The settlement of refugees in Britain

HOME OFFICE RESEARCH STUDY 141
The settlement of refugees in Britain


A HOME OFFICE RESEARCH AND PLANNING UNIT REPORT

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Foreword

This report documents how asylum-seekers who were accepted as refugees or given exceptional leave to remain in Britain, and their dependents, have fared over the last decade in terms of getting jobs, finding accommodation and settling into the community. Although only a small group, they do face special problems, because their arrival is not usually planned and they are typically unprepared for adjustment to a new language and culture.

For the first time, in this study, we have a national-level systematic picture of the lives of these people. This should enable all agencies that deal with them to target their work to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

The research was carried out by Research and Planning Unit staff in collaboration with the University of Salford, on behalf of the Voluntary Services Unit within the Home Office, which oversees arrangements for the resettlement of refugees. The original idea for the research came from the Refugee Employment, Training and Education Forum, a liaison body attended by both government departments and representatives of the refugee community.

The research was solely concerned with the process of resettling persons who have been allowed to stay in the UK. The report does not, therefore, bear on decisions as to who should or should not be allowed to remain.

ROGER TARLING
Head of the Research and Planning Unit
Acknowledgements

We would particularly like to thank all those people who agreed to be interviewed. We appreciate the time they gave up to do so and their openness in answering detailed questions.

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JENNY CAREY-WOOD
KAREN DUKE
VALERIE KARN
TONY MARSHALL
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Summary

Interviews were undertaken with 263 persons with refugee status or exceptional leave to remain (ELR), of different nationalities, and resident in various parts of the country. Many of the interviews were carried out in the respondent's own language. Only those who had applied for asylum between two and ten years previously were studied. Whether they were accepted as refugees according to the UN Convention or allowed to remain for other reasons was found to make very little difference to their experience of settlement.

No record is kept of the present whereabouts of such admissions, so that contacting relevant people for interview was a problem. To do so the researchers had to rely on the co-operation of agencies dealing with refugees and community groups. Great effort was made, however, to ensure a variety of respondents, and checks against expected distributions in terms of age, gender, status, etc. confirmed that the sample appeared to be quite adequate. The final sample is not, therefore, necessarily representative. Lack of fluent English among many respondents also meant that interviewers had to be specially recruited who spoke different languages. Care was taken, however, that they had the necessary qualifications, and they were carefully trained and supervised by the research team.

Personal characteristics

Most asylum applicants are young single men (in their twenties) when they arrive. By the time of the interviews the majority of those over 30 were married. Of all the households with children, a quarter were headed by a single parent (almost always a woman). Some were still separated from the rest of their nuclear families who had not escaped from the home country.

Employment

Employment was one of the key issues in settlement. The struggle to enter the job market tended to dominate interviewees' concerns. Two-thirds had been in jobs in their home countries, but only a quarter had employment at the time of interview. Of those seeking work, almost two-thirds were unemployed. Only 14 per cent had been regularly earning for most of their time in this country. Their unemployment rate was far above that even for ethnic minorities generally in the inner city. Many of those who were employed considered themselves to be in jobs well below the level for which they were qualified. A high proportion were found to be highly qualified people, many with university degrees and professional backgrounds.
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The main barriers to employment were:

- the break in their careers following the flight from their home country
- lack of work experience in Britain
- insufficient fluency in English.

Language

Language was a major problem. None of the respondents used English as their first language. Less than a third arrived with sufficient English to cope with most situations. Over a quarter had no English at all. Those with fewest problems with the language were the Ugandans, Tamils and Sudanese.

By the time of the interviews, most could speak some English, but a third still had problems, women more often than men. Three-fifths had taken English classes since they arrived, but not everyone who needed to improve their language skills had done so. Those with some grounding in English usually found the classes worked well, but those taking beginners' courses found it more difficult, perhaps because the classes were not geared to those with little educational experience. It is likely, in any case, that the kind of fluency needed to make it possible to get good jobs could only come from practice over time in real social contexts - an experience that those with little English were less likely to be able to obtain.

Education and training

Nearly half of the sample had taken some kind of educational course other than language classes, many of them in order to recoup qualifications gained previously in their home countries but not recognised here. Obtaining educational or professional qualifications in Britain made it easier to find employment, but did not guarantee success. Over a half of those with professional qualifications gained in Britain were still unemployed.

Two-fifths had also taken part in government employment training schemes. They were usually the least well qualified educationally, but their rates of employment after training were the same as those with qualifications who had not taken these courses. The training schemes therefore appeared to be valuable for many of those taking them.

Some also tried to get help seeking jobs by joining government job search schemes. The most popular of these were Job Clubs, used by three-fifths of those who had been unemployed at some time. However, most did not find these schemes helpful and there was no evidence from the research that they made any difference to employment rates.
SUMMARY

Accommodation

Apart from employment the other major issue dominating their lives was that of securing somewhere to live, especially in the early years. Their experiences in this respect were similar to those of any group with a high incidence of poverty or unemployment, although frequently exacerbated by lack of English.

In the first years there was heavy reliance on the favours of relatives, acquaintances and other members of their own community groups to ‘put them up’, often in circumstances that provided them with inadequate space and also put pressures on the families whose lives they had invaded. The single, the young, those living in London and the economically marginal were the most likely to have to survive in such conditions. Many of them moved address frequently in order to shift the burden from one household to another. Over a quarter had had to live rent-free in this way when they first arrived. By the time of the interviews 6 per cent were still living in this way. Over a quarter had also experienced homelessness at some time. While the minority arriving with children immediately became the responsibility of local authorities to provide shelter, the single homeless were largely left to their own devices.

Refugees are more dependent than other sections of the population on the rental market, and the increasing lack of public rental housing was making it difficult to find suitable accommodation. Nevertheless, at the time of interview, over half had found housing in the public rental sector, 37 per cent with local authorities and 20 per cent with housing associations. A further quarter were in privately rented accommodation. Only 12 per cent owned, or were buying, their own homes.

Families with children and single-parent families were particularly likely to be in public rental accommodation. This was not always very suitable. Over three-fifths of those in blocks of flats were families with children. Almost a quarter were sharing with other households. Nearly 30 per cent wanted larger accommodation. Many of the houses or flats needed basic repairs (40 per cent) and in more than a quarter the heating was considered inadequate.

Health

Sixteen per cent of the sample were suffering from physical health problems sufficient to affect their way of life, sometimes the result of mistreatment in their home countries. Many found it difficult to adapt to a different culture, climate and cuisine. Two-thirds said they had experienced anxiety or depression, with higher rates amongst those without jobs or with poorer English. Problems back home were the main reason for depression, but over a quarter were worried about not finding work.

Although most were registered with medical services, few had found doctors helpful with problems of a psychological kind.
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Settlement in the community

Relative deprivation was an important factor in the success of settlement. Some who were highly qualified in their home countries found their situation in Britain uncongenial. This group were unlikely to say they wanted to settle here permanently. On the other hand, those who had attained an economic level as good as, or better than, the one they had previously enjoyed, were more likely to say they might settle here permanently. All told, however, fewer than half saw themselves staying in Britain permanently.

Even if they intended to return to their home countries eventually, some had settled down sufficiently to feel that they actually 'belonged'. More than two-thirds felt that they were part of their local community. Feelings of belonging were most affected by success in finding jobs and satisfactory housing (just about equally) and, to a lesser extent, by how well they had been treated by British people.

Half of those interviewed said they had encountered racial discrimination, almost a third verbal abuse, and 18 per cent threats. Thirteen per cent said they had actually been attacked. Their experiences in this respect are not dissimilar to those of ethnic minorities generally. The chances of such harassment unfortunately grew the more contacts they had with the British community, so that, to some extent, increased success in integrating into the job market and participating in British society brought with it a greater risk of encountering harassment.

Contact with agencies and community groups

While a number of statutory and voluntary agencies were quite well-known, well-used and appreciated (especially the Department of Social Services, Citizens Advice Bureaux, and the Refugee Councils), the main link to the wider society for most newcomers, especially those with fewer English language skills, was their own local community group. These groups performed very important functions, including opportunities for association, practical help, emotional support, cultural activities, advice, and acting as a stepping-stone to participation in the wider society. These groups were especially important to newer arrivals. Those who had been in the country longer often spent a large proportion of their time doing voluntary work on behalf of their community.

A major concern for many was the time they had had to wait to get a decision from the Immigration and Nationality Department on whether they would be allowed to remain in the country. Towards the end of the Eighties the Department had managed to get the median decision time down to 12 months, but the upsurge in applications from 1989 onwards overwhelmed their resources, so that the waiting time rose typically to 18 months. It is claimed that new arrangements have again reduced waiting times for new asylum applicants.
1 Introduction

How the research arose and what it aimed to do

The reasons for the research

An increasing number of refugees have been accepted into Britain over the past ten years and a growing number of asylum seekers granted exceptional leave to remain. This has resulted in increased pressure on statutory and voluntary agencies involved in the settlement of both groups. That pressure has been further exacerbated by high levels of unemployment, and changes in the labour and housing markets.

Refugees face many special difficulties. For example, competence in the English language may be very limited; adjustment has to be made to an unfamiliar culture and social arrangements; they may be isolated from personal and professional contacts; continued suffering resulting from the physical and mental effects of torture or warfare is common; there may be anxiety about the safety of relatives and friends left behind; and occupational qualifications gained elsewhere may not be recognised in Britain.

Central government responsibility for oversight of arrangements for the settlement of refugees rests with the Voluntary Services Unit (VSU), located within the Home Office. VSU’s general policy is to provide the help and support needed by refugees through voluntary organisations and community groups, through local authorities, or through special programmes within existing statutory agencies. Compared to national statutory provision, such arrangements are intended to allow greater flexibility and sensitivity to local needs and consumers’ voices. It does, however, demand a certain level of co-ordination and communication. This has been provided through VSU’s contacts with individual agencies dealing with refugees, some of which receive funding from VSU, and through national fora, such as the Refugee Housing Forum, which has met on several occasions, and the continuing Refugee Employment, Training and Education Forum (REETEF).

There is no national system for collecting or collating information on people applying for asylum on or after arrival in this country (see p.12) once the decision to allow them to stay in Britain has been made. To have such a system could well be interpreted as an intrusion into the privacy of people whose lives have already been extensively disrupted. Nevertheless, the provision of support is hampered by the fact that there is no reliable information on their circumstances. A certain amount of information, on the other hand, has been available for ‘quota’ refugees such as the Vietnamese, because of their programmed arrival and the existence of organised reception centres. This has been
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further supplemented by a number of studies of the reception and resettlement of the Vietnamese (Jones, 1982; Joly, 1988; McFarland and Walsh, 1988; Dalglish, 1989; Robinson, 1989 & 1993; Bell and Clinton, 1992).

Through RETEF, voluntary organisations, agencies and community groups expressed a need for similar information on other refugees. VSU therefore commissioned the Research and Planning Unit (RPU) of the Home Office to carry out research.

Terminology

The term 'refugee' refers only to those officially accepted as satisfying the definition of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (see p.11), but this research also includes those asylum-seekers who have been given 'exceptional leave to remain' (ELR) on compassionate grounds. There is no official term which covers both refugees and those with ELR, although both experience similar problems of resettlement and both are subjects of this study. In general discussion, therefore, we have used the term 'refugee' in a looser sense, to include both persons with refugee status and others allowed to settle in this country (albeit temporarily) under ELR provisions.

Aims of the research

Two primary issues were identified as being access to housing and employment. Connected with the latter were of course the contributory factors of training and education. These therefore constituted the main focus of the research, although other factors affecting settlement, such as health and social life, were also covered.

The study's original objectives, for all asylum-seekers allowed to remain in Britain were:

- to provide greater understanding of experiences in the housing market;
- to provide greater understanding of experiences in obtaining employment;
- to examine the interaction between the processes of obtaining housing and employment, and the interaction between both and general problems of adjustment to life in the community;
- to clarify the major factors affecting success in obtaining work and settlement in the community, including assistance from national and local agencies, the impact of central government policies, access to statutory services and the role of community support groups;
- to explore policy and statutory provision options for improving settlement in future;
- to explore the contribution and potential of voluntary and community groups in settlement.
INTRODUCTION

The research was divided into two phases, each of one year. In the first year interviews were carried out to obtain first-hand accounts of experiences in the UK. The results of this first phase were to inform the planning of the second, comprising an examination of the strategies of different agencies, exploring options for improving the speed and quality of settlement.

This report is the account of the first of these phases only – the results of the interviews. As such, it concentrates on describing respondents’ personal circumstances, the problems they have experienced and the reasons for those problems. Detailed exploration of the policy implications will be left to a further report at the end of the second phase.

How the research was carried out

Overview

The research was conducted as a collaborative project between RPU and the Department of Environmental Health and Housing at Salford University. The first phase was shared between the two, working together closely in terms of methodology, execution, analysis and writing up; the second phase was carried out wholly by the Salford team. This had several advantages, not least the cross-fertilisation of ideas that comes from having several minds bearing on the same problem, especially when they represent different perspectives. It also answered the potential criticisms, on the one hand, of a project wholly conducted by a government research team, that it might be met with suspicion by refugees and, on the other hand, of a project wholly independent of government, that it might lack sufficient force and credibility to make a real impact on policies.

The research was carried out in full consultation with refugee community groups and agencies dealing with them. Because of the problem of translating leaflets and training interviewers in too many languages, it was decided to concentrate the research on a limited number of nationalities, selected to provide a representative range of experiences. The main groups involved are shown later in the text.

People were contacted for interview through their community groups and agencies in touch with them, taking care to obtain a good range in terms of age, sex and so on. Only those who applied for asylum up to ten years previously were selected, as long as they had been in Britain for two years.

Interviews were carried out by 15 different people, two of whom were the main researchers. The others were selected for their bilingual skills. Interviews were also carried out in different parts of England, Wales and Scotland in order to be able to examine geographical differences. Altogether 263 interviews were completed.

Analysis of the questionnaires was shared by both research teams. In examining comparisons and associations between different variables the usual significance tests
were applied. The results of these are not reported in detail. Unless otherwise stated, however, any associations mentioned in the text were significant at the 5 per cent level of probability at least.

Consultation

This research was intended to provide very practical information. It therefore needed to maintain a close relationship with all groups dealing with refugees and asylum-seekers, so that their experience could guide the planning of the project. It was also evident that such research could only be carried out successfully with the co-operation of refugee community groups. It was thus necessary to explain in detail the intentions, methods and expected outcomes of the project. Many of those contacted had provided help to previous research studies, only to see nothing of any consequence emerge. It was necessary to convince such groups that relevant information would be collected and made publicly available. This report is part of the fulfilment of that promise.

Full and continuing consultation throughout the project was therefore crucial, and a number of steps were taken to ensure this. In the first instance, the research teams contacted and visited as many groups concerned with refugees as they could, including all the main government departments, listening to their views about the main problems and needs for information. These views played an important part in the setting of priorities when it came to constructing the questionnaire. These discussions also enabled exploration of options for carrying out the research – how subjects for interview might be identified, where interviews could be carried out, and so on.

Secondly, a series of newsletters was established to report progress on the research to all those groups, organisations and individuals who had shown an interest in being kept in touch. The newsletters were distributed to over a hundred individuals and groups, and helped ensure that no-one would feel forgotten or left out after making an initial contribution. It also gave everyone a chance to comment on the work progressed.

Thirdly, a Steering Group was set up consisting of 20 or so members particularly prominent amongst the organisations which were co-operating with the study. Membership of this group straddled government departments, voluntary agencies and refugee community groups. This group met as a whole for the first time in December 1992, when the interviewing had been completed and analysis was planned. Participants helped the research teams draw up their plans by highlighting particularly important variables and the factors that would have to be taken into account in evaluating the results.

Lastly, a quick and easily assimilable way was needed to inform diverse people about the research, especially refugee community groups. For this purpose two leaflets describing the project were designed, one for organisations and groups, and another for individuals who might offer to be interviewed. These leaflets were translated into all the major languages used by the nationality groups selected for the interviewing – Kurdish, Farsi, Spanish, Somali, Tamil, Portuguese and Turkish.
INTRODUCTION

Selection of nationality groups

Given that interviewers had to be recruited who could speak different languages according to the groups for study, there was a limit to the number of different nationalities that could be covered. This presented a dilemma, because the experiences of nationality groups might be very different. A range of nationalities therefore had to be selected that would cover the main variations in background. It was felt that the following variables were ones that might affect quality of settlement (partly based on the list given in Field, 1985, p.4):

- white/non-white;
- Commonwealth origin or not;
- continent of origin;
- familiarity with English language;
- substantial community settled in UK already or not;
- number of asylum-seekers in the last decade;
- trend in number of applications over time;
- rates of refusal of leave to remain;
- rates of refugee status relative to ELR.

All nationality groups represented amongst refugees over the last decade were classified in terms of these variables, and a number selected so that they would include all the main distinctions.

These were: Large groups: Ghanaians
- Iranians
- Kurds
- Somalis
- Tamils

Small groups: Angolans
- East Europeans
- Latin-Americans.

It proved difficult to contact many refugees from the smaller groups, and they had to be supplemented with other nationalities – Ethiopians, Afghans and Palestinians. Very few Ghanaian subjects came forward, so that Ugandans and Sudanese were also substituted for them. These changes made no essential difference to the degree of variation in circumstances and experiences represented in the final sample.
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An obvious omission among the large groups was that of the Vietnamese. This was because, as 'programme refugees', their experiences would have been rather different from those of any of the other groups. There had also been other more recent research on the Vietnamese community, including one project going on at that time (Bell & Clinton, 1992), while a study of Vietnamese settlement since 1982 was being planned by the Research and Planning Unit of the Home Office for 1993.

The characteristics of the selected nationality groups are represented in Table 1.1 opposite. Except where otherwise stated, figures apply to the period 1982-89.

Characteristics of the sample

Target figures of at least 50 in each of the large nationality groups were set, together with 50 from the small groups combined, which would have given an overall sample of 300. Needing to balance time and resources against the desire for a sample large enough to be able to compare one factor with another, this was felt to be a reasonable target at which to aim. Allowance was also made for a number of extra interviews at the end, if certain gaps in representation were evident -- e.g. not enough women or older people.

Limits were set on the sample with respect to date of application for asylum. Those who had applied earlier than ten years ago (before 1982) were excluded on the basis that the findings should apply to a reasonably recent period, with relatively standard policies and social arrangements. Those who had entered in the last two years were also excluded, for two reasons. Firstly, they would have had relatively little experience to report, and would hardly have had time to settle into a stable situation. Secondly, such a group would contain an unknown number who would not eventually be allowed to stay on, as they would still be awaiting a decision on their status from the Immigration and Nationality Department. Some groups expressed a fear that by excluding recent arrivals we would overlook the important experiences of the first two years, but this fear was unfounded because details of their whole time in the country were collected from all those interviewed.

The exclusion of recent arrivals, however, does have one drawback. The numbers of applications for asylum escalated dramatically at about the time the cut-off point was set. From 1989 onwards there was a much higher rate than in previous years, and the circumstances for asylum-seekers in the last few years may therefore have been rather different. In practice the interview sample contained a fair proportion who entered in 1989 and who were therefore from the early part of this new phase. The main reason for the cut-off -- that very recent arrivals would have less experience to share -- also meant that there was little to be gained from changing the definition of the sample. It should be borne in mind, however, when interpreting the results presented here, that they apply only to those who entered during the Eighties. The situation of those coming in the Nineties may be different in some respects.
Table 1.1
Characteristics of nationality groups interviewed

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<th>Origin</th>
<th>Commonwealth?</th>
<th>Language English?</th>
<th>Existing Community</th>
<th>Applications Trend</th>
<th>Refusal Rate</th>
<th>Refugees v. EIR*</th>
<th>Number in final sample</th>
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</table>

*Percentage given refugee status out of all those allowed to remain.

**Figures for 1985-89 only available.

***This trend has been reversed recently.
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

Contacting refugees for interview

It was originally planned to carry out interviews in certain selected areas, to minimise the amount of travelling that the interviewers would have to undertake. This did not in the end prove to be feasible, as the only major route to finding prospective subjects was through their community groups, based on nationality rather than area of residence. It was therefore not possible to target particular parts of, say, London. As a result, interviews were more widely spread than intended, adding to the travelling time involved.

It was not possible to identify an adequate 'sampling frame' of refugees living in the UK. The possibility of selecting a random sample from Immigration and Nationality Division files was considered. For reasons of confidentiality, the researchers could not have had direct access to these, and IND themselves would have had to send out letters of invitation to interview. IND was willing to consider this, but it was felt that such an 'official' approach would cause undue anxiety and suspicion. Moreover, addresses on the files might not have been entirely up to date, and the proportion of files that could not be located at any one time during the study of geographical distribution reported on p.14 was too high for this method to be very reliable.

The main method used to contact refugees was therefore to give out leaflets to the community groups concerned, and other major agencies dealing with refugees, for distribution to individual refugees or for general display. Each leaflet contained a simple form which could be returned by any person who was prepared to be interviewed. Respondents were asked to give the preferred language for interview and a means of contacting them to arrange the interview (not necessarily their home address or phone number). Most of the sample came from the efforts of community groups to publicise the work amongst their members, and their assistance was essential to the viability of the project. Having only refugees who were members of a community group might bias the sample, so others (a quarter of the final sample) were also identified through different agencies and personal contacts.

The requisite information from the returned forms was given to the interviewer with the appropriate language, and that person was left to make arrangements with the volunteer. Any records of names or addresses, if they were given, were destroyed once the interview had been completed. The questionnaires themselves did not contain such information, so that they were completely anonymous, although they were also destroyed after completion of the analysis. This level of confidentiality was essential in being able to obtain willing subjects.

Conduct of the interviews

The interviews were carried out by fifteen different people, two of whom were the main researchers, who conducted 60 interviews in English. The others were selected for appropriate bilingual skills and ability to carry out interviews to the required standard.
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They were interviewed by the principal researchers before being accepted for training. Most of these interviewers were university lecturers or postgraduate students in this country. Half of them had social science qualifications and interviewing experience.

Training consisted of an initial half-day seminar conducted by the principal researchers, followed by trial interviews in English and feedback of performance. Support was available throughout the project and returned questionnaires were scrutinised for errors or omissions before being accepted. The interviewers were paid an hourly rate, plus travel expenses. No interviewees were paid.

In order to cover a wide geographical area, the interviewers were divided between the London team (covering the South-East and South Wales) and the Salford team (the Midlands, the North and Scotland). In London and Cardiff respondents who chose English were interviewed by the main researcher and others by the interviewer with the appropriate alternative language. Elsewhere three specialist interviewers were located in particular regions (Scotland, the North-East and the Midlands) and use was made of interpreters to cover other languages needed. The main researcher in Salford covered the North-West and used interpreters where necessary.

In spite of major efforts by the community groups, it proved to be a slow task obtaining interviewees from some of the nationalities concerned, so that constant effort had to be made by the research teams to liaise with the groups and to find alternative routes. This subtracted from time available for interviewing and limited the numbers obtainable, although, with the exception of the Ghanaians, as mentioned above, the efforts ultimately provided adequate samples. The researchers were always aware of the basic suspicion that any ‘official’ interest would arouse amongst people who feel insecure in their status as residents of the United Kingdom. They are grateful that enough of them braved such doubts in the hope of helping later refugees and gave interviews of real candour and openness.

Interviews were carried out over the summer of 1992, and on into the autumn, most of them between July and October. A long period was necessary because of the difficulties just described in tracing individual refugees and negotiating access. A fifth of respondents did not have a telephone, which made contact and arranging interviews difficult. In other cases the respondent was anxious to retain anonymity and contact had to be made through a third party. Furthermore, the scattered location of refugees outside London involved considerable travel. Many of those approached also needed time to consider the implications and to take advice in order to ensure that the research was genuine. Some refugees wanted a lot of information and reassurances before agreeing to take part.

The questionnaire was quite lengthy and usually took between one hour and a half and two hours to complete, although one interview lasted 3½ hours. While a set interview schedule was used, the respondents were also encouraged to give their own accounts of their time in the UK. Some of these accounts were taped (again anonymously) for use as
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

a source of illustrative case-study material. The questionnaire contained particularly long sections on housing, employment and training/education histories, but also covered general aspects of respondents' lives – basic demographic data on themselves and their households, language use, their prior situation in the home country, contacts with agencies, community ties, health and general attitudes and feelings.

Respondents were asked at the end of the interview how they felt about it. The feedback was very positive. They considered the questions were important and relevant. It was generally considered a pleasant experience, although a number would have preferred it to have been shorter. Some were disappointed that the interview concentrated almost entirely on their experiences in Britain and they would have liked to have contributed more about the circumstances that had driven them to seek asylum. A number of agencies that had been consulted anticipated that asking questions about lives prior to seeking asylum would prove too distressing. Although this might have been true for a few, most respondents would have appreciated being able to talk more about their former lives.

Altogether, 36 per cent of the interviews were completed in English, the rest in another language or a combination of English and another language. Fifteen were carried out through an interpreter. Many respondents who professed their English to be good still preferred to use their own language for the interview.

Checks were made for between-interviewer variability in the completed data. Although some differences were identified, these could all be accounted for by the fact that certain interviewers dealt with particular nationality groups. Where different interviewers could be compared for the same nationality group, no systematic biases were found.

Most of the questions were factual, and there were frequent cross-checks of this type of information in the questionnaire. In relation to issues like qualifications, respondents often produced certificates etc. for the interviewer to see. Where attitudes were concerned, it was obvious that many of these represented deep-seated concerns, and it was unlikely that responses were any less reliable than for any other survey of this type.

Representativeness of the sample

Given that there are no systematic lists of those granted asylum, the normal rigorous sampling methods could not be applied. The ultimate sample is therefore undefinable in relation to the total population. It is difficult to be sure how representative it is. Steps were taken, however, to ensure that different age groups and household types were contacted, and the necessity for getting substantial variation was emphasised to those groups circulating the leaflets to individual refugees. Satisfactory levels of variation were achieved, as will be borne out in the following chapters.

Ensuring that different types of people were represented did not, of course, mean that the balance between groups would be representative of all refugees. To tackle this problem, the basic characteristics of the sample were compared with those applicable to all
INTRODUCTION

asylum-seekers given leave to remain, as supplied in the statistics published by the Home Office. The comparisons that were possible were rather few, because of the limited range of data included in these official statistics, but they were at least reassuring, in that the sample of interviewees overall was generally close to the IND profiles. The results of these comparisons are included in Chapter 2.

There remains the possibility that respondents with certain attitudes would be more likely to offer themselves for interview. In actual fact, responses were very wide-ranging and there was no evidence of any particular bias. Individuals were also quite discriminating – criticising some aspects of their experiences and praising others. Illustrative quotes incorporated in the text serve to illustrate this personal variability.

Refugees in the international context

In the aftermath of the Second World War, there was an urgent need for an international structure to co-ordinate the settlement of the millions of displaced people. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) was set up to facilitate this resettlement, and was later replaced by the International Refugee Organisation in 1947. By 1950, the continuing movement of peoples within Europe prompted the establishment of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with a dual role of protecting refugees and co-ordinating international responses. In 1951, the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees established a universal agreement on the definition of a refugee and the obligations of signatory states towards refugees. The Geneva Convention was extended to include events occurring after 1951 by the 1967 Protocol (often known as the Bellagio Protocol, cf. Joly, Nettleton and Poulton, 1992).

The Geneva Convention and the Bellagio Protocol, together with a number of other conventions, represent an internationally accepted ethic of human rights, but guaranteed only the right to seek asylum. It is still the prerogative of the state whether or not to grant asylum on its territory (Joly and Nettleton, 1990). The internationally recognised definition of a refugee is set out in Article 1 of the 1951 Convention. This describes a refugee as:

Any person who owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

In the course of implementation, the 1951 Convention and the Bellagio Protocol have been subject to a variety of interpretations, with the result that different types of asylum-seekers are now distinguished (Joly and Nettleton, 1990). First, there are those who are
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

given refugee status under the Convention. These comprise two groups. The first consists of quota refugees, who are admitted as a group under a programme specifically designed and agreed for them by the international community, and who are automatically granted refugee status (e.g. Vietnamese in Britain). The second group consists of those who come individually and apply for asylum in the country of arrival (often referred to as "spontaneous" refugees).

A second type consists of those asylum-seekers who fall outside the definitions of the Convention but, due to compelling humanitarian reasons, would not be forced to return to the country they are fleeing. Reasons may include civil war, famine, economic deprivation or discrimination. The person would be granted humanitarian status, which in Britain is known as Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR).

The British context

Between 1982 and 1989 nearly 53,000 people (including applicants and their dependants) applied for asylum in the United Kingdom (Home Office, 1992). Due to the time-lapse between applications and decisions, it is not possible to determine the decisions given to this group of asylum-seekers, some of whom would still be awaiting a decision after the end of 1989. However, Home Office statistics indicate that 29,000 individuals were given refugee status or ELR in this same period of 1982 to 1989, and it is this group of people and their experiences of settlement in the UK which are the focus of this research.

Table 1.2 (in the Appendix) shows the fluctuations in the total number of applications for asylum in the UK over the 1980s and early 1990s and the decisions made in each year. The figures in this table do not include quota refugees such as the Vietnamese. The proportion of applicants with refugee status under the Geneva Convention has varied considerably over time from 59 per cent in 1982 to 11 per cent in 1987, back up to 32 per cent in 1989 and down to only five per cent in 1992. Grants of ELR fluctuated in tandem, but in the opposite direction, so that refusals tended to account for a relatively steady quarter or a fifth of decisions through the 1980s, although they jumped to over 50 per cent in 1991.

During the asylum-seeking stage there are certain restrictions on access to employment, training and social benefits. Asylum-seekers must wait for six months before they can take employment and have to apply to the Home Office for permission to work. They are ineligible for financial assistance from statutory sources for higher education. Their access to training programmes is restricted. Finally, they are only eligible for 90 per cent of the normal rate of income support. Otherwise they have the same access to benefits as those who have been given leave to remain, including housing benefit.

Given the fact that waiting times for a decision on their asylum application may be many months or even years, this period of limited rights and uncertainty has become a matter of contention for those groups who argue that it can be detrimental to the psychological
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well-being and eventual resettlement of those allowed to stay. Until 1991, at least, the majority of asylum-seekers were in fact allowed to stay. One of the aims of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 (introduced after completion of this research) was to shorten decision times in new cases.

If applicants are granted refugee status, they acquire the full rights accorded by the Geneva Convention and the same rights as other citizens in Britain. They are normally granted leave to remain in Britain for four years, followed by indefinite leave to remain.

Applicants who are given exceptional leave to remain (ELR) are initially permitted to stay for one year and this is then renewable on application for periods of three years. After seven years, an application for indefinite leave can be made. Applicants with ELR enjoy fewer rights than those with refugee status and are faced with periodic uncertainty each time they have to re-apply to stay in the UK.

A large proportion of asylum-seekers arrive in Britain with no accompanying dependants (84 per cent in the years 1987-89: Home Office, 1992). If they have dependants residing elsewhere, they are able to apply for family reunion once they have a decision. Eligibility to join an asylum applicant is restricted to married partners and dependent children aged under 18. Family reunion can only occur after an official decision has been made on the original application. Depending on the status granted, different rules apply. Individuals given refugee status can start immediately to apply for family reunion, which is normally done through the British Embassy in the country concerned. Those given ELR must usually wait four years before they can apply for family reunion, and they must also prove that they have the means to support and house their family. Both requirements can, however, be waived if there are exceptional compassionate circumstances.

Assistance with settlement

The needs of refugees and asylum-seekers are met by statutory services in the same way as they serve the general population, by specialist voluntary sector services for refugees, and by community groups that have developed around different refugee populations.

When they arrive in the UK, asylum-seekers usually have immediate needs for food, clothing and housing. Quota refugees (such as the Vietnamese) are usually housed at first in reception centres funded by central government and managed by voluntary agencies. The purpose of reception centres is to provide temporary accommodation and support to refugees on arrival, whilst they learn English and adjust to life in the new country. They are moved to permanent homes as soon as these can be found for them and they have gained sufficient confidence to manage on their own.

Asylum-seekers, on the other hand, are given assistance with immediate needs such as housing, translation/interpretation and transport by specialist organisations like the Refugee Arrivals Project (RAP) at Heathrow and Gatwick airports, the Refugee Councils and refugee community groups. Referral to these agencies may be made by the
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

Immigration Service or friends and relatives already in the UK. Some will not require these services because they are already in contact with friends and relatives, but they may need assistance at a later stage of settlement.

The Voluntary Services Unit (VSU) of the Home Office (see p.1) has the central role in Government in the reception and resettlement of refugees. VSU fosters the development of self-help through refugee community groups. VSU’s policy is flexible and changes in response to the different cultural, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds of refugees arriving in the UK (Home Office, 1987; Renton, 1993).

The main recipient of VSU grant-aid is the Refugee Council, the national refugee umbrella organisation in the UK. Some of the funds received by the Refugee Council are used to support other agencies working with refugees. Grant-aid is also provided to the Scottish Refugee Council, the Welsh Refugee Council, and the three English regional councils operating in the Midlands, the North and the North-East. The councils are involved in a wide range of activities and services for refugees, including access to employment, training, advice, housing, translation and interpretation, education, and lobbying.

The final source of help is that provided by national and local refugee community groups. They provide invaluable practical help, information, advice and support on a wide range of issues (see also Chapter 8). Some of the groups have established national networks to respond to needs in different parts of Britain, for example the Southern Sudanese Welfare Association and the Tamil Action Committee. Others have concentrated their activities in London but have contacts around the country, such as the Kurdish Cultural Centre, or are solely London-based, like the Iranian Association. Some groups are informal and have developed in response to particular needs within the refugee community, e.g. women’s groups that have been set up in some areas. One of the important roles of these community groups is to provide cultural and social activities, directly linked to members’ particular origins. These offer refugees the chance to maintain their own customs and religion, talk in their own language, celebrate their traditions and exchange news from their home country.

Geographical distribution of refugees

There is no systematic information on the geographical distribution of refugees across the UK. The only source of such information is the collection of case-files of asylum-seekers held by the Immigration and Nationality Department. These files remain in INID after the decision has been reached on each case.

With the help of the Statistics Division of the Home Office, a 10 per cent random sample was taken of all files relating to spontaneous refugees granted either asylum or exceptional leave to remain from 1983 to 1991. The sample consisted of file reference numbers (i.e. not individuals’ names) with nationality and application date. An attempt
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was then made to locate each file and the last known address recorded. To preserve confidentiality, only the town or city and the postcode were taken.

There were several limitations to the success of this exercise, however. Altogether, almost a third of the files (29 per cent) could not be located for a variety of reasons: the file was old and had therefore been destroyed, the file was not available for inspection, urgent action was being taken on the file and it could not be released, no address appeared on the file due to the applicant relying on a representative to communicate their case, or the individual had left the country and the file had therefore been destroyed. For this reason, it was not possible to assess with sufficient reliability how each nationality group was distributed, although one could gain a general impression of the distribution of refugees as a whole. (See Table 1.3, Appendix.)

Approximately 85 per cent of those granted asylum settled in either inner or outer London, while the remaining 15 per cent settled in other parts of the UK. The low numbers outside London, coupled with the problems of the missing files, makes it impossible to give reliable estimates of numbers in different regions.
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN
2 Profile of respondents

Home country and nationality

As explained in Chapter 1, certain nationality groups were targeted. The final sample
contained people from 14 different countries. To avoid identifying particular
individuals, small groups have been collapsed into an ‘Other’ category for analysis. The
main countries from which those interviewed came are shown in Table 2.1 (Appendix).
The largest single group was of Somalis (almost a third of the sample). This was
because communities of Somalis were present in four of the regions where interviews
were concentrated – London, Cardiff, the North-East and the North-West. Other major
groups included Sri Lankans, Iranians, Iraqis, Turks, Sudanese, and Ugandans. Smaller
numbers came from Poland, Angola, Ghana, Colombia, Ethiopia, the Israeli Occupied
Territories and Afghanistan.

The questions on nationality offered respondents an opportunity to define both their
nationality and their ethnic origin, to acknowledge the minority group status that may
have contributed to their exile. The responses were particularly valuable in three
circumstances: for people who no longer had a nationality (e.g. had United Nations
documentation), for those who did not accept the nationality imposed on them, and for
those who belonged to a particular minority group and wanted to be referred to as such
(e.g. almost all respondents of Kurdish origin preferred to be defined as Kurdish rather
than by their nationality).

Thirteen different nationality/ethnic groups were found in this sample (see Table 2.2,
Appendix). The main ones were Somali, Iranian, Kurdish, Sudanese, Ugandan and
Tamil.

Sex

Although, worldwide, women are estimated to account for some 80 per cent of refugees
(see Chapter 1), statistics for the United Kingdom in 1991 reveal that only 18 per cent of
principal asylum applicants in that year were women (Home Office Statistical Bulletin,
1992). 1991 was the first year that the sex of applicants was recorded so it is not known
whether this figure is typical of the years covered by this survey. Furthermore, many
women may be hidden in official statistics because they are not the main applicant or
because they have come to the UK on family reunion. In this survey, 71 women were
interviewed, representing 27 per cent of the sample. Over two-thirds of the women were
either Somali or Tamil (see Table 2.3, Appendix).
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

The higher proportion of women in the sample than in Home Office statistics may be explained by the high proportion of Somali respondents, amongst whom there is a higher proportion of women applicants (38 per cent in the statistics, 39 per cent in the current survey). Indeed, when the proportions of women were compared between the survey and Home Office records for each of the major groups interviewed (i.e. Iranians, Kurds, Sudanese, Ugandans and Tamils), the figures never differed by more than six per cent. In terms of gender, therefore, the sample appears to be representative.

Age

The sample population was restricted to people aged 18 and over, for two reasons. Firstly, the experience and needs of children may differ significantly and it was decided that this would necessitate a separate survey of its own, particularly with regard to unaccompanied refugee children. Secondly, resettlement in a new country is a process which takes time and it was felt that people under 18 were unlikely to have had much experience of employment and housing which were the main topics of the research. However, 69 respondents were aged 18 to 29 and their recollections gave some indication of young people's experiences.

In fact, the survey population as a whole was fairly young with 73 per cent aged under 40, and a third in their early thirties (see Table 2.4, Appendix). Only five per cent of the sample were aged 60 or over. The age distribution amongst men and women showed only small variation, with five per cent fewer women than men aged 18 to 29 and nine per cent more women aged over 40.

As respondents applied for asylum anywhere from two to ten years before, one needs to examine their ages on application in order to compare with Home Office statistics. The comparisons, on the basis of the categories used in the latter, are given in Table 2.5 (Appendix). This shows that the distribution of the research sample closely matches that expected.

Marital status

At the time of the interview, nearly half the respondents (49 per cent) were married, five individuals were cohabiting, eight were widowed and 15 divorced. The remaining 42 per cent had always been single. Nearly a quarter of the women in the survey were widowed or divorced compared to only 4 per cent of men. The marital status of some respondents had changed since being in Britain: some had separated, divorced or been widowed, others had married. The majority of the 18-29 age group were single (81 per cent) whereas the two older age groups were more likely to be married, widowed or divorced (62 per cent of 30-39 age group and 89 per cent of the over 40 group).
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Household size and type

Thirty per cent of the respondents lived on their own, 13 per cent with one other person, 33 per cent in three or four person households, and 24 per cent in households with five or more persons. (Household members were defined as people who shared food or a kitchen/living room.) The greatest number of persons in a household was 18.

Single people accounted for 44 per cent of the sample (115 people) but 35 of this first group (14 per cent) were living in shared accommodation either with a landlord, friends, other refugees or strangers which in some cases they described as a 'household'. Half the households contained children. Table 2.6 (Appendix) shows the distribution of the main types of living arrangement found in the research sample.

Considerable differences existed between the types of household men inhabited compared to women. The majority of women were living with their spouse and children (28 per cent) or as a single parent family (40 per cent), with only 25 per cent of women living as a single person. By contrast, 40 per cent of the men were living with their spouse and children and only six men were in single parent families. A larger proportion of the men (50 per cent) were living as single persons.

Single parent families were found in most nationality groups, but the largest proportions were in the Somali (22 per cent), Iranian (19 per cent) and Ugandan (39 per cent) groups. The average rate was not (at 13 per cent) very different from that for households generally in metropolitan areas (e.g. the 1991 Census gives 16 per cent “lone adult with dependent child” in the West Midlands, and 14 per cent in Outer London), while it is very much lower than the figures for Inner London (28 per cent of all households, 32 per cent of ethnic minority households, in the 1991 Census). There is, therefore, no undue prevalence of single parent households, although the high rate for women respondents indicates that their particular needs may have to be given special attention.

Four respondents had someone who was sick or disabled living in their household and either they or their spouse acted as a carer for this person.

Almost half had their children living with them, varying in age from very young babies to young adults (see Table 2.7, Appendix). Some respondents had other children in their home country or elsewhere, who were not with them because they were unable to leave or were waiting for family reunion applications to be reviewed by the Home Office.

Six respondents had a parent or parent-in-law living with them. Only one respondent had a grandchild in the household and one other a grandparent. The structure of refugees’ households will reflect to some extent the conditions attached to family reunion in Britain which define ‘family’ to include only the spouses of applicants or their unmarried children aged under 18.
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

Year of application and length of time in Britain

The average length of time people had been in Britain since applying for asylum was four years and eleven months. The shortest time was two years six months and the longest period ten years and nine months. (See Table 2.8, Appendix.) Some of the respondents were already in Britain studying, working or visiting relatives when they applied for asylum, but systematic data was not collected on this.

The research had not attempted to obtain a representative sample by year of application, because this would have biased the numbers too much towards later arrivals, especially 1989. Instead the intention was to obtain a good spread of dates in order to maximise the variety.

The year of asylum application varied between different nationality groups, as expected. Compared to Home Office statistics, both the Tamils and the Somalis showed the expected distribution, with higher frequencies in 1985 and 1989 in the former case, and in 1989 (over 60 per cent) in the latter. The Ugandan sample contained more long-standing refugees than expected, being evenly spread from 1985 to 1989, when one would have expected almost half to have come in 1989. The Kurdish sample also under-represented those coming in 1989 (35 per cent rather than 60 per cent). The other two major groups (Iranians and Sudanese), on the other hand, showed some bias towards later arrivals, especially those who came in 1989. Virtually three-quarters of the Iranians in the sample had applied for asylum between 1986 and 1989, as against an expected one-third.

Refugee status

At the time of the interview 47 per cent of the respondents had refugee status as principal applicants, with a further two per cent through family reunion. 'Exceptional leave to remain' accounted for another 47 per cent of the sample, with 1 per cent having this status through family reunion. Three per cent (7) of the respondents were still awaiting a decision at the time of interview, despite having been in the country well over two years, but these were kept in the sample when they were given leave to remain a month or so later.

From Home Office statistics for all nationality groups, the overall percentage granted asylum out of those allowed to remain for the period 1980-1989 (principal applicant only) was 40 per cent. In the research sample this figure was 50 per cent. The different nationality groups vary considerably in the proportions granted asylum, however. The research figures for the Sudanese, the Ugandans and the Tamils closely matched the statistics. Somalis in the sample, however, were less likely to have refugee status than expected (64 per cent against expected 77 per cent), while the Iranians and the Kurds were much more likely to do so (68 per cent versus an expected 44 per cent, and 58 per cent versus an expected 24 per cent, respectively). The overall interview sample is thus only slightly biased towards those of refugee status, but more substantially so for those emanating from Middle Eastern countries.
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Home backgrounds

The majority of the sample had been urban dwellers. Two-thirds had formerly lived in a
city and a quarter in a town. Only nine per cent of the sample had lived in a rural area
and these were mainly Tamils and Ugandans.

Differences in educational systems around the world make it difficult to compare
educational levels and qualifications. Comparing the age at which people finish full-time
education or the number of years of schooling can be misleading. The fact that someone
from another country might have only six years education compared to an average of 12
in Britain does not necessarily mean that their educational level would be equivalent to
the British primary school. In some African countries, children do not go to school until
the age of eight or nine and those who go to University would be much older at the start
and finish of their Higher Education than the average British student.

Eighty-four per cent of the respondents had completed some form of secondary
education, with over a third having attended a university-level course (see Table 2.9,
Appendix).

A number had fled their country whilst still a student which accounts for the apparent
discrepancies between the figures in this table and those in Table 2.10 (Appendix) on the
highest qualifications obtained by the respondents in their home country. A distinction
was made between those who had completed school but without recognised
qualifications (school leaving) and those who had left school with the equivalent of an O
or A-Level qualification. A third of the sample had a degree, post-graduate or
professional qualification. Only 18 per cent had no qualifications at all. These figures are
comparable with those found amongst refugees in Strathclyde, where 25 per cent had a
degree or post-graduate qualification and 12 per cent had skills training or a trade
(McFarland and Walsh, 1988).

Women tended to be less qualified than men: 30 per cent of the men had no qualification
or only a school leaving certificate, compared to 56 per cent of the women. Similarly 36
per cent of the men had a degree or professional qualification compared to 24 per cent of
the women.

The majority of Sudanese and Ugandans in the sample had degrees or professional
qualifications (77 per cent and 54 per cent respectively). The Somalis and Iranians had
the lowest levels of qualification, partially reflecting the number of people from those
groups who came to Britain at a very young age.

Two-thirds of the respondents (173) had been in employment in their home country.
Those not working were either students or caring for the home and family. The types of
occupations in which respondents had been engaged varied considerably. There were
academics, senior civil servants, doctors, accountants, teachers, lawyers, engineers,
business-people, managers, members of the Armed Forces, office workers, nurses,
technicians, mechanics, drivers, electricians, shop assistants, factory workers, security
guards and waiters. Many had occupied good jobs in their home countries (see Table
2.11, Appendix).
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

Comparison with the survey of refugees in Strathclyde in 1987 which, according to the authors (McFarland and Walsh, 1988), “included ‘quota’ and ‘spontaneous’ refugees”, indicates similar skill levels, although fewer professional and managerial level jobs. Of the total Strathclyde sample, 43 per-cent had been in professional, managerial or white collar work in their home countries compared to 51 per-cent of all respondents in this sample; 17 per-cent had been in skilled manual work compared to nine per-cent in this survey; and eight per-cent had been unskilled compared to five per-cent in this sample.

In contrast, the skill level of Vietnamese refugees arriving in the late 1970s and early 1980s was very different. Only 15 per-cent had been in professional, managerial or white-collar work, 42 per-cent in skilled manual work and 38 per-cent in semi-skilled or unskilled work (Jones, 1982). It therefore seems likely from this survey that asylum-seekers in Britain in the 1980s tended to be better qualified and to have occupied higher level employment in their home countries than that wave of ‘quota’ refugees.
3 Language

Linguistic backgrounds

One of the most significant factors affecting settlement in any country of asylum is the ability to speak the language. Lack of competence in the language of that country will affect individuals' ability to cope with their daily life and to realise the opportunities available to them.

None in this survey had English as their first or main language. The main language of 43 per cent was an African language, of 20 per cent Kurdish, 18 per cent Tamil, 14 per cent Farsi, one per cent Arabic and five per cent other languages. However, their general linguistic proficiency is indicated by the fact that over 90 per cent of them could speak at least one other language beside their main one, and 65 per cent at least two other languages. Sixteen respondents said they could speak five or more languages. These other languages included English learnt through studying in Britain or learnt since arriving in the country. In some cases one of the official languages in their home country was English (Tamil, Sudanese and Ugandans).

Competence in English

The language proficiency of the sample was measured using the respondent's own assessment of their level in relation separately to speaking, reading, writing and understanding English. These four categories were used to distinguish the different rates at which language competence is acquired in relation to particular language skills. For example, some people can read and understand a foreign language but are unable to write or converse in it. This may be due to several factors such as the way in which languages are traditionally taught, whether individuals only used English to read scientific papers or manuals, and levels of confidence in different modes of communication.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 (Appendix) show the levels at which people assessed their language ability when they first arrived in Britain and at the time of the interview. When they first arrived, the majority felt that their reading and writing were better than their speaking and understanding. By contrast, at the time of the interview, they were saying the opposite. This clearly demonstrates that the effect of living in the country and having to deal with the language on a day-to-day basis tends to encourage the development of oral and aural skills rather than written ones. It may also reflect the emphasis in much English language training on oral and aural skills, especially with beginners.
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

Between a quarter and a third thought their English good in all categories when they first arrived but, by the time of the interviews, two-thirds thought so. A similar proportion said they had no English when they first arrived, but by the time of the interview only two per cent still could not speak English and five per cent could not read it. Men’s assessments of their language ability on arrival in Britain suggests that they were more proficient than the women, no doubt reflecting their differences in educational background. Thus 44 per cent of the men said their language was good compared to 28 per cent of the women, and only a quarter of the men had no English on arrival compared to a third of the women. Those with higher qualifications from their home country tended to have better English on arrival than those with lower or no qualifications.

This sample appears to have had a better command of the English language overall than McFarland and Walsh’s (1988) sample of both quota and spontaneous refugees in Glasgow. Among the latter, 78 per cent had experienced language difficulties on arrival. By the time of their survey, between one and 14 years later, 35 per cent were still ‘coping poorly’. Their respondents rated language as the worst problem for them since their arrival.

Of the 159 people in the current sample who were classified as having little or no English on arrival, exactly a third (53) were still without a good command of the language by the time of interview, although most of them (42) had improved to some extent. Those who had not made any progress in their English (11) tended to be aged over 40 and either unemployed, looking after the home and family, retired or disabled.

Respondents were asked for details about the circumstances where language was a problem. Half of the sample (132) said there were such times. Filling in forms, using medical services, claiming benefits, dealing with asylum applications, shopping, applying for jobs and oral communication were the main causes of problems. Some of the respondents who appeared to have very good English still mentioned problems when it came to understanding regional accents, talking on the telephone, social chit-chat or expressing their emotions.

*I am slow in reading and writing, and filling in forms sometimes gives me problems. I am hopeless when it comes to speaking with officials on the telephone.*

*For the first 18 months after my arrival, yes I had problems. I didn’t claim any benefits during this time because I didn’t know about them.*

Nearly half (49 per cent) had used a translator or interpreter since arriving in Britain. Of these 130, 45 per cent had needed someone when they first arrived at the airport or when applying for asylum, 34 per cent for claiming benefits, 50 per cent for medical issues and 28 per cent for filling in or understanding official forms or letters. The other times they needed help were in applying for housing (15 per cent), interviews with the DSS or Social Services (19 per cent), for shopping (eight per cent) and for daily affairs (five per cent).
LANGUAGE

The main source of an interpreter or translator depended on the situation. Twenty respondents had been provided with an interpreter by immigration services at the airport or when attending an interview at the Asylum Division in Croydon. Over a third of those needing an interpreter had used friends and some 19 per cent depended on their family or relatives. This figure included eight respondents who had to depend on their children for help with their English.

*Sometimes in the markets and shops, friends do help me in buying things and collecting the correct change and inquiries (sic.) about transport and roads. My children who are learning English at school are also helping me sometimes.* (Tamil woman.)

Community groups and refugee agencies provided translation or interpretation services to a third of the refugees needing help, particularly when dealing with official communications and agencies.

*Most things are done by someone at the Iranian Association writing a letter in English which I take with me and if there is any problem they conduct an over-the-phone interpretation.* (Iranian man.)

*Normally I do get free service from my community members. Especially on immigration matters I seek help of an interpreter. To understand local municipal pamphlets I seek translators help free of charge from my community group.* (Tamil man.)

Only one person had used a private interpreter who had to be paid, and that was only until they discovered the existence of a community group who provided a free service. Another person had managed to persuade the local social security office to provide an interpreter when dealing with a particularly complicated application. Most respondents would be unable to afford to pay for language services, so they depend on informal sources of support. Some of them paid the travel expenses of friends who accompanied them as interpreters, but it is clear that the free and professional language services provided by community and refugee groups have proved essential for many respondents when dealing with the complexities of life in a strange language.

English language courses

As most respondents, particularly women, had limited ability in English when they arrived, their primary training need was for courses in the new language. Available courses are graduated according to starting ability: 'absolute beginners', 'false beginners' (i.e. people who had studied a little English at one time but had not used it for some years), 'intermediate' and 'advanced'.

Sixty per cent of the respondents had taken an English class at some time since they arrived. (Similarly, McFarland and Walsh (1988) found that in 59 per cent of the
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

households interviewed in their sample someone, usually the head of household, had attended English language classes.) Moreover, 21 per cent of the current sample had taken two courses, and eight per cent three. Over two-thirds (69 per cent) of those who came less than three years ago had taken classes, against just over half (51.5 per cent) of those arriving over six years ago. The most important determinant of whether classes were taken, of course, was level of English ability on arrival. As there was no difference in English competency between earlier and later arrivals, the higher rates of attending classes for the former may reflect greater availability of provision or funding in the earlier years.

Only 16 per cent who said they had had good English took such classes, whereas 79 per cent of the rest did so. Most Ugandans and Sudanese had good English on arrival, so that English classes were more often used by the other nationality groups. Those with a higher level of education in the home country usually had a better knowledge of English. Even so, more than a third (36 per cent) of those with a degree or postgraduate qualification took classes in English. The proportions increased, however, as one descended the scale of qualifications – 55 per cent for those with O/A-levels or professional qualifications, 73 per cent for those with technical skills only, and 86 per cent for those who had no more than a school-leaving certificate. It is notable, however, that only 69 per cent of those who had no qualifications or no schooling at all took English classes. Thus there were 22 people without qualifications who did not attend English classes, some of whom were looking for employment; nine were retired or disabled, five were home-carers, three had insecure employment only, and five were unemployed seeking work.

The first course taken was generally a beginner’s course, the second was usually at false beginner’s or intermediate level, and the third intermediate or advanced. Over a third (37 per cent) took beginner’s courses, 12 per cent false beginner’s, 24 per cent intermediate, and 13 per cent advanced. In addition seven people (three per cent) had taken O-levels in English. The level of the first course was naturally most strongly determined by level of English ability on entry. Of those who said they had little or no English on arrival, 27 per cent began with a course beyond the two beginners’ grades, whereas all of those who said they had good English did so. Those nationality groups who could most often speak English on entry were those most likely to start with a course beyond beginners’ or false beginners’, although half the Kurds also did so.

There was generally little delay in being able to start such courses, most people getting on one straight away, although it might take a couple of weeks to start a first course. They typically involved 12 hours work a week, although the more advanced ones were more often 18 hours, and they most often lasted six months (sometimes shorter for the advanced courses). For all but the most advanced courses, the provider was usually a college of further education or a local authority adult education programme (to roughly equal extents), but advanced courses were more likely to be provided by a college. Very few courses were provided by schools, universities or organised by community groups. Private tuition accounted for about 10 per cent of the less advanced courses, and 20 per cent of the advanced ones.
Assessment of these courses was generally positive. Four-fifths felt their English language ability had been significantly improved by the less advanced courses, and 95 per cent by the advanced ones. The fact that a fifth of those attending beginners' courses found their English not greatly improved, however, is rather worrying. This may reflect the low prior educational level of some of those attending them. They may not have been adequately geared to those who were unused to formal education. Another reason for non-improvement in English may have been that the courses were not sufficiently intense in hours per week or duration. (Clark, 1992 and RTEC, 1991).

*English was my problem, trying to study language, and to find out the best place to study – college or language centre. It was very difficult in the beginning with me. It would have been better if someone advised me the best place to study language. I could get much more confidence if I had language. I went to a lot of language centres and teachers. Two or three classes per week is not enough. After one year I found the best place...I did six months training for language and other cultural things. It was much better. The thing that I will regret was not spending much more time in the beginning. It was because I couldn't get good information.* (Kurdish man.)

Of the 90 persons who had started with a beginner's course, 63 per cent said they still had little or no English at the time of interview. Most of those who needed English courses had at least attended one or more, so that only 17 people who still had little or no English had not attended classes. Eleven of these were over 40 years of age, and the other six were over 30. Twelve of the 17 were not actively seeking work, eight being retired or disabled, and four home-carers, but five were unemployed seeking work and it is surprising that they had not availed themselves of the opportunity to learn English. There would certainly seem to be little prospect of ever getting a job otherwise.

The effect of English classes on employment prospects, however, was less impressive. Only 19 per cent of those who had taken classes were currently in a job, and even fewer (eight per cent) had had continuous employment. The majority (58 per cent) of the employed had never had to take such classes, likewise 68 per cent of those with steady job careers.

Another product of English classes is that students learn about English culture and customs as well. Two-thirds of those respondents who had taken such courses considered that they had thereby advanced their knowledge of the British way of life.
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN
4 Employment and income

The participants of the Surrey Conference in 1988 on Training and Employment Provision for Refugees in Europe identified employment as the most important element in refugee resettlement (Phillips, 1990). It enhances the resettlement process by providing refugees with important benefits such as the chance to improve language skills and to learn and understand the culture of the receiving country. In addition, working provides refugees with psychological benefits by rebuilding their confidence (Field, 1985, Clark, 1992).

In theory, refugees have the same rights to employment as British citizens, with the exception of not being allowed to join the civil service. Refugees do not have to ask for permission to change jobs as do other persons subject to immigration control. Refugees who are unemployed must register with the local office of the Department of Employment like anyone else.

If asylum-seekers want to take employment before the Home Office has reached a decision regarding their status, they must wait for six months after the date of application and then apply to the Home Office for permission to work. In this sample, 24 per cent had applied for permission to work before they were given a decision on their status. Some had no need to apply as they were retired, caring for children, attending courses, or long-term sick or disabled. Others received their letters of permission to work simultaneously with their decisions and others at the interview in Croydon, so that there was no need for them to make an application. Of those who did apply for permission to work, 86 per cent waited up to six months for a decision, while 14 per cent waited for 12 months or more.

Main economic activities

One of the more striking findings from this survey is the level of unemployment among this sample, considering their educational backgrounds. Only just over a quarter (27 per cent) were employed at the time of the survey; 36 per cent were unemployed but seeking work; 15 per cent were students or on training schemes; 14 per cent were looking after the home and family; and 8 per cent were retired, sick or did not specify their situation.

As Table 4.1 in the Appendix shows, men were more likely than women to be unemployed and seeking work (42 per cent, compared with 21 per cent), while only slightly more were either employed or students. Women were more likely to be caring for the home and family (39 per cent, compared with just four per cent). Of those in the labour market (excluding students and those confined to the home), 59 per cent of the men were unemployed, but only 48 per cent of the women. This is despite the fact that, overall, men were more likely to have educational qualifications and good English (see Chapters 2 and 3).
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

A possible explanation is that women were more likely than men to apply for jobs of a lower status that were easier to obtain; the fact that many of the older women were single parents may have forced them to find some sort of job, often part-time, to finance their families. Such a finding has already been suggested for Somali women by El-Solh (1993), who also argues that "in contrast to some among the male youth, they are apparently more likely to attempt to find work to supplement their social security income, in order, for example, to afford some educational course or to send money to kin trapped in refugee camps..." (p.28). Changes in the employment market over the last ten years have also increased the number of openings for part-time, low skill jobs which have traditionally been more associated with women workers than men. On the other hand, further analysis reported later in this chapter, in relation to economic careers, suggests that this finding could well be an artefact arising from the exclusion of those who were not economically active.

Married people were more likely to be employed (30 per cent) than were single people (22 per cent). In fact, almost two-thirds of those employed were married. Even if one just takes those people who were in the labour market, unemployment rates were higher for those who were single (66 per cent) than for those who were married (51 per cent).

The youngest age group (18-29) were largely unemployed (44 per cent) or engaged in studying/training (30 per cent), while many fewer in the older age groups were involved in training (see Table 4.2, Appendix). Those aged 40 or over were employed almost to the same extent as those in their thirties, but more of those who were not earning described themselves as looking after the home and family or retired, sick and disabled, and fewer as unemployed.

Profile of the economically active: the employed and unemployed

Respondents were defined as economically active if they were working or unemployed and actively seeking work at the time of the interview. This section focuses solely on this group: 63 per cent of the total sample. The group does not include individuals on government training schemes.

Of the economically active, only 43 per cent (71 out of 166) had paid jobs. The unemployment rate of 57 per cent is considerably above the national rate of eight per cent, and even well above the rate of 24 per cent for ethnic minorities living in Inner London (OPCS, 1992). Proportionately more of the women who described themselves as economically active (52 per cent) were employed than of the men (41 per cent), although this difference holds for the general population as well. Unemployment rates decreased with age, 71 per cent of the youngest group being without work, 57 per cent of those in their thirties, and 41 per cent of the older group. More married people were employed (50 per cent) than single people (34 per cent). Comparing the various nationalities, unemployment rates for those seeking work ranged from 84 per cent amongst the Somalis down to 43 per cent amongst the Iranians and 33 per cent among the Tamils.

The longer respondents had been in the country the more likely they were to be employed, although it took a long time before there was any significant improvement. For those who had been in the country less than four years, only 29 per cent were
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currently in a job. For those who had been here longer, but less than six years, the improvement was only slight, with 38 per cent in employment. Over six years, however, there was a large change, with 64 per cent currently employed.

English language ability was associated with employment. For example, 44 per cent of those presently employed rated themselves as good in speaking, reading, writing and understanding spoken English on arrival in the UK compared with 30 per cent of those unemployed. The difference was even greater with respect to current levels of English, with 89 per cent of the employed rating themselves as good compared with 60 per cent of the unemployed.

Those who lived in London were more likely to have secured employment (52 per cent) than those who lived outside (27 per cent).

Respondents with qualifications and work experience in their home country were more likely to have employment in the UK. More than three-quarters (78 per cent) of those who were currently employed had had a job in their home country, compared with 65 per cent of those who were unemployed. Those who were presently employed were also more likely to have had a professional job in their home countries (71 per cent, versus 57 per cent), and 78 per cent of the employed had A or O levels, degrees, or professional qualifications compared with 57 per cent of the unemployed.

The employed

Over half of those employed had been successful in securing employment as professionals, managers or employers (53 per cent), as can be seen from Table 4.3 (Appendix). In comparison, only 28 per cent of the general population and 27 per cent of other ethnic minorities are categorised at the same level (OPCS, 1992).

Those who were presently employed in professional or managerial jobs were more likely to have been employed in their home countries (58 per cent) than those who were currently working in non-professional jobs (42 per cent).

There was also a significant difference between women and men in the types of jobs they had obtained in the UK. Sixty-two per cent of men had professional jobs compared with only 19 per cent of women. This would explain the greater facility with which women found employment, if it meant that women were more likely to apply for lower status jobs.

The age of respondents was also associated with type of job. Of those working in professional or managerial jobs, 92 per cent were 30 years or over, compared with 74 per cent of those working in non-professional jobs.

The majority of those currently in paid employment were employees (78 per cent). The rest were self-employed (22 per cent), a rate higher than among the general population (13 per cent) (OPCS, 1992). The majority (87 per cent) also worked full-time (30 hours or more per week). Those in part-time positions were mostly women. Only seven per cent of the men were working part-time compared with 31 per cent of the women. All of those employed in part-time jobs lived in London and had lived in London since their arrival in the UK, which might indicate a lack of similar opportunities in other regions.
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Of those employed, 23 per cent only had a temporary position (compared to just six per cent of the employed in the general population: Naylor & Purdie, 1992). Those who worked in London were more likely to have a permanent position (83 per cent) than those who worked outside of London (59 per cent).

Three-quarters (73 per cent) of those employed said they were satisfied with their present jobs, while 16 per cent expressed neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction and 11 per cent were dissatisfied. Of those who were satisfied with their jobs, the majority (63 per cent) had been employed soon after their arrival in the UK and had always had steady employment. Those who were working at a professional or managerial level were only a little more likely to be satisfied with their current jobs (78 per cent) than those who were not (68 per cent). Feelings of satisfaction, however, can be difficult to interpret, as they relate to personal perspectives. Field (1985) suggests that job satisfaction depends on the reference group to which individual refugees compare themselves. For example, they may compare their occupational status to that of other members of the refugee community, to that of the indigenous population, or to their own occupational status before they became refugees.

Thus, while three-quarters might profess satisfaction, over half (55 per cent) felt that there were other jobs more suitable for their experience and qualifications than the ones in which they were presently working, and a quarter were actively seeking alternatives. Of those who would prefer a different job, 55 per cent thought that a professional job would be more suitable, 18 per cent wished to start their own businesses, 21 per cent preferred a skilled non-manual position and six per cent a manual job. Most of the employed respondents working in professional or managerial jobs at the time of the interview felt that a different professional or managerial job would be more suitable (93 per cent).

There were six individuals (nine per cent) who were working in other jobs besides their main jobs. Two were working as teachers, one running his/her own business, one working in an unskilled job and one employed in a skilled position. The percentage having a second job is higher than that of the general population (four per cent).

Pre-employment experience

Information was collected not only on current jobs, but on all previous jobs in the UK as well. Forty-four per cent had had a job at some time, 20 per cent had had two jobs, and seven per cent had had three or more jobs.

Comparison of the jobs that respondents had had since arriving in the UK show that there is progression throughout their careers. There is a trend toward self-employment, more full-time permanent positions and increased job satisfaction (see Table 4.4, Appendix).

Experiences of voluntary work

More than a third of respondents (36.5 per cent) said they had done some voluntary work for their own community group since they had been in the country. The most frequent type of work was help with welfare and advice to new arrivals (41 per cent gave this as
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one of their activities). In addition, 36 per cent had done administrative or secretarial jobs for the group, 28 per cent interpretation and translation, 18 per cent fund-raising, 16 per cent organising cultural events, and 15 per cent language teaching or religious instruction. Other activities included childcare and helping those in their home countries. Thus many are using their own skills on behalf of community self-help, providing widespread cultural and welfare support essential to newer arrivals.

Such community work was more likely to be provided by those who had been in the country longer and were generally more settled. Thus the percentage taking part in voluntary work rose from 25 per cent for those who came less than three years ago, through 35 per cent for those who had been here 3-5 years, to 48.5 per cent for those who came six years at least ago. Amongst the more recent arrivals, moreover, those who had obtained a quick decision on their application for asylum (in six months or less) were more likely to be volunteer workers – i.e. those who had had the greatest chance of feeling settled. Type of status also helped in this respect – only 31.5 per cent of those on ELR were volunteers, but 43 per cent of those with refugee status.

Voluntary work was also more associated with those with professional backgrounds and a good grasp of the English language. (It is interesting that the usual finding for the general British population that volunteering is a middle-class phenomenon is replicated here.) Of those with little or no English on arrival only 19 per cent got involved in community work, whereas 59 per cent of those with good English did so. The current English language ability of 96 per cent of volunteers was rated by themselves as good, compared to 55 per cent of others. The volunteers similarly tended to come from amongst those with educational qualifications from their home country, especially amongst those with professional status and with university degrees, and to a lesser extent those with O/A-levels. They were particularly likely to have been employed in professional jobs in their home countries (61 per cent became volunteers).

The volunteers were similarly more likely to be employed in this country as well. Amongst those who had had a job at some time, 81 per cent of those in professional jobs had done voluntary work, 48 per cent of those in managerial jobs, and 32 per cent of those in other kinds of work. It should be noted, however, that volunteers were no more likely than others to say that they felt permanently settled in this country.

There was some indication that community work might have been more prevalent in London than elsewhere in the country (i.e. in the area where most refugees are concentrated), in that 42 per cent of those with current London addresses had been volunteers, against 29 per cent of others.

The unemployed

There may be many barriers to entry into the labour market in the UK for newcomers. For example, employment skills and qualifications may not be readily transferable. In most cases, the types of labour demands in their home countries are very different from those in the UK. Due to the recent recession, there has also been increased competition for employment, even for the most menial work. This can put refugees at a disadvantage in the labour market, especially if they have difficulty with speaking English, have
neither references nor anyone to vouch for them, have not held work for a long period of time and have no experience working in the receiving country. Often they cannot prove they have qualifications or work experience (certificates/diplomas have usually been left behind or destroyed) and they may experience discrimination in the labour market. Employers may not understand a refugee's status, how the decision-making process works and its delays, their right to seek work and their likelihood of staying in the UK for an extended period of time. They may see refugees as temporary visitors or even illegal immigrants and therefore not suitable for permanent posts. In addition, many refugees do not understand the concept of unemployment in Western societies, as the following quote illustrates:

I went to the Unemployment Benefit Service. I filled in a lot of forms. One of my friends was with me to translate. I feel it was not right in the beginning to be considered unemployed. Because you know in even one month it is difficult to get a job or know how to find a job. Even now after 4 years I find it difficult. They said you are now unemployed. For example, since then until now if I say I haven't got a job, I'm unemployed, it is very strange. It shouldn't be more than one year. My English is not good enough and lots of places need experience... When I graduated (at home) they said now you are entitled to get a job as a teacher... there is no gap between study and getting a job. But here, they say you are unemployed and I am unable to get a job. This is very difficult for me. (Kurdish man.)

Refugee women face the same barriers to seeking employment as men, as well as some additional ones. In some nationality groups, there are strong cultural constraints on women participating in activities outside the home, such as attending English language classes and other courses, as well as seeking employment. Women may be taking paid employment for the first time in their lives and this may affect relationships with their spouses. Husbands may have trouble accepting that they cannot provide adequately for their families and now require a two-income household. Finding suitable childcare also may present problems (Forbes Martin, 1991).

Of those in the sample who were not in paid employment at the time of the interview, 60 per cent (116) were looking for a job with 39 per cent looking for full-time work, 14 per cent looking for part-time and 47 per cent looking for either. Only 83 per cent of those looking for work, however, said they were registered at an Unemployment Benefit Office.

Three-quarters (86/116) of the sample looking for employment had made significant efforts within the last two months to apply for advertised jobs. Fifty-five per cent had completed up to nine job applications within the past two months, while 20 per cent had applied for 10 or more jobs. No one looking for a job had been offered one and not taken it. McFarland and Walsh (1988) similarly found that the refugees in their study were not generally unemployed because they had unrealistic expectations or a resistance to certain types of jobs. In their study, 46 per cent were prepared to accept any type of job.

Ninety-four per cent said they had experienced some sort of difficulty when applying for jobs. These difficulties were manifold. For example, over a third cited their lack of work
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experience in the UK, another third problems with the English language, 19 per cent racial reasons, 16 per cent lack of references, 13 per cent lack of UK qualifications, and nine per cent difficulties at interview. Another 43 per cent mentioned a variety of other difficulties, such as lack of childcare facilities, lack of confidence and the recession. For example, a Kurdish man who had worked for a local authority as an engineer had just been made redundant:

After I finished my degree it was easy for me to get a job because I did my degree in this country... At the time (1988) it was easy, there were lots of jobs with construction. I had a job with the Council for one year. Then I had to work with a company – a construction company – for another three years and obviously these days it is more difficult to get a job and I was made redundant after 4 years. That's the only problem I had with the jobs. At the time it was very easy to get a job and now obviously it is more difficult, I think it's the same with everyone else. That's really about it.

Another Kurdish man described the problems of moving from a successful career in one country into another:

I decided to go to Britain for post-grad. Then I returned to Iraq after the PhD. Naturally you go back to the place you somehow belong to. That's how I felt...In the end I realised my life was in danger. I had no choice, I had to go. When I arrived here, I still had problems. The main problem was my qualification. For many jobs I apply, I am over-qualified. In others, I am too old and they won't consider me. I am in a dilemma. I don't know how it is possible to get through the system. There are people who don't even know how to write their name, but they settle and lead a good life. I don't come here to be fed and given clothes. I run away because I'm a refugee.

Finding a job

The most frequent ways in which respondents had found their present jobs were by replying to advertisements in newspapers (one-third) and through friends, relatives and community groups (28 per cent). Others became self-employed and started their own businesses (15 per cent). Some were successful in obtaining their jobs through directly approaching employers (seven per cent), while others used their local careers office, private agencies, trade unions, job centres and other organisations to secure employment (17 per cent).

Table 4.5 (Appendix) compares these methods of securing their current jobs with those used by the general population (OPCS, 1992). This suggests that the general population were more successful using formal job-seeking methods (through organisations like Job Centres), while respondents to this survey relied more heavily on informal contacts such as family, friends and their community groups.

This reliance on informal contacts diminishes over time, although not so much in favour of greater success through organisations, but in favour of more reliance on newspaper advertisements. (Table 4.6, Appendix.)
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These differences reflect the differential success of different job search methods for respondents, rather than any proclivity for one method rather than another. When those who had been unemployed at any time were asked what methods they had used to try to find jobs, there was no lack of trying formal means like Job Centres. The commonest method was replying to newspaper advertisements (58 per cent), closely followed by Job Centres (53 per cent), with only 28 per cent asking friends or relatives about possible openings. A fifth had also used Job Clubs (see Chapter 5), 18 per cent had directly approached potential employers, eight per cent had gone through the Refugee Council, six per cent through a private employment agency, and 16 per cent had used a variety of other means.

Occupational careers

Just looking at current employment only tells one a limited amount. Even more revealing is the pattern of activity in which an individual has been engaged ever since coming to Britain and being legally eligible to take up a paid job. Each interview included such histories, including periods of education, training, voluntary work and childcare, as well as periods of employment and unemployment. This history revealed great variation in the lives and experiences of respondents.

Traditional analyses of individuals in the economic system focus on whether or not they have ‘jobs’, by which is meant paid employment, and the social status or economic reward associated with different types of employment. This approach may suffice when one focuses on the majority of men at a time of relatively full employment, but a number of sociological studies have encountered problems with applying this framework to women, many of whom, as ‘housewives’, are formally classified as unemployed, although they may make a substantial economic contribution in upkeep of home and family which is not specifically ‘paid for’.

The traditional approach also falls down in a sustained period of high unemployment, when alternative economics grow in importance, including bartering rings, self-help groups and ‘unofficial’ work.

To overcome these inadequacies, one needs to distinguish two aspects of an individual’s economic relationship to society. One is the individual’s contribution, in the sense of work done which is of social benefit. The other is the individual’s financial reward, received for contributions made through traditional employment. The two do not bear a one-to-one relationship. Reference in this section is to the individual’s contribution as his/her occupation, meaning not just paid employment, but any activity by which time is occupied to the greater social good. When we refer to occupations that are financially rewarded at a commercial rate, we shall use the term employment.

This approach is necessary when one looks at how refugees spend their time in this country, because they have a number of disadvantages, of lack of familiarity with English language and culture, or not having educational qualifications recognised in this country, for instance, that make rapid access to traditional employment problematic. As members of ethnic minorities, too, they share some characteristics with other immigrant groups who, in response to social disadvantage and discrimination experienced over decades, have tended to generate alternative economies to a greater extent than indigenous groups.
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The classification of occupational careers used here, therefore, takes into account not only paid jobs, but also 'voluntary work' which helps to sustain single families or whole communities. Full-time educational courses are also taken into account, as these are the primary means to prepare for entry into the traditional employment market.

It is important, also, to view occupations in the context of the length of time the individual has been resident in this country. The great majority will be unemployed for a period of anything up to 18 months or more when they first enter, on top of a first period of what may be six months after entry before they are provisionally allowed to take paid work. Coming from recent traumatic experiences and with their whole lives suddenly in turmoil, a relatively long time is needed to settle into a 'normal' life style and a steady existence. For many, too, they are in limbo, not knowing when they may be able to return to their home country, not knowing whether they should orientate themselves to a long period of settlement in Britain or not. It thus takes time to put down roots.

The activity histories revealed three major categories of career (in the years since entry into Britain) in terms of employment:

i) The Wholly Unemployed: those who have never earned money through a job;

ii) Irregular Earners: those whose earnings have been irregular and unreliable; and

iii) Regular Earners: those who have had regular earnings (at least after an initial period of unemployment).

Across the whole of the sample the first group was the largest at 147 (56 per cent). The second group totalled 79 (30 per cent) and the last group 37 (14 per cent).

In terms of work providing financial returns, therefore, the majority lived quite precariously. This does not mean that the majority were unoccupied or making no economic contribution, however. Within these three economically defined groups, there was still a large variety of occupational experience. Examples used in the following account were selected randomly from those falling in each category.

The wholly unemployed

The wholly unemployed group can be broken down into four categories:

1. Home-carers who have been occupied full-time in looking after a home and family, sometimes including more distant relatives. Fifty (19 per cent) of the total sample fell within this group. With many single-parent families, and high rates of medical and mental suffering (see Chapter 7), the load on home- and family-carers can be substantial. In economic terms they are relieving statutory social and health services, and therefore making a real contribution.

A 40-year-old Somali woman, who had a clerical job in her home country, has single-handedly been looking after a family of 13 children in London for 28 months. She has taken an adult education language course to learn English, and obtained a certificate in house management. She is not currently looking for a job.
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2. Community-carers who perform a similar function to home-carers, but in relation to a wider group, such as other refugees from the same country living in the same area. Eighteen individuals in the sample (7 per cent) fell into this group. These people, through their voluntary work, are the mainstay of the community groups which, in turn, are vital to the process of helping new refugees find their feet and giving them advice. Some of them, through their experience of community work, may eventually go on to find employment using these skills, either as employees of community groups or in the statutory sector. Two were retired persons.

A 28-year-old Somali single man lives alone in Birmingham. He was a machine operator in a sugar factory back at home. He has been continuously out of work for more than three years now, and considers that he is hampered getting a job because of his lack of work experience in this country and having no-one to supply a reference. At first, when he lived in London, he helped his community group, accompanying new asylum-seekers to social security benefit offices, carrying out translations, and finding accommodation for refugees. He would like to attend a vocational course, but has no money for the tuition fees.

3. Students who have been occupied more or less full-time with educational courses to improve their qualifications. Most of them will be hoping to obtain paid jobs in due course. Twenty-one of the sample were included here (eight per cent). Six have been in the country a relatively short time, and have been wholly engaged in studying for a higher qualification (usually a degree). The other fifteen have had periods of unemployment at some time. Some have been seeking work for a number of years and finally decided they would stand a better chance of getting a job if they could obtain further qualifications. One of these people had also been involved with voluntary community work.

A 24-year-old single Iranian man has basically spent the whole of his 28 months in the country so far improving his educational qualifications. He did not have any post-school qualifications when he arrived. He is confined to a wheelchair and is looked after by an older brother. Firstly he took three 3-month English courses, at beginners, intermediate and advanced levels. He then studied for A-levels in economics, maths and sociology. Being successful, he gained admission to a university to study Economics. He has now been a full-time student for over a year. He told us he was very impressed with facilities for the disabled in Britain.

4. Unemployed who did not indicate any major occupation. Most of them have been seeking employment, some for a very long period. This was the largest of the categories, with 58 members (22 per cent of the total sample). Six of them were over retirement age and not seeking work. None of them were full-time students, but many had been taking a variety of educational and employment training courses.

A 30-year-old Somali man lives in London with two other single men. He had a Bachelor of Commerce degree from his home country, but this was recognised as equivalent only to an A-level in this country.
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He has been continuously unemployed for 2 years and 7 months. He has taken an advanced English course, but cannot always make himself understood. He went on a government Employment Training scheme to learn computing, but this came to an end because of financial cuts. He has now started a part-time course studying for an HND, and would like part-time work to supplement this.

Irregular earners

Those who had a history of irregular earnings had very mixed experiences and are difficult to categorise at all neatly according to how they had been occupied over their time in Britain. It is possible to identify the following broad groupings, however.

5. Mostly unemployed. These have had one or two brief jobs (almost always unskilled) but have spent most of their time in this country without earning and without any other kind of occupation. Sixteen people belonged to this group (six per cent). Many of them have been hardly any better off than those in the previous group who had never had a job.

A 40-year-old Turkish Kurd, whose wife and family have since joined him in this country, was out of work for nearly four years. He had been a bank clerk in his home country. He eventually got temporary jobs cooking at take-aways for 2½ years. He has been without a job again for two months now.

6. Mostly unemployed, but caring for the home or community. These were like category 5 in terms of their employment histories, but are fully occupying their time with a significant contribution to family or community welfare. Of the fourteen people belonging here (five per cent), 13 were community-carers, and one a home-carer.

A 30-year-old Tamil woman was unemployed for one month, waiting to take up a full-time computing and accounts course for one year. She then found herself out of work for three months, before getting a part-time temporary post as a finance assistant for six months. She has since been without a job for five months. All this time she did voluntary work for a regional Refugee Council and helped keep the accounts for charity shops.

7. Economically marginal. These individuals have been employed for a majority of their time in the country (at least half), but in occupations that are short-term, casual or insecure and generally unskilled. These jobs are often in the ‘alternative’ or ‘ethnic’ economy – fast food outlets, ethnic restaurants and other businesses (e.g. petrol station franchises, export/import merchants). This group comprised eleven individuals (four per cent).

A 39-year-old married Kurdish man from Turkey was unemployed for 14 months and then took a couple of jobs as a cook for 22 months. These were only short-term vacancies, and he has now been out of work for five months. He is trying hard to find work, but lack of English language skills or any qualifications makes it very difficult.
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8. Economically marginal, but caring for the home or community. These have had the same kinds of employment history as those in category 7, but have also occupied themselves with voluntary work for the community (eight people) or keeping a home together (three people). These eleven people comprised five per cent of the overall sample.

A 29-year-old married African man, who had formerly been an accounts clerk, was initially unemployed for over three years. He then got a temporary part-time job as a finance worker, which lasted 21 months, followed by a full-time, but again temporary, job in administration for a finance company. He has been in that post for 16 months now. Throughout his stay, he has been doing voluntary work for his community group.

9. Students with irregular earnings. These people have either been largely unemployed, or wholly in marginal employment, but are currently students or have been on full-time educational courses in the recent past. They represent a group that is attempting to move up from their currently marginal economic situation and achieve stable earnings through qualifications. They therefore resemble group 3, except that they have been in work. Eight people belonged here (three per cent).

A 31-year-old Ugandan woman is living in London with her daughter and a brother. She had had a clerical job in Uganda and had had to leave because her father was involved in political trouble. Initially she was unable to take a job because she was pregnant. She then worked as a shop assistant for several years. She did not find the work sufficiently fulfilling, however, and left that job just over two years ago to take a full-time accountancy course at a university. She has another year to go yet before she gets her degree.

10. In and out of mainstream employment. These people have had steady mainstream jobs from time to time, but interspersed with periods of unemployment. Although they have managed to attain a niche in the traditional employment market at one time or another, they have not managed to consolidate that achievement and derive regular earnings. Six people had this kind of career to date (two per cent).

A 41-year-old single Latin-American man had been working as a lawyer in his home country. He was initially unemployed for 14 months, while he took a course in English and carried out voluntary human rights and publicity work on behalf of his community group. He then got a job for one year with a major voluntary organisation, before being employed as a journalist for another year. He then set up in business as a decorator and worked in this way for two years. During all this time he kept up his voluntary work. His business did not thrive and he then worked for a national human rights organisation for 2½ years. After a further two months working in a Latin American education centre, he found himself unable to find another job. He has now been unemployed for ten months and has taken an “access course”, in the hope of getting on getting more substantial training. He finds that language is the greatest barrier to getting steady work in this country.
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11. Long-term unemployed who have since gained steady employment. These eight people (three per cent) were unemployed for their first few years, but now have steady jobs in the mainstream economy. Two of them have been voluntary community-carers.

   A 34-year-old Iranian, living here with his wife (who is British) and children, was unemployed for a year and a quarter. During that time he took a full-time advanced English course for two months. He then got on a university degree course in computing and became a student for four years. He is now a computer programmer for an insurance company, a job he has just obtained on graduating.

12. Currently unemployed who once had steady employment. These five people (two per cent) have moved in the opposite direction from category 11, having achieved good jobs early on, but having since lost them, usually having been made redundant since the onset of the recession. One of them is now a community-carer, and another has taken a full-time course as a student.

   A 42-year-old Tamil and his wife came to Britain in 1989. At home he had had a senior job as an engineer, having got a degree at a Sri Lankan university. He got a job immediately as a technician in an engineering firm. He was there for over two years before being made redundant. He has now been unemployed for ten months, but has been doing Employment Training. Getting a job is not easy because his English is not quite fluent.

Regular earners

The regular earners fall simply into two categories:-

13. Steady employment. They have been in steady employment (often after a short initial period of unemployment) for most of their career, remaining in the same kind of job and grade of work throughout. Sixteen people had this characteristic (six per cent). Many also did voluntary work for their community (seven). Five are self-employed.

   A 54-year-old Sudanese man came with his wife and children, after the overthrow of the governing party with which he was involved. By profession he was a doctor; having trained in Italy, his qualifications were recognised in this country. He had also practised medicine in this country in the late Sixties, so that he was familiar with Britain. He was initially unemployed for nearly a year and a half, while he did voluntary medical work in London hospitals in order to be able to re-register as a medical practitioner. After that time he was accepted as a general practitioner “under training” and has had a couple of jobs as a GP for over five years now.

14. Progressive career. They have been in steady employment and have advanced up the job ladder to better and better posts. This is one of the larger groups, with 21 persons (eight per cent). Two of them also do voluntary community work.
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A 45-year-old Kurd from Iran came to live in Scotland. His wife and family were allowed to join him six months later. He had obtained a degree in Iran, where he had been an army officer. He was initially unemployed for nine months before obtaining a permanent job as a shop assistant, which he held for just over 4½ years. During that time he took a six-month intermediate English course at a College of Further Education. Then, just over a year ago, he started up his own wholesale business.

Differences between career categories

Experiences of unemployment varied, by definition, between the categories. Groups 1 to 4 had never been employed. Very high unemployment rates (defined in terms of months unemployed out of total number of months in the country) applied to the "mostly unemployed" (groups 5 and 6). These two groups averaged 78 per cent of their time unemployed, with a minimum of 60 per cent. Moderately high rates characterised the other groups with major periods of unemployment (9, 11 and 12), that averaged 62 per cent, with a minimum of 25 per cent. The economically marginal (7 and 8) and those with mixed employment and unemployment (group 10) averaged 31 per cent, with a minimum of only one per cent. Finally, those with regular earnings (13 and 14) averaged 13 per cent unemployment, with a minimum of 0 per cent. One can therefore see that experience of unemployment is very common, even among the economically more successful refugees.

Of those currently employed, 30 per cent had progressive careers in this country; 23 per cent had steady employment after a short initial period of unemployment, but were working in similar jobs throughout their time in the UK; and 11 per cent were unemployed for their first few years and had now secured steady employment. This indicates that the majority of those who were now employed had been earning regularly (64 per cent) and entered the labour market soon after their arrival in the UK. The rest of the employed group (36 per cent) had had irregular earnings since their arrival in the UK.

Of those currently unemployed, the majority (69 per cent) had not had employment since they arrived: 34 per cent indicated that they had been seeking employment since they arrived, 16 per cent had earlier been occupied full-time in looking after a home and family and were now seeking work, 12 per cent had been community-carers or volunteers for their community and were now seeking work and 7 per cent were students who had finished their courses and were looking for jobs. The remainder of the unemployed group had been irregular earners (28 per cent) or had had steady employment but were now out of work (three per cent).

In terms of the sectors of the economy in which individuals found jobs (traditional private, ethnic, statutory and voluntary), the 'regular earners' were slightly more likely to be located outside the traditional private sector (62 per cent) than were the 'irregular earners' (52 per cent). Individuals outside the private sector were also more likely to be in managerial or professional jobs, typically related to community work. The regular earners were mostly in such jobs (81 per cent), while irregular earners were much less often so (35 per cent), with the exception of those in category 10, those in and out of employment, who were in managerial/professional posts in 83 per cent of cases.
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The majority of those who had secured professional jobs had been regular earners throughout their time in the UK (68 per cent). For example, 22 per cent fell into the steady employment category while 46 per cent had had progressive careers.

Field (1985) concludes that refugees tend to experience greater downward mobility or loss of occupational status compared with other migrants, especially during the early periods of their settlement. Those who have higher status jobs in their home countries experience the most downward mobility during their first years for several reasons: they have the furthest to fall down the occupational ladder; higher level jobs are more language-dependent; they may have had difficulties getting their qualifications recognised; and in some cases the skills they have may be irrelevant.

It is evident from our sample that this situation of downward mobility can be rectified with time. Over half of the respondents who had managed to obtain either a professional or managerial job had been in the country for six to 10 years (61 per cent), compared to only 35 per cent of those who had been here less than six years.

Those career categories that represent the greatest degree of success in entering the traditional job-market (13 and 14, along perhaps with 11) have the highest average length of time in the country (75 months). The other irregularly earning groups (5 to 12) average 60 months in the country, and the “never earning” (groups 1 to 4) 45 months. This may indicate that employment status tends to improve as individuals settle for a longer time in Britain, and that a considerable time (typically five years or more) is needed before a newcomer can expect to attain reasonably stable earnings. On the other hand, it may be a reflection of the fact that later arrivals (who have of course been in Britain for a shorter period) have entered the country at a time of high unemployment and have therefore been less likely to be able to get started on an employment career.

Predicting career status

Multiple regression was used to identify those variables that, taken together, would best predict career status (using the three broad categories of always unemployed, irregular earners and regular earners). Multiple regression is a statistical technique for calculating the relative contribution of each of several independent variables known to be correlated with one another. Like all ‘multivariate’ techniques used with the kind of measures generated by social surveys, the findings can only be taken to suggest the relative importance of different factors, and the figures are likely to be dependent on vagaries of the sample and so be imprecise. The type of regression analysis used here is one sometimes called ‘path analysis’, as it allows one to differentiate direct effects on employment from indirect ones mediated by other variables. This generates a number of ‘paths’, or causal links, between variables, with numerical loadings that represent their relative importance, i.e. the size of their effect in predicting one variable by means of another.

Exploratory analyses revealed that the variables predicting career status were different according to the age of the person. Separate path diagrams (Diagrams 1 and 2) were therefore generated for younger respondents (aged 18-34) and older respondents (35 and above). The ‘Multiple R’ quoted under ‘Career Status’ in each case is a measure of the amount of variation which can be accounted for, using the variables in the diagram. The
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values of R vary from 0 (no prediction) to 1 (perfect prediction). A value of 0.4 would mean that about 16 per cent of all variation had been predicted. As one expects a lot of individual variation in matters of this sort, a level of 0.4 is a moderately good result. Many more variables were used in the analysis beyond those shown, but all the others were rejected at successive stages because they failed to show significant effects. The remaining variables are therefore the only ones, out of all those available from the survey, that contributed measurably to the outcome.

It should be noted that both men and women were included in this analysis. It is common to perform such analyses separately for the two, because of the number of women who choose to look for home and family rather than enter the employment market. In this case, however, detailed analysis revealed that a large number of refugee women were calling themselves home-carers only because they had been unsuccessful in finding jobs. Gender was one of the variables used in this analysis, but it was found not to have a significant effect, confirming that the situations of men and women in relation to employment are not distinct amongst those interviewed.

The first finding of note from these analyses is the lack of impact of most of the variables related to training and education in this country. Although many respondents engaged in training schemes, language classes and educational programmes, such participation did not make any appreciable difference to their current employment, except that educational courses did have a small but significant effect for the younger people because of the improvements they produced in their English fluency. The latter was not significantly affected by the fact of being in English classes, probably because these did not involve intensive English use over a considerable period of time in a normal environment of social interaction, which is the sort of experience one might get through courses of higher education. It must also be recognised that most individuals with language problems did attend classes, so that their effect may have been across the board, rather than contributing to differences in outcomes between individuals. As a group, we already know that their fluency in English increased over time (see Chapter 3), although those who came with better English were still the more fluent.

Secondly, time in Britain was important for both younger and older respondents, indicating that the attainment of a niche in the job market is a matter, to some extent, of time and acculturation.

Thirdly, for the older group, two of the major influences on employment were the employment status and educational qualifications they had attained before arrival. Most of this older group did not attempt to return to education to improve their levels of qualification, so that these had remained much the same.

Among the younger persons prior educational attainment and job experience were similarly important. Previous qualifications had a direct effect on current English ability, indicating that the better educated arrivals were more able to benefit from the opportunities for learning or improving language skills.
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Figure 1
Prediction of career status amongst older refugees

CAREER STATUS
(MULTIPLE R 0.52)

TIME IN UK

HOME JOB

QUALIFICATIONS
AT HOME

SEX (MALE+)

Figure 2
Prediction of career status amongst younger refugees

CAREER STATUS
(MULTIPLE R 0.44)

TIME IN UK

HOME JOB

ENGLISH ABILITY

EDUCATION IN THE UK

ENGLISH ABILITY
ON ARRIVAL

QUALIFICATIONS
AT HOME
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Households' financial situations

Although the research did not collect details on income, both because of the sensitivity and the complexity of this issue, information was obtained on the sources of income of the respondent and of their immediate family or other household members.

Under a third of all the households (82, or 31 per cent) contained a wage-earner (in ten cases, two or three earners). The majority were therefore dependent on benefits, loans or grants of some kind.

Sources of household income are shown in Table 4.7 (see Appendix) for different household types. Incomes are classified as earnings from work only, benefits and grants only, or mixed earnings and benefits. There were a few cases where other sources of income, such as rents, were mentioned, but these were not major sources and no household depended on these alone. It should also be noted that all households with children were in receipt of Child Benefit, but this has not been included in benefits for the purpose of this analysis.

Overall, fewer than a quarter of all the households had sufficient income from earnings to survive without benefits. Couples with children were better off on average than the other households, with almost a half containing at least one wage-earner, but even two-thirds of these families were receiving benefits, whether because of the size of the family relative to the level of earnings, or because the work was only part-time. Adults sharing or living alone were much the same in terms of incomes, with only a fifth surviving without benefits. The circumstances of single-parent families stand out, however, with only three of the 33 households having sufficient earnings from work. Whichever type of household one takes the same fact persists – over half were reliant on benefits alone, and two-thirds or more were in receipt of some welfare payments.

Another indirect measure of each respondents' financial situation was based on a self-assessment scale based on borrowing and saving (Table 4.8, Appendix). This confirms that many were financially stretched and up to 47 per cent were not actually making ends meet.

The fact that someone was having to borrow money, of course, may have been because they had their own business and not necessarily because they were living on the poverty line. Six per cent of those borrowing money were in employment, as were most of those managing to save occasionally or regularly. Only eight people living on benefits were managing to save money. Some 60 per cent of people having to borrow money were those living on benefits. Only a third of those on benefits said that they had enough to cover expenses.

Expenses can be higher than for British nationals, because of residual social obligations to family or community abroad. Some mentioned during their interviews that they made a regular contribution to fund raising events for their particular community or sent money to friends and relatives in their home country, despite sometimes living on benefits themselves.
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Only 19 per cent of the respondents had received some of the special grants or loans available from the DSS, used to buy basics such as furniture and clothing. Awareness of these grants seemed to be fairly limited amongst those who had not claimed. Five different types of grant had been received: Single Payments, Social Fund Crisis Loans, Social Fund Budgeting Loans, Community Care Grants and (in just two cases) Social Fund Grants. Changes to Social Security payments introduced in April 1988 mean that arrivals since then have only been eligible for discretionary loans and grants from the cash-limited Social Fund, rather than the Single Payments available to people arriving earlier.
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5 Education and training

Recognition of previous qualifications

As shown in Chapter 2, respondents often had good educational backgrounds. Over a third, for instance, had been to university before applying for asylum. Some were students when they applied and had not finished their courses, but a quarter did have a degree, some of them postgraduate degrees. Another 8 per cent had professional qualifications (e.g. in law).

An issue for those with previous qualifications was whether they would be recognised in Britain. Some had completed their degrees in Britain, and therefore had no problem, but standards in Third World universities may not be recognised as equivalent. Only a fifth with some kind of qualification (fifty-five respondents) said they had tried to have their qualifications officially recognised. The percentage was highest for those with degrees (39 per cent), but still only a minority. Of these 55, 47 said they had been successful, although this does not mean that their qualifications had necessarily been validated at the same level – a degree may have been accepted, for instance, as equivalent to A-level, so that that person would still have to go to university in Britain for three years to obtain a degree that would be recognised as such. Just eight people said that they had not been successful in having their prior qualifications recognised at all; only three of these involved degrees, the others being a matter of O/A-levels and school-leaving certificates. All those with professional or technical qualifications had them recognised.

Respondents’ comments tended to confirm previous findings that refugees face a general lack of understanding and acceptance of qualifications, and of experience gained in other countries, among potential employers and training institutions (e.g. Refugee Training and Employment Centre, 1991).

Educational courses in Britain

Nearly half those interviewed had taken some type of course, other than English language classes (see Chapter 3), since they came to Britain: 28.5 per cent had taken one, 11 per cent two, four per cent three, and one per cent four. These courses covered a large range: basic skills like numeracy and cooking, work experience, access courses to prepare those lacking the required qualifications for higher education, GCSE and A-levels, skills training, vocational diplomas, degrees and post-graduate or professional courses. Of the whole sample, nine per cent had reached post-graduate level, and a further ten per cent had earned a degree in Britain (since applying for asylum). Seventeen per cent had obtained substantial qualifications like Higher National Diplomas or A-levels. Nine per cent had got no further than basic training courses by the time of interview.
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Altogether data were collected on 192 courses that respondents had started (but not necessarily completed). The most popular subjects (30 per cent of the total) were computing and IT studies, followed by maths/science at 12.5 per cent, engineering 11.5 per cent, and business/accounting 10 per cent. Over a third (35 per cent) were at degree level or higher. Most of the rest were for vocational qualifications like HND, access courses (usually preparatory to trying to get to university) and government training schemes. Apart from university courses, most lasted a year or less. Unlike the English courses (see Chapter 3), however, they generally involved more than 20 hours work a week, with a wide range from two hours to fifty.

Twenty-two of these courses had not been completed (11 per cent), for a variety of reasons, of which financial problems were the most frequent (6), along with being offered a job (4), failing exams (3) and difficulties with the English language (2). Financial support usually came from the respondent's Local Education Authority (42 per cent), and sometimes from the Manpower Services Commission (11 per cent), with 20 per cent paying the fees themselves, and 11 per cent being supported by their families.

The point of taking these courses, at whatever level, was generally to improve job prospects. On the whole it was thought that their completion had made it more likely they could get a job, only nine per cent thinking that it had not done so. The great majority (86 per cent), therefore, said that they were satisfied or highly satisfied with the courses they had taken. Only five people expressed dissatisfaction with them.

Not everyone had availed themselves of such courses to the same extent. Those who were currently full-time students had usually completed a prior course in the UK (93 per cent). Young single persons (57 per cent) and more recent arrivals (56 per cent of those arriving less than three years before) were also more likely to have finished at least one course. Those least likely to have taken and completed a course were those with unskilled jobs in their home country (seven per cent); those with no home country educational qualifications (17 per cent); those with little/no English currently (13 per cent); full-time home-carers, the retired or disabled, etc. (21 per cent); those currently unemployed, other than students (31 per cent); and those currently in skilled manual employment (30 per cent).

By and large this seems to indicate that those who take advantage of educational opportunities are those who have already had substantial educational experience before they come, and who want to find employment. Unfortunately, on the basis of the analysis in the previous chapter, there is no evidence that taking such courses actually did improve chances of finding a job. Those successful in the job market were generally those who already had good English, work experience in their home country and qualifications recognised in this country.

Generally speaking, educational provision in this country was successful in enabling respondents to regain the level of qualifications they had previously attained abroad, but not in altering their professional level, except for the youngest entrants in their teens and
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early twenties, although these may only have been returning to the educational career paths that had been disrupted and thus not completed in their countries of origin.

Of those who had gained professional qualifications in this country, 56.5 per cent were still not employed, together with over three-quarters of those with British degrees or vocational qualifications such as HND/OND. Educational qualifications did not guarantee employment.

This problem is illustrated by one of the Sudanese men who was very well qualified but could not secure long-term employment:

I did my first degree in London in Social Sciences and then I did a Masters Degree at the same university. Then I went and worked for the BBC World Service from 1989 to 1990. Then I moved from London here because my contract with the BBC was finished and could not be renewed because of the recession. A lot of people were laid off, and I came here hoping to get a job, because in London it is difficult to get a job. The only thing you can get is manual jobs, so when I came here I tried to apply to the local Council. I did several interviews and most of them, at the end of the interview, the result was that “you are over-qualified”. And then several times they say “your qualifications are not enough, you have no skills”. So for almost year I applied with almost 30 letters and all were negative. I continued applying and up to now, especially this year, they no longer reply to my applications. I did another Masters degree, specialising in International Relations. Again I tried to start applying for jobs but it has not been easy, partly because of the recession. Employers are very selective, they are looking for people with good experience... At the moment I am not completely frustrated, maybe if things change with the recession, I am also trying to do a part-time PhD in International Relations so maybe it is good to do something rather than sit around.

The success of education courses cannot be judged, of course, solely on whether or not they enable people to obtain work. They may have provided students with many other benefits, such as an understanding of British culture, intellectual development, practice in the language and even a breathing space for individuals to relax without immediate pressure of having to look for jobs. However, if such efforts do not eventually lead to some opportunity for employing the skills and knowledge gained, the effect may well be increased depression and frustration, as the above case example shows.

(In this study only adult education was examined, because of the restriction of the sample to people over 18. The nature of school education for their children is a matter of concern for many refugee families, but no data were collected on this aspect of their lives. This would warrant a study in its own right.)
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Educational aspirations

Most respondents said they would like to take further courses of study (60.5 per cent of the total sample). This is much the same as has been found in other studies – e.g. 63 per cent in McFarland and Walsh (1988). Of those wishing to study further, 15 per cent were thinking of English language courses (21, or two-thirds, of whom still had little or no English, and half of whom were home-carers or not seeking work because they were disabled or retired). Thirteen per cent were seeking computing/IT studies, seven per cent business/accounting courses, six per cent social sciences, and five per cent engineering. Many other subjects were mentioned by smaller numbers, including medicine, maths/sciences, teaching and media work. Slightly more wanted to study part-time (42 per cent) rather than full-time (37 per cent), but the rest did not mind. Those able to study full-time were mainly single (68 per cent) and in their twenties or thirties. There is apparently a demand for a wide range and variety of courses.

Those who wished to take such courses were of mixed backgrounds, but were more concentrated amongst those with technical or school-leaving qualifications only, and those who had been in skilled manual work before leaving their home country. These people mainly wanted to take business or computing courses. They were also more likely to be younger (in their twenties), and unemployed but seeking work. A large percentage of the widowed or divorced (83 per cent) wished to take courses of study, although a third of them merely wanted English classes.

Nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) of those who would have liked to take further study gave some reason why they found it difficult to attend such courses. The most frequent reason was lack of money for the fees (34 per cent), but childcare duties affected many people as well (28 per cent). Language problems were mentioned by 14 per cent.

Over a fifth of those wanting to study (22 per cent) had tried to get a place on a course, but had not been accepted. Those finding it more difficult to get accepted were those on temporary admission (44 per cent refused a place), or with unskilled jobs (33 per cent).

Sources of funding

As just noted, one of the major reasons for not being able to take up an educational course was financial. In response to the question on what would help the settlement of refugees, 14 per cent referred to the need for financial support (the fifth most common response). The bulk arrive penniless, but they often cannot work until they can improve their English skills and obtain educational qualifications recognised in this country. Without initial financial support they may be caught in a double-bind from which there is no escape.

In our sample we had information on funding sources for 202 educational courses. In only 36 cases (18 per cent) did the respondents pay the fees themselves. By far the most important source of grants were Local Education Authorities (LEA), which supported refugees in 130 cases (64 per cent). Employment Training funding was rarely used for this purpose (seven cases, three per cent), and normally it does not provide such support.
in any case, except sometimes for vocational training.

Mandatory student awards are limited to people who have been resident in Britain for three years. An exception to this rule is made for those of refugee, but not ELR, status. One of the African refugees in our sample wanted to continue his education at the Masters level but had trouble getting the financing from the LEA:

Now it would be important if the Government could remove the three year resident rule that would make refugees eligible for local authority grant awards, and also to broaden the classification of people eligible for the DES grant, especially for higher education. Because my experience shows that if I had not got that Africa Educational Trust grant, I would never be able to pursue further education and probably the skills, abilities and experience I brought to this job would have been lost... I had an offer of a place at a London university. They opened my file for two years and also at another college, but I could not get the fees. I was not eligible for a DES grant award because I was not a refugee according to the status I had been given.

Those who were able to finance themselves had been longer in the country, had been employed for much of that time and had more than minimal educational qualifications. They were largely those trying to work their way up the job ladder by getting further qualifications. More than an average proportion of the Iranians and the Ugandans had financed themselves, and may have arrived in the country with money, some being students here already.

LEA grants were particularly taken up by those who had been in the country a shorter time, who had originally had little or no English or previous education, and had not been employed at all, or, if employed, only in casual and unskilled work. The Kurds in particular were dependent on LEA grants, which are obviously crucial for those in poor economic circumstances. Such grants were more often obtained by individuals living in London than elsewhere.

Other sources of funding particularly applied to full-time students at universities, whose English was good and who had high educational qualifications from their home countries. They were largely seeking to regain the level of qualification in Britain that they had already attained elsewhere.

Training programmes

Types of training available

There are two main types of programme provided by the Employment Service and by Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs): those which increase the skills or resources of job-seekers to find appropriate work, and those which provide occupational training or work experience.
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

Over the period studied, the first group included:

Travel to Interview Schemes – which help unemployed people travel to job interviews beyond their immediate locality, by paying the costs of travel and overnight stays.

Job Review – personal interviews with a Claimant Adviser for those who have been unemployed for three months, in order to develop a plan for job search.

Job Search Seminars – two-day seminars on searching and applying for jobs, for those unemployed for three months.

Job Review Workshops – two-day workshops to help unemployed people re-assess their career paths, again for those who have been out of work for at least three months.

Job Club – help with job hunting, making applications, and so on, for people who have been unemployed for six months (or disabled); the emphasis is on self-help backed up by advice and resources (e.g. free paper and stamps for making applications).

Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) – in selected areas people having difficulty getting work (no job for six months) may get help in identifying vacancies, training in interview techniques, a chance to try out a job for up to three weeks, etc., with a guarantee of an interview for a job at the end of the course.

Restart – rather like Job Review, but more comprehensive, for those who have been unemployed longer (six months).

Restart Course – similar to Job Review Workshops, but lasting five days and more comprehensive, again for those out of work for six months or more; the courses are designed to build confidence and motivation, which may have been affected by long-term unemployment.

All these programmes were available through local Jobcentres. They assumed that clients were adequately skilled for the work they want to do, but lacked the skills or knowledge for effective competition for job vacancies.

The second group of programmes during the same period included:

Employment Training for Adults (since April 1993 re-named Training For Work) – mainly for those aged 18 and above who have been unemployed more than six months, although the latter requirement can be waived for refugees and others whose first language is not English; training is provided in job skills relevant to the local area; special facilities are available for those whose first language is not English; a training allowance equal to normal weekly benefits is paid, plus £10 per week, while help with childcare and travel costs may also be available.

Youth Training (YTS) – primarily for 16- and 17-year-olds, who need not be currently unemployed, although places are guaranteed only to those who are; a variety of organisations, including employers, provide training and work experience, sometimes aimed towards a vocational qualification. A training allowance is paid of at least £29.50
for 16-year-olds, and £35 for older persons. A similar scheme in the recent past was the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP).

**Employment Action** – not orientated to further training but to maintenance of existing work skills for people who have been unemployed for six months; temporary work relevant to the person’s skills is offered which will in some way be of benefit to the community. A similar past scheme was the Community Programme.

**Enterprise Allowance** – for unemployed who want to set up their own businesses or become self-employed; advice and training are available, plus possible financial help until the business is capable of generating regular income. Formerly Enterprise Allowance Scheme (EAS).

**Career Development Loans** – loans available to people who want to go on vocational training courses, covering up to 80 per cent of course fees and other costs. The loans have to be repaid over a period starting three months after a course ends. Such loans may also affect entitlement to benefits.

The above programmes were administered by local Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), although they were usually accessed through Job Centres. To join these programmes refugees needed to have permission from the Home Office to work in the UK.

In addition, a variety of agencies provided the following (including some of the programmes listed above):

**Literacy, Numeracy, and Access Programmes** – education programmes for those whose educational qualifications are not of a sufficient standard to obtain a job.

**Open Learning** – available to anyone, these are self-instructional packages for all sorts of skills, like running a business, operating a computer, management or bricklaying. The packages may include text books, audio and video equipment, and computers. There may also be practical sessions and group support.

Most of those who are subject to ‘temporary admission’ (i.e. awaiting a decision on their application for asylum) will not be eligible. For instance, to join a Restart Course, one needs to have been registered unemployed for six months, but asylum-seekers on temporary admission are not able to register, so that a refugee would have to be unemployed for six months after receiving a decision before becoming eligible, usually years after they have arrived. On the other hand, they may be eligible for Employment Training, although higher priority in competition for places may be given to certain other groups of unemployed.
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Awareness and use of job search schemes

Refugees may be unfamiliar with the structure of the employment market in the UK and may be unaware of the dominant sectors of employment. In addition, the job search methods and the interview process in the UK are often very different to those to which refugees are accustomed in their home countries. Many refugees experience frustration in job hunting due to these cultural differences. For example, some may feel it is not appropriate to emphasise their qualities and abilities in an interview situation, they may have difficulty adjusting to the formal process of filling in detailed application forms, developing their own curriculum vitae and writing their supporting letters and statements. (Marshall, 1989; Training Agency, 1989.)

We asked respondents who had at some time been registered as unemployed whether they knew of any government schemes to help people get jobs. Sixty per cent spontaneously mentioned Job Clubs, 25 per cent Restart Courses, 21 per cent Job Search Seminars, 14 per cent Job Review Workshops, 14 per cent Job Interview Guarantee Schemes and 13 per cent had heard of the Travel to Interview Scheme. Job Clubs are therefore quite well known, but general awareness of most of these schemes, even among those who might have had a use for them (the unemployed) was not very high. The differences between the schemes are not easy to understand, and their titles are not on the whole memorable, especially for those who are struggling with English.

Awareness of job search schemes varied with other characteristics. The Sudanese and Tamils were the most aware of such schemes, while the Kurds were the least aware. There were low levels of awareness among those who had little or no English when they arrived and those who had difficulty with the language still, and those with fewer educational qualifications on arrival.

There were some significant regional variations. There seemed to be little knowledge of any of the schemes among those who lived in Scotland, for instance, and Job Clubs were particularly well known in the Midlands, and less known in the North of England.

As the best known of the job search schemes, it is worthwhile looking further at those more likely to be aware of the Job Clubs. Apart from the general associations above, they were more likely to have been single persons, or people with professional or other qualifications in their home countries. They were likely to be currently unemployed (excluding home-carers), or, if in work, in unskilled jobs.

More important than awareness, of course, was whether they had ever been able to make use of any of these schemes. Percentages of those who had ever been unemployed who had used any of the above programmes were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Club</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restart</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Seminars</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Review Workshops</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Interview Guarantee</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel to Interview</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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From these figures it would appear that only Job Clubs were used with any frequency by those seeking work.

The types of people participating in the schemes were to some extent the same as those who were more aware, although not entirely so. The Tamils were particularly likely to be involved, but not the Sudanese. Few Kurds or Ugandans took part. They were likely to have lived in Britain longer than average, and to have better English skills (as well as arriving with more knowledge of English). Proportions taking part were higher among single persons and women, and lower among the married with children. Those who saw themselves as home-carers did not take part, because they were not actively seeking work. People with no qualifications from their home countries (or only technical ones) were less likely to use the schemes. Community-carers were more likely to take part. Participation was high in the Midlands (100 per cent there) and Wales, but low in Scotland and the North of England.

We also asked those who attended such schemes how useful they had been in helping get a job. Job Clubs were rated lower than any other type, with only 46 per cent finding them useful. Restart was found useful by ten of the 18 who had participated (56 per cent). The other schemes averaged 70 per cent (out of 37 individuals). Frequency of use of schemes was not therefore related to their ultimate success. The small numbers attending some schemes may not have reflected their utility so much as awareness of them or ease of access.

In order to test whether it was knowledge of a scheme that was important, the following table shows the percentages of those saying they had heard of a scheme who had actually taken it up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Club</td>
<td>58 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restart</td>
<td>30 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Seminars</td>
<td>37 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Review Workshops</td>
<td>34 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Interview Guarantee</td>
<td>22 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel to Interview</td>
<td>23 per cent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The differences in take-up are less substantial in this table than they were for overall take-up, so that lack of knowledge of appropriate schemes would appear to be one factor in their under-use. There is still substantial variation left, however, so that it might be that lack of eligibility was blocking access by refugees to certain kinds of assistance, even though they might have helped them to obtain jobs.

There is another hypothesis, however, which would explain the results. Those attending the Job Clubs were generally the least qualified and the least aware of other options. They were therefore likely to be the least successful in obtaining jobs.
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Quite apart from respondents' own assessments of the utility of these schemes, however, was there any evidence from their actual job patterns that participation actually made a difference to getting work? Those who had been on the schemes were more often students currently than those who had not, but they were less likely to be employed, to have achieved stable employment careers, or to be in skilled manual or managerial jobs. Those who had attended Job Clubs showed a similar work profile, but they were even more likely to be unemployed and in unskilled work or economically marginal occupations. The direction of cause and effect is not possible to determine with these data. It seems unlikely that attendance on job search schemes actively hampered people in getting jobs. It is more likely that those attracted to them were those (as it was intended) that were least likely to succeed in finding employment.

Those who said that they had found job search schemes useful were more likely to be employed currently (or students), and to have had some worthwhile jobs in their career. They were also more likely to say that they now felt settled in Britain. Those who said the experience had not been useful were most likely never to have found any job at all, or, if they had, only in manual work. Those who found the schemes useful had better English, had had to wait a shorter time for a decision on their status and were more frequent among women and those aged in their thirties. On the whole, the successful ones were those who were already better qualified for getting a job. Without such qualifications, no amount of job search assistance was likely to make a difference.

Awareness and use of occupational training programmes

The same questions were asked about the training programmes. Percentages able to name such schemes unprompted were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment Training</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Training</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Action</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Learning</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Programme</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Allowance</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy etc.</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Loans</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was therefore a fair degree of awareness of Employment Training, but plenty of scope for increasing knowledge of the other facilities.
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Awareness was consistently higher among women than among men, and among people with better English skills. There were again low levels of awareness of all the programmes amongst those resident in Scotland. The longer respondents had been in Britain the more likely they were to know of such programmes. Domestic situation and main occupation also made a difference — the more aware were generally single (including single parents and the widowed or divorced) and less likely to be home-carers and couples with children. (There were exceptions here, however, in that those who were home-carers were more aware than average of two of the programmes — the Literacy/ Numeracy schemes and the Enterprise Allowance.) Those who had better previous qualifications from their home country had above average knowledge of the programmes. Younger people were more aware of ET and YTS, while older people (over 40) were more aware of Literacy/Numeracy, Employment Action and Open Learning.

Numbers applying to go on such programmes are shown in Table 5.1 (Appendix). Employment Training stands out as the most popular programme, although lack of awareness of many others may be restricting their use, as rates of application among those who are aware of their existence are more substantial. The Enterprise Allowance appears to be the least popular programme, but it is of course only relevant to those who wish to become self-employed. Youth Training will not have been applicable to most of those interviewed because of the age restrictions.

Numbers accepted on to the programmes are shown in Table 5.2 (Appendix). Lack of eligibility or priority does not seem to have been a factor in preventing access to most of these programmes. The main exceptions to that seem to have been Youth Training and Career Development Loans. In terms of absolute numbers participating, however, the only programme with any real presence was Employment Training for adults.

Those who had been on at least one training programme were to some extent the same as those who were more aware of them in the first place — those with better English and educational qualifications from home, women rather than men, single parents and the widowed or divorced. There were other characteristics of those participating, however, that had not come up consistently with awareness. In particular, they had spent less time on the whole in Britain than others, even though the longer stayers were generally more knowledgeable. They were also more likely to be older persons, with refugee status rather than ELR.

Just as with the job search schemes, the most popular programme in terms of usage was rated the least effective in getting jobs. Only 46 per cent rated Employment Training as useful in this respect, much less than for any of the other schemes, which averaged 76 per cent. On the other hand, of those participating in Employment Training or Employment Action across the general population in 1991-92, only 34 per cent gained jobs, further education or training (Employment Department, 1993). The ratings from those interviewed may therefore indicate higher rates of success through employment training than are achieved by the general run of users.
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Those who took part in employment training had had substantial unemployment records and were economically marginal, whereas there was no association between participation and current economic status – those who had been through the training were just as likely to be employed at present as those who had not. This would appear to indicate that the schemes had had some effect.
6 Housing

Introduction

The role of housing in the settlement process has in some instances been seen as central and in other cases merely secondary to finding employment or being in close contact with others from the same country (Rogg, 1974; Phillips, 1989; Beiser, 1993). For quota refugees such as the Vietnamese, the selection of locations for resettlement in Britain was linked to the availability of housing, coupled with a policy of geographical dispersal to encourage integration and to avoid over-burdening statutory and voluntary agencies (Bristow, 1979; Jones, 1982; Field, 1987). However, the high level of secondary migration from their initial places of settlement among the Vietnamese, has suggested that settlement based on housing provision but isolated from access to employment opportunities and contact with other refugees is not an adequate settlement policy (CRC, 1974; Robinson, 1989).

For asylum-seekers arriving in Britain, including those surveyed in this study, there has been no distinctive reception or settlement policy. Therefore each individual could in theory make their own decisions about priorities for settling in the new country, depending on their own needs: such as availability of language training, access to housing, desire to live near friends or an established refugee community, the priority they place on employment or training, or the need to save money by staying with friends and relatives. Ideally people would want to realise all of their main priorities but given the functioning of the housing and labour markets in Britain, many of these choices would be severely restricted.

The actual experiences of each person in this survey have to a large extent been determined by their first contacts in Britain. Seventy per cent of applications for asylum during the 1980s were in-country. (This fell to 46 per cent in 1989 but has since risen; Home Office, 1992.) Thus many refugees were in contact with friends, relatives or refugee agencies when they applied for asylum. As the following data reveal, their role has been extremely important, given the lack of any assisted settlement policy.

The housing context

The people in this study arrived in Britain during a time of considerable change and stress in the housing market. Of the many changes in housing policy and provision, two issues in particular will have had an impact on their access to housing and their housing choices. Firstly, since the early 1970s there has been a rapid shift in the tenure structure in Britain, away from public and private rented accommodation towards greater levels of owner occupation. The decline of local authority housing has been bought about by limitations on their ability to build new housing and through legislation to transfer housing stock from the public sector to the owner occupied and housing association
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

sectors (Housing Acts of 1980, 1985, 1986 and 1988). This has resulted in a "residualisation" of council housing to the point that it is now seen as purely welfare housing (Malpass and Murie, 1990). Rented accommodation in Britain now accounts for only about 30 per cent of the housing stock and much of it is not available to refugees because of restricted access on the basis of definitions of accepted housing need (in the council and housing association sector) or entry costs (in the private rented sector).

The second issue affecting refugees has been the dramatic increase in homeless households throughout the 1980s. The causes of this increased homelessness have been the subject of considerable political debate, but research suggests that a combination of demographic change, high levels of unemployment, changes in the tenure structure and low levels of production of rented housing have together prompted a housing crisis, one of whose consequences is increased homelessness (Malpass, 1986). For asylum-seekers arriving in Britain, many of whom are homeless or only temporarily accommodated by family or friends, their priority in terms of access to housing is high but they are having to compete with other groups of homeless people for the same housing stock. Furthermore, over 80 per cent are not accompanied by other members of their family when they initially apply for asylum (Home Office, 1992) and therefore as single people they have a lower priority than family households. They are also subject to many of the difficulties experienced by other homeless households such as being allocated temporary accommodation in hostels and bed and breakfast hotels (B&Bs), having limited housing choices and having to wait for suitable permanent housing to become available.

Current accommodation

Geographical distribution

The geographical distribution of those interviewed was not random but targeted on certain urban areas (see discussion of the methodology in Chapter 1). In consequence, the list of areas in which respondents were living at the time of the interview cannot be taken to represent the geographical distribution of refugees in Britain. Analysis of addresses from IND files (p.14) led to the estimate that about 85 per cent of all asylum-seekers given leave to remain were living in London. In the sample used for this research, the largest number of respondents (57 per cent) were based in London and the South-East (see Table 6.1, Appendix).

Given the difficulties looking for housing in an unknown country, it was expected that many would have had limited choice in the location of their accommodation. Twenty-nine per cent said they had not wanted to live in their current area. (Also see section on future mobility below.)

Tenure distribution

The majority (57 per cent) were renting accommodation in the public sector, either from a local authority (37 per cent) or from a housing association (20 per cent). A quarter were renting from a private landlord, including two people living in accommodation tied to their employment. Only 12 per cent of the sample owned their own homes, 11 per cent with a mortgage and one per cent owning their properties outright. The remaining six per cent were renting from friends, relatives, a member of their community or were living rent free.
Compared with the general population in Great Britain (see Table 6.2, Appendix), respondents showed a greater dependence on public and private rented housing. Their reliance on the public rented sector is comparable to that for ethnic minorities generally in inner London but, within the private sector, many fewer owned their own houses and more were renting. The concentration in housing association property is a product of recent government policy placing housing associations in the forefront as the main providers of public rental housing.

Tenure and household characteristics

There were variations in the characteristics of households in different tenures. The home owners tended to be in two-parent families with children (69 per cent), currently in employment (88 per cent), aged 30 or over (94 per cent), with two or more employed people in the household (97 per cent), regular earners in terms of employment career (69 per cent) and currently living in London or the South-East (63 per cent). They also tended to have been in Britain longer than refugees in other tenures; the average time in Britain for owner-occupiers was six years and nine months compared to four years and eight months for the other groups.

The respondents in local authority housing also tended to be families with children (61 per cent). In contrast to the home owners, however, a third of them were single parent families. This tenure therefore contains half of all the single parent families in the survey and, in consequence, almost half of the women respondents. The local authority tenants were preponderantly unemployed; 79 per cent of them had no employed people in the household; and 63 per cent had never been employed in Britain. Sixty-seven per cent lived in London or the South-East and they had been in Britain for on average four years and eleven months.

Respondents in housing association or charitable trust tenancies were more evenly balanced between households with children (47 per cent) and single people (49 per cent). They tended to have no employed people in the household (84 per cent), to have always been unemployed (69 per cent) and to be living outside London and the South-East (73 per cent).

Those living in private rented accommodation were mainly young (80 per cent aged under 40), single (59 per cent), with no employed person in the household (73 per cent) and on average had spent only four years and five months in Britain. Just over half of them were categorised as irregular earners in terms of their occupational histories.

The people living rent free and those renting from friends, relatives or their community were all single except for one single-parent family. They tended to be young (94 per cent aged under 40), living in London (69 per cent) and irregular earners (57 per cent).

Help in finding current accommodation

Forty-nine per cent had found their current accommodation through a local authority or housing association. For the majority (75 per cent) this was through a waiting list, but six per cent had been nominated by the local authority to a housing association tenancy and 19 per cent had been accepted as homeless by a local authority. A further 10 per cent of the respondents had found their accommodation with the help of a refugee agency or community group. The importance of the help provided by friends and relatives is
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reflected in the fact that 23 per cent had found their accommodation through family or friends, whereas only 13 per cent used estate agents and private letting agencies, and five per cent responded to private advertisements or used other means. (A comparative analysis of changes over time in ways of finding accommodation is contained in the section on access below.)

Length of time in current accommodation

The length of time that respondents had lived in their current home varied considerably (Table 6.3, Appendix), but was predominantly rather short, 45 per cent for less than two years. This reflects the fact that many of those interviewed had not been in Britain long enough to have established a stable residence. Those who had spent longer periods of time in their current home tended to be living in owner-occupied housing or renting from a local authority and had lived in Britain for over four years.

Type of accommodation

The majority of respondents (52 per cent) were living in flats, with eight per cent in maisonettes, four per cent in bedsits and six per cent in a room in a shared house. Twenty-eight per cent were living in a detached or terraced house. The remaining two per cent were living in hostels or B&Bs. Those people who owned their own homes tended to have bought houses (67 per cent) rather than flats (33 per cent). Although most were families, people in local authority housing were mainly housed in flats (69 per cent) with 18 per cent in houses, nine per cent in maisonettes and four per cent bedsits. In the housing association sector, there was a slightly more even distribution between flats (49 per cent), houses (25 per cent), maisonettes (20 per cent), and bedsits or rooms (six per cent). Most of the bedsits and rooms in shared houses were rented from private landlords.

Sharing accommodation with another household

Almost a quarter of the respondents (61) said that they shared accommodation with another household. Seventy per cent (42) of those sharing were single people but there were also 14 respondents with children who were living in shared accommodation. Respondents who were sharing lived mainly in private rented accommodation (38 per cent), local authority housing (25 per cent) or housing association properties (18 per cent). Unusually, two-thirds of those sharing were living in a house or flat. The more usual situation is for people living in rooms, bedsits or hostels to predominate among those sharing facilities.

Furnished or unfurnished accommodation

The majority of tenants (55 per cent) lived in unfurnished accommodation, particularly in the local authority sector. Furnished accommodation was provided in almost all private rented tenancies and approximately a third of housing association tenancies, but in only 12 per cent of local authority tenancies. Having to find furniture for local authority or housing association properties presented a lot of problems, as more than one respondent noted:

Furnishing empty accommodation from social benefits money is very difficult. The local authority was not helpful when asked for grants or loans, and has a long waiting-list to be rehoused.
Size of accommodation

The number of bedrooms of which respondents had exclusive use varied from none to seven. Two people were sleeping on sofas and therefore said they did not have the use of a bedroom. The 34 per cent of people with use of only one bedroom included those who said they rented a room in shared accommodation and those living in bedsits. Twenty-seven per cent of respondents had use of two bedrooms, 29 per cent three, and nine per cent four or more. Home owners tended to have use of the largest number of bedrooms, with 69 per cent having at least three bedrooms, compared to 36 per cent of local authority tenants and 26 per cent of private sector tenants. The housing association tenants mainly had use of only one bedroom (49 per cent) with the rest having use of two or three. Nearly all of those living with friends and family had use of only one bedroom. As mentioned earlier, they were mainly single people.

Respondents were also asked what they thought of the size of their accommodation and 29 per cent (77) stated that it was too small. Twenty-four of these respondents were sharing their accommodation with another household and it is likely that they wanted a place of their own. Only four per cent of respondents thought their accommodation was too large. Most of these were living in shared houses and hostels, however. The majority (67 per cent) said their accommodation was the right size.

Heating

Respondents were asked what they thought of their heating and many of them complained of the high cost, but said that the heating system itself was good (41 per cent) or adequate (31 per cent). Twenty-eight per cent of the sample said their heating was bad; these were mainly tenants living in Local Authority or Housing Association properties (77 per cent). Eleven per cent said it was bad because they did not have central heating and it was therefore difficult or expensive to heat their accommodation effectively. Others who did have central heating claimed it was too expensive (eight per cent) or the condition of the house made heating ineffective (eight per cent).

The flat has central heating but the running cost is very expensive and I had to stay in cold flat because I can’t afford paying the bill. Even in very cold winter days, I have to avoid turning the heater on. (Iranian woman in housing association flat.)

There is only an electric fire in living room. The house is very, very cold. (Kurdish man in shared house.)

Amenities

One measure of quality of life is the amenities and facilities available to people in their own homes. This will depend to a greater or lesser extent on the person’s income, the type, cost and location of accommodation and their personal priorities. Table 6.4 (Appendix) lists a number of consumer goods and amenities found in the average British household, and indicates what proportion of respondents owned or had access to them, compared with the whole British population. Availability of washing machines, freezers and cars was considerably lower amongst those interviewed.
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Access to amenities varied only slightly between different tenures and different types of housing. Those living in owner-occupied housing had better access to all of the amenities than did those in rented accommodation. Within the rented sector, those living in local authority housing had better access to amenities than people in other rented accommodation. People renting a maisonette, bedsit or a room in a shared house tended to have less access to amenities than those in houses, flats, hostels or B&Bs.

Repairs and maintenance

Forty-one per cent (108) of respondents said that their home needed repairs or maintenance, and it was among tenants of local authorities that the most problems were reported. Sixty-eight per cent of local authority tenants said their accommodation needed repairs or maintenance compared to 39 per cent of housing association tenants and 24 per cent of private tenants. Only 16 per cent of home-owners said their property needed repairs.

Less than half of those who wanted repairs done said they knew who was responsible for carrying them out. Housing association tenants seemed more aware of who was responsible, with almost all of them naming the housing association. The scale of repairs varied enormously from mending broken windows, replacing doors and repairing toilets, to total refurbishment.

Windows broken, kitchen wall broken and damp, walls cracked, stairrail broken. Council is responsible. I report it many times but no action. (Sudanese family in rented accommodation.)

Dampness and dry and wet rot. The bathroom is out of order, the toilet is not according to British Standards. The decoration requires upgrading. (Single man in private rented accommodation.)

Not all of them stated whether they had tried to get anything done about these problems. Some indicated that the housing was temporary or short-life and therefore the landlord was not prepared to pay for repairs; Others said they had reported the repairs to the landlord on several occasions but with no success. Although some felt they were being discriminated against in getting repairs done, it is difficult to assess this without information from other tenants on responses to requests for repairs.

Satisfaction with current accommodation

Widespread dissatisfaction with current accommodation was indicated by the fact that 50 per cent wanted to move. At the same time, some respondents, although not totally satisfied with their current accommodation, were clearly relieved to have somewhere relatively safe to live.

When you go from not having a basin to wash in to having a fairly decent place, things seem OK. Once things improve, you always want more. I think the housing in this country is appalling, but at least we have a home and are safe. (Kurdish family in London.)
The quality of housing has been very bad but I don’t care about it much. I just want to be close to other Iranians I know. (Iranian woman in London.) Only 48 per cent (63) of those wanting to move had actually done something about trying to do so. Seventy per cent of them had applied to a local authority or housing association, or asked for a transfer, if already in this sector; 13 per cent had approached housing agencies, but had received no help because they were not considered a priority; 11 per cent had been looking for other private rented accommodation; and six per cent had taken other action. For some, however, the main problem they faced was entry costs:

The system of deposit and advance payment for people who are on state benefit and have no savings is very unfair. (Iranian man.)

[Housing has been] hectic – lucky to get a place if on the dole. Won’t accept DSS, ask for huge deposits of £800 in London, very expensive so you need friends. In England you are just abandoned and have to get on with it. (Iranian man.)

Access to housing

In the absence of any organised housing provision, how do they find somewhere to live? This issue was explored in three ways in the survey: by asking about how they found each place they lived in, their use and knowledge of different housing sectors and their experiences of homelessness.

Help in finding accommodation

Table 6.5 (Appendix) compares sources of help in finding their first, second, third and fourth to eighth accommodation, plus the averages across all places lived in. The current accommodation has been incorporated in the different categories as appropriate. On arrival in Britain, there was clear reliance on friends or relatives and refugee agencies in finding accommodation. Over time, sources of help shifted towards greater use of public sector housing agencies and, to some extent, private agencies, although friends and relatives continued to help about a quarter of respondents. Increased use of private agencies was accounted for by the number of people buying their own homes through an estate agent or resorting to private rented accommodation when moving to new areas.

The trends discernible over the first three addresses were not continued for those with a high level of mobility, having lived in four or more addresses. With increased mobility, greater reliance on more informal sources of help was evident. This mobility may have been partly due to the insecurity of tenure experienced by this more mobile group. Being mainly young, single, male and unemployed, they had access neither to social rented housing nor owner occupation.
Access to different housing sectors

Respondents were asked whether they had experienced any problems gaining access to particular housing sectors. Of the 164 who had never lived in local authority housing, 56 per cent had actually tried to get housed in that way, but had been unsuccessful. Most of those who had not tried cited ineligibility because they were single or said they had found suitable accommodation elsewhere. Others commented on the poor quality and location of council accommodation:

*Council housing is in poor condition and in bad areas. We would have to wait 2 or 3 years for housing.* (Tamil family.)

*You have to stay in one area to qualify and I kept moving around.....* (Somali man, aged 28.)

Of the 186 respondents who had never lived in housing association property, only 22 per cent had ever tried to obtain access to this form of housing. Again the issues of ineligibility or not needing this accommodation seemed to be the main reasons, but there were also some refugees who did not know about this sector.

*I never knew anything about it. The only options presented to me were local authority or private rented.* (Iranian woman.)

*Because I was told by friends that chances to be rehoused by housing associations were rare.* (Iranian man.)

Lack of knowledge of housing association accommodation is particularly worrying because they are often in a better position than local authorities to house single people, as many refugees are.

Of the 143 respondents who had never lived in the private rented sector, 24 per cent of them had tried to do so. The main reasons for not applying to the private sector seemed to be the high rents and deposits, the poor quality of housing and a belief that private landlords would not rent to refugees or people on income support.

*We couldn't afford the deposit, one month advance rent and the time it would have taken for the housing benefit to come through.* (Iranian woman.)

*I did not bother because my friends told me that no refugee who is unemployed could be offered accommodation by a private landlord.* (Somali man.)

Many had obtained their information on different housing sectors from friends or other refugees, and in some cases they had been misinformed or discouraged from widening their housing opportunities. Where several with the same landlord or living in the same area were interviewed for the survey, it was clear that the beliefs and experiences of earlier arrivals were informing the housing choices of those who had arrived more recently.

Two examples serve to illustrate this. In one case, several families had been accommodated by a housing association in poor quality, short-life housing and despite repeated requests for repairs and transfers, nothing had been done and they felt
discriminated against because they were refugees. Others who had arrived more recently in the same area had not applied to this housing association because of what they had heard about the poor quality and attitude of the housing managers.

In another case, several Kurdish families had been housed by a local authority but were very unhappy with the areas in which they had been housed because of crime and racism. More recent Kurdish arrivals in that area were reluctant to apply for local authority housing because of the possibility of being offered housing in the same areas, and preferred to stay in more expensive and insecure private rented housing, but in an area of their choice.

Experiences of homelessness

The third set of information on access was provided by experiences of homelessness. Variations in the definition of homelessness might have resulted in under-reporting or over-reporting of its incidence. Many have also commented that all asylum-seekers are in essence homeless (Marrus 1985).

When asked whether they had been homeless since coming to Britain 27 per cent (70) said they had. Homelessness had occurred at different times. Half said they had been homeless when they first arrived in Britain. A further eight per cent had been threatened with eviction by friends and relatives temporarily housing them. Seventeen per cent said they were homeless because they had lived in temporary or unsuitable accommodation. Ten per cent had become homeless on having to leave their accommodation because it was being sold or demolished, or on finishing a course of study and being no longer eligible to stay. Nine per cent had been served with a Notice to Quit or been evicted by private landlords, and six per cent had run out of money.

From the moment I arrived I was homeless because my brother was living in a very small bedsit with no access for the wheelchair. He took me to the Homeless Unit and they gave us a temporary flat, then we moved to another temporary flat. We are now in our third temporary flat. (Iranian man and brother.)

I have been living for the past ten months temporarily with my sister’s family and sleeping on the sofa in the living room. I have been to the Council and they said to me that I do not have enough points. I also could not get a private accommodation because they do not want to rent to people on Income Support. (Kurdish man.)

Local authorities and housing associations were the main sources of help to which respondents turned when they became homeless (41 per cent). A further eight per cent had approached the local council but had got no help. The other main sources of help were local refugee agencies (21 per cent) and friends and relatives (18 per cent). Other agencies such as CABs, law centres and university welfare services also provided help (seven per cent). Five per cent said they did not seek help.

First accommodation I shared with a family, I was asked to move out ...

Then I transferred to a guest house which was sold after one month I entered it. Because I had no place to go, I remained in same
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accommodation for a month with neither electricity nor heating facilities. After this I moved to a hostel which has no cooking facilities. (Somali man.)

The Council accommodated me in the first hostel. I was sharing a room with somebody I didn't know. Three weeks without electricity, so I moved out one night and spent night in front of shops in Ealing Broadway. This made me come to (the Midlands) where I got accommodated in a hostel, arranged by the city council. (Ugandan man.)

Of those who had experienced homelessness, 46 per cent were officially accepted as homeless by a local authority, 19 per cent were put on a local authority or housing association waiting list and 20 per cent found other temporary accommodation. Seven per cent managed to find their own accommodation and three per cent remained homeless. Of those who were helped to find housing, the main types of housing they got were B&Bs, hotels or temporary accommodation through a local authority or housing association, although some did obtain permanent housing.

Housing histories

Information on the housing histories of each respondent was collected to counteract some of the disadvantages of the snapshot provided by a survey, and to allow exploration of tenure and geographical mobility over time. This section begins with the first home found on arrival in Britain and then goes on to analyse tenure and geographical mobility, making reference to motivation, and the consequences and outcomes of this mobility for particular groups.

The first home

For the arrival of quota refugees such as the Vietnamese, a national programme of reception was funded by the Home Office and arranged at the local level in reception centres by three voluntary organisations (Dulghish 1989). For others there have been no formal reception arrangements.

With regard to housing, some of those in this survey (12 per cent) were initially helped by agencies such as the Refugee Arrivals Project or one of the refugee councils and a further 15 per cent were initially helped to find housing by a local authority or housing association. However for the majority, reception was very much dependent on ad hoc arrangements with friends, relatives or community-based refugee agencies (58 per cent). Four said they had stayed in a reception centre. Beyond actually providing or helping to find accommodation, friends, relatives and refugee agencies also played a major part in providing invaluable information and support.

Ninety-two per cent of those interviewed (241) gave details of their first home. Just over a quarter (27 per cent) lived rent free, mostly with friends and relatives, 20 per cent lived in council or housing association properties (not necessarily as the main tenant) and 49 per cent were in private rented accommodation. For four per cent their first home in
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Britain was a detention centre: some were detained for a couple of weeks and others for up to ten months, with an average stay of two months.

There was not much variation in access to different tenures between regions, although new arrivals were more likely to be accommodated rent free outside of London than those arriving in London. In common with many other homeless people in Britain in the 1980s, some were housed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation (13 per cent); these tended to be households with children located in London and the South-East.

The average length of stay in the first home was eleven months; the minimum was a few days and the maximum was five and a half years. Comparison with refugees such as the Vietnamese who had access to reception centres, reveals that the average length of stay in the first accommodation was similar for this sample.

From the information on the reasons for leaving the first accommodation, it appears that pull factors (e.g. better quality, better-sized accommodation, getting their own place, accepting an offer from a council or housing association, finding a job, moving to a new area or nearer family) were more significant (74 per cent) than push factors (26 per cent) (e.g. eviction, temporary housing, problems with the landlord, lack of job opportunities, health problems or violence). Furthermore, 83 per cent were living in shared accommodation when they first arrived or were temporarily housed by friends and family, and this may also have prompted many of them to move.

Condition of living in the B&B was very bad, but the worst thing was having to change my daughter’s school when we changed address. She didn’t take it easily. (Iranian woman.)

While I was living in B&B accommodation I had difficulty to rest. The place was too crowded and noisy. I could not make food and my Income Support was not enough to meet my problems. (Somali man.)

There was some variation in reasons for leaving across different tenures. Those living rent-free tended to move to get their own place and because they were only temporarily housed, whereas those in social and private rented accommodation were more likely to leave to improve the quality, size and location of their housing.

Analysing responses on satisfaction with their first homes was difficult because of the variety of unknown factors affecting their judgement. People’s views on their first home might have changed over time as their knowledge and awareness of housing provision in Britain has increased, but their views were also likely to have been influenced by the sort of housing they had previously lived in and their expectations and beliefs about British society.

Those who said they were satisfied with their first home (39 per cent) tended to be living rent free or renting from friends and relatives, or those who had found their own accommodation in the private rented sector. Forty-six per cent said they were dissatisfied with their first home, and fifteen per cent said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Dissatisfaction was particularly high amongst those who found their first home through local authorities or housing associations (77 per cent) and those who had accommodation arranged by the RAP or Immigration Service (88 per cent). Many of this last group had been housed on an emergency basis in whatever accommodation was available at the time, and this would not tend to be the most desirable.
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A final issue on first homes was the variation in experience between people who had come to Britain at different times. Those who arrived within the last four years were more likely to have used formal sources of help to find their first accommodation but less likely to gain immediate access to local authority and housing association properties than those who had come to Britain more than four years ago. Those who arrived more recently were also more dissatisfied with their first accommodation and more likely to leave to improve the quality of their housing than those who arrived earlier. These variations probably have more to do with changes in the housing market during the 1980s, as outlined at the beginning of this chapter, than in differences in the characteristics of asylum-seekers who came at different times. One difference which was not related to the housing market was the greater incidence of detention among earlier arrivals than those coming in the last four years.

Housing mobility

The average number of moves was two, with a maximum of eight, from first to current accommodation. Just six per cent of respondents had only ever lived in their current home. Over 60 per cent of the sample had lived at three or more addresses, including their current home, since applying for asylum. The majority had moved once or twice.

Tenure mobility

Tenure mobility and the routes into different tenures have been very diverse, making it difficult to distinguish any particular patterns. This was due to a wide variation in personal circumstances and local housing conditions.

Access to home ownership is dependent on having capital to purchase a house or a sufficiently high and regular income to borrow the necessary capital. Almost all who had bought their own homes were employed and had been regular earners. They had gained access to home ownership in exactly the same ways as other people in Britain.

Those who moved into the social sector did not necessarily get stuck in this sector as other studies of refugees have suggested (Bell and Clinton, 1992).

Geographical mobility

In addition to mobility across tenures, some were simultaneously moving long distances across regions or from one city to another, sometimes in a totally different part of the country. This section of the report explores this geographical mobility on the basis of the areas lived in and the distances moved, and explores some of the motivations for these moves. It also considers the future mobility of this group based on those who wanted to move at the time of the interview.

The location of each address was identified by a postal district which revealed that 52 per cent of the sample had only ever lived in London and another 29 per cent had never lived in London. The remaining 19 per cent had spent time living in both London and the provinces since applying for asylum (see Table 6.6, Appendix). Those respondents who had spent all or most of their time living in London tended to have had more moves (70
per cent with two or more previous addresses) than those who had never or only briefly lived in London (50 per cent). This may be partly explained by the procedure adopted by London boroughs in housing homeless people. Some boroughs had to use temporary accommodation due to limited availability of permanent housing, so that some had been moved through two or more temporary addresses before being permanently rehoused or given yet another temporary place.

Long-distance moves between regions

Most moves were relatively local. Of all moves of address (522), only 13 per cent were long distance moves. These were made by 58 different individuals (22 per cent of the whole sample). Just eight persons had made more than one long distance move. The majority of these moves (59 per cent) were from London and the South-East to other regions of Britain. The other moves were between different provincial regions (22 per cent) or moves from a provincial region into London and the South-East (19 per cent).

The motivation for long distance moves varied with the direction of the move, but overall the main reasons given by the respondents were: to be nearer family or friends (38 per cent), to live in a new area (31 per cent), to get their own house (21 per cent) and for employment reasons (18 per cent). In comparison with the motivations for short-distance moves, which were in the majority linked to housing reasons, more of the long distance moves were prompted by family or employment reasons. The attraction of living near family and friends and moving to a new area were particularly important for those moving away from London:

London was not all that good, not a good town to give a good impression of British traditional hospitality ... It is a big city with a record of crimes so when I came here (to the North) I noticed a big difference, people are very friendly ... The reason I am comfortable here is that there is a sizeable (refugee) community here without which we would lose a lot in terms of sharing ideas and continuing with our own culture and way of life. (Sudanese man.)

Long-distance moves within the South-East

There were 64 long-distance moves within the South-East of England, accounting for 12 per cent of all moves. Long-distance was defined as movement into and out of Greater London and movement from one postal district in London to another not adjacent to it. There was a balance between movement into and out of Greater London. Although the predominant movement was out of the NW, W and SW postal districts (accounting for 55 per cent of moves), these three districts and the western areas of the South-East were also the main destination for the majority of long distance moves (64 per cent). When analysing moves over time (i.e. from first home to last home), however, there is a discernible movement towards the E and SE postal districts (48 per cent) and out of the Greater London area (26 per cent) altogether.
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Motivations for mobility

Mobility among the general population in Britain tends to be motivated by family, personal or housing factors rather than employment circumstances (Stewart and Carey-Wood, 1992) and the same holds true for people in this survey. For each move the respondent was asked to give the main reasons for moving, of which a maximum of five were coded. Of the 722 reasons given for moving, 63 per cent were housing related. Nine per cent were for family reasons, four per cent were employment related, 10 per cent were to live in a different area, and 14 per cent for other reasons.

Exploring the reasons in more detail (Table 6.7, Appendix) reveals that the most frequent response was ‘to improve housing quality’ (52 per cent), closely followed by ‘to get one’s own place’ (48 per cent). Other reasons included leaving detention, starting or finishing a course of study, financial reasons and specific issues relating to housing quality.

Moves due to family reunion

Only four per cent of the respondents in this survey specifically mentioned family reunion as a motivation for moving. All of these were local moves except for one. Typically family reunion involved an individual who was later joined by his or her spouse and their children. In one instance a single parent family was joined by more children, necessitating larger accommodation. Prior to family reunion, most were living in one room in shared private rented accommodation or rent free with friends or relatives. Following the arrival of other family members, they bought their own home, entered council or housing association property, or found alternative accommodation in the private rented sector. Therefore, family reunion did prompt some of them to seek help from statutory housing agencies for accommodation.

Employment-related moves

Employment as a motivating factor for moving (six per cent) was not very significant among the total number of reasons given, but one has to take into account the fact that only a minority had had any opportunity for employment. Over a fifth (22 per cent) of those who had ever had employment had moved house for employment reasons, suggesting that many were prepared to move to obtain a desired job. Thirty such moves were involved, among 26 respondents (10 per cent of the total sample). Of these, 57 per cent were long-distance moves, either changing city or moving to another side of London, and 43 per cent were short-distance moves, either to the same or a neighbouring postal district. Of the long-distance moves, three moved from the provinces into London, seven left London for another city and three moved a long-distance within Greater London. The short-distance moves were mainly within Greater London.

I moved from London to here because my contract was finished and could not be renewed because of the recession. A lot of people were laid off and I came to the North hoping to get a job, because in London it is difficult to get a job. The only thing you can get is manual jobs. (Sudanese man.)
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The effect on their housing conditions of undertaking an employment-related move was assessed in two ways: by changes in the type and tenure of housing, and by changes in satisfaction with it. Whereas over 90 per cent of employment-related, short-distance moves resulted in people moving to a very similar or better house type and tenure, for those moving long-distances, only 76 per cent maintained the same or improved their housing situation. Long-distance, employment-related movers also tended to be less satisfied with their accommodation after moving, whereas short-distance movers maintained their levels of satisfaction.

Future mobility

Given the high levels of mobility in the past it seemed likely that many would move again. Almost half (131) said they wanted to move out of their current accommodation. Multiple reasons were often given for wanting to move. The main ones were: poor quality of the current accommodation (69 per cent), too small (45 per cent), issues of security and harassment (14 per cent) and wanting permanent or more independent accommodation (19 per cent).

Sixty per cent of this group only wanted to move locally within the same city or the same part of London (see Table 6.8, Appendix). Of the total sample, more of those living outside London wanted to move (45 per cent of 112) than of those living in London (21 per cent of 151), but most of this was a desire to move locally and not long distance. Of those who wanted to move area, 39 per cent said this was because they were living in a bad area, 28 per cent because of lack of security and the experience of harassment, and 32 per cent due to isolation from family, friends or their community. These three reasons were probably interrelated.
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Well, to start with, I appreciate everything I get from this country. If it wasn't this way, I'm sure I wouldn't be alive. I think the worst thing I faced when I came to this country was when trying to get accepted as a refugee. They put me through a very hard time. After a time I had a nervous breakdown and that was when some people helped me. I've never been so weak in my life. Since then I have lost my personality. I was crying and crying and in my life I never did before, never. I blame Saddam Hussein, everyone knows how powerful he was. In Iraq I refused to accept it. In the end I realised my life was in danger. I had no choice, I had to go. (Kurdish man.)

Introduction

The physical and mental health of an asylum-seeker may be one of the most significant factors affecting settlement. In the study of refugees in Strathclyde, health was said to be one of their greatest problems (McFarland and Walsh, 1988). Apart from the stress of involuntary migration, some refugees had had traumatic experiences as a result of persecution, torture or imprisonment, and endured psychological and physical hardship fleeing their home country. Refugees unfamiliar with European society may have also experienced cultural shock encountering their new environment.

Mental illness among refugees may be aggravated by the social and cultural isolation they experience in the new country. Earlier studies of resettlement have suggested that access to a refugee community group can reduce the severity and likelihood of mental illness (Field, 1985; Eisenbruch, 1991; Beiser, 1993). The attitude of people within the country of resettlement towards refugees may also be significant. As Beiser comments:

*Ethnocentrism, cultural stereotyping, racism – whatever the term, negative attitudes towards newcomers affect their mental health.*

(Beiser 1993, p129.)

However, despite such experiences, Beiser adds, the majority of refugees do not suffer mental ill-health and gradually adapt to their new homes, often contributing to and playing an important role in their new country.

Health problems and their impact

The type of health problems found in this survey were both physical and psychological. Ten per cent said they had some sort of disability sufficient to affect their daily life. The range of disabilities was wide and some were very acute, including lameness, partial loss of vision, paralysis, nervous breakdown, amputated limbs, severe back pain, lung
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removal and hearing difficulties. More men were 'disabled' than women (11 per cent and six per cent respectively). The 'disabled' were more likely to be older: of those aged 40 or over, 16 per cent said they had disabilities compared with eight per cent below that age. The majority of them were not in employment.

Sixteen per cent said they felt that their health had affected their employment, housing or way of life generally since they had been in Britain. For example, a 35-year-old Tamil man described his difficulties in both housing and employment due to the fact that his leg had been amputated above the knee:

I have difficulty in climbing stairs and work involving physical movements. Private landlords disliked me being taken as a tenant. My disability was a hindrance to my following any course of studies and taking more lucratively paid employment in factories and supermarkets.

An Iranian man in his fifties could no longer practice as a surgeon due to poor vision. A 38-year-old Sudanese woman suffering from severe back pain told us of her problems getting jobs:

It has affected my way of life as I am in pain constantly with no proper diagnosis. I am depressed due to this long illness. Even getting a cleaning job is impossible due to my back problem.

There was no significant difference between the proportion of men (17 per cent) and women (14 per cent) who said that health problems had affected their employment, housing or life generally. There were, however, some marked differences between the nationalities. The Ugandans (54 per cent) were by far the most likely to mention such problems, followed by the Iranians (23 per cent). The least likely were the Tamils and Sudanese (eight per cent).

Mental and psychological disabilities, like physical disabilities, often caused difficulties in the areas of employment and housing for refugees:

Because I have suffered from a nervous breakdown since being here, I have difficulty in finding housing, employment and I find it difficult to adjust myself to the general way of life here. (Tamil man, aged 24.)

In many cases, intensive counselling and medical treatment had been required. For example, a 40-year-old Kurdish man was poisoned in Kurdistan and was flown to the UK for treatment. He was seriously ill for one year. Another case involved a 41-year-old Iranian man who had been tortured before coming to the UK and was still suffering from medical problems:

I was in prison for three years after the Iranian Revolution and, due to the torture I went through, I have physical problems affecting my head and my back. Unfortunately, after 4 years of following the matter with the NHS and the Medical Foundation, it was not cured and the symptoms have become worse. My illness prevents me from employment and continuing my education.
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Or, as a 41-year-old Latin American man said:

*I find it difficult to establish myself and settle down here with the psychological problems that the conditions in our country has given us. The exiled conditions impose a solitude which is difficult to cope with. I'm often nervous and I suffer 'backlashes' of the situation there. Every time I hear police stress, I become frightened.*

There were high levels of stress, anxiety and depression generally among respondents. Two-thirds said they had experienced such feelings since arriving in Britain. The only group with a distinctly lower level of reported anxiety was the Tamils (22 per cent); the other groups had very high rates: all the Sudanese and Ugandans, 82 per cent of the Kurds, 72 per cent of Somalis, 65 per cent of Iranians and 80 per cent of the others. There were no significant differences between women and men or between age groups.

Feelings of stress, anxiety, or depression were associated with the respondent's occupation. Thus fewer of the employed (52 per cent) reported psychological problems, compared with 68 per cent of the unemployed, 70 per cent of those who were students or on training courses, and 81 per cent of those who were either retired, sick or disabled. (In this respect it should be noted that the Tamils had much higher employment rates (57 per cent) than other groups.) It is impossible to say from this research whether psychological problems led to difficulty obtaining jobs, or whether unemployment exacerbated such problems. Most likely there had been a mixture of both effects.

Problems of anxiety and stress were closely related to feelings of acceptance in Britain. They were reported by 83 per cent of those who also said they did not feel part of the community, compared with 61 per cent who said they did. Once again, it is not possible to determine the direction of causation between these variables.

Language was also associated with stress, anxiety and depression. Individuals who spoke no English were more likely to experience these feelings than those who spoke good English. Of those who rated themselves as speaking good English at the time of the interview, 62 per cent experienced such problems compared to 79 per cent of those who spoke little or no English. This may be explained by the fact that those who had difficulty speaking the language were more likely to feel isolated and be less able to adapt to the culture.

Respondents experiencing anxiety and stress attributed it to several causes. These particularly related to events in their home country, followed by anxieties about their future in Britain, their employment, financial problems, isolation and housing difficulties (see Table 7.1, Appendix).

Other causes included: marital problems, separation from family, deaths and executions of family members, anxiety over family reunion, stress related to asylum decisions and the uncertainty of ELR, fear of deportation, nightmares about fleeing from the home country, adapting to a new culture and lifestyle, change in climate, language difficulties, living in violent neighbourhoods, racial harassment and discrimination, loss of one's own culture and identity, dealing with children growing up in a different culture, being dependent on the social welfare system and not being able to be involved in the political life of their country.
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Many respondents were understandably preoccupied with problems in their home countries and worried about family and friends still living there. This had adverse effects on their health and their ability to settle into a new life. The following comments illustrate the experiences some had had, the situations they found themselves in here and the effects these had on their lives.

*I feel stress due to the lack of communication with my relatives, not knowing their whereabouts, or whether they are alive or dead. I feel anxiety because of the years of unemployment, while I am qualified according to standard in this country. What I want is to work to keep up and support myself. This is dignity and not to be fed by the government.* (Somali man, aged 33.)

*We are not happy. On weekends we should be doing things as a family. My children have grown up without their relatives, they need this experience.* (Kurdish woman, aged 35.)

*It is difficult to adapt to a new life and restart everything late in your life.* (Somali man, aged 55.)

*My stress is due to unemployment. I can't look for a job because of the language problem. My entire family is displaced and they expect me to help them. I have no house of my own. For years I have lived with relatives.* (Somali woman, aged 30.)

*I do worry a lot and feel under stress and depression, because I could not go out often or work, because I cannot speak the English language, and I spend most of the day at home alone. This condition has created a constant headache, stomach pains and depression.* (Kurdish woman, aged 37.)

*I feel isolated, worry about the children I left behind, and my long sickness - all these make my life useless and not worth living. I am always depressed. I am worried about social fragmentation with my children and relatives back home. I have a sense of loss of my origins and purpose in life.* (Iranian man, aged 60.)

The majority said they had felt homesick since coming to Britain (79 per cent). Several characteristics contributed to higher or lower levels of homesickness. The problem appeared to decrease the longer the respondent had been in the UK: 91 per cent who had been in the country for less than three years said they had felt homesick compared to 71 per cent who had been here for over six years. Those with refugee status were more homesick than those with ELR (90 per cent and 68 per cent respectively). Being employed also appeared to reduce the incidence of homesickness (65 per cent, compared to 87 per cent among those not in paid employment). The only nationality group not to experience high levels of homesickness were the Tamils (31 per cent). English language ability at the time of the interview was also related, with 93 per cent of those who rated themselves as speaking little or no English reporting homesickness, compared to 72 per cent of those who spoke good English at the time of the interview. The incidence of homesickness was lower among those living in London than those living elsewhere,
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perhaps because of support from the large refugee community network available to them. Finally those who said they felt part of the community and felt permanently settled in Britain were less likely to feel homesick. However, even where recent experiences had been favourable, it should be recognised that the majority still reported feeling homesick.

I miss my friends and family. When you become a refugee and flee your home country, you lose your immediate channels of comfort and support. You lose your community. (African refugee in his thirties.)

Because of my problems I cannot eat or sleep. The civil war in my country displaced my family and many of them are in refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia. I can't wait for the day when I can go home. (Somali man, aged 30.)

Help with health problems

Knowledge of health facilities and registration was relatively high. Three-quarters (74 per cent) knew that they could register as disabled and have better access to certain benefits through doing so. Almost all those interviewed (99 per cent) were registered with a doctor and 78 per cent were registered with a dentist. The older age groups were more likely to be registered with a dentist than the younger age groups: 70 per cent of the 18- to 29-year-olds, 79 per cent of 30- to 39-years-olds and 86 per cent of those aged 40 years and over were registered.

Despite this knowledge of health services, only 40 per cent of those who said they had a medical or psychological problem had actually sought help. Even fewer had sought help through formal channels such as doctors, social services and hospitals. Those who did seek help mentioned going to friends or members of their community more often (27 per cent). Other sources of help were mentioned less frequently: doctors (25 per cent), social services (15 per cent), the Home Office (14 per cent), psychiatrists (five per cent) and others (14 per cent) – including the Citizens Advice Bureau, UKIAS, Medical Foundation, MPs, churches, solicitors and the police.

It is interesting that only 30 per cent went to medical professionals for assistance. One explanation for turning to non-medical sources of help is that many of their health problems were psychological and would only be alleviated by reducing the cause of that stress rather than treating the symptoms. For example, those suffering from the stress caused by the wait for Home Office decisions on asylum and family reunion might have tried to solve these problems by going to their solicitors, MPs or by directly approaching the Home Office rather than seeking medical treatment.

Obtaining medical care and treatment for physical injuries and disabilities may be fairly straightforward because they are easily identified. However, getting appropriate treatment for psychological problems and mental illness is much more problematic due to conceptual and linguistic difficulties in describing symptoms, plus the cultural differences in the perception of mental health. These communication difficulties may also result in low expectations of health services and therefore lower take up of services (McFarland and Walsh, 1988). Furthermore, studies have shown that symptoms and treatment of the more common psychological problems, such as post-traumatic stress...
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disorder, depression and bereavement, vary across different cultures and consequently require specialist diagnostic and counselling skills which may not be readily available in this country (Eisenbruch, 1991; Pilosi and Harrell-Bond, 1989).

In the study of refugees in Strathclyde, McFarland and Walsh (1988) also found that most health problems were psychological and could not be readily solved by the health services. As a result, despite the fact that refugees were receiving little help from these services, they were very uncritical of them.

Those interviewed for this study confirmed that many professionals did not understand, or certainly did not respond to their problems, especially those related to the experiences they had in their home countries or to cultural issues. Dealing with statutory health services who have no specialist knowledge of refugees adds a further dimension to their problems and isolation.

_I saw a psychoanalyst who was unhelpful. He could not help with issues causing anxiety due to absence from family and Uganda._
(Ugandan man, aged 35.)

_I have visited my doctor but he cannot understand my problems because he cannot see any physical illness with me._ (Kurdish woman, aged 37.)

_I have contacted my GP at the health centre but he was not helpful. He told me to forget everything and try to cope with the new situation._
(Somali man, aged 26.)

The high incidence of stress-related health problems and homesickness amongst this group indicates the ongoing mental pressures that they have to live with as they go about their daily lives. From their comments it appeared that the availability and adequacy of health services varied considerably, depending on the nature of their needs. However the contribution of non-medical services and support can reduce or even alleviate many of the stresses they experience. As Beiser (1993) found from his research in Canada, the existence of a ‘like-ethnic community’ and contact with other family members can be critical in providing much needed social and cultural support. Those without this kind of support face a three to four times higher risk of depression. Therefore the family members, friends and community groups can and should play an important part in the practical and psychological settlement of refugees.
8 Agencies and the community

Experience of contact with agencies

While informal contacts with British people may develop gradually over time, all newcomers have to negotiate with a variety of unfamiliar agencies from the moment they arrive. In the interviews they were asked about their experiences of dealing with a number of the major organisations they were likely to come across.

Immigration and Nationality Department

All asylum-seekers have dealings with the Immigration and Nationality Department. As the ability to remain in this country rests upon the decision of this department, relationships are inevitably fraught with anxiety, especially if the alternative is return to a country where one’s life may be in danger. The time taken for a decision to be made may therefore influence successful settlement, both in material and psychological terms. In addition, a long wait for a decision also delays the moment when application can be made for their immediate family to join them in the country of asylum. If they are given ELR status they then have to wait a further four years to apply for family reunion.

The length of time an individual has to wait whilst their asylum application is being considered will depend on a number of different factors. Checking and assessing the documentation provided, collecting other information to support the case, corresponding with refugees and their legal advisors all takes time. This waiting period has also been exacerbated in recent years by the considerable increase in the number of applications being processed.

The median time from application for asylum to the first decision (either refugee status or exceptional leave to remain), for refugees in this study, was 16 months. In other words, half of all decisions were made within that time. Eleven people got an immediate decision or were accepted as refugees before arriving in Britain. Altogether a fifth had a decision in under six months, but a less fortunate fifth had to wait at least thirty months, in one exceptional case nearly six years. Long waiting times were therefore quite common for asylum-seekers. Even if all went well, a person who applied before the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 could have expected to wait over a year for a decision.

People who were given ELR waited on average one year and nine months, compared to one year and three months for those receiving refugee status. (See Table 8.1, Appendix.) However, in both groups there were people who waited over five years for a decision. This difference in average waiting times was expected, as those with strong evidence to support their asylum application could in theory be processed more quickly than those whose claims required considerable investigation.
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Waiting times have varied over the past decade. They had, in fact, been decreasing on average until recently. The median waiting time for those who applied 6-10 years ago was nearly 30 months, for those who applied 4-5 years ago, 16 months, and for those who applied 3-4 years ago, less than 12 months. The waiting time had, however, begun to rise again with the new high levels of application, so that half of those who came 2-3 years ago had to wait 18 months.

There were not many other variables that correlated with waiting time. The only significant difference pertained to those from rural backgrounds, as against those from towns and cities, who were found to have waited longer (86 per cent of them had had to wait for more than 12 months, as against 59 per cent generally).

When respondents were asked (unprompted) what things could be done to help refugees settle in this country more easily, speeding up IND decisions was the third most frequent response (after housing and training needs), with 16 per cent mentioning this problem. Another concern that emerged at this point was the speed with which decisions on family reunion applications were made, 10 per cent referring to that. A lone spouse will naturally find it difficult to establish a stable life, separated from the rest of his or her family, and often plagued by anxieties about their welfare and safety.

Department of Social Security

The Department of Social Security (DSS), which operates through many local branches, is the main source of welfare benefits for people on low incomes, the unemployed, those with families, the long-term sick and disabled, widows and the retired.

All the respondents had heard of the existence of Social Security (DSS), and almost all (92 per cent) had had occasion to use their services. They were generally found helpful (75 per cent of those with some contact thought them so), and only five people (two per cent) had found them definitely unhelpful. Indeed, 90 per cent said that they had got what they wanted when they used the DSS.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

These are local voluntary agencies which exist in most parts of the country where refugees are likely to have settled. They deal with a multitude of problems and complaints, for which they are often the first port of call for citizens who can then be referred on to the appropriate agency, or given advice directly by the Bureau (including legal advice).

Most of those interviewed, but not all, had heard of the CABx (85 per cent), and 55 per cent had had occasion to use them. They were also generally found helpful (by 72 per cent of those using them), only six people having found them particularly unhelpful (four per cent). Only 70 per cent of users said they had got what they wanted, however, from their visit to the CAB. Compared to the DSS, of course, to which people will have gone for specific entitlements, the nature of the needs prompting approach to a CAB may have been less definite and less easily satisfied.
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Law Centres

Law centres are local voluntary organisations staffed by qualified lawyers. They provide advice for people with legal problems and who are too poor to seek a solicitor. Many clients will be subject to prosecution by the police or be subject to litigation started by another person or organisation (e.g. a landlord or a local authority). They only exist in a few, largely metropolitan, areas, but they often provide a major source of help for immigrants and asylum-seekers, informing them of their legal rights and supporting them in their dealings with bureaucracy. They play a particularly important role helping with immigration processes.

A majority of the sample (61 per cent) had heard of law centres, but fewer than a fifth had ever had occasion to use them (18 per cent). Of those who had done so, two-thirds had found them useful, and only two people thought them unhelpful (four per cent). Only 58 per cent had succeeded in getting what they wanted, however, no doubt reflecting the difficult problems which are typically presented to such centres.

Social Services

Social Services Departments are part of the local authority. They provide general services such as running old people’s homes, providing social work to families with problems, counselling juvenile delinquents, supporting the disabled and mentally ill, policing child abuse and providing various emergency services in the event of social breakdown. Although generally well known, most of their work is with a restricted part of the population who are economically or socially disadvantaged.

Three-quarters (76 per cent) of respondents had heard of Social Services, but only a third had had contact directly with them. Of these, 62 per cent found them helpful, and six (seven per cent) definitely unhelpful. Just over half (56 per cent) had succeeded in getting what they wanted from them.

Race Equality Councils

These are local agencies of a quasi-statutory character, charged with promoting good relationships between communities of different ethnicity and combating discrimination and harassment. Although they naturally have many dealings with ethnic minorities and migrants generally, in practice they tend not to be particularly involved with refugees, with one or two exceptions.

Fewer than half our sample (46 per cent) had heard of the Councils, and only 16 (six per cent) had had any contact with them. Most of these users found them helpful (62.5 per cent), only one having a poor experience, and half had obtained what they were seeking.

Refugee Councils

The Refugee Council, which has its headquarters in London, is the main national voluntary organisation representing the interests of refugees and promoting their settlement in the community, mainly through community development work providing advice and assistance to refugee community groups, both in London and throughout the
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country. It also runs an employment and training centre for refugees in London, and its housing division provides hostel accommodation in London. It receives funding from central government to help provide these services. The Scottish Refugee Council (which has offices in Edinburgh and Glasgow) and the Welsh Refugee Council provide a similar role in respect of refugees in Scotland and Wales. There are also regional councils (which are independent of the Refugee Council but work in close partnership with it) based in Birmingham, Gateshead and Sheffield, which promote refugee settlement through various activities including employment schemes, language training, etc. The Scottish and Welsh Refugee Councils and the regional councils receive some funding from both central and local government.

It is not surprising that 92 per cent of respondents had heard of the Refugee Councils - perhaps more surprising that 20 persons had not heard of them. Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) had had occasion to use their services. Three-quarters of them had found the Councils helpful, only seven (four per cent) unhelpful. Eighty-one per cent had obtained what they wanted, a fair achievement given the level of resources available to the Councils.

At least one respondent, however, felt that, while the Refugee Council was helpful in many practical ways for individual refugees, there were limitations with respect to the needs of refugees generally:

The Refugee Council has not been able to respond to the needs of refugees because, as an institution, I hate to say this, but they are dominated by white male Liberals who are trapped in this 'charity mentality', and, to some extent, the refugee issue has become an industry, and they advocate on behalf of the refugee community instead of empowering the communities to control their own lives... IF they are dominated by whites, and the blacks they have on the executive, they are powerful in their country of origin, they belong to the upper class or the ruling classes. Their tastes, their attitudes, are different. Most refugees are ordinary working people.

Refugee community groups

These are voluntary organisations managed by refugees themselves for those from the same backgrounds (see also Chapter 4). They are therefore specific to nationality (or to ethnic or cultural group), and may act on a local or a national basis, or both. There are many kinds of group, some more concerned with social activities, others with political ones or religious concerns, but almost all will help new refugees find their feet. Nearly three-quarters of our sample said they were currently in touch with their own community group (72 per cent).

Many in this survey mentioned the help they had received in this way. A couple of examples are given here:

Sudanese Welfare Association is the general welfare service of the Sudanese community here, looking into problems the community have, a body representing the community to the authorities here, so that if we need anything or anyone has difficulties in connection with
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education and so on, even the housing issues ... so people are working in a more organised way than just depending on an individual who is interested in helping. They do some welfare and fund raising activities when someone is in trouble and we can help.

The Kurdish Cultural Centre has only been open since 1985. It is very important because most of the Kurdish refugees cannot speak English. They go for advice to the KCC or maybe any other minorities get advice too. To get advice from your own organisation is much better than to get advice from other organisations in this country, especially when you first arrive.

Other agencies

There were many other agencies mentioned by respondents. Many of these will be examined in the second phase of this research project. Some were particularly praised, for instance by this Sudanese man:

The University Welfare Service – there were some fellows who worked in the same area and they knew about it. so they told me about it. They help with applications to the Home Office, with accommodation, they tell you about benefits etc. They will send letters and advise you how to go about things.

Levels of awareness of agencies

In general, if a person had heard of one agency, they had heard of all the others too, so that individuals were either generally aware of the various agencies or not particularly aware of any of them. We looked in detail at those agencies where there was significant variation in awareness: CABx, Law Centres, Social Services, and RECs.

Those with greater awareness of agencies were particularly: those who had been longer in the country; those with full refugee status rather than ELR; those with better English; those with good prior qualifications and coming from more professional jobs in their home country; those doing voluntary work for their community; and those who had had some employment in this country, especially in non-manual jobs.

There was much less awareness of CABx, Law Centres and RECs in Scotland, which may have been associated with levels of availability of those services there. Knowledge of CABx and Law Centres was highest among those living in London, where both agencies are more frequently available. Those living in Cardiff generally had higher levels of awareness, probably reflecting the existence of a longstanding and well organised Somali community group there, in touch with local facilities.

Generally, knowledge of most helping agencies was greatest amongst those who were better settled in this country and who had professional backgrounds, those best able to help themselves. The exception was Social Services, which were better known to single parent families and couples with children in their teens.
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Use of agency services

Those who had used Social Security, Social Services and Citizens Advice Bureaux tended to be the same people. There was another group who had used a Law Centre and RECs, and a further group who had used the Refugee Council and their own Community Group. These three groups of agency-users were more or less distinct and probably had different needs.

Most agencies, however, tended to deal with the more disadvantaged sections of the refugee communities. The fact that general awareness of these agencies was more frequent in the less disadvantaged sections indicates a mismatch in information provision that needs to be addressed.

Unlike those turning to the statutory services, those using the services of their community groups were more often the ones with higher qualifications (degree-level and above) and higher economic status. Less likely to participate were women and single parents. They therefore are not always reaching those with the most problems, particularly if they are women. This may be because many of the community groups are organised by men, address issues of more concern to men in the community, and exclude women from some activities on cultural, social or religious grounds.

This survey therefore indicates that the most disadvantaged are not always receiving as much help as they might from statutory and voluntary agencies. While their own community groups fill the gap to some extent, there are still groups that fall through the net of provision. By and large the situation is one of having to rely on their own resources and those of individuals they happen to know.

Settlement in the community

Contacts with British people

Only a fifth of the respondents had joined some association or group that was not specific to their own ethnic or cultural group. Virtually all of these (95 per cent) found the British members friendly and helpful. The most important determinant of joining British associations was length of time in the country, the rate of membership rising evenly from six per cent for those who had been here less than three years to 31 per cent for those of six years stay or more. They were also slightly more likely to be currently students or employed. Membership rates were higher for those who had been professional workers in the home country (40 per cent) or in this country (44 per cent).

While 95 per cent had also made friends in this country, in most cases these were people from their own communities. Only just over half (54 per cent) claimed to have British friends. Again these were more likely to have been in the country longest and to have come with some English language skills. They were also more likely to have a professional or degree-level qualification. In terms of experience in this country, however, the most prominent influence on making British friends was whether or not they had had contact with the British job market: only 40 per cent of those who had always been unemployed had such friends, against 72 per cent of those who had had a job at some time. The currently employed and those currently full-time students were likely to have British friends (72 per cent), whereas those who were not working because
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they were home-carers were particularly unlikely to have made such friends (25 per cent).

In contrast, making new friends in this country amongst other refugees did not show any correlations with other background variables, except that those who were students were most likely to have such friends (70 per cent), and those who were home-carers, or retired, disabled, etc. least likely (32 per cent), the rest being intermediate (54 per cent). This confirms what was suspected from the analysis of economic careers, that full-time educational courses provided a fuller social experience in which fluency in English is then more likely to be developed.

Respondents who had not joined British associations or who had not made British friends often put this down to cultural, linguistic and religious factors:

No, I never tried any British associations because of cultural barriers. I am a Muslim and all British people are Christians, so I find it difficult to join any groups. I feel not needed in social interaction with the British. I do not share any common thing with them... I do not go to local pubs or social clubs, these are the areas where socialising can take place, but the citizens do not encourage such socialising. (Somali man.)

Students who are British have been friendly because we are doing the same things where our academic interests meet, but outside, no friendships because my cultural life does not agree with the British way of life. My friends are mainly refugees and Asian community, particularly Muslims. (Iranian man.)

No, there are barriers to do so. First thing is cultural differences, interpersonal and language. Secondly British society does not offer social integration because of egoistical attitude... I have not made friends because it is difficult and I feel I am not accepted into British society. (Iranian man.)

I made friends from my community and other refugees, but not British because I do not have language to understand social norms of the British. Many friends are refugees and Muslims. (Iranian man.)

Respondents were also asked whether they felt part of a community where they lived. Seventy per cent did say that they felt part of a community, but they did not have a lot in common in terms of other characteristics. They were more likely to have come from rural or urban backgrounds in the home country and to be employed.

Some of those who did not feel they belonged explained their feelings:

Do you want my honest answer? Because whenever I go or we go as a family, if I meet people that I don’t know, the first question they ask is where do you come from? So that means you are not part of the community. I can't stop people asking that question, but I have come to the conclusion that however many years I stay in this country, I will never be part of this community. I can understand that because I am old enough, but my children cannot. It hurts them. (Kurdish woman.)
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No, most time I feel I do not belong to this society... Socialisation into the British community is difficult, because people do not openly absorb foreigners into their social settings... Really I am not, and will not, become a part of the British community, but I owe them my thanks to offer me refugee status and free education. (Iranian man.)

Quite a large number (43 per cent) felt that they were treated differently by British people because they came from abroad (another 9.5 per cent said they were sometimes treated differently).

I wouldn't volunteer that I am from Iran, not because I am ashamed, but because I don't have this idea of being from one country or another... but knowing how some people are I just wouldn't bring up nationality... oh Iran, they are shocked, they haven't heard of Iran or they have a stupid idea of Iran, or they think you have some Sencex with you... Some of them will pity you which is the thing I most hate, I can't tolerate that. (Iranian man.)

They treated me differently when I went to sign on, they look at you as a foreigner, "Why have you got the right to get money?", they don't know your history. I'd been working for six years, paying tax just like anybody else who comes here. (Kurdish man.)

Basically it's the employment sector... the way they treat different ethnic groups... I've never come across any problem except the employment sector and that is common to millions and millions of black people who live in Britain. At the University they think I am from Birmingham and they never consider I'm from Africa. (Somali man.)

Those who felt that they were treated differently from the native population in Britain were less likely to regard themselves as permanently settled. Of those who were currently full-time students, a high proportion (55 per cent) also thought they were treated differently. There were also major differences between the different nationality groups in this respect. The Ugandans, in particular, felt discriminated against (12 out of 13 interviewed, the remaining person feeling 'sometimes' treated differently). Others with high rates were the Iranians (68 per cent), Sudanese (61 per cent) and Other Nationalities (70 per cent). The remaining groups in the survey had apparently encountered such problems less often — the Tamils (22 per cent), the Kurds (33 per cent) and the Somalis (35 per cent).

Aspects of security

A large majority (85 per cent) said they felt safe in Britain, although this has to be considered relative to the acute dangers most of them left behind in the recent past, or which may persist even in this country:

Yes and No. Yes because I am in a society that values human life and No because of the [home country] politics... When I do go out sometimes for a walk I'm afraid of being recognised and I have to take a different route to my home so they don't know where I live. And I do check under my car for something underneath it. (Iranian man.)

With respect to relations with British people, experiences have not been totally reassuring either. Verbal abuse was quite common (30 per cent could remember instances), 18 per cent had been threatened with violence, and 13 per cent actually
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attacked.

One year ago someone hit me with a brick and I received a very bad injury to my head. I went to hospital and had eight stitches in my head and I went to the police. (Somali man.)

Feelings of lack of safety were not evenly spread. Iranians (and to a lesser extent the Sudanese) were most likely to say they did not feel safe (35 per cent of Iranians, 23 per cent Sudanese and 12 per cent of the rest). At least as far as the Iranians were concerned this probably reflected their political relationship with their home country and the repercussions of this, as much as any feeling about Britain itself as an unsafe place in which to live. Single persons in their twenties and thirties, living on their own, also felt less safe than others (25 per cent, as against 11 per cent of others).

Those who had experienced threats of violence were evenly distributed across the various groups, except for a very high incidence among the Ugandans - 61 per cent, against 16 per cent for all the rest. The same group had also experienced an unusually high level of actual attacks - 46 per cent, against 12 per cent for the rest. As the size of this group in our sample was small (just 13), this result should be interpreted with caution, although statistically significant. The general rate of attacks (leaving aside the Ugandans) is comparable to that found for ethnic minorities generally according to the British Crime Survey (Mayhew, Elliott and Dowds, 1989), which found that 16 per cent of Afro-Caribbeans and 15 per cent of Asians had been victims of personal crime (including assaults, threats and robbery), in comparison with ten per cent of whites.

Those experiencing attacks had had more contact with the employment market: just nine per cent of those who had always, or almost all the time, been unemployed said they had been attacked, in contrast to 21 per cent of the economically marginal and 24 per cent of those with continuous employment. The same pattern held for those who had experienced verbal abuse: 23 per cent of the almost-always unemployed, 43 per cent of the economically marginal, and 49 per cent of the continuously employed. The problem was particularly prominent for those in managerial jobs (56 per cent rate of verbal abuse, 30 per cent rate of physical attacks). A possible explanation of this association would be that those who were working were more likely to be in contact with British people, especially those in management jobs where they were dealing with people all the time, so that they were more exposed to the chance of encountering abuse. This would accord with the findings of crime surveys, that victims are more likely to be those with lifestyles that take them out of the home more and expose them to risk, and that a great deal of crime, especially verbal abuse, is suffered in the workplace (e.g. Maxfield, 1987; Mayhew, Elliott and Dowds, 1989, esp. Chapter 4).

Respondents living in London were more exposed to verbal abuse (38 per cent), compared to those in the North of England, Scotland and Wales (24 per cent), and especially those in the Midlands (seven per cent). This may have been because they were more likely to be in employment.

Future outlook

Fewer than half (44 per cent) saw themselves as permanently settled in the UK. The rest thought they would leave some day. Whether or not they saw themselves as settled was related to whether they felt part of a community, although there were a number who saw themselves as settled but not part of a community (21) and a larger number who did not see themselves as settled, even though they felt part of a community (88).
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Going back to Iran, that's something I have been thinking about a lot lately, if I can. I wouldn't like to be like lots of Iranians, that's a very depressing thought that I won't be able to go back, I don't like to feel trapped somewhere. (Iranian man.)

No, I don't feel I belong here. Even if I live here for another twenty years I won't feel that I belong, not that the people and the country are not nice, they are beautiful, but I just never have that feeling. One day, doesn't matter if it is tomorrow or twenty years, I know I will go back. (Kurdish man.)

Although I get along well with the community in this country, the fact that I came to this country when I was much older, that makes all the difference. If I was very young person I would have become accustomed to this much more. Most of my life I have spent in Sri Lanka; all my relatives are there. (Sri Lankan man.)

There was a slight association with employment status, with 49 per cent of employed people feeling permanently settled compared to 36 per cent of unemployed people (statistically significant at the 10 per cent level). Those who felt permanently settled were more likely to have had few qualifications from their home country (only 31 per cent of professionally-qualified and people with university degrees said they were settled, against nearly half the others).

Advice to future refugees

Respondents were asked what advice they would give to a new refugee who had just arrived in Britain. Most responded, many offering several recommendations.

The most common response (mentioned by 39 per cent) was the importance of learning the language straight away. Without ability in English, everything else would come hard. Twenty-four per cent also said that training or studying for qualifications was essential in order to break into the job market. Fifteen per cent felt that getting a job was the key to becoming settled.

Over a quarter (28 per cent) also stressed the importance of making contact with their own community group, as the most useful source of help for new arrivals. Sixteen per cent said they should also seek advice from the various agencies set up to help refugees and others. Seven per cent thought that it was important that one knew one's rights, for instance “Get a lawyer!” was one response. Only five per cent suggested they should get in touch with their local Refugee Council.

Others offered advice on how refugees should behave. Fifteen per cent mentioned the importance of abiding by the laws and rules of British life. Any asylum-seeker who was found guilty of a serious criminal offence could, of course, be deported - a stringent threat for a person fleeing from persecution at home. Others said that one should try to mix with British people, while others stressed the need to keep hold of one's own culture and customs.

Talking with other people, sharing problems is important rather than being alone, because you are fleeing from your country and problems, and you can't talk about your refugee status to other people because they don't know. (Sudanese man.)
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Go straight back if you think that the situation is better than before, if there is a life over there for you. If you stay, don't forget your identity, don't forget your origins and make use of the facilities which this country gives you. For example there are so many courses and so many places you can get help from. For God's sake learn the English language because that is very, very important so that he or she can actually communicate with people. Not to sit at home, but to try to meet people. (Kurdish woman.)

If they want to live here they should know the law. To know the law they have to learn the language and then they can deal with the law. Nobody gives anybody anything. You have to ask for it and you can't ask for it if you don't know. (Iranian man.)

I think the best thing is to try to get on with the people in the country. I think this is very important ... to try to understand them because once you have solved this you have solved half of your problems ... if you live with them you understand them better. (Kurdish man.)

Helping settlement in Britain

Respondents were asked to say what they think should be done to help refugees settle in this country. Once again a large number of responses were forthcoming.

The most frequent response by far (mentioned by 45 per cent) was the need for help in finding accommodation. It was obviously felt that this was one area of need where recent arrivals were least able to help themselves. While language classes and training courses were to some extent available for the take-up, the need for housing was immediate and urgent, and yet finding a suitable place to live often dominated their lives for months or even years.

The second commonest response was some mention of more provision for training and education specifically relevant to refugees (37 per cent), while a further 17 per cent referred to more suitable language classes. The need for help with getting jobs was mentioned by 15 per cent.

As reported earlier in this chapter, 17 per cent thought that IND decision-making should be speeded up, and 11 per cent mentioned family reunion decisions as well. Sixteen per cent also thought that there should be more initial financial support until refugees could find their feet.

Other suggestions included:
* educating British people about refugees
* educating statutory agencies about the needs of refugees
* funding of refugee community organisations
* implementing equal opportunity policies
* recognising the UNCHR Charter.
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Teach the language, then housing immediately on arrival. Accommodation when they come into the country. From my friends and other people they say it is hard to find accommodation when you first come. (Tamil man.)

A definite path to follow would help people settle. if they are looked after in a systematic way, introduced to Britain gradually. I don’t mean putting them under locks and chains and saying do this or do that. Some people don’t have a clue, they come with a mentality that is really the problem, they don’t know what the world is about. An induction to Britain, different aspects of the life, would be helpful. (Iranian man.)

The decision making of the Home Office takes such a long time and during this the people don’t know if they will be accepted or not and their lives hang in the balance. They just live day by day, they cannot make any long term arrangements. (Kurdish woman.)

To understand what is a refugee, why people become refugees. To understand their mental state, leaving friends and family. Not to be so conservative about asking refugees about their experiences, they have so much to tell, it can be helpful for them. (Kurdish man.)

Aggregate variables of settlement in the community

It was apparent that many of the variables describing engagement with the community were related to one another. A cluster analysis of these variables indicated that the variables tended to go together in three groups, within which most of the variables were inter-correlated, while there were few significant correlations between variables in different clusters. These three clusters were as follows (the variables are shown in descending order of relationship within each cluster):

(i) ‘Contact’ - Contact with their community group, having joined a British association, having made friends in the UK, having made British friends, having been involved in voluntary work and having made refugee friends.

(ii) ‘Belonging’ - Feeling part of the community, liking the area where they are living, feeling settled in the UK, having made friends in the UK (this is the only variable shared between two clusters) and not wanting to move from their present house.

(iii) ‘Treatment’ - Not having been threatened, not having been attacked, not having felt discriminated against, not having been abused and feeling safe in the UK.

Scores for each of these aggregate variables were computed. There was no correlation between ‘Contact’ and ‘Belonging’ - in other words, those who had made more contacts and friends in Britain were not necessarily more likely to feel settled. On the other hand, ‘Treatment’ was related to both the other variables. It was related positively to ‘Belonging’, in that those who had not suffered mistreatment were more likely to feel settled; but it was related negatively to ‘Contact’, those who had had more contacts with others being more likely to have encountered ill-treatment. As argued above, the latter association is probably a matter of increased vulnerability - those who kept to their
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homes and mixed less with other people were unlikely to get involved in situations where they could come into conflict with others. On the other hand, these same people, being more isolated, will have a lower sense of belonging. This is a basic dilemma for refugees attempting to settle into communities where some degree of discrimination and harassment is prevalent.

Scores on these three new variables were related to other characteristics. Those high on ‘Contact’ were likely to have the following characteristics:

- having been longer in the UK, having full refugee status (rather than ELR),
- having better English on arrival (and now), having better qualifications and jobs in their home country, male, employed or a student and having had a more successful economic career in the UK, having a higher status job, not being confined to the home as a retired, disabled or home-caring person, having accommodation in a good state of repair and having one’s own house or (to a lesser extent) renting privately.

Those high on ‘Belonging’ shared many of these characteristics:

- having been longer in the UK, having better English on arrival (and now), being employed or a student and having had a more successful economic career in the UK, having a higher status job, not being confined to the home, having moved house more often, having accommodation in a good state of repair and having one’s own house or renting privately.

However, they had two additional characteristics: living in the South-East or London, and not having had a job in their home country.

While success in Britain (in terms of jobs and housing) contributes to both making contacts and a sense of belonging, it appears that it is the comparison of current situations with what they had left in their home countries that was most important for the latter. In other words, those who had not had jobs before, were not necessarily so well qualified, and/or were women, were the most likely to feel that their situation was now one of relative comfort and this contributed to a greater sense of belonging and a desire to settle in the UK. Those from better backgrounds in their home countries, particularly the men, were those most likely to feel they had lost out by coming to Britain (a point already made in Chapter 4).

The ‘Treatment’ variable was very different in its associated characteristics:

- not having been long in the UK, female, older, not being a student, being confined to the home, not living in the South-East or London, having accommodation in a good state of repair and not having had a job in their home country.

For the most part these characteristics merely indicate lower vulnerability to mistreatment, identifying those refugees who are less likely to come into contact with others (confirmed by the fact that those who have not suffered mistreatment are low on the ‘Contact’ variable) or live in areas where racial harassment is less prevalent. The chief importance of this variable for the subject of this chapter is therefore that those who have suffered ill-treatment are naturally less likely to feel they belong to the British community, so that harassment and discrimination are further obstacles to successful settlement.
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The ‘Contact’ and ‘Belonging’ variables were subjected to further analysis by means of ‘multiple regression analysis’, which enables one to identify the most effective characteristics for predicting scores on them (allowing for the fact that these characteristics are themselves correlated with one another).

For predicting ‘Contacts’, the dominant variable was:

1. Level of fluency in English – Beta coefficient 0.27, significant at the 5 per cent level.

Other variables made minor contributions to the prediction of ‘Contacts’:

2. Time since application for asylum (longer) – Beta = 0.18.
3. Qualifications before arrival in the UK (degree-level or professional) – Beta = 0.17;
4. Sex (male) – Beta = 0.11.

The major influence on being able to make friends and contacts is therefore, not surprisingly, ability to use the English language.

We have already noted, on the other hand, that ‘Belonging’ is not simply a matter of the number of personal acquaintances one has made, and the multiple regression confirms this. In the prediction of ‘Belonging’, the following variables are the most important (again in descending order of significance; all are significant at the 5 per cent level):

1. ‘Treatment’ (the aggregate variable described above) – Beta = 0.33;
2. Employment career (more employment) – Beta = 0.16;
3. State of repair of living accommodation – Beta = 0.15;
4. Sex (female) – Beta = 0.14;
5. Moves of house (more) – Beta = 0.14.
6. English fluency – Beta = 0.11;
7. Age (younger) – Beta = 0.11;
8. Time in the country – Beta = 0.10.

In the case of ‘Belonging’, therefore, it seems that good housing is as important as economic well-being for contributing to a sense of being part of the community (their loadings on the prediction equation are virtually identical). The most important variable by far, however, with a highly significant loading, was whether or not people had personally experienced abuse or discrimination. The prominence of this variable indicates the importance of public attitudes and the behaviour of British people to the settlement of refugees.

The implication of ‘moves of house’ might be as an indicator of having been able to find a social/residential situation more congenial to one’s wishes (as already indicated in Chapter 6, the main reasons for moving are to improve one’s situation, physically, economically or socially). Otherwise women, younger persons, those more fluent in English and those who have been in the country longer are all more likely to feel a sense of belonging. Altogether, the ‘Belonging’ variable seems to work very well as a general index of how well a refugee has settled into life in Britain. It is interesting that qualifications and training or education make little contribution to it, except indirectly through a better chance of getting a job.
9 Discussion

The subjects of the research

Over 27,000 applicants for asylum were permitted to remain in the UK in the eight-year period from 1982 to 1989, the group from which the interview sample was taken. These years include the beginning of the recent upsurge in applications which started in 1989, and which declined somewhat by 1992. Forty per cent received refugee status, the rest being given ‘exceptional leave to remain’, which is periodically re-evaluated. Over half were under the age of 30 when they entered this country, and more than four-fifths were men.

Most of these applicants (84 per cent) arrived on their own (i.e. without dependents), but some have since been allowed to bring members of their immediate families to join them (‘family reunion’). In the survey it was found that the average number of dependents of foreign nationality (i.e. excluding children born in the UK) living with respondents was 1.6. These dependents are also classified as refugees. Taking this into account the total number living in this country in households where the original applicant for asylum entered in the period 1982-89 can be estimated as approximately 70,000 (little more than a tenth of one per cent of the total population).

This was the first systematic national research on the problems of settlement of refugees who arrived in the UK before applying for asylum, and those who joined them under family reunion arrangements. Quota refugees, who are brought to the UK by the government as part of an international initiative, do not encounter a number of these problems - the wait for a decision on whether they will be allowed to remain, the psychological uncertainty associated with this, and the lack of any systematic provision of housing or other help.

This research has shown, moreover, that the types of person who present themselves spontaneously as asylum-seekers are different on the whole from those who enter as part of a quota. Those interviewed varied in their backgrounds and personal characteristics, but they contained a much higher proportion of well-qualified and professional people than do recent quota refugees from Vietnam, the only ones for which research information has so far been available. They were mostly from urbanised rather than rural areas, with the exception of the Tamils and the Ugandans. They were also relatively well educated, over a third having at least started a university course, and nearly half having had some further education after school. These proportions were even higher for the men than they were for the women. Two-thirds had held jobs in their home countries, over sixty per cent of them being professionals, managers or business people.

At the time of the interviews (on average, over four years after arrival), most of the under-thirties were still single (81 per cent), but the majority of those in their thirties were (or had been) married (62 per cent), as were almost all those who were even older
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(89 per cent). Nearly a quarter of the women were either widowed or divorced, so that there was also a high percentage of households with children having single parents to care for them (26 per cent).

Although a range of nationalities was selected for study in order to ensure that the major variations in experience would be included, we found hardly any differences between them that could not be accounted for by the fact that some nationalities were more or less likely to speak English, had greater or lesser proportions of professional people, etc. In other words, there were few findings specific to people from particular countries of origin or ethnic group. Certain groups, however, had some advantages in terms of their backgrounds. For instance, the Tamils, the Ugandans and Sudanese were more likely to have a reasonable command of English on arrival; while the latter two and the Kurds were more likely than other groups to have held professional jobs.

Employment

Employment proved to be a key issue, at least in the longer term. The struggle to enter the job market, so often a losing struggle, dominated the concerns of many interviewees. While two-thirds had been in employment before having to leave their home countries, only just over a quarter currently had a job. Even if one excludes those who classified themselves as full-time home-carers or retired or disabled, the proportion only increased to slightly more than a third. The figures were no better for men than they were for women. Their unemployment rates (nearly 60 per cent of those seeking work and not currently students or on training schemes) are much higher than those generally for ethnic minorities in Britain.

The situation looks even bleaker when seen over time. Only 14 per cent had been regular earners for most of the time since they entered the country (after the initial six months or so during which no asylum applicant whose status has not been settled is entitled to take up paid work). Another 30 per cent had had paid employment at some time, but only irregularly - often only a single short-term job. This left over half the sample never having had paid employment.

Given the skills which most had to offer, this failure to enter the job market to any significant degree is a substantial loss not only to them as individuals, and to their families (nearly 60 per cent of households had no other source of income than state benefits), but to the country as a whole. This is so not only in terms of unemployment, but also under employment, working at levels lower than those for which they were formally qualified. Over half of those with jobs felt that they could be more suitably employed given their experience, although even they were grateful, on the whole, to have achieved some means of earning a living in preference to having to rely on welfare payments. Despite these difficulties in matching work to qualifications, more of the employed respondents were in professional, managerial and skilled non-manual occupations than the general population, reflecting their initially high educational levels.

Many of those who had gained jobs were working in the statutory and voluntary sectors, with private sector jobs under-represented. Amongst those in the private sector, moreover, many were working for themselves (22 per cent, compared to 13 per cent in the general population), and others tended to be concentrated in the “ethnic” job sector,
working for other refugees or in establishments such as fast-food ethnic restaurants. This sector is particularly marked by depressed wages and working conditions, as well as by insecurity.

The experience of a large number of asylum-seekers in Britain, in the first years, therefore, has been one of substantial, and sudden, downward mobility - a failure to gain an economic level for which they feel they are qualified and that they might have expected to achieve. This was frustrating and unsettling. While employment rates did improve with time in the country, a substantial group, not all of them lacking professional qualifications, never succeeded in entering the job market, even after ten years. Those with better English skills on arrival and who had previously held professional or managerial jobs were more likely to find employment in time, but by no means all those with better qualifications did succeed. There were much better prospects for those living in London, where just over half of those available for work were currently in jobs (i.e. at the time of interviewing in the latter half of 1992), against just over one quarter in the rest of the country.

According respondents themselves the greatest barriers to gaining employment (among a variety of other reasons) were, firstly, the enforced break in their careers consequent upon having to flee from their homelands, along with lack of work experience in Britain; secondly, difficulties with the language and culture; and thirdly, discrimination.

Language

Lack of fluent English was a major factor in the failure of many individuals, some of them highly qualified in terms of education and previous job status, in finding suitable employment. It was easier in scientific and accounting sectors, although still important, but in other sectors, for instance the law, teaching, journalism or medicine, lack of fluency in English could be a crucial disadvantage. It was particularly important for the younger ones who did not have extensive work experience at professional levels in their home countries.

None of those interviewed had English as their first language, even though many were multilingual. Less than a third arrived with adequate English to cope with all aspects of language use (speaking, understanding, reading and writing). Over a quarter had no English at all on arrival.

By the time they were interviewed, almost all could speak a little English at least, but a third still had problems, women more often than men. Even for those who could generally cope well in their new language, filling in forms and talking with officials, prospective employers, doctors, and so on, could still be daunting tasks. Many had had to resort to interpreters or translators at some time, usually relying on friends and relatives, including at times their own children attending school in Britain, or on their community groups and services attached to some statutory agencies.

Although 60 per cent had taken English classes, this did not include everyone who had a need to improve their language skills. Only 81 per cent of the latter had done so. There were even a few who were seeking work who were without adequate English and had not gone to classes. This problem seems to be diminishing, however, as over two-thirds of those who had arrived in the last three years had taken classes.
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The more advanced courses were usually rated well, but fewer than three-quarters of those taking beginners' courses thought that their English had improved as a result. Taking further courses also seemed to lead to diminishing returns. Only half of those taking a second course found it useful. Those who started with very little English, especially if they did not have substantial educational experience, were finding it difficult to adjust to the courses currently on offer, and it would seem that special provision might have to be geared to the needs of those arriving without such advantages. These courses might have to be more intensive than current ones, and also adopt a less formal teaching style, perhaps taking pupils out of the classroom for real-life experience much of the time. The respondents in the survey were well aware of these deficiencies. When asked what help was most needed by refugees in the early years, the third most frequent reply was “better English classes”.

As they stand, we found no evidence that English classes made a significant difference to whether people succeeded or not in getting a job, even when they had improved their language skills. This is likely to have been because the fluency of English, and the associated flexibility in being able to understand different accents and dialects, necessary to perform well in job interviews, is unlikely to be gained from classes alone. It is much more a matter, once a basic grounding has been achieved, of time and practice, using the language in real situations with native language speakers. Unfortunately, the chief way of getting such experience is through entering the mainstream job market (not, of course, the ethnic sector), where one will have to cope day by day, for significant periods of time each day, with English as the only means of communication. This channel to experience, however, is denied by the inability to obtain such jobs without good English in the first place. One ends with a vicious cycle whereby those without the ability to succeed through formal educational channels are isolated from the social experiences that would enable them to pick up the language in a natural way through normal social interaction.

It is not, therefore, surprising that when asked what advice they would give to new arrivals more said “Learn English” than anything else (nearly 40 per cent). The third most frequent response to this question was “Get on training or education courses so that you can get a job”.

Improving qualifications

Most of those who said they had tried having their home country qualifications translated into English equivalents indicated that they had been successful in doing so, but often such translation was into lower levels of qualification, leaving them with ground to make up to regain their previous status. Accordingly, nearly half took some kind of educational course of study (other than language classes) after entering the UK, preparatory to seeking work. Over a quarter took more than one course, ranging from basic skills training to higher degrees. Almost a fifth took first or higher degrees at British universities. The most popular subjects were the numerical or scientific ones which did not demand such advanced verbal skills.

Those who took such courses were usually those with higher educational qualifications from their home countries and those seeking jobs, and they generally succeeded eventually in recouping the levels of qualification they had attained abroad, or in
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Completing educational careers interrupted by their sudden departures, for those without such backgrounds, it was difficult to use existing educational opportunities to improve their qualifications for employment, even if other major barriers could be overcome, such as lack of money to afford the fees, childcare responsibilities, and language problems. Those without qualifications who were able to take such courses usually did so by means of LEA grants, which appeared to be more easily available in London than elsewhere.

Even where respondent had succeeded in obtaining professional qualifications in Britain, they could not be sure of finding jobs. Over a half of those with professional qualifications gained in Britain were still unemployed, along with more than three-quarters of those with degrees or vocational qualifications.

Training more directly orientated to employment may have been more successful in improving job chances for those not seeking to enter professional employment. It was often some years, however, before they became eligible for such government programmes as ET (Employment Training). Of the range of programmes on offer, this was the best known amongst the sample interviewed, especially among women and those with a better grasp of English. Awareness of such opportunities was greater among those who had resided in Britain longer. YT (Youth Training) was generally not applicable to most refugees, because of the age restrictions. The only programme used with any frequency was therefore ET (42 per cent of the sample had taken ET). Other less frequently used programmes were generally judged more useful by those managing to get on them, but all of them did appear to improve chances of obtaining jobs, because the least qualified entered these programmes (the more qualified preferring academic routes), while their employment rates were later just as good as those with better initial qualifications.

Awareness and use of employment training programmes was much less in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK, but even outside Scotland these schemes were not found to be well adapted to the specific needs of the refugee. The second most frequent reply to the question about the help that was most urgently needed was "training provision relevant to refugees". Such training would obviously have to focus on the limited English skills of many participants, as well as being sensitive to cultural differences.

Looking for jobs

Many respondents recognised that obtaining employment was not purely a matter of qualifications and language, but that help was also needed to find jobs.

There are government schemes for helping the unemployed search more effectively for jobs. Of these only two were relatively well known among those interviewed - Job Clubs (60 per cent) and Restart (to a lesser extent). Awareness was higher among those with more education or better English. Job Clubs were the only ones used to any significant extent (nearly half had taken part), usually by those with better English and longer residence in the country. Take-up was only partially explained by awareness, so that eligibility may have been a stumbling-block. Fewer than half the participants found the Job Clubs useful, and there was no evidence from the research that they were any more likely as a result to find employment.
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In the early years in this country most respondents obtained jobs through personal contacts or by searching the local press for vacancies. Compared to the general population, many fewer were successful in getting jobs through the press, job centres or direct approaches to employers. It was not that they did not use the more formal methods of job search employed by others, but that these did not work very often in their favour. The outcome of this was that those who did get jobs were often entering the more marginal *ethic* job sector rather than the mainstream, from which it was often difficult to transfer to other types of job, because the experience gained tended not to count when seeking mainstream employment. The growth of such an *ethic* job sector also tends to label members as marginal, distinct and perhaps less skilled, so that this sector and the mainstream tend to polarise over time, to the disadvantage of employees in the former.

Formal job search and employment training schemes will need to take into account this problem and also prepare employers for accepting some individuals who do not have mainstream job experience, although they have appropriate qualifications and skills.

**Accommodation**

Top of respondents' list of the types of help most urgently needed was "help in finding accommodation". Certainly, in the accounts they gave, the first few years were dominated by problems in finding, firstly, *somewhere* to live, and secondly, somewhere *suitable* to live. The problems encountered were not particularly different from those encountered by anyone in Britain who is poor, or a member of any ethnic minority, except that they were exacerbated by the lack of any history of residence in this country at all. The time it took for most to find accommodation that was reasonably permanent (even if not entirely satisfactory in quality or convenience) severely exacerbated other problems such as seeking employment, settling into a new way of life and culture, learning English, and so on.

In the first years there was heavy reliance on the favours of relatives, acquaintances and members of their own community groups to 'put them up'. This was often in circumstances that gave them inadequate space and also put pressure on the families whose lives they had invaded, increasing levels of psychological stress in the refugee population generally. The single, the young, those living in London and the economically marginal were the most likely to have to survive in such conditions, many of them moving frequently in order to shift the burden of housing them from one household to another. Over a quarter of the refugees had had to live rent-free with such acquaintances when they first arrived, and a further quarter had only been able to get accommodation with the help of such people. A half were dependent on privately rented accommodation such as bed-sits and hostels. Five-sixths shared their accommodation with others not in their immediate family.

The situation is also getting worse. Those arriving in more recent years were less often being found their first accommodation by local authorities or housing associations, and more were dissatisfied with what they got. At the time of interview, when everyone had been in the country for at least two years, there were still six per cent living in temporary accommodation with friends or relatives, and nearly a quarter had only found their most recent accommodation through informal community links.
DISCUSSION

Homelessness was a very common experience. Over a quarter of the sample had been homeless at some time, half of them when they first arrived. (In a sense, most new arrivals are strictly ‘homeless’ in that they do not have a current address, but most have some contact in the country where they can be put up, or are arranged temporary accommodation by the Refugee Arrivals Project or the Immigration Service.) Only the minority arriving with children immediately become a responsibility of local authorities to provide shelter. The single homeless are largely left to their own resources, which are initially few.

Given high unemployment rates, especially in the first few years, respondents were highly dependent on the rental market, much more than the general population, and even more than the general ethnic minority population. The increasing shortage of public rental housing was, however, making it difficult to find appropriate accommodation. Nevertheless, at the time of interview, over half had found housing with local authorities (37 per cent), and housing associations (20 per cent), while a quarter remained in privately rented accommodation. Only 12 per cent owned, or were buying, their own house. Families with children and single-parent families were especially likely to be in public rental accommodation.

Although one often talks loosely of ‘housing’, it should be noted that over half were actually living in flats, especially those on local authority estates, despite the fact that over 60 per cent of these had children. Almost another fifth were in maisonettes, bedsits or shared houses. Altogether almost a quarter were sharing accommodation with another household. Nearly 30 per cent wanted more space.

In terms of quality of accommodation, there were also many deficiencies. Altogether, a half would like to move to a better house. Over 40 per cent could cite basic repairs that were necessary, especially if they lived in local authority accommodation. Less than three-quarters considered their heating adequate, and many of them thought that it was too costly and inefficient, especially those living in the public rental sector. On the whole they had fewer amenities than the general population, only half having a washing machine, a third a freezer and a quarter a car.

Geographical distribution

From a sample of Immigration and Nationality Department files it was estimated that nearly 90 per cent of all spontaneous refugees were living in the South-East of Britain, with 85 per cent in London, and 66 per cent in Inner London, of which the northern sector has the largest concentration (17 per cent). In terms of getting employment and support from established community groups, living in London probably had advantages, although housing (and racial harassment) could be major problems. It had been thought for these reasons that there would be a tendency to drift towards the South-East as time went by, but there was no evidence for this amongst our respondents. Only 13 per cent of all moves of address were long-distance, and then mostly away from the South-East to other regions.

In terms of short-distance moves, these were most frequent within London, because of the housing shortage there and attempts to find more permanent or better quality
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

housing. In fact, most short-distance moves were for housing reasons, whereas long-distance ones were for family or employment reasons, or to escape harassment. Moves for employment reasons, although few, were usually long-distance and often resulted in poorer accommodation rather than better.

How it feels to be in Britain

Many refugees have experienced considerable trauma before entering this country. Some have been maimed and others are suffering from psychological problems. Many are upset by continuing fears for the safety of relatives and friends left behind. All those who were interviewed were coping to a surprising degree with these scars, but there were obvious effects on their ability to feel settled or content with their lives, exacerbated by the problems of adapting to a new culture.

Sixteen per cent of the sample were suffering from physical health problems sufficient to affect their way of life (with higher than average rates among the Iranians and the Ugandans). Most said they had felt homesick, and two-thirds said they experienced anxiety or depression from time to time, with the rate being even higher for those who were unable to find employment, had not acquired good English language skills, or did not feel that they really belonged in this country. The most frequent reasons given for feeling depressed were the situation in the home country (70 per cent), unemployment (over a quarter), what sort of future there might be for one in the UK (18 per cent), financial problems (14 per cent), and isolation from the community (14 per cent). The only group with a lower rate of anxiety or depression was the Tamils, of whom only 22 per cent expressed such problems, due no doubt to their attainment of higher rates of employment.

Virtually all had registered with health services in this country, but only 30 per cent of those with problems had actually sought help with them from medical professionals. Insofar as help was sought, this was often from fellow members of their community group, who were felt to be more understanding and responsive. The doctors serving refugee communities will usually be in very busy inner city practices and they are unlikely to have any special knowledge of the problems of refugees, especially where these are of a psychological or dietary nature. There appears to be a need to convey knowledge about the effects of culture shock in particular, because the problems that arise from different foods, an unfamiliar climate, greater emphases on time and formality, poor living conditions, lack of community, etc., were very real for those interviewed, and could emerge as physical symptoms.

Another common effect on well-being was the 'relative disadvantage' suffered by a good number who came from professional and educated backgrounds. They were unlikely to say that they wanted to settle permanently in this country. On the other hand, there were others who had, after a number of years, attained positions that compared favourably to what they had left behind, and these people were more likely to be thinking in terms of settlement in Britain. All told, however, fewer than half saw themselves as settled permanently.
DISCUSSION

Whether or not they saw themselves as settled here was not the same thing as whether they felt a sense of ‘belonging’. More than two-thirds said they felt they had become part of a community in the UK. Those who thought they would not be returning to their home countries were also more likely to feel they ‘belonged’ to British society, but the correlation was far from perfect. Other factors contributed to a sense of belonging. These included primarily their housing and employment situations (more or less equally important) and how well they were treated by their British neighbours and acquaintances. Of the factors listed in Field (1985) as background variables potentially affecting settlement (see Chapter 1), only ‘ability to use English’ was found to be important. No other background factor had a major impact. The lesson is clear: the quality of settlement is determined by what happens to the refugees in this country.

One might have thought that the more contacts people had made with new friends since coming to this country the greater would be their integration or sense of belonging, but this was not so. The most important influences on the number of contacts were the time they had been in the UK; whether they had a job, particularly a professional one; and proficiency with English. While the existence of such contacts might otherwise have contributed to a sense of belonging, it was found that the more contact they had had with British society, the more likely they were to have encountered discrimination, abuse or actual harassment. Attempting to integrate with British society has therefore carried some risks for this group of people, and the racism that affects all immigrant groups is a major factor in the lives of refugees as well. Such negative experiences are not necessarily the general rule, but the behaviour and attitudes of even a small minority of the British public can materially affect the success of resettlement.

Although most respondents said they felt ‘safe’ in the UK, such remarks probably have to be interpreted in relation to the situations from which they have recently escaped. One is less inclined to be complacent when one considers that half of those interviewed said that they had encountered discrimination, almost a third verbal abuse, 18 per cent had been threatened, and 13 per cent actually attacked. The Ugandans in our sample were particularly high on all these indices. There is obviously plenty of scope for informing the general public on the nature and plight of refugees and for encouraging higher levels of tolerance of, and sympathy for, those of different national or ethnic origins, although it has to be said that this may have little immediate effect on the more extremist minorities responsible for much of the abuse and harassment.

The community groups

All the distinct nationalities or ethnic groups studied had their own local community groups. These were crucial in helping their members in practical matters, as well as providing a means of continuing their religious and cultural practices. Nearly three-quarters of the sample were currently in touch with their community group. In the advice that respondents would give to new refugees, ‘make contact with your community group’ was the second most frequent comment (over a quarter mentioned it).

Such contact was particularly important outside London, where there was greater danger of isolation from others similarly placed. On the other hand, women, and especially those
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

women who were single parents, were less likely to have such contact, possibly because,
in some of the cultures involved, the organisation of social events was exclusively in the
hands of men. This may mean those suffering particularly serious economic and social
problems are not getting the help that their communities could be providing, and other
statutory or voluntary agencies should therefore be particularly concerned for this group,
that may otherwise 'fall through the net' of welfare support.

These community groups depend on high rates of voluntary work by members who have
been in the country longer. Over a third of the survey respondents had done such work.
Many who were unemployed were actually working full-time at voluntary activities in
support of their community, an input of major economic value which, because it is not
rewarded financially, goes unrecorded and unrecognised. Those doing voluntary work
were more likely to be settled, have professional qualifications in their home country,
have good English and live in London.

Apart from cultural activities and practical help, the community groups constituted a
source of advice and a means of identifying resources in the wider society. They
therefore provide a major link between individuals and the formal agencies concerned
with employment, training, housing, welfare, etc. Their mediating role cannot be over-
stated, especially given the language problems that most new arrivals have, which means
that it is far easier for them to make contact with their community groups, whose
members speak their own language, than it is for them to contact British agencies
directly. There is potential here that could be built upon for improving awareness among
refugees generally of the kinds of help available and how to access it, and for re-
orientating them to life in the context of a new culture.

There are also dangers, however. There was evidence in some cases of individuals being
overly dependent on their community groups, so that there was less pressure to adjust
personally, to learn the language, or to seek to understand the structure of British
institutions, because there was someone who would handle all these contacts for one - write
letters, interpret the replies, make contacts, organise benefits, etc. There was thus a danger
of the groups becoming inward-looking and of monopolising the relationships of their
members, to the detriment of the latter when it came to 'standing on their own two feet'.

Apart from over-dependence, there was also the danger that the sharing of problems and
difficult experiences would generate a 'negative' culture which, unintentionally, would
lead to pessimism and hopelessness, and a sense of 'us and them'. Such attitudes could
seriously hinder the adjustment of individuals living in British communities. While
community groups are quite rightly a channel for voicing aggregate discontent and
working for reform in favour of their members, they should also be concerned to
maintain positive relations with outside groups and to encourage individual members,
also, to relate positively to the outside world. Most of the groups manage to maintain this
balance, both representing the interests of their members in social policy terms and
encouraging positive adjustment on the part of individuals.

Given the important role to be played by community groups as mediating institutions,
funding of their work by government and training for their role (as already occurs via the
Refugee Council's Community Development Team) should remain a major channel for
aiding settlement. Such training might be expanded, in fact, to cover the provision by
DISCUSSION

community groups of induction courses on British culture and how to empower individuals gradually to increase their independence, with support from the group as required.

Other agencies

There was general awareness of most of the relevant agencies, with at least three-quarters knowing of the DSS, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Social Services and the Refugee Council. Fewer knew about Law Centres (61 per cent) - which do not exist in all areas - and Racial Equality Councils (46 per cent) - which on the whole have not generally dealt with the specific needs of refugees distinct from other migrants. More than half had had dealings with the DSS, CABx, and the Refugee Council, and these were also rated the most helpful and the most useful of the agencies.

Knowledge of agencies was more widespread amongst those who had been in the country longer and those with professional backgrounds (on the whole those who were less disadvantaged), whereas use of their services was associated with need (or the more disadvantaged). This indicates that some with needs are not contacting agencies that could help them because they are unaware of what is on offer. This could be remedied by community groups attempting to improve their coverage (particularly of single parent families) and by attempts by the agencies themselves at outreach and by advertising their services in appropriate ways (e.g. by leaflets in other languages) in those areas where a number of refugees reside. In particular, the provision of translation or interpretation facilities may encourage more foreign-language clients to make contact.

Waiting for a decision

The time taken for the Immigration and Nationality Department to arrive at a decision on whether an asylum-seeker will be allowed to stay has always been a major problem for asylum-seekers who are not part of a pre-planned and specifically resourced 'programme' (as most of the Vietnamese arrivals enjoyed). The median time in the experience of those interviewed was 16-months, and it can be much longer (up to six years in one instance). Increasing resources on casework had enabled IND to reduce decision time to a median of 12 months during the Eighties, but the unexpected upsurge in applications at the end of that decade had sent the median time up to 18 months.

It is hoped that changes in train at the moment will again bring the decision time down again, hopefully to something more like three months. If this can be done it will help to minimise the time 'in limbo' that is both practically and psychologically damaging to those who fear returning home and at the same time are unsure that they can re-orientate themselves to life in a new country. For this group, still officially known simply as 'asylum-seekers', the main source of help is their own community group, especially in the first six months before application can be made to take up employment. The resourcing of community groups is one way in which such individuals as a group can be assured of support when this could not be justified on an individual basis.
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

General issues

The results of this survey provide much-needed information to assist all agencies to plan their policies appropriately. The second stage of this research project will be looking more closely at policy options and agencies’ experiences. It is not therefore our intention in this report to discuss the policy implications specifically, as these need more careful exploration and balanced consideration.

However, it is possible to point out the major issues that policy development will need to address, if the settlement of spontaneous refugees in the UK is to be made more successful.

1. The majority of asylum-seekers come with substantial work and educational qualifications, the bulk of which are under-utilised, to their chagrin and the country’s general loss. It should be possible to improve employment rates radically, but this will depend on:

   (a) increasing the effectiveness of language classes, especially for those with virtually no English on arrival, and with special concern for those without higher educational backgrounds who may not have the resources to adapt to classroom-based teaching;

   (b) giving assistance to embark on educational courses in Britain that will enable individuals to recoup their previous levels of qualification, including specially designed re-qualification programmes;

   (c) provision of employment training schemes which are aimed at the special needs of refugees (i.e. less than fluent in English and unused to the British culture), including work placements to provide concrete experience, such as those provided by the Refugee Council’s Training and Employment Centre (Thompson, 1993);

   (d) provision of induction courses on British culture and institutions, preferably through the auspices of the Refugee Council and community groups.

2. In the shorter term at least, obtaining appropriate accommodation is an even greater problem. The lack of sufficient public rental housing is a major problem. Many families are still living in unsuitable accommodation.

3. There was a large proportion of single parent families in the survey sample. They face particularly serious problems and are less likely to be getting assistance from their community groups. The formation of refugee women’s groups, and groups for mothers with children, might be encouraged. Some exist already, but their resource-bases are very tenuous. Statutory agencies also need to be aware of the needs of single parents.

The problems for single mothers are illustrated by El-Salih’s (1993) study of London’s East End Somali community:

"Single Somali women with pre-school and/or school-age children, who are either divorced, widowed or temporarily separated from husbands active with the SNM in northern Somalia, will tend to have..."
DISCUSSION

their own particular problems. Illiteracy or low educational levels, lack of English and of marketable skills, unfamiliarity with life in the West, coping with children traumatized by the civil war in Somalia and bewildered by the alien school system, are among the many problems which at times appear insuperable.

"Those among them with close kin who are familiar with life in Britain will generally be able to activate a social network which may help alleviate some of the problems, or at the very least offer emotional succour. For others with no immediate kin, or where the latter are equally grappling with survival in London's urban sprawl, life will often be perceived in terms of perpetual crisis."

4. There was a high rate of physical and psychological suffering, largely consequent upon the past experiences that led individuals to seek asylum, and because of separation from their families. Virtually no help is being provided to help them cope with these difficulties, which in some cases are further obstacles to a successful employment career. GPs need to be more aware of the needs of refugees in this respect and to pay more serious attention to their treatment.

5. A major mediating role is played by community groups that provide a link between their members (especially the newer arrivals) and the wider society. Without these groups it is difficult to see how many of the newcomers would have been able to survive. The groups also represent a reservoir of voluntary work by refugees themselves that constitutes a hidden (and unrenumerated) resource that should be more widely recognised and supported. The community groups should be recognised as a major channel for providing support and assistance, and their current activities might be usefully expanded, although there must still be concern for the needs of those who do not have access to such groups (e.g. living away from major areas of settlement).

6. Provision by statutory and voluntary agencies, especially in terms of language classes, translation facilities, training, etc. should be adapted in areas of high refugee residence to accommodate their special needs, which are different from those of ethnic minorities generally. In particular, medical services are poorly geared to their needs. Although this study did not examine the role of schools, as it was concerned only with people aged over 18, several respondents did mention the need also to consider provision in schools for their children and for younger unaccompanied refugees, especially special language provision. An example of such special provision is provided by the London Borough of Ealing's Support Team for International Children (Weale, 1993).

7. The general public needs to be better informed about the nature of refugees in Britain and what they have positively to offer, as well as the difficulties under which they labour. Statutory agencies, and especially social landlords, need to ensure that their practice discourages harassment.

8. There has been much discussion of the aims of government policy on refugee settlement (e.g. Dalglish, 1989, pp 8ff). This often smacks inappropriately of social engineering, arguing the pros and cons of assimilation, integration, etc. A large part of the ethos of British life is a stress on individual freedom and opportunity, so that rather than have objectives laid down as to the form refugee settlement should take, it would be
more appropriate to accept that the aim of settlement is to provide the opportunity for all refugees to be able to exercise maximum freedom of choice with respect to their future, and the way of life they lead. As Dulghish (1989) concludes, “Settlement would therefore appear to be a process whereby newcomers are enabled to take control of their own lives within the new social context.” (p.10.)

If an individual wishes to assimilate and become British, that choice should be open. If others prefer to emphasise their distinctive culture and to lead a life centred on their own community, this is quite compatible with the multi-cultural society that Britain is, and always has been (although it is easy to forget its multi-ethnic origins). Arguments over dispersal are less an issue of integration versus separation than of administrative problems with respect to overloading the capacities of local administration in particular areas. But people are free to move address and to ‘drift’ towards or away from their community foci, whatever national policy might be.

This research has reaffirmed what others have argued, that the community group is central to the settlement of refugees, so that policy must be compatible with the growth of concentrations of sufficient strength in particular areas to allow a thriving community of cultural expression and mutual support to survive. Where the size of a particular cultural group warrants it, several such concentrations might be encouraged in order to lessen the resource demands on any one local authority, but a policy of individual dispersal would plainly be inhumane, given the strong needs of newer arrivals in particular for emotional and social support in a context of familiar language and custom.

If local ethnic communities of this kind exist, it raises the question of their relationship to the wider society. Although they perform positive functions at one level, they may also insulate members from full participation in British culture at another level. It is important that such community groups, along with the communities in which they are set, try to foster cross-cultural sharing and positive interaction with each other. The celebration of distinctive cultures makes a positive contribution to the richness of modern British life, and a good example of this was the Vietnamese festival in Greenwich in June 1993, when children of many races from all the local schools contributed to the pageantry. It has to be recognised that second-generation immigrants, the children of refugees who remain in Britain, will be members of two cultures that therefore should not be at war, and that intolerance and bigotry are best combated through personal relationships across ethnic and cultural boundaries: through, that is, the sharing of cultural difference.
Appendix

Statistical Tables

Table 1.2
Applications received for asylum in the UK, and decisions, 1982-1992.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Decisions*</th>
<th>Asylum</th>
<th>ELR</th>
<th>Refusal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982#</td>
<td>4,223</td>
<td>2,942</td>
<td>1,727</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983#</td>
<td>4,296</td>
<td>2,950</td>
<td>1,185</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>2,905</td>
<td>1,431</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>4,389</td>
<td>2,635</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>1559</td>
<td>502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>4,266</td>
<td>2,983</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>2102</td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>4,256</td>
<td>2,432</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>1531</td>
<td>635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>3,998</td>
<td>2,702</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>1578</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>11,640</td>
<td>6,955</td>
<td>2,210</td>
<td>3860</td>
<td>890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>26,205</td>
<td>4,025</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>44,840</td>
<td>6,075</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>2190</td>
<td>3380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>24,605</td>
<td>34,900</td>
<td>1,115</td>
<td>15325</td>
<td>18465</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Decisions made in a particular year do not necessarily refer to applications made in the same year. They may apply to applications from several previous years.
# Figures for 1982 and 1983 include applicants and their dependants. All other figures are for applicants only.
Source: Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 1993, Table 1.2.

Table 1.3
Geographical distribution of refugees who applied for asylum 1983-1991 (excluding Vietnamese)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Estimated Total No.</th>
<th>per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East London</td>
<td>3,635</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West London</td>
<td>3,635</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North London</td>
<td>5,149</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West London</td>
<td>2,130</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East London</td>
<td>2,423</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West London</td>
<td>3,029</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>5,755</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other parts of UK</td>
<td>3,635</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>30,290</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on a random 10 per cent sample of applicants. Numbers do not include dependants.
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

Table 2.1
Country fleeing from or unable to return to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
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<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>263</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2
Nationality/ethnic group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality/ethnic group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ugandan</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>263</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3
Nationality and sex of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>per cent</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ugandan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>192</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2.4
Age of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-75</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2.5
Age distribution of sample compared with all applicants 1980-89

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Statistics*</th>
<th>Research sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-29</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+over</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Special analysis by Home Office Statistical Division.

### Table 2.6
Household type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single person living alone</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single person living with others</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with no children</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with children</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent and children</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other combinations of relatives</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 2.7
Number of respondent's children in household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children in the household</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One child</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two children</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three children</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four children</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five or more children</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.8
Year of asylum application

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of application</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.9
Highest level of education in home country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest level of education</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Level</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Level</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.10
Highest qualification obtained in home country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest qualification</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-Graduate Qualification</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Qualification</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Qualification</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Training</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O/A-Level</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Leaving</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.11
Type of employment in home country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of employment</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of those employed</th>
<th>% of total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager/Employer</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Non-Manual</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Manual</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Employed</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Employed</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>263</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1
English language ability on arrival in Britain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English language ability</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Spoken English</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

Table 3.2
English language ability at time of interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English language ability</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Spoken English</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1
Main activity by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% All</th>
<th>% Males</th>
<th>% Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On training scheme</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking after home/family</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick/disabled/other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE</td>
<td>(263)</td>
<td>(192)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2
Economic activity by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Age 18-29</th>
<th>Age 30-39</th>
<th>Age 40 plus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student etc.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-care</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired etc.</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE</td>
<td>(69)</td>
<td>(123)</td>
<td>(71)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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#### Table 4.3
Type of current employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job type</th>
<th>% of refugee sample</th>
<th>% of all ethnic minorities*</th>
<th>% of general population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers or Employers</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Non-manual</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Manual</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE</td>
<td>(71)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


#### Table 4.4
Change over time in employment experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First or only job n=111*</th>
<th>Subsequent job n=53</th>
<th>Most recent job** n=19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Number providing details of job (5 gave no details).
**Excluding first or second jobs.
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

Table 4.5
Methods of finding current job: comparison with the general population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>% of employed refugees*</th>
<th>% of general population**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper advertisements</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, relatives or community group</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct approach</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other organisations (trade unions, private agencies, local careers office, job centre)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Excluding the self-employed.
**Source OPCS (1992).

Table 4.6
Successful job search methods at different career stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search method</th>
<th>First job</th>
<th>Intermediate job</th>
<th>Latest job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start own business</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other means</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE</td>
<td>(111)</td>
<td>(53)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7
Sources of income by household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household type</th>
<th>Earnings only</th>
<th>Benefits only</th>
<th>Earnings only</th>
<th>Total &amp; benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Couples with children</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults sharing</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single adults</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parents</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL HOUSEHOLDS</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 4.8
Financial situation of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having to borrow money</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having to draw on savings</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enough to cover expenses</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saving occasionally</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saving regularly</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1
Numbers applying for training programmes, as a percentage of all those ever unemployed and as a percentage of those aware of them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of unempl.</th>
<th>% of aware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment Training</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Training</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Action</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Learning</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Programme</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Allowance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy etc.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Loans</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2
Numbers accepted on training programmes as percentage of those applying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of those applying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment Training</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Training</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Action</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Learning</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Programme</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Allowance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy etc.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Loans</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

Table 6.1
Location of current accommodation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of England</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London and the South-East</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>263</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2
Housing tenure compared to the general population of Britain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Refugees</th>
<th>GHS*</th>
<th>EM**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority Rented</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Association Rented</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Rented/Tied</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Rented/Rent Free</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>263</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 6.3
Time in current home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 Year</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Year but less than 2 Years</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Years but less than 3 Years</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Years but less than 4 Years</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more Years</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td>257*</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Six cases had missing data.
APPENDIX

Table 6.4
Amenities compared to the general population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Refugees</th>
<th>G.H.S. 1990*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing Machine</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fridge</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freezer</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USE OF A CAR</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 6.5
Sources of help in finding accommodation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of help</th>
<th>1st %</th>
<th>2nd %</th>
<th>3rd %</th>
<th>4th+</th>
<th>All %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends and Relatives</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council/Housing Assoc.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Agency/Advert</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee Agency/Group</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Sources</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL NUMBER ADDRESSES 785

Table 6.6
Region most lived in since applying for asylum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region most lived in</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>&amp;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only lived in London and S.E.</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only lived in the provinces</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently in London, but has lived in the provinces</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently in provinces but spent a short time in London</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently in provinces but spent a long time in London</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>259*</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Four cases had data missing
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

Table 6.7
Main reasons for moving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for moving</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of refugees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To Take Up a Job</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Improve Job Prospects</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get Larger/Smaller Place</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get Own Place</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve Housing Quality</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Move to a New Area</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evicted / Asked to Leave</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offered LA/HA accommodation</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temp. Housed by Family/Friend</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with Landlord/lady</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Reasons</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment / Violence</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Reunion</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move nearer Family / Friends</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Reasons</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>722</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.8
Destinations of those wanting to move

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destinations of those wanting to move</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local moves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the same city (not London)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within a local area in London</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-distance moves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Into London from outside</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Away from London to another City</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between two cities (not London)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within London</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 7.1
Causes of stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes of stress</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Events in Home Country</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future in the UK</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Problems</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation from Community</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing/Homelessness</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous Causes</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages add up to more than 100% as multiple responses could be given.

Table 8.1
Waiting time for asylum decision and status granted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waiting time</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Refugee</th>
<th>ELR</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Wait</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6 Months</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12 Months</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-18 Months</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-30 Months</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 21/2 Years</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAMPLE SIZES</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(18 cases had date information missing.)
THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN
References


THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN


REFERENCES


Sheffield City Council (1991) *Somali Profile - an examination of skills, experience and expertise*. Committee Report, July.


THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN


Publications

List of Research and Planning Unit Publications

The Research and Planning Unit (previously the Research Unit) has been publishing its work since 1955, and a list of reports for the last two years is provided below. A full list of publications is available on request from the Research and Planning Unit.

Home Office Research Studies (HORS)


133. Not published yet.


THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN


Research and Planning Unit Papers (RPUP)


73. Public satisfaction with police services. Peter Southgate and Debbie Crisp. 1993.


PUBLICATIONS


Research Findings
(These are summaries of the main findings of research projects)

THE SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN BRITAIN


Research Bulletin (available from the Information Section)
The Research Bulletin is published twice a year and contains short articles on recent research.

Occasional Papers
Managing difficult prisoners: The Lincoln and Hull special units. Professor Keith Bottomley, Professor Norman Jeppson, Mr Kenneth Elliott and Dr Jeremy Colid. 1994 (available from RPU Information Section).
The Nacro diversion initiative for mentally disturbed offenders: an account and an evaluation. Home Office, NACRO and Mental Health Foundation (available from Information Section).

Books
PUBLICATIONS


Requests for Publications

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