

Ethnic Differences in Intergenerational Coresidence: An intersectional approach

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Background

The proportion of UK young adults aged living with a parent continues to increase (ONS, 2025). Explanations tend to focus on structural factors which restrict young adults' ability to live independently, including increasing levels of economic precarity relating to uncertainties in the youth labour market and increased housing costs (Atkinson et al., 2025; Lei & Mai, 2024; Bayrakdar & Coulter, 2018). For example, increases in the proportion living with a parent among those in their late twenties and early thirties have been greatest for the unemployed (Stone et al., 2011). At the same time, for some young adults intergenerational coresidence is desirable, providing support in terms of either a "safety net" or a "launch pad" (Berrington & Perelli-Harris, 2024). In the UK, the social acceptability of intergenerational coresidence differs across the young adult age range, with coresidence being more normative among those in their early twenties (where it is often deemed as useful "launch pad", but less so among older ages, where those who remain living with a parent tend to be those most disadvantaged for whom coresidence likely acts as a "safety net" (Berrington & Perelli-Harris, 2024).

The relatively early pattern of home leaving in the UK is generally explained in terms of the UK having a "weak" family system, with emphasis on individualism and autonomy (Reher, 1998). An early transition to residential independence is considered an important marker in a successful transition to adulthood. The existing literature has not considered, however, whether relationships between structural factors such as economic precarity and intergenerational coresidence are different for particular second and third generation ethnic minorities, some of whom are likely to have different norms and preferences for intergenerational coresidence. Existing analyses of UK survey data, tend to group the whole young adulthood age range as a whole. They have demonstrated significant ethnic differences in intergenerational coresidence, with the proportions of young adults living with their parents being higher among UK-born south Asians (Ansari-Thomas, 2024; Atkinson et al., 2025). Using additive nested models, have shown that controlling for migration status, whether or not the individual is living with a partner, economic activity and health does reduce observed ethnic differences but large gaps in the likelihood of intergenerational coresidence remain (Ansari-Thomas, 2024; Atkinson et al., 2025). The authors conclude that the differences point to ethnic differences in family support for young adults (Atkinson et al., 2025). Research from the US also finds higher rates of coresidence among non-white groups and more positive attitudes towards intergenerational coresidence (Cepa & Kao, 2019; Glick & Van Hook, 2002). It is argued that ethnic minorities tend to have a more familistic orientation which places greater emphasis on the needs of the family than on individuals, emphasizing the importance of family roles and responsibilities (Britton, 2024).

Contribution

This paper contributes to our understanding of ethnic differences in coresidence by taking an intersectional approach. For example, we hypothesize that economic factors have different associations with coresidence for different ages and for different ethnic groups. Research from the US has found that the more positive views about intergenerational coresidence held by ethnic minority groups result in a different relationship between improved employment conditions and leaving home (Lei & Mai, 2024). In this paper we examine whether ethnicity moderates the

relationship between employment status and intergenerational coresidence in England and Wales. We examine these intersectional effects using a novel approach from epidemiological studies called Multilevel Analysis of Individual Heterogeneity and Discriminatory Accuracy (MAIHDA) (Evans, et al., 2024). Rather than looking at demographic and socio-economic determinants separately or as simple additive factors or two-way interactions, MAIHDA explicitly incorporates the idea that multiple dimensions (e.g., ethnicity, sex, age, employment status) interact in complex ways, producing unique "intersectional strata" or sub-groups whose combined characteristics influence the outcome of interest—in our case, the likelihood of parental coresidence.

Research questions

Our focus is on the role of economic precarity on intergenerational coresidence. Our research questions are RQ1: Among economically active young adults, how are unemployment and low skilled work associated with the likelihood of living with a parent? RQ2: How are these relationships moderated by age, sex and ethnicity?

Data

The 2021 Census Secure Household Microdata, a 10% representative sample of households in England and Wales, includes detailed information on composition, demographic characteristics, and socioeconomic conditions of the sampled households and all persons within them. A key advantage of this dataset is its exceptionally large sample size, enabling fine-grained disaggregation of the young adult population into specific ethnic groups and narrow age bands—beyond what is possible in survey data due to small cell sizes. This level of granularity in the census is crucial to conduct an intersectional analysis of parental coresidence. Our analytical sample is composed of 895,265¹ economically active (employed or not employed but seeking work) young adults aged 18-34 who were either born in the UK or a migrant who arrived before 16 (and hence are likely to have relevant kin to coreside with).

Method

First we examine descriptively the differences in parental coresidence according to our variables of interest. We then take a traditional approach which looks at the association between ethnicity and coresidence while statistically controlling for sex and age, and so on (see Table 1). Such models typically assume additivity and do not fully address how a person's experience is shaped simultaneously by multiple coexisting factors. MAIHDA, in contrast, recognizes that the demographic and socio-economic characteristics interact to form distinct intersectional strata—e.g., younger Pakistani men of low socio-economic status represent a different social grouping from relatively older White women of high socio-economic status. Each intersectional stratum is treated as a meaningful analytical unit. Our MAIHDA model specifications use a two-level framework to model parental coresidence: Level 1: incorporates individual-level factors as determinants; Level 2: considers individual nesting within intersectional strata defined by the cross-classification of ethnicity, sex, age, and employment status. Each intersectional stratum gets its own random intercept, capturing how much the average outcome at that particular

¹ All sample sizes have been rounded to the nearest 5 to comply with the Office for National Statistics Disclosure Control policies when accessing data within the Integrated Data Service.

intersection differs from a global reference. These can then be visualized in order to aid more nuanced substantive interpretation (Evans, et al., 2024).

Parental coresidence, is defined as whether an individual is a child or stepchild of anyone in the same household. Our key independent variables are Sex (Male, Female); Age (18-22, 23-26, 27-30, and 31-34); Ethnicity (White, Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, African, Caribbean, Mixed/Other) and employment status as measured by occupational class (Service (professional), Intermediate, Routine, Unemployed). In the intersectional analyses required to answer RQ3 we estimate the random coefficients for our 224 unique strata formed from the different combination of Sex, Age, Ethnicity and Employment Status. In addition to these indicators, we also include as control variables the highest qualification, grouped as none, secondary, advanced, degree, and others, and contextual indicators based on characteristics of the local authority district in which the individual is living, including urbanicity, unemployment rates and house prices.

Results

Figure 1 shows significant sex and ethnic differences in the prevalence of parental coresidence by age for all young adults aged 18-34. At every age males are more likely to live with a parent than females. White young people tend to leave the parental home at an earlier age than all other ethnic groups, with a clear concentration of home leaving between ages 18 and 20, likely associated with the movement of some young adults to attend higher education. Indian, Caribbean and African young adults also experience a surge in residential independence at these ages, but to a lesser extent. In contrast, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and the Mixed/Other groups do not show this pattern with coresidence rates for young adults in their early twenties of around 85% for males and 80% for females. The next distinctive difference by ethnicity is the rebound in the proportions living with a parent in their mid-twenties which may relate to returning to the parental home following higher education. This rebound is particularly striking for the Indian and African youth, and more muted for the white population. By the early thirties, ethnic differences in the likelihood of intergenerational coresidence are large, particularly for men. Almost one half of Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani males are coresiding with a parent compared to less than one in five white males. For females, ethnic differences are smaller among those in their early thirties than the gaps seen for men, but Indian females are roughly twice as likely to be coresident as compared with White females.

Figure 2 shows how rates of coresidence differ according to sex, age, ethnicity and employment status among economically active young adults. The dark black line is for those who are unemployed. The relationship between unemployment and intergenerational coresidence is stronger for males, is greater at older ages, and differs according to ethnicity. In fact, differences in the prevalence of intergenerational coresidence appear to be significantly larger among older white males, and very small among females in the other and mixed group.

So far we have only fitted a traditional, single-level model with main effects (Table 1). This clearly shows significant independent associations between age, sex, ethnicity and employment status and the likelihood of coresidence. Among the economically active population of 18-34 year olds, unemployment was associated with a 42% increase in the odds of coresidence. This model does not tell us whether this effect varies according to age, sex or ethnicity.

Discussion

The Census Microdata have revealed patterns that we have not previously been able to observe using sample survey data. It would appear that an intersectional approach will provide more nuanced insights. Next we will undertake MAIHDA modelling of these data in order to explore how age, ethnicity and economic activity intersect in their relationship with coresidence. We will also take account of contextual factors such as local house prices, unemployment rates, and levels of urbanicity. We will reflect on our findings in terms of their implications for theories about the factors affecting parental coresidence and possible ethnic-specific cultural factors. We will also reflect on the implications of these findings for policy.

Acknowledgements

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Table 1: Odds ratios from logistic regression of whether or not young person is living in the same household as a parent. England and Wales, 2021.

Variable	Odds ratios
Sex (Ref: Female)	
Male	1.954***
Age Grp (R: 18-22yrs)	
23-26	0.318***
27-30	0.119***
31-34	0.061***
Ethnicity (R: African)	
Bangladeshi	1.172***
Caribbean	0.794***
Indian	1.527***
Mixed/Other	0.670***
Pakistani	1.260***
White	0.338***
Mig Background (R: Child migrant <16)	
UK-born	1.092***
Economic Activity (R: Intermediate)	
Routine	1.048***
Service	0.691***
Unemployed	1.419***
Observations (rounded)	895265

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Source: ONS England and Wales 2021 Census Household Microdata (ONS, 2023)

Figure 1:

Parental Coresidence of Young Adults in the UK

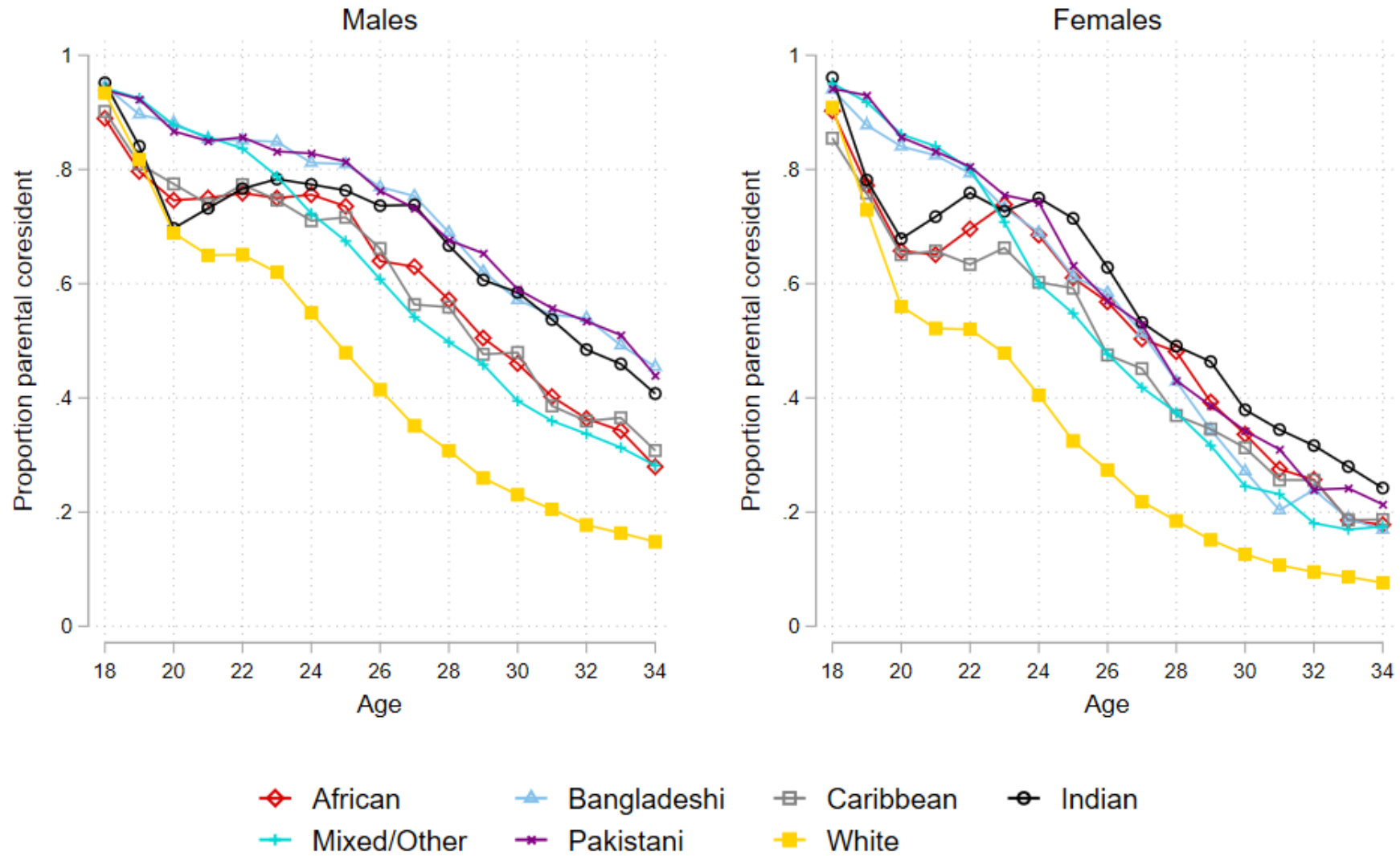


Figure 2:

Parental Coresidence of Economically Active Young Adults in the UK, by Sex, Ethnicity, Age, and Class

