

Domestic Violence and Women's Residential Relocations in England

Janet C. Bowstead, Royal Holloway, University of London

Some intimate partnerships do not quietly dissolve, but are broken apart by violence and abuse.

• Women's domestic violence journeys have been under-researched, not least because of the ongoing risk of abuse that many women face if their new location became known to the abuser.

"I was so scared of him; so frightened just to get in the car and drive off somewhere. I thought he'd always find me; and that he'd be violent towards my family if I did go – because I've tried many times before."

[Violet - Age 35, with a 6 year old boy. White British ethnic origin. Journey of 3 years from owner-occupied in London Periphery to private rented in a town in a very Rural area]

"You know – I think I'm quite a strong person – but when you just fear – you can't any more... You need help. You know what I mean – because it is like your emotions, your heart and your logic is just... everything is not solid."

[Anna - Age 42, with an adult daughter. White Polish ethnic origin. Journey of 2 years from private rented in London to rented social housing in a town in a Rural area]

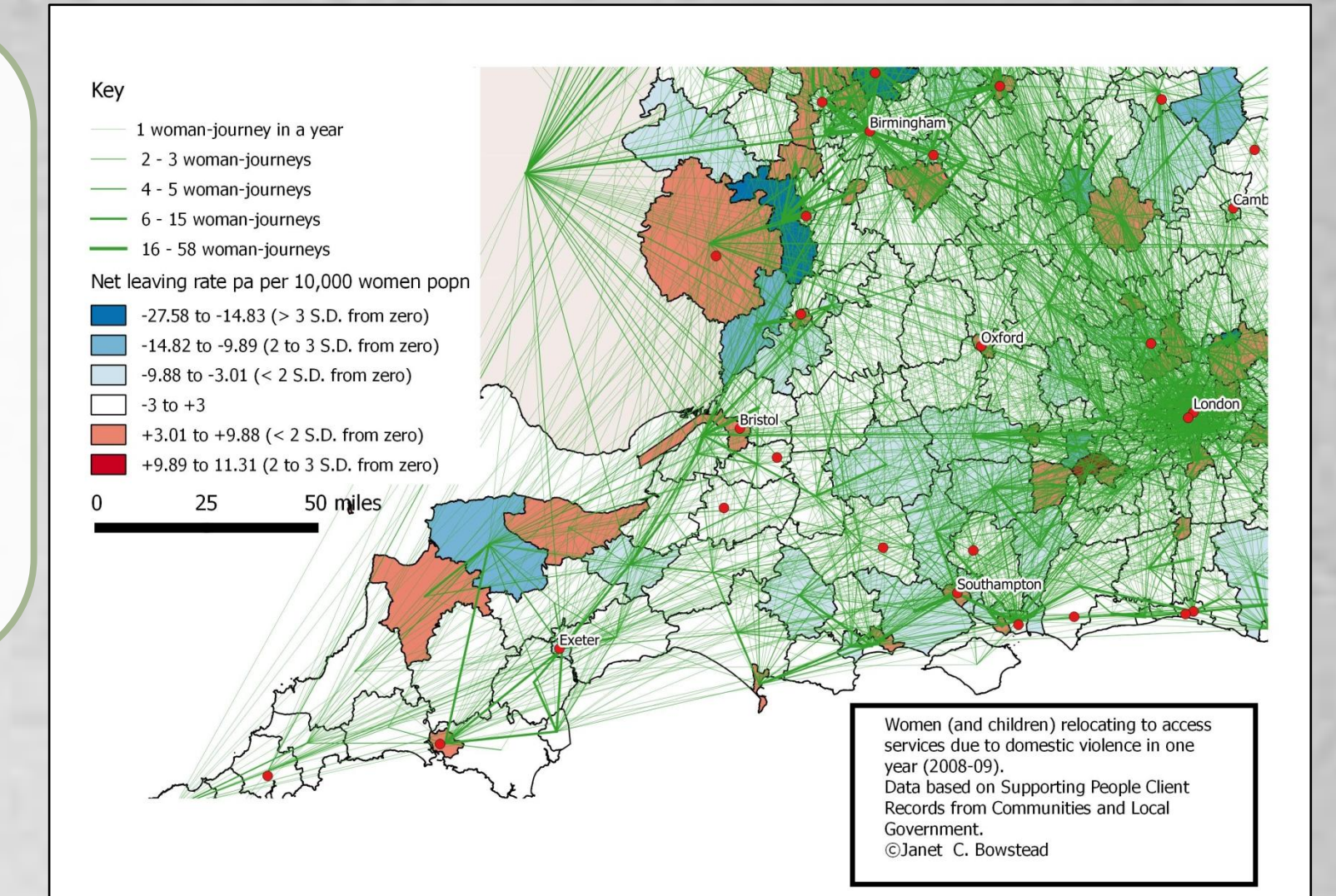
"I had no other options – I'd tried everything. He'd agreed all the conditions in 2009 – not to stalk me, not to follow, not to abuse me – he'd been on the IDAP programme [Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme run by Probation for convicted domestic abuse perpetrators]."

[Deborah - Age 29, with 5 year old boy and 3 year old girl. Asian Sri Lankan ethnic origin. Journey of a month from owner-occupied in London to a women's refuge in a Midlands city]

Where?

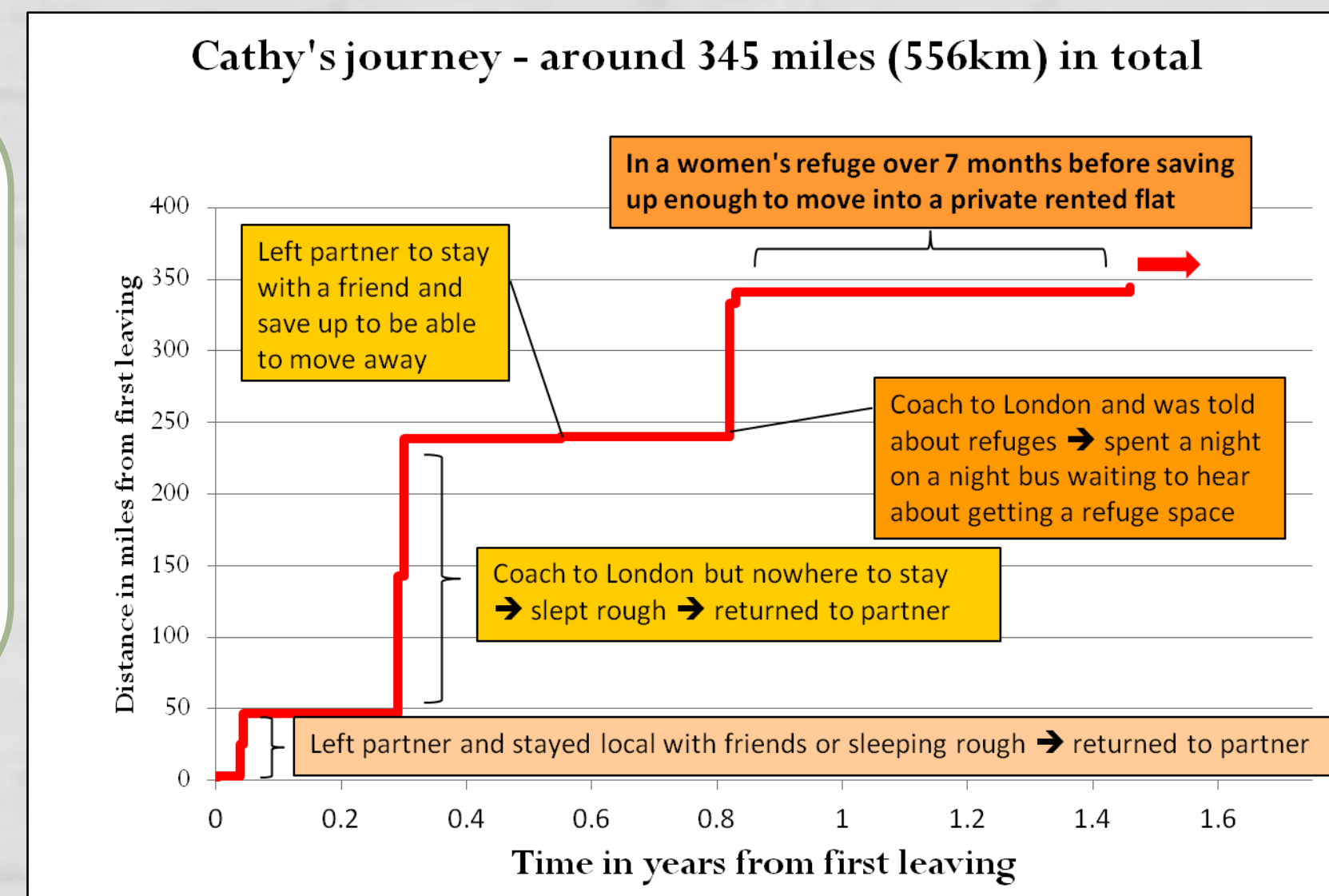
Journeys and Places

- Women were travelling short and long distances to and from all types of Local Authority.
- Most places have a net rate of around zero, though some Local Authorities experience net leaving (red on the map) and others net arriving to access services (blue on the map).
- Most journey stages were relatively short distances – including close to half being within the same Local Authority.
- Individual relocation journeys aggregate into a pattern of spatial churn, with a lack of strong flows to or from any part of the country.



The need for mixed methods research

- Analysis of de-identified monitoring data from an England-wide funding programme of support services (2003-2010) – over 100,000 relocation journeys by women to access services.
- More detailed evidence of the journeys of individual women and children generated via interviews, surveys and groupwork.
- Evidence of multiple stages of relocation journeys – such as Cathy (Age 46, no children. Black Caribbean ethnic origin. Journey from owner-occupied in an East Anglian town to private rented in West London). Only one stage involved a formal support service.



Complex trajectories

2003-9 Origin LA type	Destination LA type (Rural-Urban Classification)					
	Major Urban	Large Urban	Other Urban	Significant Rural	Rural - 50	Rural - 80
Major Urban	108.9	-38.6	-27.8	-24.8	-36.4	-30.5
Large Urban	-40.1	50.6	*-1.7	4.6	5.1	-5.0
Other Urban	-39.7	2.4	13.0	16.6	14.1	12.2
Significant Rural	-27.1	4.5	10.3	3.0	16.2	4.7
Rural - 50	-27.1	-2.6	6.4	8.2	9.3	22.6
Rural - 80	-31.9	-5.3	18.3	3.3	12.4	19.5

Internal Migration Journeys to accommodation services n=53,300

Chi-Square = 14555.624 (df=25) p<0.001 Kendall's tau b = 0.338

Strongest positive association for each Origin type (figures are the adjusted standardised residuals)
Other positive associations (figures are the adjusted standardised residuals)
Strongest negative association for each Origin type (figures are the adjusted standardised residuals)
Other negative associations (figures are the adjusted standardised residuals)

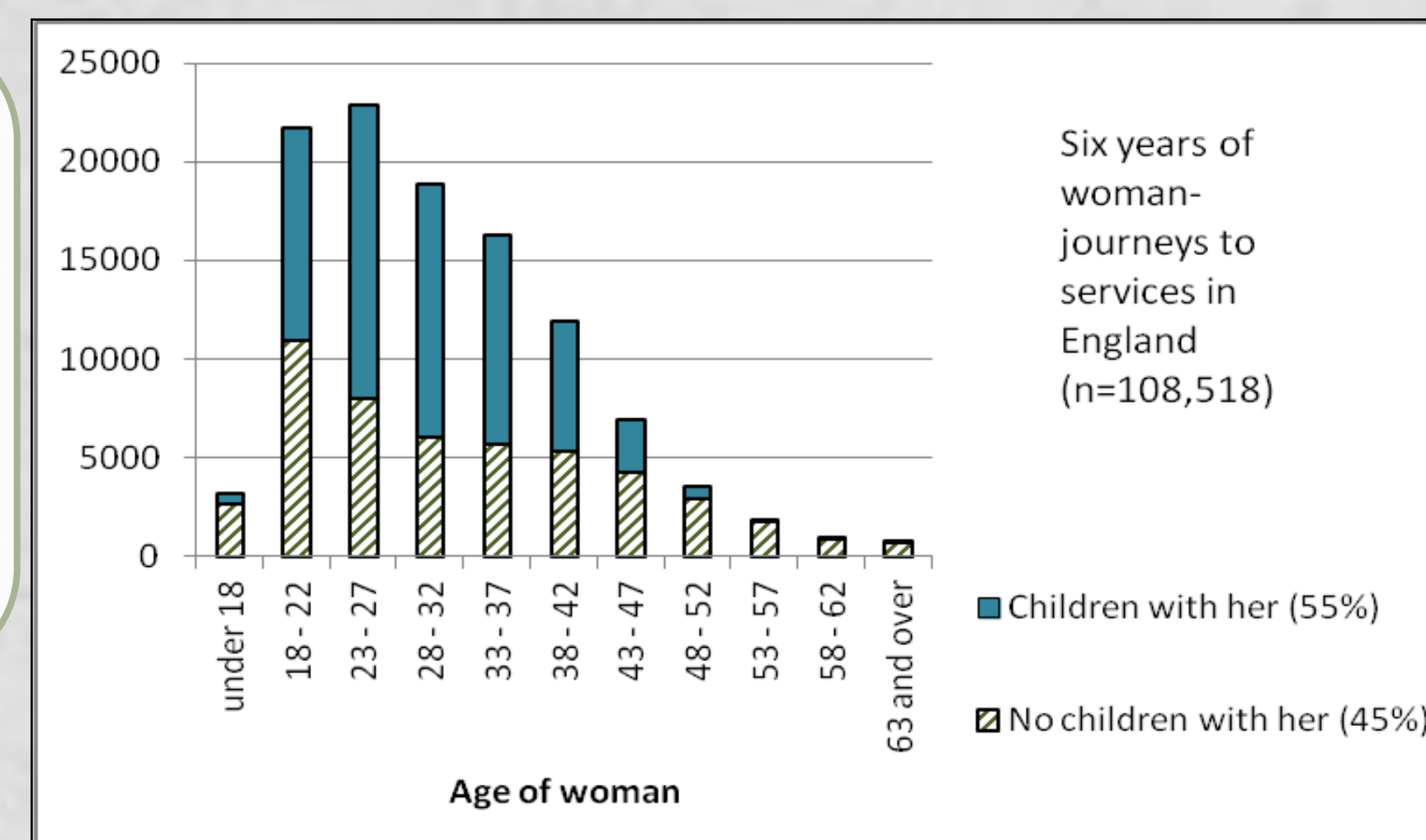
* Association < ±2 adjusted standardised residuals

- Women are leaving because of the violence, rather than any other intention to relocate – the immediate partnership trajectories are ones of escaping a violent partner.
- To access services, women are significantly more likely to go to the same type of place (eg. Rural or Urban) as the one they left, and least likely to go to the most dissimilar type of place.
- However, overall complex residential trajectories include changes of housing tenure, periods in temporary accommodation, and potential further stages of relocation and re-partnership which are beyond the scope of the administrative data.

Who moves?

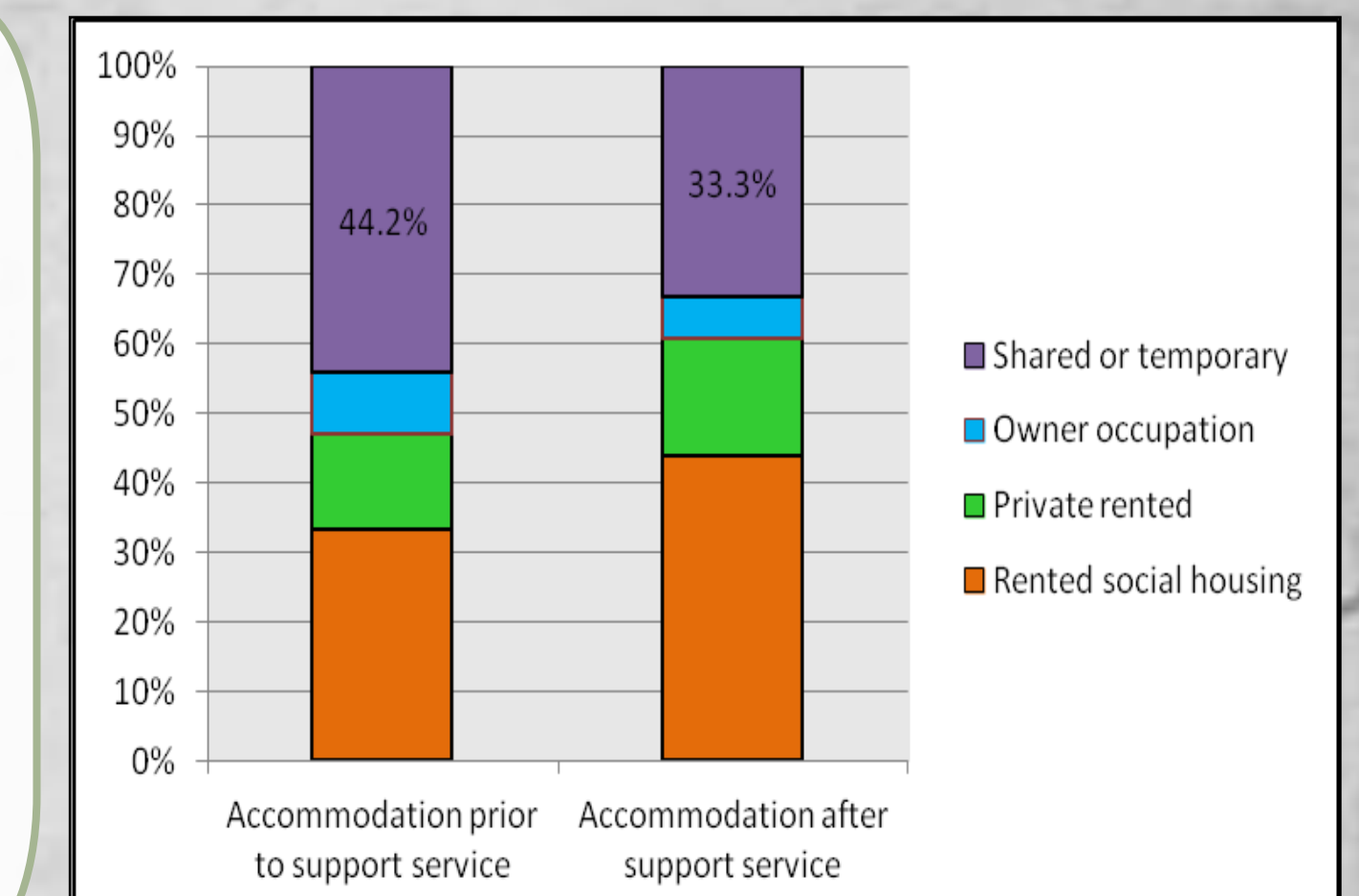
Journeys and Demographics

- Strongly gendered.
- In 2009-10, of all people relocating to access any type of Supporting People support service in England due to domestic violence (n=18,232) only 1.3 per cent (n=241) were male.
- A wide range of women relocated: women were aged between 15 and 88, from all ethnic origins (67.4% were White British), and 8.2% were disabled.
- Over half the women had children with them, and women with children tended to travel further. Unlike the notion of 'linked lives' of parents (Cooke, Mulder and Thomas, 2016, p. 755) – women are trying to unlink from unsafe lives.

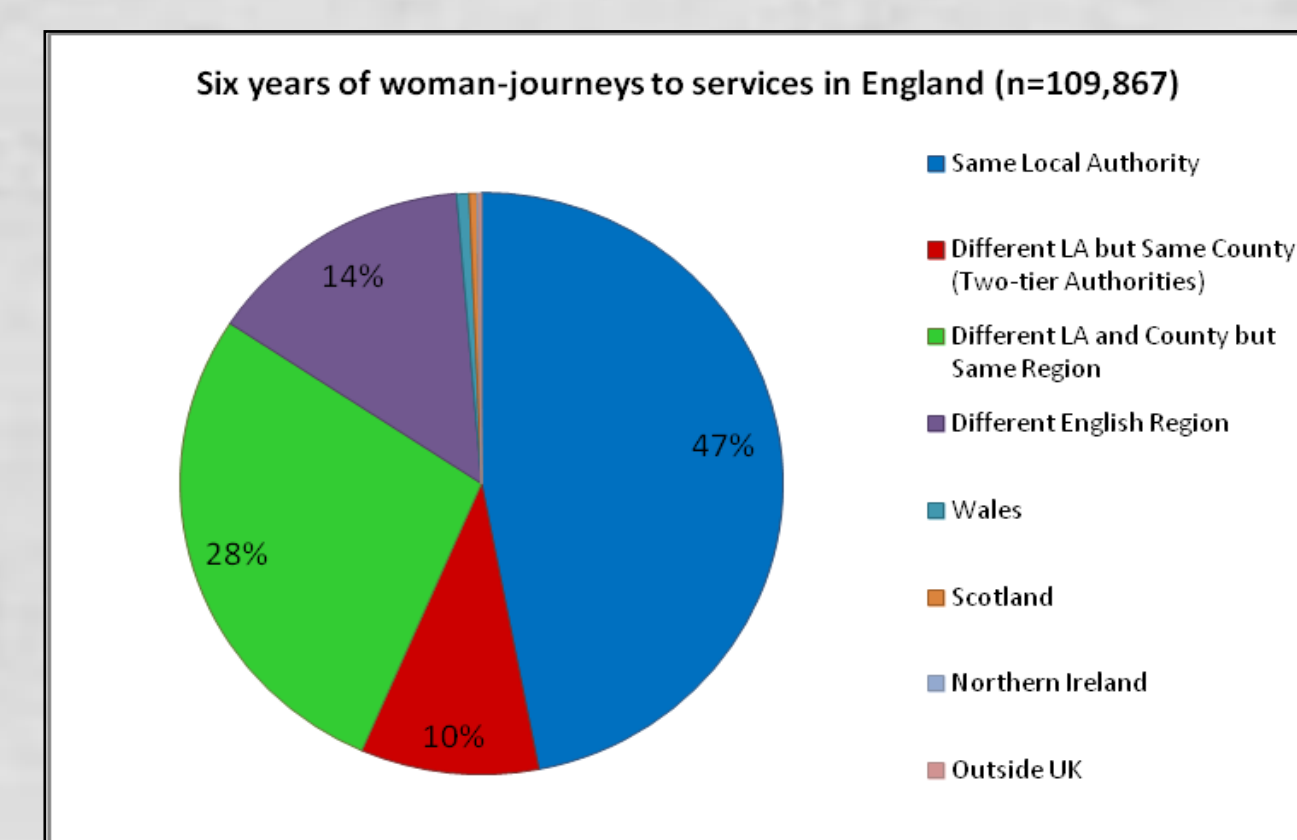


Hidden journeys

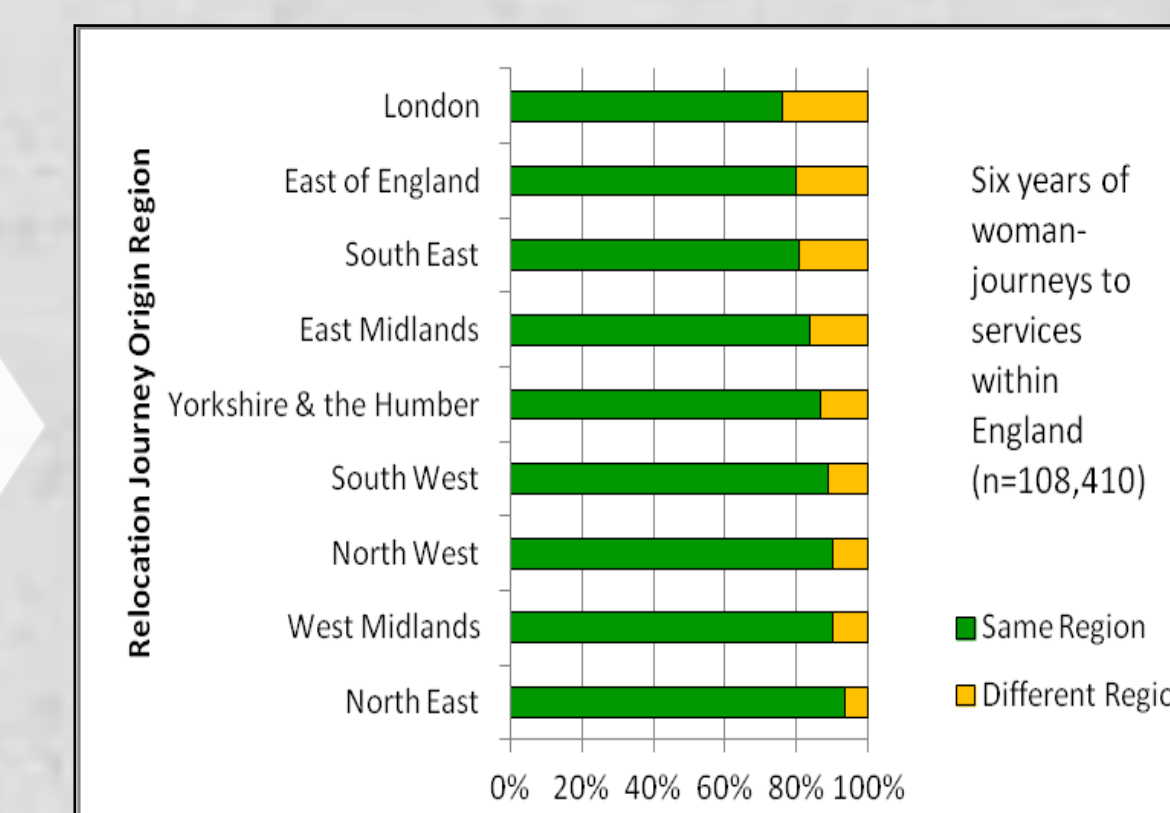
- Women keep their journeys hidden and secret for reasons of safety from the abusive partner.
- The journeys are also hidden from much research because longitudinal studies rely on maintaining contact with participants, and cross-sectional surveys (eg. the Crime Survey of England and Wales) require sampling from a household register and exclude people living in temporary accommodation (the UK has no population register).
- Prior to accessing temporary support services, over 40% of women are already in temporary accommodation, and on leaving the services, a third are moving to further temporary or shared housing.
- This research uses administrative and qualitative data to provide an important insight into the patterns and processes of forced relocation journeys by tens of thousands of women and children in England.



The scale of women's forced relocation



- Tens of thousands of women and children relocate due to domestic violence in England each year.
- Nearly half access services within their own Local Authority, but others have to travel further – crossing administrative boundaries and often losing rights and possessions.
- Most (85%) stay within the same region – indicating that regions could be the key scale for service planning, to ensure that women and children travel as far as they need to escape the abuse, but are not forced further than necessary due to constraints of administrative boundaries or service provision: a concept of women's "journeyscapes".



Further details:
Bowstead, J. C. (2015) 'Forced migration in the United Kingdom: women's journeys to escape domestic violence', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 40(3), pp. 307-320.
Bowstead, J. C. (2016) 'Women on the move: theorising the geographies of domestic violence journeys in England', *Gender, Place and Culture*, 24(1), pp. 108-121.
Bowstead, J. C. (2017) 'Segmented journeys, fragmented lives: Women's forced migration to escape domestic violence', *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 1 (1), pp. 43-58.

The loss of women's housing rights

- Women's journeys can be enormously disruptive for individuals – which is invisible within the spatial churn at the local, regional or national scale.
- By the time they access services, women and children's lives have often already been knocked off course – many are already in temporary housing, and have low levels of human and financial capital (Cooke, Mulder and Thomas, 2016, p. 754), including home ownership.
- Their housing options are further reduced by the abuse and relocation, including losing social housing rights when women cross administrative boundaries.

"You can get housed here privately – but to get social housing here is; well I will be the only one that's done it since all the people I've known. I was lucky; and I got this for a year and – providing I've been a good girl! [laughs] – I can stay on – it's permanent. Well, it's not permanent – because the Government's changed legislation – but it's renewable each year – automatic."

[Elizabeth - Age 56, with an adult son. White British ethnic origin. Journey of one year from owner-occupied in London suburbs to rented social housing in a very Rural area]

"It's like a temporary – it's not actually a 'private' but like the property is given from an agency to the Council. So I think it's for the next three years, which feels really really comforting to me because I know I'm going to be in one place! So it's not like I've signed over any of my rights or gone onto the private scheme – I'm still under the Council."

[Jenny - Age 21, with 3 year old girl. Mixed White/Black Caribbean ethnic origin. Journey of 2 years 4 months from private rented to rented social housing within London]

"I was a bit sad because we'd bought the house together, and I felt like I'd moved onto this property ladder, and started up; but now I'm back to square one again looking for council accommodation. But then I think that the fact that I'm happy and the girls are happy it makes a difference – I think you can make a home anywhere really."

[Rachel - Age 38, with three girls aged 17, 14 and eighteen months old. White British ethnic origin. Journey of 3 months from owner-occupied in Essex to a women's refuge in East London]

Dr. Janet C. Bowstead

British Academy Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Department of Geography
Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey
TW20 0EX

Janet.Bowstead@rhul.ac.uk
www.womensjourneyscapes.net



Reference: Cooke, T. J., Mulder, C. H. and Thomas, M. J. (2016) 'Union dissolution and migration', *Demographic Research*, 34(26), pp. 741-760