

With a Lot of Help from My Friends: Social Networks and Immigrants in the UK

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The Role of Social Networks

- Social Networks play an important role in the **labour market**.
- Social contacts share **information** about job opportunities.
- For immigrants, social networks provide information and substitute for **specific local skills** needed in the host country – such as the language or the knowledge of institutions – which immigrants might lack.

Methodology

- Use data from the **UK Quarterly Labour Force Survey** from 1992 to 2010.
 - Examine the determinants of social network use: as the **main** method and as **a** method of search among many alternatives.
 - Compare the social network effects on job finding rates between **immigrants** and **natives**, distinguishing between different **immigrant groups**.
 - Explore the relationship between social network use and **years in the UK**, and formal **education**.
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Why is this important?

- Understanding how individuals search and obtain jobs is **important**.
 - The methods used are relevant in whether or not workers are **successful** in their job hunt.
 - Whether immigrants are able to find good jobs is an important **measure** of their successful **integration** into a society
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Table 1: Job search methods (%)



	Non-White Foreign	White Foreign	White British
<i>Main Method</i>			
Social Networks	12.28	9.97	9.33
Job centre	36.03	25.88	34.69
Adverts/Newspapers	31.73	40.71	39.35
Direct to employer	11.95	11.22	9.00
Agency/Other	8.02	12.22	7.64
<i>Any Methods</i>			
Social Networks	67.13	63.30	68.06
Other methods	32.87	36.70	31.94

Table 2: Job finding methods (%)

	Non-White Foreign	White Foreign	White British
Social networks	28.94	26.46	29.11
Job centre	9.55	9.86	10.36
Adverts/Newspapers	21.51	18.43	23.43
Direct to employer	17.27	14.46	14.45
Agency/Other	22.73	30.79	22.65

Based on recently employed, natives are as likely as immigrants to find jobs through social networks.

Table 3: Job Search and Job Finding %



	IN	PA	BN	BC	BA	PO	EE	WE	UC	WB
<i>Unemployed Search Method</i>										
SN main	0.105	0.153	0.238	0.104	0.077	0.071	0.156	0.087	0.084	0.093
SN any	0.690	0.749	0.780	0.634	0.609	0.426	0.625	0.654	0.656	0.681
<i>Recently Employed</i>										
SN	0.260	0.346	0.487	0.309	0.188	0.304	0.331	0.238	0.219	0.291

Table 5: Predicted Probabilities of Job Finding %



Years in the UK	IN	PA	BN	BC	BA	PO	EE	WE	UC	WB
Education: ≤ 12 years										
≤ 3 years	0.445	0.485	0.584	0.430	0.227	0.359	0.329	0.270	0.233	0.319
> 3 years	0.351	0.430	0.532	0.279	0.184	0.291	0.493	0.288	0.294	
Education: > 12 years										
≤ 3 years	0.226	0.308	0.415	0.340	0.189	0.244	0.242	0.186	0.164	0.236
> 3 years	0.176	0.238	0.359	0.233	0.158	0.213	0.358	0.225	0.218	

Key Findings

- Immigrants are more likely to use social networks as a **main** tool for searching for jobs, but are **as likely as** White British-born to seek job information through their social networks.
- Immigrants exhibit a very similar **probability of finding employment** through the social networks to White British-born.
- However, substantial differences emerge among **immigrant groups** in terms of the incidence of social network use and success rate in securing employment through personal networks.

Key Findings

- **Less educated** individuals are more likely to obtain employment through personal contacts.
 - The role of the **years of stay** in the UK on obtaining a job through the network differs across immigrant groups:
 - a declining pattern over time for South Asian immigrants,
 - with the opposite pattern found for other groups, such as Eastern and Western Europeans.
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Conclusion

- Networks seem to be **relied** on for job search, not only by immigrants but also by natives.
- The use of social networks in the labour market is not a sufficient indication of a lack of **integration**, as some immigrant groups rely more on their personal contacts the longer they stay in the UK.
- The need to **further understand** the impact of networks on the quality and payoff of jobs found through those personal channels, in order to assess the efficiency of those informal methods relative to more formal channels.

For more information:

Giulietti, C., Schluter, C. & Wahba, J.
(2013)

[With a lot of help from my friends: Social networks and immigrants in the UK](#) CPC
Working Paper 31, ESRC Centre for
Population Change, UK.