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## Is there 'city flight' in middle England?

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## **Question to address:**

**What do we mean by city flight, and what does past research tell us?**

**Why should we be concerned if we discern city flight patterns?**

**Where do we mean by middle England?**

**How can we examine the key patterns and processes?**

**Which middle England cities – if any – are experiencing city flight?**

# What do we mean by city flight?

Decline of city\* population driven primarily by net out-migration

Potentially linked to the emphasis in the USA on ‘white flight’

Perhaps a particular concern with those younger/skilled people who could foster economic growth

↪ *IF* focussing on economic development, then outflow to nearby rural areas within the city’s labour market is *less* of a concern

\* “city” = continuously built up area (conurbation); for most larger English cities, this is a larger area than the ‘core’ municipality

# Past research related to city flight

## Counterurbanisation literature

(particularly relevant to the focus on longer-distance migration when there is more of an economic emphasis to city flight)

## Studies of extended suburbanisation and urban-rural population drift

*HOWEVER* the key distinction here – **local vs. longer-distance flows** – is problematic because the literatures overlap each other

*ALSO* datasets on English migrant flows rarely allow for analyses by **local vs. longer-distance flows** and/or by **inflows vs. outflows** (hence *net* flows) and/or by **different population groups** (by age, skill level, ethnicity etc ...)

*BUT* migrant motivation varies hugely by **these breakdowns**

*SO* empirical analyses often only indirectly address key policy issues

# UK migration & residential mobility: key facts

c.10% of people move address each year (this is less than in USA and Australia but more than in many European countries)

Migration rates vary through economic cycles but over the longer term migration rates have been stable for most population groups

Rates are highest for students, then for other young adults, people who live alone (other than elderly), lone parents, private-renters and also non-manual workers (especially professionals)

2 in 3 moves are under 10km: these are mainly housing-related moves

Less than 1 in 10 moves is 200km(+): mainly job-related moves

# Factors shaping\* cities' migration flows

## Demographic

eg. young adults are the sole city-orientated age group

## Cultural

eg. most ethnic minorities less rural orientated

## Environment

eg. widespread perception of rural idyll

## Housing

eg. more rural property is owner-occupied

## Labour market

eg. self-employment associated with rurality

## Policy

eg. possible reaction against the 'densification' of cities

# Fotheringham *et al* (2002) report on an innovative and unprecedentedly detailed study of British migration flow patterns and determinants [1 of 2]

Areas with **lower outflows and higher inflows** tend to have:

**warmer and drier climate + higher house prices**

Areas with **higher inflows** tend also to have

**low unemployment for the migrants' age group + low crime rates + low Council Tax + high incomes + high proportion of listed buildings**

**RED:** likely to drive anti-urban net movement

Areas with lower outflows tend also to have:

**good air quality** + low out-commuting + high deprivation +

low employment growth + more vacant dwellings +

**low proportions of non-white residents** + **low incomes** +

high levels of brownfield house-building + **fewer students** +

**low levels of social housing re-lets** + more deprived neighbouring areas

Champion et al (2007) show the cities that lose more residents *locally* also tend to have net out-flows of *longer-distance* flows: this differs from earlier decentralisation patterns, and poses a risk of **city flight**



# Why is city flight important for urban policy?

Migration flows are people 'voting with their feet' and thus show the relative attractiveness of cities and their wider regions

Cities and regions increasingly focus **economic development** policy on attracting talent, seeking net inflows of more skilled/creative migrants: the Florida thesis (*local flows may be less important here*)

*Turning to local flows between cities and the rest of their city regions:*  
local migration is mainly due to people's changing housing needs, but some areas become favoured, while others face abandonment: huge efforts in English cities to stabilise city **housing markets** will fail without a balanced supply and demand, and this will largely depend on trends in demand due to the net gain or loss of migrants

# Other policy issues raised by city flight

Loss of population (and employers) reduces municipal fiscal strength, and perhaps hits the local economy by cutting consumer spend

Selective out-migration increases the urban regeneration challenge

Many of the *local* out-migrants may be city centre workforce who then commute back long distances by car creating pollution, due to the UK's limited affordable high capacity high quality public transport (nb. Champion et al (forthcoming) show that rural in-migrants are particularly likely to commute 20km+ *ceteris paribus*)

Flows to more rural areas may drive non-sustainable development there

**BUT city flight = people satisfying housing and quality of life aspirations**

# Where do we mean by middle England?

The focus here is on England's largest cities *apart from London and the next 4 largest – Manchester/Birmingham/Liverpool/Newcastle –* (the largest conurbations are excluded from the analyses because their migration patterns are driven by distinct 'big city' processes)

Particular interest here in the English Midlands (because there are major long-standing patterns affecting northern cities – as against London & the South East – that are separate from city flight issues)

Special focus on the three largest cities of the East Midlands (*Nottingham/Leicester/Derby*) because here there is a policy focus on city flight, and we have evidence from stakeholder interviews

# Analyses here build upon a long series of earlier CURDS research studies

27 large British city regions:

large cities =  
(PUAs) *in grey*

the rest of the city regions =  
(RCRs) *in white*

rest of Britain =  
the other 16 city regions  
*in pale blue*



# Data available for analysing recent patterns

Combining the new official “Major/Large Urban Areas” definitions gives the following evidence on trends in within-UK migration...

2004/5            net flow 117,000 to less urban areas

2003/4            net flow 156,000 to less urban areas

...

2000/1            net flow 107,000 to less urban areas

Unfortunately the annual datasets do not support analyses of the human capital characteristics (ie. type of work done) by migrants (a) between cities or (b) to/from the remainder of their city regions

As a result, analyses of migrants’ impact on cities rely upon the 2001 Census datasets that provide some of the key breakdowns

# 2001 Census data for migration analyses

Migration data from the Census **only** covers the c.10% of people who had changed address in the 12 months before Census day

Impossible to measure 'households' in the way which would be ideal (ie. to set households numbers against dwelling numbers)

2001 Census "moving group" data is the nearest to household data; the key socio-economic class (NS-SeC) characteristic is given for data on each Moving Group's Reference Person (MGRP)

Students are an important feature of the 2001 data, especially of the moving groups (where a family of 4 = 1 group = 1 student)

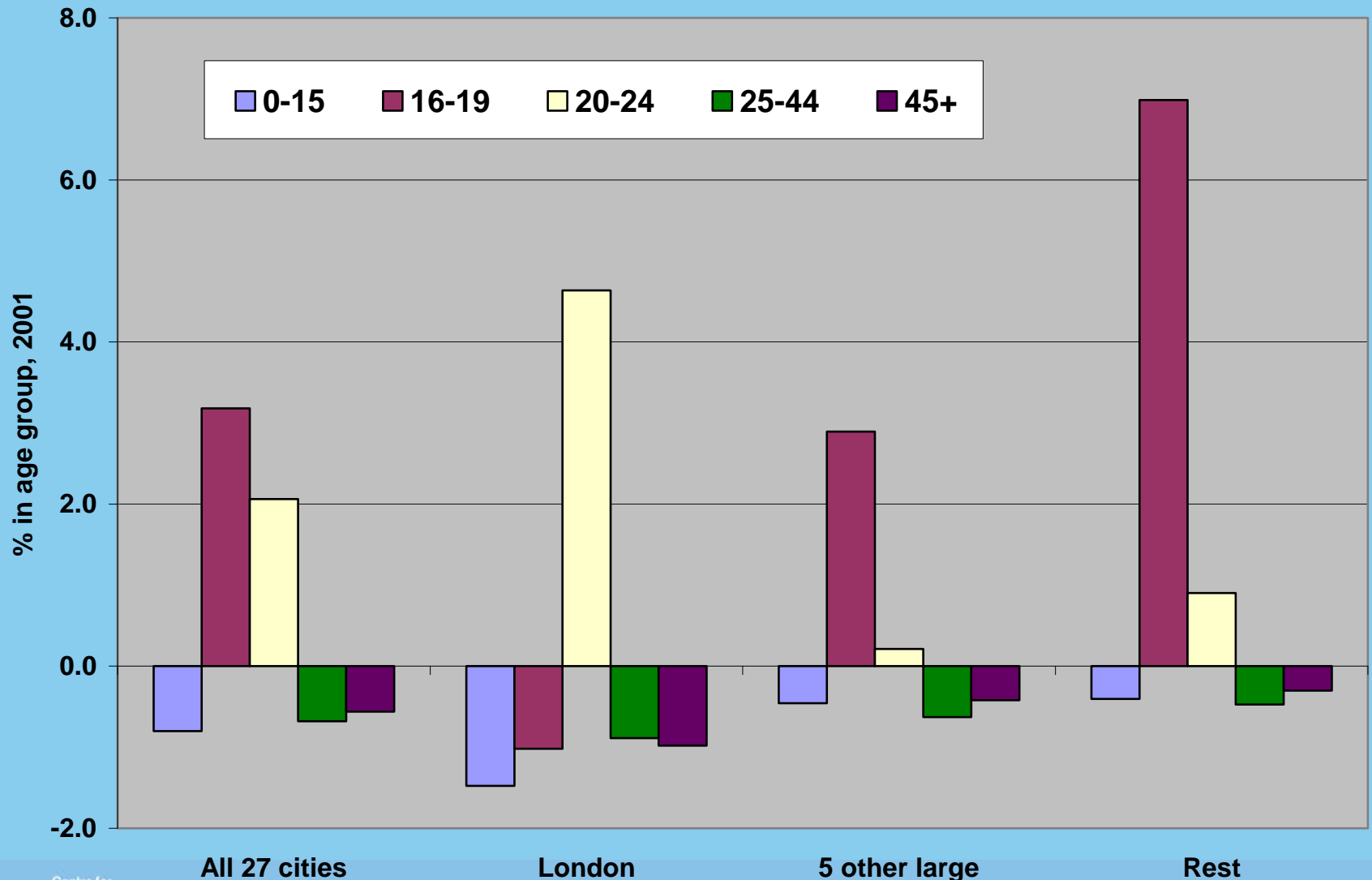
No information on any characteristics *pre* migration (which would have meant recently graduating students could be identified)

# NS-SeC groupings of the MGRP dataset

1.1 Large employers & higher managerial	<b>Higher M&amp;P</b>
1.2 Higher professional	
<b>2 Lower managerial &amp; professional</b>	<b>Lower M&amp;P</b>
3 Intermediate	<b>Intermediate</b>
4 Small employers & own account workers	
5 Lower supervisory & technical	
6 Semi-routine	<b>Lower</b>
7 Routine	
L15 Full-time students	
L14.1 Never worked	<b>Other unclassified</b>
L14.2 Long term unemployed	
L17 Not classifiable for other reasons	

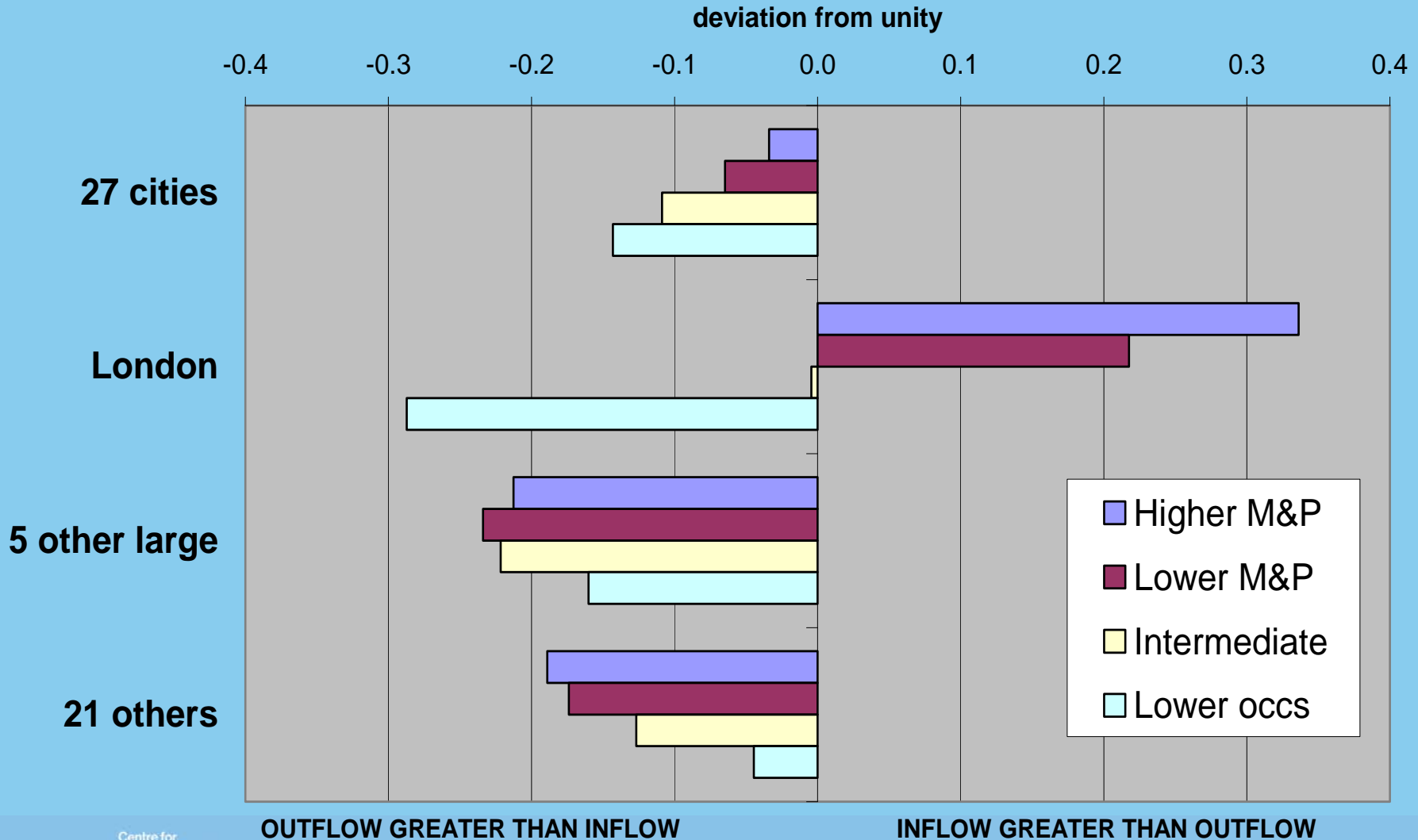
# Age shapes the migration evidence on city flight

Net within-UK migration rate, 2000-2001, by age,  
27 cities classified by population size





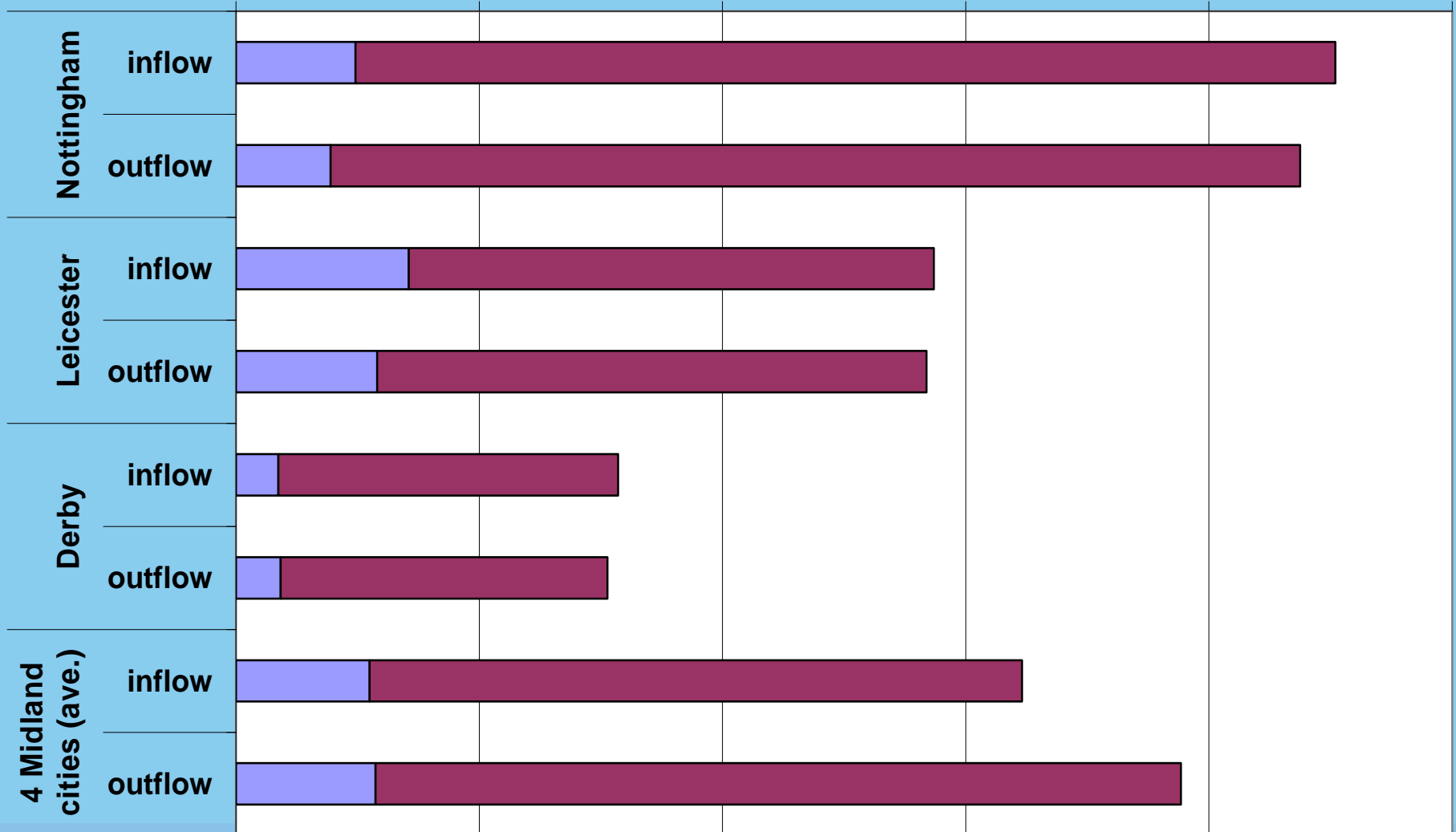
# In/out ratio for classified MGRPs, by broad NS-SeC type, for the 27 Cities grouped



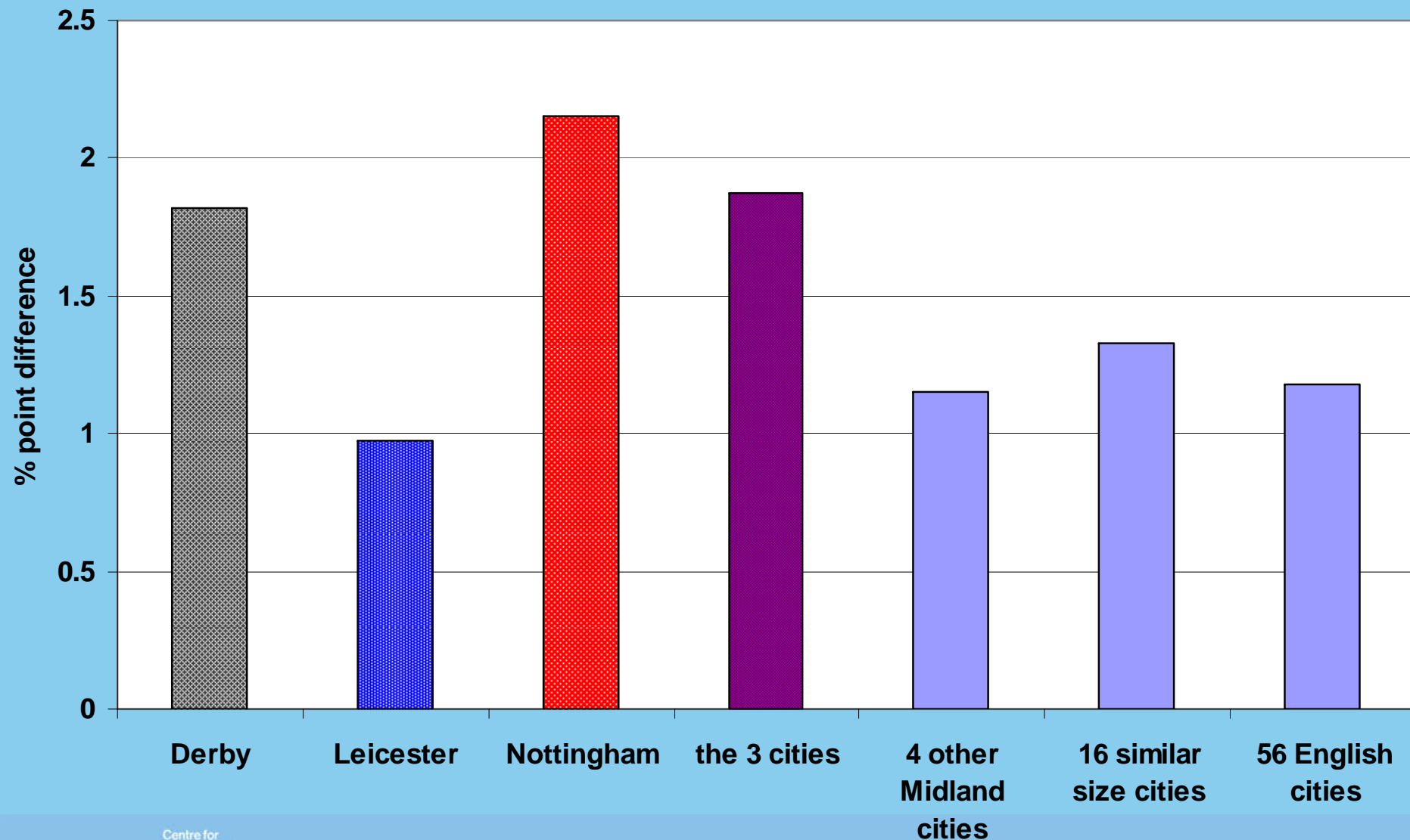
# Is city flight mostly driven by 'white flight'?

non-White White

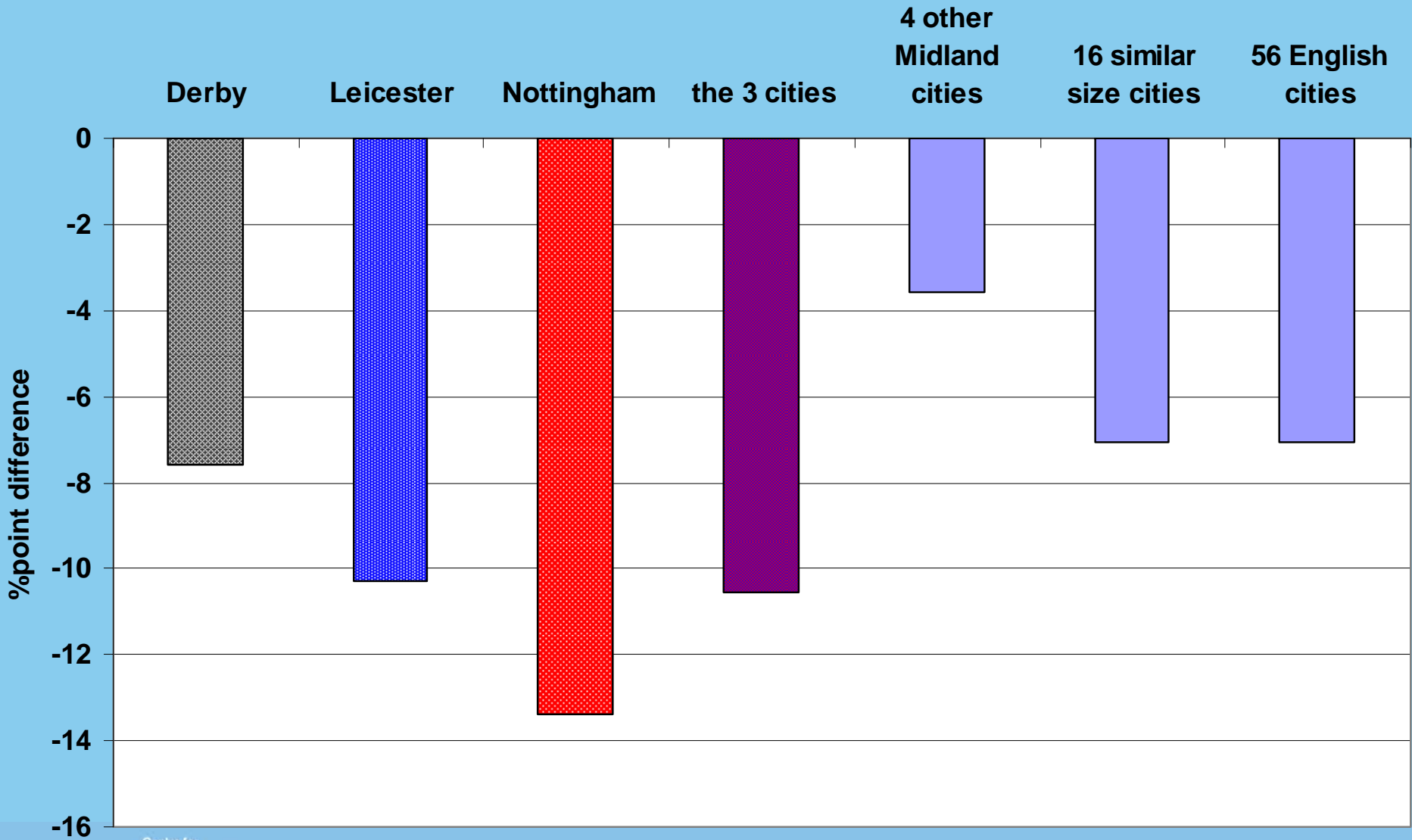
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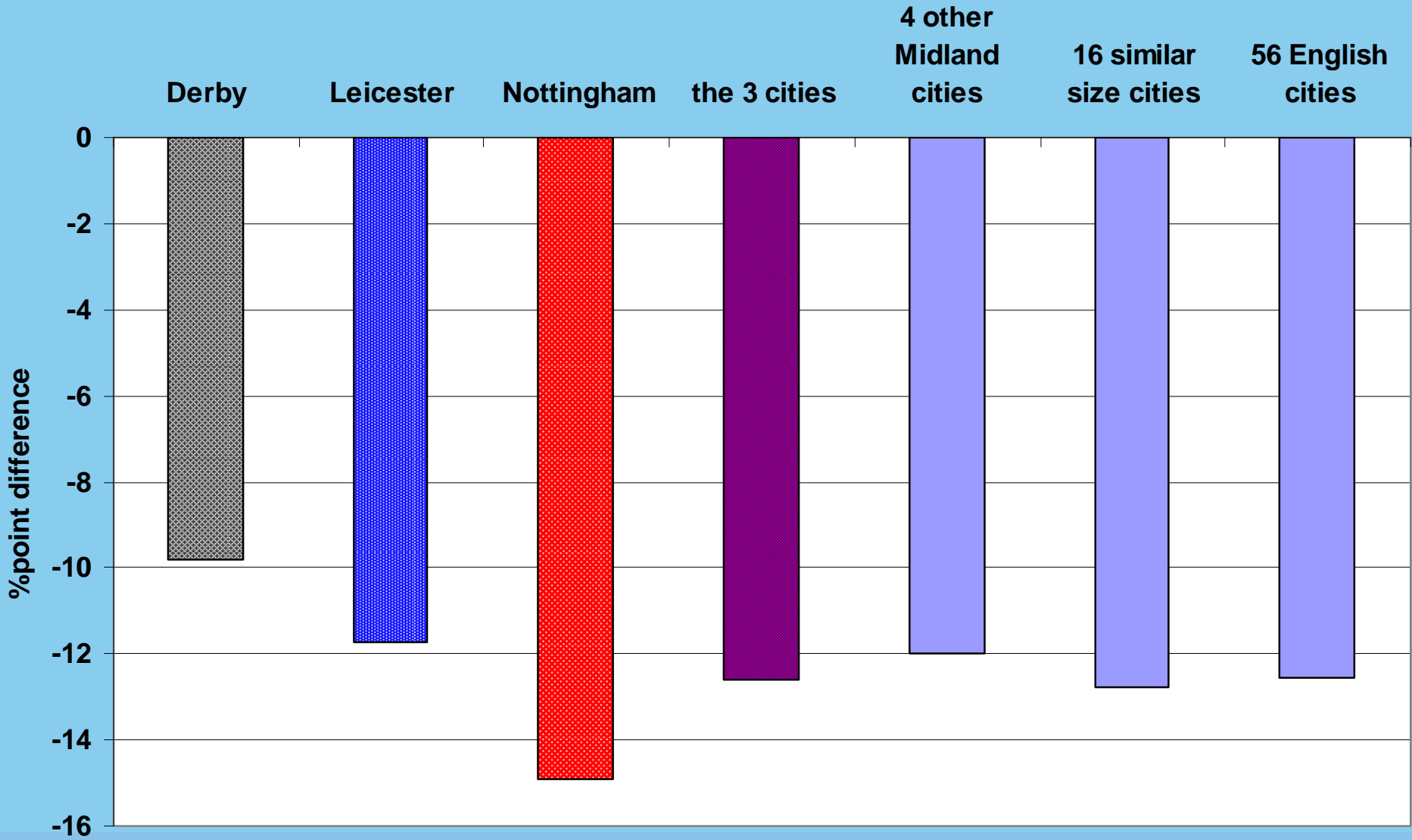
# Key(?) factor in local outflow: relative burglary risk



# Key(?) factor in local outflow: school performance



# Key(?) factor in local outflow: home ownership rate



# Stakeholder interviews in the 3 East Midland cities

Interviewees primarily drawn from:

- the 3 sub-regional housing market study co-ordinators
- housing market actors like the Home Builders Federation
- regeneration agencies in the core urban areas

Interviewees were asked for recent studies, plus their views on the cities' prospects and policy opportunities etc.

Most responses echoed the results of the analyses, such as

- ✓ the variation in trajectory between the city regions
- ✓ the importance of local school quality as migration driver

....but there were some 'disconnects' too

- × there is a perceived significance of 'white flight' to Leicester
- × migration patterns at the neighbourhood level have wide significance (eg. the availability of affordable housing shapes the wider patterns)

# Summary of Three Cities evidence

None of the 3 Cities is losing so many people – via net migration flows over long-distances *or* locally – to threaten housing market failure

Nottingham seems to lose HMP people (partly artefact of Census data?)

As almost everywhere – but London – there is a low graduate retention

Migration over longer-distances reflects relative economic performance so the patterns are unlikely to change quickly (a north/south contrast)

Crime risk and (especially) school performance seen by stakeholders as critical drivers of shorter-distance migration patterns and the evidence is consistent with this

Unclear evidence of ‘white flight’ in Leicester (*no* evidence in the others)

# Menu of policy priorities to staunch city flight

Improve educational services, especially at secondary level

Tackle crime, anti-social behaviour, and perception of crime

Improve public transport quality and capacity on key routes

Facilitate employment growth sectors which cluster in cities

Respond to 'liveability' concerns (eg. quality of accessible open space)

Increase the availability of a range of affordable good quality housing

***BUT*** commitment to cities has opportunity costs:

Prioritising urban regeneration may create a more sustainable region by limiting the long-term growth in commuting trip lengths and greenfield development but economic growth might be greater if more dispersed development were allowed



# Conclusions and *policy questions*

Few cities gained population from within-UK migration:

*can a more widespread urban renaissance be generated?*

London attracted many more Higher M&Ps there than elsewhere:

*how can more cities attract/keep this key group?*

Students moving to university boost most cities' populations, but the loss of recent graduates weakens their growth potential:

*what can improve graduate retention in provincial cities?*

Most cities making strong gains from long-distance migration have had local job growth and have attributes of a higher quality of life:

*can quality of life advantages compensate for persistent regional imbalance in economic growth?*

The least attractive cities for longer-distance flows also tend to have high losses to other parts of their own city regions:

*is this new pattern the precursor of real city flight in some areas?*