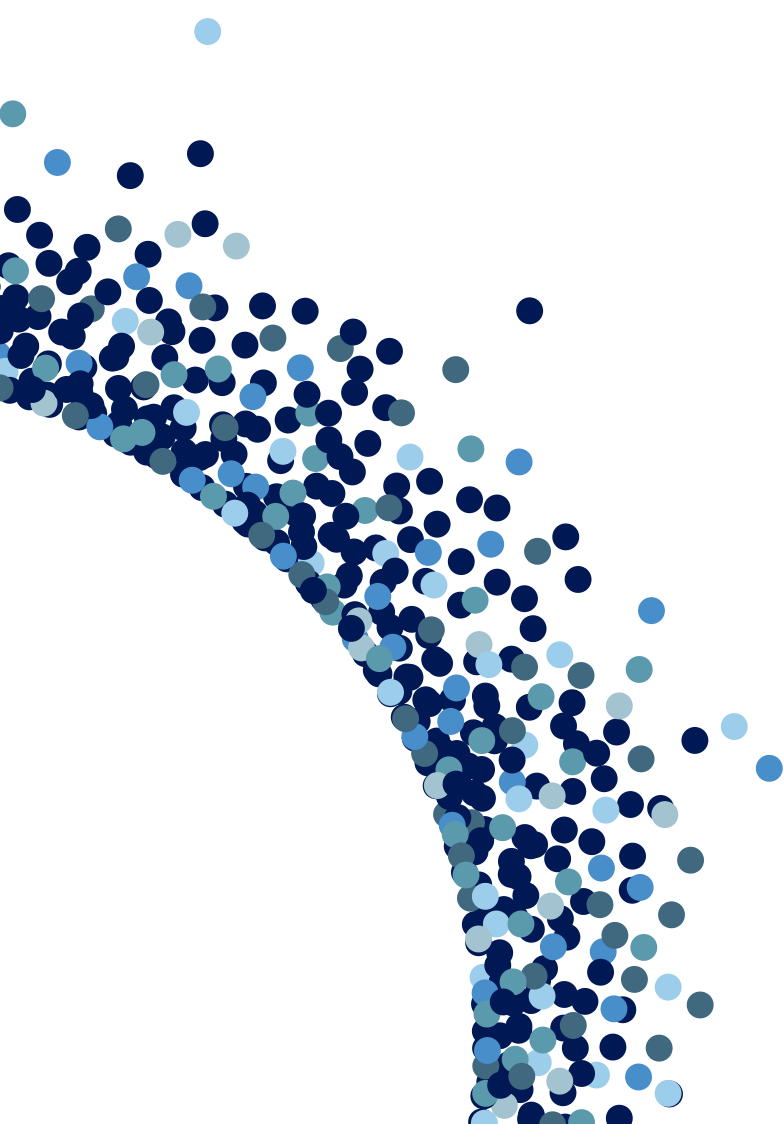




BRIEFING

Young Migrants in the UK Labour Market



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This briefing focuses on foreign-born young adults age 16 to 24 using information from the Census and the Labour Force Survey. The briefing looks at the education and employment of this group and examines how their activities vary with factors such as place of birth and length of residence in the UK. It is part of a series of briefings the Migration Observatory is producing looking at migrant youth in the UK.

Key Points

The length of time that young migrants age 16-24 have lived in the UK varies depending on their place of birth. At the time of the most recent Census in 2011, at least two thirds of young people born in China, India and EU accession countries had arrived within the last 4 years, compared to less than one quarter of those born in South Africa or Jamaica.

By 2014, just over half of young adults who were born abroad had arrived before the age of 15 and thus were likely to have completed some or most of their education in the UK school system.

Compared to young people born in the UK, those born outside the UK are more likely to have degree-level qualifications, particularly if they arrived recently. Recent arrivals are also more likely to have foreign qualifications.

Foreign-born young adults are more likely to be studying and less likely to be working or not in employment, education or training (NEET), compared to the UK born. There are large variations by place of birth, with those from East, Central and South-East Asia most likely to be studying, those from accession countries most likely to be working, and those from South Asia most likely to be NEET.

The share of young adults in the UK who are working fell from 2004 to 2014, among both UK and non-UK born. However, NEET rates among the non-UK born also fell during this period, because of a growing share who were in education or training.

Young foreign-born workers in the UK were on average more likely than their UK-born counterparts to be working in low-skilled occupations in 2014 (22% young UK-born, 34% of young non-UK born).

Understanding the evidence

This briefing looks at foreign-born 16 to 24 year olds and their participation in education or employment by drawing on data from the 2011 Census of England and Wales and the UK Labour Force Survey (LFS). This follows the Office of National Statistics approach to categorising young people in the labour market. We use the term 'young adults' to refer to people in this age group.

Migrants are defined as those who are born outside the UK. Not all foreign-born people are also foreign nationals; some foreign nationals may have lived in the UK for decades while others arrived recently. Not all of the non UK born are subject to immigration control, such as EEA nationals and people born abroad to UK citizen parents.

The analysis in this briefing uses two data sources, the Census for England and Wales for 2011, and the UK Labour Force Survey (see evidence gaps and limitations section of the briefing for a more detailed discussion of the challenges associated with these sources).

The Census is the most complete source of information about the population. It is particularly useful for obtaining information for small geographical areas and demographic groups. The census is based on a count of people and households, with efforts to include everyone, and supplemented by a survey to detect and estimate those who are initially missed. In England and Wales the latest census took place on the 27th of March 2011 and was conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Statistics based on the census refer to usual residents of England and Wales. A usual resident is defined as anyone in the UK on census day who had stayed or intended to stay in the UK for 12 months or more (or were outside the UK but had a permanent UK address and intended to stay outside the UK for less than 12 months). See the Migration Observatory video interview of Peter Stokes, 2011 Census Statistical Design Manager, for further discussion.

Some of the information in this briefing is based on a 5% subsample of the 2011 census micro-data, which enables more detailed analysis of certain variables. It includes over 2 million observations selected to be representative of census totals.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is also conducted by the ONS. It is a survey of private households and provides data on foreign born people living in the UK. The LFS is a sample survey and its estimates have margins of error. For several reasons related to the way the information is collected, the LFS undercounts the UK's foreign born population. However, it can be useful as a complement to census data since it allows us to show trends over time and offers more flexibility on the variables that can be analysed. For this briefing LFS data refer to residents of the United Kingdom. Caution should therefore be taken when comparing the statistics produced using the LFS with the Census figures.

We identify the different economic activities of young people in the UK and classify those who are in paid work, those who are in any education, training, or apprenticeship, and finally those who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). In agreement with the ONS method, NEET are those who are not in work or in education/training, provided that they are not waiting to start a course, or have not attended any other form of training or education in the previous 4 weeks. For more information see the ONS webpage for NEET, or the estimation guidelines "UK Estimate of Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training" ONS 2013.

In this briefing, both Census and LFS data are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

The length of time that young migrants aged 16–24 have lived in the UK varies depending on their place of birth. At the time of the most recent Census in 2011, at least two thirds of young people born in China, India and EU accession countries had arrived within the last 4 years, compared to less than one quarter of those born in South Africa or Jamaica.

Of the 897,000 non-UK born people aged 16–24 who were resident in England and Wales at the time of the 2011 Census, the majority (67%) were born outside the EU, 18% were born in EU accession countries (those joining the EU between 2001 and 2011) and 15% were born in EU-14 countries (those who were members before 2001).

The amount of time young migrants had lived in the UK varied considerably depending on their country of origin. Length of residence is a commonly used variable when thinking about migrants’ integration, because outcomes tend to improve over time after arrival (OECD, 2015). A detailed analysis of socio-economic outcomes by length of residence for the foreign-born population as a whole is available from the Office for National Statistics (2014b).

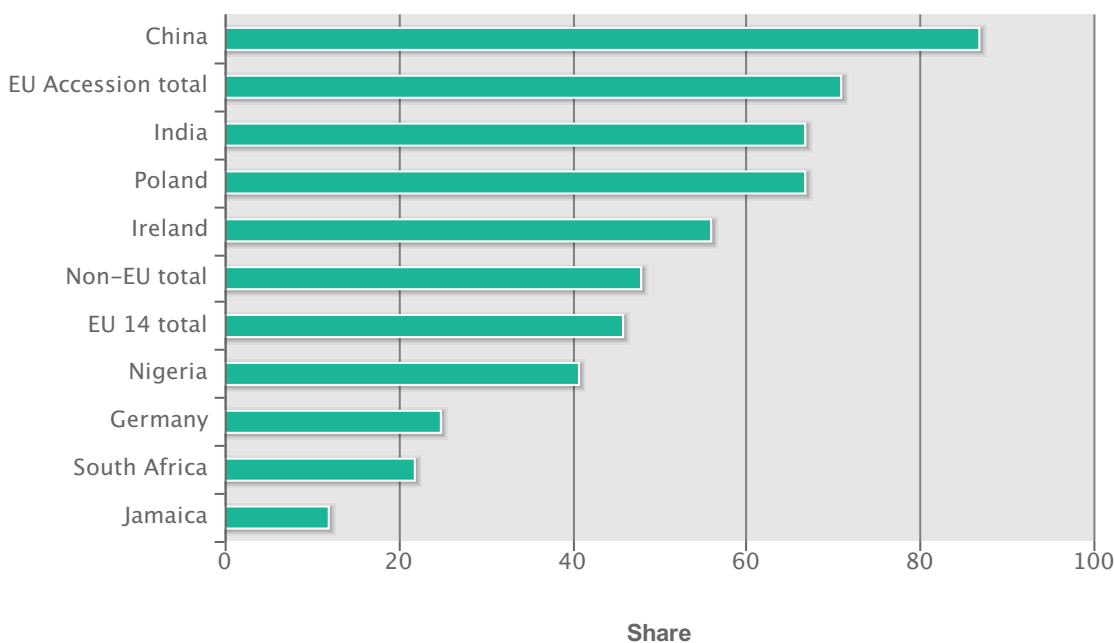
At the time of the 2011 Census, about half (52%) of foreign-born 16–24 year olds in England and Wales had arrived within the past 4 years—that is, in 2007 or later. Just over a quarter (26%) had been in the UK between 5 and 10 years, and 23% had been in the UK for 11 years or more. Young people born in EU accession countries were more likely to have arrived within the past four years, reflecting the fact that significant levels of migration from this region are a relatively recent phenomenon. In this group, 71% had arrived in 2007 or later compared to just under half of young adults born in EU-14 countries (46%) or non-EU countries (48%).

The highest share of recently arrived young adults was found among those from China, many of whom come as international students. (International students are included in the Census just like other groups of foreign-born people, and it is not possible to distinguish between Census respondents based on their visa status.) India also had a high share (67%) of people arriving within the previous 4 years. By contrast, young adults from other countries, such as Jamaica and South Africa, had typically been in the country for longer, with fewer than one quarter arriving in 2007 or later at the time of the 2011 Census (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Share of non-UK born age 16-24 arrived 2007-11, by region of birth

Chart provided by www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk



Source : 2011 England & Wales Census, usual residents 16–24 yrs old. Years of arrival included: 2008–2011

By 2014, just over half of young adults who were born abroad had arrived before the age of 15 and thus were likely to have completed some or most of their education in the UK school system.

Another key factor to take into account when examining young adults' education and labour market outcomes is how old they were when they arrived in the UK. People who arrived at a younger age are likely to have completed more of their education or training in the UK and may have found it easier to learn English.

In 2014, about a quarter of young adults living in the UK had arrived before they were 8 years old, according to the Labour Force Survey, which enables more flexible analysis of age at arrival than the Census (Figure 2). A further 27% arrived between the ages of 8 and 14, and 29% between the ages of 15 and 19. The remaining 20% had arrived when they were 20 to 24 years old.

Between 2004 and 2014, the share of 16–24 year old migrants who had arrived before the age of 15 gradually increased, from a low of 38% in 2008 to just over half in 2014. This suggests a growing share of young migrants who are likely to have completed some of their education in the UK school system. (Indeed, some of this group will still be in full-time education.)

Figure 2

Share of non-UK born 16-24 y/o by age at arrival, 2004-14

Chart provided by www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of UK Labour Force Survey, weighted average of 4 quarters.

Compared to the UK born, young people born outside the UK are more likely to have degree-level qualifications, particularly if they arrived recently. Recent arrivals are also more likely to have foreign qualifications.

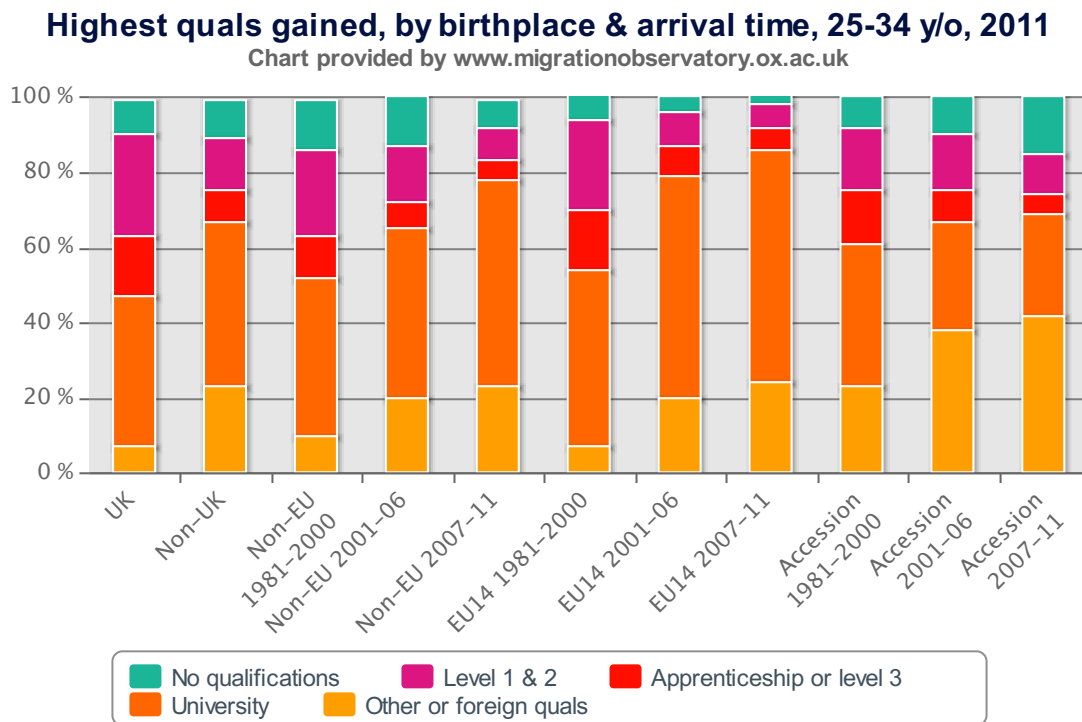
To examine the level of qualifications that young people attain and whether they receive them in the UK or overseas, it is helpful to focus on people who are old enough to have completed full-time education.

Just under one quarter (23%) of foreign-born 25–34 year olds in England and Wales in 2011 reported that their highest qualification was either foreign or did not fit into the standard UK classifications available in the Census (the notes below Figure 3 describe these qualifications). The more recently people arrived, the more likely they are to

report foreign or other qualifications (Figure 3). People who had been in the UK for longer, and thus were more likely to have arrived at an earlier age, were more likely to report a UK-equivalent qualification. People from accession countries were most likely to have foreign or other qualifications.

Non-UK born 25-34 year olds were also more likely to have a university degree compared to people in the same age group who were born in the UK. Levels of education varied by length of residence in the UK. For the EU-14 and non-EU born (but not for those born in accession countries), people who arrived after 2000 were more likely to hold a university degree compared to those in the same age group who arrived earlier. This may reflect the fact that people who arrived after compulsory schooling age are more likely to have come as international students or – in the case of non-EU born – as skilled workers sponsored by employers. These groups tend to have high levels of education (Cooper et al, 2015).

Figure 3



Source: 2011 Census for England and Wales, usual residents aged 25-34.

Notes:

Level 1 and 2 qualifications include: Level 1 (1-4 O Levels/CSE/GCSEs (any grades), Entry Level, Foundation Diploma, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic/Essential Skills) and Level 2 (5+ O Level (Passes)/CSEs (Grade 1)/ GCSEs (Grades A*-C), School Certificate, 1 A Level/ 2-3 AS Levels/VCEs, Intermediate/Higher Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate, Intermediate Diploma, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City and Guilds Craft, BTEC First/General Diploma, RSA Diploma)

Apprenticeship or level 3 includes Apprenticeship and Level 3 (2+ A Levels/VCEs, 4+ AS Levels, Higher School Certificate, Progression/Advanced Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Advance Diploma, NVQ Level 3; Advanced GNVQ, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National, RSA Advanced Diploma)

University degree or higher corresponds to Level 4 (Degree (BA, BSc), Higher Degree (MA, PhD, PGCE), NVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher level, Foundation degree (NI), Professional Qualifications (Teaching, Nursing, Accountancy)

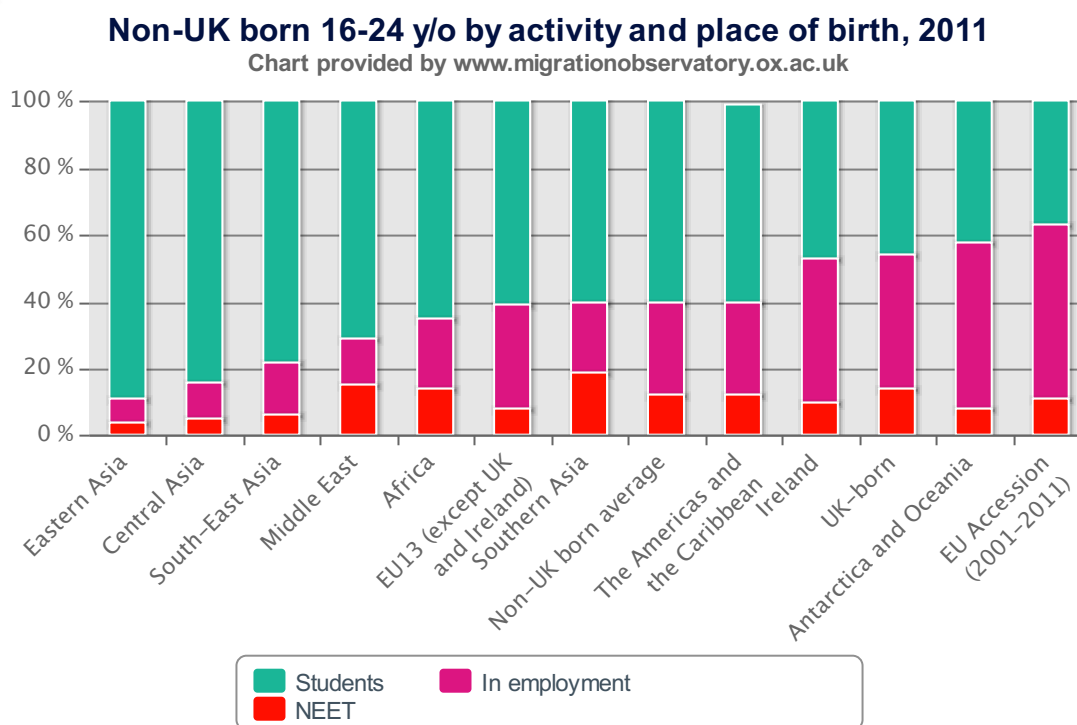
Other or foreign qualifications includes: Vocational/Work-related Qualifications, Foreign Qualifications/Qualifications gained outside the UK, Not stated/ level unknown

Foreign-born young adults are more likely to be studying and less likely to be working or not in employment, education or training (NEET), compared to the UK born. There are large variations by place of birth.

The activities of young people can be grouped into three main categories: in study, in work, or not in employment, education or training (NEET), although some people work and study at the same time. Some people who are NEET are unemployed and looking for work. Others are not looking for work—for example because they are looking after home or family, because they are long-term sick or disabled, or for other reasons.

Compared to the UK born, foreign-born 16–24 year olds in England and Wales are more likely to be studying (Figure 4). The activities of young adults varied by country of origin, however. The vast majority (89%) of young adults born in East Asia were studying, followed by those from Central and South-East Asia. Many of these people will have come to the UK specifically in order to study, whether temporarily or with a view to remaining here after graduation to work. People born in EU-14 countries were also more likely to be studying than the UK born (Figure 4). By contrast, two main origin groups were more likely than the UK born to be working: the accession-born (52%) and those born in Antarctica and Oceania (50%).

Figure 4



Source: 2011 Census for England and Wales.

Note: In employment includes both employees and self-employed in full-time and part-time work; Students includes those in full-time and part-time education who may be in employment as well; NEET includes those who are not in employment or education (unemployed or inactive excluding students)

For most country of origin groups, NEET rates were lower than for the UK born. People born in East, Central and South-East Asia had particularly low shares of young adults not in education, employment or training (at 4%, 5% and 6% respectively). The highest share of young adults not working or studying was from Southern Asia, followed by the Middle East. People who were NEET and were born in the Middle East and Asia were particularly likely to report looking after home or family (36% of NEETs) compared to the UK born (18% of NEETs).

Among the UK born, activities were relatively similar for young men and women, although men were more likely to be working and women more likely to be studying. Among most groups of foreign-born young adults, gender disparities in activity were also small. Young adults born in Southern Asia were more likely to be in education than

young women (69% men, 48% women), for example, but differences in their employment rates were small (22% men, 19% women). Gender differences in NEET rates (which includes people looking after home or family) were more pronounced in some groups, notably 16–24 year olds born in Southern Asia (9% men, 33% women), North Africa (14% men, 24% women), and the Middle East (12% men, 20% women).

There were some variations in economic activity by year of arrival in the UK, although these were less significant than the variations by country of origin. Foreign-born 16–24 year olds who had arrived within the previous 4 years were more likely to be students and less likely to be unemployed (Table 1).

Table 1 – Non-UK born (16–24) by year of arrival and economic activity, 2011

Economic activities of non UK-born 16-24 y/o by year of arrival to the UK			
	1981-2000	2001-2006	2007-2011
% in studies	57%	59%	65%
% in FT employment	21%	18%	19%
% in PT employment	9%	9%	6%
% unemployed	7%	6%	3%
% economically inactive	6%	8%	7%

Source: 2011 Census for England and Wales, based on the 5% micro-data subsample

Note:

In studies includes all students, both full-time and part-time (it is not possible to distinguish part-time from full-time students)

In studies and employment includes students who are also in full-time or part-time employment

In FT employment excludes FT students and includes those who are full-time employees or full-time self-employed with and without employees

In PT employment excludes FT students and includes those who are part-time employees or part-time self-employed with and without employees

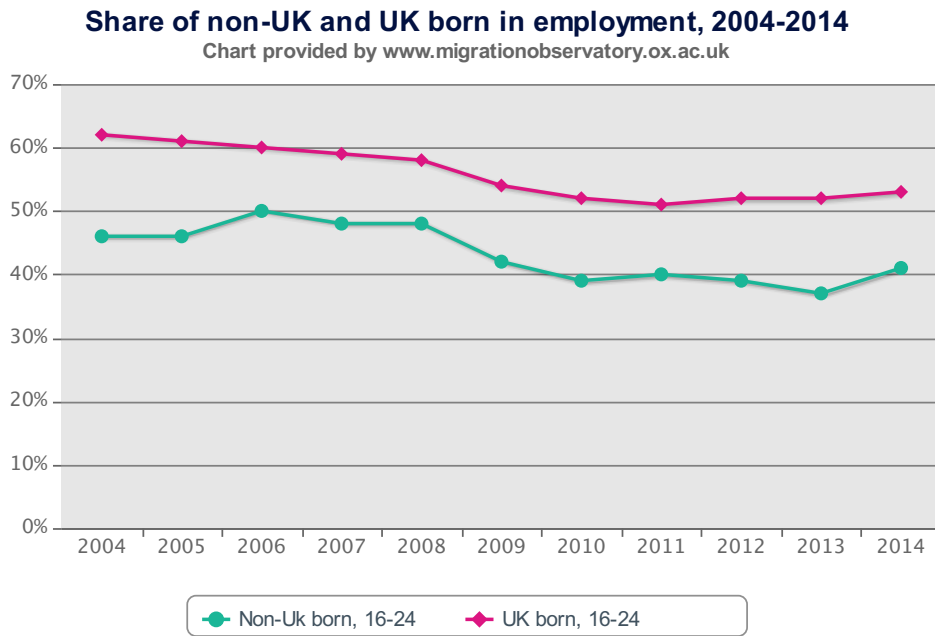
Unemployed excludes FT-students and includes those who are unemployed, and seeking work and ready to start in 2 weeks, or unemployed and waiting to start a job already obtained

Inactive excludes FT students and includes those who are retired, or looking after home/family, or permanently sick or disabled, or other activities

The share of young adults in work in the UK fell from 2004 to 2014, among both UK and non-UK born. However, NEET rates among the non-UK born also fell during this period, because of a growing share who were in education or training.

The share of 16–24 year olds in employment fell in the past decade, particularly during the 2008–2010 period of economic crisis (Figure 5). This was the case for both UK and non-UK born groups, although non-UK born started with lower levels of employment, as noted earlier.

Figure 5



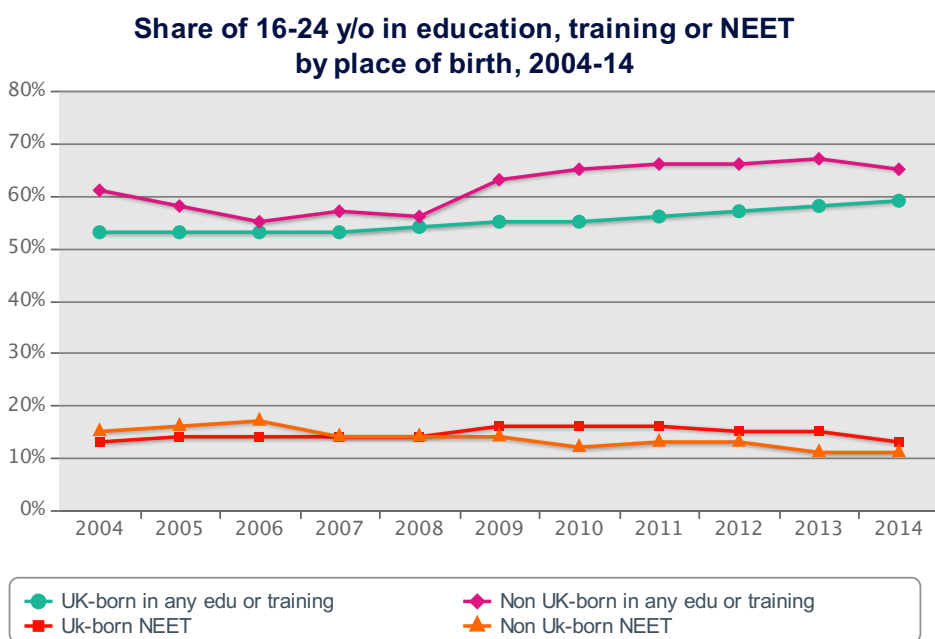
Source : ONS, Labour Force Survey, weighted average of four quarters.

Note: Employment includes both part-time and full-time employees and self-employed

Both UK and non-UK born groups also saw a growing share in education or training during this period (Figure 6). The growth was particularly significant for the non-UK born, among whom the share who were studying increased from 56% to 67% from 2008 to 2013. As a result, NEET rates for non-UK born 16–24 year olds fell over the course of the decade, despite the economic crisis (Figure 6).

For people 16–24 working while being enrolled in education is a common occurrence. The study rates in Figure 6 do not exclude those who are also working, while the employment rates in Figure 5 do not exclude those who are also in training/education.

Figure 6



Source : ONS, Labour Force Survey, weighted average of four quarters.

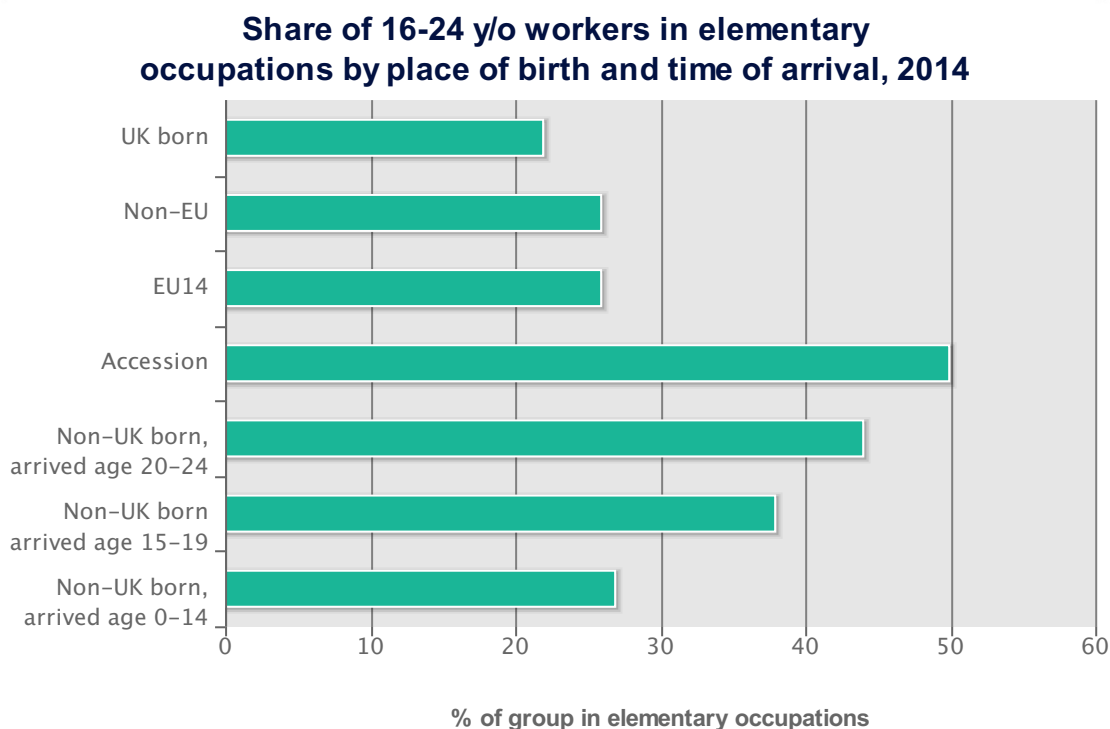
Note: In any education or training classifies a person who is currently in education, full-time or part-time, including apprenticeships and other training activities, or those in employment at the same time.

Young foreign-born workers in the UK were on average more likely than their UK-born counterparts to be working in low-skilled occupations in 2014 (22% young UK-born, 34% of young non-UK born).

Young foreign-born workers in the UK in 2014 were on average more likely than their UK-born counterparts to be working in elementary occupations, the lowest skilled occupational group used in official classifications and the group of jobs that tends to command the lowest wages. These occupations employed 22% of UK-born young adults, compared to 34% of their non-UK born counterparts (Figure 7). Among the non-UK born, the share of those in elementary occupations was larger among the Accession-born (50%) and those who arrived at later ages (44% of those who arrived age 20–24, and who will also have fewer years of residence compared to those who arrived when they were younger).

Non-UK born workers who arrived to the UK before the age of 15 and those born in non-EU or EU-14 countries had the lowest rates working in elementary occupations in 2014, the rates most similar to the UK-born in the same age group.

Figure 7



Source : ONS, Labour Force Survey, weighted average of four quarter.

Note: The share is estimated for those currently in paid employment.

The Census allows a more detailed breakdown of the occupations of foreign-born young adults for England and Wales. Table 2 shows the top 15 occupations among people 16–24 years old in 2011, and suggests that occupations vary somewhat by region of origin.

Non-EU born young adults had a similar distribution across occupations as the UK born, with just over two fifths in sales occupations and about one in ten in personal service occupations. Sales and personal service jobs were also the largest occupations for young EU-14 workers. For the accession born, the largest occupation was labourers in Mining, Construction, and Manufacturing, which employed 20% of young adults in this group.

Table 2 - Top 15 occupations in number of young non-UK born (16-24), 2011

Top 15 occupations	Share in occupation			
	UK-born	EU14	Accession	Non-EU
Sales workers (ISCO 5)	22%	16%	8%	21%
Personal service workers (ISCO 5)	11%	15%	11%	10%
Labourers in mining, construc & manufac (ISCO 9)	5%	3%	20%	5%
Personal care workers (ISCO 5)	7%	7%	5%	7%
Customer services clerks (ISCO 4)	6%	6%	3%	7%
Food preparation assistants (ISCO 9)	4%	5%	5%	5%
Cleaners & helpers (ISCO 9)	2%	3%	8%	4%
Business & admin professionals (ISCO 2)	3%	5%	2%	5%
Business & admin assoc professionals (ISCO 3)	3%	4%	2%	3%
Other clerical support workers (ISCO 4)	4%	3%	2%	3%
Legal, social, cultural & related assoc (ISCO 3)	3%	4%	2%	3%
Stationary plant & machine operators (ISCO 8)	1%	1%	7%	1%
Hosp, retail & other service manage (ISCO 1)	2%	3%	2%	3%
Teaching professionals (ISCO 2)	2%	4%	1%	2%
Science & engineering professionals (ISCO 3)	1%	3%	1%	2%
Top 15 total	77%	80%	79%	81%

Source: 2011 Census for England and Wales, based on the 5% micro-data subsample.

Note: Current or previous occupation. The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) classifications are listed in parentheses; this scale classifies occupations roughly based on skill level from ISCO-1 highly skilled senior officials to ISCO-9 for unskilled, elementary, and manual occupations.

Evidence gaps and limitations

The Census has two main limitations. Firstly, it is only conducted every 10 years. Secondly, it includes a limited number of questions, limiting the breadth of information available. While the census aims to include the entire population, it does have a certain margin of error. For England and Wales as a whole, the relative confidence interval at the 95% confidence level published by the ONS was 0.15% (83,000 more or less people than the estimate). Specific confidence intervals are not currently available for census data relating to country of birth.

The LFS is a survey and while it provides data on migrants in the UK, certain groups are excluded. The LFS does not contain information on short-term migrants because the survey excludes individuals who have been resident in their households for less than 6 months (Dustmann et al. 2010). Also, the LFS excludes those who do not live in households, such as those in hotels, caravan parks, and other communal establishments; it also excludes halls of residence, thus missing many overseas students. Finally, the LFS may not capture migrants without the legal right to live and/or work in the UK. For further discussion see the data sources and limitations section of the Migration Observatory website.

Although the LFS collects information on the entire household, persons below the age of 16 are not interviewed personally. The assigned household adult provides some general information for household members below 16 years old. As a result, some information is missing for respondents who turned 16 years old very recently and who were not asked all age relevant questions at the time of the interview. Among the questions likely to have been missed in that transition include the ones used to identify NEETs (Chandler and Barrett 2013).

For the calculation of NEETS this briefing matches the ONS definition as far as possible, with the exception of the treatment of missing values. Unlike the ONS method, the missing values have not been harmonised in this briefing. In simple terms, those with no information on the variables used to construct the measure have been excluded. The data presented here may therefore slightly underestimate or overestimate activities for 16 year olds.

Thanks to Angus Holford, Tina Rampino and Bridget Anderson for comments on an earlier version of this briefing.

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Related material

- Migration Observatory briefing – Demographics of Young Migrants in the UK - www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/demographics-young-migrants-uk
- Migration Observatory briefing - Migrants in the UK Labour Market: An Overview - www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/migrants-uk-labour-market-overview
- Migration Observatory Briefing - Characteristics and Outcomes of Migrants in the UK Labour Market - www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/characteristics-and-outcomes-migrants-uk-labour-market
- Migration Observatory briefing – Migrants in the UK: An Overview - www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/migrants-uk-overview



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.



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