foreign-

born population, despite only accounting for 10% of the UK's population overall (Kone, 2018). Meanwhile, in most local authorities, migrants make up a minority of the population (Figure 8). In 2018, only about 10% of local authorities had a foreign-born population of at least 25% of the total population. These data do not necessarily reflect what is happening below the local authority level, and up-to-date figures for smaller geographic areas will not be available until the results of the 2021 Census are published.

For local authority level data, see the Migration Observatory Local Data Guide. For regional level data, see the Migration Observatory briefing, Where do migrants live in the UK?

Figure 8

Share of the population who are born in EU and non-EU countries, by local authority in Great Britain, 2018
Bubble size indicates total foreign-born population in each local authority



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of ONS Population of the UK by Country of Birth and Nationality datasaet for England and Wales and National Records Scotland (NRS)
Note: Estimates are not available for some localities or have been supressed due to confidentiality requirements. Values of zero include values measured as and rounded to zero. Foreign-born population data by local government district are not available for Northern Ireland.

As migrants spend more time in the UK, they report a decreased sense of connection with the city or region where they grew up. Nearly 9 in 10 migrants who have been in the UK for up to 5 years consider the place where they grew up to be very important. After 15 years in the UK, less than half feel the same. However, the opposite does not appear to hold – a migrant's identification with their current place of residence in the UK does not appear to change over time.

For more information, see the Migration Observatory briefing, Migrants' social relationships, identity and civic participation in the UK.

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures have fundamentally altered, at least for the time being, how social mixing takes place (Broadhead et al., 2020). In particular it has revealed opportunities and challenges around facilitating community contact and social mixing without face-to-face interactions. While certain types of migrants have been shown to be more at risk of being digitally excluded, many also have experience maintaining and developing long-distance relationships via technology (Kierans, 2020).

Most migrants in the UK do not feel they belong to a group that is discriminated against

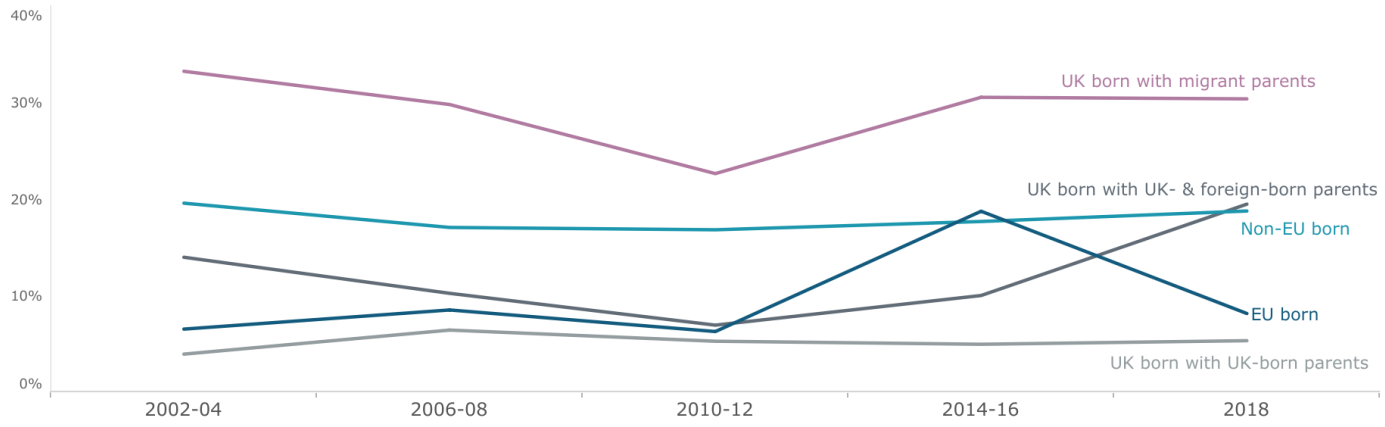
Discrimination is typically defined as the unfair or unjust treatment of people on the basis of certain characteristics, such as their ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation or religious beliefs. There are different reasons that certain

types of migrants and ethnic minorities experience discrimination. These can include having a foreign qualification or particular skin colour. Regardless of the reason, discrimination can affect the lives of those who experience it in a multitude of ways, such as experiencing increased difficulty when looking for accommodation or employment. Furthermore, research has shown that even the *perception* of being discriminated against as an individual or member of a group is enough to negatively impact a person's life outcomes, their sense of belonging and well-being (Safi, 2010) and their mental health (Nandi et al., 2020; Schmitt et al., 2014).

In 2018, 16% of migrants in Great Britain described themselves as members of a group that is discriminated against in this country (Figure 9). This figure is roughly in line with rates reported by migrants living in countries across the EU-14. Typically, non EU-born migrants are more likely to identify as part of a group that is discriminated against than the EU born, with the exception of the period 2014-2016. Some have pointed out that this may be due to the prevalence of anti-European and anti-immigration attitudes in the public debate surrounding the EU referendum – attitudes that have since softened considerably (Rzepnikowska, 2019; Ipsos-MORI, 2021). (For more information on public opinion, see the Migration Observatory briefing, UK Public Opinion toward Immigration: Overall Attitudes and Level of Concern.) By 2018, rates had returned to those seen in previous years, with 19% of non EU-born and 8% of EU-born migrants reporting that they belong to a group that is discriminated against. Perhaps owing to their higher expectations for equal treatment in UK society, those born in the UK who have foreign-born parents are more likely than migrants to say they belong to a group that experiences discrimination (Heath, 2013 in Charsley et al., 2020).

Figure 9

Respondent is a member of a group that is discriminated against on grounds of colour/race, nationality, religion, language or ethnicity, 2002-2018
Age 15+



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of the European Social Survey 2002 to 2018 for Great Britain.
Note: respondents are asked whether they "describe themselves as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in this country". Those answering affirmatively are asked on what grounds their group is discriminated against (colour/race, nationality, religion, language or ethnicity).

Overall, it appears that migrants are generally more positive about their life in the UK than the native born population. For example, they are far more likely than the UK-born population to believe that the UK is hospitable or welcoming to migrants, and that migrants can get ahead if they work hard.

For more information, see the Migration Observatory briefing, Migrants and discrimination in the UK.

Citizenship acquisition can help migrants' economic and social integration, especially among those from disadvantaged groups

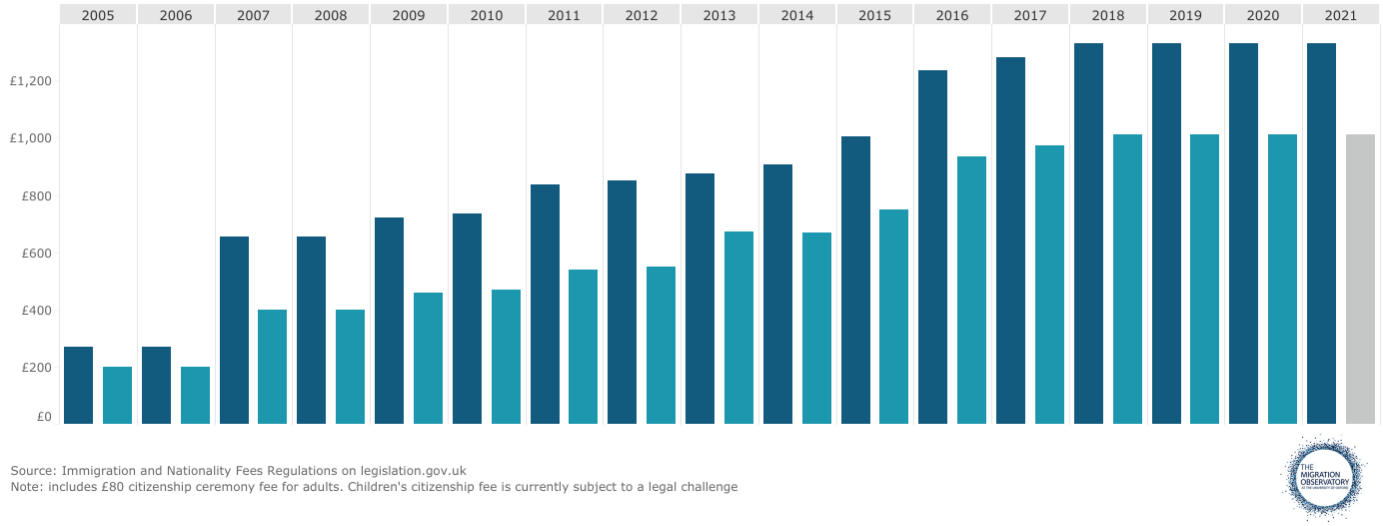
Policy debates and research both make the connection between the naturalisation of foreign citizens and their integration. In the UK, the Home Office Indicators of Integration Framework describes citizenship as an "important

bedrock to the integration of any individual in a society" (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019: 18). OECD (2011) found that the acquisition of citizenship led to better labour market outcomes in a handful of countries. Studies from countries in Europe have found that naturalisation is associated with deeper in-country social connections (Hainmueller et al., 2017) and, when made easier to acquire, results in improved economic positions (Gathmann and Keller, 2018) and greater participation in language and vocational training among certain migrant sub-groups. However, these findings are not universal (e.g., Bartram, 2019) and a substantial share of migration to the UK is temporary (Kone et al., 2020). While citizenship confers additional rights and reduces barriers to access, it is usually only possible to acquire after a significant period in the UK – making its impact difficult to disentangle from that of length of stay.

Historically, EU citizens have been less likely to acquire British citizenship than non-EU citizens. In 2019, 16% of the EU-born population living in the UK reported British citizenship as their main citizenship compared to 54% of the non-EU born population (Fernández-Reino and Sumption, 2021). There are several possible explanations for this. By virtue of the UK's membership in the EU, EU citizens could enjoy many of the same protections afforded to UK citizens without the cost (Figure 10) – among the largest in high-income countries – and inconvenience of applying for citizenship (Moreh et al., 2018; MIPEX, 2015). After the EU referendum, there was a marked increase in citizenship applications from EU citizens.

Figure 10

Naturalisation fees, 2005-2021



Source: Immigration and Nationality Fees Regulations on legislation.gov.uk
Note: includes £80 citizenship ceremony fee for adults. Children's citizenship fee is currently subject to a legal challenge

For more information, see the Migration Observatory briefing, Citizenship and naturalisation for migrants in the UK.

Conclusion

Migrants' integration across a range of elements of UK life depends on a host of factors including their reason for migration, length of stay and individual characteristics, such as gender and country of origin. Although integration occurs over time, it does not "proceed in only one direction, from 'not integrated' to 'integrated'" (Phillimore, 2012; in Spencer and Charsley, 2016: 4). Rather, it spans multiple, interrelated domains of life and progression may not take place evenly across all domains at the same time. For example, Eastern Europeans, while highly likely to be employed, are typically overqualified for their jobs (Fernández-Reino and Rienzo, 2021). While migrants' English language skills and labour market outcomes appear to improve over time, their health, on average, does not (Fernández-Reino, 2020b). In other cases, outcomes in one domain may affect progress in another – for example, overcrowded housing might affect educational outcomes, or unsociable work hours might affect the ability to access services or language instruction. Furthermore, the UK born population is both affected by migrants' progress in these domains and influences migrants' integration outcomes in them. How these processes will be affected by the UK's post-Brexit immigration

system remains to be seen (for a discussion of this, see the Migration Observatory commentary, Integration in the UK and the Post-Brexit immigration system). There remain significant gaps in the evidence base about the relationship between different domains of integration which—as this report demonstrates—are themselves complex and difficult to measure.

Acknowledgments

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The Migration Observatory

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