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EU migration has little impact on crime rates in England

EU migrants have made an insignificant impact on crime in England, says new research from Northumbria University, Newcastle.

A unique study, led by Derek Johnson, Senior Lecturer in Geography and Crime Science, has found that minorities from the European Union are only responsible for approximately 1% of all crimes committed in England.

This benchmark study is the first academic examination of EU migration to the UK focused on the offending of those migrants and their impact on

overall crime rates.

The independent research findings challenge the political scaremongering and newspaper headlines suggesting that EU migration has led to increased crime in the country.

Its findings reveal four localised areas of crime by migrants in England: Romanians in the Home Counties; Polish and Latvian populations in Lincolnshire; Polish communities in Cumbria; and Italian migrants in Surrey. However, in terms of overall crime in those areas, the impact of migrants remains minimal.

The research has been published in the Journal Applied Geography.

Mr Johnson said: “Our research confirms that the EU migrants don’t have very much impact on overall crime in the UK. EU minorities contribute around one percent of all crimes committed in England.

“The findings suggest that there is no national issue here but those that may exist are very localised.”

Researchers gathered crime data from all but six English Police forces. Using the information they were able to look at how crime committed by EU migrants is distributed throughout the country.

The study focused on EU migrants from Portugal, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Poland as these groups were found to have committed more crime in comparison with other more recent or less concentrated EU residents within England.

Data received from Police Forces in the Home Counties, Lincolnshire, Cumbria and Surrey indicated localised areas of EU migrant crime but the research only considered things at the scale of whole Police Forces rather than towns, cities or areas within those Police Forces.

Mr Johnson added: “For areas where there seems to be a particular problem, this research can help surrounding police forces to be aware that there may be a localised issue and work together to tackle it and prevent spread.

“The forces can do their own independent analysis to understand and react to the issue in their communities.”

This latest research has been undertaken as part of a £1.2 million European project aimed at fighting crime in Europe. Northumbria University is a participant in the project that intends to facilitate the more regular exchange of DNA data between all member states to prevent offenders crossing borders to evade prosecution.

Northumbria’s School of Law is considering the legal and public policy questions posed by these arrangements while Derek Johnson, supported by research assistants Mary McCloskey and Dr Anika Ludwig, will plot the movement of offenders across the UK and the EU to assess any patterns of behaviour.

Many countries within the EU already share DNA data obtained from known individuals to match with anonymous DNA recovered from crime scenes and all member states are in the process of doing so.

Mr Johnson said: “These figures make it clear that EU migrants are only being proceeded against for a very low volume of crimes in National terms but we have only been able to get values for those against which a formal charge or initial criminal justice proceedings have been taken.

“Effective criminal tagging needs serious thought. While the DNA data sharing would encompass the data of organised and serious criminals, potentially data from minor criminals, such as shoplifting offenders, could be shared in all EU countries. This places an ‘international tag’ on all crime, regardless of the severity of the offence.

“We, in England, only have 1% of crime committed by EU migrants, which does not constitute a national problem. Those police forces that have localised problem areas of EU crime could make formal links with the corresponding nations and data share where they have need on individual cases.”

The researchers are now analysing new data on the types of crimes being committed by EU migrants in the UK and current undergraduate BSc Crime Science student, Katrina O’Byan, has been researching crime committed by

Romanian nationals on a smaller scale within four Police Forces. Mr Johnson, the student's academic supervisor says that her research has been informative and useful in suggesting new areas for research by his team and also highlights the importance of smaller scale research and analysis within Police Forces.

Mr Johnson's full research, 'E.U. Migrant Criminal Activity: Exploring Spatial Diversity and Volume of Criminal Activity Attributed to Inter EU Migrants in England', is published online in Applied Geography (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0143622814000241>)

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