A survey of the illegally resident population in detention in the UK

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Executive summary

Background

This report responds to rising interest amongst policy makers and the media in the phenomenon of illegal or undocumented migration to the UK in a context of limited research information. It is based on interviews with a sample of 83 migrants detained in one of three immigration detention facilities (Harmondsworth, Tinsley House, Campsfield) between December 2001 and March 2002, and explores these individuals’ motivations for coming to the UK, their routes both to the UK and into illegal residence, and their experiences whilst living in the UK, including their means of support, their involvement in the job market, and their use of public services. The report also considers the extent to which this group could be seen as victims of coercive ‘trafficfickers’, their experience of detention, and the extent to which interviews with immigration detainees represent an appropriate and valuable form of evidence about the wider illegally resident migrant population.

Methodology

A random sample of individuals in detention was obtained, stratified into a number of broad regional groups of origin. After a pilot phase, qualitative open-ended interviews were conducted using a revised interview schedule based around key areas of discussion, and a short checklist of more quantitative questions. An ethical statement was developed which served to guide the interviewer, to explain the nature of the research to the participant prior to the interview, and upon this basis to gain their verbal informed consent to be interviewed, and for it to be taped. A tape or transcript of the interview was offered to each interviewee, after which a transcription or detailed written note of the interview was anonymised and archived.

Respondents were selected from lists of residents at each detention centre. However, it was not easy to distinguish those who had been illegally resident in the UK from asylum-seekers who had been detained during or immediately after the determination of their claim. As a result, although 168 people were interviewed, 85 were excluded either because they fell outside the category ‘illegally resident’ or in 27 cases because the interview was incomplete or recording equipment failed. A further 30-40 declined an interview, for a variety of reasons, including that they were busy, not interested, or emotionally distressed.

Characteristics

The detainees interviewed proved to be a heterogeneous group. For example, there was great variation in reasons for coming to the UK, routes and modes of transport used, ports of entry, whether they had used the services of agents or traffickers, and how they found work or survived in the UK. Common patterns were often observed for respondents from particular countries or regions, but the low numbers interviewed from each country make generalisation problematic. The points below summarise what can be drawn out as general issues across the whole sample, as well as pointing to regional specificities.

Amongst the sample respondents as a whole, the average age was 29 years, and 88 per cent were male. Those from the Balkans and North Africa were younger on average (early twenties), and had mostly travelled to the UK within the last two years. Those from other regions were older (late twenties), although many Africans had come to the UK at a younger age, having been in the UK for an average of five years.

Over half of all respondents had completed secondary school, and 17 of these had a college or university education. Even assuming that all those for whom no information on education or training was available were unskilled manual workers, a clear majority of the sample had some form of skill, ranging from two who were doctors to two who were car mechanics and one craft weaver. Almost half spoke reasonable English, although in a number of cases this had been learned or significantly improved since arrival in the UK.

Although the sample focused on those who had been illegally resident in the UK for at least three months, nearly two thirds of those interviewed had claimed asylum. Those who had not claimed asylum were mainly from the Caribbean and from Central Europe.
**Routes to illegal residence**

Nearly half of those who cited a reason for leaving their home country mentioned a lack of safety, including reports of actual or perceived threats on the part of both state authorities and non-state actors such as business associates, moneylenders and criminals. Most of this group had claimed asylum, although some had not, as they did not believe they would be accepted as ‘genuine refugees’.

The main reason cited by respondents for choosing the UK over other destinations was also its perceived safety, followed by the availability of jobs and the presence of family members or friends. Only four respondents had been brought to the UK by agents without knowing their destination in advance. Although eleven others had placed their travel plans in the hands of an agent, for the majority of these the UK was still their preferred destination for economic or family reasons, or was seen as an acceptable alternative to their preferred destination, the United States. Two thirds of respondents had friends or relatives in the UK prior to leaving their home country. In only four cases was their migration consistent with the concept of ‘people trafficking’.

In all, 60 per cent of respondents had entered the UK illegally. Others became illegally resident by overstaying a tourist, student or work visa. This included 12 out of 13 respondents from Jamaica, all three from Poland, four out of seven from Pakistan and two out of three from Sub-Saharan Africa. All legal entrants had come to the UK directly by air, except those from Poland who entered by coach as tourists.

For those entering illegally, almost all had travelled overland, the majority entering the UK hidden in the back of a lorry. A total of 46 had used the services of an agent. Of these, 15 were accompanied on their journey by the agent. This included most those travelling from China and India. Others had simply purchased false documents, and travelled alone.

Payments to agents ranged from £10-22,000 for Chinese, £4-6,000 for Indian and Pakistani respondents, and £900-1,500 for those from Eastern Europe (although two respondents had paid over £3,000). The cost of false documents ranged from £1-2,000 for Ukrainians to as little as £15 for one Algerian.

Of those who entered illegally, nearly two thirds claimed asylum on or within a few days of their arrival, only subsequently going ‘underground’ either during or after the determination of their claim. Most of those hidden in lorries, and all except one of those travelling with an agent claimed asylum on arrival. In contrast, most of those using false documents only claimed asylum later, if at all. Those who claimed asylum later did so either when they were detained, or when friends, relatives or legal advisers explained the procedure to them. Of 19 illegal entrants who did not claim asylum on arrival, eight did so within the first six months.

**Means of support and role in the economy**

Three quarters of those interviewed had worked illegally whilst in the UK. Of those who had not worked, most relied on family members or friends to support them whilst they were illegally resident. Just three had illegally claimed benefits, three were supported by their own funds, and one had been supported by a place of religious worship. Relatively few reported receiving welfare benefits even when they were entitled, whilst their asylum claim was being processed, and a small number reported that they deliberately did not claim, either because they were being supported by their family, or in one case because someone feared that this might affect whether his asylum claim would be accepted or rejected.

Those who worked found a range of manual labouring jobs in factories, construction, agriculture, shops and restaurants. Thirteen had found skilled manual jobs, mainly in restaurants, whilst two were working as nurses, and five were self-employed as traders. Reports of poor working conditions and long hours were quite common, whilst over half of those for whom information on wage rates was available were working for less than the national minimum wage. Those with documents, whether legal or false, reported higher rates of pay than those working cash-in-hand. However, the small number willing to answer questions on wage rates makes it difficult to generalise, or to discern whether sector of employment or gender made any difference to wage rates.
Living in the UK

Most respondents lived for some time in London, and about 40 per cent had never lived outside the capital. The majority also said that people from their country of origin were their main source of social support and made up the bulk of their friends. Nonetheless, around 40 per cent of respondents did have some contact with UK nationals who were not originally from their country, and in five cases were either living with them or had married them. The likelihood of having British friends increased over time.

Only five out of the 46 respondents who used the services of an agent to get to the UK reported harassment or intimidation on the part of that agent after their arrival, but a further seven had experienced harassment from UK nationals, and eleven from others from their own country since they arrived in the UK. Almost one third of respondents reported harassment by the police or immigration authorities.

Over half of those who had sought legal advice in relation to their stay in the UK reported problems in their interaction with either the Home Office or their legal representative or both. The majority of complaints related to perceived delays, lack of communication or misleading or confusing information being provided by the Home Office. Four respondents had experienced difficulties relating to excessive payments being demanded by their legal representative.

Only a third of respondents had used education services, and less than one in five had used medical services. The majority of the former had attended classes whilst their asylum claim was being processed, whereas nine people had seen a doctor whilst they were undocumented. Although none of the latter reported any problems, six others reported that they had not gone to the doctor when they were ill because they feared they would be arrested.

Detention

For most of those interviewed in this study, this was their first period of detention. However, some had been held previously either at another detention centre, in prison, at the Oakington Reception Centre for asylum-seekers or in a police cell. Although nearly half of all respondents had been detained in a police raid on their place of work, or more usually their home, only around a half of these had been specifically known to the immigration service. The next largest group had been detained after a random police checks, or violations of the Highway Code. Eleven respondents were detained after their arrest for committing a crime.

Future plans

Three-quarters of those who had considered their future plans reported that they would again leave their country of origin – in most cases to return to the UK. For many this was because they feared for their safety in their home country, or because they now felt they had no ‘home’ to return to.
1. Introduction

There has been rising interest in European states in recent years in the phenomenon of illegal or undocumented migration, reflecting an apparent growth in international mobility that falls outside the law. The capacity of individuals to evade increasingly stringent immigration controls has attracted the interest of academics and the popular press, and the concern of governments. Although there is a problem in trying to ‘quantify the uncountable’, it is nonetheless estimated that there were five million undocumented migrants in the United States alone in 1996, as many as three million in Europe, and 2.7 million to countries in East Asia (such as Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, etc.). In particular, concerns are expressed that within a growing international ‘trade’ in people, up to 700,000 might be ‘women and children [who] are trafficked across borders’.

The significance of illegal migration and residence

Beyond the media focus on the supposed ‘threat’ posed by illegal immigration, there are still a number of reasons why those people who have entered, or are illegally resident in the UK, should be of interest and concern for more detailed research. First, although there is increasing recognition by the UK government of the need to recruit skilled workers, there is still some concern that immigration may place downward pressure on wages. This fear is particularly felt amongst the lower paid and less skilled, where if labour supply increases to exceed demand, competition should cause wages to decline. Trade Unions in particular have often been attracted to the idea that irregular migrants – who are generally seen as unskilled labour – drive down host country wages, although some have more recently seen irregular migrants as a fertile recruiting ground for new Union members. For example, at the last TUC congress, a delegate from the US Trade Union organisation AFL-CIO noted that his unions should not ‘ignore the rights and plight of America’s undocumented workers and leave them as prey for low-wage, no benefit employers’.

A further strand of literature examines the illegal migrant as a victim exposed to danger and exploitation. An IND memorandum in 2000 reported that gangs were at that time charging around £1500 to smuggle a migrant from Romania, £6,000-£9,000 from India, and up to £16,000 for Chinese migrants. It was also reported that many arrive in debt and are forced into criminal activities (e.g. prostitution or foot soldiers for smuggling gangs) to pay off such debts or suffer abuse. An additional question is whether the migrants survive the journey at all, with estimates of the number of people dying each year trying to enter Europe or the US running to several thousand.

One major difficulty in responding to such concerns is the lack of detailed and reliable information on the conditions of illegal migration, and the activities carried out by those entering or illegally resident in the UK. Just as popular accounts stress the burden of illegal immigration on state budgets and society more generally, others insist that most migrants are neither seeking asylum nor state benefits. Yet there is a relative lack of studies based on interviews with those who have moved to, or have been illegally resident in the UK, with much public comment based instead on speculation or ignorance. Hence, for example, the impact of migrants working illegally is far from clear, given the lack of reliable empirical evidence on types of employment and earnings. The extent to which there is competition with local workers in specific sectors of the labour market in which migrants work is also largely unknown.

There is also confusion about the relationship between supply and demand for migrants, government policies, and the extent of abusive or coercive practices on the part of those who help migrants to move. As Koser points out, a vicious circle is developing between increasingly stricter entry controls and the need for potential immigrants and asylum-seekers to turn to the services of ‘traffickers’ and ‘smugglers’. More is known about the movement of some groups – such as the Chinese – than others, notably other ‘new’ flows

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4 The Economist, June 22 2000, ‘The last frontier’.
6 Harris, op cit.
7 Ram, Edwards, Jones (2002), Employers and Illegal Migrant Workers in the Clothing and Restaurant Sectors, DTI Final Report.
to the UK of people from countries without historic ties to this country\(^9\). In this context, there is still a gap in knowledge about the nature and causes of migrants’ interactions with traffickers and smugglers, and especially their choice of the UK over other destinations.

**Aims and objectives of this study**

One major obstacle to the gathering of information on illegal or undocumented migration is the difficulty of identifying and accessing sample populations for survey work. With this obstacle in mind, this study was commissioned by the Immigration Research and Statistics Service (IRSS) of the UK Home Office to explore the characteristics, motivations and experiences of members of the illegally resident population, based on interviews in UK immigration detention centres. The aim was to increase understanding of the illegally resident population by describing in depth the characteristics of that part of it that is in detention.

Five such immigration centres currently exist: at Heathrow and Gatwick airports (Harmondsworth and Tinsley House centres respectively), Campsfield (near Oxford)\(^{10}\), Yarl’s Wood (a new centre near Bedford opened in late 2001) and Dungavel (in Scotland) with a total capacity of nearly 3000 places\(^11\). Although interviewing migrants whilst they are held in detention by the immigration authorities is far from ideal in terms of generating meaningful responses that are representative of the broader population (see Chapter 2), it does present a relatively straightforward route to identifying, selecting and interviewing this particular group. The study also sought to provide an opportunity for detainees to provide their own representations and accounts of their experiences in coming to the UK, and to disseminate these accounts to a wider audience.

**Specific areas of interest to the study team included the following:**

- The motivations people had to leave their home countries and to choose the UK over other destinations (and the extent to which they did make a choice);
- The process by which people arrived if they came in an irregular fashion and to what extent facilitators or agents were involved;
- The extent and nature of trafficking\(^12\);
- The process which led to them becoming illegally resident where they did not enter the UK illegally;
- The experience of irregular migrants in the UK in relation to their lack of legal status;
- The means of support during their time in the UK;
- The nature of any work undertaken including sector, level of skill, pay and conditions; and
- Their intentions regarding whether and for how long they would have remained in the UK.

Alongside basic demographic and socio-economic characteristics, it was hoped by the research team that such research could inform the debate on illegal migration and consider the extent of contributions made by irregular or clandestine migrants to the wider economy and society.

**Existing research and statistics**

Despite the relative lack of research and statistics on illegally resident migrant populations noted above, some data are available on those being detained in immigration facilities. This is included in this report as an indication of the total population from which it was possible to draw a sample for this study. Information provided by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) of the Home Office showed that as of 30 September 2001, a total of 325 individuals were being held in immigration detention centres, out of 1,620 in total being held under powers of the 1999 Immigration Act\(^13\). Of those being held in detention centres, 260 were asylum-seekers. By 29 December 2001, there were 905 people in the detention centres, of whom 710 were asylum-seekers. This rise reflected the completion of new facilities at Harmondsworth and Yarl’s Wood during this period. Over the same period, the total population in detention also rose by 200 to 1,820\(^14\).

\(^9\) Although see the work of Jordan and Düvall in Section 1.4 below.

\(^{10}\) The Campsfield centre is due to close in the near future.

\(^{11}\) This capacity has been reduced following the fire at Yarl’s Wood centre on March 1st, 2002.

\(^{12}\) IND uses the UN definition of trafficking, which refers to the ‘threat or use of force or other forms of coercion’, and/or ‘exploitation’, including ‘sexual exploitation’, ‘forced labour’, ‘servitude’ or the ‘removal of organs’ (Article 3(a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, 2000). We use the word ‘agent’ to refer to those who facilitate migration outside the context of ‘trafficking’.

\(^{13}\) The remainder were being held in dedicated immigration service wings of prisons, at the Oakington reception centre, or within one of 18 ordinary prisons.

\(^{14}\) At this stage, only 13 prisons were in use for immigration detainees. By late February 2002, the Home Office claimed to have removed all remaining asylum-seekers from these prisons, although the fire at Yarl’s Wood may have reversed this.
Tables 1.1 and 1.2 show some basic data on the population in detention. Individuals originating from at least 35 different countries worldwide were being held on 29 December 2001. The largest national group of non-asylum-seekers in detention was Jamaicans (185), followed by Nigerians (25), Algerians (15) and Zimbabweans (15).

Table 1.1 Gender breakdown of population in detention as at 29 December 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Asylum-seekers</th>
<th>Not asylum-seekers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1,265</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>1,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,410</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>1,820</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IRSS. Figures rounded to nearest 5.

Table 1.2 Region of origin of population in detention as at 29 December 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region of origin</th>
<th>Asylum-seekers</th>
<th>Not asylum-seekers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E/C Europe</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balkans</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,410</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>1,820</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IRSS. Figures rounded to nearest 5.

However, it is important to note that these figures do not provide a simple representation of undocumented migration to the UK. First, the UK’s detention estate is geared towards removals, and so those individuals who are detained are more likely to be those who can be removed. This means, for example, that some nationalities are not represented at all in detention centres since their removal from the UK is difficult or impossible. Second, we cannot assume that the illegally resident population corresponds to ‘non-asylum-seekers’. For example, although some 77 per cent of detainees at the end of December 2001 were asylum-seekers, most of these were likely to have entered the UK illegally, given the absence of legal channels for asylum migration. Some would then have claimed asylum either at port, or soon thereafter, such that they never, or only very briefly fell into the ‘undocumented’ or ‘illegal’ population resident in the UK. However, others might have remained ‘hidden’ for some considerable period of time, only claiming asylum when they were detained. In addition, it is possible that a proportion of those detained on alleged immigration offences will be found to have a legal right of residence in the UK, and to have been detained by mistake. Unfortunately, no figures are currently available on what proportion of the detained population is released into the community in the UK, and what proportion is removed from the country. Moreover, the population in detention is dynamic, such that the figures provided are only a snapshot.

Beyond these Home Office statistics, there are also a small number of studies of illegally resident migrants both in the UK, and more particularly in neighbouring European countries. One of the most substantial in the UK is a five-year study conducted with 21 Brazilian, 40 Polish and 25 Turkish or Kurdish ‘irregular migrants’ by Jordan and Düvell in London. These groups were selected precisely because they formed part of the ‘new migration’ to the UK, so they cannot be taken as representative of the wider population of undocumented or illegal migrants. Another small study in London was also commissioned by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in 1996, and involved just 16 interviewees, all in London. Of these, three were not even migrants themselves, but their ‘trusted representatives’, a term not defined in the study.

15 At the time of interviews, this is likely to have reduced the number of Afghans, Somalis and others in detention.
17 Some respondents argued that this had happened to them, although it was not possible to independently verify such accounts.
A synthesis report on this, and two comparative studies also commissioned by JRS in Spain and Germany made a number of recommendations on how to deal with what was perceived as government ‘silence’ on irregular migration. In the case of the UK, emphasis was placed on the diversity both of pathways to the UK, and of individual experiences whilst here of the labour market, housing, health and education. In contrast, Jordan and Düvell’s work suggests that Poles, Turks and Kurds have distinctive patterns of migration and work, increasingly based around transnational networks that facilitate international movement.

Some other studies have also been conducted in European countries, although again there is a bias towards small and not particularly representative samples. One of the more comprehensive studies was carried out in 1999 by the Institute for Social Studies of the University of Warsaw, and included interviews with institutional actors at both national and local level with what it termed ‘migrant trafficking’. This study was relatively unusual in that it included 42 interviews with 72 ‘trafficked migrants’ in refugee reception centres and deportation centres, as well as a further 14 interviews with ‘selected influential individuals’ within three migrant communities.

Similarly, in Belgium, the organisation ‘Mensen Zonder Papieren’ has collaborated with researchers from the Université de Liège and the Université Libre de Bruxelles to conduct qualitative research based on in-depth interviews with 130 undocumented migrants, of whom 23 were asylum-seekers. Interviews were conducted in a number of Belgian cities, and the findings of the research stretch from conclusions on the causes of migration, the trajectories of undocumented migrants, the conditions in which people stay in Belgium (including accommodation, work, incomes, health, education and social relations) and their perspectives on life in Belgium. Although the results are not yet formally published, information available on the internet once again stresses the diversity and complexity of migration trajectories. However, it is more common for literature on undocumented or illegal migrants to be based on interviews with policy-makers or NGOs, ignoring the stories of individual migrants.

The structure of this report

The report that follows is based on field research undertaken by the Sussex Centre for Migration Research, and funded by the Immigration Research and Statistics Service (IRSS) of the UK Home Office over the period December 2001 to March 2002. The aim is to present information from in-depth interviews with some 83 immigration detainees carried out over this period in three UK immigration detention centres – Harmondsworth, Tinsley House and Campsfield. The report does not seek to draw wider policy conclusions. Nonetheless, it does reinforce some of the conclusions of earlier studies noted in the previous section, notably on the diversity and complexity of the experiences of illegally resident migrants in the UK, and the need to differentiate populations in terms of age, sex, region and country of origin and a range of other factors if understanding is to be reached of their condition and motivations.

Subsequent chapters of the report are presented as follows. In Chapter 2, the methodological basis of the study is considered. Interviews with detainees of whatever kind present special methodological problems, whilst the representativeness of any sample from a rapidly changing and diverse population can be called into question. Chapter 2 addresses these issues, and argues that the sample can be considered broadly representative of the illegally resident population held in detention – although this cannot be extrapolated to the illegally resident population more broadly. Then, in Chapter 3, basic information about the age and sex structure of the population, the regional and national origin of detainees, and their levels of educational attainment and English language proficiency are presented, alongside a brief discussion of the legal and policy context in which detention of illegally resident migrants currently takes place.

Chapters 4 to 7 then focus on the findings of the study in relation to patterns of movement to the UK, experiences whilst in the country, and the circumstances that have led people to detention and likely removal. Chapter 4 highlights the diverse range of trajectories of the sample population, although patterns do emerge for migrants from particular countries and regions of the world that present some regularity. In Chapter 5, the analysis turns to the means of support of the sample population whilst illegally resident in the

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22 www.picum.org, as of 11 March 2002.
UK, focusing on their experience of working in the UK, since this represents the primary means of support identified. The chapter includes analysis of the way in which jobs were found, and the kind of conditions and wages experienced. Chapter 6 considers the level of interaction of those interviewed with other groups whilst living in the UK, as well as their use of education, health and other services, whilst Chapter 7 deals with why they were detained, and their experience of interaction with the UK authorities and legal system throughout their period of residence in the UK. Finally, Chapter 8 concludes with a view of the respondents’ future plans, as well as discussion of gaps in knowledge that remain for future research.
2. Methodology

Introduction: initial research plans

Scope of the project

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study set out to explore the experiences of a range of individuals held in detention whom had been illegal residents in the UK. The decision to conduct interviews inside detention centres reflected the lack of reliable studies of the illegally resident population in the country as a whole, linked in turn to the lack of an appropriate sample frame or profile data and the difficulty of gaining access to this population. The aim was to generate in-depth information on the experience of travel to the UK of undocumented migrants, and the nature and impact of their illegal residence. The work was designed to be qualitative, in order to explore the range and depth of motivations and experiences rather than producing a representative sample survey. The study also sought to explore the value of conducting qualitative in-depth interviews inside detention centres, in terms of the depth and validity of the data collected.

The population of interest for this study was defined as comprising the following groups:

- those who had entered the country illegally and had not claimed asylum within their first three months in the country;
- those who had entered the country legally, but had then overstayed their period of legal entry, and had not claimed asylum within three months of the expiry of their visa;
- those who had entered the country legally or had claimed asylum, but were in breach of their conditions for temporary residence by working illegally in the UK; and
- those who had claimed asylum, but became illegally resident as they had ignored removal directions, or had lost contact with the authorities during their asylum claim, again for a minimum of three months.

Those who had claimed asylum and were then detained during or immediately after the rejection of their claim, and those detained on arrival in the UK and held in detention thereafter were excluded from the survey as they could not be classified as ‘illegally resident’ in the UK. Asylum-seekers who had been illegally resident for a period of less than three months were excluded from the survey. One of the aims of the study was to reflect on the appropriateness of research based on interviews at immigration detention centres, and the extent to which this could be considered relevant to the wider illegally resident population.

Preliminary concerns and ethical issues

A number of problems are associated with the task of interviewing illegal or undocumented migrants, whether in detention or not. Foremost amongst these is the suspicion held not only of researchers, but also of anyone who appears in an ‘official’ capacity. There is a risk that those held in detention will either not cooperate with research at all, or will misunderstand the nature of the research process, providing answers to questions that are aimed at securing their release rather than presenting honest and unbiased accounts of their situation.

For this reason, gaining trust and cooperation was considered essential to carrying out the research. The initial research plan was to visit individual detainees on several occasions, engaging in progressively more formal discussions to ensure understanding of the purpose and safeguards of the research. In particular, the research team aimed to stress the complete separation between the research process, and the process of dealing with individuals’ immigration cases. It was also keen to consult with a variety of social and legal actors involved in the life of the detention centres, in order to build relationships, explain context and ensure cooperation. Summary sheets in appropriate languages were planned that could be distributed to detainees and others working in and visiting the centres.

The first task was to develop a formal ethical statement, which was shared with the Home Office, and circulated to staff, detainees and others working in or visiting the centre. This reflected concern that:

‘certain social groups … (including) the institutionalised, may continually be sought after as research subjects, owing to their ready availability … Given their dependent status and their frequently
compromised capacity for free consent, they should be protected against the danger of being involved in research for administrative convenience.  

As an institutionalised population, it is clear that effective ethical safeguards are necessary for research with detainees, particularly if research could be seen to involve risks for that population. The ethical statement (Appendix 1) concentrated on procedures to eliminate risk (ensuring anonymity, and a clear demarcation from legal processes affecting respondents) and to ensure informed consent (involving a process of explanation, understanding, and agreement to participate). It envisaged written consent to interviews, and to the taping of these interviews, on the part of each detainee.

Pilot phase of interviews

After agreement of this ethical statement with the Home Office and preliminary discussions at each of the detention centres under study, we developed and piloted an interview schedule, which took the form of a series of key issues and questions to be raised during semi-structured interviews. The interview schedule is reproduced in Appendix 2. We then conducted a series of pilot interviews at Tinsley House, focusing initially on detainees from Sri Lanka and Kosovo.

In selecting respondents, we were concerned that the wide variety of languages spoken by detainees, and their diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, would cause logistical difficulties in terms of translation, and militate against understanding of the diverse social, political and cultural contexts from which people had migrated. In order to enhance the consistency of translation and the ability of interviewers to connect with the particular background of illegal immigrants, as well as to build trust, it was viewed as advantageous to concentrate on specific immigrant groups. In principle, it was agreed with IRSS to conduct interviews with a maximum of five different nationalities, drawn from the major regions of significant immigration to the UK that are represented amongst the illegally resident population in detention. Within these nationalities, the aim was to ensure that the sample was structured to include the full range of modes of entry, and a range of ages and both men and women. The target number of interviewees was set at 100.

Modifications after the pilot phase

During the pilot phase, a total of 60 interviews were conducted at Tinsley House over a period of one week, of whom only six were found to meet the criteria set for inclusion in the sample. A revised strategy for the research was developed following this experience.

The pilot phase demonstrated that it was relatively unproblematic to arrange and conduct interviews with detainees. The initial interview schedule was found to provide a good basis on which to initiate open-ended discussions with detainees that gave space for the presentation of their own ‘stories’. This qualitative approach facilitated openness in the interview process, distancing the procedure from the more formal interviews normally conducted by immigration officers. However, it was found desirable to include a short ‘checklist’ of more or less ‘factual’ questions at the end of each interview, in order to ensure the collection of a limited range of quantitative data amenable to statistical analysis. The suitability of the interview schedule meant that it was possible to integrate some pilot interviews into the final set of cases used for analysis. Nonetheless, significant modifications in the research design and implementation were necessary in three key areas detailed below.

Selection of respondents

Identification of respondents who fell within the research team’s criteria for the target population was shown to be extremely problematic during the pilot phase. This was due to the fact that each detention centre contains a mixture of people who have been arrested for illegally residing in the UK, alongside others who have either claimed asylum and are then detained when the claim is refused, or who have been detained on arrival. Although it was possible to ‘screen out’ many of those who had been detained at port of entry (and


25 These nationalities were selected on the basis of the prior experience of the research team in working on these regions, and their strong representation at Tinsley House. Due to the low proportion of detainees interviewed from these countries who fell within the target group (see below), several other nationalities were also interviewed during this pilot phase.

26 The five regions from which nationalities were to be chosen were South Asia, the Balkans, China, West Africa, and the Caribbean. Although there is significant migration from the Middle East (Iran, Iraq) and the Horn of Africa (Somalia) to the UK, these groups are not significant amongst those held in immigration detention centres.
so not call them for interview) by identifying standard ID codes in their files, it was impossible to identify asylum-seekers who had claimed asylum on arrival, and had not broken their conditions for entry since that time. In addition, whilst the research team had access to individual detainee files, these contained very little information about the nature of each detainee’s case. This slowed down progress towards the target number of valid interviews, as it was often not possible or desirable to terminate interviews prematurely once they had begun. In particular, all interviewees from Sri Lanka and most from Kosovo in the pilot phase were found to fall outside the criteria for inclusion. This, and the fact that the numbers from different nationalities being held in detention changed considerably over time, also called into question the initial decision to focus on respondents from particular countries and regions.

In addition, some respondents refused to be interviewed as they claimed to have been misled by centre staff about the nature of the interview. Willingness to participate in the study was influenced by the internal dynamics of individual centres. For example, on one day during the pilot phase, 50 per cent of the Albanian population at the centre had been deported that morning, making it almost impossible to conduct interviews with the remaining Albanian detainees. Interviews with Polish respondents on two other days had to be terminated as a bus booked to take them to the airport for an evening flight arrived at lunchtime. Difficulty was also faced on another occasion with Jamaican respondents, who feared they had been ‘targeted’ due to adverse press coverage of drug dealers travelling from Jamaica to the UK in the previous day’s press.

In response, the plan to focus on five nationalities was relaxed, and instead an attempt was made to interview a sample of respondents from each of the major regions in which there were significant numbers of detainees who fitted in the target group. The extent to which the final group of interviews retained for analysis constitutes a representative sample is considered in the next section.

Informed consent

In practice, it proved cumbersome and unworkable to require written consent for each interview, and the taping and transcription of each interview. Instead, interviewers adopted the practice of explaining in full the research purpose and nature of the interview, and then asking orally (and separately) whether the interviewee (a) consented to the interview, and (b) consented to it being taped and used in anonymous form, including lodging in a public data archive.

In principle, every respondent was given a sheet (in English, as translation to the wide range of languages of the detainees proved impractical) explaining the purpose of the research and giving contact details for the research team. This was translated orally where necessary (Appendix 3). All respondents were also given the chance to receive a tape or transcript of the tape— an offer taken up by just three respondents. At the same time, in order to ensure anonymity, each interpreter was asked to sign a declaration indicating that they would not disclose any aspect of the interview to anyone outside the research team (see Appendix 4). In practice, a number of interpreters ended up in informal discussions with respondents after the interview had terminated. Additionally, a leaflet was left at each of the detention centres, to be distributed to legal advocates and other groups with access to the detainees, to inform them of the nature and period of research (see Appendix 5).

Repeat interviews

An important element of the initial plan— repeat interviews with individuals in order to establish trust and build a consistent account of their migration and illegal stay in the UK— also proved impossible due to the high level of turnover found at Tinsley House during the pilot phase. Indeed, those who were held for longer periods of time tended to be asylum claimants awaiting final appeals, who fell outside the target group for this study. By contrast, some nationalities— notably illegally resident Central and Eastern Europeans who had not claimed asylum— stayed at the centres for only a few days prior to removal from the UK. This necessitated the arrangement of translators at short notice, and occasional shifts from a planned programme of visits to different centres, in order to interview groups from particular countries who were to be removed within one or two days.

27 Administrative oversight led to a failure to hand this sheet to a small number of respondents. However, respondents were encouraged to show the sheet to other detainees, and to their legal representatives, in order to publicise the existence and purpose of the research.
Conducting the research

In practice, a total of over 200 individuals were approached for interview, of who around 30-40 declined to respond, for a variety of reasons. A further 85 interviews were then excluded because they did not fall within the definition of those ‘illegally resident’ in the UK. The vast majority of interviews took place at Harmondsworth and Tinsley House, with only a small number being conducted at Campsfield both due to its distance from the research team’s base, and a perception that it mainly held asylum-seekers who fell outside the target population. In practice, the proportion of interviews excluded from the sample at Campsfield was more than at Harmondsworth, but much less than at Tinsley House (Table 2.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Detention centre</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Excluded as ineligible</th>
<th>Total in final sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harmondsworth</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinsley House</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campsfield</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ survey. Valid cases: 168.

Each interview lasted between ten minutes and one hour, depending on the willingness of respondents to answer questions, and the detail in which they described their experiences. Within what were usually open-ended in-depth interviews, attempts were made to steer discussion through the key points on the interview schedule, although in practice it either proved impractical to ask certain questions, or these questions were asked but no specific answers received.

Where it was possible to tape interviews, these were transcribed into a standard format for analysis using Nud*ist (N5) software. Detailed interview notes were also made of each interview, and where necessary these were also written up and imported into Nud*ist. Each file was anonymised, and then coded for basic quantitative information, as well as qualitative descriptions of reasons for departure and the journey to the UK, arrival and living in the UK, and the nature and subsequent experience of detention. An initial coding schedule was modified and enhanced through discussion within the research team and with IRSS.

Limitations of the methodology

Although the study is based on qualitative in-depth interviews, quantitative data was also collected on a series of issues, such as age, sex, dates of migration, occupational profiles and the costs associated with illegal residence. The choice of semi-structured interviews necessarily represented a certain compromise in terms of the precision and validity of the data obtained. First, as noted above, in some cases it was impossible to obtain information on all of the areas envisaged in the interview schedule, both because respondents were unwilling to answer in precise terms, and because the open-ended nature of the interview led discussion away from certain issues. This was probably inevitable given the need for an open-ended interview in order to develop trust. If it had been possible to conduct repeat interviews, it is possible that some of these gaps could have been filled. However, as noted above, the idea of repeat interviews proved impractical.

It is also important to note that the interview transcripts are a representation of the migration process and experience on the part of detainees, and that the information provided could not be independently verified. Despite measures to establish trust in the confidentiality and value of the research process, and attempts to ask questions on particular issues in a variety of different ways, it was neither possible nor desirable to come to a judgement on the ‘truth’ of individual accounts, either during or after the interviews. It is likely that the

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28 There were three main reasons for refusal of interview. First, some intended interviewees expressed distrust in the research process. This was exacerbated in some cases where the refusal by one person from a particular country developed into a refusal by anyone else from that country to be interviewed either. For example, on the day after sensationalist tabloid coverage of alleged drug running from Jamaica to the UK, all Jamaicans called for interview refused to be interviewed. Second, some refused to be interviewed because they were not interested in the research – saying that they would rather be watching TV or had a phone call to make. This was exacerbated by the fact that in one centre, a schedule for calling detainees to interview was misunderstood by immigration officers, with the result that five or more people were called for interview at the same time. In such cases, it was usual for one or two to wait to be interviewed, but for the remainder to give up and return to the secure area of the centre. Third, some refused to be interviewed because they had been told that the interview would be with a legal representative or an immigration officer, and were upset when they were then asked to speak to a researcher.

29 In total, 49 per cent of all interviews were taped and transcribed, representing 82 out of 168 interviews.
accounts presented by respondents reflect a judgement on what it was the research team wanted to hear, and what kind of information might have a positive impact on their immigration status – despite clear explanation that the research was not linked to the immigration determination process. Nonetheless, there is no evidence that this was any more pronounced than it would have been amongst a population not in detention.

Qualitative information provided in subsequent sections of this report has been selected as illustrative of the different kinds of experience related by interviewees, but should not necessarily be regarded as representative either of those interviewed, or of the illegally resident population in detention as a whole. Quantitative data are presented based on the sample of respondents that provided information for any particular question, and in some cases represents the response of a relatively small number of interviewees. The total number of valid cases from which quantitative data are derived is presented in each table or figure.

Is the sample representative?

A more general question concerns whether the sample as a whole can be considered representative of the illegally resident population either in the UK in general, or in currently in detention. In principle, it should be straightforward to ensure a representative sample of a population in detention, where a register is maintained of all residents from which interviewees can be chosen at random, although as noted above, this would not deliver a representative sample of those in the country as a whole since different groups have a different likelihood of being detained. In practice, several factors militated in any case against the selection of a simple random sample. First, the linguistic diversity noted above meant that it was necessary to structure the sample by broad regional or linguistic groups in order that interviews could be carried out on any one day in a single language or group of languages for which interpretation could be pre-arranged. The research therefore proceeded using a modified quota sampling technique, in which quotas were set for regional groupings, and individual respondents were selected at random from within these regional groupings. This was to ensure that each regional group was represented, but did not produce a large enough sample of each group to allow statistically valid comparisons to be drawn.

In principle, quota sampling would have led the research team to interview primarily Jamaicans, as figures presented in Chapter 1 show this group making up almost half of all immigration detainees who had not claimed asylum. However, this was not done for three reasons. First a desire to reflect the diversity of the illegally resident population in detention led a slight over-representation of smaller groups. Second, since the population in detention is constantly changing, it is not strictly possible to choose respondents from a single list of the total population. This problem is compounded by the geographical dispersal of centres and the rising population in detention over the period of the study. Finally, since even a strict quota sample which delivered sufficient numbers of each group could not have been representative of the undocumented migrant population as a whole, there seemed little point in sticking to strict quota targets. An additional problem arose from the fact that though IND’s summary statistics distinguish asylum-seekers from non-asylum-seekers at an aggregate level, this distinction is not evident in the daily registers of detainees in each centre from which interviewees were selected. This meant that there were frequent instances of choosing someone to be interviewed from the daily register who turned out not to be illegally resident at all, but simply an asylum-seeker who had been detained when their claim for asylum was refused.

In principle, quota sampling would have led the research team to interview primarily Jamaicans, as figures presented in Chapter 1 show this group making up almost half of all immigration detainees who had not claimed asylum. However, this was not done for three reasons. First a desire to reflect the diversity of the illegally resident population in detention led a slight over-representation of smaller groups. Second, since the population in detention is constantly changing, it is not strictly possible to choose respondents from a single list of the total population. This problem is compounded by the geographical dispersal of centres and the rising population in detention over the period of the study. Finally, since even a strict quota sample which delivered sufficient numbers of each group could not have been representative of the undocumented migrant population as a whole, there seemed little point in sticking to strict quota targets. An additional problem arose from the fact that though IND’s summary statistics distinguish asylum-seekers from non-asylum-seekers at an aggregate level, this distinction is not evident in the daily registers of detainees in each centre from which interviewees were selected. This meant that there were frequent instances of choosing someone to be interviewed from the daily register who turned out not to be illegally resident at all, but simply an asylum-seeker who had been detained when their claim for asylum was refused.

In practice, towards the end of the data collection phase, checks were made to ensure that each regional group currently in detention was broadly represented in the sample. Rather than use available data for September 2001, which was already out of date, a table of those present by region of origin in each of the detention centres was compiled on three separate dates during fieldwork (one at the beginning, one in the middle, and one towards the end) and this was compared with the regional backgrounds of the sampled respondents (see Table 2.2). This helped to ensure a breadth and depth of understanding from a variety of different regional groups, rather than strict statistical accuracy.
Table 2.2 Regional origin of detention centre residents, and sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region of origin</th>
<th>Total Residents</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Sample of illegal residents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balkans</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C/E Europe</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China/Far East</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ interviews, Daily residence sheets, Tinsley House (6 Dec, 11 Jan, 8 Feb), Harmondsworth (8, 18 Jan, 1 Feb) and Campsfield (24, 29 Jan, 5 Feb).

As can be seen from Table 2.2, the sample does have significant under-representation of respondents from Sub-Saharan Africa, and from the diverse ‘Other’ group of nations held in detention during the fieldwork. In contrast, respondents from Central and Eastern Europe and the Caribbean were perhaps over-represented. It is also possible that some groups who are illegally resident in the UK had either evaded detention or had deliberately not been detained because of the difficulty of removal. However, despite these comments, and the lack of strict statistical representativeness, the final sample is considered to be free of more obvious biases, such as an over-representation of those who spoke English, or a reliance on community gatekeepers. Note that this refers to representativeness among the illegally resident population in detention in the UK. It is not possible to draw conclusions on the representativeness of the research sample among the illegally resident population in the UK as a whole.

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30 Nationals of a total of 72 countries were held in detention at the three centres during fieldwork.
3. Characteristics of the illegally resident population in detention

Basic information

Age and sex structure of the illegally resident migrant population

As with many migrant populations in the West, those in detention at the time of this study, and the sample of those illegally resident in the UK identified for the purpose of this research, both consisted primarily of young men. Thus, taking the same three sample days for each detention centre used in the previous chapter, the proportion of women residents across the three centres was just seven per cent (Table 3.1). Over 70 per cent of all residents were aged 20-35, although women were more concentrated in the 25-29 age group. In the sample, there were slightly more women, at 12 per cent of the total. There were also slightly more interviewees in the 20-35 age range (76 per cent), although the small number of women makes comparison of percentages somewhat meaningless for this group (Table 3.2). Overall, although the population in detention is quite youthful, its average age is raised by the fact that there are very few children.

Table 3.1: Age and sex structure of resident populations in detention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age band</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1793</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>101%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Daily residence sheets, Tinsley House (6 Dec, 11 Jan, 8 Feb), Harmondsworth (8, 18 Jan, 1 Feb) and Campsfield (24, 29 Jan, 5 Feb).

Table 3.2: Age and sex structure of sample population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age band</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ interviews. Valid case = 70 (not recorded for 13 cases).
The median age of the sampled population was 29 years, and on average, respondents had been living in the UK for three years, such that migration itself took place on average at the younger age of 26. The sample also shows some variation in both the age at which people migrated, and their age now (Table 3.3). The only comparable recent study of illegally resident migrants in the UK also showed a relatively mature population, in which every interviewee was aged between 26 and 40\(^\text{31}\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region of origin</th>
<th>On arrival in the UK</th>
<th>During fieldwork</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E/C Europe</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balkans</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ survey. Valid cases = 70 (not recorded for 13 cases).

For the majority of regions of origin, respondents had been in the UK between one and three years, but this is higher for three of the five groups in which respondents were on average older. Thus in terms of their current ages, a distinction can be drawn between detainees originally from the Balkans and North Africa\(^\text{32}\) who were aged 22-23, and those from other regions of the world whose average age was closer to 30. Yet, if the age at which respondents had moved to the UK is considered, the division is less clear, with African respondents in particular having moved at a younger age. Also, it should be noted that these averages are calculated for quite small groups of respondents in some cases, and so should be treated with caution.

Levels of education and training

The level of education and training of respondents also varied, although here it is more difficult to draw even broad comparisons between different national and regional groups. Overall, out of 48 respondents for whom meaningful information could be derived on their level of education, ten had been to university, and a further seven had attended some form of technical training college above secondary level (Table 3.4)\(^\text{33}\). It is not strictly valid to express these numbers as percentages of the total number of respondents for whom information is available, since it is likely that a significant proportion of those who did not provide information had a relatively low level of educational attainment. Nonetheless, over half of all respondents had attended secondary school, either completing their studies, or in some cases having these interrupted by political insecurity in their country of origin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region of origin</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Primary School</th>
<th>No information</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balkans</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E/C Europe</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ survey. Valid cases = 83.

Some nationalities (as represented by respondents in the sample) displayed high levels of education. Out of six Ukrainians interviewed, only one – a former market trader – had little formal education, with others including a qualified doctor, a teacher, two others who had completed university training, and one more who

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\(^{31}\) Anderson, \textit{op cit.}

\(^{32}\) All four North African respondents were from Algeria.

\(^{33}\) The low response rate to this question may reflect the unwillingness of respondents with a low level of education to talk about their educational experience.
was in the middle of his university course. Moreover, respondents had also moved into a diverse range of occupations in their home country since leaving full-time education. The sample overall included two doctors, two teachers, a trained nurse and a civil servant, whilst those with more technical training included two IT technicians, a policeman and an accounts clerk, as well as two car mechanics, a welder, two tailors, an electrician, and a craft weaver. However, 17 of the respondents had come straight from school or college, many of them seeking to further their education in the UK, whilst four more had come direct from the military (at various levels). It was possible to classify eight more respondents as ‘unskilled’, although almost certainly a number of the 22 respondents for whom no information was available would also fall into that category. See Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1 Occupational group in home country**

Overall, almost half of those interviewed could speak English fairly well, in the sense that it was of acceptable standard to conduct an interview. This reflected in part the presence of Jamaicans, for whom English was the first language, and the fact that African respondents primarily came from countries in which English is the official language (Table 3.5). Indeed, amongst the ten women interviewed, regional origin explains all of the variation in English proficiency, with all six of those who could speak good English coming from either Jamaica or English-speaking African countries.

Ability to speak good English did not appear to be linked to length of stay, with 29 per cent of those who spoke no English having been in the UK for five years or more, compared with 26 per cent of the sample as a whole. Comparison between levels of education and proficiency in English are difficult to make because of gaps in the dataset. However, it was not always the case that those with higher levels of formal education necessarily spoke better English. For example, amongst men, levels of proficiency in English were also generally high for Kosovans, none of whom had progressed beyond secondary schooling. Their knowledge of appeared to reflect commitment to learning English in the UK, rather than necessarily any greater level of educational attainment in Kosovo. Meanwhile, across the sample as a whole, this often involved learning English ‘in the community’ rather than through formal classes, as one Albanian respondent commented:

*I spent 18 months in West Wycombe. I made lots of English friends – I felt safe in the community. I found a one-bed flat and moved into it with my girlfriend. I met people through work and also learnt my English there.*

In contrast, respondents from South and East Asia appeared less orientated towards learning English, whilst the four Algerian respondents all spoke French or Arabic rather than English.

Source: Authors’ Survey. Valid cases: 83.
Table 3.5 Respondents’ proficiency in English, by region of origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region of origin</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balkans</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E/C Europe</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ survey. Valid cases = 83.

Legal status

Although the target population for this research was those illegally resident in the UK, who had subsequently been detained, as was noted in Chapter 2, this included a number of people who had claimed asylum at some stage, but had either been illegally resident in the UK prior to this, or had overstayed illegally after the final rejection of their claim. Table 3.5 sets out the number of those who had claimed asylum by regional group. For all regions except the Caribbean and North and Sub-Saharan Africa, there is a majority of asylum-seekers, although in the latter two cases, the sample was extremely small. However, there was a significant group of Central/Eastern Europeans who had never claimed asylum.

Table 3.6 Asylum-seeking amongst interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region of origin</th>
<th>Asylum-seekers</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Non-asylum-seekers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balkans</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China/Far East</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C/E Europe</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ interviews. Valid cases = 83.

The routes through which respondents became illegally resident are explored in more detail in the next chapter.

Summary

Analysis of basic quantitative data in this chapter has demonstrated that in terms of the age and sex structure of our sample, there is a broad similarity to that of the overall population in detention at the time of the study, though no conclusions can be drawn as to representativeness of the illegally resident population in the UK as a whole. Levels of education, training and competence in English are fairly high – although there are significant variations within the sample that do not necessarily reflect region or country of origin. The following chapters now go on to explore variation within the sample during three key parts of the migration process – movement to the UK in the first place, migrants’ experience whilst illegally resident in the UK, and the period since they were first detained.
4. Routes to illegal residence in the UK

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore and track the paths that respondents had taken that had led to their being detained under UK Immigration Act powers. It considers why respondents chose the UK (if indeed they made a choice), how they travelled to and entered the UK, and how they then became illegally resident. It explores whether illegality is an inevitable part of the whole project of migration to the UK, or whether migrants fell into illegality as a result of specific circumstances after they had departed for, or arrived in the UK.

Choice of the UK over other destinations

The process of migration can be conceptualised as involving choices both in terms of leaving a home country, and of selecting a particular destination, in this case the UK. Respondents generally touched on both of these choices in response to the question “How did you come to migrate to the UK?” In some cases further information was obtained by probing.

Data presented in Figure 4.1 demonstrate that the main reasons given why respondents left their home country were connected with issues of safety. This included reports of actual and perceived threats both on the part of state authorities, and of non-state actors such as business associates, moneylenders and criminals. A wide range of other factors was also mentioned. Economic issues, relating to the opportunity to work and earn money, were often mentioned, although more respondents stressed the positive economic climate outside their country than specific problems faced at home. Other explanations for departure include a significant group that cited family reasons, and a rather smaller group who had left their country in order to further their education.

Figure 4.1 Reasons for leaving home country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Personal</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Pull</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Push</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ survey. Valid cases = 83. Multiple responses allowed.

The majority of those mentioning safety as a factor had claimed asylum in the UK. Their accounts ranged from the very general: ‘I came just to save my life because there are many problems in (my country)’ to specific and often lengthy accounts of violence, intimidation and beatings. There is also some overlap between those mentioning different factors and multiple responses are possible in Figure 4.1. For example, one Nigerian respondent commented:
‘It [home country] is a nice country, but it is a country that has two different kinds of people. It is either you are rich or poor. The rich gets richer, the poor gets poorer. And another thing I want to say is that … there are no human rights at all.’

Similarly, economic push and pull can merge with political and security problems:

‘Since my mother was all alone, divorced, and being the eldest of the family, I had to take the place of the father. So I decided to go abroad and try my luck … All African countries are poor … (but) since I had a political or military problem with (my country), I had to move on.’ (Senegalese respondent)

Sometimes, the reasons cited were quite complex:

‘I had to go because of the difficult conditions in (my country). My psychological conditions were very bad. I was relieved of a lot of things. Life was in ruins. I met a person, we lived together, we had terrible difficulties. We decided to leave’. (Polish respondent)

‘One day I was at school (and I was told) “you going to England in a week’s time”. I didn’t have any notice, just “you’re going to … get your passport, and from there you’re going to help your cousin, who’s actually paralysed because she just gave birth, she’s not feeling well, and she’s going to be paying for your college fee.” That’s what I was told.’ (Gambian respondent, female)

However, whilst reasons for leaving their home countries were varied and complex, it was sometimes clearer why respondents had chosen the UK as their destination (Figure 4.2). Whilst the safety of the UK again comes out as the principal reason, this was cited by fewer respondents than those who described reasons for departure that were essentially to do with finding a safe place. After this, the next most important reason mentioned was the perceived availability of employment or opportunities to earn good money, followed by the presence of family members.

Out of 46 respondents who reported using the services of an agent, fifteen said that the agent had made all the travel plans, including the choice of destination. However, only four respondents reported that they did not know that they were coming to the UK in advance, and even those who had left the final decision to their agent had often also requested the UK as a possible destination. For example, all five Chinese respondents had come to the UK using agents, and yet one had specifically requested the UK because his sister was here, whilst two more commented that they could only afford to reach the UK, since their preferred destination, the United States, was too expensive. Meanwhile, of the four Indian respondents, all of whom had used agents to arrange their travel, one came to the UK because her mother was living here and was ill, whilst another had come to the UK because he had been living here previously. Nonetheless, three of the four had stopped elsewhere en route, with one claiming asylum in France, another in Hungary, and a third had worked for just under a year at the agent’s restaurant in Germany:

IDA: The agent had his own restaurant in Germany, in Frankfurt, and made me work in the restaurant for about ten, eleven months.
INT: In Germany?
IDA: Yes. He didn’t pay me at all, then put me on a lorry to come here.
INT: Why was this?
IND: He exploited my situation, because I illegal resident in the country.
More generally, there was also some overlap between the reasons cited for coming to the UK. One Albanian respondent commented:

‘I was really scared of going anywhere. I thought England was the best country for me. Farther away than Greece or Italy. I never thought of coming to the UK, (but) the life is better here … (and) it was not my choice. I simply paid the money and did not know the destination.’

This is particularly true for the ‘UK immigration rules’ category in Figure 4.2. Thus of the five people in this category, two had chosen the UK because they could get visas through family connections, whilst two more mentioned the UK’s human rights record:

‘The law is universal here, there’s no difference between this person who is big, important or has money’ (Ukrainian respondent)

‘Britain … has a reputation for respecting human rights, and the British have been of great help to the Kosovans’ (Kosovan respondent)

Where possible, respondents were asked specifically if they had any existing relatives or contacts living in the UK, which might explain their choice of destination. Data presented in Figure 4.3 shows that around two thirds of respondents did mention either friends, relatives or other people they knew living in the UK prior to their arrival. Within the ‘contacts’ category are both friends and also others who had offered employment in the UK prior to arrival, usually through an agent. Seven respondents identified that their job had been arranged prior to entering the UK. A Chinese man had gained restaurant work through the agent that had facilitated his journey. Five respondents from Eastern and Central Europe had organised farm-work prior to entering the UK through other former employees in their country as these farms only recruited from the same country. The only ‘legal’ worker that organised a contract and work permit prior to entering the UK in the sample was a Ghanaian weaver with a contact in the UK (this will be explored further in Chapter 5.)
In some cases, migrants had come to the UK in response to newspaper adverts offering jobs in their home country, whilst a female Polish interviewee explained that it was common in the Polish case for people to seek farm-work in the UK:

INT: How did you find out about this job?
POL: Somebody who had been here before told us about it.
INT: Did they say you would be working on a farm?
POL: Yes.
INT: How much did you think you would be paid?
POL: We didn’t know, because it depends on how many flowers you pick.
INT: How long were you planning to stay in the UK?
POL: Two months.
INT: And then what were you going to do?
POL: Go home.
INT: And this is something quite common for people in your town, to work abroad for a few months?
POL: Not only in my town, but all over Poland!

Jordan and Düvell report similarly frank economic accounts of their motivation to migrate, forming part of an emerging migration ‘tradition’ amongst Polish workers34. However, of three Polish respondents interviewed in this study, only one had a clear motive to work, with the other two citing ‘safety’ and the need to sort out a string of personal problems at home as the primary reasons for them leaving Poland.

Patterns of travel to the UK

A wide diversity of travel paths to the UK was also discovered during interviews, although some clear patterns emerge in relation to particular countries and regions. A number of different modes of transport had been used, ranging from direct flights (representing around a third of arrivals) to trains, boats, coaches, and lorries (Figure 4.4). The majority of respondents described one mode of travel only – mostly a direct flight or lorry journey from their country of origin, with smaller numbers coming direct by boat, coach or train. However, some had used multiple modes of travel, for example transferring from air or coach to lorry to cross the channel. Of those who had not flown direct, around half had spent three months or more in other countries – mostly European, including Italy (Albanians and Kosovans), Germany (South Asians) – prior to

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34 Jordan, B. and Düvell, F., op cit.
their arrival. In Figure 4.4, travelling on a cross-channel ferry inside a coach or lorry is not considered as a separate mode of transport, but is classified as 'coach' or 'lorry' respectively.

**Figure 4.4 How did you get to the UK?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorry</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boat</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ survey. Valid cases = 83.

It is interesting to explore the patterns of travel associated with movement from different countries of origin. For those coming from Jamaica, the exclusive mode of travel was unsurprisingly by air, whilst the majority of West and Sub-Saharan African respondents had also arrived in this way. All except one respondent from Pakistan had also travelled by air, but the same was not the case for two Bangladeshi and four Indian respondents, each of whom had used more circuitous overland routes. Similarly, all of the Chinese interviewed had travelled overland at some stage in their journey, using a variety of forms of transport, although all had also flown part of the way – in two cases to Moscow, one to Frankfurt, and one to Prague. The three Polish respondents had all travelled by coach from Poland, reflecting the existence of a regular coach service, and the possibility of obtaining visas for entry to work or study in the UK. In contrast, all except one Albanian, and four of the six Ukrainian interviewees had travelled to the UK hidden in the back of a lorry. This was also the route of entry for the majority of Sri Lankan asylum-seekers interviewed in the pilot phase of the study, but excluded from the group for subsequent analysis.

**The legality of entry, and use of agents**

The mode of travel used to migrate to and enter the UK was also strongly related to the pattern of entry, and the extent to which agents were used, and payments made to them in order to complete the journey. Overall, the majority of those interviewed had entered the country illegally (Figure 4.5), although once again this obscures considerable variation from country to country both in terms of whether their entry was legal, and whether significant sums had been paid, or an agent engaged in order to secure illegal entry.
Most obviously, all twelve out of thirteen Jamaican respondents and all three respondents from Poland had entered the UK legally. Of those who had entered legally overall, two came on student visas (from South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa) whilst three came on work visas (one from Central Europe, and two from West Africa). All of the remainder came as tourists. Four of the seven Pakistanis interviewed had entered legally, as, perhaps more surprisingly, had almost half of the West Africans and all of the Sub-Saharan Africans. This reflects the fact that a number of the Africans interviewed had arrived in the UK prior to the imposition of visas in the mid to late 1990s. All of the remaining respondents, with the exception of one Ukrainian and two Latvians had entered the country illegally (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Mode of entry to the UK by region of origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region of origin</th>
<th>With agent</th>
<th>False docs</th>
<th>Hidden in lorry</th>
<th>Hidden on ship</th>
<th>Not checked</th>
<th>Legal entry</th>
<th>Un-known</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balkans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E/C Europe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>83</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors' survey. Valid cases = 83.

Almost all of those who had entered the country illegally reported using the services of some form of agent to arrange the journey. However, this hides the diversity of circumstances. In eight cases, an agent was guide and companion during their journey to the UK. For example, Chinese agents might go as far as an eastern European city where a local or regional agent would replace them. It was common for the agents to leave the migrants just before entry to UK immigration when they would disappear after collecting the documents from the subjects. This was the most expensive form of service provided by an agent. Thus, the five Chinese respondents had each paid between £10,000 - £22,000 to agents to facilitate their journey to the UK, with this generally taking the form of a loan that was to be repaid on arrival. However, Indian and Pakistani respondents reported substantially smaller sums of £4,000 - £6,000, even for those who travelled by air to the UK accompanied by an agent. These amounts were lower than those recorded in an IND memorandum in 2000\textsuperscript{35}, although one Chinese respondent contrasted the cost of entry to the UK with that of the US and mentioned the sum of $70,000 (about £50,000) for the latter journey, considerably higher than that reported by previous studies\textsuperscript{36}.

\textsuperscript{35} Cited in the Economist, The last frontier, op cit.

In contrast, no other national group reported such high sums as payment to agents, reflecting in part the different type of service on offer. The going rate reported by a number of Albanians and Kosovans was in the region of 3,000 – 5,000 Deutschmarks, the equivalent of £900 - £1,500, although one respondent reported paying £3,500 and another £3,000 for being hidden in a lorry from Macedonia to the UK. All except one interviewee from the Balkans had entered the UK in this way.

In general, it was cheaper simply to pay the agent for false documents. For example, two Ukrainians reported fees of £1,000 and £2,000 respectively for false documents and transport by lorry. One Ghanaian reported paying £1,000 (about £700) for false documents. However, a number of other Central or Eastern Europeans and North Africans reported paying much lower sums for false documents – as low as 150 FF (about £15) for a false French ID card bought in a Parisian suburb that was sufficient to pass UK customs. In such cases, some respondents had been able to travel to France using their own passports, obtaining false documents on arrival to continue their journey to the UK.

**Becoming an ‘illegal resident’**

Whilst illegal entrance to the UK was one way in which respondents became ‘illegally resident’, this was not the only way, nor indeed the most important. Table 4.2 summarises the ways in which illegal residence, rather than illegal entry came about.

Those who entered legally, but then overstayed on their visa comprise the largest single group of illegal residents. Most of these had come as tourists, and most had never claimed asylum. The next largest group involves those who entered illegally, but then immediately claimed asylum, so regularising their stay. This group then became illegally resident either by overstaying after their asylum claim was refused, or by going underground before the outcome was known. Finally, even of those who had entered illegally and did not immediately claim asylum, around half subsequently claimed asylum either after a period of illegal resident, or at the point at which they were detained. Table 4.2 also presents a breakdown for each group on how they entered the UK. Although the numbers in each category are relatively small, this analysis suggests that those who entered illegally using false documents were much more likely to go underground on arrival, whereas those who were accompanied to the UK by an agent or were hidden inside a lorry were much more likely to claim asylum on arrival.

A total of 24 respondents had become illegally resident because they had stayed on after the period for which they were initially allowed entry as a visitor. This group comprised West Africans, some Sub-Saharan Africans, and most of the Jamaicans. However, within this category, many people seemed to drift in and out of legality. Fifteen claimed that their documents had been lost in the post or misplaced by the Home Office whilst they had been trying to legalise their status, although the nature of the research meant that it was not possible to independently corroborate such accounts. One Jamaican respondent explained:

> Before the book was lost, I had applied and been granted a student visa to extend the holiday visa. But there is no record of this and immigration don't believe me when I tell them what happened. Anyway the Jamaican High Commission gave me another passport which I sent to get another visa from the Home Office. But I did not receive it. It seems that this was lost in the post. But I didn't know this and I continued waiting to be contacted by the Home Office about my visa, and my new application for a student visa.

A smaller number were more obviously concerned to get into the country using a visa in the first place and from then establish themselves through work. This included the Polish woman mentioned in Chapter 4, and the one respondent from Malaysia.

---

37 This particular respondent was arrested, however, when he tried to use this false ID card to obtain a National Insurance number at the DSS.
Table 4.2 How respondents became ‘illegal’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Of whom claimed asylum:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Became illegally resident on entry</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of whom:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used false documents</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden on lorry</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No entry check</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelled with agent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entered illegally, claimed asylum, but then became illegally</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resident</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of whom:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden on lorry</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelled with agent</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used false documents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden on ship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overstayed after refusal</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went underground prior to decision</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked in breach of entry conditions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entered legally, but overstayed legal visa</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of whom:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist visa/no visa required</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work visa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student visa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went underground</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In breach of entry conditions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ survey. Valid cases=83.

The group that claimed asylum on entry is also quite complex. Of those classified as ‘going underground’, this generally meant that communication between solicitor, applicant and the Home Office had lapsed. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. For one Albanian respondent, this was a direct response to the perception of becoming ‘trapped’ by welfare benefits whilst claiming asylum:

‘The Home Office supported me for two months but they controlled where I lived. I didn’t know anyone at the hotel and I was very lonely and depressed. I had to go and live with my friends.’

This respondent also subsequently left the hotel and joined the illegal job market. However, others had continued to receive benefits, even though their asylum claim had been turned down and their rights of appeal were exhausted, leading to confusion about why they were now considered illegally resident.

As one Albanian respondent recounted:

ALB: I was refused, but I never received anything to me … I know that I had been refused. I was getting all the benefits till five months ago. Till five months ago I was getting all the benefits from the state.
INT: And when did they claim to have sent the refusal to you?
ALB: Two years ago.
INT: And they only stopped the benefits five months ago? [ALB nods] How long had you been in Britain?
ALB: Four years.

A similar account was given by a Kosovan respondent:

‘Then I moved to Handsworth. I didn’t tell the Home Office. I hadn’t heard from them but I thought they would know because the government still paid for the house.’
Others had deliberately gone to ground as a strategy to avoid deportation after receiving notice of the refusal of their asylum claim. In some cases, this was a last attempt to stay in the country after all appeal options had been exhausted, although some did not wait to hear the result of their asylum application. In either case, this strategy of ‘going underground’ within the community often depended on assistance from others from their country of origin. For example, the experience of a Pakistani respondent is not unusual, except perhaps in the degree of success achieved:

‘And then in 1998 I went underground. I went to Gillingham and I worked as a chef. And in 1999 my friends started a restaurant; and I received an award for my work as a chef. It was very easy because I could just live with other people from Pakistan, rent rooms from them that kind of thing. They well we looked out for each other. And so my job was good and I was paid in cash. But it was like a family business.’

Two respondents explained how in following the advice of their legal representative, they had undermined the validity of their asylum claim, causing problems later on.

‘I met a solicitor who was my mother’s friend. She said I could claim asylum. She told me to give a false name. If they know my real identity, she said, this would make it difficult for my father and my other sister to travel here.’ (female Indian respondent)

Yet the economic benefits of going underground should not hide the fact that a number of respondents identified the fear of returning to their country as their primary motivation – whether because they feared persecution or for their personal safety, or because they had nothing to go back to. Often respondents described how their legal representative and/or their friends had advised them to ‘disappear’, particularly after asylum claims had been refused.

In addition, a number of respondents were illegally resident because there was a considerable time lapse between their irregular entry to the country, and the submission of their asylum claim. For example, one Nigerian respondent only claimed asylum when a girlfriend explained that this was possible:

NGA: Yeah, I was sleeping in the street, until one day I saw this girl and then I beg her money. She gave me some £5 and then later she come back and ask me what is my problem so, I tell her, so she said when she finish from college she will come speak to me so when she finish she take me with her, so, I go to her home, so that is how I started staying with her.
INT: Right, right. And she is now your... she's your girlfriend?
NGA: Yeah.
INT: And did she tell you that you could claim asylum?
NGA: Well, she said to me that what I need to do is to go to a lawyer. So I went to lawyer, then the lawyer said that what I should do is to claim asylum.

Others did not claim asylum immediately because they feared the consequences of revealing themselves to the authorities. As one Albanian man commented:

‘Yeah…I arrived with false identity cards from Italy. I used to live five months like this. But honest work and honest life, how you can say – I know that England does not accept this, I'm out from the rules from England. If I come here and I don’t see nothing positive to claim my asylum, I'm not going to do it. They ask me, “Why didn’t you do this straight away, claim asylum? In the day when you were in police station?” And I say, “I did because you see where I am now? Is this what I accept for asylum? If I come straight away, is going to be the same thing. They close me in detention. That’s why I don’t claim straight away.” I’m not going to do never in my life, never. If I don't know that the place is safe for me, personally, I'm not going to claim asylum. It's wrong.’

One category in Table 4.2 that encompasses relatively few respondents is that of people in breach of their entry conditions. In all five cases, this meant they were working illegally in the country whilst technically legally resident. However, it should be noted that a number of those classified as ‘illegally resident’ for other reasons (notably those asylum-seekers who had gone underground) were also working illegally. For example, all but two respondents who had applied for asylum (one Moldovan and one Indian) had worked, many of them illegally. One Nigerian woman identified her frustration in the length of time taken by the Home Office to decide on her asylum claim, as the major motivation for purchasing and then working with a
false Italian identity card (even though technically she should have been able to work after six months anyway):

‘I have going through the stress staying at home for four years doing nothing I decided to work with false documents […] I then went to apply for a cleaning job. I was so pleased. When I went there they didn’t ask me for no identification nothing. Just gave me the job they said I should start work.’

Others, like this Ukrainian man, bought false documents almost immediately in order to access the job market:

‘It’s difficult to work in this country without a passport that has a valid visa. I needed a false passport. So then I went to […] market and looked around for a passport. But it was hard because everyone was very fearful about giving out information. So I talked to people, and then they found me. They could look at me and identify me as a Ukrainian. They got me a Dutch passport which I paid a lot of money for. It was very expensive – because they put my photo in the passport. I don’t remember how much I paid. Now I was ready. Ready for work.’

This strategy of seeking a European passport or identity card was common, with different respondents obtaining Dutch, French and Italian identities. In contrast, no respondents recounted obtaining a false UK passport, although some had used false National Insurance numbers or a friend’s bank account. One Ghanaian recounted how he was arrested because he had been using someone else’s bank account to receive his wages,

‘We were stopped by the police because we did not have seatbelts on. Questioned and then arrested because I had told them one name, and then they found this other person’s bank card on me. This man had already returned to Ghana and left the card for me (or someone like me) to use, with my friend’.

Overall, although over half of those interviewed had entered the country illegally, many had then passed through a period of legal residence as an asylum seeker before becoming ‘undocumented’ once again. This complexity has influenced outcomes in terms of how these migrants have supported themselves, and how they have impacted on the UK economy. Both of these issues, and the significance of the use of false passports or other documents in terms of work experience are considered in the next chapter.

**Summary**

This section has explored why respondents chose to come to the UK, how they came here, and how they have ended up residing in the UK illegally. The most important reasons cited both for leaving countries of origin, and for choosing the UK, was the possibility of safety (both from ‘persecution’ and more generalised violence) and ease of finding work in a strong economy. Four out of 83 respondents had not exercised any choice over destination, as an agent had decided this. In general, those travelling from longer distances had travelled by air, and those from the periphery of Europe had travelled by lorry, although respondents from China, Bangladesh and India formed an exception to this pattern, having travelled using rather circuitous routes that often included land and air journeys. The sample included both those who had knowingly come to the UK to live and work illegally, and those who had become illegal during their stay.
5. Means of support and role in the UK economy

The purpose of this chapter is to consider how respondents had supported themselves in the UK, and especially their experiences of employment. The aim is to provide an assessment that can inform calculation of the fiscal contribution of the population (e.g. extent of tax payments, use of welfare benefits), their role within the labour force, and their impact on existing workers and employers. The following chapter will supplement this with information about consumption of other public services.

Experiences of work

One of the major economic pull factors identified in Chapter 4 by respondents was the perceived employment opportunities in the UK. These were anticipated to be far greater in diversity of profession and ease of access and much more lucrative than in the respondent’s country of origin. As a result, a total of 63 of 83 respondents reported working whilst in the UK.

Of the 20 respondents were not working, three respondents, two from Jamaica and one from South Africa, were studying. They were supported either by friends or family or their own funds. The remainder were unemployed. Five of these did not work because they were tourists, all of whom had family in the UK. Three respondents reported that they did not work because they were illegally resident. Of these, a Nigerian man stated that he depended on the charity of a Welsh family that had taken him in, an Ivorian said that he did not work but stayed at the addresses of the people that he had been given by his agent and friends in Côte d’Ivoire, and an Indian respondent claimed that although he had been arrested at a raid on a factory he had not been working because he had only recently arrived. Up to that point, he had relied on his religious connections in Leicester to survive. Finally, eight respondents had gone underground after submitting asylum claims, but had not worked. Most of these were able to rely on family, friends and contacts made in the UK during their period of residency. Of the total not working, just three were claiming benefits illegally, whilst three had brought their own funds.

Finding work

Unsurprisingly, those who had found work in the UK were concentrated in unskilled occupations (Figure 5.1). A total of 25 respondents had found manual labouring jobs in factories, construction and agriculture at various times during their period of residence, whilst eight had worked in shops or petrol stations, often doing packing or other less visible jobs. Five respondents had found work painting and decorating, and another five as cleaners or hotel chambermaids and one care assistant. Six were working in bars and clubs, one as a DJ. The category ‘other’ in Figure 5.1 includes two nurses, a musician, a student and one who had worked in various categories.

One of the more prominent occupations found by respondents was work in restaurants, which mainly involved kitchen jobs. Overall, 20 respondents were working in restaurants, mostly in unskilled jobs, although some also received training as chefs. Only two of these reported having worked in the restaurant trade before coming to the UK. All of the Chinese respondents found restaurant jobs through the Chinese community, generally with the help of the agents that had facilitated their journey to the UK. One respondent said he had found a job in Scotland through a Chinese language newspaper, but that he had no working papers and none were requested. Another Chinese respondent found a job in London that was arranged by an agent. This involved working in a restaurant kitchen for an Indonesian Chinese employer initially, and subsequently in many different Chinese restaurants from London to Birmingham. This respondent commented on how hard the work was, and how in order to change jobs, he sometimes had to go through a middleman and pay £300.

However, more generally, individuals found jobs through contacts or by asking around:

‘easy, easy, I find a lot of jobs. That’s why I forgot to asylum seek, and they pay for your house…’
(Algerian respondent)

‘Well, you enquire at your friends if there is anybody that needs work so you get it through your friends or through agencies and so forth’. (Jamaican respondent)
‘I walked around asking “can you give me a job, can you give me a job, can you give me a job?”’
(Pakistani respondent)

Figure 5.1 Occupations of respondents whilst illegally resident in the UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled manual</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business/self-employed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No data</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ survey. Valid cases=83.

Overall, 19 of those working illegally found jobs through fellow nationals and family members. For example, an Indian respondent commented:

‘I spent one year living with my sister and six months living with my other sister. I looked after their children and helped them in the shop. I was just part of the family.’

Several had also arranged the jobs prior to entering the country, such as the Polish respondent highlighted in Chapter 4. Meanwhile, the Chinese were not the only nationality to have work arranged for them by agents, as one Ghanaian respondent revealed:

‘I made a report, that she (his employer) always brought people from Ghana, ask them to pay £5,000 and work somewhere as they like. She get them National Insurance, and everything. And they work. She ask me to do the same thing.’

Constraints posed by illegality

As noted in the previous section, a large number of respondents remarked on the ease with which it was possible to find work in the UK. However, the majority were working without proper documentation, placing limits on the kind of work they could find. Overall, 13 respondents had at least started working legally as they had applied for permission to work after six months as an asylum seeker, whilst three more had entered the country with work visas. Of the remainder, the vast majority were paid cash-in-hand, with just ten using a false identity to receive payment through a bank account. Most people also referred to problems in getting employment without a National Insurance number. These could be purchased for those who entered illegally. Those who had absconded on an asylum claim or had previously been given leave to work found the process far easier.

A Jamaican respondent, who had overstayed a tourist visa, summed up the difficulty of finding appropriate employment whilst illegally resident:

‘I was working. But it was difficult to work because I was in the country illegally so it is difficult to get a job. I ended up doing painting and decorating jobs for people – putting in wooden floors, that kind of thing. They always paid me cash. I always found the jobs though…’
More specifically, many respondents mentioned poor working conditions as a particular problem, across a range of sectors of employment. Most were expected to work a minimum of eight hours per day, and some as many as 18 or 20 hours per day, often without regular days off, and sometimes even without receiving payment. For example, a Polish respondent who was working in a factory commented:

‘It was sometimes ten sometimes 15 hours per day. Some of my colleagues worked 18 or 20 hours per day. It depended on an employer. Sometimes I felt like a slave labourer. If my employer asked me to work 15 hours, I had to do it. If I refused, I would lose my job.’

Similarly, a Russian respondent who had gone underground after claiming asylum remarked:

‘…I worked all of the time. In the afternoon I worked at a factory. And in the evening I worked at a hotel. I used to work 74 hours a week […] I had no days off at the hotel, and Sunday off at the factory. I worked like this for two years.’

A particularly bad situation was highlighted by a Ghanaian respondent, who had come to the UK on a legitimate work visa, but then found that his employer refused to pay him, so that he was unable to leave or move on at the end of his contract:

‘[She] broke the contract. She never paid me. She is not paying me. I have been in Citizen’s Advice in Sittingbourne several times to sort me out of that problem, but they don’t do anything about it…She promised me she would be paying me £250 per week.’

This did appear to be an isolated incident, in its seriousness and the fact that he took the matter up with the CAB and the police. Other respondents reported not being paid, or being arrested by immigration authorities in raids the day before they were due to receive wages for periods of one week to one month.

One Chinese respondent claimed that he was not paid very much because everyone at the Chinese supermarkets where he worked knew that it was illegal for him to work. Two cases were found in which employers had failed to pay wages at all for a period. One Polish respondent working in the agricultural sector in East Anglia spoke of the difficulties people often face in relation to their work supervisor, who may be a sub-contractor for a particular farm, and finds employees in the informal labour market

‘Always [he] tells you he will pay you in a week or two because he has problems. You carry on working, but you don’t have your money. It happened to me’.

These problems are perhaps most acute where employers or sub-contracts are either closely linked to the agents who helped people to travel, or organise that travel themselves. In such cases, individuals have few routes through with to complain about or ameliorate their situation. Nonetheless, such situations were rarely explicitly reported. The only interviewee who did take legal steps towards extracting payment from his employer – a Ghanaian weaver – was arrested when he approached the police. He believed that his employer had informed the police that he had overstayed his work visa when she realised that he was going to make a formal complaint.

Rates of pay

In total, information on rates of pay were provided by just 30 respondents, reflecting the fact that wage rates remained a difficult subject to broach in a single interview. Of those for whom information was available, over half were being paid below the minimum wage, and seven at less than £3 per hour. Individual respondents were often keen to stress the low level of their wages, and the poor conditions under which they were working. A Romanian respondent noted:

‘A couple of people in the flat worked in construction…They were not well paid. They were always paid like foreigners. Always paid less than the English people were. Working eight to 12 hour days, and receiving £125-150 per week.’

38 There was no discernible pattern of those willing or unwilling to discuss information about their wages or conditions of work.
Similarly, a Pakistani respondent reported:

‘Initially during this period I was working for £2-3 per hour. Part of my earnings went to pay the rent, but the rest went on drugs. I was doing ironing work eight hours per day, five days per week. I had to pay the tax as well – but I’m not sure if they paid it. But that was their explanation for the wages being so low.’

However, the small numbers make it difficult to discern trends of whether factors like sector of employment, gender or legal status made a significant difference to rates of pay.

No particular pattern could be discerned in which a particular employment sector paid worse than any other. For example, one restaurant worker reported a wage of under £3 an hour, but others reported wages in excess of £5 per hour. A similar pattern was seen in cleaning and construction. Only factory work showed more consistency, with four of the seven workers in this sector reporting wages at the level of the minimum wage, although even here, one worker reported a lower wage.

Nor was it evident that women were being treated significantly worse than men. Of the ten women interviewed, two were working in agriculture, two in restaurants, two in cleaning jobs, and one as a nurse. Only three of these women reported on the level of their wages, but all of these were being paid in excess of £5 an hour.

There was, though, some limited evidence that legal status – or more precisely, whether individuals had documentation (legal or not) did make a difference to wage rates. Out of 24 respondents working illegally for whom information on wage rates was available, 14 were being paid below the minimum wage. Of these, 12 were being paid cash in hand because they had no documents. In contrast, four of the six respondents who were working legally, and for whom information on rates of pay was available, were earning above the minimum wage. Moreover, five out of seven respondents who were working illegally but had false passports or ID cards were also earning above the minimum wage – in some cases significantly above it. This helps to explain why several respondents bought illegal documents, not for purposes of entering the country, but after arrival in order that they could work.

Skill utilisation

Educational attainment and skill levels were relatively high in the sample. Six individuals had worked in a professional capacity in their country of origin, 11 had a trade or skill, and almost half the sample had either attended university or completed secondary school (see Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3). Nonetheless, as noted above, unskilled work has been the norm for this group whilst in the UK, with few finding work either commensurate with their qualifications, or even in the field in which they had previously worked.

One respondent with professional training had found work in the same field in the UK, as a nurse. She had come from Nigeria in the early 1990s, and said she was told she had been illegally resident in the UK for six years at the time she was detained. As far as she was aware, she was a qualified nurse and had a work permit, a permanent contract with the NHS and had worked in a variety of different hospitals, working her way up to become a senior nurse in charge of acute wards. The other respondent classified as ‘professional’ was a Kenyan woman working as a nursing assistant had stayed on in the UK for four years after her asylum claim was refused. She had not worked as a nurse in Kenya, and had found work by buying the necessary papers for £300. She had worked in various hospitals as a nursing assistant, as well as in private residential homes as a care assistant.

A few other respondents were employed in areas that broadly matched those in which they had been working in their country of origin. Two people with experience of working in bars in their home country reported finding similar work in the UK. A car mechanic had found work at a car factory, a chef had found similar employment in London, and a Ghanaian craft weaver had been employed to demonstrate his trade to schools in Kent (though he claimed he was never paid). In addition, a Nigerian doctor who claimed to have come to the UK for training and to pass conversion exams said he had had carried out volunteer work at a hospital in Birmingham. His understanding was that he was legally in the UK, and indeed was about to accept a permanent job here. However, he had experienced some visa problems that he thought his solicitor had sorted out; clearly this had not happened, as IND detained him when he contacted them to renew his visa.
In contrast, many respondents – particularly those without documents – said that their jobs were very hard work and badly paid, and that often these jobs were the ones that no one else was prepared to carry out. For example, a former factory owner was working in a kitchen, whilst the owner of a substantial farm in Pakistan was a painter and decorator. Nor had most of those with trade skills fared any better. Thus a female accounts clerk was working as a cleaner; an IT technician was working cleaning cars in a garage, whilst a telephone engineer was doing menial jobs in a kitchen.

The nurse mentioned above was an exception as of the five remaining professional workers, one doctor was working on a construction site and one teacher was working in a restaurant. The other two were not working at all and did not state that they were looking for work. Meanwhile, the sentiments of many were summed up by the frank comments of a Pakistani civil servant who had ended up stacking shelves at a supermarket:

INT: OK, what kind of job did you end up doing?
PAK: [laughs] Very fantastic jobs. My God, that was cruelty not jobs.
INT: Like what?
PAK: Like they were f**king shit jobs, yeah. Stacking and cleaning and moving.

These sentiments were expressed in less forthright language by a number of respondents.

Fiscal impact: public welfare benefits and tax payments

Although a clear majority of those interviewed had found work in the UK, not everyone interviewed had been able to find work. Indeed, failure to find work was itself in some cases perceived as being related to a lack of documents, as expressed by one Nigerian:

‘Living without documents in this country is very difficult. I had to stay at home all the time, every day. I did nothing and just got more and more depressed’.

A total of 20 respondents did not appear to have found work, but only one of these reported living on state benefits whilst illegally resident, with the vast majority relying instead on help from family or friends. This is perhaps unsurprising, since no respondent could legally claim welfare benefits whilst their status was illegal. Nonetheless, at least 50 respondents had passed through a period in which their stay was regularised, during which time they could claim benefits. In particular, for those who had claimed asylum, welfare benefits were theoretically available through the National Asylum Support System (or prior to 1999, directly from the Department of Social Security), along with housing and other support. In this context, it is perhaps surprising that only 33 respondents mentioned that they had received welfare benefits. One Nigerian respondent reported not claiming benefits even though he was entitled to do so, because his uncle was supporting him. Another Indian respondent had declined benefits because he feared that this might affect whether his asylum claim was accepted or rejected:

‘I didn’t want to be a burden on the government. I wanted to get permission to stay here.’

In total, 12 asylum-seekers who were eligible to claim benefits did not report doing so. One reason for this might be found in the fact that 18 of the 33 who did claim benefits specified a number of problems, relating mainly to housing quality or location. For example, one Albanian respondent commented:

‘Where I used to live, the hotel had a very bad condition and everybody used to leave. The manager of the hotel was a thief and he stole so many goods.’

Such comments were not uncommon. In addition, receipt of welfare benefits for asylum-seekers imposed a number of conditions on where the individual could live. For example, a Romanian respondent had left the hotel in Dover where he was sent after claiming asylum and went to London to live with friends. As a result, he did not receive housing benefit or any other benefits, and slept on the floor of a two-bedroom flat with five other people for three years. However, in this case, he was prepared to forego benefits because of the freedom it gave, relying on his cousin to help him because he had a work permit.
It was not possible from the interviews to calculate the likely level of income tax and National Insurance contributions (although it can be assumed that all of those working were paying VAT on purchases). It is likely, however, that almost half of those working were contributing in this way, as they had either started working legally as an asylum seeker or on a regular work visa, or were using false documentation that made them appear legal.

**Remittances**

Despite the relatively poor wages, conditions and types of work highlighted earlier in this chapter, it is clear that a number of respondents were able to send money to their country of origin. However, it is worth noting that 18 of the 83 respondents indicated that they were able to send money back to their families. This figure probably underestimates the true level of remittances, as many would have been unwilling to reveal that they were sending home money at a time when they had recently been arrested for breaking immigration rules. Where it was mentioned, the sending of remittances took various forms. Some commented that they sent money home through people who were travelling back to the country, whilst others sent money by post. Some of these payments were regular (i.e. four to six times a year), whereas some appeared to be one-off payments.

An example of a regular remitter was a Pakistani respondent, the former factory owner who was working in a kitchen:

‘I was paid £300 each week, and I worked 50-52 hours per week. I remitted money every month to my family. Normally through someone - about £800 four times a year.’

Moreover, for some this remittance appeared to be crucial for the survival of the family:

‘I called my mother to know what problems were at home. I started sending her money to regularise her situations. I wasn’t able to send money from any other countries. As she has diabetes, I had to send money for medicine. After four months my dad died. When my dad died, my responsibility become so big. And I couldn’t at that time have success to do all that was expected of me ... sending money, helping people to eat, helping my young brother to go to school ... ’ (Senegalese respondent)

‘Yeah, I send a grand a year to my parents because we had problems because of my brother he make all stupid things in Russia. They wrote we need some money, just for that case.’ (Russian respondent)

Four respondents commented that they would have remitted money if they could have done, identifying the high cost of living in the UK as a major obstacle to building savings. Meanwhile, in a number of other cases where remittances were not mentioned, the respondent had already identified the loss of family as part of the reason for leaving their home country.

**Summary**

Despite the fact that a majority of our sample had claimed asylum in the UK, and cited the lack of safety at home as their main reason for leaving, nonetheless work in the UK represents an important issue, and was seen by our sample as relatively easy to obtain. In some cases, employment was clearly the reason why individuals had come to the UK, such that a period of (illegal) migration formed part of a strategy designed to earn money to support themselves or relatives at home. In a number of other cases, though, working in the UK was also a necessity for survival, with individuals being prepared to take a range of jobs, often well below the skill or training level they had achieved before coming to the UK. The experience of respondents in the job market represents one level on which this group experienced exclusion as a result of their lack of legal status. Examples of payments below the minimum wage were common, even if they did not constitute a majority of cases. There were also many examples of long working hours and poor conditions, although relatively few examples of more blatant exploitation. Despite this, a number of respondents were able to remit significant sums to their families back home, and it can be reasonably estimated that half of the sample had paid income taxes either during a period of legal work, or because they were working on false documents.
This chapter aims to examine the experiences individual respondents had whilst living in the UK with regard to the ‘community’, harassment, and use of public services. However, it must be stated from the outset that the experience of most in the survey was that they moved in and out of legality. A typical example might be, entering the country illegally and waiting some time before claiming asylum, and then going underground when asylum had been refused, reverting back to their initial illegal status. It is important to understand the impact of this dynamic between illegal and legal status. Whilst it was not possible for the survey to draw conclusions of the social cost incurred by such illegal residents, the survey attempted to ascertain the extent to which illegality (current, threat of, and/or history) might alter the experience of each respondent in terms of ability to access services, create social networks and identify a livelihood strategy.

Location and integration

Finding a place to stay

In recent debates on the situation of asylum-seekers, central government and local authorities in London have identified concentration in the capital as a major issue. Dispersal under the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act was designed to address this. However, despite the fact that a majority of those interviewed in this study had claimed asylum, most had still travelled first to London, with a large number of these remaining in the city throughout their stay. Thus, in total, 52 respondents had lived in London at some stage during their stay, whilst 31 had stayed in London for their entire period of residence in the UK (Figure 6.1). Many explained that they had friends or contacts in London, or felt that London would provide the best opportunity for work and lower visibility.

Figure 6.1 Location of respondents whilst illegally resident

Source: Authors’ survey. Valid cases = 83.

Amongst the asylum-seekers interviewed in this study, a number had opted to turn down accommodation provided by the Home Office if it meant that they could not stay in London. In some cases, this was because of confusion over arrangements for dispersal, as recounted by a Romanian asylum seeker:

'We went to Croydon and claimed asylum. After a few weeks I was sent to a hotel in Kent – only me, my wife was allowed to stay in London. I spent three to four days alone here but no-one contacted me about what was going on so I left the hotel and returned to London.'
However, other asylum-seekers without family or contacts were happy to be relocated, such as this Kosovan man:

‘Then I stayed for 15 days in a hotel without talking to anyone. There was no one. This was in Muswell Hill… I was transferred to Birmingham and I lived in Perry Barr and Handsworth. To start with I lived in Perry Barr in a hotel. And then I met lots of friends from Kosovo and Albania – living in Smethwick, West Birmingham.’

Some asylum-seekers also chose to move out of the city they had been living in when they went underground. For example, one Chinese respondent whose asylum claim was refused after six months kept reporting until he exhausted the appeal process. He then moved to Scotland to avoid deportation.

However, more generally, the main motivations for moving to different cities were for employment, to be with or visit friends and family or for study. For one Pakistani respondent, this involved a move back to London:

‘... because there were no jobs in Manchester – because no university, no degree, no funds, no money. So I came to London because I knew some people here.’

Similarly, a Ukrainian respondent had moved back to London, but then on to Manchester:

‘They sent us to a hotel where we lived for a few weeks […] We left and went to London. We knew there was Ukrainian club in London, we lived in that club for just over six months. And then we learnt that there was a similar club in Manchester – and it was much bigger. And from the Manchester club we were provided with a home. Somewhere we could live. We were also supported by them giving us food. And to some extent the church provided us with financial support.’

Clearly the choice of location by respondents was also influenced by factors that contributed to their integration within a local community – whether of UK nationals, other residents with similar status (e.g. other asylum-seekers or illegal residents), or others from their country of origin. Data presented in Figure 6.2 show that of these different ‘communities’, co-nationals were clearly the most important, being mentioned by over two thirds of all respondents as people with whom they interacted on a regular basis. However, religion was also important for some respondents, with nine respondents identifying religious groups as their source of material or emotional support and/or as a way of meeting people. No mention was made of NGOs, although it seems likely that groups in the voluntary sector would have assisted some in finding accommodation. This may reflect a weakness in the methodology.

Figure 6.2 Integration/interaction with different communities whilst illegally resident

![Graph showing integration/interaction with different communities](image-url)
Integrating in the ‘community’

Of the 66 that identified co-nationals as their main source of support or method of integrating into British society, a very diverse pattern emerged in terms of how these networks and contacts were formed. A total of 19 respondents stayed with relatives or family members who often already had citizenship or residency here and had been in the UK for many years. Similarly, those with friends already in the country made contact after arrival, as with this Kosovan man:

‘And then I moved to Birmingham and then to Coventry to see friends – people I knew from when I lived in Kosovo. They supported me.’

Sometimes new arrivals were contacts given by other friends. One Albanian man described how he obtained his release from Oakington to live in London:

‘...I had to find a friend and some work in London [...] and I chose to stay in London with this very good friend of mine [a contact gained from another Albanian whilst living at the Oakington Centre] – well he is a good friend of mine now.’

It was clear that for a large number of respondents, contact with co-nationals was extremely important, as they were able to assist in developing coping strategies for illegal residency in the UK, and were seen as a source of information on the UK legal system and other services available. Such contacts also provided an opportunity to network and build social capital, and were often available on arrival.

In cases where people arrived with no friends or relatives who could help, the agent who had facilitated their travel might provide contacts:

‘The agent directed me to a Pakistani living in Upton Park, someone who the agent said would help me. This man in London arranged my accommodation. I had a room in a flat that I shared with five other Pakistanis, we shared three rooms.’ (Pakistani respondent)

However, even where individuals had no such ‘leads’, efforts were often made to find co-nationals. Thus a Ghanaian respondent described arriving in the UK, and then looking for people who looked like they were from his country to ask them for advice and help:

‘I arrived and first went to Waterloo, London. I identified a fellow Ghanaian and he agreed to put me up for some time. From the outset I did nothing but stay at home in his house in Woking. I lived there for approximately two months without work.’

Similarly, a new Kosovan arrival reported:

‘I saw someone who looked Kosovan – he was young maybe 16 or 17. I was 19. I asked him for help and he invited me to stay in his house overnight. I couldn’t eat I was so tired. The next day he took me to an address to go to DSS.’

A Tamil respondent (excluded from the sample as he did not end up residing illegally in the UK) had even looked for fellow Tamils amongst the airport personnel.

Meanwhile, approaching people of the same religion was also an important strategy for some respondents, which did not necessarily depend on pre-existing connections and networks from the country of origin. For example, a Bangladeshi man did not know anyone prior to entering the UK reported:

‘When I came here I didn’t know what to do. So I went to a mosque where I met someone.’

Similarly, an Indian respondent had found help in the Sikh community:

‘I met another person here, I explained my problem to him, he took me home. He kept me for a couple of days, and again left me at the temple. Well, anyway, I ended up at the Sikh temple again [...] Another person I met who was from near my place back home [...] and introduced me to a lawyer who used to come to the temple [...] Then I met a few people from the congregation who had
come there to pray, and they advised me to accompany them to a factory where they were working…’

Several respondents identified religion as an alternative to forging relationships among other co-nationals, where this was potentially harmful or uncomfortable. For example, one Nigerian remarked:

‘I don’t like mixing up with [Nigerian] people, the only people I like mixing up is the people in the church.’

Meanwhile, an Algerian respondent explicitly contrasted fellow Muslims with fellow Algerians:

‘I have been living with other Muslims from India – I don’t want to have anything to do with other Algerians as they would show me the wrong things to do.’

Meanwhile, 33 respondents mentioned that they had a level of social interaction with UK nationals, although this sort of integration appeared to be a feature of those who had stayed in the UK for substantial periods of time. Most began through making contacts among co-nationals and then meeting UK nationals as their English improved or they became more accustomed to UK society. A total of 20 respondents had partners who were UK nationals, or had married UK citizens. Five respondents also commented on having good relationships with UK colleagues at work, who became friends and sources of support to the respondent.

Finally, some respondents had contacts with fellow workers from a range of different nationalities. This appeared particularly prevalent amongst Central and Eastern Europeans engaged in farm-work, where labour gangs were commonly composed of people from a range of nationalities. Meanwhile, a number of African respondents chose to associate with others from the African continent, regardless of their particular nation or region of origin.

Experiences of discrimination and harassment

Experiences of discrimination and harassment were a common theme in interviews, although information was not obtained systematically, so it is difficult to draw broader conclusions. In total, just over half (44) of all respondents mentioned experiencing harassment in the UK, with the majority attributing this to the activities of the police. Generally this was immediately prior to their being detained, which could partially explain respondents’ negative perception of police activities. This is explored in more detail in Chapter 7.

However, it was not just the police or immigration authorities that had caused difficulties for interviewees. In addition to harassment at work, which was discussed in Chapter 5, harassment was also referred to in other contexts. For example, 11 respondents talked of fear of other co-nationals. Typically this was related to their asylum case and the events that led to leaving their country of origin:

‘I knew that lots of people from my country were around when I was in London, and sometimes there was fear, I would not say that I lived in complete freedom. I do not know where these people lived, but … I saw them and I thought that they might cause me problems because of the problems back home.’ (Bangladeshi respondent)

‘Sometimes people are afraid to talk to people from their country because of the danger.’ (Kosovan respondent)

Others expressed concern that their interaction with others from their own country was overshadowed by their illegal status. A small number of respondents had experienced harassment from locals. Meanwhile, three of the five Chinese respondents, one Jamaican, and one Polish respondent had experienced harassment from agents whilst resident in the UK39. For the Chinese this was generally related to the fact that they still owed the agent money for their passage to the UK. Some had received threatening telephone calls and one had been kidnapped. One Chinese respondent spoke of how he was tricked by a Cantonese person at the airport when he arrived, to whom he had to pay US$300 for his release. Disturbingly, another Chinese man became involved in the kidnapping of a fellow Chinese migrant, in order to earn the money he needed to pay back his own loan. Meanwhile, a Jamaican woman commented more generally that irregular migrants were ‘prey’ to people who take advantage of their vulnerable position:

39 In addition, one Indian respondent reported harassment from an agent en route to the UK.
‘It’s not people want to be dishonest, not a people want to live a life full of lies, not everyone can do that, it’s not everyone who wants to be in drugs or sell drugs, but people will find loopholes to escape their conditions wherever they are…’

**Figure 6.3 Harassment whilst illegally resident**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience of harassment</th>
<th>Agents</th>
<th>Locals</th>
<th>Co-nationals</th>
<th>Police</th>
<th>Harassment not reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ survey. Valid cases =83.

**Use of public services**

In this section, experiences of using a range of public services in the UK are explored, again based on the responses provided by those interviewed. It should be noted that systematic questioning on these issues did not take place across the whole sample, such that the instances of problems in accessing particular services should be considered illustrative rather than necessarily representative. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that in relatively free-flowing discussion of the use of public services in the UK, most respondents had accessed legal services, followed by welfare benefits and education, with the demands placed on the health service appearing to be least.

**Legal services and immigration processes**

A high level of recourse to legal advice is perhaps not surprising in a population that has been detained. In practice, a total of 67 respondents reported receiving legal advice at some time during their stay in the UK, of whom 16 had consulted a legal representative only at the time they were detained. Of the remainder, nine made it clear that they had not received legal advice at any stage, even after they were detained, whilst a further seven (most of them people who had overstayed on visitor visas) did not specify whether they had had legal advice or not.

Perhaps more interesting than the total recourse to legal advice was the extent to which legal issues had proven problematic for respondents. For 26 individuals, no problems were identified either with their treatment by the Home Office or by their legal representative. However, over half of those who had received legal advice had nonetheless experienced a problem either with the Home Office, or with their legal representative, or with both. For example, of 43 respondents who reported legal problems involving their interaction with the Home Office, six said they had received misleading, conflicting or confusing advice from Immigration Officers. In at least two cases, this was cited as the main reason an individual had gone underground before the completion of his or her asylum claim. For example, a Ghanaian respondent commented:
'In 1997 I received a communication from the Home Office that invited me and my wife to go for an interview. We went and were interviewed separately and around one month later, I received another letter inviting just me to go for interview alone. But I had to phone to postpone it as I was unwell. The next letter I received was a refusal of my marriage application. No reason was given. The Immigration Officers told me that they would remove me from the UK pending on my asylum application, and they also revoked my work permit. I showed this letter to the solicitor and he appealed against the decision. But I didn't hear anything about this. There was also no decision made about my asylum claim.'

Similarly, a Russian respondent said:

‘The police officers have been OK - but I am very scared of the immigration officers. They are very different from the police and are full of hatred. When they talk to me, they don't see a human being. They got the job because their government needs them, but they are unprofessional and unskilled. They have very threatening body language – they are just looking for reasons not to believe you.’

(Russian respondent).

Both respondents cited these events as reasons for then choosing to go underground.

In addition, 15 respondents identified the major problem as being a lack of any communication from the Home Office about their case, or because they claimed they were never invited to interview. The following reports were illustrative of the kinds of problems people claimed to have faced:

‘I gave the Home Office my address, and I didn’t have any idea what was happening with my case, because I never received any letter or refusal or anything’. (Albanian respondent)

‘And I kept in touch with my solicitor and the Home Office, I kept asking why I wasn’t getting a response for my [asylum] case. The decision page, it turned out, was missing from my file.’

(Pakistani respondent)

In addition, 32 respondents had experienced problems with their legal representative. Of these, a number described their legal representative as ‘incompetent’, either because forms were incorrectly completed or incomplete, or because the legal representative did not return phone calls/requests by the respondent to see them for advice or to find out what the outcome of their application or appeal was. For example, two individuals reported receiving advice from the legal representative that later negatively affected the validity of their appeal, including the Indian respondent mentioned in Chapter 4, Becoming an “illegal resident”.

In addition, nine respondents reported communication problems between the Home Office and the legal representative; four said that their case had failed as a consequence of the legal representative moving address or ceasing to operate without informing either the Home Office or their client; three respondents experienced difficulties when the legal representative did not carry out their instructions, such as to appeal a decision, a problem that was only discovered when the individual was detained; whilst two respondents had their asylum claim refused as a result of the incompetence of legal representatives, which was then taken by immigration officers to undermine the respondents’ cases.

For example, a Pakistani respondent reported a common story:

‘We were given a list of forms to be submitted in 14 days, asylum application forms. But my solicitor was late in submitting them. As a result I was told that it was “very irresponsible of me for not having submitted them on time”. So my asylum application was turned down for its late submission in March 2000. My solicitor apologised to me, and he lodged an appeal in April 2000. I attended the appeal hearing, and 17 days later in June 2000, the appeal was refused because even this time they had not received a full set of papers. I changed my solicitor for the new appeal with a barrister defending me. I was then given more papers to make an appeal through the tribunal. But three or four days later I was informed that my file had been closed.’
Four respondents had experienced difficulties relating to excessive payments being demanded by a legal representative for his or her services. In total, nine respondents commented on the fact that their legal representatives charged them money, with the sums involved ranging from £60 to over £2000. Although in general, charges were between £200 and £300, much higher charges were often a disincentive to continue with the legal process, as in the case of this Albanian:

‘...the solicitor's trying to charge so much, as if I've been here for 20 years. They asked me last time, quite freshly, “if you want us to work on your immigration case then you have to pay us £1900... Okay, I can see there's plenty of corruption here...tell the truth I was just nearly enough to give up. I started drinking, didn't want to talk to anyone, I didn't see anybody...’

Indeed, there was evidence – though only indirect – that legal representatives had touted for business from a number of respondents in order to collect funding from legal services commission, but with no intention of providing effective representation. However, this is an area that would merit further research, particularly in the context of the fact that franchising for representation of asylum-seekers has now existed for nearly four years.

The following sections relate the experiences of individual respondents in using education and health services. Due to the nature of the sample, it should be specified that respondents related experiences of moving in and out of illegal residence or periods where they were undocumented (depending on perhaps, renewal or changing the nature of their visas; the stage of asylum claim – complicated by legal (mis)advice, and the perceived problems with Home Office communication. Thus problems are reported in the use of services and may or may not correspond to the period of illegal residence.

**Education**

A slightly smaller number of respondents – 26 – mentioned that either they, or their children, had attended classes since their arrival in the UK. Of these individuals, however, a much larger number had faced problems. For example, 15 respondents reported that they experienced problems whilst studying and had to drop out of the course. This was either for documentation reasons – for example delays in processing their application for renewals of their student visas – or, more commonly, because of financial considerations. In particular, a deterioration in economic circumstances could mean being forced to give up classes to return to work, as happened to this Nigerian respondent:

‘I went to college to move on with some education at a Tower Bridge college. Later on when we were running short of monies I drop again and went back to work.’

This respondent was studying whilst claiming benefits as an asylum seeker but due to financial problems (relating to the level of benefit which he found to be too low for surviving in London), he opted out of education, preferring to work illegally.

Similarly, where work became available, or benefits ended, study could simply fall away because of the lack of available time, as this Russian respondent recalled:

‘I study in college first education in Oxford in English and also computers. It was a free study from Oxford Social Security, so when I started my job I left college because I didn’t have time. I tried to do some both, to study and job but it is difficult.’

Although nine individuals had attended classes without experiencing any problems, of these six had studied English when they first arrived in the UK.

Of the 26 respondents that said they had used the education system, the majority did so whilst legally resident. Thus, 11 had attended classes whilst they were asylum-seekers, three had entered the country on study visas, one on a work visa and another three had successfully obtained student visas once inside the UK. Of the remainder, five (an Algerian, Ghanaian, Nigerian and two Ukrainians) had used false documents to get into the education system, whilst three had no documents at all (one respondent from India whose child had attended school, one from Jamaica and one from Poland).
Health

Finally in this section, a total of 28 respondents touched on health as an issue, but just 15 had actually made use of the National Health Service (NHS) since their arrival. Nonetheless, despite (or perhaps because of) this low level of usage, only one respondent had experienced a problem in doing so, even though many were illegally resident in the UK at the time. A further seven individuals confirmed that they had had no need of medical attention during their stay.

The one respondent who had used the NHS and reported a complaint in relation to his treatment was an Algerian man, who recalled that a doctor had shouted at him because he could not explain the problem in English very well. However, six others had held back from seeking medical help because they feared the legal consequences of going to a doctor or hospital without documentation. One respondent from Côte d’Ivoire only sought medical help after he was detained. This was despite experiencing considerable problems with his teeth, which had been broken in Côte d’Ivoire as part of the incident that led him to flee. In addition, five other respondents identified problems with their health, but felt unable to use the health service because of their illegality:

‘My health has been bad but I have been unable to seek help.’ (Pakistani respondent)

The response mentioned by two individuals was to see a pharmacist instead:

‘I could not go to the doctor anyway because I was here illegally. I used to go to the pharmacist and get medication.’ (Bangladeshi respondent)

‘But anyway since I stopped being legal I couldn’t see an NHS Doctor – I knew of private doctors you could see if you needed to. So I would just use a chemist.’ (Russian respondent)

Of the 18 respondents that had used the NHS, nine had used it without documents or with false documents (two had gone ‘underground’ after claiming asylum and one had overstayed on a study visa). None of these had experienced any difficulties. A total of five respondents reported health problems but said they had not gone to a doctor because they were illegally resident.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the experience of living in the UK, and whether the lack of legal resident status influences access to services or integration into the community. On the whole, relatively little use had been made by respondents of public services, and although over half had sought legal advice in relation to their status, many complained of bad experiences in their interaction with either their legal adviser or the Home Office. However, there were relatively few experiences of harassment or intimidation, with a majority of respondents saying they had received support and friendship from others from their own country, and a significant minority reporting positive contacts with UK nationals as well.
7. Detention

The previous chapters have summarised information pertaining to the respondent's motivations and method of entry into the UK, their experiences of living in the UK and use of services. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the issues relating to detention itself. The objectives of the survey were ‘to explore the characteristics, motivations and experiences of members of the illegally resident population, based on interviews in UK immigration detention centres’. The inclusion of this chapter reflects the fact that people’s experience does not end when they are detained. Indeed, many respondents wanted to talk about their experience of detention above all other issues, with some only agreeing to be interviewed in order to recount this experience. Several respondents had been detained, released, and then re-detained though the reasons for this were not explained.

Histories of detention

In Chapter 2, it was noted that the population of immigration detention centres in the UK is relatively fluid, and this relates in part to the fact that detainees are both moved between centres and removed, and in some cases have spent a period of time outside the centres before being re-arrested. A total of 16 respondents had already been detained at least once before their current period of detention in either the same or another immigration detention centre (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1 Experience of detention prior to current detention (multiple responses possible)

A Ghanaian man related a typical experience of detention:

'I was detained for a few days in a police station until immigration arrived. I was informed that I was breaching my landing conditions and I was taken to Harmondsworth and served with a removals letter. Then I told them about my problems at home. And they took me to Oakington where I claimed asylum – I would have done this before but I only found out about it at Harmondsworth; I just knew that I was illegal and should keep low. Then they transferred me to Campsfield.'

Ten respondents had been in prison prior to entering the detention centre. Of these, seven were detained for administrative reasons – sometimes for quite lengthy periods of time – until the Immigration Service could
interview them. One Algerian asylum seeker complained that he had been detained for nearly four months, 12 weeks in a prison in Liverpool and three weeks in Harmondsworth. Two other respondents noted that despite being kept separately from the other prisoners, the prison conditions were much worse than the conditions in the detention centres. A Russian man who had absconded on an asylum claim commented:

'I was sent to HMP Walton. I was there two months before an Immigration Officer came to interview me. I lived in very bad conditions. The detainees were kept separately from the other prisoners but we were still locked in our rooms for 23 hours of every day. They finally brought me here (Harmondsworth) on 25th December 2001.'

In addition, three respondents had spent between one month and three years in prison after being sentenced for offences of arson, actual bodily harm (ABH), and kidnapping. Two of these individuals had been taken straight from the prison to the detention centre, and were awaiting removal. One Chinese man who had completed over three years of a six year prison sentence had then been removed to Harmondsworth, where he had spent a further two years pending deportation.

Seven respondents had spent time in police custody. In three cases, this was either at the port where they claimed asylum, or nearby. For example, a Russian man commented:

'We were arrested [at Harwich] and detained at the police station for five days. We were arrested because we were illegal entrants, they said. But we claimed asylum during these five days, so eventually we were released.'

Two respondents were picked up by the police, had claimed asylum whilst in police custody and were later released. Finally, two respondents had spent time in police custody for minor offences, but were then released on bail.

Circumstances leading to detention

Information was collected on how each respondent had been arrested and then detained. In cases where a respondent had entered the UK more than once or had been detained more than once, the information described here relates to the arrest immediately prior to their detention at the centre they were interviewed in. Figure 7.2 provides a summary of this data. Raids at home and at work were generally reported as having been carried out by a combination of police and immigration officers. 'Random' refers to those picked up by police on the street for an identity check and then arrested; 'claiming' refers to those arrested when claiming benefits or when signing on at a police station; whilst 'agency' refers to those who were arrested at an agency that arranges work. Unfortunately, information on the circumstances leading to detention is missing for six respondents from the sample, whilst none of the responses could be independently verified.
Figure 7.2 How the respondent was arrested and detained

![Graph showing how the respondent was arrested and detained]

Source: Authors’ survey. Valid cases=83.

Of the 77 respondents that gave information about their arrest and detention, the largest number (30) were arrested during a raid on their home, or the place where they were staying (Figure 7.2). In 18 cases, respondents reported that the police came to the house and asked for a named individual (the respondent), implying that they were acting on specific intelligence.

A Kenyan woman detainee described a typical scenario:

‘I was arrested at my home at the end of December 2001, Immigration Officers came to my house and were looking for me in particular. They didn’t explain why they were looking for me or how they had information about me.’

Another Nigerian woman commented on how she was arrested by the police at her home address. They had a deportation order for her that dated back to 1996. She stated she was not aware that she was classified by the Home Office as having absconded after the failure of her asylum claim, and had not moved house during her residence in the UK.

The remaining 12 respondents who had been arrested in a raid on their home had been detained more by chance than on the basis of specific evidence. Commonly, the police had come to their home, or a friend’s house, either looking for someone else, or without asking for an individual by name. However, during these raids, the interviewee’s documents and status had been checked by the police, leading to their detention. For example, one Pakistani respondent explained that:

‘The police came looking for a person that I was staying with – I rented a room. They asked for my papers as well and arrested me. They took me to the police station and then here.’

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian man spoke of how Immigration Officers had come to make an inspection of the house, which was known to accommodate asylum-seekers. After a check on his documents, he was arrested, with the reason given being that he did not state at the port of entry his reasons for coming to the UK. This respondent had slept rough for almost three months after entering, and only claimed asylum when he had found out about how to make a claim. His case was still ongoing at the time he was detained.
Often, descriptions of the circumstances of arrest were quite vivid. A Jamaican man described how his ex-wife had informed on him to the police following an acrimonious break-up after six years in the UK one Sunday morning:

‘7.30 in bed, the police bmm bmm bmm open the door up – name? I says yeah, they says “we’re arresting you on suspicion of being an illegal immigrant”. I thought you’re joking, you don’t have to do this, speechless. Girlfreind comes running down, “what’s happening?”, I said “I’m gonna go”. “No, you can’t do that”… took me to the police station. I was like, listen, before I went, I didn’t even know what to take. I grabbed my phone, grabbed my laptop, and whatever money was lying around, probably around 20 quid or something. So off to the police station. Sunday night I was in police custody, Monday morning they took me from Derby down to Gatwick, and informed me that I am on a flight Tuesday morning back to Jamaica. I thought this can’t be happening. Luckily, I don’t know what happened, the flight for Tuesday got cancelled.’

There was a common theme amongst respondents of the surprise of the raid, and the lack of time they were given to gather personal belongings, money and phone numbers. Respondents talked of how they were quickly arrested, taken to a police station and then moved to a detention centre that was often very far away from where they had lived, and where their friends and contacts were. It was clear that those who had been in the country for shorter periods of time, without good social networks, often lost everything in terms of housing and possessions.

Police and immigration service raids took place not only at homes, but also at respondents’ workplaces. In five cases, respondents admitted that they had been working illegally. One Jamaican man explained how he had gone to Derby to cook for a wedding:

‘So I was in the kitchen, cooking so forth and suddenly goes bang. It was the police […] First time I’d been to Derby. Just in the wrong place at the wrong time.’

Yet three other respondents were caught during workplace raids even though they claimed not to have been working at the time. An Indian man related how he had:

‘… met a few people from the congregation who had come there to pray, and they advised me to accompany them to a factory where they were working so I could spend my time and be in their company. During the tea break at ten o’clock, then the police raided and I was caught.’

Similarly, a Bangladeshi man explained how:

‘I just went to visit him [a friend]. He was working in his restaurant. The Immigration Officers came to the restaurant. I went to see a friend who was working in a restaurant, I wasn’t working there, but while I was there the Immigration Officers came. They took me to the police station. They gave me a piece of paper saying that I had applied for asylum, and that I had an interview soon, and that the reason I hadn’t attended was I was waiting for the documents to come.’

In contrast, a total of 21 respondents explained that they were arrested in what appeared simply to be random police checks. Often this involved being stopped whilst driving, and being found in possession of a false driving licence or with other false documents. A Nigerian reported:

‘Well I was driving to work that morning and they stopped me for a routine check. They checked everything in my car, the insurance, the registration number and my driving licence. Everything was OK. They sent my details to the police station to check if I was a criminal, which I am obviously not, and it resulted that I was a missing person.’

A Ukrainian man had a similar experience:

‘I was in a car with a friend. We got stopped by the police and had our documents checked. My friend was driving but we were both found to be here illegally and we were arrested and brought to Campsfield Detention Centre.’

Similarly, a Polish man commented on how he was arrested whilst sitting in a car with a colleague.
A number of respondents said they felt the police had subjected them to harassment. Of the 44 respondents that mentioned feeling harassment in the UK (Chapter 6), the majority (26) attributed this to the activities of the police. Generally this was immediately prior to their detention, which could partially explain the respondent’s negative attitude towards the police. For example, an Albanian respondent described his detention in the following terms:

“Yes it was some seven days ago. I had trouble with the police you know, just friends going out, drinking, some, some some just coming up sort of like … he’s Albanian, he’s Kosovan. … Then the police come and say, “You’re the trouble-maker” and just arrests you. F**king four times. For nothing, yeah – sorry for swearing – you see … They started asking me questions and they sort of arrested me. They kept me in Brixton prison for four days. They put me in cells with crazy people, drugged, addicted …disturbing.’

Other respondents spoke of being pulled over by the police whilst driving for routine checks, a common occurrence prior to detention:

‘The police pulled me over whilst I was driving. They got my details in a routine check and found that I was wanted by immigration.’

Others claimed to have been stopped on the street because they were speaking a foreign language, or in the words of one respondent, for ‘acting like a Jamaican’.

A total of 11 respondents were initially arrested for committing a crime, before being transferred to a detention centre. Of these, two were arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol, two for fighting in public places, three on suspicion of fraud, one for arson and one after a botched attempt to kidnap another immigrant.

However, the general feeling amongst most respondents was that they weren’t doing anything wrong. Even those who were working illegally saw themselves as doing the jobs that no one else wanted to do in order to support themselves. As one Algerian man commented:

‘I been in this country four years, and I have no problems. I don’t fight, I never been to the police station, I just work, go home and that’s it. I’m illegal and I know I’m illegal, but I’m not the first and I’m not the last one.’

Finally, two respondents were arrested after being called for interview by the Home Office. Three more were detained variously when signing at the police station, making an asylum claim at Manchester Airport, and in one case when a Ghanaian respondent approached the police because his employer was refusing to pay him.

**Summary**

This chapter has shown how most respondents were detained during a raid on their workplace or home, although a significant minority were also arrested after being randomly stopped on the street. The experience of being detained was still vivid in the minds of many detainees, and this constituted the main topic on which they wished to talk, as it often involved a situation perceived to be unjust or to involve harassment. It seems likely that any study conducted in detention centres would need to deal with this aspect of detainees’ experiences.
8. Conclusion: looking forward

This report has sought to explore the experience of the illegally resident migrant population in the UK, based on interviews conducted in three UK detention centres. The aim was to explore the characteristics, motivations and experiences of this group, as well as to consider the methodological challenges associated with conducting interviews within detention centres. This final chapter looks forward to whether this research could usefully be replicated or extended, and to the research gaps that remain in relation to this group. However, first, it considers the future from the point of view of those currently in detention.

Future plans of respondents

It is not a straightforward question to ask those in detention what their plans for the future are. Some have not thought of the future. Many are focused on challenging their detention, and remaining in the UK. At the end of interviews that involved harrowing stories, it was sometimes felt inappropriate to ask what the respondent planned to do next. In some cases respondents volunteered that they would commit suicide rather than return to their country of origin. As a result, valid information on future plans was obtained from only 53 respondents (Table 8.1). Moreover, it was not possible to contextualise this information in an understanding of how long people had planned to remain in the UK had they not been arrested, although some respondents did comment that they had only planned to remain a short time – mostly those who accepted now that they would return home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.1 Future Plans</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will return to UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will accept removal and return home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will not accept removal to own country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will accept removal to a third country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not recorded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total cases = 83.

In practice, the overwhelming majority made it clear that they would try to again leave their country of origin. A total of 24 respondents indicated that they intended to return to the UK at the earliest possible opportunity. In eight cases, this was because they had spouses or partners in the UK. For others, the explanation was that they felt that they had accrued skills and experiences that were only relevant in the UK, or that they had invested time and money in acquiring these skills and were reluctant to give up the opportunity of using them. Some respondents continued to contrast the economic opportunities that the UK afforded them with the lack of opportunities in their own country. One Chinese respondent explained that despite having paid over $20,000 to come here in the first place, he would pay the money again to come back, if deported. Meanwhile, an Indian woman expressed the hope that she could return, but next time through legal means:

‘Now I just want to go. I don’t want to stay in this prison. I’ll leave but I will return – I’ll get sponsorship from my mother or my husband. I’ll do it through legal channels.’

Secondly, 12 respondents spoke of their concern that their home country was not safe to live in, without specifically stating that they would seek to return to the UK. A Kosovan respondent commented:

‘I have no idea. Honestly I have no idea. I can’t stay even home, I can’t stay there. My father got killed. My mother is not living there anymore, my sister neither.’

Others explained that they had no one to go back to in their home country. One Nigerian woman tearfully explained:

‘I really don’t want to go back, going back there will give me bad memories. I lost my dad, my baby, there no body, there I do not want to go and coming back, I don’t want to. It’s a bad memory for me, it’s a bad memory. See my child where she was buried. It’s hard, it’s hard, the people will be
looking for me over again. I am just scared, nobody to love me. Most people they kill them along the route, it's hard. And the things have become much bad there now, the killing has even become worse. It's hard, it's hard.’

Similarly a Kenyan woman spoke about not having a home to go back to now because her family are mostly dead and she has not stayed in contact with those still alive. An Albanian man also commented that he no longer knew where his family were:

‘For four years, I don’t know where they is. Maybe they’re somewhere else, but I don’t know. I have not contacted my family for four years. So the first what I done when I go to Albania, to say just hello to them – I don’t want to visit, that’s … horrible.’

As in the explanation of their initial movement to the UK, this country was often described as a safe place to live – safe enough to outweigh the cost and difficulty of getting here. A Kosovan man explained:

‘I will try to return. Don’t know what method I will use. But I cannot stay in Kosovo and I don’t know why they want to send me back. I work, I pay taxes and I have a job. I like it here, it is more safe.’

However, the UK was not the only country that was considered necessarily safe. A Nigerian respondent commented:

‘I just wanted to go somewhere where I could be safe. Now, if I leave the UK, I still want to go somewhere where I can be safe.’

In five cases, respondents specified a different country to which they were now planning to travel. These included France, Ireland and Canada.

A number of respondents (13) did articulate their wish to just go home – indeed, to be returned as soon as possible. Of these, five were from Central and Eastern Europe, whilst the others were from Jamaica (3), South Asia (3) and West Africa (2). One Ukrainian man who had waited a long time for travel documents explained his need to be sent home today, and ‘not always tomorrow!’ Another Jamaican man explained,

‘It’s all been very confusing. I don’t know what is going on. I just want to go home now. When I get there I won’t try this place again.’

Nonetheless, only a minority of the sample indicated that they would remain in their home country. In part, this may reflect the fact that many had claimed asylum, and so felt that it was unsafe to return; in some other cases, this may reflect the fact that they had only been in the UK for a short time, and so had not yet earned enough money or completed their ‘migration project’.

Main findings, and research gaps for the future

In Chapter 1 a series of specific areas of interest to the study team were set out, and it has been possible to provide partial answers to many of the questions raised. Nonetheless, gaps remain.

First, the research has indicated that even amongst a sample group of immigration detainees chosen on the basis of their illegal residence in the UK, rather than the fact that they might have claimed asylum, the primary motivation for leaving their home country, and for choosing the UK, was for reasons of safety. Other principal reasons cited were the availability of work in the UK, and the presence of family and other contacts in the UK. Most did appear to have made a choice to come to the UK: only four had been brought to a destination they had not chosen.

Of course, the prominence of ‘safety’ as a factor may partly reflect the fact that the majority of those interviewed has (also) claimed asylum, and so were citing a reason for coming to the UK that would be consistent with that claim. Nonetheless, ‘safety’ was also mentioned as a reason by some of those who had not claimed asylum. In addition, a number of people cited more than one reason for their migration. Although the interviews conducted were fairly open-ended, they did not really allow the time or space for further exploration of the complex interaction of causes of migration – an issue that remains for further in-depth research.
Second, the majority of respondents had come in an irregular fashion, and many had used the services of facilitators or agents. This most commonly involved payment to be hidden in a lorry to cross into the UK, but in some cases extended to being escorted by an agent from their country of origin across Europe to their destination in the UK. A small group had used agents or facilitators simply to obtain false documentation; an equally small group had pre-arranged employment in the UK through an agent.

Much public and government concern about the activities of migration agents or facilitators focuses on the perceived coercive or exploitative behaviour of these middlemen, reflected in public statements about the need to crack down on ‘people traffickers’. In reality, only six respondents mentioned ill-treatment by agents who had helped them enter the UK illegally – three Chinese respondents, one from Jamaica, one from Poland, and one from India. Indeed, the classic stereotype of ‘people trafficking’, in which vulnerable individuals take on massive debt in order to pay traffickers to bring them to the UK, and then are forced to work for the trafficker, seemed to be limited to three Chinese respondents and one Indian. Most migrants from elsewhere had paid much smaller sums to agents, and appeared much less dependent on them (or not dependent at all) once they arrived.

In practice, paths into illegal residence revealed in this study vary. They include people who hide in the back of a lorry, people who enter the UK using false documents and people who travel with the help of an agent. However, those who are escorted to the UK by agents and those who pay to travel in lorries were found to be much more likely to claim asylum on arrival. This could reflect the fact that agents or facilitators tell their clients to claim asylum on arrival, whereas those who only buy false documents do not receive this advice. It could mean that those travelling on false documents are less likely to be caught. However, it could also be that those fleeing persecution are more likely to travel with agents, or pay for travel in a lorry – as that increases the likelihood of arrival in the UK. Further research would be needed to explore these hypotheses.

Third, despite the fact that a majority of the sample had claimed asylum in the UK, and cited the lack of safety at home as their main reason for leaving, nonetheless work in the UK represents an important issue. In some cases, employment was clearly the reason why individuals had come to the UK, such that a period of (illegal) migration formed part of a strategy designed to earn money to support themselves or relatives at home. In a number of other cases, though, working in the UK was also a necessity for survival, with individuals prepared to take a range of jobs, often well below the skill or training level they had achieved before coming to the UK.

The experience of respondents in the job market represents one level on which this group experienced exclusion as a result of their legal status. Examples of payments below the minimum wage were common, even if they did not constitute a majority of cases. There were also many examples of long working hours and poor conditions, although relatively few examples of more blatant exploitation. Respondents spoke of finding people when they needed help, or of chance encounters with co-nationals or those sharing their language or religion. Particularly during periods of illegal residence, the main strategy appeared to be, in the words of many respondents, going underground. However, the study was not able to draw conclusions about the social impact of the presence of these migrants on host communities, or whether their presence had led to downward pressure on wages or competition with the local workforce. Such information would require work that looked not only at the migrants themselves, but also at local labour markets, although a useful starting point is the observation that many of those interviewed in this study were doing jobs that no local worker seemed willing to undertake.

As a population living effectively ‘outside the law’, it is unsurprising that many of those interviewed should have sought largely to ‘blend in’ with others from their country with legitimate rights to live in the UK. Nor is it remarkable that many had had recourse to legal advice. However, the level of problems experienced in dealing with the legal system does suggest the need for some policy responses. In relation to other services such as health, education and welfare benefits, it is clear that these were also accessed, although often not by illegal residents. Further evidence would be required, perhaps through a more in-depth study than could be achieved in the detention centre setting, to fully assess the extent to which needs in this area are going unmet.
The value of research in detention centres

The final question raised by this study concerns whether a survey of residents in immigration detention centres can provide valid and useful information that is representative of the illegally resident population more generally. Certainly there are some limitations on the applicability of this study. First, there is no clear evidence available on the likelihood of detention for different groups of illegally resident migrants, though it can be observed that those in detention had often been detained in a fairly random fashion, and that they included many who had been in the UK for a long period of time, as well as some who had only just arrived. For this reason, it is impossible to say with certainty that the population in detention is representative of the wider population, since it is not a random selection.

In addition, the circumstances of the interviews conducted, including the location and layout of the room, the fact that an immigration officer waited outside, and the way in which people were selected and called for interview, were not always conducive to an open, honest, in-depth interview. In this regard, the opportunity to conduct repeat interviews, in order to build up trust with respondents, may have improved the reliability of the research data, but proved impossible to achieve in practice. However, these interviews would still have been conducted under time constraints, and the required cooperation with the detention centre staff and immigration services would still have left doubts about the independence of the research team.

Nonetheless, this study does represent a step in understanding the situation of the illegally resident migrant population in the UK. It is rather larger, in terms of the number of interviewees, than has been achieved by most previous studies in the UK, and the sample of migrants interviewed can be regarded as more representative of the illegally resident migrant population as a whole. Given the regular turnover of residents in UK immigration detention centres, it is also feasible to consider the implementation of a regular survey of these residents, although such a survey would require resources and would need to be done with a clear purpose in order to maintain the cooperation of staff and residents themselves. However, it remains essential to place the results of such a study within the context of other forms of research – especially ethnographic – that can help to explore in depth those issues that cannot realistically be explored in the detention centre context. In this sense, and particularly given the high turnover in detention centres that makes any ‘representative’ sample soon out of date, there may be more value in extending understanding of the dynamics of undocumented or clandestine migration through in-depth case studies, than in seeking to refine further the elusive search for a ‘representative’ sample.
Appendix 1: Ethical statement for the survey of detainees

In view of the sensitive nature of this research, the research team feel it essential to espouse the following ethical statement.40

The objective is to obtain qualitative information from 100 in-depth interviews with those currently detained at Detention Centres, who have at one time or another been undocumented whilst resident in the UK. The information collected will be analysed and summarised in a report for the UK Home Office.

Information will be collected that relates to personal aspects of the interviewee’s life pertinent to the survey. Involvement in the survey will be voluntary; and the following procedures are intended to ensure that there is no risk to participants.

- All participants will be assured of their strict anonymity during the recording of the interview, analysis and report.
- The team will not pass on information pertaining to the migrant’s social networks, contacts, safe-houses, or other aspects relating to legal issues etc.
- All interpreters will sign a legal statement ensuring their confidentiality.
- Participants will be made aware that the process will not influence their legal status or case, or have any bearing on the administrative procedures being followed during detention.

An in-depth interview will only go ahead after potential interviewees give their consent based on full information about the nature of the research project (its purpose, methods and outcomes). If the interviewee agrees, this interview will be taped and subsequently transcribed. Original tapes will be held by the Sussex Centre for Migration Research, and will be archived with consent, in anonymous form at the ESRC data archive; a copy will be made available to the interviewee on demand, if time allows.

40 The Belmont Report, a key code of practice on ethics in research, highlights how: ‘certain social groups… [including] the institutionalised, may continually be sought after as research subjects, owing to their ready availability … Given their dependent status and their frequently compromised capacity for free consent, they should be protected against the danger of being involved in research for administrative convenience’ (US Government Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Belmont Report: Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research. Report for the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioural Research at http://www.med.unich.edu/irbmed/ethics/belmont/BELMONTR.HTM
Appendix 2: Semi-structured in-depth interview schedule

- Tape-recorded. (Areas in bold are essential for every interview).

1. General Information: Demographic and socio-economic characteristics
   - Approximate age (18-25; 26-35; 36-45; 46-55; 56-65; 66+)
   - Sex
   - Status (dependants/family? And their location)
   - Place of origin (country…; region?)
   - Religion
   - Profession/training
   - Qualifications/skills
   - Linguistic skills

2. Choice to migrate and choice of destination
   - Decision/choice(?) to migrate. Circumstances prior to departure.
   - Situation in ‘home’ country
   - Ever lived in another country? Where? Why? How long?
   - Location of immediate family? Extended family, i.e. location of brothers/sisters? Friends? First person to emigrate? Travel experience?
   - Kinship map (if appropriate)
   - Motivations for choosing the UK? (e.g. job, friends, study?)

3. How they reached the UK: process
   - Method of transport: air/sea/rail. How many countries did you pass through? Did you break your journey in another country?
   - Group/individual (Accompanied by friends/family?)
   - With/without use of agents – or without naming anyone, did someone help you come to the UK? How do you know them/how and where did you meet them? Payment?
   - Documentation? What legal migration status you had/ categories you moved through before overstaying?
   - First contact with the Home Office/Immigration Authorities?

4. The extent of coercion?
   - Payment to agent? How much and method of payment? When/where?
   - Contracts entered into? Ongoing links with facilitators (i.e. debt?, etc.)
   - If/how entered labour force? Nature of work undertaken and how related to employment in home country. Pay rates, conditions and how work was found.

5. Why they are undocumented?
   - Visa issues
   - Other circumstances – bureaucracy; difficulty in understanding the system
   - The first time as undocumented migrant? Ever detained before (if so where and why)?
   - Describe situation leading up to your detention/arrest. Where and by whom? How long have you been at this detention centre?

6. How illegality made a difference to them
   - How did you find a job? Payment of wages? Wages/earnings?
   - Access to health services?
   - Family (i.e. did children have access to education?); communication with family?
   - Location in the UK? Why and how did you choose/end up there? Did you already have contacts/knowledge of other x-communities in the country? Did these contacts/communities have documents? Cultural or political organisational links?
   - Accommodation? Living conditions? Status within community? Treatment?
   - Other activities?
7. **Their means of support**
   - Social networks/kinship ties. Did you already know of communities in the UK from your country? Did you meet your contacts whilst here? *(Degree of integration)*
   - Payment issues and contact (if any) with traffickers?
   - Finding accommodation.
   - Employment?
   - Social Security payments/vouchers?
   - Access to any services/advice – what services did they use?
   - Legal/NGO/government
   - Safety – did they experience any harassment

8. **Work undertaken**
   - UK employment/occupation history
   - Formal/informal and approximate time periods
   - Earnings
   - Remittances?

9. **What their plans were if they had not been detained**
   - Work/remittances
   - Family and location of family. Plans for anyone else to come and join you?
   - Accommodation/location
   - What will you do when you are returned?
   - Future plans to emigrate again: where?

*Semi-structured interviews: standard information (at end of interview)*

Confirm facts of each case

1. **General Information**
   - Approximate age
   - Sex
   - Place of origin
   - Language
   - Profession/training
   - Status (dependants?)

2. **Journey to UK**
   - Date of arrival – length of time spent in UK until now
   - Port of entry
   - Method of transport
   - Payment to agent? How much/method of payment? When/where? Contracts entered into?
   - Ongoing links with facilitators.

3. **Documentation? Visa issues?**
   - Any periods of time spent in the UK without documents? How long and why?
   - Did you have a visa? When did/does it expire? What sort of visa was it?
   - Was your application for asylum turned down? Current status?
   - What legal migration status you had/categories you moved through before overstaying?
   - Nature of work undertaken and how related to employment in home country. Pay rates, conditions and how work found.
Appendix 3: A statement about the purpose of the research

We wish to obtain your agreement to be interviewed for UK government-funded research into undocumented migration. The research team is from the University of Sussex and is independent of the government. The research is extremely important because it will represent the views of those who have experience of being undocumented whilst resident in the UK.

The interview will be entirely voluntary and fully anonymous. Where necessary and possible these interviews will be conducted in your own language with an interpreter. Interpreters will also sign a legal document to ensure confidentiality.

We will begin by explaining about the research and why we are doing it and answer any of your questions. If you agree to be interviewed we will then ask about your story, how you came to the UK, and your experience whilst here. We would like to understand your experiences in the UK and how integrated into a community you felt whilst resident here. With your agreement this interview will be tape-recorded and later written out. Your name will not be on the tape. Although the interview tape will belong to the research team, we will offer a copy of the tape of your interview to you. The tape will not be released to anyone else, unless you agree to us putting it in a data archive for use by other researchers. Any specific information relating to your family, contacts and so forth will be used anonymously, if at all, in a final report.

This research will not have any impact or relation to your case. We are not able to assist you with queries regarding legal matters or process being followed.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact

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Appendix 4: Interpreter’s anonymity declaration

I, ……………………………………….. (Full name) agree, as a condition of my employment as an interpreter for the Sussex Centre for Migration Research, to treat every interview and all of the information that I receive during these interviews as confidential. I will not discuss or replicate this information in any way. I understand that this will assist in ensuring the anonymity of the interviewees during and after the research process.

Signed: ……………………………………    Date: …………………………..
Appendix 5: The research leaflet

The Sussex Centre for Migration Research is currently conducting a survey of those detained in various detention centres around the UK.

The research consists of in-depth interviews with randomly selected individuals. The qualitative information obtained will be used to write a report for the UK government.

Involvement in the survey will be voluntary – an interview will only go ahead with the informed consent of the individual. The following procedures are intended to ensure that there is no risk to participants.

- All participants will be assured of their strict anonymity during the recording of the interview, analysis and report.
- The research team will treat all the information received as confidential.
- Interpreters will sign a legal statement ensuring confidential treatment of the interview.
- Participants will be made aware that the process will not influence their legal status or case, or have any bearing on the administrative procedures being followed during detention.

If the interviewee agrees, this interview will be taped and subsequently transcribed. Original tapes will be held by the Sussex Centre for Migration Research, and will be archived with consent, in anonymous form at the ESRC data archive; a copy will be made available to the interviewee on demand, if time allows.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact

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