

Family and fertility patterns of recent foreign-born populations in the United Kingdom

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Extended abstract

Context:

Net international migration has made significant demographic contributions to the United Kingdom's (UK) population in the past decade, consistently accounting for over 50% of population growth¹. In 2008, however, this trend changed with natural change (i.e., births less deaths) becoming the largest contributor to population growth. This can be partially explained by the increasing contributions made by foreign-born women. In fact, 24% of all live births occurring within England and Wales occurred to foreign-born mothers in 2008. This represents the largest proportion ever contributed by foreign-born women since the recording of mother's country of birth began in 1969. In comparison, only 14% of live births were to foreign-born women ten years previously². The fertility rates of the foreign-born population are generally higher than that of the UK-born population. They also represent a relatively large share of women in childbearing ages. These two factors, along with the fairly stable and low rates of UK-born fertility, are partly driving the recent increases in contributions to population growth made by fertility³.

Despite the importance of foreign-born fertility in the UK, relatively little is known about the wider familial context within which this childbearing is occurring. Furthermore, most quantitative studies of migrant family types are based on 2001 census data. Given the well established migrant flows from Eastern European countries to the UK following EU accessions in 2004, and large increases in the percentages of births to Polish mothers in the UK following this time, it is clear that more recent analyses are required. This is especially the case given that these migrant flows have sometimes been considered to be made up of young, single individuals whose migration is likely to be temporary or circular and not associated with long-term settlement in the UK. The births to Polish mothers would seem to suggest that individuals are in fact settling in the UK or are at least not postponing other life-course events, such as childbearing, during the migration process.

¹ Office for National Statistics (2009, August) <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?ID=950>

² Office for National Statistics (2009, August) <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=369>

³ Tromans, N., Natamba, E. and Jefferies, J. (2009). Have women born outside the UK driven the rise in UK births since 2001? *Population Trends*. 136, 28-42.

To better understand the relationships between international migration and family careers of recent migrant groups to the UK, this research explores the differences in partnership and children status by age, sex, country of birth and duration of residence of recent migrants to the UK from 2001 to 2008.

Data and methodology:

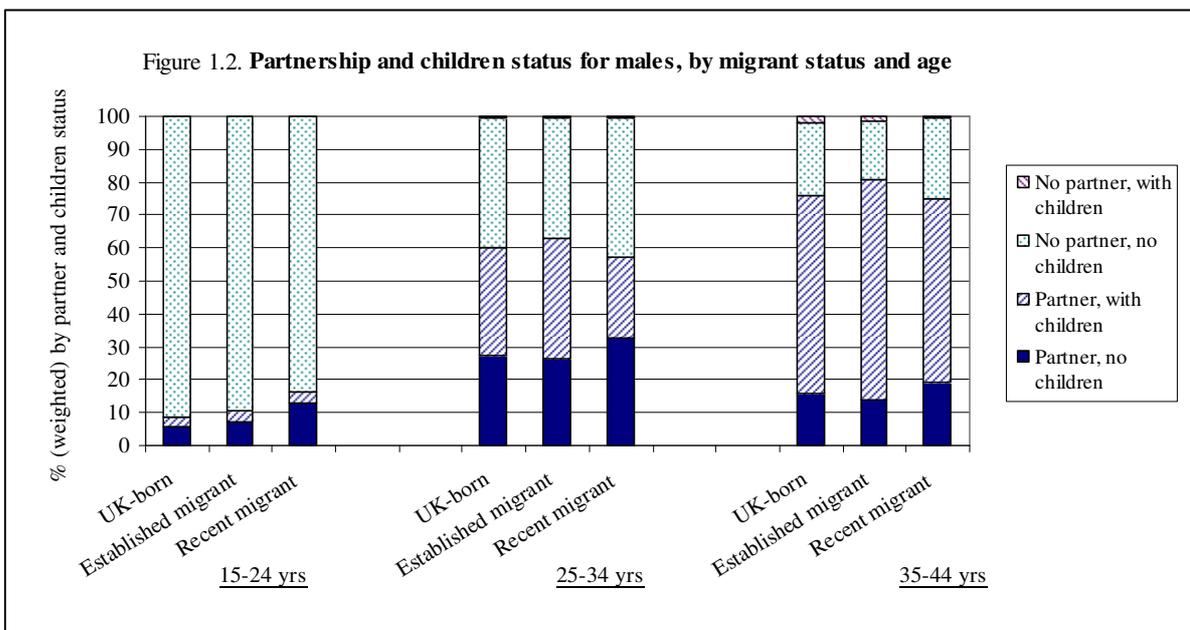
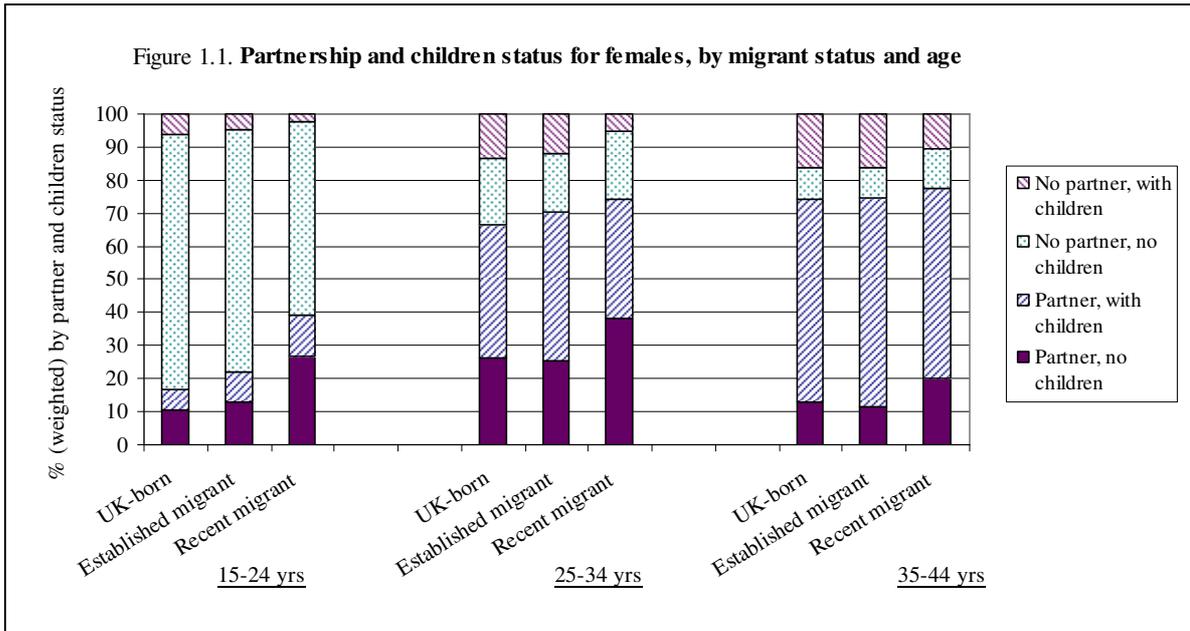
The analyses are conducted using a cross-sectional sample from the UK Labour Force Survey, with data pooled from April-June quarters for 2001-2009. The sample consists of 353,733 individuals aged 15-44 years, of whom 313,107 are UK-born, 26,649 are foreign-born arriving prior to 2001 and 13,977 are foreign-born arriving after 2001. The analysis first focuses on the differences between these three groups, before focusing on the more recent migrant groups with respect to duration of residence and country of birth characteristics. More specifically, migrants from Poland, 'Other A8' countries, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are compared, representing relatively new migrant groups from low fertility areas and more established migrant groups from higher fertility areas, respectively. These groups are selected because of their relative importance to foreign-born childbearing within the UK since 2001.

Weighted descriptive statistics are presented, along with the results from a series of binomial logistic regression models, which are used to assess the role of further important characteristics such as socio-economic status, level of educational attainment and characteristics of the migrant's partner, such as migrant status, country of birth and year of arrival, where applicable.

Preliminary findings:

Initial findings for partnership and children status according to migrant status and age are shown for females and males in Figures 1.1. and 1.2. respectively. It can be seen that the female recent migrant group has high percentages partnered at all ages in comparison to other females, but that this is particularly so at the youngest age group. It is also evident that even at the youngest age group, the female recent migrants have substantial proportions who also have children, despite the proportions being slightly smaller than those of comparable females of other migrant statuses. With regards to partnership status, a similar, but less

pronounced, finding can be seen for males at the youngest age group where recent migrants have higher percentages partnered than other males. However, unlike the female recent migrant group, the male recent migrants then have smaller proportions partnered than comparable males at the two older age groups. Possible explanations for why the recent migrant group has the highest percentages partnered at the youngest ages are explored further with binomial logistic regression modelling, paying particular attention to socio-economic and educational attainment differentials.



Clear differences are visible according to age, with increasing proportions partnered and having children with increases in age for all groupings. Sex differentials are also

apparent with greater proportions of females both being partnered and having children than males at the youngest age group, likely reflecting timing differentials in union formation and childbearing, which decrease with increases in age. Another interesting difference between the sexes is that observed between male and female recent migrants, whereby female recent migrants have higher percentages partnered than comparable females at all ages, whilst this is only true for male recent migrants at the youngest age group. This might suggest that the migration and family trajectories of the two sexes are different, with females perhaps more likely to form families within the UK or less likely to migrate without a partner than males, who perhaps at older ages are likely to have already formed families who remain in the country of origin and are therefore undetected in our sample.

These ideas are explored further with regards to duration of residence and country of birth in an attempt to establish whether relationships are formed before or closely to arrival or after some time in the UK. Binomial logistic regression is also used to explore with whom different individuals are partnered considering that a greater proportion of recent migrant females are partnered than males at all ages. The analyses then consider the importance of these partner characteristics in relation to having children.