



Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings linked to Migrant Workers Scan – England, Scotland and Wales Research Priorities

Background

The linkable Migrant Workers Scan dataset has the potential to transform our understanding of migrants' experience of the labour market from labour market entry, through job mobility and career progression to retirement decisions. Researchers can use the dataset to explore how migration affect individuals' wage levels and pay progression.

Linking the Migrant Workers Scan to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) and other datasets offers a powerful evidence base to inform some of the UK's most pressing policy challenges. Migration is central to debates on labour shortages, productivity, wages and inequality, yet robust data on migrants' employment and earnings has historically been limited. The linked data can help policymakers understand the contribution of migrant workers to key sectors facing skills gaps, assess how migrants' pay and job mobility compare with UK-born workers, and identify whether certain migrant groups are concentrated in low-paid or insecure employment.

It can also provide insights into the regional distribution of migrants, the role of self-employment in migrant livelihoods, and the longer-term progression and integration of migrant workers into the labour market. These insights are critical for shaping immigration policy, workforce planning in health and social care, addressing in-work poverty, and supporting inclusive economic growth across regions.

About the dataset

The Migrant Workers Scan dataset provides information on overseas nationals who have registered for, and been allocated, a National Insurance Number. Maintained by HMRC and supplied annually to the Office for National Statistics via the Department for Work and Pensions, the dataset has been recording migration information since 1975, with its current structure in place since 2002. It includes details such as nationality, country of residence prior to arrival, date of arrival in the UK, and date of National Insurance Number registration, alongside demographic



information including age, marital status (for women only) and postcode area at the time of registration.

The Migrant Workers Scan is based on a 1% sample aligned with the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), making it both a valuable standalone resource and a linkable dataset that can be integrated with ASHE and HMRC's PAYE and Self-Assessment data (which covers the same 1%). The ASHE linked to Migrant Workers Scan – England, Scotland and Wales is an ADR England flagship dataset.

By linking the Migrant Workers Scan with ASHE and other datasets, researchers gain a powerful tool for understanding migrants' role in the UK labour market. The linkage combines migration details with rich information on pay, occupations and employment, enabling detailed analysis of wage progression, job mobility, sectoral participation and regional variation. It also provides a basis for exploring questions around pay gaps, labour market inequalities and the long-term economic contributions of migrant workers.

Developed as part of the Wage and Employment Dynamics (WED) project, the MWS is helping to build a stronger evidence base on wage inequality in Britain, moving from partial snapshots to a comprehensive view of migrant employment.

Research themes

Priority key questions the ASHE linked to Migrant Workers Scan dataset could help to address include:

Migrant labour market participation & pay

1. What are the earnings differences between migrant and UK-born workers across occupations, industries and regions?
2. How do wage trajectories differ for recent migrants compared to long-settled migrants and UK-born workers?
3. To what extent are migrants concentrated in low-paid or insecure jobs, and how does this change over time?

Job mobility & career progression

4. How mobile are migrants within the labour market - do they change employers, sectors or regions more frequently than UK-born workers?
5. Do migrants transition into higher-skilled or higher-paying roles over time, or are they more likely to remain in entry-level jobs?



Regional & sectoral dynamics

6. Which regions and sectors are most reliant on migrant workers, and how has this evolved since migrants' arrival in the UK?
7. How do productivity, wages and job stability differ in sectors or firms with higher shares of migrant workers?

Inequalities

8. Are migrant workers more likely to experience pay penalties or limited progression compared to similar UK-born workers?
9. How do migrant outcomes vary by country of origin, immigration route (e.g. EU vs non-EU), and time of arrival?