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Did 2004 EU expansion matter to new migrants' housing tenure and settlement choices in England?

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Abstract

This paper analyses how migration policy changes affect the housing and location patterns of immigrants in the UK. Using the UK Longitudinal Household Survey, we examine the relationship between the 2004 EU accession as a migration policy change and housing and locational patterns. In addition to confirming the importance of migration policy frameworks, we find that liberalised migration can create a wave of immigrants with a lower propensity for homeownership and may cause the dispersion of new immigrants to locations away from the gateway cities and primary immigrant clusters such as London. The results are robust to several sensitivity tests.

KEYWORDS

EU, housing tenure, locational choices, migration policy, regional distribution

JEL CLASSIFICATION

C35, F22, O18, R23

1 | INTRODUCTION

Location choice and associated housing outcomes are two significant implications of immigration. A place of residence has an impact on an immigrant's economic outcome. Immigrants' housing outcomes have been variously examined by past studies. In the UK, there is evidence of a regional

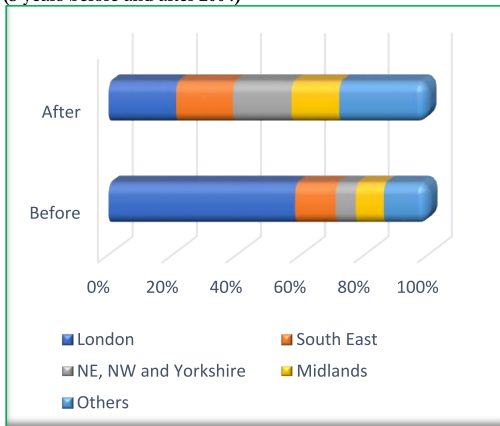
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variation in the distribution of immigrants (see Vargas-Silva & Rienzo, 2018), with London having a significant share of immigrants: data from a Migration Observatory (2020) report shows that almost half of UK immigrants reside in London and a third of London residents are immigrants. This immigrant concentration may be linked to London's political and economic importance on the global stage. This aligns with the theoretical construct that large gateway cities, economic hubs, and immigrant clusters exert stronger migration pull forces (Aslund, 2005; Tanis, 2020). These theoretical constructs further create an expectation that a significant proportion of new immigrants into the UK will settle in London on arrival. It is, therefore, expected that EU-A10 immigrants¹ to the UK after the 2004 accession would be concentrated in the Greater London areas.

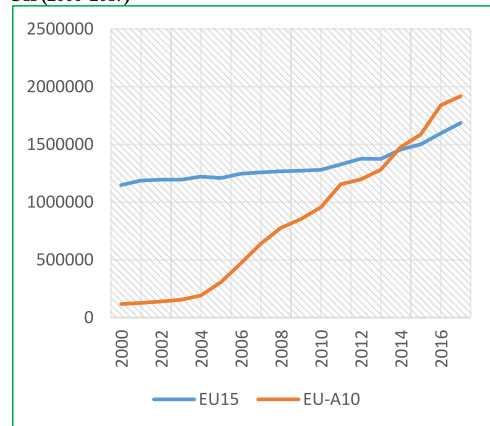
As shown in Figure 1, Panel A, using data from the UK household longitudinal survey (commonly known as the Understanding Society Survey), EU-A10 citizens who migrated to the UK after 2004 were less concentrated in London. Further evidence from the same dataset shows that EU-A10 immigrants to the UK after 2004 also have a lower homeownership rate. The change in the housing and regional distribution of EU-A10 immigrants immediately after 2004 suggests a potential link between migration policy, housing tenure and residential locational patterns of immigrants, which we explore in this paper. It is important to note that we do not focus on refugees and we rather analyse the issues from the perspective of general economic migration. Housing issues related to refugees follow different dynamics (see a recent paper by Brown et al., 2024). We do not focus on existing migrants and do not analyse how the locational and housing tenure behaviour of immigrants who were in England before the shock might have been subsequently influenced by the shock. Rather, we analyse how the housing tenure and locational patterns of immigrants from the A10 countries (aggregately) changed following the

Panel-A: Locational Pattern of EU-A10 Immigrants (3 years before and after 2004)



Source: Author's Computation; data from the University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research. (2018)

Panel-B: EU15 and EU-A10 Immigrants to the UK (2000-2017)



Source: Author's drawings Using data from ONS 2017; in Vargas-Silva and Fernandez-Reino (2018).

FIGURE 1 Figure 1 panel (b) shows the number of EU15 and EU A10 immigrants that arrived every year from 2000 to 2017. Please note that panel (b) information comes from a different data source (ONS) at the aggregate level, which is different from the household dataset that we use. Therefore, we cannot break it down to regional level.

¹Immigrants from the 10 countries (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) that joined the EU in 2004.

new wave of immigrants from those countries. We do not argue that immigrants from those countries that resided in the UK started to behave differently after their counterparts joined them post-2004; rather, our argument is that the counterparts that joined them after 2004 had different housing and locational patterns.

A significant challenge for migration is often housing, which is a basic human need and is fundamentally important for financial and emotional well-being (Waldron, 2022). Therefore, individuals, particularly immigrants, attempt to satisfy this need through a mix of housing tenure and locational preferences, which are driven by macro-level factors such as local and regional economies, demographics, and socio-cultural structures as well as more micro-level factors such as individual and household characteristics and social networks (Aslund, 2005; Tanis, 2020; Zavodny, 1999). This paper, therefore, aims to contribute to the extant literature by developing conceptual and empirical links between the liberalised migration policies, and housing tenure and regional distribution of immigrants in the destination country.

We draw on a strand of literature, which suggests that migration policies are linked to the socio-economic, socio-cultural, and demographic characteristics of immigrants (Aslund, 2005; Ejermo & Zheng, 2018). We also cite another strand of literature, which suggests that the characteristics of immigrants may be linked to the housing tenure and residential locational distribution of immigrants (see Nygaard, 2011; Oladiran et al., 2019; Tanis, 2020). We use EU membership and accession policies to examine the hypotheses by focusing on EU-A10 immigrants to the UK between 2002 and 2005, using data collected from 2009 to 2017. We employ a comparison estimation approach to compare the housing tenure and regional locational distribution of EU-A10 citizens that migrated just before and after the accession, and a form of a Difference-in-Difference approach (using EU15 countries² as a control group). It is also likely that some return migration can take place and thus may interfere with selection in the sample. Some literature seems to suggest that the majority of return migration takes place in the first 5 years (see Dustmann et al. (1996), Martin and Dragos (2012) for a discussion on return migration). Given the data we are using, we are limited in terms of identifying the return migration effectively. However, as our concern is around housing and settlement choices, the 'return intention' is perhaps weak for this selected group and in this sample, we can expect to have a strong and more permanent 'motivation to stay' for these migrants.

Our results show that immigrants from EU-A10 countries who arrived after the liberalisation in 2004 have a significantly lower homeownership probability and a higher rental propensity, compared to immigrants from the same countries who migrated before the liberalisation. The results further show that EU-A10 immigrants who migrated to the UK after the 2004 accession are less likely to be concentrated in London, compared to those who moved before 2004. This suggests that migration liberalisation may have a role in the diffusion of immigrants from the primary immigrant clusters and economic hubs, particularly when the cost of living is extremely high. This creates the expectation that new immigrants to a country will most likely concentrate in core economic hubs and areas with strong social networks. Our study extends this knowledge further by showing that new immigrants will prefer core economic hubs and areas of strong social networks only if they can afford the high level of housing and living costs.

Our contribution to the insight on migration policy changes and the link to immigrants' housing outcomes and spatial patterns is important from both theoretical and practical

² Countries that were members of the EU before 2004 are Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Austria, Finland, Sweden and United Kingdom.

perspectives, with significant policy implications. Housing outcomes, locational choices, and mobility are critical elements of housing market dynamics and spatial economics, and these have profound effects on labour markets, consumption, investment, inequality, and welfare. Our study therefore highlights the important link between migration policy and local and regional economies, with housing serving as a conduit. Our study also points to the potential linkage between the transmission of economic shocks across local and regional geographies and the performance of financial systems and migration policy changes. There is a body of work that highlights the shared experience of housing marginality for migrants and non-migrants at the lower tiers of the urban structure (see Wacquant, 2019). This calls for caution when migration policy changes are planned and for particular consideration of strategic spatial planning issues such as physical and social infrastructure, regeneration, and other development expenditure.

While it is widely recognised that immigration boosts economic growth, it is also often a politically thorny subject. In particular, political claims often tend to centre around the possibility of immigration straining public resources. Such rhetoric has recently caused very significant changes in migration policies. It is also likely that immigrants follow their networks, and especially in the initial years, following the network may lead to job market and housing outcome, leading the dispersion to various locations. Moreover, given policy discussion in the UK around encouraging employment centres away from Greater London, such as the so called Northern Powerhouse initiatives with some funding and policy boost and relocation of some key employers, it is certainly possible to have this parallel network effects in play leading to settlement choices, along with what we are finding in terms of immigration policy changes. In the current set-up, we are not able to deal with network effects which would require individual-level matching processes.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of the EU-A10 era of migration to the UK. Section 3 discusses the development of the conceptual framework. Section 4 introduces the data and discusses the empirical approach in the study. In Section 5, the results of the empirical estimation are looked at and more robustness tests are shown. Section 6 gives a summary and some final thoughts.

2 | MIGRATION FROM THE 2004 EUROPEAN UNION ACCESSION (EU-A10) COUNTRIES TO THE UK

The spike in immigration from the EU-A10 accession countries to the UK after 2004 is a clear contrast to the relatively stable immigration rates associated with the 1981, 1986 and 1995 EU accessions. Most of the immigrants to the UK before 2004 came from outside the EU. However, this pattern has now changed, with the EU-A10 immigrants now constituting a significant proportion of the immigrants to the UK. Figure 1 panel-B particularly shows the exponential increase in the volume of EU-A10 immigration to the UK from 2004.

Before the 2004 accession, estimates show that anywhere from five million to 40 million economic migrants would move from Central and Eastern Europe to other European countries, mainly because of the high differences in income and standard of living between EU15 and EU-A10 countries (Drinkwater et al., 2003). Data from the World Bank³ shows that indeed, EU15 countries had higher GDP per-capita and average income levels compared to EU-A10 countries (2000–2005 aggregates), which effectively created an economic pull/push disequilibrium. Whilst

³Data is available at <https://databank.worldbank.org/home.aspx>.

the EU migration liberalisation has been in place for approximately 3 decades, the scope of liberalisation has expanded by every phase of new accession. It is thus challenging to adequately map out the full-scale policy effects. The high volume of migration from the EU-A10 countries to the UK after the 2004 accession is however a focal point in the EU migration to the UK. This migration wave particularly led to a series of debates that snowballed into a full-blown national discourse, contributing to the 2016 Brexit referendum.⁴

3 | CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The literature on the relationship between migration liberalisation and urban/regional economics within the housing context is rather scant making a direct conceptual link difficult. However, the study is premised on the idea that the relationship between migration policy changes and the housing and locational patterns of immigrants may be linked to the socio-economic, socio-cultural and demographic characteristics of immigrants. These can also be driven by specific migration policy systems. This further suggests that changes to the housing and locational patterns of immigrants following changes to specific migration policy systems may be an indirect result of the immigrants' selection mechanism engineered by the migration policy changes in the first place.

The conceptual framework developed in this paper is based on three main postulations. First, migration policy is the underlying mechanism for immigrants' selection. Second, changes to migration policy tend to drive migration waves and affect the characteristics of the immigrant population. Third, the characteristics of the immigrant population determine the housing and locational patterns (Aslund, 2005; Ejermo & Zheng, 2018).

Migration policy may be classified as restrictive (introducing migration restrictions or expanding the immigration requirements) or liberalised (relaxing or removing already existing immigration restrictions) (see Ejermo & Zheng, 2018). It is also noteworthy that migration policies can also be informed by narratives of integration and racialisation of the issues. If we follow the binary classification of Ejermo & Zheng, 2018, the EU-A10 accession was effectively a liberalisation of migration restrictions, hence further discussions are provided on the liberalised migration policy framework.

3.1 | Migration liberalisation

The philosophy behind liberalised migration is the free movement of people, goods and services across countries. Many advocates of liberalised migration postulate that it aids population and demographic balance (Moses and Born Letnes, 2003), labour mobility (Borjas, 2001), trade growth and economic development (Drinkwater et al., 2003). Conversely, critics associate liberalised migration with weak border control, over-supply of labour (Borjas, 2001), difficulty in social integration, lower education and skill level of immigrants (Ejermo & Zheng, 2018); putting undue pressure on public provision system and work as a demand shifter for public amenities and services (Abrahámová, 2007; Ejermo & Zheng, 2018). Generally, immigration

⁴The UK referendum on EU membership which led to a majority of the UK voters voting to leave the EU. The UK formally left the EU on 1 February 2020.

has been found to increase population diversity thus making societies in the destination more heterogeneous (Docquier et al., 2020). Liberalised migration may create a socio-economic mixture of the immigrant population with high, mid and low-socio-economic classes and varied educational qualifications, skills and technical abilities. This implies that the characteristics of the immigrant population under a liberalised immigration system may be heterogeneous, and this wave of migrants may likely be dominated by immigrants in the bottom half of the socio-economic strata.

3.2 | Migration liberalisation and the potential changes to housing and locational patterns of immigrants

Prior research has focused largely on the links between migration and the housing market in general. However, these papers are not contextualised and driven by the primary migration policy frameworks, which might have shaped the observed migration patterns.

The housing tenure outcomes of individuals are typically linked to socio-economic factors (see Kuebler & Rugh, 2013). Because housing tenure outcomes are theoretically associated with affordability, factors such as educational levels, skill levels, labour market conditions, income, house prices, and access to credit are key determinants of housing tenure outcomes of immigrants. Painter et al. (2001) suggest that individuals (particularly immigrants) with lower educational attainment may be less competitive in the labour market, thus earning a lower level of income than their counterparts. Hall and Greenman (2013) further argue that individuals (particularly immigrants) with lower education and skill-set may earn lower income and thus have lower credit scores, experience down payment constraints, and may find it more difficult to access the mortgage market and secure favourable mortgage deals. Locational choices of individuals are also linked to socio-economic factors, labour market forces, demographic factors, socio-cultural factors, individual taste and preferences, regional and local economies, housing tenure and housing market conditions (Aslund, 2005; Tanis, 2020; Zavodny, 1999).

Immigrants also tend to face significant constraints in accessing housing market and other economic resources. Especially on residential mobility constraints, there is a body of work highlighting various issues (see for example, Rosenbaum and Friedman (2007) on housing divide across generations; Robinson et al. (2007) on housing pathways of immigrants; Velez (2020) on attitude towards immigration depending on residential mobility constraints).

As migration policy plays a vital role in determining the socio-economic, demographic and socio-cultural composition of the immigrant population, it is logical to infer that these policies may further influence the spatial distribution and housing tenure pattern of immigrants. Therefore, we develop the following testable hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 Immigrants under a liberalised migration policy system are less likely to concentrate in London.⁵

Hypothesis 2 Immigrants under a liberalised migration policy system will have a lower homeownership probability and higher private rental and public rented housing outcome.

⁵London is the key major economic hub and the main migrant cluster in the UK.

Hypothesis 1 is based on the idea that the liberalised migration policy creates a wave of immigrants of heterogeneous socioeconomic classes, with the majority in the lower socioeconomic strata. These immigrants generally have lower skill levels and earn a lower level of income, thus may have a lower propensity to reside in global, gateway cities such as London where their skillset may not be high in demand and where affordability challenges may be more severe. Therefore, this may push them to other second tier cities and regions. It is noteworthy though that policies to recruit foreign skilled workers to provincial areas away from gateway cities have not been immensely successful due to such workers tending to move to major cities after few years attracted by the higher returns to their human capital in large cities and the greater level of amenities there.

Hypothesis 2 is premised on the expectation that this wave of immigrants will be dominated by immigrants in the lower socio-economic strata with characteristics such as lower skill levels and lower-paying jobs. This is likely to make housing unaffordability more likely and homeownership more difficult.

Based on the conceptual framework developed in this section, it is logical to hypothesise that the liberalisation of migration for EU-A10 immigrants would have created a wave of migrants from EU-A10 countries with lower socioeconomic status and thus a lower likelihood of concentration in London and a lower homeownership probability. These hypotheses form the basis of the following empirical analysis. This has strong implications for housing issues at the urban margins, racialisation of narratives around migration and integration of migrants.

4 | DATA AND EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

4.1 | Data

We focus on two outcomes of immigrants: the regional location distribution (residing in London or residing in other regions outside London) and housing tenure patterns (homeownership, private rental and social rental). Citizenship/nationality is key in analysing migration policy impact (Borjas, 1987; Nickell & Saleheen, 2017). Therefore, there is a need to use a dataset that identifies immigrants' countries of origin and year of immigration. It is important to also control for other socio-economic factors, demographic factors, individual characteristics and household characteristics of the immigrants (see Aslund, 2005; Oladiran et al., 2019). As a result, this study uses the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Survey (UKHLS) dataset that contains the required information. Note that the data we use here reflect the country of nationality.

The UKHLS is a nationally representative survey of UK households which follows a sample of 40,000 UK households in eight waves (as of 2018), and it captures individuals and households' economic and non-economic attributes in longitudinal form spanning from 2009 to 2017 (University of Essex, 2018).⁶ It is also the largest longitudinal survey in the UK, which provides data on the individual, household and migration-related information of UK immigrants.

⁶University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research. (2018). Understanding Society: Waves 1–8, 2009–2017 and Harmonised BHPS: Waves 1–18, 1991–2009: Special Licence Access. [data collection]. 10th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 6931, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6931-9>. See Oladiran et al. (2019) for details on the UKHLS sample design.

We use the first eight waves of the UKHLS dataset with 16,263 immigrants⁷ who have responded at least once within these eight waves. This results in a total of 57,991 person-years observations for immigrants. However, as this paper focuses on a smaller subset of these immigrants, we identify a total of 2990 immigrants (10,677 person-years observations) from either EU-A10 or EU15 countries. Considering that we are primarily interested in the 2 years before and after the 2004 accession, we further identify 506 (1751 person-years) EU-A10 and EU15 immigrants who migrated to the UK between 2002 and 2005. Furthermore, we apply filters due to missing information on some variables. We particularly find that some of the immigrants in our sub-sample of interest have missing information on their housing tenure and location, which form our dependent variables. We therefore have to exclude them from the sample, leaving a total of 1182 person-years with complete information.

The ability to clearly identify the immigrants who were affected by the migration policy change and those who were not affected is key in implementing our empirical strategy. There are multiple categories of immigrants that the policy changes did not have a significant impact, based on their nationalities and year of immigration. In the 2004 EU accession, there was a transition from non-EU to EU membership for the 10 new countries, hence the potential policy impact should only be observed within the EU-A10 immigrant cohort that migrated after 2004. We expect that the EU-A10 accession led to a change in the socio-economic composition of the immigrants from the EU-A10 accession countries to the UK after 2004, and by extension, their housing and locational patterns. We, however, do not expect a significant variation in the housing and locational pattern of EU15 immigrants, EU-A10 immigrants that migrated before 2004 and other non-EU immigrants.⁸ Thus, we create sub-divisions ('pre' for immigrants that arrived in the UK 2 years before 2004 and 'post' for immigrants that arrived 2 years after) for the primary interest group (EU-A10 immigrants) and the control group (EU15 immigrants). We use a 2 years-policy window (2 years before and 2 years after 2004) to ensure that we have a reasonable number of observations while also keeping to a timeframe with minimal issues relating to other policy changes and time spent in the UK. This setup particularly supports the identification of the potential linkages between migration liberalisation, the characteristics of the immigrants and their housing and locational patterns.

We examine two housing outcomes: location and housing tenure. The first outcome variable is the regional location of the immigrants and we begin by creating a binary variable for immigrants residing in London (1) versus non-London (0). While the UK comprises 12 regions, we create five groups of regions because of the low frequency in some regions, which are London, South East (South East region of England), Northern England (North West, North East and Yorkshire), the Midlands (East and West Midlands) and other regions (East of England, South West, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). Apart from the "others" category, which is a category created for the regions with low-frequency distribution, the other four regional categories are based on geographical proximity and economic similarity. The second outcome variable is housing tenure. Individual housing tenure indicators are created from the household tenure variables. Since we analyse housing tenure outcomes at the individual level, the tenure variable is captured at the household level, we identify another variable in the dataset that indicates the individual within the household that owns the home or is responsible for the rent.

⁷ Born outside the UK.

⁸ We exclude all non-EU immigrants because they operated under restrictive immigration policy systems, thus subject to several migration policy changes which may be difficult to adequately account for.

We, therefore, create a new variable that satisfies the condition of owning or renting and exclude all observations that do not meet these conditions (such as individuals living with relatives). Because of the unbalanced nature of the panel,⁹ a pooled panel data set-up is used for the analysis, and since the error terms are likely to be correlated within individuals, the standard errors are clustered at the individual level.

We have performed pairwise *t*-test for statistical significance for all these cases that is, EU-A10 before versus EU-A10 after; EU-A10 before versus EU15 before; EU15 before versus EU15 after; and EU-A10 after versus EU15 after. The tests have been performed on a number important and relevant attributes. For a majority of the cases, we find statistically significant differences.

We are also faced with the challenge of high correlations among some variables relating to age and time spent for example, biological age, the number of years spent since migration, age at immigration and the year of the survey (see Oladiran et al., 2019). To avoid multicollinearity issues, we adopt a 'relative approach' by creating a variable that captures the time-associated effects relative to the standard retirement age in the UK, which is 65 years as expressed below:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Time left until normal retirement age} &= 65 - (\text{age at immigration} + \text{years spent in the UK}) \\ &= 65 - \text{biological age}\end{aligned}$$

This approach produces a variable with a much lower correlation with the *wave* (interview year) variable, thus enabling a measure of the effects of the lifecycle relative to the remaining years of economic productivity, while also explicitly accounting for time fixed effects. Furthermore, we also account for educational attainment, household income, employment status, gender, and living with a spouse, the number of children, mobility and housing tenure as controls for socio-economic, demographic, household and mobility effects¹⁰. We take particular interest in the variables for educational attainment and income, which are key factors for immigrants' socio-economic and cultural outcomes (as discussed in Section 3; also see Docquier et al., 2020).

Housing tenure decisions are typically more of a household financial ability than individual; hence we convert the household income using the OECD equivalised household income scale and further standardise the outcome. This scaling methodology enables us to adjust the household income in order to measure the standard of living rather than just the actual household income (see, Oladiran et al., 2019).¹¹

⁹Some individuals do not take part in the interview in some years.

¹⁰See Appendix T1 for the changes in the percentage distribution of key characteristics of the immigrant groups; and Appendix T2 for the variable definition and summary statistics.

¹¹According to Oladiran et al. (2019), the OECD equivalised household income is a standard methodology that adjusts household income to consolidate the different economic requirements of different households (such as household size and composition). Larger households typically require higher income than households with fewer individuals, and the household need and expenditure will increase with each additional member, but not proportionally as a result of economies of scale in the consumption. For instance, a single individual household with a monthly income of £2000 is better off financially than a household earning the same amount but with two or three individuals. Also, need for space, transportation and electricity may not increase at five times the rate as it will be for a household of five members, compared to a single individual household. Hence the household income in the data is adjusted to the OECD scale (the first adult in the household is subject to a conversion fraction of 1; other additional adults are subject to a conversion fraction of 0.5; children below 14 years have a conversion fraction of 0.3) and this is further standardised to derive the standardised OECD equivalised income. Therefore, an OECD equivalised income point of 0.08 suggests that the household is 8 times better off financially than a household with a point of one regardless of how much the household head earns.

4.2 | Empirical framework and methods

Our empirical analysis is aimed at analysing the link between migration policy changes and the housing and regional distribution of immigrants. We compare the residential location and housing tenure patterns of EU-A10 immigrants to the UK who entered before the accession in 2004 to EU-A10 immigrants to the UK after the accession. The control group constitutes EU15 immigrants, and a comparison is also done to see if there are any changes in their regional distribution and housing tenure pattern of those who entered before and after accession.

The data does not contain information on the residential location, housing tenure and other characteristics of the immigrants around the policy change, so we cannot directly observe the regional distribution and tenure patterns before they migrated and immediately after they arrived in the UK. The UKHLS data, however, records their location at the time of the survey (from 4 to 7 years after entry to the UK, which means that their housing tenure and regional distribution can be observed from 4 to 7 years after their arrival in the UK). We adopt two approaches:

- A Comparison estimation approach for those affected by the policy
- A Difference-in-Difference (DiD) style approach using a control group of immigrants

4.2.1 | Comparison estimation approach

Our approach compares immigrants who entered the UK just before and after the 2004 policy ‘cut-off point’ and explores the differences in outcome of immigrants based on the differences in the migration policy system through which they were admitted into a country. This, therefore, enables an analysis of housing and locational outcomes of two sets of immigrants before and after the accession. It further enables us to observe the changes in these outcomes for our group of interest-the EU-A10 immigrants; and to compare this to the control group- EU15 immigrants. The expectation is that since the 2004 migration liberalisation was only applicable to the EU-A10 immigrants, we should observe changes in their housing and locational outcomes; and as the EU15 group were not affected by the liberalisation, we do not expect to observe any significant changes to the locational and housing outcomes. The comparison approach does not aim to estimate causal inferences; rather, it is set up to demonstrate the differences in the type and outcomes of immigrants based on the differences in the migration policy system through which they were admitted into the country. We first estimate a probability model to estimate the probability of an immigrant residing in London (relative to residing outside London) at time t , conditional on a set of observed characteristics x_{it} ; and also the probability that the immigrant will be a homeowner (relative to being non-owner) as follows:

$$P(y_{it} = 1 | x_{it}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{POST}_i^{\text{TREAT}} + \beta_2 x_{it} + \beta_3 T_i + u_{it} \quad (1)$$

y represents the dependent variable (resident in London vs. resident outside London as the first dependent variable; and being a homeowner vs. being a non-homeowner as the second dependent variable); x_{it} includes a set of control variables; T_i are the controls for time fixed effects, and u_{it} is the error term. $\text{POST}_i^{\text{TREAT}}$ refers to the immigrant groups affected by the policy change and equals 1, if the group entered the UK after the policy change and 0, if they entered before. We then estimate the same model for the control group

$$P(y_{it}=1|x_{it}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{POST}_i^{\text{CONTROL}} + \beta_2 x_{it} + \beta_3 T_i + u_{it} \quad (2)$$

Based on the hypotheses, it is expected that the $\text{POST}_i^{\text{TREAT}}$ in Equation (1) for the EU-A10 will be negative and statistically significant in both sets of analysis (locational pattern and housing tenure). It is also expected that $\text{POST}_i^{\text{CONTROL}}$ should be statistically insignificant in both models because they were not affected by the policy change-suggesting that there are no observable differences in the locational and housing tenure patterns of EU15 immigrants, whether they immigrated before or after 2004.

4.2.2 | Difference-in-differences-style approach

As an alternative estimation, we examine if the comparison estimation design is robust in capturing the effects by using a difference-in-differences (DiD) type approach. Given that it is impossible to observe the patterns of the immigrants before and after the cut-off point and also before and after migration, a pure difference-in-differences may be difficult. Therefore, a difference-in-differences style estimation is adopted:

$$y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{POST}_i + \beta_2 \text{TREAT}_i + \beta_3 \text{POST}_i * \text{TREAT}_i + \beta_4 x_{it} + \beta_5 T_i + u_{it} \quad (3)$$

This approach includes a dummy (POST_i) for whether the individual migrated pre or post-2004, a dummy variable for treatment (TREAT_i) for whether the individual is in the treated or control group, and interaction between POST_i and TREAT_i . The idea is that POST_i controls for any differences pre and post the policy change that may have impacted locational choices and housing tenure (affecting all individuals), TREAT_i controls for any differences between the treated and control immigrants and the interaction term (β_3) is the effect of being in the treatment group-post the policy change.

We estimate Equations (1)–(3) using a probit, given the choice is a binary one (London/non-London; and own/non-own) and report average marginal effects, which tells us the effect of a change in the variables on the probability of living in London.

4.2.3 | Other estimations

To have a better understanding of the changes in the regional distribution of immigrants that can be linked to the migration policy changes, we also examine a second outcome variable. We break down the locational and tenure choices further: for the locational outcome analysis, non-London regions are further split into South East England, Northern England, Midlands and Others; while non-homeownership housing tenure outcomes are also split into the private and public rental. Given we are concerned about smaller cell sizes, we use a slightly different approach and utilise a categorical variable of four categories which groups the immigrants based on whether they are in the treatment or control group, and whether they are pre/post the policy. To maintain consistency with other estimations, the pre-policy immigrants in the control group (EU15) are used as the base category. We therefore estimate

$$P(y_{it}=m|x_{it}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{PRE}_i^{\text{TREAT}} + \beta_2 \text{POST}_i^{\text{TREAT}} + \beta_3 \text{POST}_i^{\text{CONTROL}} + \beta_4 x_{it} + \beta_5 T_i + u_{it} \quad (4)$$

y_{it} in Equation (4) refers to the regional ($m = 1,2,3,4,5$) and housing tenure ($m = 1,2,3$) categories defined above.

5 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first groups of estimation are based on Equations (1) and (2) within a simple binary modelling framework. All the models reported are full-specification models that include the main policy variable and all the other control variables. Table 1 reports the main variable of interest (the migration liberalisation¹²). The results for the models with location outcomes as the outcome variable are reported in columns 1 and 2; while the housing tenure outcome models are reported in columns 3 and 4.

Panel A, Table 1 reports the probit results with the comparison estimation approach. The results for the treatment group (EU-A10) are reported in columns 1 and 3 while the results for the control group (EU15) is reported in columns 2 and 4. The average marginal effects for each of the probit estimations are reported rather than the raw coefficients to facilitate interpretation of the estimated policy effects. The difference-in-difference type approach is used as a robustness test (Equation 3) and reported in panel B of Table 1. Columns 1 and 3 show the results using probit estimates for both locational and housing tenure outcomes respectively. Because of the difficulty in estimating the average marginal effects of the interaction terms in a probit framework, the raw estimates of the probit models have been reported in columns 1 and 3; and a further OLS coefficient is reported in columns 2 and 4 for locational and housing tenure outcomes respectively.¹³

The results from the comparison approach estimates (shown in Panel A) indicate that the main variable of interest that is, the post-policy effect is statistically significant at the 1% level for the EU-A10 group in both location and housing tenure models. These results indicate that EU-A10 immigrants to the UK after 2004 have a lower probability of residing in London by 22% points and a lower homeownership probability of 19% points in comparison with EU-A10 immigrants that migrated to the UK before 2004. We also find that the same variable is statistically insignificant for the control group (EU15 group), suggesting that there are no significant changes in the locational and housing tenure patterns of EU15 immigrants after 2004. These results align with Hypotheses 1 and 2.

The stepwise introduction of the control variables (Appendix T5 and T6) also offers some valuable insight. The introduction of control variables appears to weaken the coefficient of the policy impact variable for EU-A10 immigrants while simultaneously increasing the model fit; the introduction of income appears to further weaken the policy impact, suggesting that household income may be one of the key factors responsible for the observed variation.

The results from the DiD (reported in Panel B) as indicated by the interaction term provides support to the result in panel A that EU-A10 immigrants to the UK after 2004 are less likely to reside in London. They are also less likely to be in homeownership compared to the cohort of EU-A10 immigrants that arrived before 2004, and other EU15 immigrants (before and after

¹²The stepwise introduction of the control variables is shown in Appendices T3–T6

¹³The OLS serves as a proxy for the marginal effects of the DiD interaction term.

TABLE 1 Showing the policy coefficients with location (London vs. non-London) and housing tenure using comparison and difference-in-differences-style estimation approaches.

Variables	Location outcome		Housing tenure outcome	
	EU-A10	EU15	EU-A10	EU15
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	London versus non-London	London versus non-London	Own versus non-own	Own versus non-own

Panel A: Comparison estimation

Pre-policy	–	–		
Post-policy	–0.217*** (0.048)	0.031 (0.073)	–0.189*** (0.059)	–0.091 (0.069)
Observations	828	354	828	354
Pseudo r2	0.190	0.238	0.333	0.506

Variables	Location outcome		Housing tenure outcome	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	London versus non-London (probits)	London versus non-London (OLS)	Own versus non-own (probits)	Own versus non-own (OLS)

Panel B: Difference-in-differences

Post/pre	0.125 (0.292)	0.0308 (0.0866)	–0.397 (0.351)	–0.0871 (0.0821)
EU-A10/EU5	0.542* (0.301)	0.180* (0.0972)	0.038 (0.355)	–0.00851 (0.0962)
Interaction	–1.087*** (0.374)	–0.320*** (0.117)	–0.398 (0.463)	–0.0850 (0.116)
Observations	1182	1182	1182	1182
Pseudo r2	0.156	0.167	0.347	0.354

Note: **Standard errors in Parentheses** (clustered at individual level). Full specification model-control variables include: age until retirement, educational attainment, household income, gender, living with spouse, number of children, mobility, tenure and time fixed effect; the coefficients for these variables are shown in full in Appendices T3–T6.

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

2004). Although this negative effect is stronger in the models of locational distribution and statistically insignificant for housing tenure. Similar to the comparison approach estimation, we observe that the introduction of the control variables, particularly educational attainment and household income, slackens the policy impact, suggesting that indeed, educational attainment and income are the key channels through which the migration policy change works.

We also adopt a categorical variable approach (Equation 4) to test the variation in the EU-A10 locational distribution and housing tenure outcomes relative to the other immigrant cohorts- EU-A10 pre-2004 and EU15 pre/post cohorts, and the results are shown in Table 2. The locational outcome model's estimates are presented from column 1–6 (column 1 presents the result of the model estimation with the binary outcome variable while columns 2–6 show results using the multinomial outcome variable approach). Furthermore, the housing tenure results are

TABLE 2 Binary and multinomial probits with categorical regional and treatment variable.

Variables	Location outcome						Housing tenure outcome			
	Binary (1) London versus non-London	Multinomial					Binary (7) Own versus non-own	Multinomial		
		(2) London	(3) South East	(4) North	(5) Midlands	(6) Other		(8) Own	(9) Private rental	(10) Public rental
EU15 pre	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
EU-A10 post	–0.104 (0.070)	–0.099 (0.069)	–0.007 (0.060)	0.043 (0.062)	0.116*** (0.038)	–0.052 (0.092)	–0.177** (0.073)	–0.186*** (0.072)	0.147** (0.072)	0.039 (0.051)
EU-A10 pre	0.177* (0.096)	0.180* (0.096)	–0.065 (0.067)	–0.038 (0.087)	0.036 (0.044)	–0.114 (0.114)	0.010 (0.093)	0.006 (0.092)	0.070 (0.094)	–0.076 (0.058)
EU15 post	0.037 (0.086)	0.042 (0.085)	–0.010 (0.077)	–0.050 (0.065)	0.081 (0.057)	–0.063 (0.106)	–0.099 (0.089)	–0.103 (0.086)	0.048 (0.090)	0.055 (0.066)
Observations	1182	1182	1182	1182	1182	1182	1182	1182	1182	1182

Note: Standard errors in parentheses (clustered at the individual level). Includes same controls as in Table 1.

****p* < 0.01; ** *p* < 0.05; **p* < 0.1.

presented in column 7–10 (column 7 showing the binary outcome variable results, while columns 8–10 showing multinomial outcome variable results).

The results also show that EU-A10 immigrants to the UK after 2004 are generally less likely to reside in London and have a lower homeownership probability (compared to the control group of EU15 immigrants before 2004).¹⁴ The multinomial outcome variable results particularly suggest that EU-A10 immigrants are more likely to reside in the Midlands and are also more likely to be in private rental, though some of these effects are weaker for some immigrant groups. The effects observed in the locational model estimate may be attributed to the fact that some Midland city-regions are secondary immigrant hubs in the UK (e.g. Birmingham) and generally have lower living costs than London. Furthermore, we observe a higher private rental probability for EU-A10 post-2004 immigrants. Generally, it can be observed that EU-A10 immigrants to the UK before 2004 have different housing and locational patterns from their counterparts that migrated before 2004 (when compared to the control group of immigrants from EU15 countries before 2004).

In addition to all the analyses carried out above, we also conduct a three-yearly policy window sensitivity analysis as it can be argued that immigration policies are undertaken within a long backdrop of policy deliberation and effects would take a while to work through and get observed. This effectively extends the pre and post-policy periods to 3 years (rather than the 2 years that we used before). The model specifications are the same as Table 1. However, for the models with the housing tenure outcome variables, we introduce a control for years of stay, which should matter more when we are looking at a relatively long timeframe. The results (Table 3) are generally not substantially different from those observed in the model estimates with 2-yearly policy windows.¹⁵

5.1 | Robustness tests

We also carry out several further empirical exercises to test the robustness of the results obtained and address potential estimation biases. First, we test the possibility that mechanically, immigrants who arrived between 2003 and 2004 have on average two more years in the UK relative to immigrants who arrived between 2005 and 2006 and this could potentially bias the estimates, which may vary with the number of years spent in the destination country. As stated in Section 4.1, controlling directly for the number of years spent in the destination country alongside the wave and age variables can generate multicollinearity. We, therefore, conduct the robustness tests by decomposing age and years spent based on the lifecycle cohort approach (as adopted in Oladiran et al., 2019).¹⁶ The results show no significant deviation from the results obtained in the full specification model estimates, suggesting that the estimates are not biased by the number of years spent in the destination country.

We also note that after controlling for a rich set of individual and socioeconomic characteristics, the potential selection caused by the change in policy is not fully explained by the

¹⁴ This effect is statically significant in the housing tenure and insignificant in the locational choice model estimation.

¹⁵ We also attempt a 5-yearly policy window (5 years before and 5 years after) using the same approach as for the 3 yearly policy window and the results do not show a significant variation from previous trends.

¹⁶ This paper shows that immigrants' housing preferences are more pronounced and variant within a 10-year migration cycle and notable differences can be observed between the first and second stages of this cycle (i.e. 0–10 years and 11–20 years).

TABLE 3 Yearly policy window sensitivity analysis: policy coefficients with location (London vs. non-London) and housing tenure using comparison and difference-in-differences-style estimation approaches.

Variables	Location outcome		Housing tenure outcome	
	EU-A10	EU15	EU-A10	EU15
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	London versus non-London	London versus non-London	Own versus non-own	Own versus non-own

Panel A: Comparison approach estimation

Pre-policy (3 years before)	-	-	-	-
Post-policy (3 years after)	-0.294*** (0.043)	-0.023 (0.067)	-0.168** (0.075)	0.051 (0.084)
Observations	1199	527	1199	527
Pseudo r2	0.202	0.163	0.344	0.494

Variables	Location outcome		Housing tenure outcome	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	London versus non-London (probit)	London versus non-London (OLS)	Own versus non-own (probit)	Own versus non-own (OLS)

Panel B: Difference-in-differences

Post/pre	-0.119 (0.235)	-0.0361 (0.0722)	-0.381 (0.354)	-0.0871 (0.0821)
EU-A10/EU5	0.625** (0.254)	0.225** (0.0872)	-0.220 (0.284)	-0.00851 (0.0962)
Interaction	-1.120*** (0.313)	-0.352*** (0.102)	-0.260 (0.380)	-0.0850 (0.116)
Observations	1726	1726	1726	1182
Pseudo r2	0.164	0.181	0.347	0.354

Note: **Standard errors in Parentheses** (clustered at individual level). Includes same controls as in Table 1.

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

observable characteristics in the regression model. Borjas (2002) reports individual factors such as motivation, taste, preferences, and socio-cultural factors related to homeownership that can affect housing choices. Furthermore, immigrants' country of origin may be an underlying factor for their outcomes and other inherent beliefs, preferences, and dispositions towards housing and social networks. The dataset does not enable us to observe and identify the potential impact of individual and socio-cultural factors; we, therefore, introduce country-fixed effects. We explore the country of origin effects using two different approaches: first, we introduce controls for the country of origin fixed effects and cluster at the country of origin level (simultaneously). Our results show slight decreases in the magnitude of coefficients for both location and tenure. However, the statistical significance remains the same.

The third set of robustness tests concerns the fact that Polish immigrants account for 14% of the UK immigrant population and in 2010, made them the largest immigrant origin country within the sample (see The 2020 Migration Observatory report). We, therefore, exclude the Polish immigrants from the sample and thereafter undertake the reverse exercise (creating a sample with only the Polish immigrants) in two different specifications. Following the first exercise, we observe a drop in the statistical significance and magnitude of the impact of the policy estimates; the second exercise leads to a weaker policy impact. This suggests that Polish immigrants within the sample may contribute to the effects observed, although the effects cannot be solely attributed to the Polish immigrants within the sample. It is also likely that the weaker effects observed for the models with a sample of non-Polish immigrants may be driven by a smaller sample size.

Finally, we test for the parallel trends assumption to gain some insights into the possibility that the two groups would have likely continued on the same path as before, had the 2004 liberalisation not occurred. We use a falsified policy change year (2008) to test the parallel trends assumption (using 2006–07/2008–09 as the falsified policy window).¹⁷ Using a policy window where one component comes before the actual policy change in 2004 (e.g. 2001–03) and comes after (e.g. 2005–07) will make it difficult to observe a clear policy break. Our approach to use a falsified window where all 4 years fall after the policy change is therefore appropriate, as we do not expect any significant changes to be made to liberalised migration policy. Another reason 2008 has been used as a falsified policy change year is that it is sufficiently after 2004 and not any of the years before 2004 which might have had other relevant policy or background discussion leading up to the 2004 EU accession policy. The results for this test show that interaction term is statistically insignificant, suggesting that the parallel trend assumption is satisfied.

5.2 | Policy implications

The results of these empirical studies provide unique theoretical and practical insights on migration policy and housing, with policy implications. Potentially, migration policy can alter the flow and mix of immigrants. Moreover, our findings indicate that changes in immigrant composition have a significant impact on the homeownership/rental and locational patterns of immigrants, and that these shifts in housing demand can lead to shocks in local and regional housing markets, which in turn affect rents, house prices, and mortgage rates. We specifically find that educational attainment and household income are key determinants of these effects; therefore, countries with significant migration inflow should examine their migration policy mechanism and its ability to attract immigrants with a higher socioeconomic status in order to reduce strains on public expenditures, close inequality gaps, and improve ethnic integration. Although Cesa-Bianchi (2013) suggests that immigration policies should influence the self-selection of immigrants *ex ante*, we argue that imposing certain restrictions *ex post* can also

¹⁷ Using a policy window where one component comes before the actual policy change in 2004 (e.g. 2001–03) and comes after (e.g. 2005–2007) may not be ideal because the differences in the characteristics of the wave of immigrants before and after 2004 may be captured in those years. Our approach of using a falsified window where all 4 years fall after the policy change is therefore appropriate as we do not expect any significant changes to be made to liberalised migration policy. Another reason that 2008 has been used as falsified policy change year is that it is sufficiently after 2004 and not any of the years before 2004 which might have had other relevant policy or background discussion leading up to 2004 EU accession policy.

act as an effective way to shape the effects of migration on housing markets and, by extension, on local and regional economies.

Individuals' housing conditions can also affect their employment, wealth, and health. Access to affordable housing is an important concern for migrants, and renters are frequently the most vulnerable to housing insecurity, affordability, and welfare risks (Adianto et al., 2023; Soaita et al., 2020; Waldron, 2022). They typically reside in sub-optimal housing conditions compared to their native counterparts, notably in terms of housing tenure, where they have a significantly lower homeownership rate and a greater renting rate (Oladiran et al., 2019). Our research demonstrates that liberalised immigration has the potential to exacerbate housing inequality among natives and immigrants and within immigrant cohorts. Consequently, it is crucial for policymakers to carefully analyse the effects of planned or existing migration policy in the context of the housing capacity of local and regional systems and infrastructures, particularly in immigrant gateway cities (such as London in the UK). For instance, policymakers should seek to comprehend and predict the effects of a change in migration policy, such as the increase in the need and demand for public housing and the ability of the public housing supply to accommodate migrant waves along with budget adjustments to meet increased demand for public housing and other services.

6 | SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study examines the link between migration policy changes and the concomitant changes to housing and spatial patterns. The results suggest that the migration policy framework through which immigrants were admitted into the country may significantly influence their decision to prioritise economic opportunities, social networks, and the cost of living when making their locational choices. In other words, immigrants under a liberalised migration policy system may have a different order of priorities from immigrants who migrated under a more restrictive framework in terms of their choice of place of residence. The cost of living may be a primary consideration for individuals that have migrated within a liberalised migration policy framework, while this factor may have a weaker impact on immigrants within a restrictive migration policy framework.

The findings also support the theoretical proposition that changes to migration policy systems have the potential to affect regional spatial and neighbourhood patterns, and the migration policy structure in place when immigration occurred is key in defining the housing affordability of immigrants and, subsequently, their housing tenure and locational patterns. Our findings provide more clarity by showing that the already low homeownership probability of immigrants may be much lower for immigrants that migrated in a more liberalised migration system compared to their counterparts who migrated in a more restrictive system. Integration should be a key driving goal of all housing and immigration policies, or else we risk making inequalities more entrenched.

Despite the limitations in this paper, notably the small sample size, we have been able to test the hypothesis using various econometric techniques, thus arriving at fairly robust conclusions. These results provide empirical evidence supporting the proposition that a liberalised migration policy system may strengthen migration pull forces, which may particularly attract immigrants of lower socioeconomic status (Abrahámová, 2007; Borjas, 1987; Ejermo & Zheng, 2018). The study also provides a deeper insight into the potential link between migration policy, housing, location and the regional distribution of immigrants.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data is available at <https://databank.worldbank.org/home.aspx>.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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