

The impact of migration on housing requirements

Some parts of England are under considerable housing pressure whilst others are struggling to sustain themselves. How important to these pressures is the impact of population migration – to and from other countries, between the UK regions, and between urban and rural areas? Are the strains in the South of England, for example, the result of people migrating from the old Northern cities? A report edited by Richard Bate, Richard Best and Alan Holmans brings together papers from distinguished contributors and looks at new data from the Office for National Statistics.

f At the national level, ONS 1998-based projections show an increase in the population of England, in comparison with 1996-based projections, of nearly 1m people by 2016 and over 1.2m by 2021. Overall the changed projections mean a requirement to house 4.3m extra households over the twenty-five years to 2021.

f The higher numbers result principally from the ONS changing its assumptions about inward migration from other countries (and also from assumptions of slightly lower male death rates).

f In regional terms, the greatest pressures will continue to be felt in Southern England, with the population of the South East region alone expected to increase by 50,000 people a year. These pressures come principally from i) migration out of London, ii) internal, natural growth (the excess of births over deaths) and iii) some inward international migration.

f At the city level, in the 1990s there was net migration of about 40,000 people annually out of the Northern and Midlands conurbations to the rest of the country. In the worst affected urban areas, the result is local abandonment of existing homes. But this movement has been principally to other parts of the same regions (and adjacent ones) rather than to the South.

f London is a special case. Although 48,000 more people were leaving London in the 1990s than moving in from the UK each year, it has gained a similar number from net inward international migration. It also has a disproportionately high rate of natural population growth – 39,000 a year. This raises questions over whether it will be able to meet the needs of all its citizens within its own boundaries.

Background

Recent JRF reports by Anne Power, Ivan Turok, Alan Holmans and others have looked at the movement of population out of cities. Lord Rogers' Urban Task Force and the Social Exclusion Unit's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal have looked at solutions to the problems posed. But while the decline – and even the incipient abandonment – of some areas presents a challenge to social cohesion and urban renewal, elsewhere in the UK the needs and demands for new house-building raise environmental, social and economic questions.

There is considerable local interest in the effects of migration, as the appropriate agencies try to match jobs to labour supply, homes to households, and housing finance to housing need. With increasing power of decision being concentrated in Regional Planning Bodies on land use issues and in the Regional Development Agencies on economic issues, there is some risk that migration between regions will not receive the attention it deserves from policy-makers. And, despite an increasing body of research examining migration issues, understanding the causes and effects is by no means complete.

The national context

The 1998-based population projection for England from the ONS shows 999,000 more *people* in 2016

than the 1996-based projection. The reasons for the higher projection are higher assumed rates of net migration from outside the UK (95,000 a year in place of 65,000) and lower male death rates (which increase the excess of births over deaths).

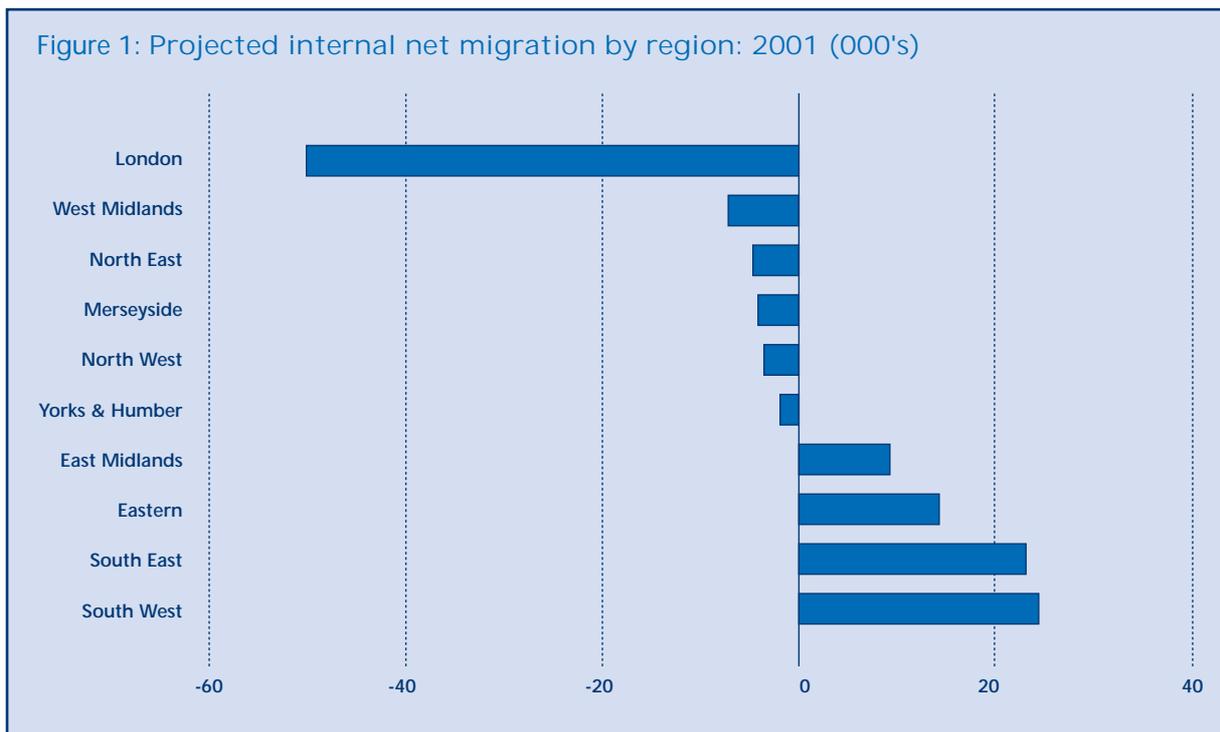
When these population numbers are converted into numbers of extra *households*, the new figures indicate a growth of 4.3m households between 1996 and 2021 compared with the last official figure (from the 1996-based projections) of 3.8m extra households.

The pressure on housing from growth of population and households comes from the natural change from more births than deaths, and from international migration into this country, which are more important factors than migration between regions *within* the UK.

The North to South drift

Around 5m people move home each year. Most move within their local area, but around 15 per cent of moves are between different regions. Net migration from the North and West Midlands has typically amounted to a net flow of around 30,000 people a year during the 1990s. But the projections are for a rather lower loss in the years ahead (see Figure 1).

The volume of movement is greater amongst the



Southern Regions than from North to South: in particular there is a net outflow from London and net gains in the surrounding regions.

The drift away from urban areas

The movement out of the towns and cities, to the suburbs and rural areas, is of much greater significance than North-South movement. 90,000 people a year have been leaving London and the six conurbations – the metropolitan counties – alone.

But this movement of people between urban and rural areas is not simply a one-way 'exodus'. It is the balance between typically nearly half a million people moving out of the cities and nearly 400,000 moving in.

In regions which are losing population, migration by young adults is of overwhelming importance. There is a clear life-cycle feature, with net movement by people aged 15-19 out of almost all regions and into London. However, London is shedding people in all other age groups and this net outward movement is on a much bigger scale than any other kind of migration in the UK.

If places are arranged in an urban hierarchy, from 'inner city' to 'remote rural', the evidence shows that places can expect to gain population through net immigration from all levels of places that are higher up the urban hierarchy, and experience a loss of population to each of the levels lower down than them.

Amongst those moving out of cities, the main flow is from the suburbs on the urban edge. Out-migrants are replaced by people from more central urban areas moving out to the suburbs.

Those leaving for the countryside tend to be relatively wealthy families and their children. There is also a significant movement of older couples

retiring to the seaside and to other attractive areas.

It needs to be emphasised that those moving out of the conurbations of the North and the West Midlands are unlikely to be moving to the South East, South West and Eastern regions. More than half of the people leaving these metropolitan areas move locally, to other parts of the same region. Many others move within the North and the West Midlands. The main movement southwards is to London. Direct movement from North to South is a relatively insignificant part of the total.

Pressures on the South

So how important is the migration within the UK in adding to the pressures on the Southern regions (South East, South West, Eastern)?

Only 8 per cent of the net increase in the population of the South in 1991-98 came from net migration from the North and Midlands and only 12 per cent in London. That does not mean that policies relating to outward migration from the Northern regions are unimportant: but it shows that retaining population in the North will do little to restrain growth in the South.

The really large components of population change in the three regions of the South of England are: the natural increases (excess of births over deaths); the net migration out of London to the rest of the South; and the net inward migration from outside the UK (see Table 1).

The London phenomenon

London follows the pattern of the other major cities in one major respect: there is a major outward movement of UK population: 48,000 more people have been leaving than moving in from the UK (1991-98) (see Table 2). London might be expected,

Table 1 Population change in the South of England outside London, 1991-98

	<i>Number (thousand)</i>	<i>Annual average</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Natural change (births minus deaths)	+183	+26	25
Internal migration (net) from North and Midlands and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland	+61	+9	8
Internal migration (net) from London	+370	+53	50
International migration (net)	+137	+20	19
Other changes	-16	-2	-2
Total population change	+735	+105	100

therefore, to show the same characteristics as the major Northern cities in terms of low demand and empty property. However, it is the premier destination for net inward international migration and has gained a similar number from other countries as it has lost through internal migration. The new assumptions by the ONS on the level of net inward migration to the UK will disproportionately affect London (and the South).

Those moving in from other countries include extremes of rich and poor, fuelling central London house prices on the one hand and the need for social housing on the other. The London Boroughs are accommodating over 50,000 destitute asylum-seekers.

Moreover, London has a disproportionately large natural increase in its population – 39,000 extra people a year for 1991-98 – adding to pressures on its housing stock.

Table 2 Population change in London 1991-98 (thousand)

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Annual average</i>
Natural change (births minus deaths)	+273	+39
Internal migration (net) from London	-337	-48
International migration (net)	+335	+48
Other changes	+26	+4
Total population change	+297	+42

Conclusions

Housing pressures in the Southern regions of England seem destined to continue. Even if there is the hoped-for "urban renaissance" in the North and Midlands, with more people encouraged to move back or remain within the major cities, there will be large increases in population in the South.

London's population seems likely to grow considerably. It is unlikely, on the basis of present trends, that all of London's population growth can be accommodated within its present built-up area – without increasing over-crowding and multi-occupation.

In other regions, efforts to make urban living more attractive could tackle the problems of low demand and area abandonment, while easing pressures on the greenfield land around cities.

About the study

In the autumn of 1999, the Foundation commissioned a number of related papers and held a seminar in London to debate the consequences of population migration trends. When new household projections were published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in March 2000, the position was updated to create this new report.

How to get further information

The full report, **On the move: The housing consequences of migration** edited by Richard Bate, Richard Best and Alan Holmans, is published for the Foundation by YPS (ISBN 1 902633 69 5, price £13.95).