



Why did BNOs come to the UK... and how does this affect their outcomes?

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The Hong Kong British National Overseas (BNO) visa route isn't like any other route people can use to come to the UK. It was introduced as a humanitarian route after the Chinese government passed a controversial National Security Law in Hong Kong in 2020, but BNO visa holders' characteristics resemble migrants on work visas more than those arriving via humanitarian routes. How, then, are BNOs integrating into UK society? Which group are they closer to, and does this depend on why BNOs came to the UK?

Why did BNOs migrate to the UK?

Unsurprisingly, 'Did not feel safe in Hong Kong' was by far the most common reason BNO visa holders gave as to why they moved to the UK. Two-thirds of respondents gave this reason, followed by a 'To give my child(ren) a better education' and 'Moved together with family members' (both 35%).

However, while this suggests BNOs generally see themselves as refugees, it is an oversimplification because many moved to the UK for several reasons. In total, our respondents gave 139 different combinations of reasons for coming to the UK. Hong Kong not being safe was still the most common combination, but some also gave other reasons, and some didn't mention safety in Hong Kong at all.

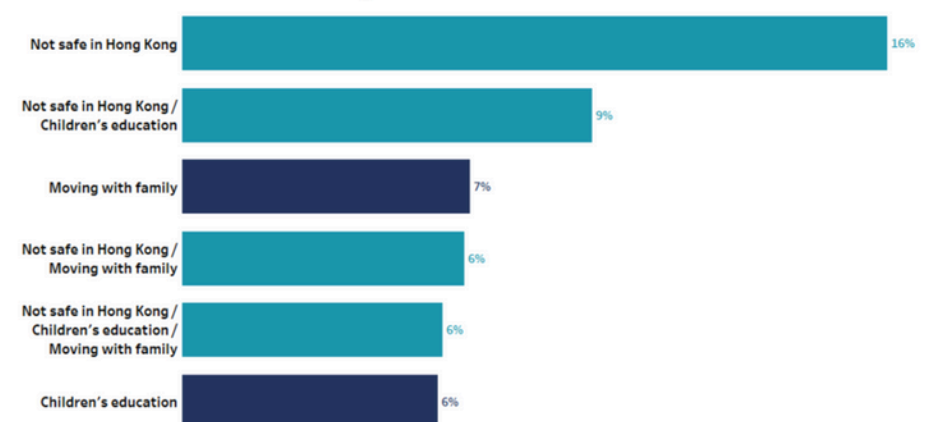
To see if BNOs' economic and social integration in the UK is related to their reasons for migration, we can split our respondents into our reason-for-migration groups. First,

there are those who gave 'work' as one of the reasons they came to the UK (11%); second, people who only said Hong Kong wasn't safe (16%); third, people who said Hong Kong wasn't safe and also gave at least one other reason (43%); and fourth, people who didn't mention either work or safety in Hong Kong (30%).

Which BNOs were more likely to be working?

Overall, 59% of respondents were in work—a relatively low employment rate, similar to that of refugees living in the UK (58% in 2022). While the share of BNOs in employment will likely increase over time as they become more settled in the UK, there does appear to be a link to their reason for migration. At one end, almost 80% of respondents who said work was a reason they came to the UK were in employment. At the other, only half of those who migrated to the UK for other reasons (i.e., not for work or due to safety in Hong Kong) were in employment. This is to be expected given many of this group came to do things which involve being out of work, such as full-time education or looking after the family or the home.

Why did BNO visa holders move to the UK?
Most common combinations of reasons for moving



Source: UK Hong Kong BNO panel survey, Wave 1.

Note: Respondents were asked "There are different reasons for moving to the UK. Why did you move?" and could select all reasons that applied to them. Figures are based on 2,112 responses from main and secondary respondents and are weighted by age and sex to match grants of BNO visas, as per the Home Office.

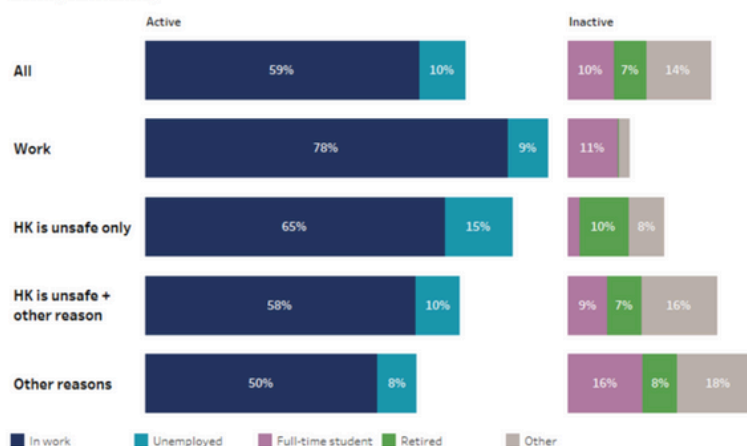




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Differences in employment rates may be related to each group's English language proficiency. Migrants with better English language skills are more likely to be in work, and among our respondents, only 4% of the 'work' group said they had difficulty speaking day-to-day English, a very low share. This compares to 16% of those who migrated only because Hong Kong wasn't safe and 17% of those who came for other reasons, shares closer to other recent migrant groups to the UK more generally.

Labour market status of BNOs, by reason for migrating to the UK
16-64 year olds only



Source: UK Hong Kong BNO panel survey, Wave 1.

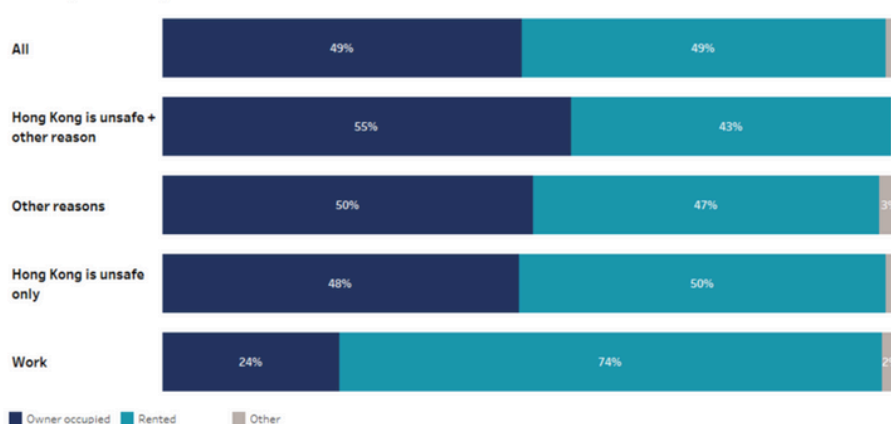
Note: Respondents were given 11 options and asked which best fit their employment situation at the time of the survey. Figures are based on 1,997 responses from main and secondary respondents and are weighted by age and sex to match grants of BNO visas, as per the Home Office.



Which BNOs were more likely to own their own home?

We can also see sizable differences in homeownership by reason for migration to the UK. Whereas 24% of the 'work' group owned their own home, around half of BNOs who migrated either because Hong Kong wasn't safe or for other reasons owned their own home. To put that into context, it's a higher homeownership rate than for migrants living in the UK overall (43%), and particularly high compared to migrants who have lived in the UK for under 5 years (27%). Two factors may explain this pattern. Firstly, the work group are younger on average: their median age is 33, compared to 43 for our sample overall. Secondly, this group was less likely to say they expected to stay living in the UK in the years ahead.

BNOs' housing tenure, by reason for migrating to the UK
Main respondents only



Source: UK Hong Kong BNO panel survey, Wave 1.

Note: Respondents were asked "How well would you say you are managing financially these days?". Figures are based on 1,562 responses from main and secondary survey respondents and are weighted by age and sex to match grants of BNO visas, as per the Home Office.

