**Intra-regional and inter-regional geographical mobility**

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**1. Introduction**

Intra-regional and inter-regional geographical mobility within a country has important implications for both labour demand and supply, as well as for factors such as local demand for goods and services, wages, productivity and innovative capacity. When considering inter- and intra-regional migration there are differences between groups (unemployed people, students, workers, households, couples/dual earners, older people) as they have their own, and often distinct, migration push and pull factors. This chapter focuses on the United Kingdom (UK) context and sets out some of the labour market information sources that have been used in analysing inter- and intra-regional migration. The chapter first, briefly considers the importance of clarifying the definition of a region in any study, then considers: what promotes intra-regional and inter-regional migration; the impact of intra-regional and inter-regional migration; some data and information sources; and conclusions.

 **2. What is a region?**

When considering inter- and intra-regional migration, it is important to clarify the definition of a region. Functional Urban Regions, for example, are defined as the urban core as well as the surrounding areas from which people commute to and from the core area (Freeman, 2007). As such Functional Urban Regions are concentrations of employment and economic activity; and they share the same labour market and are, in the main, composed of several cities and semi-urban areas (Johansson, 2007). The Functional Urban Region concept is a logical way of considering inter- and intra-regional moves in that intra-regional moves are within a functionally coherent region. Of course there are a number of practical and theoretical problems with defining functional regions.

One set of functionally based regions are termed Travel to Work Areas (TTWA). In the UK these are defined by the UK Office for National Statistics (2008) as: areas where at least 75 per cent of the inhabitant economically active population work in the area; and also where that at least 75 per cent of those working in the area also live in the area. The minimum population of a TTWA is 3, 500. Hence people should usually be able to move jobs within a TTWA and not have to move house (although in practice if the job is quite far away then often the people may have to move house, i.e. make an intra-regional move).

However, TTWAs do not necessarily follow administrative boundaries and may not exactly correspond with Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) regions (often NUTS 2), but differences are often small (see Eurostat, 2011 for more details). If NUTS 3 regions (e.g. a municipality or local authority) are considered then a move by a person from the city centre to a suburb may be counted as an inter-regional move. For NUTS 2 regions (e.g. usually coherent groupings of local authorities) then such a move to a suburb would not count as an inter-regional move and a job change within the region would not necessarily involve moving home. Meanwhile an inter-regional move may involve changing job (or vice versa). For a NUTS 1 region (e.g. Scotland) a job move would almost certainly involve inter-regional migration (except for a few people on the boundary of the region), however, intra-regional migration could involve a short move or a move of hundreds of kilometres.

In summary, the definition of the region is of great importance when considering what is meant by an inter- or intra-regional move. The data that needs to be gathered/examined in order to understand inter- or intra-regional moves clearly needs to reflect these different perspectives.

**3. What promotes intra-regional and inter-regional migration?**

This section considers the factors that promote intra-regional and inter-regional migration showing that shorter distance moves (which are the most common) have different push and pull factors compared to longer distance migration (Champion et al., 1998). There are different promotion factors for different groups who are moving and mobility has been found to be dependent on age, household composition and employment status (see for example: Scanlon et al., 2010).

*Employment status*

It has been found that, controlling for wage, unemployment, and house price differentials, that, people who are unemployed are more likely to migrate; and that unemployed people migrate because of higher wage opportunities rather than for better employment opportunities (Rabe and Taylor, 2010). However, the likelihood of migration varies over time with the propensity to migrate declining as unemployment duration increases (Böheim and Taylor, 2003, Jackman and Savouri, 1992). It has also been argued that it is not only employment that promotes migration amongst those who are unemployed. Other factors may be related to the higher migration rates of unemployed people e.g. the search for new housing (Dixon, 2003).

The role of employment in prompting migration is more common among different groups. Job related mobility declines with age, with younger people more likely to be recent migrants (Dixon, 2003; Halfacree et al., 1992). Additionally, using the British Household Panel Survey which asks about reasons behind a move, Dixon (2003) shows that only 12.6 per cent of all moves (short and long distances) in Great Britain between 1991- 2000 were job related e.g. new job or job relocation. However, job related factors were the most common prompt of inter-regional moves. Additionally it is those with higher levels of qualifications and working in managerial, professional and semi-professional jobs are more likely to move between regions. Shorter distance moves were more likely to be precipitated by changing relationships, wanting to live in a better area etc. Andrews et al., (2010) found, in contrast to other studies in Great Britain, that regional level real wages and tightness are not linked to individual migration decisions, nor does tenure limit regional migration.

*Age, household composition and the changing nature of work*

In a study of work related relocation it was found that changing family structures and the nature of work have made relocation more complex: as more women enter the labour market the less likely they are able to move because of their partner’s career; as families break up individuals may have dependents living in more than one household; and individuals may not expect to only work for one employer for the whole of their working life (Green and Canny, 2003). However, when taking an EU wide perspective it must be recognised that there are significant differences in female participation rates, and dual earner households, across the EU (with generally lower figures in the south). While it has been previously found that moves in couples were directed by the husband’s job preferences (a ‘breadwinner’ model, see for example, Taylor, 2007), recent research has shown that dual earner households place equal value on both parties wages when making migration decisions (Rabe, 2011). It is perhaps in this context that it has been found that dual earner households/couples are less likely to move (Böheim and Taylor, 2003, Dixon, 2003) with Taylor (2007) finding that less than 2 per cent of couples move for job related reasons. Rabe and Taylor (2010) show that having a partner with high wage expectations reduces the likelihood that an individual will migrate (especially from a region with many suitable job opportunities to a region with fewer such opportunities); and that if a spouse expects or seeks employment, individuals are less likely to move away from low unemployment regions. Therefore, it is in this context that it is young individuals with high incomes, high education levels and without dependents who are the most mobile (Meen et al., 2005).

The changing nature of work and the timing of life course events (e.g. having children) have also affected flows of migrants to and from centres such as London. An example of return migration (where people move back to their region of origin, perhaps to bring up their young children) is provided by Findlay et al. (2008). Recent flows of Scots to London and South East England have fallen and return migration amongst well qualified young people has increased. This is not due to reduced career opportunities but rapid career acceleration now allows young people to fulfil life goals earlier than previously, as well as the strong standing of the financial sector in Edinburgh providing high level opportunities in Scotland(Findlay et al., 2008)

*Housing*

Housing affects regional migration (Cameron et al., 2005). In terms of tenure there are differences in mobility between owner occupiers, private renters and those in social housing. Those who have a mortgage are less likely to move (Böheim and Taylor, 2003) and those who own their houses outright are less likely to be recent migrants (Halfacree et al., 1992). In contrast those living in the private rented sector are more likely to be recent migrants than owner occupiers but those in local authority (public) housing are less likely to move between counties (Halfacree et al., 1992).

The housing market also shapes mobility. Active housing markets and a supply of private rented accommodation can encourage population ‘churn’. Conversely an inadequate supply of good quality housing can act as push factors, and high house prices in potential destinations areas can reduce the likelihood of migration (Rabe and Taylor, 2010, Scanlon et al., 2010).

*Educational migration*

Hollywood and McQuaid (2008) and  McQuaid and Hollywood (2008) analyse the link between educational migration and religious background (termed community background)  in the case of Northern Ireland,  taking account of the relationship between: community background and attainment at school; progression from school to higher education; levels of deprivation in a local area; and the impact of higher education policy. They argue that there is an association between educational migration and community background and levels of deprivation. In particular, that those areas with the lowest levels of deprivation have the highest rates of educational migration and, significantly, that differences in migration by community background remain constant irrespective of levels of deprivation in an area. The educational policy, especially keeping a limit on the number of students who can study at universities in Northern Ireland, is likely to encourage greater outmigration.

Others have looked at the links between ethnicity and educational migration. A study of university graduates showed that recently graduated individuals from non-White ethnic groups were less mobile than individuals from White ethnic groups; and that this could have an impact on their future earnings potential (Faggian et al., 2006).

*Quality of life*

Much of the research on migration focuses on the pull and push factors, and less on what encourages people to stay within an area. However, it is research on what encourages people to stay in an area that draws attention to the role of quality of life in promoting migration. Research on the factors that keep people in an area has found that ‘place-based’ factors such as the appeal of the physical landscape as well as social networks (e.g. being able to make friends), play a more important role than economic conditions and individual demographic characteristics (Mellander et al., 2011). The importance of quality of life has been confirmed in other studies on what attracts internal migrants. Quality of place has been argued as key in attracting the ‘creative classes’ (Florida, 2002). Furthermore an analysis of within-UK migration in the year leading up to the 2001 Census looked at whether 27 large British cities were attracting more migrants than they were losing. Cities benefiting from long distance migration were found to have features associated with higher quality of life as well as greater local job growth than those cities which are least attractive for long distance movement (Champion et al., 2007).

*Regional differences in migration promotion and the role of regional characteristics*

There are regional differences in factors that promote migration. Regional migration to London, as discussed above, has been found to operate differently to regional migration in the rest of the UK: in and out migration from London and the South East is more responsive to house prices; and net migration to London is strongly affected by relative unemployment, while relative unemployment has little effect on migration to the South East (Cameron et al., 2005). Regional characteristics also play an important role in promoting migration. Research of intra-regional migration amongst the four nations in the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), 1975-2006, has found that neither regional per capita GDP nor unemployment affect regional migration (the reverse has found to be opposite for international migration), but it is the characteristics of the regions involved, e.g. demand and supply of workers and the social and political context, that are most important (Biswas et al., 2008).

In terms of graduate migration other research has highlighted again the disparities between regions. Winner regions in terms of graduate recruitment may be those that are familiar to graduates; although London attracts students through ‘outsider’ pathways because of the large scale of its employment, entertainment and social opportunities, as well as having a high likelihood of having social networks, such as friends, from the ‘home’ region who have moved there. Loser regions tend to attract students with lower grade degrees (Hoare and Corver, 2009).

A further aspect of regional characteristics concerns employment relations and organisational structure and change within a regional and how these vary across regions in a country which may be again partly linked to the buoyancy of the local economy, including the level of unemployment).

**4. The impact of intra-regional and inter-regional migration**

*Segregation*

Migration reinforces segregation patterns with higher managerial and professional migrants tend to move to areas with higher than average incomes (Champion et al., 2007, Meen et al., 2005). The ‘churn’ of the population can worsen the experiences of local households through the reduction in quality of services although it can also benefit areas through the introduction of new aspirant households (Scanlon et al., 2010).

Research on the impacts of the repopulation of parts of rural Scotland found that the existing population could be threatened through increased competition in the housing market because of the lack of supply of housing. Children of migrant households are also more likely to move out of the area for higher education, employment and to live. However, it also needs to be stressed that in-migration can also bring many opportunities such as job creation (Stockdale et al., 2000).

*Wage returns*

There may be a wage return to migration for men. Using the British Household Panel Survey 1991-2002 Böheim and Taylor (2007) found that the return from migration was greatest for men who were in continuous employment and who migrated for job related reasons. Tied migration can have a negative effect on the job retention of wives especially (Taylor, 2007) and it has been found that migrant wives may experience a temporary decrease in employment by 8.5 per cent following migration (Rabe, 2011). More generally increasing income per capita disparities can be the results of skill-selective migration (Fratesi and Riggi, 2007).

*Developing regions and Innovation*

The innovativeness of a region may attract recent university graduates, and at the same time the migration of these graduates into regions in England and Wales, promotes innovation according to research by Faggian and McCann (2009).

However, it is unclear if attracting people of the ‘creative classes (as discussed in Florida, 2002) will be as beneficial to older industrial regions as it is to high technology or more prosperous service industry centred regions (Houston et al., 2008). So while Florida’s work would suggest that we need to gather detailed demographic and labour market  data on ‘class’ and creativity, this is currently rarely gathered in a comprehensive manner in the EU.

**5. Data and information sources**

There is no registration of residence or movements within the UK and, as is demonstrated in the literature cited in this chapter, data collected for other purposes has to be used in order to indentify patterns and trends (UK Statistics Authority, 2009).

Champion and Coombes (2007) used the 2001 Census of Population to study human capital movements affecting Britain’s larger cities. The UK Census is carried out every ten years and is one of the most comprehensive sources of information about all people and households living in the UK. However, its usefulness in the study of migration has been questioned. Differences between Censuses can make it had to make comparisons over time (Champion and Coombes, 2007). Specifically when using the 2001 Census Champion and Coombes (2007) found that it was difficult to monitor the movements of recent graduates as those who graduated the year before the Census could not be identified. So if they took up a job away from their university city they were counted as a professional person gain to their new city but also as a professional person loss to their University city (even if they were not working as such while they were studying) (Champion and Coombes, 2007). Champion et al., (2007: xi) argue that there is a *“strong case for the continuous monitoring of migration by labour market position and skill level, rather than relying on the 10-yearly snapshot from the census*”.

The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) has been used in studies, amongst others, of: labour market dynamics, housing tenure and residential mobility (Böheim and Taylor, 2003); duration models of interregional migration (Andrews et al., 2011); and in combination with the Labour Force Survey in a study of the role of labour market factors in geographical mobility (Dixon, 2003). The BHPS is an annual survey (carried out since 1991) of all adult members of a representative sample of over 5,000 households. This panel data is useful in looking at changes over time and follows individuals if, and when, they leave a household (Taylor et al., 2010). The BHPS asks about the reasons for moving with the Wave 18 questionnaire including the questions:

* *Did you move for reasons that were wholly or partly to do with your own job, or employment opportunities?* and
* *Which if any of the reasons listed on this card were reasons for you moving?*[[1]](#footnote-1)

Panel data, such as the BHPS, is useful as it provides information about a household before and after a move, although there may be some attrition amongst migrating households (Böheim and Taylor, 2003). However, it is limited as it cannot match the coverage afforded by the Census for example.

Health records have been used to measure movement at a regional, and across UK, level. For example, the General Register Office for Scotland uses National Health Service Central Register and the Community Health Index (as well as the International Passenger Survey for information of international migration) (General Register Office for Scotland, 2010). The National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR) calculates moves between NHS Board areas within the UK; and the Community Health Index estimates migration at Council area and below. The NHSCR is seen as the most reliable source and the Community Health Index is controlled to ensure it is consistent with the NHSCR data (General Register Office for Scotland, 2010). The NHSCR has also been used in academic studies with information for 1975-2003 being used to model regional migration for England and Wales (Cameron et al., 2005). The Office for National Statistics (2010) highlights that there are however, shortcomings in the NHSCR, primarily as it is reliant on internal migrants registering with a General Practitioner when they move to a new area: patterns of registration vary by age and gender, and students may either be registered at their home or term time address so their movements may not necessarily be identified. The NHSCR does not have details on the actual change of address and only records moves between Health Authorities. Additionally, Jackman and Savouri (1992) use the NHSCR data source but highlight the difficulty in identifying specific movements (in their case labour force movements) because the NHSCR also includes student flows etc.

Another limitation of potential data sources is the scale at which they measure migration (which links back to our discussion of what is a region): movements at a very local level may not be captured. A study to help the Department for Communities and Local Government and the five London 2012 host boroughs understand population ‘churn’ identified that borough boundaries are only administrative so there may be rapid movement in some parts of a borough, whereas others may be relatively stable. The study recommended the need for more detailed super output area data analysis (Scanlon et al., 2010).

There is potential for the greater use of nongovernmental sources e.g. telephone directories, utilities companies, voting registers, banks and television licensing, to offer an alternative measure of mobility, but as Champion et al. (1998) caution these could be biased to more affluent groups and those who do not migrate. Additionally in relation to voting registers, these registers are not always up to date as details are not updated immediately when someone moves and individuals may be registered in more than one place e.g. students registered at both their home and term time addresses (Office for National Statistics, 2010).

**6. Conclusions**

This chapter has indicated that there is a need for a much fuller range of types of regional data and data sources when analysing intra-regional and inter-regional geographical mobility within a country. A wide variety of data sources have been used (and the sources outlined in this chapter are not exhaustive), but major labour market information gaps still exist. Different groups have different factors influencing their migration and standard data sources often do not cover all the relevant factors or do so only with long time gaps (such as in the Census). There is also a need for a consistent definition of regions and a clearer idea of what information is required. Finally, the impact of inter- and intra-regional migration on regional development requires more research, especially in how different groups and different local circumstances affect these impacts.

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1. British Household Panel Survey Wave 18 Questionnaire and Show cards: <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/bhps/documentation/pdf_versions/questionnaires/bhpsw18q.pdf> [Accessed 06.07.2011] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)