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| Migration and diasporas: Activity sheet 1 |

**What is migration?**

Migration is the process of someone moving away from their usual place of residence, on a temporary or more permanent basis. It can happen internally, within a country, or internationally, across a border.

There are various push and pull factors that drive migration. For example, limited employment opportunities, deteriorating livelihoods, natural disasters and climate change, political repression and persecution and violent conflict are all factors that may push people to move to other places. On the destination side, employers keen to find new workers offering better income and work opportunities, universities offering diverse learning opportunities and social and familial networks may encourage people to migrate. Migration can offer the possibility of a better income, fulfilling care responsibilities and supporting livelihoods back home. For some it offers relative safety. For others adventure.

This means that migration is a very diverse phenomenon. It may involve a journey from village to nearby city, or moving the other side of the world. It may be a relatively straightforward process or migrants may have to navigate tough physical terrain and legal barriers. Some people migrate reluctantly because they see little alternative. Others enter into the process with enthusiasm and ambition. People’s experiences of migration processes and their subsequent trajectories in life vary a lot.

**What are the major trends and patterns in international migration?**

Here we are focusing on international migration. Table 1 shows that international migration has increased around the world since 1990, in terms of numbers of people, as well as the percentage of the world’s population who are international migrants. However, international migrants still only account for a small proportion of the global population.

**Table 1. International Migration, 1990-2020**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Year | International migrants (millions) | Proportion of world population (%) |
| 1990 | 153 | 2.87 |
| 1995 | 161 | 2.81 |
| 2000 | 174 | 2.83 |
| 2005 | 192 | 2.93 |
| 2010 | 221 | 3.17 |
| 2015 | 249 | 3.37 |
| 2020 | 281 | 3.60 |

Source: IOM 2023

There is wide variation between countries. For instance, in the United Arab Emirates over 88% of the population are international migrants. Figure 1 shows the largest ‘corridors’ of movement. Some of this movement involves refugees, of whom there were 26.4 million globally, by the start of 2021. A common misconception is that high income countries are overrun with refugees. In fact, the majority of refugees (73%) are living in countries neighbouring their countries of origin. The top hosting countries are Turkey, Pakistan, Uganda, Germany, Sudan.

**Figure 1. Top 20 international migration country-to-country corridors (millions of migrants), 2020**

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Source: IOM 2023

**What is a diaspora?**

The term ‘diaspora’ is used to refer to people who have spread out from the place they considered their homeland. Originally the term was used with reference to people who had been forced to move. Nowadays the term is used in a broader way, referring to people who have moved country, or the descendants of people who have moved country, who share a sense of identity and connections with that country of origin / heritage.

One of the reasons why diasporas are interesting is because the transnational connections that they maintain can shape people’s lives abroad and people’s lives in the country of origin in important ways. These connections and impacts may be economic (e.g., sending money and investing), political (e.g., lobbying foreign and home governments) and social (e.g., through social media, family contact and cultural exchange and influence).

**What is the history of migration to the UK?**

Under the British Empire, many people were displaced and relocated as part of business projects and colonial government schemes, including indentured labour and slavery. That said, relatively few people moved from places that were colonised to settle in the UK. However, in the decades after World War Two, the UK’s recovery relied heavily on immigration from the British Commonwealth, to fill vacancies in vital industries and build public services. The British Nationality Act of 1948 granted all citizens of the UK and its Colonies the right to move around British territories to live and work. For example, people came to the UK from the Caribbean, dubbed the Windrush migrants, after the first ship arriving from Jamaica in 1948, recruited to jobs in sectors with labour shortages. In 1973, the UK joined the European Union (EU), allowing citizens of other EU states to migrate to work in the UK. Other people travelled to the UK for various reasons with visas (special permission detailing the conditions of their stay) during this period as well. While some people eventually returned to their countries of origin, others stayed on and settled, becoming part of UK society. Some also formed diaspora communities which kept connections with countries of origin.

**What is the nature of contemporary migration to the UK?**

Over the last decades, more restrictions have come into place, with more people needing visas, to travel to, work and live in the UK. People coming to the UK are mainly categorised as coming for work, study, family, or protection from conflict and human rights abuses. For example, over the last 20 years, migration from India is primarily for work, study and family reasons. Migration from Somalia has primarily been to ensure protection from conflict, and also to join family previously settled in the UK. Migration from Brazil is more recent and primarily for work opportunities.

In 2021, one in six usual residents of England and Wales were born outside the UK. Table 1 shows that the largest migrant groups in England and Wales are of Indian, Polish and Pakistani origin. It also shows that the numbers of migrants from particular countries may increase and decrease over time, as people move back and forth – for example, there were somewhat fewer international migrants from Ireland and Germany living in the UK in 2021 compared with 2011. There are also people who may not be included in the Census or represented in estimates derived from other national surveys, because they are reluctant to participate, for reasons such as not speaking English or insecure immigration status.

**Table 2 Top 10 non-UK countries of birth in England and Wales in 2021**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rank in 2021** | **Country of birth** | **2011** | **2021** |
| 1 | India | 694,148 | 920,361 |
| 2 | Poland | 579,121 | 743,083 |
| 3 | Pakistan | 482,137 | 623,557 |
| 4 | Romania | 79,687 | 538,840 |
| 5 | Ireland | 407,357 | 324,670 |
| 6 | Italy | 134,619 | 276,669 |
| 7 | Bangladesh | 211,500 | 273,042 |
| 8 | Nigeria | 191,183 | 270,768 |
| 9 | Germany | 273,564 | 263,368 |
| 10 | South Africa | 191,023 | 217,180 |

Source: Office For National Statistics 2022

The ‘superdiversity’ of major cities in the UK is often emphasised: this means that by contrast to having a small number of large migrant communities, there is a great diversity of people with respect to nationality, ethnicity, linguistic and religious backgrounds, as well as in relation to the immigration channels used, demographic characteristics and legal and socio-economic statuses.

**What do we know about diaspora communities in the UK?**

**Migrants often move to places where they know people or there are other people that speak their languages.** This leads to clustering of people identifying with different groups in particular regions and cities. For instance, you can explore the distribution of ethnic groups in the UK using [Census map data](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/ethnic-group/ethnic-group-tb-20b/asian-asian-british-or-asian-welsh-indian). This is the result of past patterns of migration and shapes current migration patterns.

**Gauging the size of diaspora communities in the UK is harder than tracking migration, for several reasons.** First, some homelands, like Somaliland, are not internationally recognised as states so data is not collected on people migrating from those places specifically. Second, data collection typically focuses on country of birth or nationality and less often captures whether people have family heritage abroad, although ethnic identification may in some circumstances be an indicator of this. Third, the term diaspora tends to imply some sense of shared identity and connection, which is less easy to quantify than simpler facts, like where people were born. Some people are less interested, and some more interested in maintaining connections.

**It is clear that some migrants and people with diverse ethnic identities form part of diaspora communities, sharing a common sense of identity maintaining connections with countries of heritage/origin.** In Activity Sheets 2 and 3 we consider the financial connections people maintain. In Activity Sheets 4, 5 and 6 we will look in detail at Indian, Somali and Brazilian migration and diasporas in the UK.

**Further reading**

* Chase, Elaine, Kavita Datta, Laura Hammond, Anna Lindley, Kaltun Fadal, Saliha Majeed-Hajaj and Gabriela Loureiro (2021) Access to Care and Support During Covid-19. Connecting During Covid-19, Research Briefing No.1. London: Queen Mary’s University, <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/geog/media/geography/images/research/connecting-during-covid/14_22-Connecting-during-Covid-policy-brief_v3.pdf>
* El-Enany, Nadine (2019) ‘Britain as the Spoils of Empire’ Manchester University Press Blog, <https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/blog/2019/11/06/britain-as-the-spoils-of-empire/>
* IOM (2023) World Migration Report 2022. Geneva: IOM. <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2022-interactive/>
* Office for National Statistics (2021) Census Maps. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/>
* Office for National Statistics (2022) International migration, England and Wales: Census 2021, statistical bulletin released 2 November 2022, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/internationalmigrationenglandandwales/census2021>. For Scotland’s Census, see <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>; for Northern Ireland’s Census, see <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census>
* Singh, Kulwinder (2023) ‘Lee's Theory of Migration: Intervening Obstacles Model’ Pan Geography, <https://pangeography.com/lees-theory-of-migration/>
* Vargas-Silva, Carlos and Cinzia Rienzo (2022) Migrants in the UK: An Overview. Migration Observatory Briefing. Oxford: Oxford University. <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migrants-in-the-uk-an-overview/>

**Questions**

List examples of 4 push and 4 pull factors for migration. Which are economic, social, environmental, or political?

1. What do you find most surprising in the international migration data and trends presented, and why?
2. Define a diaspora.
3. When does someone stop being a migrant? Consider different perspectives (the person themselves, the state of destination, the destination society)
4. How did the British Empire shape migration?
5. Why do people migrate to the UK today?
6. Can you think of an example of super-diversity in the place where you live in the UK? Or in places you have learned about?
7. Create a clustered bar chart showing the top 5 non-UK countries of birth for England and Wales in 2021, compared with the numbers of migrants from these countries in 2011, to illustrate changes.
8. Why do you think there were somewhat fewer migrants from Ireland and Germany in England and Wales in 2021, compared with 2011?
9. Use the Census interactive maps (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/>) to compare and contrast the clustering of people born in India and people born in Poland in England and Wales. What do you notice?
10. What do diaspora communities bring to the UK? Give some examples.
11. Summarise the challenges involved in estimating the size of (a) migrant populations and (b) diaspora communities in the UK.

**Answer guide**

**1. List 4 push and 4 pull factors for migrants. Which are economic, social, environmental, or political?**

Examples are listed below. This is not exhaustive.

* Economic: unemployment, higher wages, better public services, opportunity to develop skills
* Social: lack of human rights and civil liberty, poor access to education, family links
* Environmental: risk of natural disaster, safety, a favourable climate
* Political: fleeing persecution and violence.

**2. What do you find most surprising in the international migration data and trends presented, and why?**

Examples listed below. This is not exhaustive. Will depend on students’ perspective.

* There is a lot of talk of being in global age, but a small minority of the world’s population are actually international migrants, and this has increased only slowly since 1990.
* There are major destinations that are also major origin countries of migrants, e.g. India, Russian Federation, Ukraine, Kazakhstan. We often imagine that countries are either major sources or major destinations, but some countries experience a lot of circulation.
* Refugees are a modest proportion of international migrants, despite emphasis on asylum-seekers in the press.

**3. Define a diaspora.**

* A diaspora is a group of people who have spread out from their original country. It is a global network of connected individuals, often linked by ethnicity or nationality. It is a phenomenon which can be voluntary or coerced with people moving from one place to another, or to several places. Typically, individuals retain their shared identity and, in doing so, maintain linkages. It is through these links that flows of capital, goods, products, ideas, materials, or people move.
1. **When does someone stop being a migrant? Consider different perspectives (the person themselves, the state of destination, the destination society)**

Possible discussion points:

* Person themselves**:** depend on how comfortable they feel and how they imagine their future in the country of residence, and the conditions which shape that future (immigration status, economic resources, family situation). Establishing a life in a new place does not necessarily mean that you cut of connections with place of origin.
* State of destination: From the perspective of legal status, people may have and move between different types of immigration status, for example: unauthorised migrant, refugee, international student, skilled worker, permanent resident. These are all migrant statuses, but some people may become ‘naturalised’ citizens with an open-ended right to reside in the country, and equal rights with other citizens. From the legal standpoint, they are then no longer a migrant.
* Destination society: Whether people are viewed by others in the communities in which they live as migrants or as locals may depend on various things, including the perspective and diversity of the place in which they are living. For instance, sometimes even people who have grown up in a country may be asked ‘where are you *really* from’, if their skin colour is different from the dominant one, which can be irritating and alienating for the person. At the same time, at more local level, the city/area where people grow up, and the social networks and connections that people have, form an important source of common ground and community.
1. **How did the British Empire shape migration?**
* Displacing people and forcing migration within and between colonies
* Establishing connections of language and education systems
* Later recruitment to work in the UK
1. **Why do people migrate to the UK today?**

Common reasons:

* Work, business, trade
* Study
* Family connections
* Protection
* Role of colonial connection – situation in country of origin connected to UK, language, access
1. **Can you think of an example of super-diversity in the place where you live in the UK? Or in places you have learned about?**

Possible answers:

* Our school / town / a [named] city does not have people from just one main country of origin or heritage, but from many places around the world.
* In the hospital, there are information leaflets in many languages showing that people from many places use the hospital.
* The wide range of different kinds of food that you can buy in the supermarket, and the many shops specialising in food from different parts of the world, demonstrates that there is a market among diasporas - and the general population - for food from all over the world.
1. **Create a clustered bar chart showing the top 5 non-UK countries of birth for England and Wales in 2021, compared with the numbers of migrants from these countries in 2011 to illustrate changes.**
2. **Why do you think there were somewhat fewer migrants from Ireland and Germany in England and Wales in 2021, compared with 2011?**
* Before Brexit free movement rules meant that EU citizens had the right to live and work in the UK without a visa. Since 2020, EU citizens have had to navigate been more restrictive immigration rules which apply to people from other parts of the world as well (although Ireland remains in a Common Travel Area with the UK).
* Also, many people of different migrant groups left the UK because of the pandemic.
1. **Use the Census interactive maps (**[**https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/**](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/)**) to compare and contrast the clustering of people born in India and people born in Poland in England and Wales. What do you notice?**

India: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/population/country-of-birth/country-of-birth-60a/middle-east-and-asia-southern-asia-india> and Poland: [Country of birth - Census Maps, ONS](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/population/country-of-birth/country-of-birth-60a/europe-other-europe-eu-countries-countries-that-joined-the-eu-between-april-2001-and-march-2011-poland)

People born in India are more tightly clustered than people born in Poland.

1. **What do diaspora communities bring to the UK?**

Possible answers:

* Sense of community and mutual support for people who are part of that community.
* May have developed out of migration for work, which can help employers to meet the national demand for goods and services.
* Fosters connections between the UK and other countries – may increase the UK’s soft power abroad, trade and business networks, educational linkages, brings knowledge about other parts of the world.
* Traditions and fresh practices and perspectives that contribute to a varied culture in places where diaspora communities are based (shaping for example food, social, religious, cultural and leisure practices).
1. **Summarise the challenges involved in estimating the size of (a) migrant populations and (b) diaspora communities in the UK.**
* Migration: poorer language skills may hinder participation in census or surveys, people with insecure immigration status may avoid official surveys due to fear of removal.
* Diasporas: lack of recording of migrant parentage, difficulty of quantifying identity and connections, some homelands aren’t recognised as independent countries