



Small island

Public opinion and the politics of immigration

LORD ASHCROFT KCMG PC

© Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC 2013

© Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC
September 2013

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC is an international businessman, author and philanthropist. He is founder and Chairman of the Board of Crimestoppers, a member of the Board of the Imperial War Museum and a Trustee of the Imperial War Museum Foundation, Chairman of the Trustees of Ashcroft Technology Academy, Chancellor of Anglia Ruskin University and Treasurer of the International Democrat Union. From 2005 to 2010 he was Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party.

His previous political books and research papers include *Smell The Coffee* (2005), *Minority Verdict*, *What Future For Labour?*, *What Future For The Liberal Democrats?* (2010), *Crime, Punishment & The People*, *Project Blueprint*, *The Leadership Factor* (2011), *Degrees of Separation*, *The Armed Forces & Society*, *Blue Collar Tories*, *Project Red Alert*, *They're Thinking What We're Thinking: Understanding The UKIP Temptation* (2012), *What Are The Liberal Democrats For?*, *Marginal Territory*, and *Are You Serious? Boris, the Tories and the Voters* (2013).

For more information please go to www.LordAshcroftPolls.com. You can also follow Lord Ashcroft on Twitter: @LordAshcroft

Contents

Introduction	6
Methodology and acknowledgments	10
Immigration: the seven pillars of opinion	11
The economy and public services	17
Society and culture	23
Challenging viewpoints	27
Politics and policies	33
Full poll results	42

Introduction

There are two reasons why immigration is such a potent subject in British political debate. First, it encapsulates all the stuff of politics: who we are as a country, our character and identity, the nature of our society and culture, how we see our economic prospects and those of our children, our sense of entitlement and obligation, the purpose of public services and the broader welfare state. It is not surprising that nearly everyone has a view and nearly all those views are strongly held.

Second, many people feel that until recently you could not really talk about immigration – or at least, that it was safer not to. That is no longer true, if it ever was, but there is no doubt that its proximity to questions of race and political correctness made the territory potentially explosive. Many feel that over the last fifteen years immigration has been allowed to happen on a scale we cannot cope with, and without public consent being sought or given. The debate now is how to deal with its consequences.

The issue serves as a microcosm of Britain's relationship with its political class: the values and competence of our representatives and their willingness, or even ability, to keep their promises and act as we wish. Whatever people's view of immigration itself, few think any recent government has had any real grasp of it, or that any of the parties does today: politicians underestimated the size of the challenge, lost control of the situation, refused for too long to acknowledge that any problems might result and are now struggling but failing to cope. Most do not feel there is any strategy for dealing either with the number of migrants, for their successful integration into British society, or for managing the effects they see or fear in terms of housing, infrastructure, jobs, the NHS, schools, or the benefits system.

In a poll of more than 20,000 people I found that six in ten thought immigration had produced more disadvantages than advantages for the country as a whole, with around a quarter thinking they were about even; only 17% thought the pros outweighed the cons. The biggest concerns were the idea of migrants claiming benefits or using public services without having contributed in return, and added pressure on schools and hospitals. These were more common complaints than those of taking jobs that would otherwise go to British workers, or changes in the character of local areas.

On the positive side, the idea of migrants doing jobs that British people are not prepared to do, and being prepared to work harder for lower wages, were seen as the biggest advantages – more so than a contribution to a more varied and exciting national life, a more dynamic economy or the possession of scarce specialist skills. Just over a third said they or someone in their family had found it harder to find work or were paid less because of competition from immigrants, and a quarter said they had been denied access to housing or other public services because priority seemed to have been given to those entering the country. More than four fifths said someone in their family had been treated by NHS staff from overseas, but less than one in five said people moving from outside the UK had made their area a better place to live. More than three quarters thought a dramatic reduction in the number of immigrants coming to Britain would help the economy rather than harm it.

Not surprisingly, attitudes to immigration are far from uniform. Analysis of the poll findings revealed seven segments of opinion on the subject, each with definable concerns and priorities. Around 16% of the population fall into the group I have termed 'Universal Hostility'. They are most likely to be working class, middle-aged, and with low levels of formal education. Nine out of ten name controlling immigration as one of the most

important issues facing Britain – nearly twice the level for the population as a whole – and almost as many say their local area has changed for the worse because of it. They are hostile to practically all aspects of immigration.

At the other end of the spectrum, around one tenth of the population are ‘Militantly Multicultural’. Dominated by graduates and professionals, and with a significant public sector contingent, four fifths of this group say the advantages of immigration outweigh any disadvantages, with the remainder saying they are about even. Nearly one third of them have no concerns about immigration at all, compared to just one in twenty of the general population. Most of this segment say the main advantages of immigration have been to enhance the life, culture and economy of Britain. A large majority say people moving from abroad have made their area a better place to live, and they are twice as likely as the population as a whole to have employed immigrants to do cleaning or building jobs at home. By more than four to one they say a sharp reduction in immigration would harm the economy – the reverse of the result for the population as a whole.

Five other groups emerged. ‘Cultural Concerns’ largely comprises older owner-occupiers worried about changes in their local area and wider society resulting from immigration, and pressure on public services. The ‘Competing for Jobs’ segment are most exercised about migrants’ impact on the labour market, including downward pressure on wages, while ‘Fighting for Entitlements’ are more worried about immigrants competing for public services and benefits, which they think they often receive at the expense of, and in place of, established residents. ‘Comfortable Pragmatists’ are better off, preoccupied with the economy and less concerned about immigration as an issue, taking a balanced view of its upsides and downsides. The ‘Urban Harmony’ segment, ethnically diverse and city-based, have a mixed view of the issue. Though more likely than most to say they have found it harder to find work or have missed out on public services because of immigration, they are the most likely of all to have employed migrants themselves and see a contribution to British culture and a more dynamic economy as the main advantages – probably not least because they are more likely to live alongside those who came from overseas and are more likely to be descended from them.

Public opinion on immigration, then, is more varied, and certainly more nuanced, than is sometimes supposed. At the same time, while those who take the most favourable view often regard opponents as backward-looking and fearful of change, those who are most concerned think supporters of immigration are insulated from its more challenging consequences.

The qualitative element of our research – a day-long deliberative event titled Immigration on Trial, bringing together 85 members of the public representing all segments of opinion – showed that people were rarely dogmatic in their view of immigration, but also hard to persuade one way or the other. Sunder Katwala, director of the think tank British Future, gave an upbeat presentation setting out the case for immigration. He emphasised the benefits to all aspects of national life including our culture, sport, the NHS, business and the economy, while stressing the importance of integration, the upholding of British values, and dealing with pressures on infrastructure and public services. Many participants who were concerned about immigration found his talk positive and even rather uplifting, but however compelling they found stories of individual immigrants they also found the challenges posed by the overall numbers inescapable.

Sir Andrew Green, chairman of Migration Watch UK, echoed the concerns of many or even most participants in setting out his argument, supported by detailed evidence, that the volume of immigration into Britain is too high and should be reduced. But his case also met resistance, even from those who were ultimately on his side. For many who agreed the

number of new arrivals should be cut, it was at least as important to deal with the impact of those who were already here. He also underlined the potentially fraught nature of the debate when he referred in passing to a study suggesting that white British people could be a minority within fifty years. Many who were worried about immigration were disquieted (and the most pro-immigration people aghast) that the question of race had been touched on at all – whatever your view of the scale of migration, they asked, why did such a thing matter?

Both speakers also encountered a phenomenon that bedevils British political discussion, and perhaps this part of it above all others: a reflexive refusal to accept any kind of official statistic. More broadly, the event proved that in the immigration debate, opinions are a good deal more abundant than facts. Participants who had a firm view on, say, the idea of welfare benefits being paid to migrants, would readily admit that they did not know the circumstances under which the rules allowed them to claim, or the numbers doing so, or whether they paid more in taxes overall than they cost in benefits and public services. (They would then cheerfully confess that if they were told the answer they would probably not believe it.)

One thing that unites people with different views about immigration is their conviction that politicians have been unsatisfactory in their handling of it: whether because they are incompetent, or fail to listen, or afraid to be accused of racism, or too weak to set out the advantages of immigration in the face of public opposition. The government's 'Go Home Or Face Arrest' ad van initiative provided an ideal and timely case study on the public response to political initiatives on the issue.

Public and media reaction ranged from outrage to bafflement at what the fuss was about. The second category was bigger, if quieter: 79% in my poll said they supported the scheme, including a majority of all parties' voters, and less than a fifth thought the posters were racist. Six in ten – again including majority of each party's supporters – thought the idea showed the government was serious about dealing with illegal immigration. But although they welcomed the action being taken, few thought it would work: only 17% thought the scheme would probably be effective in persuading illegal immigrants to leave the UK. Only 37% thought people who were in the UK illegally really had a high chance of being arrested and deported as the posters warned. Instructively, UKIP voters were both the most likely to say they supported the initiative (90%) and the least likely to think it would work (14%).

The ad van episode underlines the gap between elite and public opinion on immigration, the very wide concern about the subject (and particularly about illegal immigration), and the matching belief that those in charge are not doing anything effective about it. This, rather than any specific event, probably accounts for the Conservative Party's dwindling lead on the subject since coming to office in 2010.

I found that only a minority of voters thought Britain would have a firmer policy on immigration, with smaller numbers entering the country, if the Conservatives were in government with an overall majority rather than leading a coalition. (Apart from Tory voters, the only group among whom a majority thought this would happen were the 'Militantly Multicultural' – the people who least wanted such a policy).

Rather more voters thought the policy would be much the same as it is today. This reflects their view that the action on immigration promised by the Conservatives before the election has not come to pass – and that since the Tories seem to them to dominate the agenda, they cannot blame their coalition partners.

In fact, the Conservatives point to a number of measures introduced by the coalition government that have contributed to a fall in net immigration. I found clear majorities

supporting each of these policies – but in no case did a majority think it had actually been implemented. Three quarters supported an annual limit on migration from outside the EU, but only a third thought the government had imposed one. Seven in ten approved of a minimum earning threshold for anyone wanting to bring in a spouse or partner from outside Europe, but only a quarter thought this was in place. 87% supported reforming the student visa system and cracking down on bogus colleges, but fewer than half thought this had been done. People at our discussion event often said Britain ought to adopt a points-based immigration system – something that was introduced by the last Labour government in 2008.

Of course, most of these things take place well out of sight of most voters. Reducing net migration is not something that will be achieved before their eyes. More to the point, the people whose communities have changed will not see them change back, and those competing for jobs will still to have to do so.

People’s concerns about immigration are part of a bigger set of anxieties. They see the pace of change continuing and even accelerating, and they know Britain in twenty years will look different from the Britain of today, let alone that of twenty years ago. Some welcome that, many are ambivalent and others are scared. In the end, migration is inseparable from global economic conditions; governments appear as powerless to manage the first as to deal with the consequences of the second.

MAA
September 2013

Methodology and acknowledgments

Quantitative

20,062 adults were interviewed online between 17 and 29 May 2013. Results have been weighted to be representative of all adults in Great Britain.

The data was analysed using discriminant analysis to identify seven 'segments' of opinion within the population:

- Universal Hostility (16% of the population)
- Cultural Concerns (16%)
- Competing for Jobs (14%)
- Fight for Entitlements (12%)
- Comfortable Pragmatists (22%)
- Urban Harmony (9%)
- Militantly Multicultural (10%)

These segments are explained in more detail on page 11.

In addition, 2,006 adults were interviewed online between 2 and 4 August 2013. Results have been weighted to be representative of all adults in Great Britain.

Qualitative

A day-long deliberative research event titled 'Immigration On Trial' was held in London on 11 July 2013.

85 members of the public took part, recruited to ensure each of the seven segments was represented. The participants took part in moderated round-table discussions with others of the same segment.

Acknowledgments

Sunder Katwala of British Future and Sir Andrew Green of Migration Watch UK made presentations at the deliberative research event, with the aim of introducing new facts and perspectives into the discussion and challenging participants' existing opinions.

Their presentations were thoughtful and stimulating and I am grateful to both for their contributions.

Immigration: The seven pillars of opinion

‘Universal Hostility’

16% of the population

Members of this segment are most likely to be working class, middle-aged, and to have low levels of formal education. They are hostile to all aspects of immigration, and overwhelmingly believe the costs to the country outweigh any benefits.

Nine out of ten in this group name controlling immigration as one of the three most important issues facing Britain – nearly twice the proportion for the population as a whole, and well above their second biggest concern, economic growth and job creation (which is easily the biggest issue for the public in general).

Their biggest specific concerns are immigrants claiming benefits and public services when they have not contributed in return, and being given priority over established residents. They are much less likely than the public as a whole to say immigrants do jobs that need doing or are prepared to work hard for low pay; a majority say there have been no benefits to Britain from immigration.

Nearly 90% say their area has changed for the worse because of immigration, more than four fifths say they have found it harder to find work or are paid less because of competition from immigrants, and two thirds say someone in their family has been denied access to housing or other public services because immigrants seem to have been given priority.

Politically, 40% say UKIP have the best approach to immigration among the parties, ahead of Labour on 19% and 16% for the Conservatives. While 95% support the idea of an annual limit on non-EU migration, only 30% believe this policy has been implemented.

95% of the Universal Hostility group support ‘Go home or face arrest’ ad van scheme, with two thirds saying it shows the government is serious about dealing with illegal immigration – though only just over a fifth (22%) think it will be effective in persuading illegal immigrants to leave the UK.

46% of UKIP Loyalists (who voted UKIP in 2010 and would do so again tomorrow) are in this segment, compared to 16% of the population as a whole. Defectors from Labour and the Conservatives are also more likely than average to appear in this group.

‘Cultural Concerns’

16% of the population

This segment largely comprises older people, many of whom are owner-occupiers. They believe immigration has on the whole been bad for the UK. They are particularly concerned about pressure on public services and cultural changes in their local area or in society.

Immigration is a very important issue for them, with two thirds saying naming it as one of the top three facing the country (slightly above the economy and jobs). One in ten say the advantages and disadvantages of immigration are about even, with the rest saying the disadvantages have been greater.

They are twice as likely as the general public to name changes in local areas as one of their main concerns about immigration, and much less likely to say that a contribution to British life and culture is one of its benefits. They are less likely than average to say they have suffered in the job market or lost out on benefits or public services because of immigration.

More than 9 out of 10 the Cultural Concerns group support the ‘Go home or face arrest’ ad van scheme, though only 16% think it will be effective in persuading illegal immigrants to leave the UK, and only just over a quarter (26%) think illegal immigrants have a high chance of being arrested and deported.

This segment is divided as to whether UKIP or the Conservatives offer the best approach to immigration. A quarter of Conservative Loyalists (who voted for the party in 2010 and would do so in an election tomorrow) and defectors to UKIP appear in this segment, compared to 16% of the population as a whole.

‘Competing for Jobs’

14% of the population

Though they acknowledge that immigrants often work hard for low pay doing jobs that others will not, members of this segment are worried about the competition in the labour market this brings and the downward pressure on wages they think results.

Immigration is the second most important issue for this group, after economic growth and job creation. Though no less likely than ‘Cultural Concerns’ to think the disadvantages of immigration outweigh the advantages overall, they are mainly exercised by the idea that immigrants will take jobs that would otherwise go to British people, or push down earnings. Accordingly, they are significantly more likely than average to say that immigrants are willing to do jobs that need doing, and are often prepared to work harder for lower pay than British workers. Despite this, only 50% (though this is more than for the public as a whole) say that they or someone in their family has found it harder to find work or is paid less because of competition from immigrants. Nearly three quarters support a cap on the number of people employers are allowed to bring into the country to work in skilled professions.

Nine out of 10 support the ‘Go home or face arrest’ ad van scheme, though only 13% think it will be effective in persuading illegal immigrants to leave the UK.

This group has no clear political affiliation, being quite evenly divided as to whether the Conservatives, Labour or UKIP offer the best approach. They are less likely than the public as a whole to think Britain would have a tougher immigration policy under a Conservative government with an overall majority. Conservative and Lib Dem Loyalists are less likely to appear in this segment than other voting groups.

‘Fighting for Entitlements’

12% of the population

These people are predominantly concerned about immigrants competing for public services and benefits, which they think they often receive at the expense of (and in place of) established residents. The segment is older than average with relatively low levels of formal education.

This group also puts immigration at the top of its list of concerns, just above the economy and jobs, though is slightly more likely than the above segments to say immigration may also have brought benefits as well as costs.

They are mainly concerned about the idea of immigrants receiving priority access to public services and benefits to which they have not contributed in tax, only just over a quarter (barely more than among the public as a whole) say that they or someone in their family have been denied housing or other services because immigrants seem to have been given priority.

Though 91% support the ‘Go home or face arrest’ ad van scheme, they are among the least likely to think it will be effective in persuading illegal immigrants to leave the UK (13%).

The segment is evenly divided between UKIP and the Conservatives when it comes to immigration, with Labour a close third, but are more likely than most to say “another party” has the best approach. UKIP Loyalists are slightly more likely than average to appear in this segment.

‘Comfortable Pragmatists’

22% of the population

Largely comprising graduates and professionals, this segment is concerned primarily with the economy and shows little concern about immigration as an issue. Most have a balanced view of immigration: though they believe it has put pressure on the economy and public services, they also believe it has culturally enriched the country and society.

Only 15% of this group name controlling immigration as one of the three most important issues facing the country, well behind the economy, the deficit, the NHS and welfare reform. A majority (54%, more than twice the proportion of the public as a whole) say the advantages and disadvantages of immigration are about even, and they are slightly more likely to say the advantages outweigh the disadvantages than the opposite.

Members of this segment are more likely than most to say pressure on public services is one of their main concerns, and less likely to worry about immigrants getting priority in benefits and public services, taking jobs or driving down wages. More than the public as a whole they say the chief benefits of immigration have been to make life in Britain more varied and exciting, to create a more dynamic and prosperous economy, and to bring specialist skills that are hard for employers to find in Britain. They are much less likely than the segments above to say a dramatic reduction in immigration would benefit the economy overall.

They give the Conservatives a clear lead over other parties on immigration, and are slightly more likely than average to say a Tory government with an overall majority would mean a tougher immigration policy. They are less likely than the public as a whole to support most proposals to restrict immigration, including an annual limit on non-EU migration.

Support for the ‘Go home or face arrest’ ad van scheme is, at 65%, considerably lower than in the above segments. A small majority (53%) think the initiative shows the government is serious about tackling illegal immigration, but a quarter think the scheme is racist.

Conservative Loyalists and Joiners (who voted for other parties in 2010 but would vote Conservative in an election tomorrow) are overrepresented in this segment, as are Liberal Democrat voters. 26% of Conservative Defectors to UKIP are also in this segment – more than in appear in an any other segment.

‘Urban Harmony’

9% of the population

The most ethnically diverse segment, these people are predominantly young and based in urban centres, especially London. They have a mixed view of immigration, taking a more positive view than most but seeing no overriding advantages or costs. They are less favourable towards the idea of restricting immigration than the public as a whole.

Only one third of this group put immigration control among the most important issues facing the country, putting it behind the economy, jobs and the NHS. They are evenly divided as to whether the advantages of immigration outweigh the disadvantages or the reverse, with more than two fifths saying they are about even. They are more than twice as likely as the public as a whole to say they have no concerns about immigration. For them, the main benefits of immigration have been to contribute to British culture and life, and to help create a more dynamic and prosperous economy.

This group are more likely than the public as a whole to say they are paid less or have found it harder to find work, that the character of their local area has changed for the worse, and that they have been denied access to housing or other public services because of immigration. However, they are also three times as likely as average to say they have employed immigrants to do things like cleaning or building jobs at home.

Though two thirds (67%) of the Urban Harmony group support the ‘Go home or face arrest’ ad van scheme, 42% think it is racist. Four in ten think it will be effective in persuading illegal immigrants to leave the UK, more than in any other segment.

The segment gives a narrow lead to the Conservatives over Labour on their approach to immigration. Though a majority in the group support most of the government’s immigration policies they are significantly less likely to do so than the public as whole, while being significantly more likely to know they have been implemented. Labour and Conservative Loyalists, and Lib Dem Joiners, are slightly more likely than average to appear in this segment.

‘Militantly Multicultural’

10% of the population

This group is dominated by graduates and professionals, with the greatest concentration of public sector employees. They are overwhelmingly positive about nearly every aspect of immigration. Pressure on public services is their biggest concern (though nearly one third of them say they have no concerns about immigration at all), though where this is the case they would expect more resources to be found than for entitlement to be restricted.

For this segment, immigration comes at the very bottom of their list of concerns for the country. Four fifths say the advantages have outweighed the disadvantages, with one fifth saying they are about even. Seven in ten say the main advantages have been a contribution to British life and culture, and the creation of a more dynamic and prosperous economy – around three times the level among the public as a whole.

People in this group are twice as likely as the general population to say they have employed immigrants to do cleaning or building jobs at home, and nearly seven in ten say that people who have moved from overseas have made their area a better place to live.

By more than four to one, people in this segment say a dramatic reduction in the level of immigration would harm the economy – the reverse of the result for the public as a whole.

This segment gives Labour a clear lead over the Conservatives on the subject, with the Liberal Democrats third. They are the only group in which a majority say that a Conservative government with an overall majority would mean a firmer policy on immigration and smaller numbers entering the country, but also the only group where most think this would be a bad thing. Only one third support an annual cap on non-EU migration, only one in six agrees with a cap on the number of skilled employees a company can bring in to the country, and only one in five supports ending the right of overseas students to stay in the UK to look for work once their course ends.

Only 30% of the Militantly Multicultural group support the ‘Go home or face arrest’ ad van, by far the lowest for any segment. More than half (56%) think it is racist, while only just over a third (35%) think the scheme shows the government is serious about tackling illegal immigration.

Liberal Democrat Loyalists, and Labour Loyalists and Joiners, are significantly overrepresented in this segment.

The economy and public services

Taking our jobs?

Just over a quarter (27%) of the population as a whole said that one of their main concerns about immigration was migrants “taking jobs that would otherwise go to British workers, or pushing down wages in general”. This was more of a concern for Labour voters (31%) than Conservatives (20%).

Just over one third (36%) said that they, or someone in their family, had found it harder to find work or been paid less because of competition from immigrants (though 83% in the Universal Hostility segment thought this). Even among the Competing for Jobs segment, whose main concern is immigrants taking work that would otherwise go to British workers and pushing down wages in general, only 50% said this had personally affected them or their family. Conversely, 60% of those in the Urban Harmony segment agreed with the statement, despite having a more positive view of immigration overall.

Half of men aged 18 to 24 said they or someone in their family had found it harder to find work or been paid less because of competition from immigrants. Those in social groups C2 (44%) and DE (46%) were significantly more likely to say this than ABs (25%).

Despite these concerns, nearly half (49%) of respondents chose “immigrants often do jobs that need doing but British people don’t want to do” as one of the main benefits of immigration to Britain. Here there was relatively little variation between supporters of different parties, ranging from 46% of Labour voters to 56% of Conservatives (with 49% of UKIP voters agreeing with the statement).

Just under four fifths (38%) thought one of the main benefits was that “immigrants are often prepared to work harder for lower pay than British workers”, though only one third of Labour and Lib Dem voters chose this statement.

A quarter of people in the South East, and 45% in the Urban Harmony segment, said they or someone in their family had employed immigrants to do things like cleaning or building jobs at home. Only 13% of the whole sample said this, and only 8% in the North of England. Nearly a fifth (18%) of ABs said they had employed immigrants in this way, compared to one in ten C2s and 8% of DEs.

The qualitative discussions revealed mixed attitudes to migrant workers in the job market. Those who felt directly threatened said that migrants were able to work at artificially low rates that would be uneconomic for others: being in the UK only temporarily they were prepared to work seven days a week at rates that would guarantee them work, while living in cramped shared accommodation. These people also sometimes argued that migrants would often do shoddy work that would need to be corrected later by professionals like themselves.

“Immigrants have taken over the building trade. You can get two of them for the price of me. And then you call people like me to put the job right, so it costs you.”

Comfortable Pragmatist

However, sympathy for this point of view was limited: you could hardly blame the customer for choosing cheaper workers who, far from being shoddy, often seemed to have a better attitude than their domestic counterparts. Some argued that complaining about migrant competition was often used as an excuse for those who did not work or wanted to charge too much.

“I’ve got building work going on either side of me. The Polish and the Serbs and the Slovaks are getting on with it like a house on fire, and the one on the other side is purely English, trousers hanging round their knees, bottoms sticking up in the air. They’re going to be there twice as long as they other guys and don’t deserve the opportunity they’ve got.”

Cultural Concerns

“If you’ve got a white UK male of say 25, and a Polish immigrant of 25, and you say which one is going to paint my house, turn up on time and do it for a decent price, guaranteed it’s going to be the Polish guy. Whose fault is that?”

Competing for Jobs

“It’s quite easy for the English who live on benefits to use it as an excuse for not working, to say they are taking our jobs. Do they really want to work or is it easier to blame immigrants?”

Urban Harmony

More worrying for some who had witnessed it was the sight of migrants lining up by the roadside in the morning to be hired for a day’s labour. This seemed an alien practice, and suggested that those taking part may have been in the country illegally, were open to exploitation, and probably not paid the minimum wage.

Benefits and public services

In the qualitative research it emerged that many participants believed or assumed that the desire to claim benefits was, for a high proportion of migrants, the main reason for coming to Britain (though some strongly disputed this). There was a widespread impression that it was easier for immigrants to claim benefits than it was for others. However, participants would often volunteer that they had no real idea of the numbers involved, or the rules governing what migrants were entitled to and when.

“I’m really interested to know how many of these immigrants really do sit at home on benefits and don’t learn English. It would be good to hear the figures. Is it really true that it’s just immigrants taking the welfare and sitting at home doing nothing? I know a lot of British people who are very capable of working but don’t.”

Cultural Concerns

“If they come as pensioners, are they going to claim a pension in this country? I don’t know.”

Cultural Concerns

“The media are whipping up a lot of it. They will hone in on one particular case where someone’s got a five bedroom house in a wonderful area, which are isolated cases.”

Cultural Concerns

Others argued that immigration was simply a distraction in the debate over welfare reform, which should be tackled on its merits and had nothing to do with the nationality of claimants.

“There are plenty of white British people that are third generation that have never paid tax. Politicians should target the issue, instead of nationality.”

Militantly Multicultural

“I don’t really think this is about immigration, it’s about the leniency of the welfare state, and that applies whether you’re from Botswana or the East End of London. If you’ve got a state which is easily exploitable, you’re going to get that kind of person irrespective of where they come from.”

Comfortable Pragmatist

In the poll, respondents expressed more concern overall about access to benefits, pressure on public services and the idea of immigrants having priority access to these than established residents than they did about competition for jobs or changes in the character of local areas. Nearly two thirds (62%) said “immigrants claiming benefits and public services when they have contributed nothing in return” was one of the things that most concerned them about immigration. A majority of all parties’ voters were concerned about this (including 74% of UKIP supporters and 70% of Conservatives, but 54% of Labour voters and 52% of Lib Dems). “Increasing pressure on public services like schools and hospitals” was a

concern for just over a third (35%), just above “immigrants being given priority over established residents when it comes to benefits or public services”.

Just under a quarter (24%) said that they, or someone in their family, had been denied access to housing or other public services because priority seemed to have been given to immigrants; nearly half (48%) disagreed. Those in social group DE (32%) were more than twice as likely as ABs (15%) to say this. 37% of 18-24 year-old men agreed with the statement, as did 40% of UKIP Loyalists.

However, more than four fifths (83%) said that they or someone in their family had been treated in the NHS by staff who were originally from overseas. Large majorities of all voter groups said this (including 84% of UKIP Loyalists), as did 76% of the Universal Hostility segment, the group most concerned about immigration overall.

While a number of participants in the qualitative research talked about the cost to the NHS of treating patients from overseas, this was balanced by the argument that overseas staff were essential to the functioning of the service. This concern was also usually abstract, rather than something that people felt had affected them directly. For a few, the debate over “health tourism” had been constructed for political reasons that had nothing to do with the NHS.

“The minute they come here they’re entitled to NHS treatment. Half of them can’t speak English, so the NHS has got to pay for an interpreter.”

Universal Hostility

“Without the immigration we wouldn’t have had the NHS. It was staffed by Irish nurses and then the West Indians, and now they’re coming from all over the world.”

Urban Harmony

“The government’s own estimate is that health tourism costs £12 million a year, out of a budget of £100 billion. The whole thing seems a sideshow to demonise these people.”

Urban Harmony

However, there were two areas in which people said the scale of immigration had had an impact on their own experience of public services: housing and schools. Some who were waiting for social housing claimed to have been told by their local authority that they were required by law to give priority to immigrants.

“I used to live in a two bedroom flat and I had to carry my disabled daughter up the stairs. She was sharing with her brother, and he had to sleep literally half in the cupboard. And they kept saying there are no houses because they’re going to the people who are coming into the country.”

Urban Harmony

Many more – including participants in the groups with the most favourable attitude to immigration overall – said standards were falling in their local schools because teachers were having to spend so much time helping pupils whose first language was not English. This made established residents less inclined to apply to the school, intensifying the problem.

“When the proportion of children who don’t have English as their first language increases, it drives down the standard because teachers are having to put in extra resources to deal with those children separately. So the children with English as a first language are not getting the level of teaching you would expect, and people are deciding not to send their children to those schools. So they become ghetto schools.”

Cultural Concerns

“I live in a multi-ethnic area and I was told that at my local primary school, English is not the first language of the children in the school. So I had to put my son into a faith school, which is a 15-minute drive instead of a 5-minute walk, and it just seemed crazy to me because we’re not particularly observant in our faith but he had to go there to get a good education where he might mix with people he might become friends with.”

Militantly Multicultural

Overall economic impact

Most people thought the overall economic impact of immigration on the UK was negative. As well as the perceived cost in terms of benefits and public services, they often questioned the economic contribution of those in work. If migrants were prepared to work for less, people were more inclined to regret the downward effect in general wage levels than the restraining effect on prices, and even if they were paying tax on their wages, sending part of their earnings out of the country represented a loss to the economy.

“[If migrants work for less] it’s good for the customer but it’s not good for the community at large because it ends up devaluing the position. It starts to devalue the worth of the job and that can’t be good for the economy.”

Competing for Jobs

“What worries me is people working here and then sending money back home, then that’s taking money away from our economy.”

Comfortable Pragmatist

Only one fifth of poll respondents said one of the main benefits of immigration was that “overall, the ability of immigrants to work and do business in Britain makes for a more dynamic and prosperous economy for everyone”. Again there was significant variation between political groups, with Lib Dem voters (29%) more than four times as likely as UKIP supporters (7%) to choose this statement.

We asked what would be the most likely outcome if the government were to clamp down on immigration and dramatically reduce the numbers entering Britain. More than three quarter agreed that “it would help the economy by reducing pressure on public services, cutting the benefits bill, and making it easier for British people to find jobs”. 83% of Conservative voters and 97% of UKIP supporters thought this.

Lib Dem voters (38%) and Labour voters (33%) were the most likely of the voting groups to think such a policy “would harm the economy by cutting the number of skilled workers and entrepreneurs, stifling innovation and reducing access to global markets”.

Among the segments, the Militantly Multicultural were the only group in which a majority (83%) thought dramatically cutting immigration would harm the economy. In the other groups between 64% (Urban Harmony and Comfortable Pragmatists) and 97% (Universal Hostility) thought the policy would help the economy overall.

Society and culture

Character and identity, local and national

Just over one third (36%) in our poll agreed that “the character of my local area has changed for the worse in recent years because of the scale of immigration”. Support for this statement was highest in the South East, where people agreed by a margin of 9 points, and lowest in Scotland, where they disagreed by a 22-point margin.

There was very wide variation between political groups on this question. While Conservative Defectors (who voted Tory in 2010 but say they would not do so tomorrow) agreed by 48% to 25%, Conservative Joiners (who did not vote Tory in 2010 but would do so tomorrow) were more likely to disagree than agree. While Lib Dem Loyalists agreed by a 35-point margin, UKIP Loyalists agreed by a 45-point margin.

People were only half as likely to agree as to disagree that people who had moved from outside the UK had made their area a better place to live, but 46% said neither of these was the case. While Labour Loyalists were equally likely to agree as to disagree, Conservative Loyalists disagreed by a 22-point margin, Conservative Defectors by 45 points and UKIP Loyalists by 72% to 3%.

Fewer than one in five (19%) said “changes in the character of local areas with large numbers of people not originally from Britain” was one of the main disadvantages of immigration (less than a third of the proportion who named “immigrants claiming benefits and using public services when they’ve contributed nothing in return”. Conservatives (24%), Lib Dems (26%) and UKIP voters (28%) were more likely to be concerned than Labour voters (15%).

Asked what were the main advantages of immigration, 26% said that “immigration has contributed to British culture in a way that makes life in Britain more varied and exciting overall” (around half the proportion who said that immigrants do jobs that need doing but British people don’t want to do). Lib Dem voters (34%) were nearly three times as likely to do so as UKIP voters (12%). One third of 18-24 year-olds chose this statement, compared to 19% of those aged 65 or over.

For some in the segments best disposed towards immigration overall, the presence of new people and languages was a good thing in itself. Those who were concerned about changes in their own neighbourhood sometimes complained about how immigrants behaved in public, but more often they regretted a change in the general character of a place, or a feeling that they themselves were not catered for, or were even excluded from, new local shops and other amenities.

“I really enjoy the fact that sometimes I walk down the road and not only do I not understand what someone is saying but I can’t even work out the language, and I’d really like to ask them what language that is, that sounds really interesting.”

Militantly Multicultural

“I’m about to start a campaign about people spitting in the street. I see it more and more every day and it’s infuriating. I can only go by my general observations but I don’t see English people doing it, I don’t see West Indian people doing it.”

Cultural Concerns

“We had a local shop that used to sell everything and all of a sudden is selling primarily Indian-style food. And I went in, and I just wanted some Marmite. No, no Marmite, there’s no call for it.”

Comfortable Pragmatist

“There are a lot of times in London now when I don’t feel I’m in England. When I went to visit some friends in the West Country, that’s actually England as I remember it, ten or 15 years ago. When I go to Tottenham, it’s not like being in England any more.”

Universal Hostility

“You’ve got Polish shops and a Polish pub and they all gather there but they don’t join in with anything. If you walk into one of them they treat you like you shouldn’t be there.”

Urban Harmony

Integration and the English language

All segments of opinion agreed on the need for immigrant communities to integrate into wider British society. However, even the most pro-immigration groups felt that this was not happening to a sufficient degree, often because immigrants themselves seemed reluctant or unwilling. “Separate” shops and different cultural attitudes towards women, including dress, were often cited. Some drew a contrast with previous generations of immigrants who made every effort to integrate.

“My parents were from Jamaica, I’m not white, but I probably hold stronger views on immigration than a lot of white people do, so it’s not about colour. I believe if they come here they should immerse themselves in the culture, learn our language, learn our ways, and they have something to contribute, and it goes both ways.”

Urban Harmony

“You’ve got communities with their own schools, their own shops, their own GPs. That’s not integration. They want to live in England like they used to live somewhere else.”

Cultural Concerns

“I have friends from Egypt and they don’t want their wives to work but their wives are obliged to go into the Job Centre and discuss it. None of them are motivated to speak English and their husbands are deliberately keeping them away from other local people. How can the government break something like that down?”

Cultural Concerns

“When your face is covered you make yourself unapproachable to somebody who might want to talk to you and find out who you are and all that. I find that quite difficult.”

Militantly Multicultural

“When immigrants came from Jamaica, they all spoke English, shirt and tie, came to work and make their fortune, help their families, and it was all very positive. Whereas now you’ve got people that come across who don’t speak the language, don’t integrate.”

Urban Harmony

Above all, participants in all segments felt strongly that immigrants should learn English – both as an obligation and for their own benefit. Again, even many of those who were favourable towards immigration overall felt that in too many cases migrants did not seem willing to make this step.

“At my son’s school, for 70% of them English is their second language. They are offering lessons to them and their families after school to teach them English, but people aren’t taking them up. People are quite happy not to speak English.”

Cultural Concerns

“There were different kinds of migrants. I’m from Ghana. If you went home and said ‘innit’ to my mum you’d probably get a slap. You had to speak properly.”

Urban Harmony

There was a widespread view that local councils and other public bodies added to the problem by providing interpreters and producing documents in multiple languages, thereby reducing the incentive for migrants to learn English.

“It doesn’t make sense to have an interpreter while you’re doing a health and safety test on a building site. Because then in a situation where they really need to know what to do and somebody’s yelling at them, they don’t understand.”

Comfortable Pragmatist

More advantages or disadvantages?

Overall, 60% of respondents agreed that “on balance, immigration into Britain has produced more disadvantages than advantages for the country as a whole”, with just under a quarter (23%) saying they were about even. Only 17% said they thought the advantages outweighed the disadvantages.

Again, responses varied between groups. Men (21%) were more likely than women (14%) to say the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. Those in social group AB (24%) were twice as likely as C2s (12%) and DEs (11%) to say this.

People in London (29%) were more than twice as likely to say the advantages outweighed the disadvantages than those in the East Midlands and Yorkshire & Humberside (14%). Students and graduates were more than twice as likely to say this as those who finished their education at secondary school.

Conservative Defectors (who voted Tory in 2010 but say they would not do so tomorrow) and UKIP Loyalists (who voted UKIP last time and would do so again tomorrow) were the most likely to say the disadvantages were great than the advantages (78% and 95% respectively).

Challenging viewpoints

As part of the qualitative element of the research, two speakers were invited to put their case to the participants. Sunder Katwala, Director of British Future, spoke about the benefits of immigration for the UK. Sir Andrew Green, Chairman of Migration Watch UK, argued that the level of immigration was too high and needed to be reduced.

Their arguments, and participants' reactions to them, are summarised below.

Sunder Katwala, British Future 'Why does Britain need immigration?'

- Things we take for granted in Britain, like different kinds of food, came with immigrants over previous generations.
- Mo Farah arrived in from war-torn Somalia aged 11; he is proud to represent Britain and we should be proud of a society that gave him the opportunity to achieve his potential by winning an Olympic gold medal.
- The NHS is dependent on immigration – many doctors have come from India and nurses from the West Indies.
- Britain benefits when entrepreneurs come here to create jobs. Cobra beer was founded by an immigrant, Karan Bilimoria, who began in a flat in London and now exports to 50 countries, including India.
- It is important to Britain's identity that we are an island – but immigration is essential for international political links and to be a hub in the global economy.
- One in three immigrants is a foreign student. They bring £60,000 each in tuition fees, as well as spending tens of thousands of pounds in the local economy. We are competing with places like Harvard and Yale, and should welcome them as a source of income for the country.
- Children who do not speak English as a first language put pressure on schools, especially in London – but London schools have gone from having the worst results in the country to having the best, despite coping with these pressures. Having a mix of different cultural influences in the classroom will help children succeed in the global economy.
- Britain has a proud history of protecting genuine refugees. This has also brought benefits to the country – the founder of Marks & Spencer was a refugee, as were those who fled Hitler's Germany. The public have supported offering asylum to Afghani interpreters working for our Forces.
- We should welcome the fact that people want to come here to do tough jobs like cleaning and fruit picking. It is essential to enforce laws like the minimum wage, to ensure migrant workers are not exploited and British workers are not undercut.
- EU immigrants are half as likely to claim unemployment benefit as British-born people. It's not because Polish people are inherently harder working than the British, but because the ones who come to Britain are younger, better educated and more aspirational.
- The challenges, like schools, hospitals and housing, are as real as the benefits, and they need to be dealt with. We need to have tight controls, and to encourage those who are going to contribute and discourage those who are not. We also need a better balance of jobs and growth across the country.
- Integration is vital so we have a shared society rather than segregated communities. There are few benefits to Britain of immigration if we do not have integration too.
- You should be sceptical when people say we could solve problems like housing and unemployment if we didn't have immigration. Those problems need proper answers, and immigration can be a distraction from that.
- Migrants who want to work hard, pay into the system, speak our language, share our society and uphold British values should be welcome in Britain.

Sunder's presentation was well received. Most participants accepted that the benefits of immigration he mentioned were real. However, in discussions afterwards many said they thought he had given an idealised version of events; much as they would like the vision he gave to be real, the numbers involved had created problems which outweighed the benefits.

They agreed that the problem was not uniform across the country, but argued that a more balanced economy would take some time to achieve; meanwhile, most immigrants would still be attracted to London where shortages of housing and good school places were most acute. Many felt there must be a limit to the numbers the country could cope with, and we must be near that limit already.

"The implication of what he said is that there's no maximum limit that any country can contain. I think we're the second most densely populated country in Europe. You can't have a country with no limit, it makes no sense whatsoever."

Cultural Concerns

"I think he was looking at it through rose-coloured glasses really. Supposing hundreds of thousands of even the people who *can* speak English came over, where are they going to be housed, schooled?"

Universal Hostility

"He said that not everywhere is overstretched, but London is and we're in London. Maybe they need to sort out these places before they start bringing more in. I can't even get my kids into the school I live next to. And it's housing, the NHS, the works."

Fighting for Entitlements

"It's a little bit too easy to talk about spreading it across the country because in places like the North East, unemployment is a lot higher. So obviously they're going to go to London and the South East where it's more prosperous. So it's a nice thing to say we're going to spread it around, but I'm not sure how."

Universal Hostility

Participants strongly agreed that integration was essential if immigration was to benefit Britain. Again, though, many felt the number of recent immigrants made integration harder, and that the vision was idealistic since many immigrants themselves did not seem to regard integration as a priority. Though people believed immigrants should learn English, they questioned what could be done to enforce this, and most resisted any suggestion that the taxpayer should need to contribute.

“He talked about encouraging people to learn English, but how can you do that when you’re wasting money doing leaflets in every language?”

Universal Hostility

“It’s difficult enough to get control of immigration, never mind knocking on someone’s door and saying ‘you’re due a test on whether you can go to Tesco’s and order some food’. You’ve got to do it at the point of entry.”

Urban Harmony

The focus on Mo Farah and Karan Bilimoria prompted some to ask whether they were really representative of the immigrant experience in Britain. And how were the authorities supposed to identify the people who would be successful? Habitual suspicion of official statistics also led some to question the statement that overall, immigrants contributed more in taxes than they cost in terms of benefits and public services.

Several participants said they were surprised to hear that students constituted the biggest single immigrant group. Some questioned whether this was necessarily a good thing, since universities would want to give places to lucrative overseas students rather than those from Britain.

“How do you choose who’s going to come in? They’re not all Mo Farahs, they’re not all the person who created Cobra Beer.”

Cultural Concerns

“The people he’s talking about are all very able. He’s talking about students, doctors and nurses. It’s the other ones who concern me.”

Fighting for Entitlements

“He said that overall they take out about half what they put in. You can prove anything with statistics if you want to, and I’d love to see how he came to that conclusion.”

Universal Hostility

“I have a problem with what he said about all the foreign students coming here and paying £60,000 to go to university. When my daughters wanted to go they lowered the quota for English people to go because they’d rather have people coming from abroad and paying.”

Cultural Concerns

Sir Andrew Green, Migration Watch UK
'Immigration is too high and needs to be reduced'

- Migration Watch is not opposed to immigration, and certainly not to immigrants. Immigration brings benefits, but the argument is about scale: can mass immigration be allowed to continue?
- During the time of the last government, net foreign immigration into Britain was 4 million – equivalent to the entire population of Birmingham, Leeds, Bristol, Manchester, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Belfast and Newcastle.
- Immigration rose sharply after 1997 when there was a change of government. So the increase in immigration is not a matter of globalisation as some suggest, but is a result of government policy.
- Polls show public concern about immigration was negligible until the numbers started to increase dramatically after 1997.
- If immigration continues at the present rate the population of Britain will rise from 63 million today to 83 million in the middle of the century. We would have another 5 million people in the next 15 years.
- Migration accounts for one third of projected future household formation, requiring 200 houses to be built every day for the next 20 years. England is already the fifth most crowded country in the world.
- Since 2004, most new jobs have gone to foreign-born workers, while the number of British-born workers has fallen.
- Immigrants bring benefits to the economy, but we do not need mass immigration to have those benefits. We need a selective system. The House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee concluded there was no evidence that net migration generates significant economic benefits for the existing UK population. The government's Migration Advisory Committee concluded that the main benefits of immigration go to the immigrants themselves. Employers like cheap, flexible, high quality labour, but there are negligible benefits in terms of GDP per head of existing population.
- It is essential to integrate new immigrants, but when we have arrivals by the million this is very difficult to achieve. For example, there are schools where most of the children are immigrants.
- A recent poll found that only 12% of people said immigration had improved their local community (the same proportion of the population that is foreign-born).
- Another recent study concluded that if present trends continue, the white British will be in a minority in about 50 years.
- Two thirds of migration is from outside the EU. Non-EU migration rose from 32,000 in 1999 to 266,000 in 2004. Migration from inside the EU is almost balanced by the number of British people emigrating. The growth in migration has therefore mostly been from outside the EU, where the government could and should have had control.
- The current government has got migration down by about a third, but there is a long way to go. Labour know people were cross about their record on immigration, and UKIP's profile has grown. People are much more willing to discuss concerns about immigration than they were five or ten years ago. We believe immigration must be brought under control before it changes the nature of our society and does so against the will of the majority.

Sir Andrew's presentation echoed many of the concerns that people had expressed in their earlier discussions. The fact that most migrants came from outside the EU was new to many people, and some of the figures were alarming, especially the projected population growth to 83 million.

It was notable, though, that many people's scepticism about official statistics was such that they questioned the validity of the figures he quoted, even if they shared his overall view.

"We can't cope with 83 million people. We can't cope with 60-odd. The country doesn't get any bigger, it stays the same. How can we cope with another 20 million people?"

Comfortable Pragmatists

"Never mind about race, colour, creed, what he said was correct, that if numbers increase then it doesn't matter who you are, if you live here you are going to be in trouble. If people are coming here in numbers the country can't afford to accommodate, something is going to crack."

Fighting for Entitlements

"It needs verifying in some way. How reliable are government statistics?"

Comfortable Pragmatists

"They've not produced evidence to say that large parts of Bulgaria have decided to get on the bus and leave the home they've lived in for 300 years to decamp to the UK. So I think that was on the scaremongering front."

Comfortable Pragmatists

Several participants who shared his concern about the scale of migration were frustrated at what they saw as the lack of positive solutions to the problem. Sir Andrew made clear that his organisation did not specialise in integration; its aim was to advocate tighter and more selective controls on the numbers coming into the country. Some who agreed with this also wanted further answers on how to deal with pressures created by the large numbers who had already arrived.

"It's out of the box now with all these people here. They all have families. What do we do about the future? We can still be talking about this in 100 years, and while we're at it people are getting on and having babies."

Urban Harmony

Sir Andrew's passing reference to a study suggesting that white British people could be a minority in 50 years was off-putting to many participants, and not just those who were most favourably disposed to immigration. It seemed to them to lend a racial element to the argument with which they did not want to be associated. However, some supported his wider point that the nature of a democratic country should not be changed without the consent of the majority.

"I'm a British woman, Asian. How does it matter if in something like 50 years' time there are not going to be enough white people? I just found that a little bit offensive. I was born here. If I'm not part of the country, where do I go then?"

Cultural Concerns

"He lost me as soon as he said 'white British'. I don't know why he had to mention the word white."

Militantly Multicultural

"He really revealed that one of the major concerns for a lot of people is fear of change. It's not a good reason not to have immigration."

Urban Harmony

"I understand to a point where he's coming from. The country does need to hold on to some cultural values."

Comfortable Pragmatists

Politics and policies

Relative importance of immigration

Nearly half (48%) of respondents in our 20,000-sample poll named “controlling immigration” as one of the three most important issues facing Britain. This made it the second most important issue after “getting the economy growing and creating jobs” (68%).

However, there was considerable variation between groups. More than four fifths (81%) of UKIP supporters mentioned immigration – making it the most important issue for them – compared to 32% of Liberal Democrats and 38% of Labour voters. More than half (54%) of those aged 65 or over mentioned the subject, compared to 34% of those aged 18 to 24. Those in social groups C2 (58%) and DE (57%), compared to 38% of ABs.

Some participants, particularly in the Militantly Multicultural segment, argued that those who worried about immigration must be motivated by fear or ignorance.

“I think they’re predominantly areas that are very white and they’re British and they’re fearful of their communities changing, because it’s always about fear. And it’s exacerbated by a depressed economy.”

Militantly Multicultural

“There are pockets of the country where people are quite fearful but politicians should be educating people about the benefits of immigration.”

Militantly Multicultural

Debate allowed

Very few participants thought that immigration was currently a taboo subject in public debate (though some argued that people were occasionally still too ready to take offence or see racism where none existed). However, many felt that this was a comparatively recent development, and that ten years ago the subject had been much harder to discuss. The effect of this was that immigration on the scale Britain had seen in the last decade had never been properly debated: people were now free to debate the consequences of the decisions that had been made, though they had not had any say over the decisions themselves.

“Ten years ago, if you mentioned immigration everyone would think you were a racist. Now other cultures who are over here are saying, hold on, this is not about racism, this is how it’s affecting me personally or someone I know.”

Competing for Jobs

“I think the debate on immigration has happened a bit later than it should have done. There have been decades of immigration and now it’s an issue for most people. And you’re not anti-immigration because you’re anti-immigrant – being anti-immigration is for subsequent reasons. A lot of people are here already and now it feels a bit panicky.”

Cultural Concerns

Lack of information

Despite their strong views on the subject, participants often spontaneously said they knew few facts about some of the basic questions that most concerned them: for example, how many people came to Britain every year, the criteria for entry, the number of asylum seekers, the estimated number of illegal immigrants, who was entitled to benefits or to use the NHS, the numbers claiming benefits, the numbers in prison, the rules governing workers and students from overseas, and the impact of immigration on services like housing and health relative to other factors such as an ageing population.

However, they also readily admitted that if they were given figures on these questions, they would probably not believe them.

“The trouble is, we’re not able to see the statistics so you end up saying that immigration is a problem. We don’t actually know. Well, I certainly don’t.”

Competing for Jobs

“Ultimately we will come to a view from our own perspective, irrespective of what the Office for National Statistics comes up with, I’ll guess.”

Cultural Concerns

Competence

When discussing politicians and governments in the context of immigration, the question most often raised – though in different forms – was that of competence. Many people felt that the scale of immigration over the last ten years had not been a calculated policy so much as a failure to predict or control the situation. Similarly, the government was not deliberately obfuscating the number of migrants it expected from Romania and Bulgaria, it simply had no idea.

“We don’t have an immigration system that is fit for purpose. There are hundreds of thousands of applications waiting to be processed, and these are people that believe they are here legitimately. They’re not allowed to work so they can’t get on the tax or National Insurance radar so they’re having to take on ridiculously paid jobs to survive.”

Cultural Concerns

“We use contract cleaners at the council. I called the immigration service, said can you come down, we’ve got illegal immigrants being used by this contractor. They interview them, look at the papers, say yes, they’re illegal immigrants. And they say, we’re going to give you two months to leave the country, and they let them go. You’ll say, how are you going to find them again? Oh, we’ll find them. And that’s the system in this country.”

Cultural Concerns

“Come January, Bulgaria and Romania are going to be full members of the EU, and they’ve been fudging all these figures to say there will be 20 or 30 thousand of them, how do we know? The pressure on schools and so on nobody knows, and it’s their job to find this out, and they haven’t a clue.”

Cultural Concerns

There was also a clear view that the question of immigration and its consequences seemed beyond the ability of governments to get to grips with.

“The population is moving inexorably upwards, and at what point, what is roughly the number, when this country really can’t handle any more people? Logistically there will come a point when there are just too many people to sustain electricity, gas, water, all the rest of it. How high is the population going to get? Who is the judge of that?”

Universal Hostility

“I don’t see politicians addressing the big issues because they haven’t got the courage or the political will or the support to address things on more than a 5-year election cycle.”

Cultural Concerns

Which party has the best approach?

In our poll 31% said the Conservatives had the best approach to immigration, ahead of UKIP on 24% and Labour on 23%. Only 7% named the Lib Dems and 14% said another party.

More than three quarters (77%) of Conservative defectors to UKIP said the Tories had the best approach to immigration, compared to just 14% who named UKIP.

40% of the Universal Hostility segment said UKIP had the best policy, followed by 22% for another party, 19% for Labour and 16% for the Conservatives. In the Cultural Concerns and Fighting for Entitlements segments UKIP and the Tories were neck and neck, while the Conservatives had a 5-point lead over Labour in the Urban Harmony group. Labour had a clear lead in the Militantly Multicultural segment.

A number of participants in the group discussions observed that the Conservatives had always seemed more inclined to talk about immigration, and some felt Labour had a credibility problem on the issue given the party's record in government in the decade to 2010.

However, the failure as many saw it of successive governments to manage the scale of immigration or its consequences, and the seemingly intractable nature of the problem, meant none of the parties inspired people's confidence. Though a few mentioned UKIP, they also noted that Nigel Farage was in the comfortable position of being able to talk about the subject without having to follow rhetoric with action.

"Parties are very reactionary and always respond after the fact, which I find incredibly frustrating."

Cultural Concerns

"You don't hear much of a policy from the other parties. It would have to be the Tories saying cap immigration. I don't really hear anything from the other parties about it."

Cultural Concerns

"Labour have got a credibility problem. It rings a bit hollow to say 'now we're not in government we think we want to do something about it'."

Universal Hostility

"If you're the Prime Minister or one of the other leaders you're in charge, or you have the potential of being in charge, so you have to be very careful about what you say and how you say it. Farage can just rally the crowds."

Cultural Concerns

If Britain had a Conservative government...

Asked to imagine that Britain had a Conservative government with an overall majority, rather than a coalition with the Lib Dems, nearly half (48%) said the country's immigration policy "would be pretty much the same as it is today". A majority of Labour voters (53%), UKIP supporters (56%), and those in the Universal Hostility and Competing for Jobs segments (54%) thought this.

More than two thirds (68%) of Conservative defectors to UKIP say Britain would have a firmer immigration policy under a Tory government, compared to 27% of UKIP Loyalists.

Slightly fewer overall (43%) thought that under a Conservative government "Britain would have a firmer policy on immigration, with smaller numbers entering the country than is the case today". Apart from Conservative voters (68%), the only group among whom a majority

(55%) agreed with this were the Militantly Multicultural Segment, who were least likely to want a cut in immigration.

The discussions shed further light on these findings. For some, being in government alone would allow the Conservatives to act unimpeded by the Lib Dems (or at least deprive them of an excuse for not doing so). More often, though, people thought the Lib Dems seemed to have little or no influence within the coalition, so an undiluted Conservative government would be little different.

“I expected the Conservatives to be much tougher than they have turned out to be, because they used to complain about it so much. I expected them to have a hold on the number of illegal immigrants or people whose cases have not been processed in the time that they’ve been in government. They used constantly to bring that up, yet the boxes of unopened cases still remain.”

Cultural Concerns

What has the government done?

When shown a number of policies the coalition government has introduced in the field of immigration, a clear majority said they thought each policy was a good idea. This ranged from 56% who supported a minimum pay threshold for those applying to stay in the UK permanently, to 87% backing reform of the student visa system and a crackdown on bogus colleges.

Among those aged 65 and over, support for an annual limit on non-EU migration (85%) was significantly higher than among 18 to 24 year-olds (57%).

However, in no case did a majority think the policy had actually been introduced. While more than three quarters (76%) supported an annual limit on non-EU migration, only a third (34%) knew the government had already imposed one. Though two fifths had heard of reforms to the student visa system and the requirement to pass a ‘Life In The UK’ test, only a quarter knew the government had ended the right of overseas students to stay in the UK to look for a job, introduced a minimum earning threshold for anyone wishing to bring a spouse or partner from outside Europe, or capped the number of people employers were allowed to bring into the country. Only a fifth knew about the minimum pay threshold for those applying permanently in the UK.

Conservative Loyalists and Conservative defectors to UKIP were slightly more likely than most to think an annual limit had been introduced, though a majority of both groups thought this had not happened, or did not know. UKIP Loyalists were the most likely to think an annual limit was a good idea (90%) but the least likely to think the government had imposed one (28%).

In the Universal Hostility segment, approval of the policy ideas ranged from 70% (minimum pay threshold) to 95% (annual limit on non-EU migration), though no more than 36% (‘Life In The UK’ test) knew that any one of them had been implemented. In the Militantly Multicultural group, most did not think that most of the proposals were good ideas. In two cases – an annual limit on non-EU immigration and capping the number of people employers are allowed to bring in – more of them thought the policy had been introduced than thought it was a good idea.

‘Go Home Or Face Arrest’

Shortly after the qualitative research was completed the government launched its ad van scheme warning illegal immigrants to “Go home or face arrest”. We conducted a separate poll to gauge overall reaction and differences in attitude between our segments.

Shown a picture of the ad vans, 79% said they supported the scheme, though this varied widely: 95% of the Universal Hostility segment were in favour of the initiative, compared to just 30% of the Militantly Multicultural group. Opinion differed even more markedly over whether the scheme was racist: 18% thought so overall, ranging from 4% of the Universal Hostility to more than half (56%) of the Militantly Multicultural.

Though a majority in most groups, and 60% overall, thought the scheme showed the government was serious about getting to grips with the problem of illegal immigration, only 17% thought it would be effective in persuading illegal immigrants to leave the UK. Fewer than four in ten (37%), and a minority in all segments, thought illegal immigrants had a high chance of being arrested and deported.

There were also some notable variations by political group. Conservative voters (88%) and UKIP supporters (90%) were the most likely to say they supported the initiative, though clear majorities of Labour (68%) and Lib Dem voters (73%) also did so. Though UKIP supporters were the political group most likely to be in favour of the scheme, they were also the least likely to think it would be effective (14%).

The leaders

Participants were shown clips of the three party leaders speaking about different aspects of immigration. They recorded their responses using hand-held devices and discussed their impressions in groups. The key points of their speeches, and participants’ responses, were as follows.

Ed Miliband

Learning English is essential to integration, to helping your children, to get into work, to be part of society. If we are going to be one nation, everyone should speak English. We should expect it of everyone who comes to this country. But funding has been cut for English language courses.

[December 2012]

Most participants agreed strongly with Miliband about the importance of English, and liked the positive tone of the extract. However, some opposed the idea that the state should subsidise the teaching of English to immigrants, arguing that they should fund this themselves, or should not gain entry to the country if they could not speak English already.

More generally, some questioned Labour’s credentials on this subject since they believed many of the problems they had been discussing had arisen under the last government. Some also doubted that Miliband in particular had any real concerns about immigration, but felt he had to say something about the subject.

“I liked the way he was focusing on integration rather than control. And I’ve never voted Labour.”

Cultural Concerns

“He forgot to mention it was under his government the trouble started. He forgot to count them in and out in the first place.”

Cultural Concerns

“If you can’t afford to learn English in your own country, you’re coming to the UK to do what? If you’re coming to make a better life and support yourself, not on our benefit system, then you can support yourself to learn English.”

Competing for Jobs

“The trouble is that fundamentally I don’t think Miliband thinks there is a problem. I don’t think he believes in the stuff about controlling immigration.”

Cultural Concerns

Nick Clegg

There has been a crisis of public confidence in the immigration system. For too long politicians did not act on people’s concerns. The numbers are down by a third under this government. The public need the assurance that the government has a grip on who is going in and out, that it can deal with illegal immigrants, and that the system benefits the UK and does not put undue pressure on the state. The coalition is creating a system people can be confident in.

[March 2013]

Many participants refused to assign any credibility to Clegg, even though what he said reflected many of the views they had expressed themselves. In particular they discounted what sounded like a list of government achievements that they did not think sounded plausible. Some said they struggled to take anything he said seriously, given previous broken promises.

“He was saying things we can’t see any evidence of. He said ‘we’re doing this’ but we can’t see anything.”

Comfortable Pragmatists

“It’s all notional – yes, we’re going to get it under control, we’ll sort it out, don’t worry.”

Cultural Concerns

“People just don’t believe him because in the past he’s made some very public promises that have not come to fruition.”

Fighting for Entitlements

David Cameron

We cannot stop transitional controls on migrants from Bulgaria and Romania coming to an end, but we can make sure people come for the right reasons, not to claim benefits and public services. Our immigration controls have not damaged the economy. We are in a global race. Migration cannot be a substitute for training our own workforce. Failure to reform welfare and immigration meant migrants took jobs while young people did not work. We must not rely on immigration to fill the skills gap.

[March 2013]

Cameron’s clip received a largely positive reception, and he was given some credit for addressing the specific issue of training and the skills gap, though some were sceptical about what he was actually doing or whether it would work. Some said it was also suitably prime ministerial to be talking about Britain’s place in the global economy.

“I didn’t expect to see anything positive in what Cameron said, but I was quite interested when he was discussing how we’d got into this situation, the training and the ambition of the young people and the skills gap, and that’s why people came in – instead of just blaming the migrants coming in and saying that’s what caused the situation.”

Cultural Concerns

“It’s whimsy – you’re talking about kids who can’t be bothered to get off their arse and pick carrots. They’re not going to turn into rocket scientists. It seems as though he’s trying to shift the focus from immigration to training.”

Comfortable Pragmatists

“He sounded like a Prime Minister because he covered all the areas like talent and the international global race.”

Comfortable Pragmatists

Overall, many people felt none of the leaders said much you could disagree with, nor did they seem to disagree with each other. For some this was reassuring, showing they grasped the importance of the subject and seemed to have sensible views. At the same time, though, it was frustrating – if they all agree, why does nothing seem to happen?

“I don’t think anyone said anything we really disagree with. Language is very important, getting tougher is very important, and something needs to be done about the numbers. They all said that. So it should be easier to get through parliament, no?”

Cultural Concerns

“I thought all three clips showed how unpopular it is to be in power, and how hard it is to have a positive record on something like immigration.”

Cultural Concerns

“I don’t want them to return to the dog whistle thing, I want them to be sensitive about it. But they’ve got to be more specific and give more detail.”

Urban Harmony

Full poll results

GENERAL POLL: 20,062 adults were interviewed online between 17 and 29 May 2013. Results have been weighted to be representative of all adults in Great Britain.

AD VAN POLL (Q10 onwards): 2,006 adults were interviewed online between 2 and 4 August 2013. Results have been weighted to be representative of all adults in Great Britain.

Segments denoted as follows (see page 11 for definitions):

UHos = Universal Hostility
CC = Cultural Concerns
CJ = Competing for Jobs
FE = Fight for Entitlements
CP = Comfortable Pragmatists
UrbH = Urban Harmony
MM = Militantly Multicultural

1. Which of the following issues do you think is the most important facing Britain? And which is the second most important? And which is the next most important?

<i>% naming in top three</i>	ALL	UHos	CC	CJ	FE	CP	UrbH	MM
Getting the economy growing and creating jobs	68	58	63	73	63	78	54	84
Controlling immigration	48	90	66	60	67	15	34	1
Managing the economy overall	43	29	37	41	37	54	42	64
Cutting the deficit and the debt	32	21	32	30	29	42	30	33
Improving the NHS	30	26	25	28	25	32	37	44
Reforming welfare to cut benefit dependency	26	24	32	24	32	30	21	16
Defending Britain's interests in Europe	19	23	24	16	21	17	19	9
Dealing with crime	16	20	13	15	17	12	28	9
Improving schools	10	4	4	8	4	12	21	21
Protecting the environment	7	4	3	5	3	8	15	19

- UKIP supporters were the most likely to put 'controlling immigration' in their top three issues (81%). Lib Dem voters were the least likely to do so (32%) followed by Labour voters (38%).
- 54% of those aged 65+ chose 'controlling immigration', compared to 34% of those aged 18 to 24. 58% of C2s and 57% of DEs chose the issue, compared to 38% of ABs.
- 68% of Conservative Defectors and 88% of UKIP Loyalists named immigration in their top three issues. Only 30% of Lib Dem Loyalists did so.

2. Which party do you think would have the best approach to each of the following issues?

%	Con	Labour	Lib Dems	UKIP
Getting the economy growing and creating jobs	32	39	8	9
Controlling immigration	31	23	7	24
Managing the economy overall	37	34	8	8
Cutting the deficit and the debt	43	28	8	8
Improving the NHS	25	43	11	8
Reforming welfare to cut benefit dependency	45	27	9	8
Defending Britain's interests in Europe	33	28	9	19
Dealing with crime	39	31	7	10
Improving schools	28	38	13	8
Protecting the environment	18	22	21	5

- 77% of Conservative-UKIP Defectors said the Conservatives had the best approach to controlling immigration. 14% of them named UKIP.

Which party do you think would have the best approach to immigration?

%	ALL	UHos	CC	CJ	FE	CP	UrbH	MM
Conservatives	31	16	36	28	29	42	36	26
Labour	23	19	14	25	21	23	31	39
Liberal Democrats	7	4	4	6	5	8	11	16
UKIP	24	40	36	24	28	16	9	6
Another party	14	22	11	17	18	10	13	13

3. Thinking about the issue of immigration, which of the following statements comes closest to your own view?

%	ALL	Con voters	Labour voters	Lib Dem voters	UKIP voters
On balance, immigration into Britain has produced <u>more advantages than disadvantages</u> for the country as a whole	17	14	25	30	2
The advantages and disadvantages of immigration are about even	23	24	26	31	6
On balance, immigration into Britain has produced <u>more disadvantages than advantages</u> for the country as a whole	60	62	48	39	91

%	ALL	UHos	CC	CJ	FE	CP	UrbH	MM
On balance, immigration into Britain has produced <u>more advantages than disadvantages</u> for the country as a whole	17	-	1	1	1	26	28	80
The advantages and disadvantages of immigration are about even	23	1	10	12	14	54	43	19
On balance, immigration into Britain has produced <u>more disadvantages than advantages</u> for the country as a whole	60	99	89	88	85	19	29	-

- Women (14%) were less likely than men (21%) to say the advantages of immigration had outweighed the disadvantages.
- AB respondents (24%) were twice as likely as C2s (12%) and DEs (11%) to say the advantages outweighed the disadvantages.
- In London, 29% said the advantages outweighed the disadvantages, compared to 14% in the East Midlands and Yorkshire & Humberside.
- 26% of graduates, 28% of those still in full-time education and 35% of those with a higher degree said the advantages outweighed the disadvantages, compared to 13% who finished their education at secondary school.
- Lib Dem Loyalists (30%), Labour Loyalists (26%) and Labour Joiners (25%) were disproportionately likely to think immigration had produced more advantages than disadvantages. Switchers from Labour to UKIP were also more likely than most to say this (25%).
- Conservative Defectors (78%) and UKIP Loyalists (95%) were the most likely to say immigration had produced more disadvantages than advantages.

4. Which two of the following, if any, most concern you about immigration into Britain?

%	ALL	Con voters	Labour voters	Lib Dem voters	UKIP voters
Immigrants claiming benefits and using public services when they've contributed nothing in return	62	70	54	52	74
Increasing the pressure on public services like schools and hospitals	35	37	35	42	34
Immigrants being given priority over established residents when it comes to benefits or public services	32	31	31	26	34
Immigrants taking jobs that would otherwise go to British workers, or pushing down wages in general	27	20	31	22	28
Changes in the character of local areas with large numbers of people not originally from Britain	19	24	15	26	25
No concerns	5	2	8	8	-

%	ALL	UHos	CC	CJ	FE	CP	UrbH	MM
Immigrants claiming benefits and using public services when they've contributed nothing in return	62	67	77	58	98	63	26	28
Increasing the pressure on public services like schools and hospitals	35	21	65	13	-	52	30	45
Immigrants being given priority over established residents when it comes to benefits or public services	32	40	9	15	100	27	31	11
Immigrants taking jobs that would otherwise go to British workers, or pushing down wages in general	27	42	-	100	-	14	25	13
Changes in the character of local areas with large numbers of people not originally from Britain	19	22	40	7	-	20	23	16
No concerns	5	-	1	-	-	5	12	30

5. Which two of the following, if any, do you think are the biggest benefits of immigration into Britain?

%	ALL	Con voters	Labour voters	Lib Dem voters	UKIP voters
Immigrants often do jobs that need doing but British people don't want to do	49	56	46	51	49
Immigrants are often prepared to work harder for lower pay than British workers	38	43	34	33	42
Immigration has contributed to British culture in a way that makes life in Britain more varied and exciting overall	26	23	33	34	12
Overall, the ability of immigrants to work and do business in Britain makes for a more dynamic and prosperous economy for everyone	20	19	25	29	7
Immigrants often have specialist skills that are hard for employers to find in Britain	16	17	17	22	13
No benefits	16	12	12	7	28

%	ALL	UHos	CC	CJ	FE	CP	UrbH	MM
Immigrants often do jobs that need doing but British people don't want to do	49	25	70	55	65	63	19	24
Immigrants are often prepared to work harder for lower pay than British workers	38	25	61	51	56	33	20	8
Immigration has contributed to British culture in a way that makes life in Britain more varied and exciting overall	26	5	9	17	16	37	37	71
Overall, the ability of immigrants to work and do business in Britain makes for a more dynamic and prosperous economy for everyone	20	3	5	5	7	28	37	70
Immigrants often have specialist skills that are hard for employers to find in Britain	16	8	14	12	12	25	20	18
No benefits	16	56	11	18	14	1	11	-

- 37% of UKIP Loyalists said immigration had brought no benefits to Britain.

6. Please can you say whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

%	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Net agree
I, or someone in my family, have found it harder to find work or am paid less because of competition from immigrants	36	27	38	-2
The character of my local area has changed for the worse in recent years because of the scale of immigration	36	27	37	-1
I, or someone in my family, have been denied access to housing or other public services because priority seems to have been given to immigrants	24	28	48	-24
I, or someone in my family, have employed immigrants to do things like cleaning or building jobs at home	13	21	66	-53
I, or someone in my family, have been treated in the NHS by doctors, nurses or other staff who are originally from overseas	83	12	5	+78
People who have moved here from outside the UK have made my area a better place to live	18	46	36	-18

% agreeing	ALL	UHos	CC	CJ	FE	CP	UrbH	MM
I, or someone in my family, have found it harder to find work or am paid less because of competition from immigrants	36	83	28	50	33	7	60	1
The character of my local area has changed for the worse in recent years because of the scale of immigration	36	89	45	29	31	8	51	-
I, or someone in my family, have been denied access to housing or other public services because priority seems to have been given to immigrants	24	65	13	21	26	1	51	-
I, or someone in my family, have employed immigrants to do things like cleaning or building jobs at home	13	2	7	5	6	15	45	26
I, or someone in my family, have been treated in the NHS by doctors, nurses or other staff who are originally from overseas	83	76	86	80	84	87	67	94
People who have moved here from outside the UK have made my area a better place to live	18	-	1	2	3	21	54	68

- 50% of 18-24 year-old men said they or someone in their family had found it harder to find work or was paid less because of competition from immigrants. 44% of C2s and 46% of DEs said this, compared to 25% of ABs. A majority of UKIP Loyalists (54%) but only 22% of Lib Dem Loyalists said this.
- Net agreement that “the character of my local area has changed for the worse” was highest in the South East (+9%) and lowest in Scotland (-22%). Conservative Defectors agreed with this statement by 48% to 25%, but Conservative Joiners were more likely to disagree (39%) than to agree (35%). Lib Dem Loyalists disagreed by a 35-point margin, while UKIP Loyalists agreed by a 45-point margin.
- DEs (32%) were more than twice as likely as ABs (15%) to say they or someone in their family had been denied access to housing or other public services because priority had been given to immigrants. 37% of 18-24 year-old men said this, as did 40% of UKIP Loyalists, but only 14% of Lib Dem Loyalists.
- 25% of people in the South East said they had employed immigrants to do cleaning or building jobs at home, compared to 8% in the North of England. 18% of ABs said this, compared to 10% of C2s and 8% of DEs. Lib Dem Joiners (25%) were nearly twice as likely as average to say they had employed immigrants, and UKIP Loyalists (4%) less than one third as likely.
- Voter groups were almost equally likely to say that they or someone in their family had been treated in the NHS by staff from overseas. 84% of UKIP Loyalists said this, compared to 83% overall.
- Labour Loyalists were evenly divided over whether or not people from outside the UK had made their area a better place to live, while Conservative Loyalists disagreed by a 22-point margin; Conservative Defectors disagreed by 45 points. UKIP Loyalists disagreed by 72% to 3%, though Labour-UKIP Defectors disagreed by only a 2-point margin.

7. If the government were to clamp down on immigration and dramatically reduce the numbers entering Britain, which of the following do you think would be the most likely outcome?

%	ALL	Con voters	Labour voters	Lib Dem voters	UKIP voters
It would help the economy by reducing the pressure on public services, cutting the benefits bill, and making it easier for British people to find jobs	77	83	67	62	97
It would harm the economy by cutting the number of skilled workers and entrepreneurs, stifling innovation and reducing access to global markets	23	17	33	38	3

%	ALL	UHos	CC	CJ	FE	CP	UrbH	MM
It would help the economy by reducing the pressure on public services, cutting the benefits bill, and making it easier for British people to find jobs	77	97	95	95	93	64	64	17
It would harm the economy by cutting the number of skilled workers and entrepreneurs, stifling innovation and reducing access to global markets	23	3	5	5	7	36	36	83

8. If Britain had a Conservative government with an overall majority, rather than a coalition between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, do you think...?

%	ALL	Con voters	Labour voters	Lib Dem voters	UKIP voters
Britain would have a firmer policy on immigration, with smaller numbers entering the country than is the case today	43	68	37	42	33
Britain's immigration policy would be much the same as it is today	48	28	53	48	56
Britain would have a more relaxed policy on immigration, with larger numbers entering the country than is the case today	8	3	10	9	11

%	ALL	UHos	CC	CJ	FE	CP	UrbH	MM
Britain would have a firmer policy on immigration, with smaller numbers entering the country than is the case today	43	34	48	37	40	48	41	55
Britain's immigration policy would be much the same as it is today	48	54	46	54	50	48	40	43
Britain would have a more relaxed policy on immigration, with larger numbers entering the country than is the case today	8	12	6	9	9	4	19	2

- 68% of Conservative Defectors to UKIP say Britain would have a firmer policy on immigration under a Conservative government, compared to 27% of UKIP Loyalists.

9. Below are some policy ideas that have been proposed regarding immigration. Please say whether you think it is a good idea or not. // Please say whether you think the government has done it or not.

%	Good idea	Govt has done
Impose an annual limit on migration from outside the EU	76	34
Reform the student visa system and crack down on bogus colleges	87	42
Cap the number of people employers are allowed to bring into the country to work in skilled professions	57	23
Introduce a minimum pay threshold for those applying to stay in the UK permanently	56	21
Introduce tougher language requirements on overseas students and empower the Border Agency to refuse entry to students who cannot speak English	75	30
End the right of overseas students to stay in Britain for two years to look for a job after their course ends	58	23
Introduce a minimum earning threshold for anyone wanting to bring in a spouse or partner from outside Europe	70	25
Make it a legal requirement for those applying to settle in the UK to speak better English and pass a 'Life in the UK' test	81	41
Introduce a minimum probationary period of five years to deter sham marriages	81	25

Below are some policy ideas that have been proposed regarding immigration. Please say whether you think it is a good idea or not. // Please say whether you think the government has done it or not.

% saying 'good idea'	ALL	UHos	CC	CJ	FE	CP	UrbH	MM
Impose an annual limit on migration from outside the EU	76/34	95/30	90/34	86/33	90/32	65/34	57/40	33/35
Reform the student visa system and crack down on bogus colleges	87/42	94/34	93/43	89/38	92/38	88/47	64/46	79/49
Cap the number of people employers are allowed to bring into the country to work in skilled professions	57/23	87/25	64/20	72/24	67/23	36/18	50/38	16/18
Introduce a minimum pay threshold for those applying to stay in the UK permanently	56/21	70/23	58/18	63/22	60/22	49/18	50/38	39/15
Introduce tougher language requirements on overseas students and empower the Border Agency to refuse entry to students who cannot speak English	75/30	93/30	86/29	81/30	85/30	68/29	58/41	45/27
End the right of overseas students to stay in Britain for two years to look for a job after their course ends	58/23	84/26	71/22	65/24	68/24	43/18	47/37	20/19
Introduce a minimum earning threshold for anyone wanting to bring in a spouse or partner from outside Europe	70/25	84/26	80/23	74/27	80/25	65/21	54/39	41/19
Make it a legal requirement for those applying to settle in the UK to speak better English and pass a 'Life in the UK' test	81/41	94/36	91/40	86/38	90/39	79/44	61/46	54/44
Introduce a minimum probationary period of five years to deter sham marriages	81/25	93/27	91/22	87/26	91/26	79/21	60/39	56/16

- 57% of 18-24 year olds said an annual limit on non-EU migration was a good idea, compared to 85% of those aged 65+.
- Conservative Loyalists (42%) and Con-UKIP Defectors (40%) were slightly more likely than most to think an annual limit had been introduced, though a majority of both groups thought this had not happened or didn't know.
- UKIP Loyalists were the most likely to say an annual limit was a good idea (90%) but the least likely to think the government had imposed one (28%).



10. Posters like these have been launched in parts of London as part of a government initiative to persuade illegal immigrants to leave the UK voluntarily before they are arrested. What is your overall reaction to these posters?

%	ALL	Con voters	Labour voters	Lib Dem voters	UKIP voters
I support the initiative	79	88	68	73	90
I oppose the initiative	21	12	32	27	10

- 46% said they "strongly support" the initiative – including 53% of C2s (53% of whom supported it overall) and 52% of DEs (84% overall). 54% of Conservative voters and 67% of UKIP voters said they strongly supported the initiative. Conservative Loyalists (88%), Defectors (85%) and Joiners (88%) were almost equally likely to support the initiative.

%	ALL	UHos	CC	CJ	FE	CP	UrbH	MM
I support the initiative	79	95	91	90	91	65	67	30
I oppose the initiative	21	5	9	10	9	35	33	70

11. Please say whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the poster scheme.

<i>% agree / % disagree</i>	ALL	Con voters	Labour voters	Lib Dem voters	UKIP voters
The poster scheme will probably be effective in persuading illegal immigrants to leave the UK	17 / 60	22 / 52	21 / 58	17 / 61	14 / 63
The poster scheme is racist	18 / 63	8 / 78	32 / 43	23 / 57	3 / 82
The poster scheme shows the government is serious about dealing with the problem of illegal immigration	60 / 21	73 / 13	52 / 27	59 / 27	62 / 23
People who are in the UK illegally have a high chance of being arrested and deported	37 / 42	37 / 45	42 / 35	41 / 39	28 / 55

%	ALL	UHos	CC	CJ	FE	CP	UrbH	MM
The poster scheme will probably be effective in persuading illegal immigrants to leave the UK	17 / 60	22/61	16/58	13/61	13/63	12/64	40/30	13/72
The poster scheme is racist	18 / 63	4/87	6/75	9/68	9/71	25/50	42/25	56/30
The poster scheme shows the government is serious about dealing with the problem of illegal immigration	60 / 21	66/20	67/16	65/16	67/13	53/25	52/16	35/47
People who are in the UK illegally have a high chance of being arrested and deported	37 / 42	39/48	26/57	47/31	36/37	37/42	42/20	34/39

- Conservative Loyalists (75%) were more likely than Conservative defectors to UKIP (61%) to say the poster scheme showed the government was serious about dealing with illegal immigration.
- UKIP Loyalists (52%) were among the least likely to say they thought the posters showed the government was serious about illegal immigration.