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POST-BREXIT IMMIGRATION POLICY: RECONCILING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS WITH ECONOMIC EVIDENCE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Existing research shows consistently high levels of concern among people in the UK over the scale of immigration and its impact on jobs, wages and services. At the same time, that same body of research does not provide much in the way of detail about the nature of these concerns. This is partly because much of the data is from opinion polls which say little about the priorities and perspectives that underlie the aggregate numbers. Moreover, very little research has been carried out on what new immigration policies the British public would like to see once the UK leaves the EU and free movement ends. Our research for this report aims to fill these gaps by providing evidence about how people use and understand information about economic impacts of immigration, and what they might wish to see from new, post-Brexit, policies.

OUR METHODS

We used a range of methods to test a number of hypotheses about the role of evidence in formation, and change, of immigration attitudes. These methods were applied to a purposive sample of 105 participants in a Leave voting area of the UK and with relatively high levels of concern about immigration. Our purpose was to test out ways of getting people to consider the economic evidence by doing a number of exercises with the participants to encourage alternative view-points, counteract in-group favouritism, and ensure that participants felt listened to, before screening a commissioned video summing up the existing evidence on the economic impact of EU immigration on the UK. We also used surveys to measure immigration attitudes at various points.

Our findings should be interpreted with two considerations in mind: Firstly, we encouraged our research participants to discuss the economic impacts of migration – on wages, jobs and services – not their views about immigration more generally, although discussions naturally led to these as well. Secondly, it was not our intention to achieve a representative sample, but to understand a particular set of perspectives on immigration that lie behind the option polls. Because of this, we chose to carry out the research in a Leave voting area where immigration issues might be seen to have played a role in the outcome. With policy makers now wishing to take account of public attitudes in forming new immigration policy, it is important that these are understood.

OUR FINDINGS

1. Immigration attitudes are resistant to statistical evidence about impact

We saw no significant shifts in attitudes in our participants over time, compared to a control group. As such, our results are consistent with existing research suggesting that immigration attitudes are deeply embedded. However, our research does give some indication of *why* participants might not have changed their attitudes. Our qualitative data suggests participants were working with a clear hierarchy of evidence, in which personal experiences and anecdotes are viewed as more credible sources of information than either media stories or statistical data. Moreover, discussions in the focus groups tended to be framed negatively, with the consequence that positive perspectives on the impact of immigration, presented for example in our video, were viewed to an extent with mistrust. Combined with a lack of trust in the media, many of our participants concluded that it is best to rely on your own evidence, drawn from experiences and the accounts of people you know.

2. It is recognised that EU immigration has economic benefits

While participants saw highly skilled migration as valuable, they also saw low-skilled migration as having an important role to play. In particular, focus group participants readily acknowledged that low-skilled migrants meet labour shortages in sectors such as social care, and often perform jobs considered too unattractive by British people. While recognising the need for immigration more generally, participants also felt that young British people are not given sufficient opportunity to acquire skills.

The main concern about EU immigration is its perceived impact on services, and some participants believed that migrants are a net drain on the public finances and even achieve priority access. They did not argue that EU migrants should not be able to access services such as health and education, but they believed that they should be in the UK to work and should be net contributors through employment and taxation.

Cultural concerns are not prominent in debates about EU migration, although such issues were frequently raised in the focus groups. However, they were largely voiced in relation to settled ethnic minority communities, and involved issues of integration, extremism and crime. This is in line with existing evidence that different groups are associated with different threat perceptions, with EU migrants perceived in economic terms and Muslim ethnic minorities and migrants in cultural and security terms.

3. Control is more important than numbers

When surveyed, our participants said they wanted the Government to use Brexit as an opportunity to reduce the number of EU migrants coming to Britain. However, whenever that preference was discussed in the focus groups, it was framed in terms of a desire to screen out (perceived) low-quality migrants. The distinction between low- and high-quality migrants was not conceived in relation to qualifications and skills, but more widely in terms of economic need and, most importantly, contribution. Control was seen as important to help ensure that people come to contribute (e.g., work or study), rather than to claim benefits or to commit crime. Participants expressed varying opinions on whether future policy should favour EU migrants.

4. Public attitudes can be reconciled with the needs of the economy and employers

In drawing conclusions from our findings, we look at whether public attitudes can be reconciled with the needs of the economy and employers. It could be assumed that the public and employers have opposing values and priorities when it comes to immigration. Our focus group findings suggest that this might not be so. Participants expressed a desire for immigration to benefit the UK economically and in other ways, while also wanting British workers to have opportunities to work, for young people to have training opportunities, and for jobs to be of good quality. None of these is incompatible with employers' perspectives or with policy, which allow employers to continue to recruit migrants. Our focus group participants recognised this.

Employers and the public also show some recognition that, if we want to see EU migration continue, we have to consider the preferences of EU migrants themselves. Developing policy to address the needs and preferences of all three major stakeholders: the public, employers and EU migrants, will be challenging but there is at least some shared ground on which policy can be built.

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Last, but not least, we would like to thank the focus group participants for their enthusiastic participation in the research and engagement with the research questions. The research team is responsible for the interpretation of all data presented in the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the research

In June 2016, the UK voted to leave the EU, and it is clear that anti-immigration sentiments played a decisive role in the minds of many voters. As opinion research consistently shows, a large part of the UK population sees immigration as one of the most important issues facing the country (Ipsos MORI, 2018), and while the public at large are getting more positive about the impacts of immigration, they are also increasingly divided along generational, educational and social lines, with a large proportion of Britons becoming increasingly worried about immigration (Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2017).

What factors are driving people's negative perceptions of immigration? Some have argued that it is driven by cultural concerns about the impact on national identity and the traditional 'way of life' caused by the influx of foreigners with different cultural values and customs. Others focus on how attitudes are driven by economic concerns about the impact on jobs, wages and public services. These considerations can be based on a perceived threat to one's own well-being, or they can be socially-minded in the sense that they reflect a concern about the impact on the broader population, or on the country as a whole (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014).

Focusing in on the economic considerations, the problem is that the belief that immigration is costly and has a substantial negative effect on the economy is not supported by the evidence. Economists find impacts on wages to be very small (Dustmann *et al.*, 2005, 2013; Nickell and Saleheen 2008; Manacorda *et al.*, 2011; MAC, 2014) and there is no evidence that immigration has reduced natives' job prospects (Lucchino *et al.*, 2012; MAC, 2012; Devlin *et al.*, 2014; Wadsworth *et al.*, 2016). Impacts on public finances have been found to be positive through increased tax revenue (Dustmann and Frattini, 2014) and broader concerns about potential negative impacts on public services appear to be largely unsubstantiated (Portes, 2018). These conclusions were recently backed up by the Migration Advisory Committee report on the impact of EU migration (MAC, 2018)

Given this disconnect between public opinion and the weight of evidence on the economic impacts of migration, the UK Government faces a dilemma in negotiating the UK's post-Brexit relationship with the EU. On the one hand, it can design immigration policies that enable the UK to continue benefitting economically from immigration, but in so doing fail to meet public expectations for a new, more restrictive immigration policy, possibly exacerbating social divisions and hostility towards migrants. On the other hand, the Government can meet the expectations of a sizeable proportion of the electorate for more controlled immigration into the UK, but at a large economic cost, which is likely to impact most on lower income groups who support greater controls (Armstrong *et al.*, 2016). Precisely how this dilemma can be addressed, through both policy and public debate, depends on understanding public perceptions better than is currently the case.

1.2. The limitations of existing research evidence

Appendix 1 of this report summarises the literature on the economic impacts of immigration in the UK, while section 2 explores the existing evidence on British attitudes to immigration. Given the apparent mismatch between economic evidence and public perceptions of the economic impacts of immigration, our review of the evidence explores how informational factors influence immigration attitudes. The evidence shows that people are highly misinformed about the migrant population and immigration policies (Blinder, 2015; Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014). Misconceptions about levels of immigration are typically correlated with higher perceptions of threat and negative attitudes

towards the immigrant population, though it is unclear whether people's misconceptions drive negative attitudes or *vice versa* (Hopkins et al., 2016; Sides and Citrin, 2007). Experimental survey studies have shown that correcting misinformation does reduce misperceptions about the immigration population but fails to change attitudes and policy preferences (Hopkins et al., 2016; Alesina et al., 2018; Grigorieff, 2016). One limitation of these studies is that the intervention to correct misperceptions typically only focuses on correcting one small element of misinformation related to the number of immigrants.

At the same time, an argument can be made that public attitudes to immigration are still fairly poorly understood. Existing research rely mostly on survey/polling data and analysis, and it is only in recent years that research has emerged based on focus groups methods (see for instance Rutter and Carter, 2018; Rolfe et al., 2016; Gaston, 2018; Newman et al., 2017), experimental surveys (see recent examples in Kaufmann, 2017a; Alesina et al., 2018; Blinder and Markaki, 2018) and deliberative democracy exercises (Renwick et al., 2017). While polling data are instrumental in mapping out attitudes and divisions, and exploring these over time, other research methods are equally important to provide complementary data to assist interpretation, especially about what causal processes drive immigration attitudes.

For instance, survey studies rely on questions about 'immigrants' and 'immigration', terms which are often vaguely defined and likely to be understood differently by different respondents (Blinder, 2015). As such, survey studies often fail to capture people's multifaceted perceptions of the immigrant population (Blinder, 2015; Verkuyten et al., 2018). Similarly, focus group studies have complemented the interpretation of specific survey findings. For example, people's preference for high-skilled migrants seem to reflect their perceived economic contribution and their role in filling skill gaps, the latter of which is also relevant to low-skilled occupations (Rutter and Carter, 2018). Another example is the interpretation of to what extent the public is divided. Recent focus group studies show that a large proportion of the population can be considered 'balancers' in the sense that they are neither located squarely in the pro- or anti-immigration camp, in that they acknowledge the positive impacts of immigrants through filling skill gaps and paying taxes (*ibid.*).

1.3. Objectives

The key to addressing public concerns without damaging the economy lies in understanding the apparent mismatch between evidence and perceptions of the economic effects of immigration. Importantly, this is unlikely to simply be a matter of informing the public of available evidence, since policy preferences tend to remain in the face of corrected misconceptions (Grigorieff *et al.*, 2016; Katwala *et al.* 2014). Our two central research questions were therefore:

Q1. *Why do people not change their negative views on immigration when faced with evidence of its economic benefits?*

Q2. *If simply providing the economic evidence is not enough, how is it possible to foster less negative views on immigration?*

To answer Q1, we used focus groups to test the three most prominent hypotheses in the psychological literature (explained below) about why people do not integrate information about the economic effects of immigration. In particular, we aimed to understand the processes and moral considerations at work in potentially making views resistant to change.

To answer Q2, we hoped to identify effective ways of communicating about immigration to help ensure that, whatever people's views on immigration might be at the end of the day, they will at least have taken account of its economic impacts.

1.4. Research methods

Our methods consisted of a review of available evidence and new empirical research. As already noted, the experimental literature on immigration attitudes is small, and the subset concerned with the extent to which it is possible to move preferences through information interventions smaller still. In light of this, we ran an experimental focus group study to investigate whether policy preferences could be moved if participants were informed about the economic impact of immigration following interventions controlling for well-known biases. The focus group format inevitably reduced the potential sample size compared to alternative approaches (such as experimental online surveys). However, it was required by the nature of the interventions, which required face-to-face interaction with the participants.

1.4.1. The research locality

The research took place in the town of Sittingbourne in Kent and participants were recruited locally. Sittingbourne is in the local government district of Swale, which had a Leave proportion of 62.5% in the 2016 referendum. As such, the district falls about halfway between the national result (51.9%) and the highest Leave proportion of 75.6% (in Boston). We chose Sittingbourne as the location to carry out the focus groups because it has a number of features which make the views of its population of interest. Swale is a Leave voting area with slightly higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of economic activity than average. It is ranked the second most deprived area of Kent (out of 12) and nationally 77th (out of 376) and child poverty is higher than elsewhere in Kent and England taken as a whole. Its skill profile is towards the lower end with a greater than average proportion of residents employed as process plant machine operatives and in elementary occupations. Hourly rates of pay are lower than in the rest of the UK, at £12.37 compared to £13.99. In July 2018 2.8% of Swale's population were receiving out of work benefits, compared to 1.3% of the South East. These features make Swale, and the town of Sittingbourne, deprived relative to the rest of the South East and to England as a whole and therefore one which might be considered an area 'left behind' by those wishing to explain patterns of Leave voting in those terms (Ford and Goodwin, 2014; Goodwin and Heath, 2016).

With regard to migration and ethnicity, 2011 census data finds 96.6% of the population to be White, compared to 85.4% of England as a whole. Areas adjacent to Swale have a much higher proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) residents, including Medway (10.36%) and Gravesend (17.2%). Like the rest of Kent and England, Swale has seen an increase in the proportion of its population born outside the UK and, in 2017 net migration accounted for the majority of its total population growth. Employment is the main reason for inward migration and, compared to the rest of Kent, Swale has a consistently high proportion of short-term migrants seeking employment, as opposed to arriving to study. More detailed data on the characteristics of migrants to Swale is provided in Appendix 3.

1.4.2. The research participants

We wanted our sample to include a mix of people according to their attitudes towards immigration and support for leaving or remaining in the EU. In this section, we describe our recruitment methods and the profile we achieved in terms of basic characteristics and attitudes towards EU immigration.

A total of 105 participants were recruited, 92 through a recruitment company recruiting participants on Sittingbourne High Street and 13 through a local Facebook group. Standard demographic information including gender and age was collected at the point of recruitment. In addition, each potential participant filled out a survey (see Appendix 5) asking them about their feelings about EU immigrants—both overall and for specific groups (e.g., high-skilled and low-skilled); their concerns about EU immigration; their beliefs about the impact, both cultural and economic, of such immigration; their immigration policy preferences; and whether they would be willing to pay to reduce immigration. The first question on the questionnaire was designed to capture respondents' overall feeling about EU immigration as follows:

'On a scale of 1-10, do you think EU migration has had a positive or negative impact on Britain?'

We also used this question to screen out respondents scoring at the furthest ends, responding with a 1 or 2, or a 9 or 10. This was to ensure receptivity to the terms of the discussion, as well as room for moving preferences in a positive direction¹. Prior to any analysis, eight participants were excluded on account of not complying with the exercises in the experimental conditions. These conditions, as well as criteria for exclusion, are discussed below. For the remaining 97 participants, the median response was 5, distributed as follows:

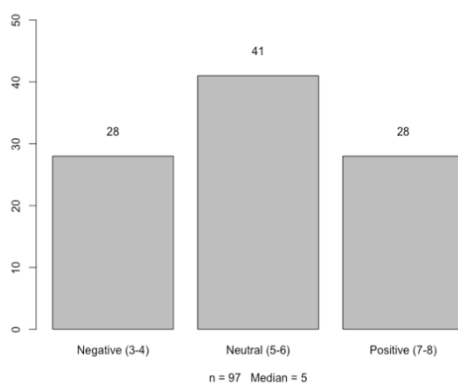


Figure 1. Frequency distribution of participants' responses on the question: 'On a scale of 1-10, do you think EU migration has had a positive or negative impact on Britain?' (1 = Very negative; 10 = Very positive; respondents answering 1, 2, 9, or 10 were screened out)

As can be seen from Figure 1, most participants gave a neutral response, with smaller and equally sized groups giving negative and positive responses, respectively.

¹ This screening method has been used in other recent focus group research for the same reasons (Rutter and Carter, 2018).

The gender breakdown of participants was 55% (53) female and 45% (44) male. Mid-2017 population estimates suggest 49.5% (72,500) of Swale residents are male and 50.5% (74,200) are female. Men were therefore slightly under-represented in our sample (Kent County Council, 2018).

The age distribution in our sample was as follows:

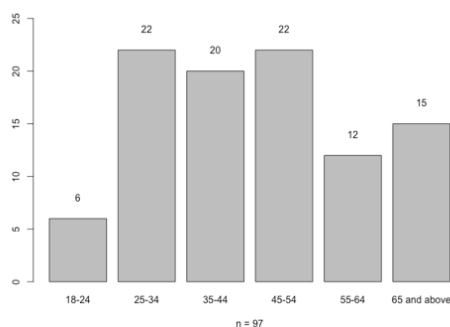


Figure 2. Age distribution of participants

Comparisons with mid-year 2017 Swale population estimates suggest both 18-24 year olds and those aged 65+ were under-represented in our sample (Kent County Council, 2018).²

The breakdown in terms of EU referendum vote was 35% (34) Remain, 53% (51) Leave, and 12% (12) non-voters. As such, the profile of focus group participants matched that of the area of Swale closely. If we take out non-voters, our sample consisted of 60% who voted Leave and 40% who voted Remain, compared to the referendum vote which was 62.5% vs. 37.5% in favour of Leave. Since the turnout in Sittingbourne was 74.2%, the proportion of non-voters in our sample (12%) was lower compared to what would be representative.

It is clear both from our choice of location for the focus groups and our selection methods that our sample is not representative of the UK as a whole. However, it was not our intention to achieve a representative sample, but to understand perspectives on immigration which lie behind the opinion polls. That is why we chose to carry out the research in Sittingbourne, a Leave voting area where immigration issues might be seen to have played a particularly prominent role in the outcome. With policy makers now wishing to take account of public attitudes in forming new immigration policy, it is important that these perspectives are understood.

1.4.3. Focus group design

Each participant was allocated to one of twelve focus groups of an average of eight people, such that each group had a similar demographic and referendum vote profile³. These groups were in turn allocated to one of four conditions: three treatment conditions, and one control condition. Each condition was attended by two members of the research team, who started the group by introducing themselves, saying that they were looking to better understand people's concerns about

² Mid-Year 2017 Age Population estimates for Swale: 11% aged 18-24; 16% aged 25-34; 15% aged 35-44; 18% aged 45-54; 16% aged 55-64; 65+ 24%.

³ Although this principle was followed in allocating registered participants to groups, a higher no-show rate by Remain voters resulted in an imbalance towards Leave voters in many of the focus groups.

the impact of EU immigration on Britain, and then asking each participant around the table to introduce themselves and saying a few words about why they had decided to attend. The groups in a treatment condition then proceeded as follows:

In the **listening condition**, we wanted to test the hypothesis that people fail to change their preferences because, when we are ‘just giving people the facts,’ they feel lectured to, and stop listening as a result (Katwala *et al.*, 2014). The expectation on this hypothesis was that we would see greater receptivity to the evidence, as measured by changes in responses in surveys responses, following an intervention that makes people feel listened to, since people are more prone to listen to people who are listening in turn (Ahlstrom-Vij, 2014; Tyler, 2006). The experimental intervention in this condition involved asking the participants about their main concerns about EU immigration to the UK, and then for the members of the research team to look the participants in the eye, affirm them through body language and verbally, and asking follow-up questions that show an interest in their position and validate rather than challenge them.

In the **devil’s advocate condition**, we were looking to test whether people fail to change their preferences because they tend to accept confirming evidence while disregarding disconfirming evidence (e.g., Lord *et al.*, 1979, Mercier and Sperber, 2011). Our expectation was that we would see greater receptivity to evidence following an intervention that reduces biased assimilation of evidence. For this intervention, we again asked participants about their concerns about the economic impact of EU immigration on Britain. For the first three concerns that came up, we wrote them on a whiteboard and then asked each participant, for each concern that they shared, to write down at least three reasons for why they might be mistaken, thereby playing devil’s advocate with their concerns.⁴ Each participant also wrote down their name on each sheet, to enable us to exclude from subsequent analysis anyone who didn’t follow the instruction⁵. Only two participants were deemed non-compliant and were therefore excluded from analysis.⁶

In the **proposal defence condition**, we wanted to test whether people fail to change their preferences on account of favouring those they consider to be of their own group over others, in this case immigrants. Our expectation was that we would see greater receptivity to evidence following an intervention that reduces in-group favouritism. For this intervention, we handed out a piece of paper to each participant and, asked them to defend a hypothetical proposal for EU citizens currently in the UK to receive a free legal advice telephone service on their right to stay in the country post-Brexit. The proposal was designed in such a way that it would clearly be costly to the public purse, and there would be no obvious benefit for anyone except for EU migrants. The exercise was designed to help participants feel that their defence of the proposal was written voluntarily, and that it was to some degree public: they were asked to write their name on the paper and told that their argument would be considered by a working group. These measures were important because

⁴ Early versions of this type of intervention can be found in Experiment 1 in Lord *et al.* (1984) and Experiment 2 in Koriat *et al.* (1980). The particular formulation we used most closely models the one in Study 1 in Mussweiler *et al.* (2000), adapted to apply to biased assimilation of evidence as opposed to anchoring effects.

⁵ Compliance for purposes of inclusion in subsequent analysis was defined narrowly: if a respondent at any point during his or her answer demonstrated any reflection on why their concerns might have been wrong, it was recorded as compliant.

⁶ See Appendix 8 for an analysis of the responses to the devil’s advocate exercise

the point of the exercise was to induce cognitive dissonance in cases where the proposal ran counter to participants' views, and that dissonance would be resolved by taking a more positive view of EU migrants⁷. Six participants did not comply, either by not writing an answer or arguing the case to either deport migrants or spending the money on UK public services instead⁸.

Three of the focus groups were carried out as a **control condition** with no intervention.

Following these interventions, or none in the case of the control group, all participants were exposed to the same 'evidence' in the form of a commissioned [video](#) that, on the basis of the evidence review in Appendix 1 and review protocol in Appendix 2, summed up the data on the economic (including fiscal) impact of EU immigration to the UK. The video covered questions such as the following:

- Does EU migration drive down wages?
- Why can't British workers just do the jobs that EU migrants are doing?
- Do EU migrants take jobs from British workers?
- Do EU migrants put pressure on public services like health and education?

The script of the video was written with reference to research evidence, referenced in the final scene. The video was designed by a professional animator.

After having seen the video, every participant filled out the same survey they filled out at recruitment. Then, we engaged the participants in a discussion that lasted for about an hour. We started out the discussion by asking participants what they felt about the video. Beyond that, we let the direction of the discussion be guided by the participants. Each focus group was audio recorded and transcribed. These transcripts make up our qualitative data. Two weeks after the focus groups, the participants filled out a survey which contained all of the survey questions from before, together with a couple of questions about how they experienced the focus groups.

Participants were given £35 for taking part in the focus group and an additional £10 for completing the follow-up survey. This additional sum was given in order to encourage survey participation and to therefore have a set of attitudinal data at three points of the research.

⁷ The exercise was modelled on the one found in Experiment 1 (high-choice, high-publicity condition) in Leippe and Eisenstadt (1994) in turn building on Baumeister and Tice (1984), both of which concerned racial in-group/out-group attitudes.

⁸ See Appendix 8 for an analysis of the responses to the defence treatment exercise.

2. EVIDENCE REVIEW ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRATION AND EU IMMIGRATION

This section reviews findings of analysis of survey and polling data and other studies, mainly but not exclusively from the UK, that have explored public attitudes towards immigration and EU immigration. The historical data and papers on UK public attitudes on immigration is not as comprehensive as one might expect (Ford et al., 2014). The main sources are survey studies including the British Social Attitudes survey (BSA) and the British Election Study as well as commercial pollsters such as Gallup, Ipsos MORI and YouGov. However, even for these sources, survey questions on immigration attitudes have been infrequent and irregular without a consistent wording over an extended period (ibid.). However, this has been a growing field in recent years, with an increasing use of experimental survey studies as well as focus group research giving more detailed insights into certain aspects of public opinion.

The first section presents the available evidence on the salience and attitudes towards immigration, explaining how the public are predominantly negative towards immigration and how attitudes have developed historically, and then outlines the substantial divisions in attitudes across social, education and generational lines. The subsequent sections review the evidence on why people hold or develop anti-immigrant attitudes, which is dominated by the debate in the literature between economic and cultural factors. The review will also explore the role of evidence and information in shaping people's opinions, and it will discuss the failure in much of the literature to distinguish between different types of migrants. Our review methodology is outlined in Appendix 2.

2.1 Salience

Coinciding with an unprecedented increase in net migration in the past two decades, immigration has become a highly salient political issue in the UK in recent years, according to survey data by pollster such as Ipsos MORI, Gallup and YouGov (see Figure 3).

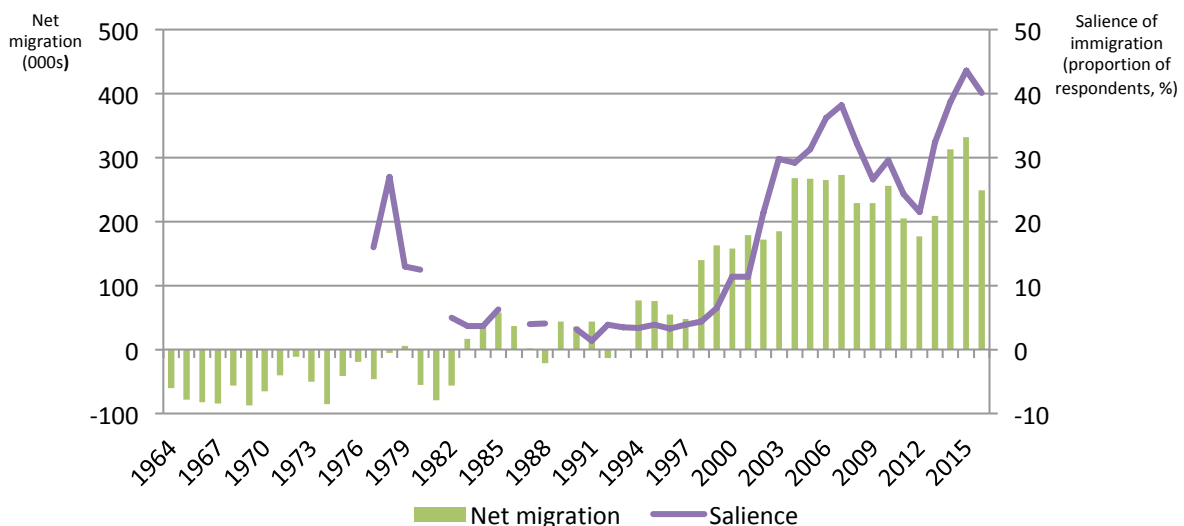


Figure 3. Net migration (ONS, 2018) and proportion of respondents who see immigration as one of the most important issues facing the UK (Ipsos MORI, 2018)

For most of the 1980s and 1990s, the salience of immigration was close to zero (Ford et al., 2014). Since then the salience has increased and immigration has been continuously rated as one of the most important issues facing the UK reaching a first high of over 20% in 2007 and then more than 50% in 2015 (see Figure 4 below). The increase in salience is also reflected in data of MP caseload which shows an increase in constituents contacting their MPs about immigration, refugees and asylum (Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014; Blinder and Allen, 2016). In recent years the salience of immigration first declined during the economic crisis and then increased during the economic recovery as economic concerns dominated and then subsided (Ford et al., 2014; Ipsos MORI, 2014). Following the Brexit referendum, the salience of immigration has again declined (Ford, 2018). This is likely to be, at least partly, due to an increase in related topics such as EU/Brexit (see Figure 4 below).

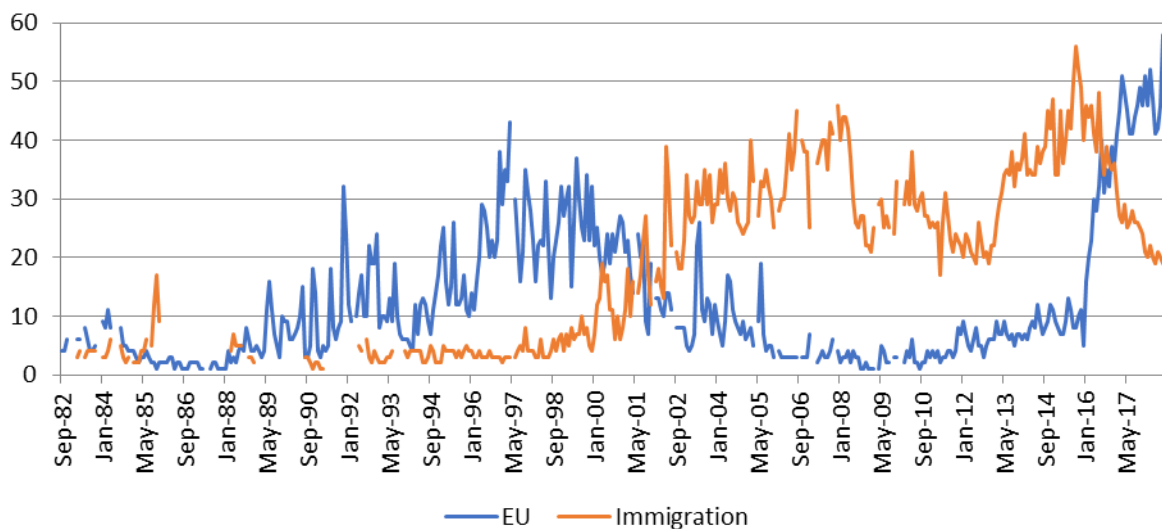


Figure 4. Salience of EU/Brexit and immigration (1982-2018). Proportion of respondents who mention it as one of most important issues facing the UK (Ipsos MORI, 2018)

The increased importance of the topic of immigration means the debate has spilt into other policy areas such as EU membership (Ford and Goodwin, 2014) and the welfare state (Alesina and Glaeser, 2004). Immigration concerns have impacted on party politics, in particularly by fuelling the rise of UKIP (Food and Goodwin, 2014). In recent years, the immigration debate has exposed the frictions between public opinion and the constraints on public policymaking (Ford et al., 2014). The public has consistently demanded restrictions on immigration inflows and the Conservative Party responded to this by famously committing themselves to reducing net migration to the ‘tens of thousands’ ahead of the 2010 general election.

However, in reality, policymakers have faced significant constraints in responding to public concerns, primarily due to the inability to change EU migration policy and freedom of movement in particular. Instead the government has pursued a range of restrictive reforms against more economically valuable and socially acceptable migrant streams to achieve their immigration target (Ford et al., 2014). This has included changes to rules on student migration, family reunion migration and to labour migration, as well as the introduction of the ‘hostile environment policy’ (Cangiano, 2016; Gower and Hawkins, 2013; Robinson, 2013). Ultimately, the vote to leave the EU is often attributed

to immigration concerns (Harding, 2017; Ford and Goodwin, 2014; Clarke et al., 2017) and the vote can be interpreted as the natural consequence of this consistent friction between public opinion and the constraints on policymaking.

2.2 Britain's attitudes towards immigration

Analyses of data have consistently shown that public opposition to immigration is widespread in the UK (Ivarsflaten, 2005; McLaren and Johnson, 2007; Sides and Citrin, 2007; BSA, 2017; Ipsos MORI, 2017). Historically, British public attitudes towards migration became less negative during the 1980s and 1990s, then turned increasingly negative at the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, before finally becoming more positive, particularly in the most recent polling conducted after the Brexit referendum (Curtice and Tipping, 2018; Ipsos MORI, 2018; Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2017, Ford et al., 2014, Ipsos MORI, 2017; Ford, 2018; Ford and Heath, 2014). This positive change has occurred in regard to both people's attitudes to economic impacts as well as cultural impacts (Curtice and Tipping, 2018). In a European context, the upward trend in attitudes towards immigration means that the UK is now mid-ranking in terms of how immigration is viewed for the economy though the UK is still among the most negative countries regarding the cultural impacts (Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2017). This contrasts with earlier studies that highlighted the British public as particularly ill-disposed towards immigration in a comparative context (Ford, 2012). However, even though preferences are now more similar to other countries, Hatton (2017) noted that what sets the UK apart is that the product of 'salience' and 'preferences' are consistently high in the UK compared to other countries, with the implication that for the people who are predominantly negative about immigration, this is a very important issue.

The positive change in people's attitudes to the impact of migration, as reported by survey studies, represents something of a paradox, particularly considering the most recent BSA figures show an increase in support for leaving the EU compared to before the referendum campaign (Curtice and Tipping, 2018). The positive change following the Brexit referendum may reflect a galvanising effect from the Brexit vote on those who already held positive views about the impact of immigration, or a sense of reassurance among those with negative views that immigration will be dealt with as part of the deal to leave the EU (Ipsos MORI, 2017; Ford, 2018). With regard to the latter, however, the most recent polling from the BSA survey show that the British public (including those in favour of leaving the EU) are not expecting any substantial changes to the level of migration as a result of leaving the EU (Curtice and Tipping, 2018). Instead, the study shows that the question of British identity has seemingly come to play an increasingly central role in people's attitudes toward Brexit, particularly among people in favour of leaving (*ibid.*). This is also reflected in a much greater increase in support of leaving the EU among those who feel British cultural life has been undermined by immigration than those who feels it has been enriched. Meanwhile, there is no systemic evidence that voters' perceptions of the economic impacts of immigration has been salient in driving opinion towards EU membership (*ibid.*).

According to survey studies, British attitudes towards whether there should be more or less restrictions on migration has remained fairly constant over the years (Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2017). While the salience and actual levels of immigration have changed, and while British people have changed their overall attitudes towards the impact of immigration on Britain's economy and culture, the British public (typically in excess of 60%) consistently report in survey and public polling that there are too many immigrants in the UK and that they would like to see immigration levels

reduced (Ipsos MORI, 2018; Ford and Heath, 2014; Blinder and Allen, 2016; Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014; Blinder and Allen, 2016). However, Figure 5 below shows that recent survey findings suggest that this may also have experienced in reduction in recent years following the EU referendum (Blinder and Richards, 2018). In addition, people have become more selective in who to let in, with significant and increasing majorities believing that important criteria for selecting migrants should be the ability to speak English, a commitment to the British way of life and possessing needed skills (Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2017).

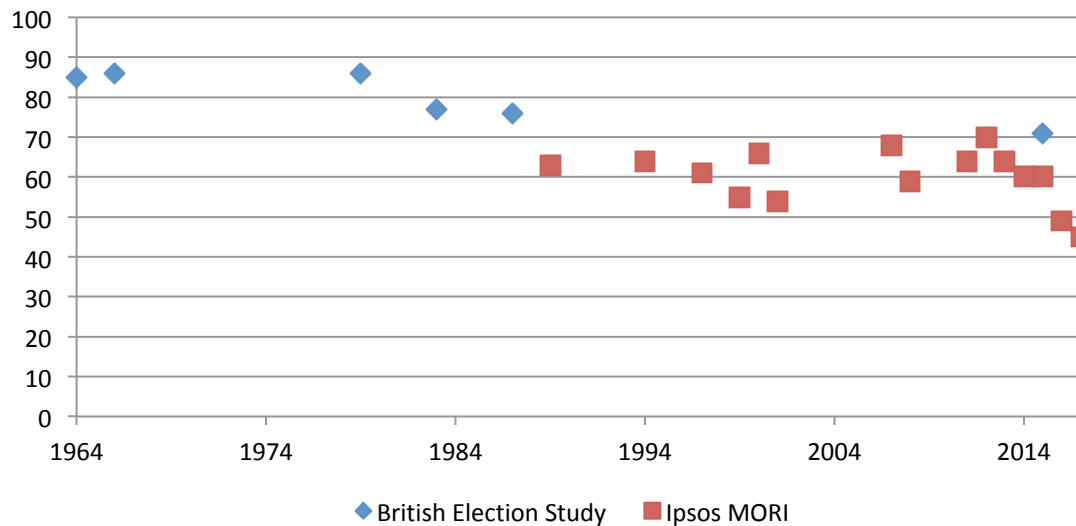


Figure 5. Too many immigrants (polling from 1964-2018), British Election Study and Ipsos MORI.⁹

While the headline aggregate findings now suggest that the UK public has a fairly balanced view on the economic impacts of immigration, most people don't actually hold this balanced view (Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2017). In practice, polling data and survey studies show that people in the UK are either positive or negative about the economic impacts of immigration. In fact, in a comparative perspective Britain is the most divided country in Europe, and these divisions are growing (Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2017). These persistent and deepening divides may also help to explain why immigration has become more politically contentious at the same time as the overall public attitudes have become more positive (Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014). While some groups do not see immigration as an important issue, other groups see immigration as an increasingly important issue which is ever more central to their voting decisions. This may have contributed to creating the impression of a 'population-wide backlash against immigration' (Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2017). Similar to the friction between the high salience and the constraints in public policymaking, the immigration divide means that a centrist compromise policy, which would match the overall average of public opinion, may backfire as it is likely to satisfy few voters (ibid.).

⁹ Adapted and updated from Migration Observatory Briefing Paper (Blinder and Richards, 2018). Sources: British Election Studies 1964, 1966, 1979, 2015 (Do you think that too many immigrants have been let into this country or not? Yes/ no), 1983, 1987 (Do you think that immigration has gone too far? Yes/ no); Ipsos MORI 1989-2017 (How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'There are too many immigrants in Britain' 5-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'). Ipsos MORI allowed a 'neither' response in some years but not others.

In contrast to survey studies describing a deep divide in the UK public, British Future has argued that ‘balancers’ represent the majority of the British public. This is reported in a number of papers based on polls and focus groups with the public (Katwala et al., 2017; Rutter and Carter, 2018; Katwala et al., 2014). While not directly contradicting the findings above as British Future recognises that around half the population consist of ‘rejectionists’ and ‘migration liberals’ at either end of the immigration spectrum, British Future also found that a majority of the British public hold more nuanced views on immigration, capable of seeing both the positive and negative aspects of immigration. Their reports also recognise that immigration is not a politically salient issue for the ‘balancers’ which means they are often not heard in the immigration debate despite forming a majority group.

2.3 How are Britain’s attitudes divided?

Survey research shows that not only are British attitudes on immigration divided, they are divided along specific lines. Research analysing BSA and ESS data (Ford et al., 2012, Ford and Heath, 2015; Heath and Richard, 2016; Ford and Lymeropoulou, 2017) shows strong divisions by age, education and social class. And similar to the overall divide in attitudes, these divisions have been growing since 2002 (Ford and Lymeropoulou, 2017). In particular there is a strong positive relationship between education and pro-immigration attitudes (Card et al. 2005; Braakman et al. 2017, Ivarsflaten 2005) and the likelihood of expressing prejudice or discriminate against ethnic minorities (Coenders and Scheepers 2003; Vogt 1997).

In addition, there is a strong generational divide over immigration, with older generations holding more anti-immigrant views than younger generations (Ford, 2011, 2012; Ford and Lymeropoulou 2017; Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014; Ipsos MORI, 2014). Comparative studies show that the UK generational divide is larger than in other countries (Ford, 2012; Ford and Lymeropoulou 2017). Longitudinal survey studies show that the generational gap didn’t exist until the mid-1990s where each generation was equally unconcerned about immigration, but then all generations increasingly started expressing concern about immigration, but at varying rates in strict generational order, with the concern of the oldest generations increasing most quickly (Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014). Other analyses shows the generational differences may work in parallel with a lifecycle effect where concern increases with age (Ipsos MORI, 2014; Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014). For instance, analysis of the ESS and BSA found that baby boomers went from being the most positive generation in 2002 to the most negative ten years later (Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014).

2.4 What drives immigration attitudes: Economic or cultural factors?

There is a large body of academic literature examining the determinants of people’s attitudes towards immigration. In particular, researchers have asked whether anti-immigration attitudes are driven by economic factors or socio-cultural factors, or some combination of the two. The debate between economic and cultural factors can also be framed as being between interests and identities. In both theories, a sense of threat is a prior condition to forming anti-immigration attitudes; what differs is the nature of the threat, and particularly whether the origin of the treat lies in economic conditions or in cultural and ethnic factors (Sides and Citrin, 2007). Other determinants that will be explored is whether and to what extent contextual or informational factors affect attitudes towards immigration.

From the economic perspective, the opposition to immigration is rooted in economic considerations. Attitudes are shaped by people's concerns about the ethnic competition over scarce resources, and particularly that natives may lose out due to the higher immigration population (see Sides and Citrin, 2007; Citrin et al. 1997; Esses, Jackson & Armstrong, 1998; Sniderman et al. 2004; Dancygier and Donnelly, 2013; Dustmann and Preston, 2006; Hanson, Scheve and Slaughter, 2007; Facchini and Mayda, 2009; Facchini and Mayda, 2012; Malhotra, Margalit and Mo, 2013). This concern can be self-interested (e.g. attitudes are driven by the perceived threat to one's own material well-being through loss of jobs, wages, welfare benefits etc.) or socially-minded (e.g. attitudes are driven by the concern about the impact on the broader population, or on the country and its economy) (Nakata, 2017; Citrin et al., 1997; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014; Dustmann et al., 2013).

As any negative economic effects on the broader population are very modest at best (see previous chapter), it can be difficult to explain why economic considerations produces such strength of feeling about immigration among the public (Battison et al., 2014). However, all that matters for generating public attitudes is the perceived impact and in particular perceived localised and individual impacts, and the evidence of the aggregate economic impacts may not feed into what people perceive (Strabac, 2011; Cornelius and Rosenblum, 2005). Subsequent sections in this review and in the primary analysis will examine in more detail how people perceive immigration impacts, and how this is affected by information sources, evidence and media portrayal.

The existing literature often argues that people have a very personalised understandings of what the impact of immigration is (Rutter and Carter, 2018; Katwala et al., 2014). Focus group studies in the UK have shown that detailed and abstract economic arguments about fiscal and economic impacts, such as describing the macroeconomic contribution migrants make to the UK, did not resonate with research participants. Instead, it was observed that economic impact is seen through what they call a 'common sense fiscal lens', in which migrants contribute positively if they are in work and pay taxes, and negatively if they work off the books, send money back home to their family or are perceived as coming to claim benefits (ibid.), and immigration is often used as a proxy for globalisation as the immigrant inflows are the most visible aspect of globalisation (Brady et al., 2016). There is also evidence to suggest to people respond more strongly to information conveyed through personal narratives rather than through statistical data and economic evidence (Perloff, 2010). As such, there is not necessarily a contradiction between the lack of evidence on adverse economic impacts and the literature that argues that the economic threat drives anti-immigrant attitudes. However, it should be noted that the majority of the literature, which will be reviewed below, does focus on actual impacts through the focus on high and low skilled workers.

Following Borjas (1999), a number of studies have explored the validity of this theory empirically, by testing predictions of various models of labour market competition and use of public services. However, the literature mostly tests the theory of labour market competition in the self-interested sense, e.g. the prediction that individuals will oppose immigration of workers with similar skill levels to their own (as they compete directly in the labour market) but support inflows of immigrant workers with different skills levels (as they complement their skills in the labour market) (Mayda, 2006). In the pioneering article for this approach, Scheve and Slaughter (2001) found that unskilled workers in the US were more likely than skilled workers to oppose immigration. This is interpreted as consistent with the labour market hypothesis as US immigration is predominantly unskilled. Similarly, in a cross-country study, Mayda (2006) found that the positive association between

natives' skill levels and their support for immigration is more pronounced in countries where natives are more highly skilled compared to immigrants, i.e. in countries where the high-skilled population stand to benefit more from low-skilled immigrant inflows (O'Rourke and Sinnott, 2006). Both studies show that the skill effect only works for people in the labour force, which they interpret as evidence for the labour market hypothesis (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Mayda, 2006).

Survey studies in the UK have found correlations between anti-immigration attitudes and economic vulnerability and lower levels of economic satisfaction, which may indicate that economically insecure people may worry more about the competition from migrants (Ford et al., 2012; Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2017; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014; Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014). Some studies find that concerns about fiscal impacts and the effect on the welfare state are more important in driving immigration attitudes than labour market concerns (see Braakman et al 2017; Campbell et al. 2006; Card et al. 2012; Rustenbach 2010; Dustmann and Preston 2007; Facchini and Mayda, 2007).

However, there is a large literature that criticise these studies, both on empirical and theoretical grounds. Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007) argue that previous studies only indirectly test the labour market hypothesis. They argue that studies such as the pioneering Scheve and Slaughter (2001) and Mayda (2006) do not really differentiate between low- and high-skilled immigration but only implies this at a country level as a low-or-high skill dominant immigrant workforce. Using the 2003 ESS data, they show that natives with higher skills are supportive of all types of immigration regardless of their skill level and regardless of how they affect the individual's exposure to labour market competition. This is reinforced by a later paper by Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) who found no evidence that US natives are more likely to oppose immigrants with similar skills to their own, but instead found evidence that higher educational levels among natives is correlated with higher support for both high- and low-skilled immigration. This finding is replicated among a number of studies in Britain (Ford et al., 2012).

These findings point towards potential problems with identifying causality in previous studies, arising from the fact that education and skill-levels are closely related with many other variables. There are many possible interpretations for why evidence strongly shows that higher educational levels are positively correlated with immigration attitudes. One interpretation is the one offered by the economic literature that more educated people are less vulnerable to labour market competition (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Mayda 2006; O'Rourke and Sinnott, 2006). Another interpretation, based on the Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007, 2010) findings, is that people with higher education tend to be more positive about the cultural impacts of immigration since they value ethnic and cultural diversity, and are more tolerant towards ethnic minorities.

This interpretation is the basis for the cultural literature which emphasises the importance of non-economic drivers, and in particular cultural factors. According to this perspective, opposition to immigration is driven by the perceived cultural threats caused by the influx of foreigners with different cultural values and customs (see Citrin et al., 1997; Sides and Citrin, 2007; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007; Dustmann and Preston 2007; McLaren 2003). According to the framework by Hellwig and Sinno (2016), these are perceived threats to 'national identity' (Sniderman et al., 2004), religion (McDaniel et al., 2011), values and beliefs (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007), ethnic differences (Brader et al., 2008), and the perceived increase in security threats and crime (McLaren and Johnson, 2007; Carl, 2016). In contrast to this, recent focus group studies have found that economic contribution dominates people's evaluation of migrants (see Rutter and Carter, 2018). Kaufmann (2018) has

argued that this is people's way of rationalising cultural fears that are often not deemed socially appropriate in a focus group setting, though this fails to explain why recent focus group studies have found a strong cultural theme especially focusing on anti-Muslim sentiment (Rutter and Carter, 2018).

Other studies focusing on the sectoral perspective also provide support for the cultural interpretation. These studies found that natives with different skill levels working in a wide variety of sectors with different characteristics and migrant composition share similar immigration preferences, in particular the tendency to support high-skilled immigration more than low-skilled immigration (Hainmueller et al., 2011). The authors conclude that this finding is difficult to square with the labour market hypothesis as people's labour market position does not seem to be a powerful predictor for immigration preferences (ibid.). Instead, this literature often finds that people's perception of cultural threats are more important in driving their immigration attitudes. However, equally, one could argue that this finding is consistent with the economic literature when this is framed in terms of people's perception about how migrants affect the country as a whole rather than the individual (Nakata, 2017; Citrin et al., 1997; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). People's perception that high skilled migrants contribute more to the country's economy and public services than low skilled migrants would be an economic interpretation of this finding, and it would be aligned with the strong theme of migrants' contribution in recent focus group studies (Rutter and Carter, 2018).

To conclude this debate, although scholars have often worked on the assumption that either the perceived economic threat or the perceived cultural threat drives immigration attitudes, it is likely that both types of evaluations are present synonymously, together affecting an individual's attitude towards migrants (Maxwell, 2012, 2013; Facchini et al., 2010). Indeed, British Future's recent National Conversation report found that while economic contribution was key in people's evaluation of migrants, people also attached importance to perceived social and cultural contribution including whether immigrants spoke English, and the research identified a widespread anti-Muslim sentiment (Rutter and Carter, 2018).

2.5 Informational factors

Another factor which can influence attitudes towards immigration is informational factors. The literature examines people's knowledge or lack of knowledge about immigration, and explore how any misperceptions influences attitudes towards immigration, and whether correcting misperceptions affect opinions. Furthermore, the section will also discuss where the British public get their information on immigration from, and in particular what impact the media have on driving anti-immigration attitudes.

2.5.1 Lack of knowledge and tendency to overestimate

The main robust finding in the literature is that people are highly misinformed about immigration. Large misconceptions exist about the level and composition of the immigrant population, such as by country of origin, religion, reliance on welfare state, employment situation, and level of education (Alesina et al., 2018; Blinder, 2015; Citrin and Sides, 2008; Ipsos MORI, 2014; Grigorieff, 2016). In particular, people tend to overestimate the proportion of immigration populations both at the national and local level (Alesina et al., 2018; Sides and Citrin, 2007; Citrin and Sides, 2008; Hopkins, Sides and Citrin, 2016) and even within neighbourhoods (Wong, 2007; Wong et al., 2012). The 2009 BSA survey found that respondents overestimated non-Western migrants as representing 25% of the

UK population compared to the actual 11% at the time (Blinder, 2015). While British people are not alone in overestimating the proportion of the immigration population, comparative studies have found that British people tend to overestimate more wildly than most (Alesina et al., 2018; Ford, 2012; Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014). In addition, people often lack basic knowledge about immigration policies and trends, such as the numerical cap on skilled non-EU workers and the trends in asylum applications (Blinder, 2015).

The evidence suggest that people with higher educational qualifications tend to have less biased beliefs about immigration (Alesina et al., 2018; Grigorieff, 2016), which is consistent with the broader evidence base on the relation between education and misconceptions (d’Hombres and Nunziata, 2016). A recent paper also found that people with an immigrant parent, the young and women were more likely to overestimate (Alesina et al., 2018). In addition, research has shown that people who live in areas with higher migrant shares and low-skilled workers in migrant-dominated sectors tend to have more biased beliefs, though people who know a migrant personally have less biased perceptions (Alesina et al., 2018; Grigorieff, 2016). These findings suggest that people’s attitudes are heavily affected by their experiences at the local level (ibid.). Some authors argue that public attitudes are formed by personally or social constructed conceptions of immigration, and as a result framed by everyday experiences of integration at the local level (Cornelius and Rosenblum, 2005; Rutter and Carter, 2018). Other literature argue that it is not the level of migration in the local area, but instead anti-immigrant sentiments are generated by rapid changes in migration levels which are more visible to the local population (Hopkins, 2010; Kaufmann, 2017b). On the other hand, British survey studies have found that people are more likely to view immigration as a problem at the national rather than the local level, suggesting that anti-immigrant sentiments are generated by narratives and frameworks from the media rather than local experiences (Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014).

2.5.2 Relation between misconceptions and attitudes

Having established that people lack knowledge and accurate information about immigration, some studies have examined whether there is a correlation between misconceptions and anti-immigration attitudes. Broadly, a recent experimental survey study found that simply making respondents think about immigration ahead of answering questions about their attitudes causes attitudes to be more negative (Alesina et al., 2018). On an individual level, studies have found that misconceptions about the levels of immigration are correlated positively with perceptions of threat and negatively with attitudes towards the immigrant population (Sides and Citrin, 2007; Wong, 2007; Wong et al., 2012; Semyonov et al., 2004, 2008).

However, these findings cannot establish whether the misconceptions drive anti-immigrant attitudes. It could be a spurious relationship in which a third factor causes both misconceptions and anti-immigration attitudes, or alternatively there could be reverse causality where people who develop anti-immigrant attitudes report higher estimates of immigration levels to rationalise and justify their attitudes (Hopkins et al., 2016; Herda, 2010). This criticism is backed up by several experimental survey studies which found that correcting misinformation reduces misperceptions about the immigration population but fails to change attitudes towards immigration and policy preferences (Grigorieff, 2016; Hopkins et al., 2016; Sides and Citrin, 2007; Lawrence and Sides, 2014).

Overall, there are mixed findings in the broader literature on whether correcting misconceptions changes factual perceptions and related attitudes. This literature can be divided into three strands (Nyhan and Reifler): the *motivated resistance account* in which people resist the information provided to them, sometimes even strengthening their misconceptions, referred to as a ‘backfire effect’ (Nyhan and Reifler, 2010); the *belief updating account* in which people accept the information provided and update their beliefs (Weeks, 2015; Wood and Porter); and finally the *interpretations account* in which people update their perception of the factual information but then adapt new interpretations to make their existing attitudes and policy preferences consistent with the factual information (Nyhan and Reifler, 2010; Kuklinski et al., 2000; Swire et al., 2017).

The existing literature, though it is limited, suggest that immigration attitudes fall into the third account in which people update their beliefs about the factual information but interpret these in a manner consistent with their anti-immigrant attitudes (Grigorieff, 2016; Hopkins et al., 2016; Sides and Citrin, 2007; Lawrence and Sides, 2014). This has a number of implications. First, it directly challenges group threat theories in which anti-immigration attitudes are understood as a reaction to the perception of the level of immigration or the accelerating level (Sides and Citrin, 2007). Second, it suggests that immigration attitudes are grounded in stable psychological predispositions which enable people to resist information that challenges their beliefs (Sides and Citrin, 2007; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). A recent survey by Ipsos MORI followed up with people who had significantly overestimated the size of the immigrant population and asked them why they thought they had overestimated in order to understand their conscious justifications. The two most common responses both rejected the validity of the official data while other common reasons evolved around the higher proportion of immigrants in their local areas, highlighting people’s tendency to generalise from personal experiences (Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014).

Finally, this literature implicitly provides a major criticism to much of the existing survey and polling data which is flawed in the sense that it explores attitudes towards immigration without controlling for people’s knowledge of the issue. Blinder (2015) argues that the evidence base from surveys and polls is most useful to understand how people respond to immigration when talked about in general, but is less useful as a guide to public preferences. This point will be made more elaborate in the following sections about different types of migrants, and people’s different perceptions of who the migrant population compose.

2.5.3 Sources of information

There are many sources of information on immigration. The first is personal experience, through everyday contact with immigrants themselves, or through hearing stories from friends and colleagues (see Meltzer et al., 2017). There is a large literature on the contact hypothesis which argues that interaction between different racial groups reduces social distances, and improves perceptions and reduces intergroup prejudices (Allport, 1954). The alternative theory is known as the conflict or threat theory which argues that interactions are more likely to lead to negative attitudes as it activates a sense of anxiety among the minority group (Campbell 1965; Putnam, 2007). People may also be affected by the opinion of other fellow citizens. While current polling data suggest that British attitudes to immigration are softening, respondents themselves report that they believe fellow citizens’ attitudes are in fact hardening (Ipsos MORI, 2017) which may create a bandwagon effect. The second source of information is government policy which sets the contexts in which immigration is discussed (Demster and Hargrave, 2017). The most obvious example is the

target to reduce net immigration to the ‘tens of thousands’ which has shaped the immigration debate towards a focus on numbers, and the subsequent inability to meet the target may have contributed to cementing the public belief that immigration is out of control. Another source of information are various interest groups, such as non-governmental organisations, trade unions, employer associations and political parties, who through narratives attempt to create a story about the impact of immigration often by linking it to economic, security and cultural issues (Esses et al., 2017; Demster and Hargrave, 2017; Hericourt and Spielvogel, 2010). The main question concerning the influence of political narratives and government policy is to what extent this relationship is bi-directional, e.g. while they set the backdrop for the formation of public attitudes, the narratives are themselves often influenced by existing public attitudes on immigration (McHugh-Dillion, 2015; Demster and Hargrave, 2017).

The other main source of information is the media. A growing body of work has explored media coverage of immigration in European countries and in the UK. The literature highlights how descriptions and framing of migrant population and movement are often negative rather than stressing positive aspects of immigration (see Igartua and Cheng, 2009). For instance, it has been described as dehumanising and creating a false sense of social crisis, by describing refugees and migrants as ‘swarms’, ‘cockroaches’ and a ‘plague of feral humans’, and by failing to provide the migrant or refugee perspective (Esses et al., 2017; Threagold, 2009; Crawley et al., 2016). Media portrayals may be important in reinforcing or cultivating the cultural and economic story of immigration threats (Meltzer et al., 2017; Boomgaarden and de Vreese, 2007; Esses et al., 2013). Media publicity has focused on rise in crime rates and security threat (Vicol and Allen, 2014; Arendt, 2010; Stephan et al., 2005) and the impact on social welfare and public services such as education, housing and the NHS (Berry et al., 2015; Crawley and McMahan, 2016; Jordan and Brown, 2006). In addition, there is a growing focus on the scale of migration and the lack of ability to control those numbers amid the Conservative pledge to reduce net migration (Allen, 2016; Allen and Blinder, 2013; Threagold, 2009).

In addition, media portrayal may contribute to misperceptions about migrant characteristics. For instance, there is a growing focus on EU and Eastern European migrants over other geographical areas though non-EU nationals continue to clearly outnumber EU migrants in the population statistics (Allen and Blinder, 2013). Similarly, the most common descriptor of the term migrants in the UK media is ‘illegal’ across all types of newspaper types, though immigrants with legal status far outnumber those without legal status according to population estimates (ibid.). Some papers note that the negative or biased media environment has been sustained over a long time, therefore potentially cumulatively ‘cultivating’ negative attitudes on immigration (Domke, 2001).

While it is clear that migrants are negatively portrayed in the UK media landscape, it is harder to provide evidence of the link between media portrayals and public attitudes. It is often observed that the press is good at setting the agenda, i.e. choosing what stories and themes the public should think about it, and how they should think about them by linking them together to specific narratives (Allen, 2016; Chong and Druckman, 2007). But as pointed out earlier, it is harder to determine to what extent this is bi-directional, i.e. that people’s attitudes determine what stories the media cover. However, there is a growing literature suggesting that media affects people’s political attitudes and specifically on immigration (see review in Meltzer et al., 2017).

2.6 Attitudes towards different types of migrants

Another similar criticism of most of the reviewed literature is that it typically examines attitudes towards immigrants or immigration as a whole, and fails to take into account what people understand by the term ‘immigrant’ (Blinder, 2015; Ford, 2011).¹⁰ Each survey respondent answers on the basis of their (unstated/unknown) understanding of what immigration is and who ‘immigrants’ are. This is a problem because many people lack knowledge about the composition of different types of migrants in the population (Blinder, 2015), and more fundamentally, surveys fail to capture the public’s multifaceted perception of what an immigrant is and what type of migrant is most valued (Verkuyten et al., 2018). In particular, when asked about the value of immigration, the public often have specific types of immigrants in mind; for instance they tend to focus on asylum seekers and permanent arrivals while ignoring international students and temporary arrivals (Blinder, 2015; Blinder et al., 2011). Particularly in a media environment where refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are conflated, public attitudes as expressed in surveys may only reflect each respondent’s opinion on a subset of migrants in the UK (Baker et al., 2008). This highlights that the public may perceive ‘immigration’ very differently than the government and official statistics do (Blinder, 2015). Blinder (2015) argues that while the government sees immigration through a statistical lens, the public constructs their opinions from a varied set of sources including by interpreting their social and political surroundings. This is what Blinder (2015) terms ‘imagined immigration.’

This difference in perceptions about immigration is a problem because evidence shows that public attitudes vary substantially towards different types of immigrants, with some being regarded as ‘desired’ or ‘acceptable’ and vice versa. Studies show that the perceived level of acceptability or desirability vary by different types of migrants (Brader et al., 2008; Adida et al., 2016; Ford 2011; Hainmueller and Hangartner, 2013). Furthermore, attitudes vary by the migrant’s race, ethnicity, class, skill-level, region and country of origin etc. (Blinder, 2015; Ford, 2011; Sniderman et al., 2004; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015; McLaren and Johnson, 2007; Adida et al., 2016; Brader et al., 2008; Strabac and Listhaug, 2008;). As an example, Blinder et al. (2011) explored the large majority of British people who favour reducing the level of immigration to the UK, and found that opposition particularly centred on illegal immigration, asylum seekers, refugees, extended family members and low-skilled workers, while other groups were not as prevalent in driving this view, in particular high-skilled workers, immediate family members and students (ibid.).

One of the most clear distinctions found in the literature is the higher acceptance of high-skilled workers and occupations compared to low-skilled (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010; Crawley, 2005; Ford, 2011, 2012; Blinder et al., 2011; Katwala et al., 2017; Blinder, 2016; Blinder and Allen, 2016). Recent research shows that people attach greater importance to skill-level which overrides concerns related to other factors such as country of origin and religion (Blinder & Markaki, 2018; Heath and Richards, 2018). The importance of skill-level is thought to be related to the perceived economic benefits of welcoming high-skilled migrants due to their ability to support themselves or to contribute to specific parts of the welfare state such as healthcare. As a consequence, while there is

¹⁰ Furthermore, it is unclear in many surveys and polls how immigration is defined (Crawley, 2005). Even where surveys have defined the term, such as the BSA definition of immigrants as ‘permanent settlers’, this have contradicted the UN definition that they UK government uses which defines anyone who stays for more than 12 months as an immigrant (Blinder, 2015).

majority support for reducing immigration for low-skilled workers, only a minority of the UK public supports reducing immigration of high-skilled workers (Blinder et al., 2011). But there is a lack of evidence on how survey respondents understand the definitions of high- and low-skilled workers. There might be a fairly large discrepancy between how government authorities define skill-level and how the public perceives it. For instance, existing non-EEA immigration policy defines high-skills based on a salary threshold of £30,000, which excludes many professions, particularly public roles such as nursing and teaching, which are highly valued among the public (see discussion in Home Affairs Committee, 2018). It is possible that low-skill workers (which are often described as low-paid workers in surveys) are seen as a proxy for low-contributors.

Another clear distinction is by immigrants' country of origin, which may be understood as a proxy for other factors such as religion, language and cultural factors. Survey studies show a clear pattern where British people are more accepting of white, English-speaking, European and Christian countries compared to non-white, non-Europeans and Muslim countries (Carl, Richards and Heath, 2018). This has been described as an 'ethnic hierarchy' in the literature (Ford, 2011). Widespread opposition to migrants from Romania is often highlighted as an interesting anomaly from this pattern, and thought to be caused by an association with Roma (Vicol and Allen, 2014; Blinder and Richards, 2018). The literature is surprisingly sparse regarding public attitudes to EU versus non-EU migration, but a recent European study found that not only do few Europeans register a preference for EU migrants, they also attach greater importance to high-skilled migrants regardless of whether they are from the EU or not (Blinder and Markaki, 2018).

Ford and Heath (2014) explored people's views of four different types of migrants: student migrants, EU working migrants, non-EU working migrants, and spousal reunions, and found that assessments of student migrants were more positive and spousal reunions most negative, irrespective of a person's overall views of immigration. The 2011 BSA examined this further with a series of randomised survey experiments, and found that skill level, educational quality, time in the country and reason for migration all had substantial effects on the perception of the migrants (Ford et al., 2012). They also found interaction effects: for instance, the influence of origin region were largest for views on family reunion and low-skilled migrants and smallest for high-skilled workers and students. In other words, where a migrant comes from seem to matter less when they have something to offer economically (ibid.).

This observation is backed up by the emerging focus group literature, in which the perceived contribution of migrants is found to be a central theme in people's attitudes towards immigration (Rutter and Carter, 2018; Gaston, 2018; Newman et al., 2017). Often, the distinction is made between migrants who are self-supporting through employment and paying taxes, and migrants who claim benefits, send money home and rely on the welfare state without giving anything in return (Rutter and Carter, 2018; Gaston, 2018). Related to this, focus group research finds that the concept of ensuring that there are appropriate controls to make sure that migrants make a positive contribution, often outweighing the concern over numbers (Newman et al., 2017). This is often reflected in a support of an Australian-style points based system, which British Future found appeared to be 'a shorthand for a controlled and selective immigration system that meets the economy's needs' (Rutter and Carter, 2018). This literature also provides another perspective to the sharp distinction between high and low-skilled migration. Focus group research shows that public support centres more around migration that is economically beneficial and socially useful rather

than necessarily high-skilled (Rutter and Carter, 2018; Gaston, 2018, Newman et al., 2017). This is demonstrated by high ratings and support for immigrants with jobs offers or skills in area of skill shortages even if these by definition are low-skilled (Newman et al., 2017). People also tend to support low-skilled immigrants more when questions are asked specifically about their job, such as fruit-picking, rather than in generic terms (Rutter and Carter, 2018). Generally, the literature suggests that people have a different perspective of the definition of low and high-skilled work (see Home Affairs Committee, 2018).

Considering the evidence that people's attitudes vary by different migrant characteristics, it is no surprise that there is also evidence that people's 'imagined immigration', i.e. their beliefs about the composition of migrants in the UK population, is strongly associated with their attitudes (Blinder, 2013, 2015). Those who view immigrants as asylum seekers and permanent immigrants are more likely to support reductions in immigration levels (ibid.). Similarly to previously discussed theories about correcting misperceptions about levels of migration, this misperception about migration composition may in itself be the driver of anti-immigration attitudes, or alternatively people's anti-immigration attitude lead them to overestimate their assumptions about the levels of 'undesired' migrants to internally justify and rationalise their attitude.

Some evidence also suggests that different migrants are associated with different immigration concerns. An experimental survey study in Britain by Hellwig and Sinno (2016), in which respondents were randomly assigned to three groups (Muslims, Eastern Europeans or a control group with no specific group label), found that an issue context can diminished support for one type of immigrant and boost it for another. For instance, framing immigration in terms of security concerns or cultural threat negatively affected attitudes towards Muslim migrants while framing in terms of economic concerns or crime threat negatively affected attitudes towards Eastern Europeans (ibid.). A recent paper also explored threat perceptions of migrants in Britain, examining attitudes towards EU and non-EU migrants (Stansfield and Stone, 2018). They also found differences in the threat perception between migrants, with criminal threat eliciting a greater support for reducing the rights of EU migrants, compared to when framing in terms of economic concerns (ibid.). These papers link back to the debate about whether it is economic or cultural considerations that drive immigration attitudes. They suggest that it may be both, but this may vary for different groups of migrants.

The evidence points to the importance of migrant motivations as one of the underlying reasons for the different preferences between different types of migrants. Recent poll data shows that respondents had very different reactions to migrants depending on their original motivation to migrate (Migration Observatory, 2011; Ford and Heath 2014). The motivations of migrants can be divided into 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' motivations, which are found to be directly affected with who people perceived to be 'deserving' and 'undeserving' migrants. An experimental vignette study among 15 European countries including the UK found that migrants who immigrate for economic reasons are less accepted than those who faced political or religion persecution in their home country (Bansak et al., 2016). Similarly, a study in the Netherlands found that people expressed more empathy and support for the rights of newly arrived migrants when they had been forced to leave their country of origin (Verkuyten et al., 2018). In contrast, people expressed less support and more feelings of anger towards migrants who were described as being responsible for their own situation (ibid.). This distinction is also made in the literature on refugees where public debate often centres around 'real refugees' compared to 'fortune seekers' and 'bogus refugees' (Verkuyten, 2014).

2.7. Attitudes of immigrants themselves

The body of literature examining attitudes of immigrants themselves is still limited but is potentially interesting for two reasons. Firstly, the evidence shows that it is often immigrants themselves who are under more threat economically as they tend to have more similar skills to incoming immigrants and as such may be more likely to express concerns about immigration on the basis of self-interested economic concerns. On the other hand, migrants may be less prone to cultural concerns as they may share the cultural traits of immigrants or be more supportive of multiculturalism. Broadly, the literature shows that earlier and more recent immigrants differ in their views about immigration (Braakmann et al., 2017). A recent study on immigrants in England and Wales show that immigrants who have been in the UK for longer are similar to natives in their opposition to immigration while those who have recently arrived tend to be more pro-immigration (ibid.). This may reflect some interesting time effects as migrated people integrate into their new country and become more similar in terms of cultural and economic characteristics. In turn, as more studies in this field emerge, this may be able to make significant contributions to the literature on the drivers of anti-immigration attitudes.

2.7. Summary

This section has outlined existing evidence on public attitudes to immigration in the UK. It shows how opposition to immigration have been widespread in the UK, though the public has turned more positive in recent years and particularly after the Brexit referendum. At the same time, survey and polling data shows that the British public are divided according to generational, educational and social lines, and that these divisions are growing. The section also explored the existing evidence on what drives immigration attitudes including the prominent debate as to whether it is cultural and economic factors that drive anti-immigration sentiments.

Given the inconsistencies between the economic evidence (see Appendix 1) and public opinion on immigration impacts, our review of the literature then explored how informational factors influence immigration attitudes. The evidence shows that people are highly misinformed about the migrant population and immigration policies, and that misconceptions about levels of immigration are typically correlated with more negative attitudes towards the immigrant population, though it is unclear whether people's misconceptions drive negative attitudes or *vice versa*. Experimental survey studies have shown that correcting misinformation does reduce misperceptions about the immigration population but fails to change attitudes and policy preferences.

The review identifies one limitation of these studies. Typically, the intervention that corrects misperceptions only focuses on correcting one small element of misinformation related to the number of immigrants, and this piece of information is provided as part of the survey. Our study focuses on the misperception of the economic impacts of immigration, and provides this information through a video at a focus-group setting, after subjects are exposed to different treatments that are meant to control for well-known biases. This will be explained in more detail in the following sections.

3. SURVEY FINDINGS

This section and the next present the findings of our empirical research. In this section, we explain our analysis of the survey data and our hypotheses, and why we believe our approach did not bring about a change in immigration attitudes. We then present the main focus group findings thematically. Finally, we draw some conclusions, focused particularly on how the nature of the debate on immigration might be improved through a greater understanding of the drivers of opinion and use of evidence.

3.1. Survey questions and experimental design

The data collected through the surveys and focus groups were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Our quantitative analysis focused on changes in responses on the different questions between the three points at which participants filled out survey: at recruitment, immediately after having watched the video in the focus group, and then again two weeks after the focus group. In what follows, we will refer to these time-points as *pre*, *post*, and *follow-up*, respectively. All reliability estimates are provided at the initial time-point (*pre*).

Several of the items on the questionnaire were combined into scales. Specifically, three questions gauging participants' agreement with statements to the effect that EU migrants take jobs from British workers, drive down wages for British workers, and have helped create jobs in the UK were combined (after reverse scoring items where necessary) to construct a scale for *economic perceptions*, with higher scorers being more positive about the economic impact of EU immigration (alpha = 0.76). Four questions gauging participants' agreement with statements to the effect that EU migrants contribute more in taxes than they spend on public services, have a negative impact on the NHS, have a negative impact on schools, and have a negative impact on housing, were combined (again, after having reverse scored items where necessary) to construct a scale for *fiscal perceptions*, with higher scores being more positive about the fiscal impact of EU immigration on the UK (alpha = 0.86).

The primary form of analysis was non-parametric, given the ordinal nature of the items and scales. Specifically, overall longitudinal changes (ignoring experimental conditions) were analysed by way of Wilcoxon signed rank tests with continuity correction. The effects of individual experimental conditions were analysed by calculating the difference in response between *pre* and *post*, representing short-term effects, and separately for *post* and *follow-up*, representing longer-term effects, and then running a Kruskal-Wallis rank sum test to identify any significant differences between any of the conditions, with a Dunn's multiple comparison test for any post hoc analysis.

As noted at the outset, our main aim was to investigate whether policy preferences could be moved if participants were informed about the economic impact of immigration following interventions controlling for well-known biases. This meant that, in addition to aforementioned scales of fiscal and economic perceptions, one item was of particular interest to us, namely: 'The Government should use Brexit as an opportunity to cut down EU immigration' (1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree). This was our main policy item, which also can be expected to tap into the sentiments that crop up in large-scale surveys regarding the desire on the part of people in the UK to reduce the number of immigrants. As such, we can formulate the following hypotheses:

Listening Hypothesis: Following an intervention designed to make people feel listened to and the subsequent provision of information about the economic and fiscal impact of EU immigration on the UK, we should see significant movement (*i*) in a positive direction in regards to economic and fiscal perceptions, and (*ii*) away from agreement with the statement that the Government should use Brexit as an opportunity to cut down EU immigration, compared to the control group.

Biased Assimilation Hypothesis: Following an intervention designed to reduce biased assimilation of evidence and the subsequent provision of information about the economic and fiscal impact of EU immigration on the UK, we should see significant movement (*i*) in a positive direction in regards to economic and fiscal perceptions, and (*ii*) away from agreement with the statement that the Government should use Brexit as an opportunity to cut down EU immigration, compared to the control group.

In-group Favouritism Hypothesis: Following an intervention designed to reduce in-group bias and the subsequent provision of information about the economic and fiscal impact of EU immigration on the UK, we should see significant movement (*i*) in a positive direction in regards to economic and fiscal perceptions, and (*ii*) away from agreement with the statement that the Government should use Brexit as an opportunity to cut down EU immigration, compared to the control group.

3.2. Survey results

As we explained above, we surveyed focus group participants at three points in the research: *pre*, *post*, and *follow-up*. In this section, we present the findings of the survey carried out at the *pre* stage. The next section will then discuss any changes to the *post* and *follow-up* stage.

As indicated by our two policy survey items, participants wanted to see the Government use Brexit as an opportunity to cut down on EU immigration (median response of 4; 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree) and for the UK to rely on its own skill rather than on EU immigration (median response of 4).

Our scales for economic and financial perceptions suggested fairly neutral views on the economic impact of EU immigration (median score of 3 on a scale from 1 to 5, with higher numbers being more positive) and slightly more negative perceptions on fiscal impact (median score of 2.5).

There were some concerns about there being too many EU immigrants in the UK (median response of 4; 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Interestingly, participants seemed less concerned when asked whether there were too many EU immigrants in their local area (median response of 3).

The survey did not suggest that participants were particularly concerned about there being too many cultures coming into the country (median response of 3; 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

3.3. Movements in responses over time

We looked for any changes in responses over time that might indicate that the focus group methods and discussions had an impact on participants' attitudes. A summary of changes in responses over time for the main items and scales can be found in Appendix 4. As the data is ordinal, we are

reporting responses at the pre-stage in terms of the median response. However, we have reported changes in responses across time in terms of means¹¹.

The first thing to note is that we see a statistically significant movement in a positive direction from *pre* (i.e., at recruitment) to *post* (i.e., after the participants had seen the video) on our scales for economic and fiscal perceptions, together with a significant negative movement, signifying a movement *away* from agreement with the statement that the Government should use Brexit as an opportunity to cut down on immigration. This is consistent with the participants having been moved in a positive direction as a result of the information provided in the video, and consequently experiencing a shift in their policy preferences regarding numbers. This shift then waned in the period from post video to the follow-up survey two weeks later. However, it is not possible to ascribe these changes to participation in the focus groups since we lack a control group of people who did not attend.

The second thing to note is that we found no statistically significant differences in movements in attitudes between participants in the different focus group conditions, compared to the control group. Figure 6 offers an illustrative and representative example of the degree of similarity we saw across conditions with respect to any movements in responses on our main policy item, in this case from *pre* to *post*.

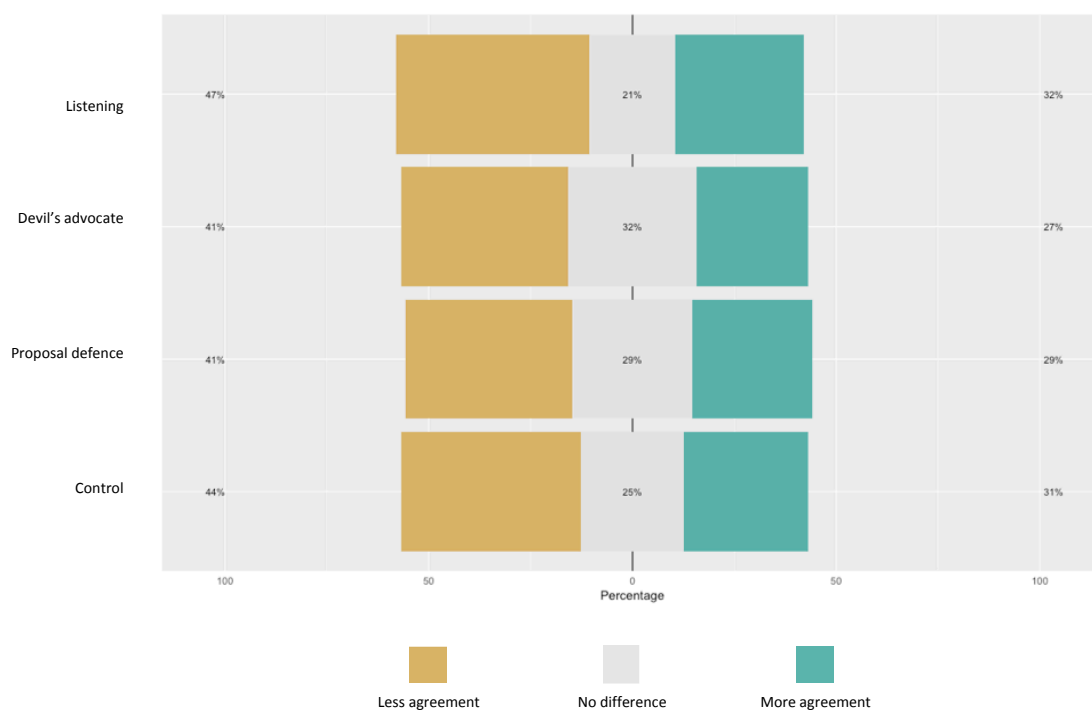


Figure 6. Change in participants' agreement with the statement 'The Government should use Brexit as an opportunity to cut down on immigration' from recruitment (*pre*) to after having watched the video (*post*).

¹¹ The reason for this is that the changes are small, and would tend to be obscured if reported in terms of changes in medians. For that reason, means offer a better sense of the central tendency of movements across time, although their exact magnitude of course should be taken with a grain of salt, given the ordinal nature of the responses. Note, moreover, that none of the statistical tests have been performed on mean values—again, respecting the fact that our data is ordinal.

Given the absence of any statistically significant differences across conditions, we are unable to reject the null hypotheses corresponding to our three hypotheses above (Section 3.1.). It is possible that this is due to the relatively small samples and resulting lack of power. Alternatively, the interventions did not make any difference. While our experiment doesn't settle the matter, existing evidence suggests that the latter is the more likely possibility between the two. In other words, given that attempts prior to ours to move people's policy preferences by providing information about its fiscal, and more generally economic, impact have failed to do so, one might reasonably look at our results as another instance of this happening.

At the same time, the focus groups generated rich and detailed qualitative data on the opinions, views and perspectives of a set of people on a major policy question at an historic point in time for the UK. In this respect, the focus group discussions go beyond much existing research by potentially offering explanations for why people hold particular views, rather than simply describing the views that they hold. The findings also suggest ways in which public understanding about immigration might be improved and how concerns and misconceptions might be addressed. We now turn to these findings.

4. FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

Focus group discussions were wide ranging. While we used a topic guide which varied according to the experimental condition, this guide was used in a semi-structured way so that discussions were guided by the group around the following core questions:

- What evidence should be considered when assessing the impacts of immigration?
- What measures is the Government going to take on immigration post Brexit?
- What evidence would you be looking for to be reassured that the Government delivers what you would like it to do on immigration?
- What is more important to you: control or numbers?

As we explained earlier, we commissioned a short video presenting the evidence on the impact of immigration on jobs and wages and showed this to all focus groups before the main discussion. Questions on evidence were therefore designed to relate to the evidence summarised in the video. Participants in the 'devil's advocate' and 'listening' conditions were asked what their main concerns were about the economic impacts of EU migration on Britain. In effect, however, all groups covered this issue since it was also the main subject of the video. Those in the 'listening' groups were also asked whether people ever ask for their views on immigration, who these people are, and whether participants wish people would ask for their views more often.

Our analysis of the interview transcripts found a number of key themes in responses across focus groups¹². This included:

- the labour market impacts of migration, focusing on jobs, skills and wages;

¹² Focus groups were analysed using a framework approach in NVivo. This process comprises of coding responses and identifying themes from the accounts, explanations, views and perspectives of research participants.

- impact on public services, with discussion around entitlement and contribution;
- culture and integration, exploring ideas around enrichment and the perceived cultural threat of migrant communities; and
- concerns about crime.

Our presentation of evidence is structured around these key themes, starting with perceptions of the impacts of immigration. We then look at sources of evidence which influence perceptions before looking at what participants would like to see from new, post-Brexit immigration policies.

4.2. Perceptions of the impacts of immigration

In keeping with the aims and objectives of the project, discussions within the focus groups were wide-ranging but focused strongly on economic impacts. In presenting the findings of the discussions we divide the issues covered into three thematic areas: jobs and skills; entitlement and contribution; and culture and integration. While largely presenting focus group discussion data, we also refer to participants' responses to the three surveys on their immigration views. This serves as a reminder that our sample has particular characteristics, that they are not representative of the public more widely, although their views are affecting the direction of policy.

4.2.1. Impact on Jobs and Skills

As we described above, participants were surveyed for their views on the impacts of immigration, with questions focused on the economic impacts. Participants were asked whether the following groups of migrants are good or bad for the UK economy:

- High-skilled EU migrants
- Low-skilled EU migrants
- Students from the EU
- Asylum seekers and refugees

As can be seen from Figure 7 below, participants tended to view high-skilled immigrants as good for the UK economy. Participants' views on low-skilled immigrants were more or less evenly split, with a third feeling they are bad, a third being neutral, and a third feeling they were good for the economy. Views of students were more positive than of low-skilled migrants, with almost half seeing students as good for the economy. Views on asylum seekers and refugees were negative, with almost half of participants viewing them as bad for the UK economy.

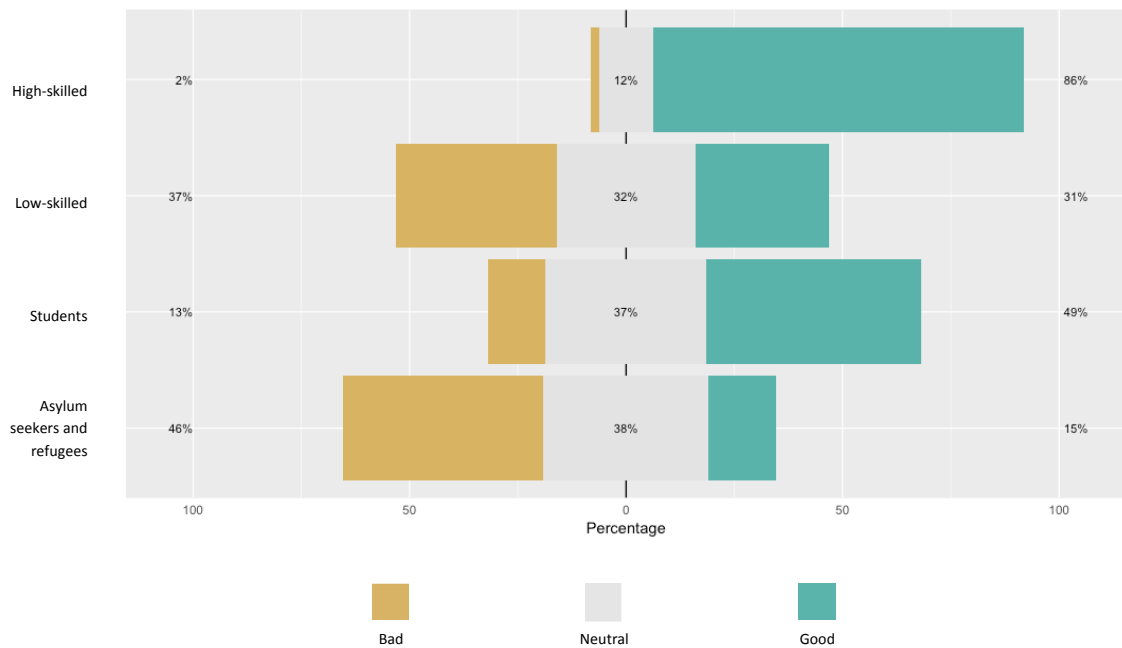


Figure 7. Distribution at *pre* stage of participants' responses to the question: 'To what extent do you think the following groups of EU migrants are good or bad for the UK economy?'

In focus groups participants described the benefits of migration via the skills that migrants bring to the UK, and the jobs that they fill. Reflecting the survey findings, the majority of participants expressed a preference for high-skilled over low-skilled migrants; recognising greater overall economic benefits in their skills, contributions and ability to support themselves financially. Many discussions centred on the positive contribution of highly skilled migrants, particularly in the public sector and often in the health service. Participants saw benefit in migrants filling gaps in worker supply, helping sustain important services and making a positive contribution to the UK economy.

'We're struggling in the NHS sector so I guess that's why you get people coming over from different countries to make our hospitals better'

'In terms of the positives you're expanding your economy, and you're expanding the workforce, you're getting more taxes, more national insurance'

While many participants saw benefit from migrants working in high-skilled occupations, concerns around British workers being displaced were common. Some participants felt recruiting high-skilled migrants substituted for British workers whose education and skills were being under-utilised:

'There's a positive on the NHS in that the staff coming in are working providing they're not taking a job that there is someone already qualified for that job who is already in that country'

'Why would you spend years going to college and university when there's no job at the end of it? Why aren't there any jobs, because they're bringing people in who already have the skills? Why not wait until the people here get the jobs.'

There was widespread agreement that British young people are not given sufficient opportunity to acquire skills, in particular through vocational training routes. This also showed up in the survey, in

relation to the question of whether ‘the UK should grow its own skills rather than rely on EU immigration’. Participants tended to agree with this statement (median response of 4¹³).

In the focus groups some participants argued that too many young people go to University, creating a shortage in supply of British people into skilled manual trades. Young people were also seen to lack experience, and that programmes such as school work experience were essential in equipping young people for work and helping them to compete in the labour market.

Concerns around displacement were also raised in regard to low-paid jobs, where migrant workers were thought to squeeze British workers out of the labour market.

‘For the youngsters that are coming out of permanent education, because they’re not academic-trained, you know, academically able to do better jobs. And the lower-paid jobs are being taken by Eastern Europeans’

The survey findings show some degree of concern about displacement of British workers and also about effects of wages. The surveys asked participants for their views on whether EU migrants jobs away from British workers, EU migrants drive down wages of British workers, and, more positively, whether ‘EU immigration has helped to create jobs in the UK’.

As can be seen from Figure 8 below, about as many participants disagreed as agreed with the claim that EU migrants take away jobs from British workers. By contrast, more people agreed than disagreed with the statement that EU migrants drive down wages for British workers. Finally, more people disagreed than agreed with the statement that EU immigration has created jobs in the UK.

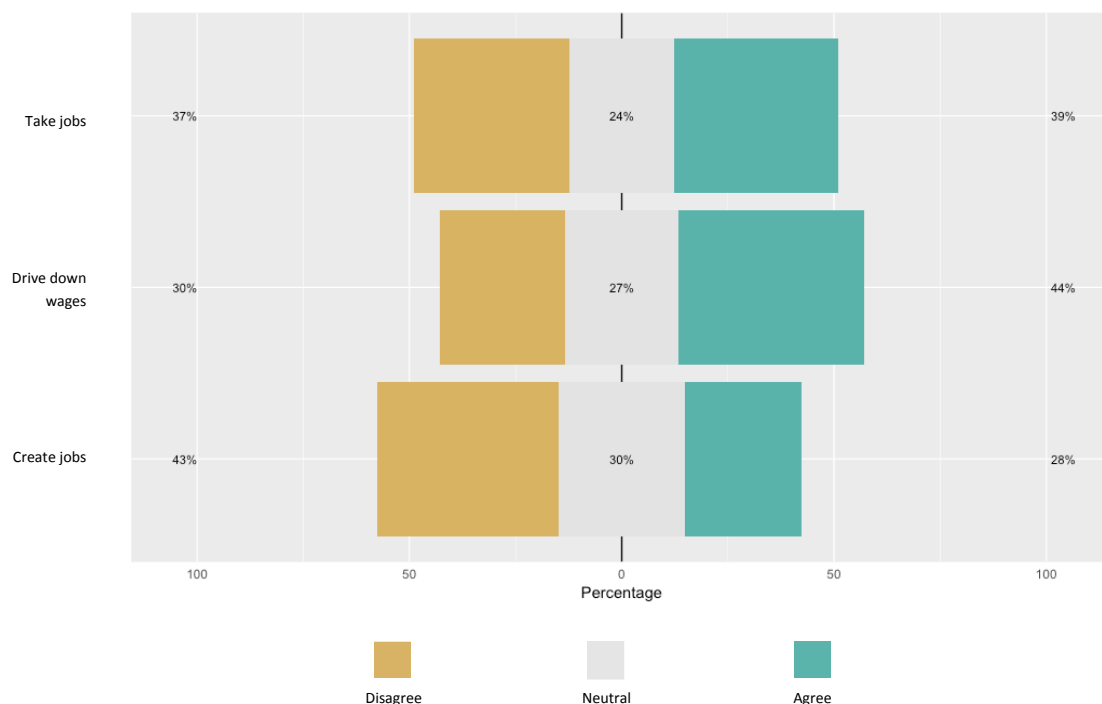


Figure 8. Distribution at pre stage of participants’ responses to whether they agreed with the statements ‘EU migrants take jobs away from British workers’, ‘EU migrants drive down the wages of British workers’, and ‘EU immigration has helped to create jobs in the UK’.

¹³ 1 = Strongly disagree. 2 = Disagree. 3 = Neither agree, nor disagree. 4 = Agree. 5 = Strongly agree.

In keeping with our survey findings, many of the concerns about labour market impacts discussed in the focus groups centred on the idea that migrant workers were driving down wages. This was often underpinned by the assumption that migrants had minimal outgoings, and could therefore afford to take work at or below the minimum wage, and that migrant workers had high tolerance for low-pay in the UK because it is higher than for equivalent jobs in their countries of origin. This, in turn, was thought to drive down pressure to increase low wages, to the detriment of British workers.

'It's the fact that these people are coming in and trying to push everyone who's British out their jobs, because they can do it for twice as less money as we do'

'Some [British] people can't take a £6.50 job an hour because they can't pay their bills on that. And [migrants] are probably getting more on benefits, and getting their housing, and they can afford to work for £4 an hour, can't they? Because that's just their tea money'

'EU workers are coming over and grateful for it but that might be pushing down the wages. It glossed over the bit where it says that minimum wages at the very bottom is not going up as much as it should'

It was therefore seen as important that migrants' pay levels are increased to ensure fairer access to work for British workers, and especially to encourage British workers out of unemployment:

'...if they were paid the same wage as British people then it might encourage British people to maybe start going back to work'

The reluctance of British, and particularly young workers, to engage in perceived low-skilled, low-paid work was a common theme in the focus groups. Unattractive jobs were identified across high and low-skilled sectors, and were characterised by their low pay, long hours and lack of a work-life balance. Many participants were familiar with agricultural work and this was described as particularly unattractive to young British workers:

'If we're talking about distribution of work in low skilled areas, a lot of kids don't want to go on work on farms and stuff like that. They don't want to do those things because they're not good enough jobs for them'

Consequently, even participants who expressed the most negative views toward migrant workers accepted a need for their employment in the agriculture sector. This was, however, often caveated with an explicit preference for migrants to work on a seasonal basis rather than work in permanent posts in the sector. Therefore, discussing new immigration policy, one participant argued:

'As a Brexit voter I have no problem at all with people coming in from Europe to do jobs on farms, living in temporary accommodation provided by the farmer and going back again, that's been going on for years. I don't have any problems with that at all.'

Participants also explained the recruitment of migrant workers with reference to what they saw as the positive work ethic of migrants and their strong performance in low skilled jobs compared to British workers:

‘The hospitality industry, [migrants] are the ones doing the job there, and are forever smiling and asking you, even if they’re worked a very long shift they are forever smiling and asking you and doing what you want them to do. We don’t do it, we British won’t do it.’

While they admired this work ethic, participants felt that more needs to be done to make low skilled jobs appeal to British people rather than expect them to change their attitude towards low skilled work. Suggestions included improving training, career paths and turning unskilled jobs into skilled jobs where possible. These were put forward as ways of improving opportunities for British workers, with migrants largely seen to be useful as a resource to fill gaps. Participants therefore expressed a clear preference for priority to be given British people.

4.2.2. Entitlement and Contribution to public services

Participants were surveyed on their views on the impacts of EU migration on services through responses to the following statements:

- EU migrants contribute more than they cost to public services through the taxes they pay
- EU migrants have a negative impact on the NHS
- EU migrants have a negative impact on schools
- EU migrants have a negative impact on housing

The survey results show that people were fairly evenly split on whether EU migrants were net contributors, when it came to how much taxes they paid and how much they cost in terms of public services, with roughly one third disagreeing, one third being neutral, and one third agreeing. In terms of the three specific public services mentioned—i.e., NHS, schools and housing—people reported more agreement with the idea that EU migrants had a negative impact when it came to housing, followed by the NHS and schools.

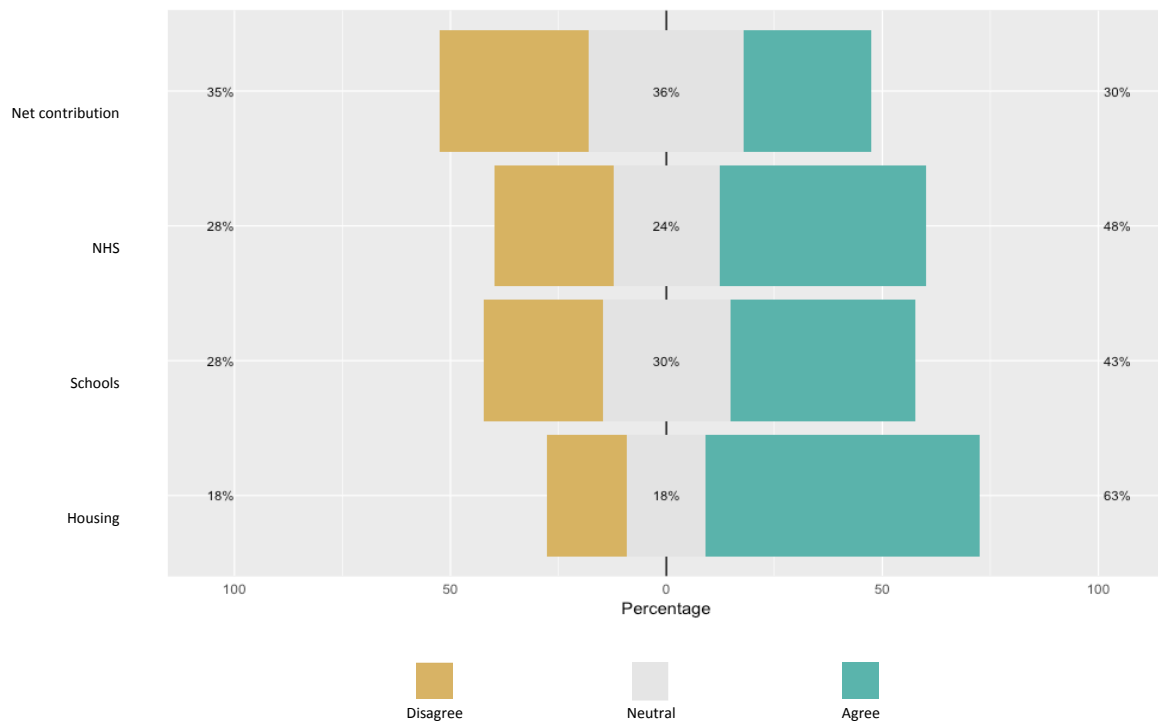


Figure 9. Distribution at *pre* stage of participants’ responses to whether they agreed with the statements ‘EU migrants contribute more than they cost to public services through the taxes they pay’, ‘EU migrants have a negative impact on the NHS’, ‘EU migrants have a negative impact on schools’, and ‘EU migrants have a negative impact on housing’.

Concerns about public services were a strong theme of the focus group interviews, and arose in relation to access to local services such as housing, and use of health services. Within these discussions, entitlement and contribution to public services was a primary point of discussion. The prevailing, and strongly held view was that making a net, positive contribution to the UK economy through taxation and National Insurance should be a prerequisite for entitlement to public services. However, British citizens were commonly viewed as having greater entitlement. This view underpinned many discussions around public services. This instrumentalist attitude towards migration can be captured in terms of two forms of access: *earned access* and *default access*. Earned access is what immigrants have: they have access, so long as they have already paid in to cover their share. As one participant put it,

'If you're not putting anything into the system you shouldn't be able to take anything out of the system'.

Default access, by contrast, is the type of access had by citizens, who can take out even if they have not paid anything in. Therefore, in relation to welfare benefits, participants made clear that, even for citizens, it is better to only take out once you have contributed. British people who did not do this were viewed with disapproval and it was argued that they need to be 'encouraged' or even 'pushed' into work. Many participants therefore commented negatively on welfare dependence among British people, often suggesting more should be done to ensure they enter work and are therefore contribute to public resources:

'Well just stop [British unemployed people's] money if they're not prepared, if they offer them a job and they keep refusing to do it, no matter whether they think it's beneath or not, it's still earning money at the end of the day. Instead of pushing them into it, they're just sitting back and saying, yeah, you don't want to work, we'll just carry on paying your benefit.'

It was also argued that the conditions for migrants should be stricter than for British people in relation to access to services and benefits. This was partly because migrants will not have contributed sufficiently before 'taking out'. There was also a view that migrants should be committed to the UK and be culturally integrated. But a number of concerns about migrants' access to services and benefits were raised in all focus groups.

It was common for focus group participants to express concerns that many migrants are not making sufficient contribution through taxes and National Insurance to justify access to services. Some suggested that a significant proportion of migrants were in the country illegally, were unemployed, working cash-in-hand or sending wages home through remittance. They were therefore viewed as not entitled to make use of otherwise universal public services. Furthermore, a number of participants raised concerns regarding migrants' dependents, and the extent to which they were entitled to public services given their non-contributory status. Similarly, participants regularly raised concerns around 'welfare tourism', suggesting migrants intentionally target the UK for cash benefits, free health care and education. Therefore, in response to the video message that EU migrants put in more than they take out, one participant argued:

'I don't disagree with that side of it where it says that [migrants] put in as much as they take out, but there's not just one person that comes who is working. There's all the rest of the family who come along with it as well'

Some concern about migrants' access to benefits was framed within the context of austerity, and a perceived need to control access to ensure future provision. In line with this, participants often saw migrants as exacerbating, or even being the root cause of, strain on public services:

'... there's a hell of a lot of people on the streets at the moment, and that is all due to the fact that these people from Europe or all over the world or whatever, who are coming, are getting into houses and leaving our lot homeless, if you like'

This led to some participants to suggest that there should be greater scrutiny around the money spent on migrants, as well as their dependents, and a need to directly prioritise the needs of British people.

'That child that came over couldn't even speak a word of English. Not being funny that's why he needed the English lessons, but you're taking that time from the actual child that is having problems with speech and language, a different skill altogether and you're taking all that resources on that. They're putting money to teach these immigrants to learn English'

Related to this, many participants thought that migrants were given preferential treatment when accessing public services, raising concerns that British people were being treated as 'second rate citizens'

'They get hand-outs, they do get housing, they do get everything and then it's a knock effect as you say to education, housing and so on. In a way that, I could feel resentful and in some ways I do feel resentful'

This was a common theme throughout focus group discussions, with many examples of perceived evidence of impact relating to cases where migrants were seen to use services before having contributed or met other conditions, such as cultural integration.

4.2.3. Culture and Integration as a positive and negative impact

The surveys asked participants about cultural concerns by asking to what extent they agreed with the statement 'I am concerned about too many cultures coming into the country'. Almost half of the participants disagreed with this statement (46% versus 35% agreeing, with the remaining 19% neither agreeing nor disagreeing). Reflecting the survey findings, focus group participants discussed a range of broadly 'cultural' impacts of immigration, and these were both positive and negative.

Throughout focus group discussions participants gave a number of examples of the positive impacts of migrants regarding cultural enrichment and integration. Parents, for example, described the benefits of their children mixing with migrant children in schools.

'I've got three young children and my own personal opinion is I don't want them growing up that we only live in a world where there's White British people. I want them to be exposed to lots of different cultures and lots of different people that can enrich them and teach them.'

One participant described how she had welcomed being asked if her daughter could help a new migrant pupil to settle in. In another case, a man told how his young son had been influenced by a Muslim friend:

'My son's praying to the wall like the kid did at his school because he wants to be like his friend. I'm thinking that's a safe thing for my son, that's a good thing'.

Participants speaking as parents or teachers also gave other examples of how migrant children were learning to speak English very quickly and were not placing undue demands on schools or affecting the learning of their British classmates. A few examples were given of workforce integration with some participants describing the positive impact migrant workers had in the workplace, and the benefits of learning about different cultures and languages:

'I enjoy working where I work and it's nice to have it, it adds a bit of colour to the day when you meet people. I met a Greek guy yesterday, I don't meet many Greek people, so it's interesting to meet different cultures and things like that.'

Similarly, a warehouse worker enjoyed telling the group how he had learned how to swear in Polish from his co-workers. At the same time, one participant regretted that more cultural mixing does not take place:

'The worst thing that's happening is that people aren't mixing and being friendly to each other and it's people that are wary of each other and that's an underlying tone that I think I would hope would change'.

In fact, no examples of community integration were given. Moreover, despite the positive sentiments covered above, much of the discussion framed migration as a threat. Although participants were frequently reminded that the focus of the research was on EU migration, non-EU migration dominated discussions around cultural impacts. Integration was a central theme of many discussions, underpinned by a view that migrant communities are reluctant to integrate and exert control over spaces.

'If they choose to come to this country then they should choose to integrate with regard to religion, education and all these things because we are now getting more Muslim schools, Muslim only schools. This is awful, it sounds dreadful but we get coloured sections in school. It doesn't need to be like that. It should be open for everybody and people who come here should be quite willing to mix because this is our country'

'They're all Indian or Pakistani and as soon as a house goes up for sale from a British person, they're in there and they put in their families and it's just taking over. That's how these areas, as you say, are ghettos or whatever you want to call it, get set up and they won't integrate, and this is where we do need people, welcome people to come to the country but they do have go to our schools, don't set out their own areas. I don't think that's fair'

For some participants the presence of migrant communities was seen in itself as a direct threat to British culture and identity. The nature of this threat was by and large non-specific. Some participants, however, did talk about preserving British values, and make specific reference to symbols of British life, such as flags and public holidays.

'Why are other countries allowed to fly theirs and we're not allowed to fly ours because it's racist? It's wrong'

'I think that's the problem you're not allowed to fly your flag now are you, in your garden you get told to put it down. Christmas isn't Christmas, Easter can't be Easter and it's those sort of things that are causing the problems.'

'I do believe that if [migrant] want to come to Britain then they should also integrate into British life, so that we don't lose our British values as well'

Some participants expressed feelings of threat in more direct ways, expressing concern around foreign languages being spoken in public, and increasingly feeling like a minority. Others, however, directly opposed these ideas, suggesting that they did not feel British culture/identity were under threat.

'I don't feel any of that, I don't feel that anyone's ever told me that I can't have Christmas or I can't fly a flag or I can't do this, I've never, I'm not saying it doesn't happen, I'm just saying...'

Much of the opposition to immigration was expressed in relation to 'illegal' immigration, asylum seekers, and refugees. These groups were frequently attributed to Africa and Middle East, and were considered to present the most criminal and cultural threat.

'I disagree, I think Afghan and a lot of the African countries that are coming over, I'm not racist at all but I think there's a lot coming over from Africa, there's a lot coming over from Afghanistan...'

Cultural proximity was a key determinant of the value and level of threat perceived by different migrant groups. This manifested in reluctance amongst participants to accept the presence of certain languages or cultural practices, underpinned by a sense of threat to British way of life. The vast majority of the negative views around the perceived cultural threat of migrants were directed toward Muslim migrants, who were often associated with terrorism and unspecified threat from Sharia law.

'There needs to be a commitment to this country. And there needs to be the integration. The language, for me, is an issue. I find it incredibly rude, and I also find it incredibly, we don't deal with it down here very much, but the sort of Muslims that wear that, it's nothing to do with their religion or anything like that. I wouldn't dream of letting my son walk in the bank with a balaclava on his head.'

In line with this, EU migrants were often, collectively, considered the safer of migrant populations, due to being more culturally proximate to British values.

'I think it's different types of immigrants as well aren't there, there's EU immigrants and there's other immigrants from elsewhere who don't really care about what they do.'

That being said, some participants disaggregated further, perceiving specific threat, from particular groups, often due to specific incidences of crime.

'The Lithuanians are the worst people and the Romanians a little bit, but the Polish think they're all really bad, so the Polish are not too bad.'

The value placed on integration and cultural proximity was demonstrated by participants' discussions around other migrant groups who were thought to have proven their willingness to cultural assimilate.

'You've got this Windrush thing which is in the press at the moment. These people have integrated with us, so therefore we consider that they are part of us, which is why so many people are upset about it'

'The Pakistanis and that were very accepting of our region when they came in the 80s and had the corner shops and they integrated, and you don't hear them complaining about anything'

These groups' integration into British society was presented by participants as almost entirely problematic, characterised by a positive contribution to the UK economy, and a distinct sense of inoffensive assimilation.

4.2.4. Crime as a negative contribution

The relationship between migration and crime was a common theme in discussions around culture and integration. The issues of sexual abuse and drug and gang-related crime were raised most often, and attributed to inward migration of migrants from cities. Participants also believed that the police are reluctant to deal with such behaviour, fearing that they would be accused of institutional racism:

'[The police] are finding more and more immigrants getting involved in the drugs and gangs because it's easy money. They come over here, they're on the streets, they get offered money to carry this, to deliver this and that's how it all starts and the amount, and it's not just around the cities anymore, there's huge gangs working the way down'

'About all these youngsters that have been mistreated and raped and God knows what else up [in] the north. The police would not prosecute because they said they thought it was racist. They were frightened of being called institutionally racist. That's just one example. There's loads of them'

Throughout focus group discussions, participants clearly created and engaged with a threat hierarchy based on the extent to which different migrant groups were perceived to be a risk because of their criminal behaviour as well as their culture. While some migrant groups, such as Eastern Europeans, were associated with a general increase in crime, the greatest threat was associated with Muslims. Many of the participants who engaged in this kind of narrative regularly assumed that to be Muslim was to be non-British, and associated Muslim communities with terrorism. Negative assumptions were also made about Sharia law.

'We don't want Sharia law in this country. We don't think it should be allowed to take place in this country while we're here. I mean, they can actually kill their daughters for disgracing the family. What sort of a law is that?'

'A lot of it's not from Europe though isn't it, it's coming from Eastern, and I think that's where it's coming from, and a lot of people are scared nowadays but I don't think that's necessarily coming from Europe as such. I think everyone's targeting Europe at the moment for anything that's going to happen.'

Asylum seekers were also regularly perceived as a significant cultural and criminal threat. While participants expressed some sympathy with their situation, asylum seekers were generally treated with great cynicism, even amongst those with more pro-migration views. Preventing entry of asylum seekers and refugees who were seen not to have a case for settlement in the UK was therefore a frequent point in which the majority of focus group participants agreed. There was therefore a strong view that the immigration system should seek to establish the validity of claims for asylum.

'The actual immigration is a positive thing, but then you get the asylum side of things which probably the negative side of things. I'm not saying every asylum seeker is here falsely because obviously we do get genuine cases and I think it's the ones under the radar, who come in and also commit crimes'

4.2.5. Differentiating migrants according to their contribution

The narratives constructed in our focus groups suggest participants did not view all immigrants equally. Rather participants developed a largely consistent hierarchy of preferences between immigrant groups, based on perceptions of economic and social contributions, and lack of the threats described above.

In general, focus group participants saw value in migrants who were perceived to offer a positive net contribution to the UK economy. This contribution was broadly defined as migrants putting in more than they took out. These discussions were largely underpinned by an assumption that migrants would be making use of public services, such as health, education and housing. Many participants therefore perceived migrants as in an immediate deficit, and were therefore required to make an equal, if not positive, contribution to the economy through tax or National insurance.

'I think that's why there's two types of immigration. You've got the ones that migrate and want to work, like in your trade and people that are really do want to put in the graft and you've got others that, you see them on the news that they get given a house, they get given all this money and a lot of them are illegal immigrants that we know are illegal immigrants.'

Migrants' motivations for being in the UK and subsequent use of public services were discussed with significant cynicism, with participants constructing clear notions of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' immigrants based on the perceived likelihood of a migrants' positive net contribution. In this respect, highly skilled migrants were considered more valuable than lower skilled migrants in being more likely to making a more significant contribution to the public purse and being able to sustain themselves financially. Furthermore, since highly skilled migrants were, by in large, positioned as working in the UK public sector, they were seen as making an extra contribution through their skills and services, particularly in the NHS. Although the services of low-skilled migrants were also valued by participants, these were often subject to a sense of expiry in line with seasonal work or the temporary skill shortage demands of the UK labour market.

4.3. The role of evidence in informing attitudes towards immigration

A key aim of the research was to explore how people use evidence on immigration to form or confirm their opinions on the subject. It was apparent from the focus groups that participants drew their evidence about immigration from a variety of sources but gave these varying amounts of credence. Here we consider how they drew evidence from sources including the media and personal contacts, and the relative weight they attached to statistical versus non-statistical information. We

also look at how focus group participants responded to a short video they were shown on the economic impacts of migration.

4.3.1. Sources of evidence on immigration

In the 'listening' condition focus groups we asked participants where they got their information about EU immigration from and who they talked to on the topic. Many participants said they felt they had few reliable sources of information and felt that the debate was polarised in a way that made it hard for them to assess the evidence. While some had discussed Brexit with family and friends, they either felt their views were not understood, or were aware that they discussed it largely with people like themselves. Aside from the financial incentive, the opportunity to hear the views of others on the issue of EU immigration was the single most common reason given for attending a focus group.

4.3.2. Media stories as a source of evidence on immigration

We had expected media stories to be cited as evidence and to be regarded as credible by some participants. However, we found instead that very few stories were mentioned, although a number of participants referred generally to the media as an information source. Table 1 presents the examples of media coverage cited by participants, two of which are the same story. Of the three examples given, two concern the demands made by immigration on the benefit system without prior contribution. As we have described, this was a strong theme which emerged in all focus groups and in many of the discussions. The final example is of EU bureaucracy, discussed in the context of reasons to have voted to leave.

All of the examples led to a wider discussion in which some respondents agreed with the point being made. However, participants voiced distrust about the validity of media stories, either in relation to the first two specific examples in the figure, or more generally. A statement by one participant on the trustworthiness of media reports had some support:

'A lot of the news even now is all slanted at a particular angle. You've got to be so careful because... media sort of slides and twists a little bit'.

It was also argued that the media focuses on extreme examples. There was general support for the statements of participants in one group that the media makes examples of extreme cases of migrants in the same way as it does of British people. Lack of trust in the media stories about immigration appears to lead many to rely on their own experiences, or the direct and indirect accounts of others.

Table 1. Media stories cited by focus group participants

Example	Contextual point	Response
The local paper reported that a group cleaning cars in a local car park were found to be irregular migrants and were deported (Group 7).	Irregular migrants do not contribute through taxation and are not spending earnings in the UK.	Led to a wider discussion about migrants accessing benefits.
A television programme showed how a Romanian gypsy set up a rubbish collection business and, when the business failed, was able to claim benefits and was saving to build a house in his home country (Group 8).	General discussion about low paid work and claiming benefits.	Agreement from others who had seen the programme but some questioning of the accuracy of the story and how common such a case would be.
The same example as above but with a focus on the practice of sending benefits to a family living overseas (Group 11).	Young British people are not able to afford housing because of immigration.	No follow-up discussion since it was an introductory statement.
A television programme showed how white vans delivering papers between Brussels and Strasbourg for European Parliament meetings were in fact arriving empty, as a result of fraud (Group 8).	Reasons for voting to leave the EU.	Led to a wider discussion about bureaucracy and corruption in the European Commission and Parliament.

4.3.3. Personal experiences and second-hand narratives

Participants were much more likely to give examples from sources other than the media to illustrate points they made on the impact of EU immigration, or immigration in general. Many, but not all of these, are presented in Table 2. These were largely stories relayed to them by a third party rather than directly experienced. The stories vary in their evidential strength, and the extent to which they were accepted. However, as the figure below shows, while some group members did express surprise in relation to some cases the stories were largely treated as credible.

Table 2. Personal and third-party immigration narratives

Example	Response
Fairness and the principle of paying in before you take out	
A participant accompanying her elderly parent for a hospital eye appointment spoke to an Italian woman who told how her mother had moved to the UK to claim a pension, for which she was not eligible in her home country (Group 8).	Other participants questioned when that had happened and one participant suggested it may have resulted from a reciprocal arrangement.
A participant waiting to see a midwife found herself with three other women, none of whom could speak English (Group 4).	Agreement from another participant that 'you are the odd one out in your own country'.
A participant had a Latvian friend who was given social housing on two separate occasions because she had a large family. The participant herself had to wait more than four years for Housing Association accommodation (Group 2).	Agreement from respondents followed up by the next example in the table.
A local supermarket was believed to have bought housing near its site for migrant workers (Group 2).	Agreement that the local area had not seen these changes until relatively recently.
A participant who was in need of housing after a divorce believed that that the local authority retain housing for refugees (Group 9).	Others gave examples of where they, or relatives, had to wait for housing or for their benefits to be reassessed following a change in circumstances.
A participant and her family of six was made homeless but a newly arrived migrant family were given priority for housing (Group 1).	No follow-up discussion since it was an introductory statement.
Integration and social norms	
On a recent bus journey a participant found all the other passengers speaking a language other than English (Group 8).	Led to further example from another participant below.
The work environment at a local supermarket is 'tribal' and 'horrible' but no source was given for this assertion (Group 8).	Another participant followed up with a report heard on radio and television of fights between immigrants and residents outside school gates (see next item).
Immigrants and residents have been fighting outside school gates in another part of the UK	Led to wider discussion about decline of respect with disagreement on the role of immigration in this process. This then led to a discussion about

(Group 8).	the link between immigration and crime, and the example below.
A participants' son was chased across town by a gang of Ukrainian men armed with knives (Group 8).	Led to a wider discussion about migrant crime gangs which the police have not controlled.
The UK does not have control of its borders and illegal immigration	
A participant claimed a woman driving from a south coast port to Eastbourne found a migrant stowed in the boot of her car (Group 10).	Dialogue about under-cutting of wages and capacity of UK to accommodate further immigration.
Migrants have been seen coming out of lorries on the A20 from the channel ports (Group 7).	Other participants questioned whether this was a direct experience, but another participant confirmed its validity, arguing 'You see the lorries pull over and they just pile on'.
Legitimate vs illegitimate immigration	
A friend of a participant's daughter dated a refugee who claimed to be 16 and was given access to education, but was thought to be older on the basis of his facial hair (Group 7).	Some sympathy was expressed for refugees but also concern about crime and that some refugees are economic migrants rather than fleeing persecution or war.
A friend's brother works for the UK Border Agency in Greece and reported that while many are escaping from tyranny, others are economic migrants (Group 9).	Disagreement from a participant who believed that people who seek asylum must be desperate, but agreement from others that some claims are not genuine.
Labour market impacts	
A participant had worked in a distribution centre where there were only 20 English employees in a workforce of 2,500 (Group 7).	Some agreement that the availability of migrant labour must reduce wages at the lower end.

As the table shows, many accounts related to the theme of deservedness and paying into the system before you take out in accessing benefits. Most of the examples concerned access to housing or to health services and included an assumption that a British citizen should have priority to such services over migrants. Three of the examples concerning integration and social norms involved violence or unacceptable behaviour on the part of migrants. This was a theme which was raised quite often in the focus groups, especially in relation to irregular migration. Also in line with views expressed throughout the interviews, participants gave examples of ways in which control over entry was not exercised at the border. Other examples were given of migration which was seen to be illegitimate, focused on the validity of refugee status. While the workplace was mentioned in a few examples, very few specific examples were given of threats to the wages of British workers, although much was said about migrants being prepared to do jobs which British people do not find attractive.

It is also worthy of note that, with the exception of the examples of deservedness, most examples were of second hand evidence rather than direct experience. As indicated in the figure, other participants questioned the validity of some examples and were more reassured when the speaker said they had witnessed the example for themselves. Of course, it is possible that they did not believe the examples were true but chose not to challenge the speaker.

4.3.4. The divisive nature of the debate

The divisive nature of the immigration debate was a prominent theme in many of the focus groups. It encouraged some participants to put more weight on personal experiences than on evidence presented by others. It also confirmed their suspicions that information is not always accurate or objective and that statistics can be used to manipulate opinion.

First, in relation to the referendum, participants felt that the debate during the campaign period was divisive and unconstructive. Reports of confusion around who was right, or wrong, in the assertions made during the campaign were common. Some expressed feeling under pressure to make a decision in a short space of time. One participant commented ‘there were people giving out leaflets in the High Street with all different points’ which led him to be confused about validity. It was common for participants then to conclude that it was best to base their decision on their own experience. The importance of personal experience and observations was raised frequently in the focus groups, including in assessing the impact of immigration and salience of it as an issue.

The divisive nature of the campaign was then seen to extend to the post-referendum period where many participants had reflected on their voting decisions. Some reported negative comments on their own voting decisions which they had not seen as especially controversial. A hairdresser was surprised to find clients objecting to her decision to vote Leave and felt that this made other people scared to give their opinion. Another participant in the same focus group reported that her daughter had called her ‘racist’ for voting Leave, and felt that this reflected the views of teachers at her school. More generally, some participants were of the view that it is hard to talk about immigration and race without someone being offended.

It was also argued that the debate, and particularly the media, uses extreme examples, which make it difficult for real impacts of immigration to be assessed. These might include, for example, a migrant claiming substantial state benefits, owning an expensive house or supporting a very large family. Scepticism of media stories did not, however, extend to all types of evidence: exaggerated depictions of migrant behaviour were always attributed to the media and were not seen as entirely credible. Meanwhile, information provided by a personal contact, even at second hand, was treated as much more credible.

4.3.5. The video as presentation of evidence

As part of the focus groups we screened a short video summarising the impact of EU immigration on jobs and wages. This was intended to stimulate debate about economic impacts, to encourage participants to consider the evidence and how this might change their attitudes. In the focus groups, we asked focus group participants what they thought of the video and its messages. We also asked for their feedback on the video in our follow-up survey two weeks after the focus groups.

Most participants expressed limited interest in the video and it did not lead to in-depth discussion about economic impacts. There are a number of possible explanations for this, which include their

keenness to discuss issues of more interest to them, in particular of migrants' access to benefits and the attraction of the UK to migrants with interests in activities other than employment.

The most commonly expressed responses to the video were:

- It was too positive and ignored the negative side to immigration.
- It gave an overall picture and did not acknowledge differential impacts on areas and social groups.
- It ignored specific negative impacts such as crime.

Responses to the survey question 'Do you think the video presented the facts about EU immigration in a balanced or biased way?' show that more respondents found it biased than balanced (42% for the former, with 26% for balanced and 31% for neither biased nor balanced). On the other hand, close to half of respondents (48%) suggested that they either learned something or a great deal from watching the video, and 33% that the video made them more positive about the impact of EU immigration (versus 56% who said it didn't change their mind on the matter and 11% who said it made them more negative). At the same time, since a third of participants in the focus groups did not fill out the follow-up survey, we cannot assume that these numbers are representative of all participants.

In the focus groups the main criticism of the video was that it ignored issues that the British public are concerned about, in particular increased immigration in their local communities. More generally, there was a mistrust of the video's positive messages:

'It's just a PR video to say it's not as bad as everyone thinks. But it is'.

'It was making everything very positive and anyone that thinks otherwise is in the wrong'.

'I think it's a propaganda film. I don't believe in that. I really did. I felt it was absolute junk, I really did'

Some participants viewed the message and tone of the video more positively and welcomed the different perspective it gave, as one participant stated:

'You have given me a bit of a different opinion now. Definitely, definitely... Because I just felt so negative but, watching that, yes you are probably right, yes the video did change the way I felt about some things, definitely'

A number of participants commented that the video provided an overall picture, presenting the average impacts of immigration and that, in reality, its impacts are felt disproportionately in some areas of the country, including Kent, and among some social groups, in particular the low paid. It was also argued that areas like Kent have experienced a higher impact from immigration and more pressure on public services than other areas of the country and that this was left out of the video.

'I think living in Kent as I'm sure all of you do, we got the brunt of it as the end closest to the continent'

'I think the impact is very often localised. I think if you had this conversation somewhere 200 miles further north, you probably wouldn't be having the same level of impact as we are perhaps having here in the South East.'

Impacts that were previously thought to be confined to London, including segregated communities, were seen to be gradually spreading to Kent through a process of inward migration from both London itself and from outside the UK. A common response was to question the factual statements in the video in favour of their own experiences of impact. This included, for example, coming across migrants in hospital waiting rooms. Some participants also directly expressed the view that personal experience is a valid way of assessing migration impacts:

'You can only go by your own community can't you? You can do it based on your own experiences'

'People can only go on their own personal experience when they make a decision [referring to the referendum] if they have been affected or what they have seen, and certainly people have been affected and what they have seen is why they voted the way they did [to leave].'

The video was also seen to neglect non-economic impacts, in particular crime. One participant expressed the view that migrants were particularly prone to commit crime because:

'Whereas if you are new here and you have not got family, you feel less responsible to the community, so there seems to be more criminal activity for people that are foreign rather than anything else.'

As we discussed above, the relationship between migration and crime, both in relation to migrants breaching immigration controls and through perpetrating crime, was a common theme throughout the focus group discussions. It featured in discussions about integration and also about contribution and deservedness. As such, the video was seen as ignoring what was seen as an important topic in relation to immigration.

4.4. Preferences for post-Brexit immigration policy

In the survey at the recruitment stage participants were asked whether they agreed with the statement that 'the Government should use Brexit as an opportunity to cut down on EU migration'. As we described in Section 3.2, the median response was 4, with 1 being 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 being 'Strongly Agree'. This indicates a high level of support for new, more restrictive immigration policies to be developed once the UK leaves the EU. To understand what participants might expect from new immigration policies, their preferences and rationale for these, we discussed the issue in the focus groups.

4.4.1. Short-term impacts of Brexit on immigration

There was some discussion in the focus groups about the short-term impacts of Brexit and likely end of free movement. First, on the question of the status of existing EU migrants, there was general agreement that they should be allowed to stay, but largely on the condition that they are contributing economically. Some participants expressed concern for the status of friends or family members, primarily cases involving partnerships between British and EU citizens. A small number of participants also expressed the view that EU citizens might be less inclined to come to the UK post-Brexit because of negative messages around immigration. Little concern was expressed for any

implications of the end of free movement for British citizens. A common view was that UK citizens have benefited less from free movement than those of other EU member states. As one participant argued:

'We don't get the same opportunities in other countries that we do here. If I wanted to pick up sticks and move to Romania or Poland there's nothing for me there'.

Only a small number of focus group participants could give examples of people they knew who had taken the opportunity to live in other member states, though some knew people who had retired to Spain. There was also some discussion about the position of British citizens living in other member states, particularly Spain. There was a view that any measures which resulted in their return to the UK would have a negative economic impact since they were understood to be older and retired.

4.4.2. Support for stronger immigration controls but not necessarily for reducing numbers

We asked focus group participants whether they would like to see new immigration policy exerting greater 'control' or reducing migrant numbers. Reflecting its salience to participants, the issue also arose unprompted in discussions. Whether prompted or not, the predominant view was that new immigration policy should exert greater control. The idea of imposing immigration controls in order to select for quality and to try to ensure that access to services is earned through contribution, came up in all focus groups. Other reasons for exerting control included improving security, safeguarding culture or selecting for specific skills, but needing to ensure contribution was the most commonly cited reason for control.

While control over immigration was sometimes seen as a first step to controlling numbers, it was more usually expressed as a goal in its own right:

'You get control first. You can't curb the numbers unless you've got someone to police it'

'Secure the borders. That would be of big benefit to me to know that our borders are being controlled'.

The current system was seen by many to lack the ability to control, or to manage, migration. Two typical viewpoints were:

'We are known for a wide open door aren't we? So what we want to do is just shut the door and then say 'Right. You can come in, because we have got control and it's uncontrolled at the moment'.

'I want to have the right to say, 'yes we want you, please come, thank you very much'.... It's the being able to come whether we want them or not.'

But control was not supported just for its own sake: it was seen as important to control certain types of migrant or migration. These included the prevention of entry for the following groups:

- 'Illegal' (irregular) migrants who have no legal right to live in the UK
- Migrants who cannot support themselves, including those who will claim state benefits
- People who have committed crimes
- Asylum seekers who are not genuinely seeking sanctuary

As well as preventing entry of migrants who have no legal right to live in the UK, participants were also concerned to control irregular employment of migrants. In fact, the most common motivation

for controlling immigration was as a tool for increasing the (perceived) quality of immigrants. A high-quality migrant was seen to be someone who is (a) immigrating to work, and (b) doesn't take out more than they put in with respect to tax-funded services and benefits, such as the NHS and welfare benefits.¹⁴ The two aspects are intertwined: high-quality immigrants benefit the UK by working, and don't cost the country anything, by not being net recipients of benefits and services.

Among some participants, there was a pronounced form of instrumentalism underlying this sentiment about high- and low-quality migrants in the focus groups. For example, in relation to admissions criteria, one participant asked *'why should we have to accommodate people that we don't need?'* Other participants expressed a similar sentiment:

'I don't think they should be allowed to come into the country unless they are going to benefit us'.

'[...] you've got to show that you've got something to contribute to the country'.

'Prove your worth and then you can stay'.

It was also seen as important to control migration of people who cannot support themselves and who will potentially make demands on the state. There was a common view that migrants come to the UK to claim benefits and that this should be subject to strict control by allowing entry largely to those with a job. As one participant stated:

'If they have not got the money to support themselves for x period of time, they can't come [...] You have got to have a job and the finance to support yourself'.

'It's not necessarily a reduction in number: it's a reduction in the people that are just going to claim off the state'.

Or more positively:

'As long as people are pulling their weight when they come over here, fair enough, not a problem'.

The idea of imposing controls for purposes of making sure that immigrants contribute was the only consideration that came up in every single focus group condition, and that moreover tended to come up early on in the focus groups.

Participants also expressed a desire that migrants should be free of a criminal record and that immigration controls should screen such people out. The association between immigration and crime was strong in many of the focus groups. This was expressed both in relation to irregular immigration and more generally. The views of two participants are typical:

'We've let all and sundry in... people come here with criminal records and we don't even look'.

¹⁴ This notion of a high-quality immigrant is similar to what Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014) refer to as a 'preferred immigrant', someone who 'is well educated and in a high-status occupation, with plans to work, good English skills, and no prior unauthorized entries' (239).

'I'd like to see background checks done... I think there's been a few cases like them where there's been some real serial offenders, like murders, have come into the country and just disappeared'.

Migration by asylum-seekers and refugees was seen as important to control, in particular to ensure that claims were genuine and were not motivated largely by economic concerns or criminal intentions. There was also scepticism about the age of child refugees and that current checks are not being carried out correctly. A number of participants questioned why a 'genuine' asylum seeker would not aim to settle in the first country they arrived at rather than travel across Europe to the UK. There was a view that such migrants are motivated by reports of 'easy money' in the form of benefits. In some focus groups a direct link was made between refugees and crime.

4.4.3. Numbers are important to some

In discussions about control versus numbers, some respondents argued that the number of migrants is less important than establishing processes and criteria. One participant expressed the view of others in saying *'I think they need to start with control first and then think about reducing numbers'*. But despite this common view, some participants also argued that the number of migrants should be reduced. Only a very small number thought migration should be stopped, and even these thought this should be a temporary measure. One suggestion was to balance in-flows against out-flows on a one for one basis.

The main reason given for needing to control numbers was to reduce demand on services, especially health, education and housing. While participants recognised the contribution of migrants to services, in particular health, they were concerned about the capacity of UK public services. Again, participants worried most about their use by migrants who had not made a financial contribution:

'It's not a direct thing but they are coming over here and they are stretching our resources: the ones that are obviously not paying into the NHS'.

Some participants argued more generally that Britain is too full with a participant in the same group arguing:

'If we keep on saturating our own country, it's going to reach a point where it just implodes and that's it. There's got to be some control over it.'

Rather than for migrant numbers to be reduced overall, many participants wished to see fewer migrants in certain categories. These were the same groups as those who should be subject to greater control, largely criminals and those attracted by the UK's benefit system. Therefore, one participant who saw the UK as 'at full capacity' argued that this would not be the case 'if we shipped out the ones that aren't contributing to our society'.

4.4.4. Should new immigration policies prioritise skilled workers?

As we discussed earlier, there was relatively little support for reducing the number of skilled migrants and many participants supported migration of doctors, nurses, teachers and other skilled groups. The median value at the stage of recruitment to the focus groups to the question 'To what extent do you think high skilled EU migrants are good or bad for the economy' was 5 (representing 'very good').

Survey respondents were also asked whether they thought there should be changes the number of EU migrants in certain categories. These were Health and Social Care, Agriculture, Hotels and Restaurants, Packing and Distribution. As can be seen from Figure 7, for each of these sectors, about half or more of all of the participants reported wanting numbers to remain the same. The largest share of participants reporting wanting to see an increase was for agriculture (26%). The largest share of participants wanting to see a reduction in numbers was for health and social care (40%).

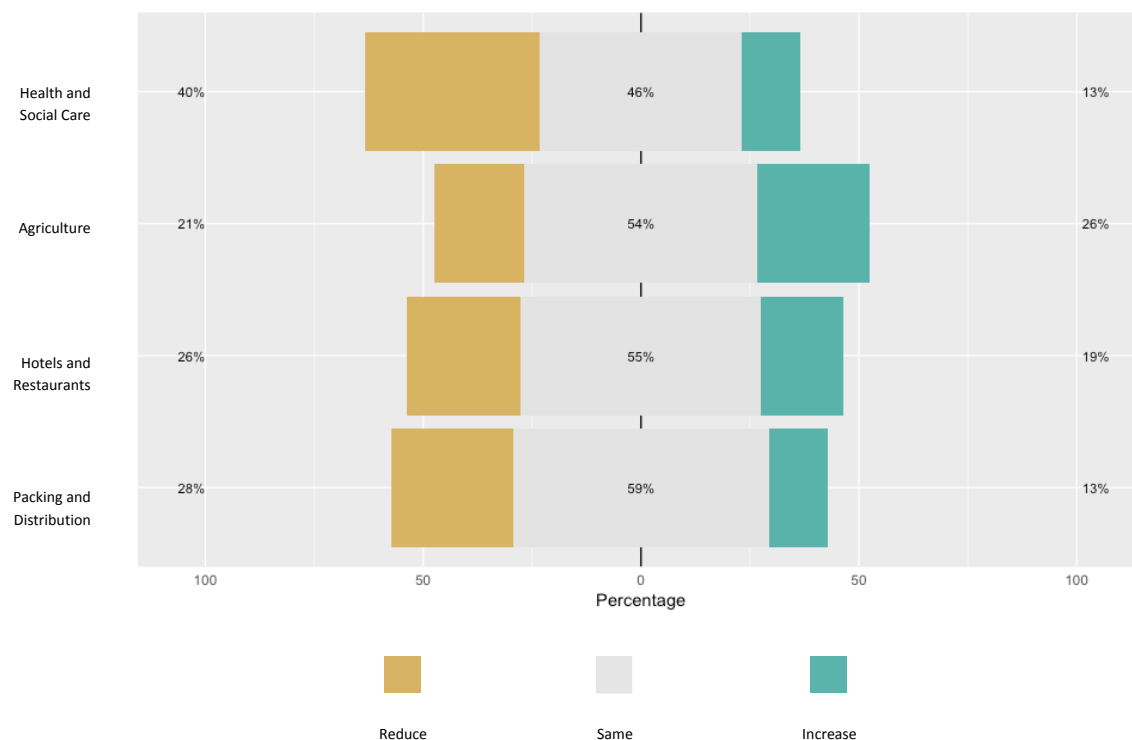


Figure 10. Distribution at *pre* stage of participants' responses to the question 'For each of these sectors, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of EU migrants coming to live in the UK to be increased, reduced or remain about the same'.

In focus group discussions, there was relatively little discussion about skill as a basis for decisions about the right to live and work in the UK. Instead, discussions about control centred on issues of legality and legitimacy. At the same time, participants had views about the relative value of migrants based on skills criteria. Positive statements were made about highly skilled migrants, in particular doctors, nurses and teachers. But participants also saw a need for skilled workers outside of these occupations, to fill gaps in supply. Skills were broadly defined and included trades. The views of the following participant reflect others:

'Every single school has got an issue with vacancies. There are carpenters that we're short of. There are plumbers that we're short of. They don't necessarily have to be intelligent, academic kind of highly skilled workers but as long as there's something that they can contribute... and not claim off the state'

Lower skilled migration was also supported where shortages exist, for example in agriculture. The employment of migrants in seasonal work was raised in ten out of twelve focus groups. It was an issue which generated discussion with many participants saying they or their families had carried out seasonal work. It was generally agreed that the work no longer attractive to British workers because it is now regulated, so that pay has to be declared rather than given by cash in hand, and women are

no longer allowed to take their children to work. Wages were also reported to have fallen, but the seasonality and nature of the work were seen as the principal factors deterring British workers. Therefore, it was seen to be legitimate for farmers to be able to recruit migrants for seasonal work.

As stated above, for several participants, the level of skill was a less important factor than the contribution that a migrant makes, seen in broadly economic terms. For many participants, the main criteria for entry was therefore that an individual should make a contribution and be able to support themselves. This general view is represented by the following statement by one participant:

'If they've got the means to support themselves, having a skill and that skill could be landscape gardening or building a brick wall. I can't do those things but have they got something that they can offer?'

Some participants took this further in expressing the view that almost anyone should be allowed into the UK to work, and that controls should be put in place simply to prevent entry to people who come to claim benefits or who have broken the law. There was some agreement with the statement of one participant, referring to the defence proposal exercise, that 'if they're employed and they're in society I'd happily give them the £200 to work out how to stay'. Her following qualification was also supported by the group:

'But if they're sponging off our system, if you're not paying benefits, if you're just living on benefits and you're living in our accommodation then you don't get it. You're going home.'

Cultural requirements were also mentioned as important in whether an individual should be allowed to settle in the UK, but raised much less frequently than economic or financial considerations. Cultural requirements centred on the ability to speak English, or willingness to learn, and to integrate into British society. One participant reflected the views of some others in stating:

'When you can agree that you are going to blend in and integrate with our way of life then come, but if you are going to come over and be arrogant and not learn English, just what to celebrate your own religion and make everyone else suffer for that, that is English, then it is not fair.'

The Australian points-based system was raised as a model of immigration policy in all of the focus groups, though was rarely discussed in any depth. This policy was designed specifically to target migrants who have skills or outstanding abilities and to meet labour shortages: more than two-thirds of all places are allocated to skilled migrants who have to meet requirements for age, English language competency, qualifications and experience and must either be sponsored by an employer or their occupation must be on an approved list, with numerical caps (Gower, 2016).

Public understanding of the Australian system centres on its focus on the skills needs of the country. Participants referred, variously, to the requirement to have skills, a sponsor in the country and a reserve of money in an Australian bank. The system was seen to have the ability to select migrants with positive motivations and who will not make demands on the state. One participant explained:

'I don't get why should we try to accommodate, find jobs or have people coming over without jobs and, to put it crudely, taking benefits and obviously the tax payer paying towards them for them to sit around and do nothing.'

Unskilled migrants were seen as less desirable than those with skills and there was a view that Britain should supply its own unskilled labour. However, some participants made a case for unskilled migration to be continued, though subject to control over numbers. As one participant argued:

'I would say with regard to their skills we do need some unskilled workers because the people that are unskilled in this country won't take [the jobs]. They'd rather have benefits because it's better for them. I think that we should have a limited amount of different skills and unskilled. I think that would be fair. It wouldn't over-burden the country'.

While the need for lower skilled migrants was acknowledged, there was also concern that such migrants make less contribution and are more likely to be in need of state support.

4.4.5. Should new immigration policies prioritise EU citizens?

Some focus groups also discussed whether new immigration policy should give priority to EU citizens, and views on this were mixed. Some participants thought that new immigration policy should depend on trade and with reciprocal arrangements with other countries, including from outside the EU. They believed there was little justification for giving preferential terms to EU migrants and that Brexit should create a 'level playing field'.

Other participants expressed stronger support for European migration than from other countries, largely because they regarded it as economic migration. But other factors also meant that some participants favoured European migration, with some participants expressing hostility towards Muslim migrants who they characterised as unwilling to integrate into British society. Economic, skills-based, reasons were also given for removing any priority to EU citizens. As one participant argued:

'I don't see why we should have any difference, once we're out of the EU when someone from France has got the right skills, someone from Australia, India, Uzbekistan. It doesn't make a difference. But it should be based on what gaps we've got in our economy and employment as with skills'.

Participants also expressed some support for temporary migration where this is necessary to meet temporary shortages or for seasonal work. At the same time, there was some concern that temporary workers would fail to leave when their visa expired. One participant worried that:

'You'd need to have a whole police force purely looking out where these people are, tracking their progress, in inverted commas... They might be sacked the next week if they're not very good, or they may seek a job with more money somewhere else. They would go running'.

There was particular concern that such individuals would then fail to make a contribution. Questions were also raised about provision of housing and access to health services:

'... what happens in that year if they're taken ill, or have an accident? Do we have to care for that as well?'

There were therefore mixed feelings about widespread use of temporary visas.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Our research helps to fill a gap in our understanding of what lies behind headline opinion-poll and large-scale survey findings on public concerns about EU immigration. It also contributes to a more detailed understanding of how people use economic evidence on immigration, and the relative importance they give to various sources of information about migration impacts. Additionally, in more practical terms, our findings help us understand what the public would like to see from new, post-Brexit immigration policy, and how these relate to the needs of the economy and employers.

In interpreting our findings, we have been mindful that our sample does not reflect the profile of the UK population as a whole. We selected a Leave voting area to carry out our research, and our sample was consistent with the referendum result in the local area in question. As such, our participants were more likely than the general public to be concerned about the impact of EU migration and this is confirmed by responses to our recruitment survey. At the same time, given the interpretation of the referendum vote as reflecting concerns about immigration, our participants are a group whose opinions policy-makers are seeking to take into account in drawing up new immigration arrangements.

For this reason, it is important that the opinions and preferences of groups such as our focus groups are understood. However, our overall finding is that these opinions and preferences might have been misunderstood or misinterpreted. In particular, our results offer some reason to believe that these views are fairly nuanced on the needs of the economy, and that popular preferences and those of employers are not as far apart as might be assumed.

5.1. Immigration attitudes are deeply embedded and resistant to economic evidence

We used a range of methods and techniques to test a number of hypotheses about the role of economic evidence in the formation of immigration attitudes. Our aims were ambitious in using focus groups to identify ways of getting people to consider the evidence and to find this reflected in changes in their reported attitudes, including about immigration policy. We employed experimental interventions aimed at making people feel listened to, promoting the consideration of alternative viewpoints, and reducing in-group favouritism, prior to screening a facts-based video that summed up the available evidence on the economic impact of immigration. However, we found no evidence that their stated policy preferences were responsive to these methods. This is perhaps not surprising as it is consistent with existing evidence that, while factual misconceptions can be corrected, policy preferences are more deep-seated, and unlikely to budge in the face of a simple re-assessment of the facts (Grigorieff et al., 2016; Hopkins et al., 2016; Lawrence and Sides, 2014).

5.2. Personal experience and anecdotes are seen as more credible than media stories or economic evidence

One possible explanation for the absence of any change in the policy preferences of focus group participants is that the type of evidence offered in the video, i.e., statistical economic evidence, was not one the participants considered particularly relevant. In particular, the kind of evidence invoked by participants in our focus group suggested a clear hierarchy, with personal experiences and anecdotes at the top, and media stories and statistical information at the bottom, in line with recent findings by British Future (Rutter and Carter, 2018).

Since the issue of migration is frequently covered in the media, we had expected media stories to be cited as evidence on immigration impacts. However, few media stories were brought up by participants. When mentioned, newspapers and on-line sources such as Facebook were typically referred to as unreliable and as presenting extreme views and unrepresentative cases. Comparisons were made with media coverage of welfare claimants.

Instead, participants primarily relied on personal narratives and anecdotal evidence. Participants had a store of such evidence from the accounts of friends, family and acquaintances, which they used to support specific and popular themes around migration impacts. The most common theme was the principle of putting in before you take out, with examples frequently involving migrants accessing services. Narratives based in personal and local experiences undoubtedly appealed to participants but their preference for them likely also stemmed from their stated mistrust of the media and of economic evidence, which led them to conclude that it is best to rely on your own evidence.

As mentioned, our methods involved the use of economic evidence in the form of a video. Surveys of our participants revealed considerable scepticism about its merits, with 42% of participants believing it to be biased in its presentation of basic facts about impact. This might in part stem from public understandings of aggregate economic statistics: they believe that there are many cases that go against the general picture which make average impacts a questionable notion. Many of our focus group participants felt that their local area was affected more by immigration than other parts of the UK, and that the migrants they come across are likely to be taking out more than they put in. Therefore, while participants showed a basic understanding of the economics of immigration, and felt it was important, many did not see that it should change their views. It is likely that their scepticism about general economic impacts and statistical data reinforced their conclusion that it is best to rely on your own assessment based on what you see and hear.

5.3. The value of EU migrants is assessed by their economic contribution

Interestingly, while participants as already noted largely rejected the type of economic evidence offered as part of the focus groups, they did see the main impact of EU immigration as economic, in terms of its impacts on jobs, wages and public services.

Our participants had mixed views on whether EU migration is economically good or bad for the UK, especially in terms of jobs. Consistent with existing polling data (Ford, 2012; Blinder and Allen, 2016; Heath and Richards, 2018), they saw most value in highly skilled migration, with 88% saying that it is good for the UK economy. In particular, there were frequent mentions of the importance of migrant doctors to the NHS. At the same time, participants tended to agree with the statement that ‘the UK should grow its own skills rather than rely on EU immigration’. There was widespread agreement that British young people are not given sufficient opportunity to acquire skills, in particular through vocational training routes.

Opinion was more divided on the economic value of low skilled migration, with a third saying that it was good, a third bad and a third neutral. Based on existing survey findings, it is commonly assumed that the public is opposed to low-skilled migration (e.g., MAC, 2018). In focus group discussions, however, many participants said that low skilled migration played a role in meeting labour shortages, and recognised that migrants are needed in a wide range of economic sectors which fail to recruit sufficient British workers. In keeping with their views on highly skilled migration, they felt

that opportunities for British people to acquire skills should be improved, and also that the quality of jobs and pay should be increased.

In line with other research, we found that the impact on public services was an issue of considerable concern: many participants not only believed that some migrants were a net drain on public finances, they also believed that some groups of migrants, though not necessarily from the EU, enjoy priority access to health and housing. Possibly reflecting local concerns, they were most concerned about housing, followed by negative impacts on NHS and schools. However, while participants were concerned about such impacts, they did not argue that migrants should not be able to access services such as health and education. Their concerns were that the UK should ensure that migration is of high quality, typically constructed as someone who is immigrating to work and is a net contributor to the public purse.

Concerns about impacts on public services were underlain by ideas of deservedness and the principle that a user of services should be a contributor rather than a burden. This principle was also applied to British people who were also strongly criticised for claiming welfare benefit in preference to work. But at the same time, British people were seen to have more right to claim benefits in not needing to prove their entitlement. For migrants, access to benefits was seen as conditional on economic contribution.

The importance of contribution as a condition for accessing benefits or services was a prominent theme in focus group discussions, but within this, any kind of economic contribution through formal and regulated employment, high or low skilled, was viewed positively. The opposite of contributing, i.e., needing state support, was an equally common, related theme. Many participants expressed concerns that migrants, including from the EU, are attracted to the UK to claim benefits rather than to work, or to commit crime. Beliefs that migrants are attracted to the UK for these purposes lead some to conclude that many migrants do not contribute to the UK, but detract both economically and in other ways, including through making it a less safe place to live. Views on the motivations of migrants to come to the UK led many participants to believe that a reasonable proportion of migrants would not come if they were not able to claim benefits. This points to the need for greater awareness that existing benefit rules already prevent such access, rather than a change in welfare policy, and further highlights the role of anecdotes in the formation of beliefs about immigrants.

5.4. Cultural concerns are not prominent in the debate about EU migration

The academic debate on immigration attitudes has seesawed over whether they are driven by economic or cultural concerns, with some commentators arguing that economic concerns are expressed as a more acceptable form of objection in a focus group setting (Kaufmann, 2018). We did not ask focus group participants directly about cultural concerns but they did raise them and often quite forcefully. Participants were not shy in expressing cultural concerns about immigration even if the debate about economic contribution was the dominant theme in discussions. This suggests that both economic and cultural concerns exist, likely working in tandem and likely with variations between individuals.

However, in the case of EU migration, our research seems to suggest that economic contribution was seen as more important. When participants did raise cultural concerns, it was largely with reference to British ethnic minorities, in particular Muslims, and in relation to issues of dress and crime. These findings are in line with existing experimental survey evidence which shows that

different migrant and ethnic groups are associated with different concerns: Eastern European migrants are associated with economic threat and Muslim ethnic minorities and migrants with security threat and crime (Hellwig and Sinno, 2016; Stansfield and Stone, 2018). More generally, many participants held the view that the UK has ‘too many cultures’. They argued that British culture is being demoted, expressing this through statements such as ‘you can no longer celebrate Christmas’ or fly the Union flag. Again, we have to recognise that ours is not a representative national sample but rather one that represents a specific vocal group of opinions within the UK. Focus group participants said little about integration more generally, although speaking English was seen as an important requirement of living and working in the UK. Some participants did value cultural diversity and integration, and cited examples from their workplaces and from schools.

5.5. Public preferences for new immigration policy emphasise control and the quality of migrants

Existing research generally concludes that the public is expecting Brexit to result in a reduction in migrant numbers and greater control over entry, probably in tandem (Ipsos MORI, 2018). In the survey, our participants did say that they did want the Government to use Brexit as an opportunity to reduce the number of EU immigrants coming to the country. However, whenever that preference was elaborated on in focus group discussion, it was framed in terms of a desire for high-quality migrants, and a reduction in those who come for other purposes other than to work or study. In relation to specific occupational groups, the survey found that most respondents wanted numbers to remain the same in agriculture, hotels and restaurants and in packing and distribution. Around a quarter wanted numbers in these occupational areas reduced, except for health and social care where 40% did so. There was some support for an increase in some of these occupational areas, particularly in agriculture where 26% were in favour of higher numbers.

In exploring post-Brexit immigration principles in the focus groups, we found stronger support for achieving the objective of controlling immigration than for a reduction in numbers. Controls were seen as important to keep out people motivated by the prospect of claiming benefits and committing crime. Participants also argued that new immigration systems should include mechanisms ensuring that migrants do not over-stay temporary visa arrangements.

It is also commonly argued that the public has a strong preference for highly skilled over low-skilled migration (see Blinder and Markaki, 2018; Heath and Richards, 2018). Participants reported a preference to that effect in our survey, where 88% said high-skilled migrants are good for the UK economy. At the same time, a third of participants also thought that low skilled migration is good for the economy and a further third thought its impact is neutral. Recognition that migrants carry out jobs which British workers are reluctant to do meant that a case was seen for some continuation in supply. And here, financial contribution was important to many participants. Doubts about its value centred on its need focused on the availability of British workers and alternatives were identified in encouraging, or even forcing, benefit claimants into work. Improving the quality of jobs was also seen as an important step to making vacancies more attractive to British workers.

Existing literature suggests that British people are more accepting of migrants of white, English-speaking, European and Christian origin (Carl et al., 2018; Ford, 2011), but there is mixed evidence whether they favour EU migrants to non-EU migrants (Blinder and Markaki, 2018; Hix et al., 2017). In our focus groups, participants’ views on whether future policy should favour EU migrants varied.

Some wished to see ties with the EU continue, and were concerned at the potential loss of rights of EU citizens who they knew. There was a general view that UK citizens have benefited less from free movement than their counterparts in other member states. Therefore, in terms of future policy, some participants felt there was little justification for giving preferential terms to EU citizens. However, others felt this was valid since much EU immigration occurs for economic reasons, and was therefore seen as legitimate. Consequently, our data gives no strong indication of whether the public would support policies which give EU citizens preference.

5.6. Implications of our findings

Our research findings have implications for the terms of the debate on immigration and for new, post-Brexit immigration policy.

5.6.1. Implications for the nature of the debate

Much of the focus group discussion took on a negative tone, although individual participants did have quite mixed views. But, while some participants did express positive attitudes, and told positive stories involving integration, especially by children in schools, the general thread was negative. Overall, immigration was discussed as if it is a problem to be dealt with and it was clear that participants were much more familiar with negative than positive themes and narratives around immigration.

In this context, the tone of the video shown as part of the focus group discussion was viewed with suspicion, not necessarily because of its content was disputed but because it was seen as too positive. At the same time, around half of participants who filled out the follow-up survey two weeks after the focus groups said that they felt they had learned something from the video.

Of course, immigration might not be unique in being viewed within a negative framework. Bobby Duffy (2018) finds more generally that people are more receptive to information presented negatively. This presents a challenge for the immigration debate when there are benefits to migration. Our research also suggests that media stories are less influential than personal narratives obtained in conversations with others. Of course, our research may have understated the influence of the media, particularly in shaping the terms of the debate rather than by providing information about immigration. There is evidence that the media does indeed frame stories about immigration negatively (Allen and Blinder, 2013), and there is a growing body of literature suggesting that media affects people's immigration attitudes, though it is hard to determine to what extent it is public attitudes that affect media coverage and not the other way around (Meltzer et al., 2017).

The propensity to rely on personal accounts and to distrust economic statistics about immigration presents challenges for society, for example in hostility towards migrants. Combined with possible misconceptions about migrants' access to benefits and impact on services such as health, education and housing, there is also a challenge for policy makers aiming to address public concerns. Many participants felt they did not have enough opportunity to discuss immigration and that the current debate is polarised. They enjoyed taking part in the focus groups and said they welcomed the opportunity to hear others' views. While there is clearly a selection effect, it may indicate a more general public interest in discussing immigration in some form of public setting, and in improving the quality of the debate. While the public is to some degree sceptical about statistical evidence on immigration, our earlier research found that they also have an interest in understanding the broader

impacts (Rolfe et al, 2016). Therefore, if used carefully, statistical evidence may have a valuable role to play.

5.6.2. Reconciling public attitudes on immigration with the needs of the economy and employers

It is often assumed that the preferences of the public are at odds with the needs of the economy and employers, in that the public would like a substantial reduction in immigration to the extent that would damage the economy, while employers want much more immigration than is strictly necessary to meet the needs of businesses and services. However, when taken in conjunction with our research on post-Brexit policy preferences of employers, carried out before and after the referendum vote (Rolfe and Hudson-Sharp, 2016; Rolfe, 2016; Davies and Rolfe, 2017; Dolton et al, 2018), our focus groups suggest that employers and the public might not be as far apart as is often assumed.

Firstly, employers are fairly confident that new systems will allow for the recruitment of highly skilled workers, although employers in sectors such as health are not necessarily satisfied with current visa arrangements for recruiting non-EU migrants and would not wish for these to be used more widely. Employers are less sure that adequate provision will be made for lower skilled roles, partly because they believe the referendum outcome was interpreted as a vote against low skilled immigration. The available evidence therefore suggests that employers would like a new immigration system with the following features:

- policies which allow for the recruitment of lower skilled workers, rather than those with professional or high level qualifications, and jobs at low pay levels;
- policies which are responsive to changes in the labour market and which can therefore respond quickly to labour and skills shortages;
- visas, or other arrangements, which enable migrants to remain in the workforce on a long-term basis to develop skills, experience and company-specific knowledge.

Our focus group research findings suggest that these conditions might also be broadly acceptable to the public, given that they recognise the need for lower skilled as well as highly skilled workers. Employers also express some concern over temporary visas since they provide only short-term labour and are hard to regulate. And focus group participants shared employers' concerns about immigration systems which are hard to police and might lead to irregular migration. On the issue of whether EU migrants should have priority, the range of views among employers is mixed, as was also the case within our focus groups, with arguments presented for and against EU preference or what some call a 'level playing field', or arrangements linked with trade.

Our research on employers' policy preferences found that employers would accept a requirement to prove that they cannot meet their labour and skills needs from the resident labour market. They would also accept a requirement to make a job offer to a migrant before entry. Our focus groups suggest that this might also be welcomed by a public who are concerned that migrants might be given preferential access to jobs. Along similar lines, our focus group participants also wanted to see the quality of low skilled jobs improved to make them more attractive to British workers, and this is something that employers in some sectors have said they aim to do (Davies and Rolfe, 2017).

5.6.3. But there are three sides to consider...

Findings from our Brexit-related immigration research suggests that the needs of the economy, employers and the general public might not be as far apart as is often assumed, at least on some general principles. But in drawing conclusions from our research there is a further viewpoint to consider, and one which is often left out of the picture: that of EU migrants themselves.

Our research with employers has found some awareness that systems which place restrictions, for example in length of stay, may not be attractive to prospective migrants. And while focus group participants did not voice such concerns, they were aware that the UK may not be attractive in other respects. Some participants talked of the anti-immigration image projected by the Brexit vote and treatment of groups of migrants, for example the Windrush generation. They were aware that EU migrants have a choice of countries in which to live and work and may not wish to come to the UK in future, unless conditions are right.

This is an important reminder to policy-makers that there are three key stakeholders in future immigration policy – the public, employers, and migrants themselves – and that the needs of all three must be taken into account. Reconciling the preferences of all three will be challenging, but there is some shared ground on which future policy may be built.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Evidence review of the economic impact of immigration on the UK

This chapter reviews existing evidence on the economic impacts of immigration including EU immigration specifically. It will review evidence mainly but not exclusively from the UK. The following type of economic impacts of immigration will be explored in turn:

- Labour market impacts (employment and wages)
- Productivity and growth impacts
- Fiscal and public service impacts
- Impacts on prices and housing

For this chapter, we broadly define the economic impacts of migration to include impacts on availability and quality of public services. This study does not review other type of potential impacts such as cultural or social. Our review methodology is outlined in Appendix 2.

A1.1. Labour market impacts

According to economic theory, the impact of immigration on native workers' wages and employment outcomes critically depend on whether migrants have similar or different skills to natives; that is, in economics jargon to what extent migrants' skills are complements or substitutes to the skills of the existing workforce (see Dustmann et al., 2005; Ruhs and Vargas-Silva, 2017; Devlin et al. 2014; Migration Advisory Committee 2012). The similarity of skills is expected to determine how immigration affects the demand for workers in the labour market: if migrants and natives possess similar skills, immigration would lead to an increase in competition in the labour market, which would be expected to drive down wages. Depending on natives' willingness to accept a reduction in wage levels, this may lead to an increase in unemployment or inactivity among existing native workers. Alternatively, if the skills of migrants are different and complementary to those of the existing native workforce, economic theory would suggest that all workers experience an increase in productivity leading to an increase in wages for natives. However, this is only true if migrants are able to put these skills into use. If skilled migrants, for instance, end up working in unskilled roles, there will be a negative impact on the unskilled native workforce (McGuinness and Hawkins, 2016). Economic theory would suggest that effects may differ in the short and long run, as the economy have time to adjust to the new circumstances (see Constant, 2011; McGuinness and Hawkins, 2016).

Another critical theoretical economic hypothesis is that contrary to the often held misconception that immigration inevitably leads to increased competition between jobs as migration increases the number of workers looking for jobs, immigration may increase the demand for labour as there are not a fixed number of jobs in the economy (the lump of labour fallacy). As migrants expand consumer demand for goods and services, immigration can be expected to lead to more investment, which in turn leads to greater demand for labour and as a result potentially higher wages and employment (Ruhs and Vargas-Silva, 2017). As such, economic theory predicts that impacts on employment and wages will crucially depend on how investment and labour demand responds to immigration, which will typically depend on a number of characteristics of the labour market and the economy, and it may vary in the short and long term.

In addition to employment and wages, there are at least two other adjustment mechanisms (Dustmann et al., 2008). Immigration may lead to a change in the mix of goods and services in the economy. This may affect the industrial and occupational structure of the economy, and therefore the balance between different types of skills, which may impact on wages. Similarly, the economy may adjust by changing the technology used for production, which may again affect labour demand and wages.

Overall, economists argue that the labour market impacts of immigration are ultimately an empirical issue:

‘To summarise, economic theory shows that a range of labour market outcomes may result from policies that facilitate or allow (or deter, or prevent) particular types of migration. The actual labour market impacts of migration are, therefore, an empirical issue and are likely to vary over time.’
(Migration Advisory Committee, 2012).

The next two sub-sections will review this empirical literature, for the impacts on employment and wages, respectively. Broadly, it finds little impact on employment outcomes and a small impact on wages with differences among the wage distribution, with high-paid workers gaining and low-paid workers losing out, but still these effects are very small. Overall, the evidence highlights that the employment and wage impacts depend critically on context, in particular the local labour market characteristics, the composition of net-inflows including skill composition, and the scale of net migration inflows compared to the national labour market (Devlin et al., 2014).

The majority of the reviewed literature is quantitative, where the key aim is to compare the labour market outcomes of the existing population after immigration has taken place with the counterfactual outcome if migration had not taken place. The former outcome is observed, but the latter must be constructed using economic assumptions. As such, the reviewed literature is based on three types of methodological approaches: spatial correlation, skill-cell correlation and a factor proportions approach. The spatial correlations approach slices the national labour markets into sub-markets by regional area, and then analyses wage and employment changes in areas with different levels of immigration. The skill-cell correlation approach divides the national labour market by skills groups and assumes that workers within each cell are perfect substitutes. The factor proportions approach involves the simulation of the impact of immigration on the supply of labour, and the impact on wages and employment. These approaches are discussed in more detail, as well as the strengths and limitations of each, in various papers (see Devlin et al., 2014; Ruhs and Vargas-Silva, 2017, Vargas-Silva et al., 2016). These papers also discuss other methodological issues, such as general problems with data on migration and the tendency to use the Labour Force Survey as the main data source due to its collection of information on both migrant stock and labour market characteristics in contrast to better measures of migration flows such as the International Passenger Survey though this has its own flaws as well (see ONS, 2018). Finally, this review also includes some references to qualitative evidence, particularly studies with focus on whether employers prefer migrants for certain jobs.

A1.1.1. Employment impacts

Overall, the evidence suggests that, even in the short term, there is no statistically significant impact of overall migration on employment outcomes (see Devlin et al. 2014 and MAC, 2018 for a review). A

large number of studies have generally failed to find any significant association between migrant flows and changes in employment or unemployment for native workers in the UK (see Dustmann et al., 2003; Dustmann et al., 2005; Gilpin et al. 2006; Lemos and Portes, 2008; Lemos, 2010; Lucchino et al., 2012; Migration Advisory Committee, 2012, 2018; Devlin et al., 2014, Wadsworth et al., 2016; Becker and Fetzer, 2018).

However, some of the literature found evidence of displacement including Nathan (2011) and the Migration Advisory Committee (2012). Nathan (2011) found this negative impact to be strongest among the low-skilled. While Dustmann et al. (2005) found no impact on overall employment outcomes of native workers, they found statistically significant and adverse impact on employment outcomes on those with intermediate education such as GCSE and a positive impact on those with advanced education such as A-levels or university degrees. In addition, some cross-national studies confirm the prediction from economic theory that unemployment increases in the short run for those with skills most similar to immigrants while immigration has no significant impact in the longer run as the economy adjusts (Jean and Jimenez, 2010).

The employment impacts are likely to depend on the type of migrants in question. In particular, some studies have examined whether the impact is different for EU and non-EU migration. This is theoretically plausible as EU migrants have different characteristics as they enjoy rights of full access to the UK labour market and are geographically closer which may make them more likely to return to their home country in the event of deteriorating economic prospects in the UK (Devlin et al., 2014). Using data from 1975 to 2010, the Migration Advisory Committee (2012) found that while overall migration had no impact on employment outcomes for native workers, non-EU migration was associated with a reduction in employment for UK native workers between 1995 and 2010. This analysis was replicated in a joint Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Home Office analysis which still found the negative association for non-EU migrants (Devlin et al., 2014). The Migration Advisory Committee study found a similar sized effect for EU migration, but this was not statistically significant, though this may be due to a higher variation in the data due to the smaller sample sizes of EU migrants. In addition, a number of the studies cited previously examined the impact of migration from recent EU accession countries (A8 and A2) and found no statistically significant effects on employment (Gilpin et al., 2006; Lemos and Portes, 2008; Lemos, 2010; Lucchino et al. 2012).

Existing studies vary in their assessment of how the impacts are affected by the economic conditions. Lucchino et al. (2012) found that migration had no impact on claimant count rates (a proxy for unemployment) even during low growth periods or recessions. In contrast, the Migration Advisory Committee (2012) found that the strength of the economy affected its ability to absorb new migrant workers without adversely affecting employment prospects.

Evidence from other high-income countries suggests that low-skilled migration leads to a re-allocation of native low-skilled workers into occupations and tasks that make more use of local cultural knowledge and communication skills (Peri and Sparber, 2009; D'Amuri and Peri, 2014, Foged and Peri, 2015). This can, for instance, happen when there is an increased inflow of immigrants doing manual tasks, which generate a need for more supervisors or sales representatives (Vargas-Silva et al., 2016). However, this review and other reviews (see Vargas-Silva et al., 2016) have not identified any quantitative evidence for the UK that demonstrates this effect.

Finally, qualitative studies have examined whether employers prefer migrant workers for certain types of jobs. Some papers based on interviews and surveys with employers suggest that some migrant workers are more attractive employees due to their perceived work ethic, especially in low-paid jobs that offer unattractive working conditions and irregular working hours, and their higher literacy and numeracy skills for low-skilled jobs as many migrants tend to work in lower-skilled jobs despite high levels of qualifications (Ruhs and Anderson, 2010; Migration Advisory Committee, 2014; Scott, 2013; McCollum and Findlay, 2015). However, similar studies have found that employers don't discriminate between natives and migrants based on perceived skills, but that low-skilled jobs simply attract fewer applications from British natives, and that employers recruit simply to fill vacancies (Green et al., 2013; Rolfe, 2017; Migration Advisory Committee, 2018).

A1.1.2. Wage impacts

The evidence on wage impacts is less conclusive. The emerging evidence suggests that migration has had little or no impact overall on average wages of UK natives, but they differ in their assessments of whether this small impact is positive or negative. This is similar to evidence from the US (Card, 1990, 2005; Borjas, 2003; Ottaviano and Peri, 2012). The available evidence suggests that there are some impacts along the wage distribution, particularly with negative impacts on the wages of low-paid workers and positive impacts on medium and high-paid workers (Ruhs and Vargas-Silva, 2017). Similarly to the average wage impacts, it should be noted that the magnitude of the impacts are very small, even if they are statistically significant (Portes, 2016; 2018).

The studies that have found a small impact on average wages have used different approaches and explored different time periods. For the period 1997-2005, Dustmann et al. (2008, 2013) found that an increase in the number of migrants equal to 1% of the UK-born working-age population led to a small increase in average wages of 0.1% to 0.3%. Similarly, Nathan (2011) found that an increase of one percentage point in the migrant share in the population was associated with a 0.5% increase in native wages. In another paper using data for 2000-2007, Reed and Latorre (2009) found that a 1% increase in the share of migrants in the UK's working population reduced average wages by 0.3%. However, while the impacts are statistically significant, they are very small. The Migration Advisory Committee (2012, 2014) calculated that the results from these studies suggest that an increase of 10,000 migrants in the UK affect average wages for native workers by between -£2 and +£2 per year. Meanwhile, other papers have found no statistically significant impact on average wages for native UK workers (Lemos and Portes, 2008; Manacorda et al., 2012). Recent analysis by the MAC (2018) support these findings, and concludes that 'immigration is not a major determinant in the wage growth experienced by existing residents.'

The evidence suggests that there is a larger effect of immigration on workers in specific occupations or across different wage ranges, with the greatest wage effects for low-waged workers even though these are still relatively small (Ruhs and Vargas-Silva, 2017; Portes, 2018). Dustmann et al. (2013) found that each 1% increase in the share of migrants in the UK working-age population led to a 0.6% declines in the wages of the 5% lowest paid workers and conversely to an increase in the wages of high-paid workers. Similar findings have been found for Eastern European migration after 2004 (Becker and Feltzer, 2018). In addition, Nickell and Salaheen (2008) examined the wage effects at the occupational level between 1992 and 2006 in the UK and found that a 1% rise in the share of migrants led to a reduction in average wages by almost 0.5% in the unskilled and semi-skilled service sector. In an updated Bank of England paper on the period between 1992 and 2014, they found the

same effect but with a lower wage reduction of 0.2% (Nickell and Salaheen, 2015). This wage reduction is equivalent to estimating that overall immigration to the UK since 2004 have reduced wages for UK natives in the semi/unskilled service sector by about 1% over the entire period, which is equivalent to reducing annual pay increases by around £0.01 an hour (Portes, 2018). This means that while migration may have had a small negative impact on wages for low-paid workers, other factor such as technological change, policies on tax credits and the National Minimum wage are more important determinants of changes in wage growth (ibid.).

With the UK national minimum wage set to rise considerably until 2020, a recent report notes that previous studies have not systematically studied how minimum wages affect migration and its impacts (Vargas-Silva et al., 2016). On the one hand, this may make the UK labour market more attractive for low-skilled immigrants, particularly EU immigrants who can currently still freely access the UK labour market. On the other hand, the higher minimum wage may facilitate a transition to an economy less reliant on low-skilled workers including migrants. At the same time, a higher minimum wage could restrict the options for employers to adjust wages as a response to migration flows, impacting the wage and employment impacts of immigration. In any case, the authors acknowledge that the complex dynamics make it difficult to assess, and the relationship between minimum wages and migration may in any case change as a result of the UK's future exit from the EU (Vargas-Silva et al., 2016).

Finally, the existing research suggests that any negative effects of immigration are likely to be felt more by migrants who are already in the UK. Manacorda et al. (2012) analysed data from 1975-2005 and found that the main impact of immigration was on the wages of resident migrant workers in the UK. This is because their skills are typically closer substitutes to the incoming migrants than those of UK native workers.

A1.2. Productivity and growth impacts

The impact of immigration on productivity and growth is methodologically harder to estimate than labour market effects. Theoretically, there are a number of mechanisms by which migration could increase or decrease productivity (Portes, 2018; MAC, 2018). Firstly, individual migrants may be more or less productive compared to the average productivity, leading to a rise or fall in average productivity, or there may be spillovers that affect the productivity of residents workers either positively or negatively. It is often argued that EU migration could reduce productivity growth because EU migrants are paid less than the average UK workforce, or because the availability of a large pool of relatively low-paid and flexible workers reduce employers' incentives to invest in productivity improvements such as labour saving-technology. These claims are, however, not backed up by any empirical evidence (Portes, 2018). On the other hand, immigrants' skills may complement those of native workers. A number of studies in the US found that immigration of low-skilled workers increased the labour force participation of higher skilled native workers, increased specialisation in the economy, or increased the wages of low-skilled native workers who are 'pushed' into higher-paid occupations in which they can make greater use of their local cultural knowledge and communication skills (Peri and Sparber, 2009; Foged and Peri, 2016; Peri, 2012). Immigration may also contribute positively by increasing the level of human capital in the domestic economy. A number of studies in the US have shown that this can happen either directly by increasing skills in the economy (Keer and Lincoln, 2010; Hunt and Gauthier-Loiselle, 2010), or indirectly by incentivising natives to acquire higher levels of skills and qualifications (Hunt, 2017; McHenry, 2015).

Immigration is also thought to play an important role as vehicles of transferring knowledge between countries, leading to higher productivity and export diversification (Bahar and Rapoport, 2018).

Until the recent MAC publication, the empirical evidence for the UK was still limited, but generally positive. Ottaviano et al. (2015) found that a 1% increase in the proportion of immigrants in local areas is associated with a 2-3% rise in labour productivity. The study attributes this increase mainly to cost-cutting dynamics as well as reduction in the import of intermediate inputs and an increase in exports to immigrants' home countries. Looking at the UK services sector, Ottaviano et al. (2018) found that immigrants lead to an increase in firm productivity. Similarly, Rolfe et al. (2013) found a positive impact in specific industries with high immigrant concentration though the impact was small. Cross-national evidence also tend to find an increase in productivity across countries, but by varying amounts; the UK's productivity boost is higher than most other advanced economies, probably reflecting the relatively high skill-level of migrants into the UK (Boubtane et al., 2015; Jaumotte et al., 2016).

The recent MAC report included three studies on the migration impact on productivity. Campo et al. (2018) found that the share of immigrants in the local area was associated with higher productivity and growth, both over the short and long term, and this was driven by high-skilled migrants with at least tertiary education. Costas-Fernandez (2018) used a different methodology and found that both migrants in high- and low-skilled occupations were more productive than UK-born workers. Finally, Smith (2018) focuses on firm productivity rather than labour productivity and found that higher migrants share leads to higher firm productivity.

A1.3. Impact on public finances and services

Like everyone else in any given economy, an immigration population contributes to public finances through the taxes they pay and other public finance contributions, but also costs something as they use public services and claim benefits. This section will review the evidence on the net fiscal impact, i.e. whether migrants make sufficient contributions through taxes to finance the required expansion of public services, as well as more general evidence on the impact of public service quality and availability.

A1.3.1 Impact on public finances

There are two main methodological approaches to estimate the net fiscal impact of immigration: the static approach and the dynamic approach (Vargas-Silva, 2017). The static approach zooms in on a specific year with available data and simply compares the contributions and costs of existing migrants for that year. The dynamic approach computes the net present value of contributions and costs over the entire lifespan of any migrant, and in some cases their children depending on definition. This approach moves beyond the snapshot in time provided by the static approach by providing a forward-looking perspective, but it requires strong assumptions about factors such as migrants' fertility rates, return migration, productivity, labour market participation, tax rates, government spending etc. (ibid.). Even the static approach requires assumptions about how migrants use public services, with most studies simply assuming that migrants use public services in the same way as UK-born nationals with similar characteristics (Vargas-Silva, 2017).

In a UK context, only the recent study by Oxford Economics (2018) for the Migration Advisory Committee uses a dynamic lifecycle approach. Looking at the 2016 cohort which consist of 515,000 EEA migrants, it found that they make a discounted net contribution of £26.9bn over their lifetime in

the UK. This is equal to an average fiscal contribution of £78,000 for each EEA migrant, compared to non-EEA migrants who were estimated to make a smaller, but still positive, contribution of £28,000 over their lifetime (Oxford Economics, 2018).

The remaining studies on the topic in the UK uses a static approach. The Oxford Economics (2018) report estimated that in 2016/17, EEA migrants paid £4.7b more than they received, compared to a £41.1b deficit of the UK-born population and a £9b deficit for non-EEA migrants. In average fiscal contributions compared to the average UK residents, this equals a yearly surplus of £2,310 for each EEA migrants, a yearly deficit of £840 for non-EEA migrants and a small yearly deficit of £70 for UK-born adults. The report notes that the most important causes for the positive contribution is that EEA migrants tend to have higher employment rates and higher earnings, and they tend to be relatively young so health expenditures and pensions are lower (ibid.).

Previous studies based on the static approach have also shown largely positive results. The first UK-based study estimated that for the fiscal year 1999-2000 the net fiscal impact of migrants was positive at around £2.5b, as migrants contributed £31.2b and cost £28.8b. An updated version of the analysis covered the 2003/04 fiscal year and found a negative net contribution of around £0.4b, as migrants contributed £41.2b and cost £41.6b (Sriskandarajah et al., 2005). Another way of stating these results is as the net annual fiscal contribution (NAFI), i.e. the ratio of contributions to costs, which can then be compared between natives and immigrants. In the 1999/00 fiscal year, this ratio was higher for immigrants (1.06) than for natives (1.01). In the 2003/04 fiscal year, while the negative net contribution meant that the ratio was below one for immigrants (0.99), this was still higher than the UK-born population (0.88) (ibid.). A study by Rowthorn (2008) for the same fiscal year 2003/04 adopted a slightly different approach estimating what the migrant contribution would be with a balanced budget and adjusted for a number of factors such as the cost of asylum support and the exclusion of defence spending which is largely unaffected by migrant flows. This study found a small but positive net contribution of £0.6b.

Recent research shows that the net fiscal impacts vary by types of migrant groups, with more positive contributions from recent and EEA migrants. Dustmann and Frattini (2013, 2014) found that the net fiscal impact from European migrants is more likely to be positive while it is more likely to be negative for non-European migrants. For the period 1995-2011, their most recent study estimated an annual average fiscal contribution of £0.3b for EEA migrants while non-EEA migrants cost on average £6.9b per year (Dustmann and Frattini, 2014). During the same time-period, the UK population cost on average £34b per year (ibid.). The same study found that it was particularly recent migrants who had arrived since 2000 who made a positive fiscal contribution. They explained that while EU accession (A10) migrants worked mostly in low-paid jobs, this was offset by comparatively high employment rates (ibid.).

In a number of reports, Migration Watch UK (2006, 2014) have criticised a number of the assumptions in previous studies. They challenged that some of these studies ascribed the cost of services used by children born to a UK and non-UK parent only to the native group rather than splitting it, and generally argued that academic studies overstated the migrant contributions and understated the costs (ibid.). Their most recent calculations show a negative net fiscal impact of immigration for all type of migrants (EEA, non-EEA, recent EEA and recent non-EEA), but their findings are nevertheless consistent with Dustmann and Frattini in estimating that recent migration has had a less negative impact (Vargas-Silva et al., 2016).

Rowthorn (2014) provides a detailed discussion of the differences between the Dustmann and Frattini (2014) and Migration Watch UK (2014) estimates. While most studies on the impacts on UK employment have not found statistically significant effects, as described in a previous section, Rowthorn (2014) notes that if immigration does have a negative impact on employment, for instance during periods of recessions as some studies indicate, the displacement effect would mean that net fiscal impacts would be more negative. More broadly, most of the reviewed studies do not take into account any potential effects of migration on the contributions and costs of native workers, such as impacts on employment, wages, housing prices etc. (Vargas-Silva, 2017).

Another source that provides an indication of the balance between contributions and costs of immigrants is official data released by HMRC, which suggest that foreign nationals pay more in taxes and National Insurance contributions than they receive in benefits and tax credits (HMRC, 2016a, 2016b; 2018). The most recent publication show that EEA nationals who arrived within the previous 4 years received tax credits and child benefits worth £0.75b in the 2015/16 fiscal year, but paid £4.72b in income taxes and National Insurance contributions (HMRC 2018). Note these estimates are not compatible with the other studies as it excludes a number of contributions such as VAT and council tax, and a number of costs such as housing benefit and JSA (Vargas-Silva, 2017). Generally, while it is difficult to assess how many people migrate to gain access to the benefit system in the UK, what can be established from the available data is that migrants including those arriving from the EU are underrepresented among out-of-work benefits and those receiving tax credits (Sumption and Allen, 2015). The data shows the divisions between migrants from Eastern Europe (the 2004 accession countries and Romania and Bulgaria), Southern Europe (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) and Northern Europe (everyone else in the EU14) (O'Connor, 2018). In particular, Eastern European taxpayers average around £2,000 in income tax each, with Southern European taxpayers averaging three times that amount, and Northern European taxpayers over seven times (ibid.).

A1.3.2 Impact on public services

Whether there is a positive or negative net fiscal impact does not preclude potential negative or positive impacts on the quality and availability of public services such as health and education, both on the national and local level, particularly if funding allocations are not adjusted or other policy decisions are not made to reflected the increased pressures resulting from the population expansion (George et al., 2011, MAC 2018).

However, overall, there are no strong evidence that higher immigration is associated with negative impacts on public services, though it should be said that there is not a large evidence base on this, particularly compared to the impact on wages and employment. This is the case for the NHS where there is a lack of reliable data on the use of health services by immigrant status. Residents of the UK including EU immigrants have free access to the NHS. This had led to speculation among the public whether immigrants increase the demand for NHS services disproportionately, and whether some move to the UK with the purpose of abusing the freely accessible health care system (Giuntella et al., 2018). The few studies that have looked at this found that immigrants generally use hospital and GP services at the same rate as natives (Wadsworth, 2013) and that immigrants do not use more secondary care than natives as is sometimes assumed (Steventon and Bardsley, 2011). A recent empirical study looked at waiting times, which is often used as a proxy for quality of the health care system. It shows that higher immigration is not associated with higher NHS waiting times in accident and emergency departments (A&E) and elective care, and in fact immigration led to reduced waiting

times for outpatient referrals because immigration increases natives' internal mobility and immigrants tend to be healthier than natives (Giuntella et al., 2018). The study did find some localised impacts with a rise in waiting times for outpatient referrals in more deprived areas outside London though this is concentrated in the years following the 2004 EU enlargement (ibid.).

Research by the Department of Health on the cost of providing services to immigrants in 2013 estimated the total gross cost to be around £2b per year (including with countries where the UK has a reciprocal agreement), compared to the annual NHS budget of around £113b (Prederi, 2013). The report estimated the cost per head for EEA migrants to be £588 which was lower than the estimated average expenditure of £736 for non-EEA migrants. In any case, the average use of the NHS by immigrants appears to be lower than for the native population, partly due to the fact that the immigrant population are on average younger (Steventon and Bardsley, 2011). Based on this assumption, the Migration Advisory Committee (2018) recently calculated that EU13+ and new member states migrants each represented 2% of health expenditure, with citizens from the UK and Ireland accounting for 89%. Of course, the impact of immigration is not limited to the cost of providing health care to immigrants, but immigrants also account for a large proportion of the NHS workforce. The most recent employment figures from NHS Digital for March 2018 shows that workers from new EU member states account for 1.6% of the NHS workforce and EU13+ nationals account for 2.6%, in addition to 6.6% non-EEA nationals. The proportion of nurses and midwives from EU/EEA countries have increased in recent years, reaching 5.1% in the most recent data for 2017/18 (MAC, 2018). Given their age composition, the Migration Advisory Committee (2018) concludes that 'the share of expenditure estimated to be on EEA migrants is much less than their share of the healthcare workforce so that they contribute more to the supply of healthcare than the demand (ibid). With some staff groups in very short supply, this contribution to fill British skill gaps may be very significant.

In primary and secondary education, the Migration Advisory Committee (2018) recently calculated the family composition of school-aged children in the UK, showing that 5.1% of children are 'EEA born only', 2.2% are 'mixed UK born and EEA-born' while 72.6% are 'UK born only'. In comparison, the share of EEA school teachers is lower than the proportion of pupils as it accounts for 2.6% and 3.0% in primary and secondary schools, respectively (ibid.). There are also a number of UK-based studies in education that shows that an increase in the number of pupils with English as a second language is not associated with negative impact on attainment outcomes of native pupils (Geay et al., 2013). If anything, pupils in schools with many non-native speakers do slightly better (Strand et al., 2015). The Migration Advisory Committee (2018) recently updated these analyses and found no impact of migration on reduced school choice or on educational attainment of UK-born pupils.

In higher education, foreign nationals and particularly non-EEA students generate significant revenue as they pay higher tuition fees, and as such can be considered to be cross-subsidising education for natives (Hajela and Sumption, 2017; OECD, 2015; Universities UK, 2017). Oxford Economics has estimated an average net fiscal contribution of EEA students to be around £3,300 and the contribution of non-EEA students to be £5,100 higher than that of UK native students (Migration Advisory Committee, 2018b). On the other hand, international students can also put additional pressures on existing public infrastructure (OECD, 2015) though their demographic characteristics suggest their usage would be less than the average UK resident (George et al., 2011). In addition, the share of EEA workers at 17% is higher than the share of students, meaning the EEA migrants

contribute more to supply than demand. There is little specific evidence on the impacts of international students who remain in the UK after their studies (Migration Advisory Committee, 2018a).

More broadly, Portes (2018) notes that recent years' increased immigration inflows have coincided with a general deterioration of public services amid on-going fiscal consolidation. The evidence suggests that those immigrants make a positive net fiscal contribution to the UK. This could, in principle, be used to expand and improve public services such as health and education to cope with the increased demand on public services. However, Portes (2018) points out that the fiscal contribution typically has been used for other purposes such as tax cuts or deficit reduction. The Migration Advisory Committee (2012) explain that 'if public spending does not increase in response to a rise in migration, consumption of public services will rise and so, all else equal, the quality of those services will fall.' Portes (2018) argues that this may have caused people to associate immigration with the failures of public services. In reality, the failure should be attributed to poor planning and poor policy decisions by the government. The recent MAC report noted that at present only the education funding formulae explicitly incorporates migration into its funding mechanism through the English as an Additional Language (EAL) factor which accounts for 1.2% of the total formula spend, and recommends that the most recent measures of population and demographics growth are taken into consideration to ensure that funds are distributed accordingly.

A1.4. Impacts on prices and housing

Since migration affects both the demand for and supply of goods and services, in theory migration flows can affect prices in the economy (Vargas-Silva et al., 2016). For instance, an increase in migration will lead to an increase in demand for certain goods such as houses and a subsequent increase in the prices, but at the same time there would also be an increase in the supply of workers in specific sectors which may reduce the cost of production and decrease prices for goods produced in those industries (ibid.). Empirically, few studies have examined the balance between these effects for the UK. Using data from 1995-2006, Frattini (2008) found a reduction in the growth of prices of non-tradable goods and services in industries dominated by low-paid workers but not in other sections. An updated analysis with data from 1997-2012 found no significant impact on price growth of non-tradable goods and services (Frattini, 2014). However, migration led to a reduction in price growth in the pre-recession period for low-skilled dominated sectors similar to the original analysis, but the study found no effect on price growth for the post-recession period (ibid.). In their recent report, MAC (2018) found that migration, particularly from new EU member states and non-EEA migration, had reduced prices, particularly in the middle and lower-skilled personal services and occupations.

There are more evidence on the impact of immigration on housing prices and rents in the UK economy, though this research remains inconclusive. In theory, positive net migration leads to population growth which may be expected to increase housing prices and rents in the UK economy (Vargas-Silva, 2017b). The magnitude depend on how housing supply adjusts to the changes in demand, but given that the UK supply of housing has increased more slowly than demand for a number of years (Barker, 2004), any population growth may be expected to increase housing costs. Indeed, MAC (2018) recently found that the impact of migration on housing costs are higher in areas with high refusal rates on major housing developments (used as a proxy for the difficulty of expanding supply), indicating that the impact of migration – similarly to the impact of public services

– cannot be seen in isolation from other government policies, in this case on housing construction (MAC, 2018).

Generally, establishing the contribution of migration on changes in housing costs is a complex exercise as housing costs can take many different forms such as prices, rents and social housing, and is not only affected by demographic factors and housing supply, but also income growth and availability of mortgage credit (Vargas-Silva, 2017b). There are also substantial data limitations on the price of houses out of the market, which means that if immigration leads to an increase in sales of low-quality and inexpensive houses, this may incorrectly be interpreted as a reduction in average house prices. Another data limitation is the limited knowledge of the impact of a number of foreign nationals owning properties at the top end of the housing market particularly in London. Finally, the more general methodological problem is that housing prices may affect immigrants' decision to migrate in the first place, and particularly impact on their decision on what area to move to (Vargas-Silva, 2017b). The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2018) recently estimated that an increase in housing demand from immigration had raised housing prices by 20% over the period 1991-2016 in the UK, but this study highlighted another number of limitations as it assumed that housing supply was unaffected by immigration though some migrants work in construction, and they may not consume housing services to the same extent as UK natives (MAC, 2018).

International studies tend to find different effects depending on the level of geographical disaggregation used and whether they examine the short or long term effects (Sá, 2015). Papers that examine broader regions tend to find that higher immigration flows are related to an increase in house prices (Saiz, 2007; Degen and Fischer, 2009; Gonzalez and Ortega, 2013) though studies examining the effects in the longer run tend to find smaller effects as the housing supply has an opportunity to adjust (Akbari and Aydede, 2012; Stillman and Mare, 2008).

At the local level, however, studies based in the US have tended to find a, perhaps counterintuitive, negative association between changes in local immigration flows and house prices (Saiz and Wachter, 2011). Similarly, studies in England and Wales have compared the change in house prices with the changes in migration inflows in different geographic areas and found that higher levels of migration inflows leads to a reduction in house prices (Sá, 2015; Braakmann, 2013). The empirical evidence suggests that this reduction in house prices can partly be explained by subsequent out-migration of UK natives (Saiz and Wachter, 2011, Sá, 2015). This phenomenon is observed especially in areas where migrants are less educated, and among natives at the top of the wage distribution (Sá, 2015; Saiz and Wachter, 2011). This creates a negative income effect, which means that even if the native out-migration is complete so the local population size remains constant, housing demand and therefore prices may still be affected due to an income effect if the composition of skill and income levels are different for the new local population (Sá, 2015). The literature also explores whether increased immigration flows could lead to a reduction in housing prices due to increased crime levels or reduced quality of locally provided goods such as schools through overcrowding, but finds no evidence for this in the empirical literature (Sá, 2015; Saiz and Wachter, 2011). Recently, the Migration Advisory Committee expanded Saiz's study to include more Local Authorities and a longer time-period, and found that migrants put an upward pressure on house prices, with a 1 percentage point increase in the population due to migration leading to a 1% rise in house prices.

Finally, it should be noted that the finding of reduced housing process at the local level is not inconsistent with the finding of increased housing prices across broader geographical areas. The reason for this is that native out-migration may lead to house price increases in other areas of the UK and subsequently a potential increase in the average house prices across the UK (Migration Advisory Committee, 2014).

Another part of the housing literature examines the potential effect of immigration on natives' access to social housing. While only migrants with general settlement status or EEA nationals are eligible for social housing, non-eligible migrants may still increase demand for social housing if they displace the native population or eligible migrants from the private rented sector (Vargas-Silva, 2017b). Generally, there is an excess demand for social housing in the UK, so positive net migration may lead to a further shortage of social housing.

Provision of social housing can be considered part of the welfare state, but it is unlike more traditional benefits (Battiston et al., 2014). Unlike traditional benefits, provision of social housing places natives and immigrants in a 'direct and visible conflict over access to resources' (ibid.). Due to the inability of current and past UK housing policies to adjust supply to demand, one can say crudely that 'one more immigrant household in social housing is quite likely to be one less native household' (ibid). Similar to the broader impact on prices and availability in the private rented sector, the magnitude of any potential increase in shortage of social housing depends on the adjustment to the supply of social housing relative to the increased demand. The interaction between supply and demand factors can vary locally across different housing markets with different scale of migrant inflows.

The most recent figures show that a roughly equal proportion of UK-born (16%) and foreign-born individuals (17%) live in social housing (Vargas-Silva, 2017b). However, once you control for demographic, economic and regional circumstances, immigrants are less likely to be in social housing compared to natives (Battiston et al., 2014, Wilson, 2016). Overall, immigrants are overwhelmingly housed in the private rental sector, particularly those who have arrived recently in the UK (Rutter and Latorre, 2009). The existing evidence also shows that at the point of arrival, migrants are less likely than UK natives with similar characteristics to live in social housing, then this likelihood increases yearly to reach a level above natives after 10 years before finally falling back to a similar level to natives (Battiston et al., 2014).

It is commonly asserted that migrants 'jump the queue' and receive priority status in the allocation mechanism of the social housing stock. The Citizenship Survey (see Battiston et al., 2014) found that more than 20% of white Britons think they are treated worse than ethnic minorities in social housing, which is higher than similar numbers for education and health services as well as private housing. Examining data on waiting lists and allocation of new tenancies as well as analysing social housing allocation policies, a number of studies have found no evidence of systematic discrimination in favour of immigrants in social housing (Battiston et al., 2014; Rutter and Latorre, 2009; Robinson, 2010). Rather, the studies point out that often migrants are unaware of the possibilities and the rules of the social sector, and as such are less likely to take advantage of it (ibid.). However, these studies point out that there are a number of reasons why white Britons may feel that they are being unfairly treated. Most importantly, the combination of changes to allocation procedures that have reduced discrimination against ethnic minorities, a rising immigration population and a decline in social housing stock have led to a reduced probability of native Britons gaining access to social

housing (Battiston et al., 2014). Battiston et al. (2014) estimate that the reduced probability of natives living in social housing can be attributed about two-thirds to the reduction of social housing stock, and one-third to the higher migrant population and reduced discrimination in allocation mechanisms (ibid.). In addition, Rutter and Latorre (2009) notes that in some areas the sale of social housing stock and its subsequent use as private rental housing for migrants have led to a misperception among locals.

Appendix 2: Evidence review protocol

Literature searches were undertaken using a predetermined protocol and a wide range of databases and search engines. This was supplemented by manual searches of key organisations' websites. Bibliographies of publications identified to be relevant were also searched to ensure maximum coverage.

The review covered published and unpublished literature from the year 2000 and onwards. Sources included published quantitative and qualitative analyses in the form of academic papers, reports produced for government departments, papers by research teams in universities, research institutes, think tanks and large-scale survey studies and commercial pollsters.

Three separate types of evidence was collected:

1. Evidence on the economic and social impact of immigration and EU immigration in the UK

Primary Search Terms: 'immigration' OR 'EU immigration' OR 'migrants' OR 'EU migrants' OR 'EU migration' OR 'migration' AND 'impact' OR 'economic impact' OR 'social impact' OR 'distributional impact' AND 'labour market' OR 'employment' OR 'productivity' OR 'growth' OR 'fiscal' OR 'public services' OR 'wages' OR 'low-skilled' AND 'England' 'United Kingdom' 'Britain' 'Great Britain' 'British'

Broad Inclusion criteria:

Geography	UK
Timescale	Published (or disseminated) from 2000 onwards
Publication Status	Published or pending publication, including working papers. Search focus on existing literature reviews.
Language	English
Research Method	None prescribed.

2. Evidence on attitudes towards immigration (including EU immigration) and its impact in the UK

Primary Search Terms: 'immigration' OR 'EU immigration' OR 'migrants' OR 'EU migrants' OR 'EU migration' OR 'migration' AND 'attitudes' OR 'opinion' OR 'public opinion' OR 'beliefs' OR 'perception' AND 'England' 'United Kingdom' 'Britain' 'Great Britain' OR 'British'

Broad inclusion criteria:

Geography	UK
Timescale	Published (or disseminated) from 2000 onwards
Publication Status	Published or pending publication, including working papers
Language	English
Research Method	None prescribed.

3. Evidence on how information and economic evidence affect the attitudes towards immigration and its impact (UK *and* international evidence)

Primary Search Terms: 'immigration' OR 'EU immigration' OR 'migrants' OR 'EU migrants' OR 'EU migration' OR 'migration' AND 'attitudes' OR 'public attitudes' OR 'opinion' OR 'public opinion' OR 'belief' OR 'perception' OR 'public perception' AND 'information' OR 'evidence' OR 'economic evidence' OR 'facts' OR 'data' OR 'statistics'

Broad inclusion criteria:

Geography	UK and abroad
Timescale	Published (or disseminated) from 2000 onwards
Publication Status	Published or pending publication, including working papers
Language	English
Research Method	None prescribed.

Search engines/databases:

International Bibliography of Social Sciences
JSTOR
EBSCO
DawsonEra
Google Scholar
Academic Search Complete
Informaworld
IngentaConnect
Public Information Online
Sage Journals Online
Scopus
Social Policy and Practice
Web of Science
Social Science Research Network (SSRN)
UKOP
Web of Knowledge

Specific academic journals:

Migration:

International Migration Review
International Migration
Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies
Ethnic and Racial Studies
IZA Journal of Migration
Migration Studies
Population, Space and Place
Migration, Mobility and Displacement
Journal of Refugee Studies

Journal of International Migration and Integration
Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies
Journal of Comparative Migration Studies
International Journal of Migration and Border Studies
European Journal of Migration and Law
Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture
Nordic Journal of Migration Research
Migration Letters
Journal of Identity and Migration Studies

Public opinion:

Journal of Public Opinion Research
International Journal of Public Opinion Research
Public Opinion Quarterly
Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties

Research Institutes/Departments:

Migration:

COMPAS (Oxford)
Migration Policy Institute
NIESR
British Future
Migration Observatory

Public Opinion:

NatCen
Ipsos MORI
YouGov
Gallup World Poll
Eurobarometer
PEW Research Center
European Social Survey

Appendix 3: Demographic features of the district of Swale in Kent

The estimated population size of Swale in 2017 was around 146,700, 60.9% of which was working age (16-64). In 2017 Swale had an unemployment rate of 4.5%, compared to 3.4% in the South East and 4.3% nationally. Economic inactivity was at 22.3%, compared to 18.7% in the South East and 21.6% nationally. As shown by Figure 11, a greater proportion of Swale’s working population are in Soc 2010 Major Group 8-9 jobs¹⁵, compared to both the South-East and the UK generally. Correspondingly, only 36.3% of Swale’s working population are in Major Group 1-3 jobs compared to 50.8% in the South-East and 45.8% in the UK as a whole. As outlined by the UK Business Register and Employment Survey (2016), Swale’s industrial structure is significantly weighted toward manufacturing (14.1%) and transportation and storage (9.6%) when compared to the rest of Kent.

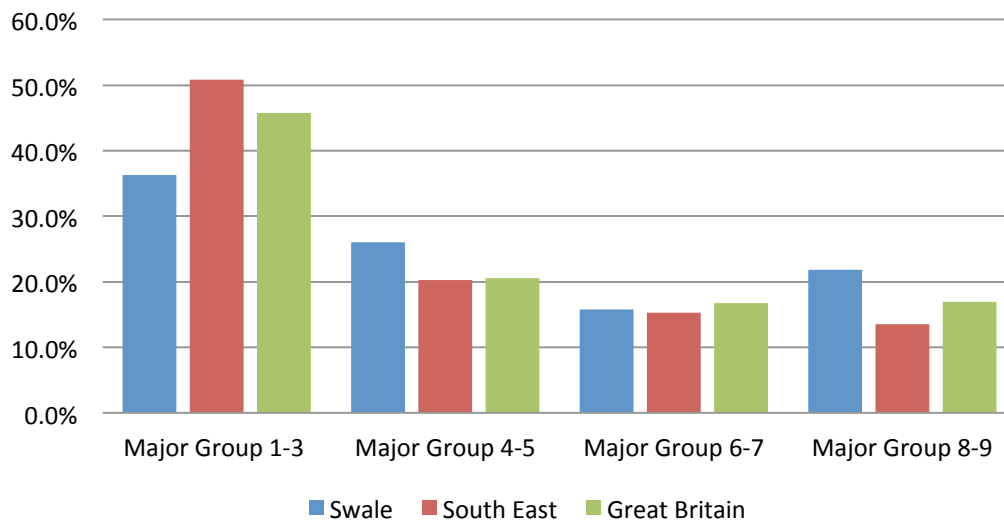


Figure 11. Employment by Occupation (April 2017 – March 2018)
Source: ONS Annual Population Survey – Standard Occupational Classification

As shown by Figure 12, general qualifications levels for Swale are lower than those found in the South-East and the UK. 8.3% of Swale’s population have no qualifications, compared to 5.2 in the South East and 7.7% in the UK.

¹⁵ Soc 2010: Group 1-3 are Managers, Directors and Senior Officials, Professional Occupations, Associate Professional; Group 4-5 – Administrative & Secretarial, Skilled Trades Occupations; Group 6-7 are Caring, Leisure And Other Service Occupations, and Sales and Customer Service; Group 8-9 – Process Plant Machine Operatives and Elementary Occupations.

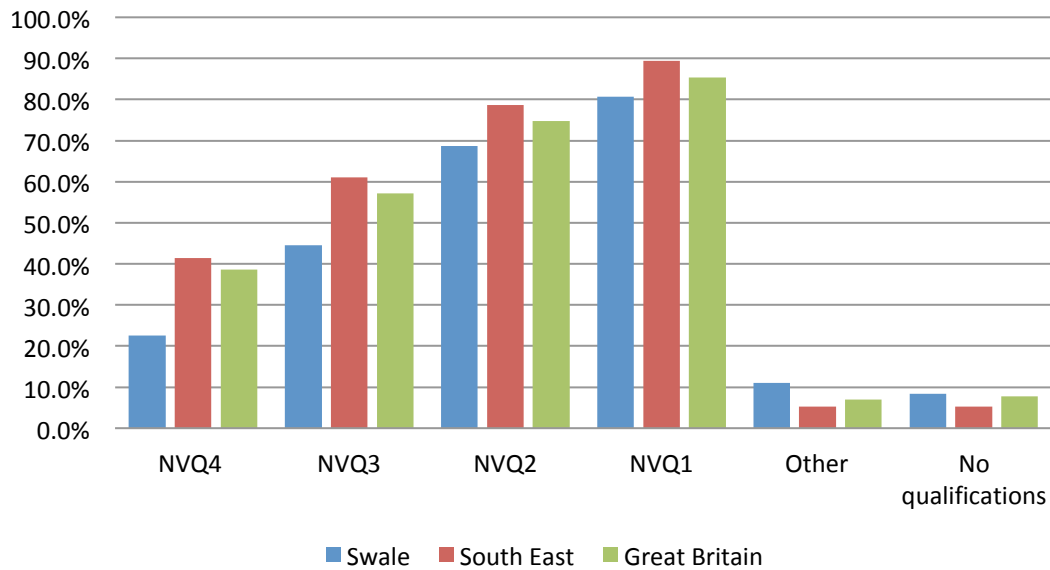


Figure 12. Qualifications (January 2017 – December 2017)
Source: ONS Annual Population Survey

In July 2018, 2.8% of Swale’s population were in receipt of out-of-work benefits. This compared to 1.3% of the South-East and 2.2% of the UK. As shown by Figure 13, Swale has higher proportion of its population claiming Jobseekers Allowance in November 2016 compared to the South-East and the UK. Estimates place Swale’s job density (i.e. the ratio of total jobs to population aged 16-64) at 0.67, compared to 0.88 and 0.84 in the South East and the UK respectively. Hourly rates of pay for full-time employees Swale in 2017 averaged at approximately £12.37. This compared to £14.56 in the South East and £13.99 in the UK.

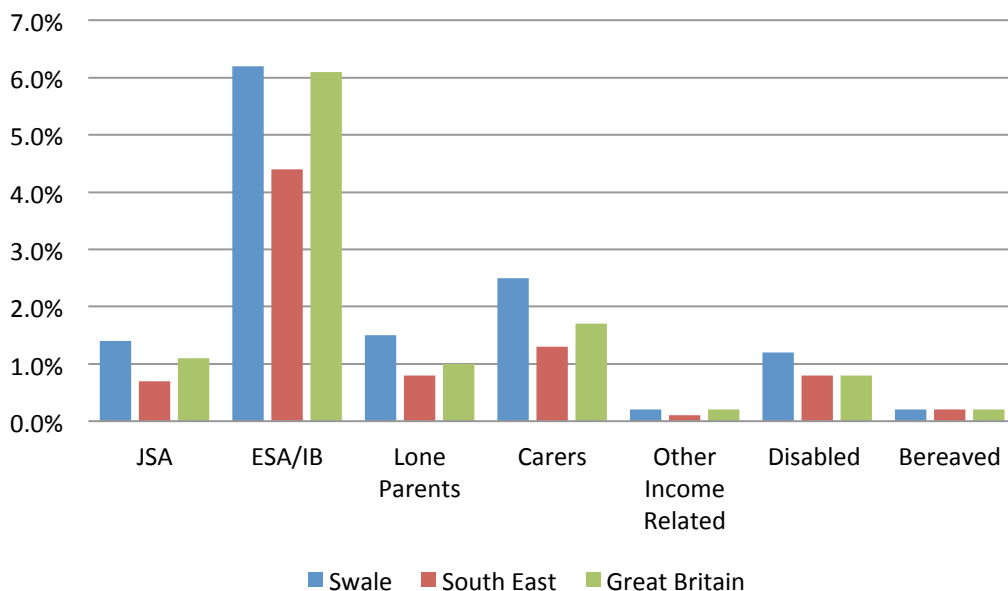


Figure 13. Working Age Client Group – Main Benefit Claimants (November 2016)
Source: DWP benefit claimants

In 2015 Swale was ranked as the 2nd most deprived part of Kent (out of 12), and 77th nationally (out of 376) (DCLG, 2015). In 2014 23% of children in Swale were considered to be in poverty. This is compared to 17.9% in the Kent County Council area, and 19.9% in England.

2011 census data identified 96.6% (135,835) of Swale’s population as white, compared to 85.4% of England as a whole. Swale has the second smallest BME population within Kent and Medway at 3.45% of the resident population, followed only by Dover (3.23%). Surrounding areas are identified to have a much higher proportion of BME residents, including Medway (10.36%) and Gravesend (17.2%).

As shown in Figure 14, Swale has seen an increase in the proportion of resident population born outside of the UK, much like the rest of Kent and England. Most recent data shows that net international migration to Kent accounted for the majority of the area’s total population growth in 2017 (Business Intelligence Statistical Bulletin, 2017). During mid-2015/16 net international migration (as opposed to internal UK migration) accounted for 36.7% of Kent’s total population growth (+6,300).

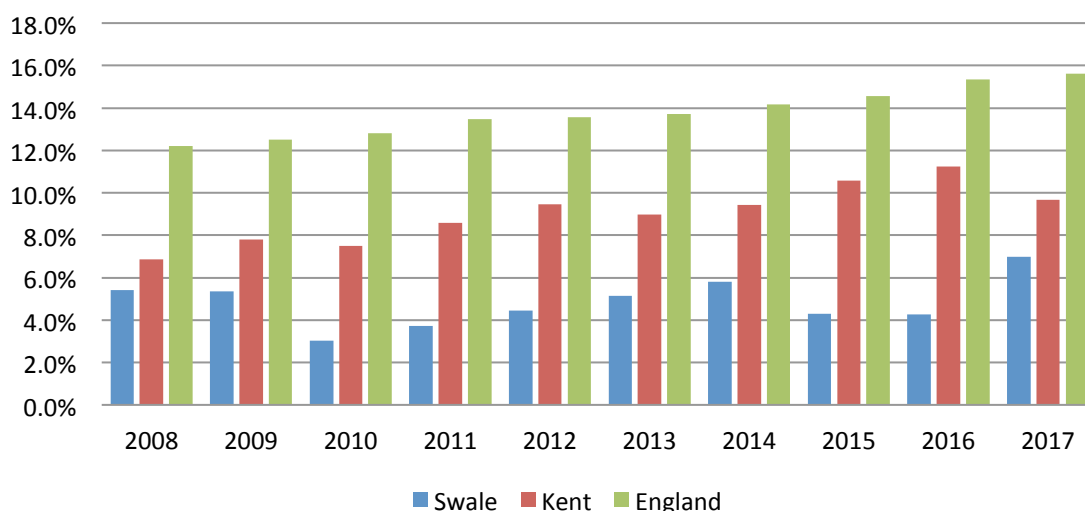


Figure 14. Proportion of resident population born outside of the UK (2008-2017)
Source: Annual Population Survey

In mid-2015 to mid-2016 Kent saw a net increase of 14,300 migrants, 6,300 of which originated from outside of the UK (KCC, 2017). As shown by Figure 15, between 2006 and 2016 Swale experience an overall net increase in the number of *long-term* international migrants¹⁶, going from 600 in 2006/07, to a low of 100 in 2010/11, to a high of 800 in 2015/16. In 2015/16, Swale’s net increase in international migrants was ranked the 3rd highest amongst Kent Local Authority Districts, behind Maidstone (+1000) and Canterbury (+1500).

¹⁶ ‘Long-term migrant’ is defined by the ONS as someone who intends to stay for 12 months or more.

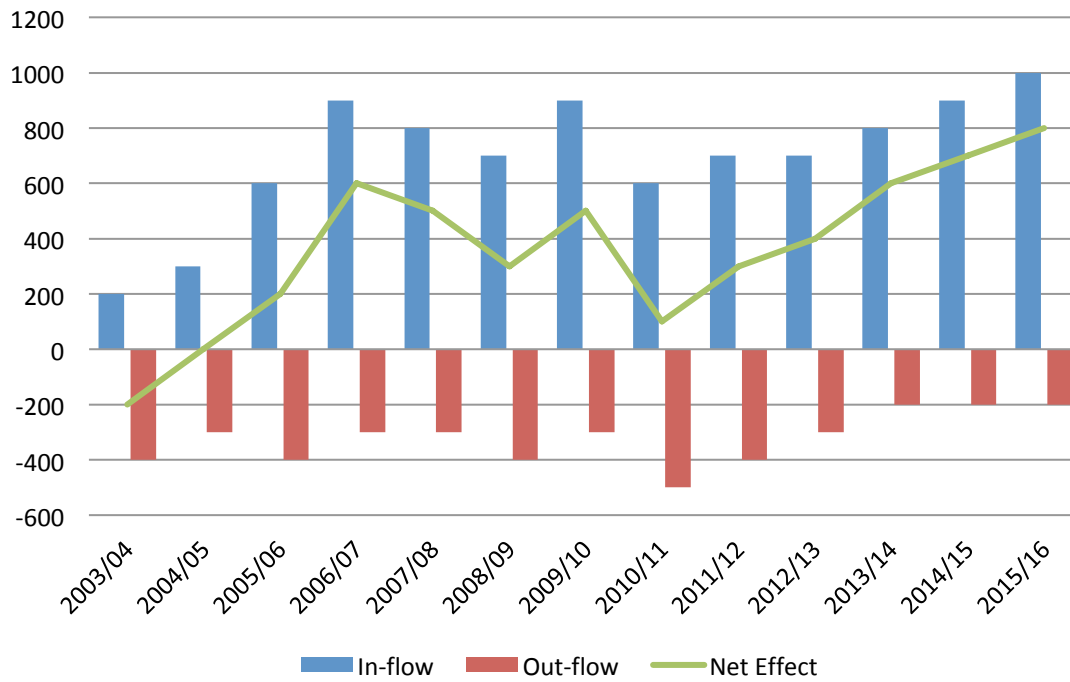


Figure 15. In-flow, Out-flow and Net Effect of long-term International migrant to Swale
Source: KCC, 2017a. Figures estimated to the nearest 100.

There were an estimated 300 short-term migrants in Swale in Mid-2014 year to Mid-year 2015, equivalent to 2.4 to every one thousand resident population for that year. This rate is lower than that of the South East (2.6) and England (2.8), but equivalent to that of Kent generally. During this period Swale had the third highest rate of short-term international migrants per thousand population, behind Maidstone (3.3) and Canterbury (6.5).

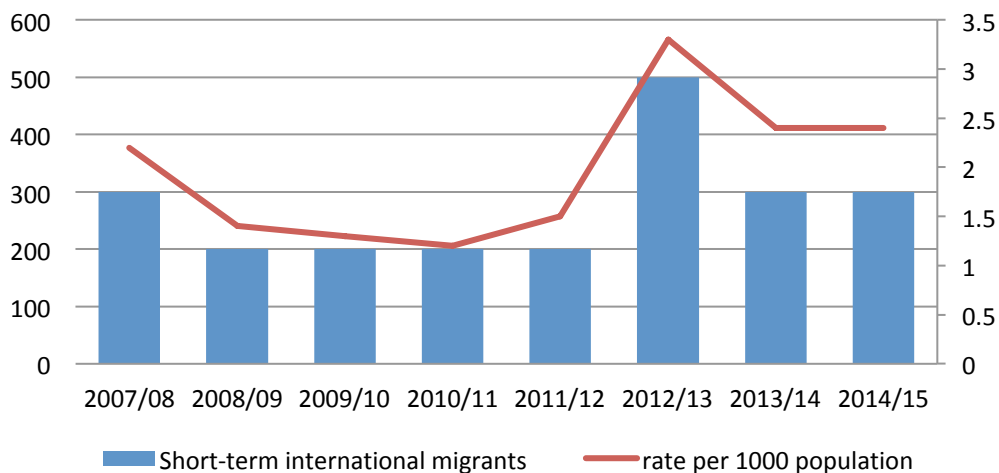


Figure 16. Short-term international migrant rate per thousand resident population in Swale
Source: KCC (2017) using International Passenger Survey. Figures estimated to the nearest 100.

Furthermore, as shown by Figure 17, estimates suggest that the vast majority of short-term migrants in Swale between Mid-2014 to Mid-2015 were there for employment, as opposed to study.

Compared to the rest of Kent, Swale has consistently had the largest proportion of short-term migrants seeking employment as opposed to study.

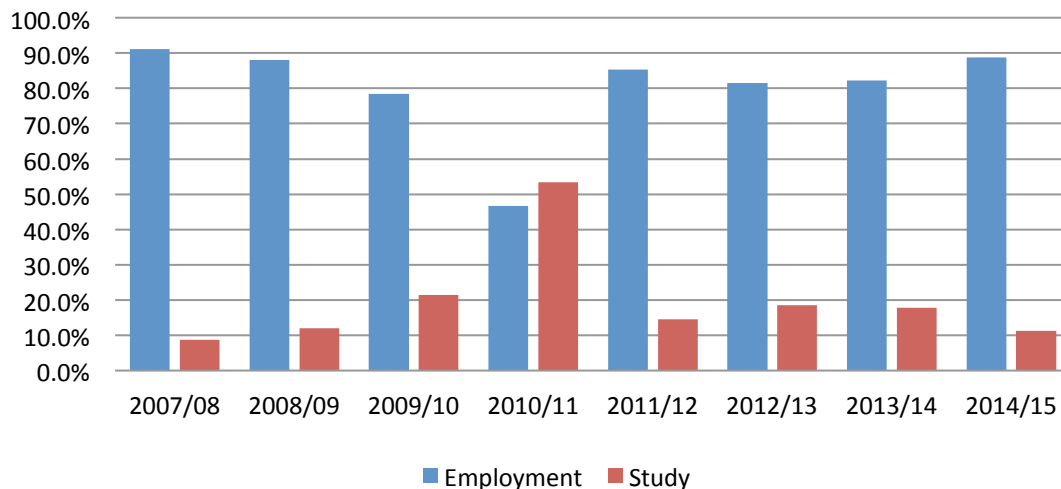


Figure 17. Short-term international migrants’ reason for migration to Swale
 Source: KCC (2017) using International Passenger Survey. Figures estimated to the nearest 100.

Small sample sizes make obtaining detailed aggregate data on the composition of Swale’s short- and long-term migrant population difficult. 2011 Census data suggest 56 per cent Swale’s migrant population had been resident in the UK for 10 years or more. This is compared to 16% who had been resident between 5 and 10 years, 16% between 2 and 5 years, and 12% less than 2 years. These proportions, however, have likely changed considerably since then. As shown in Figure 18, 2011 Census data identified, the majority of non-identifying ‘White: English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British’ self-report as ‘other white’ (3,515), followed by African (913) and White Irish (780)

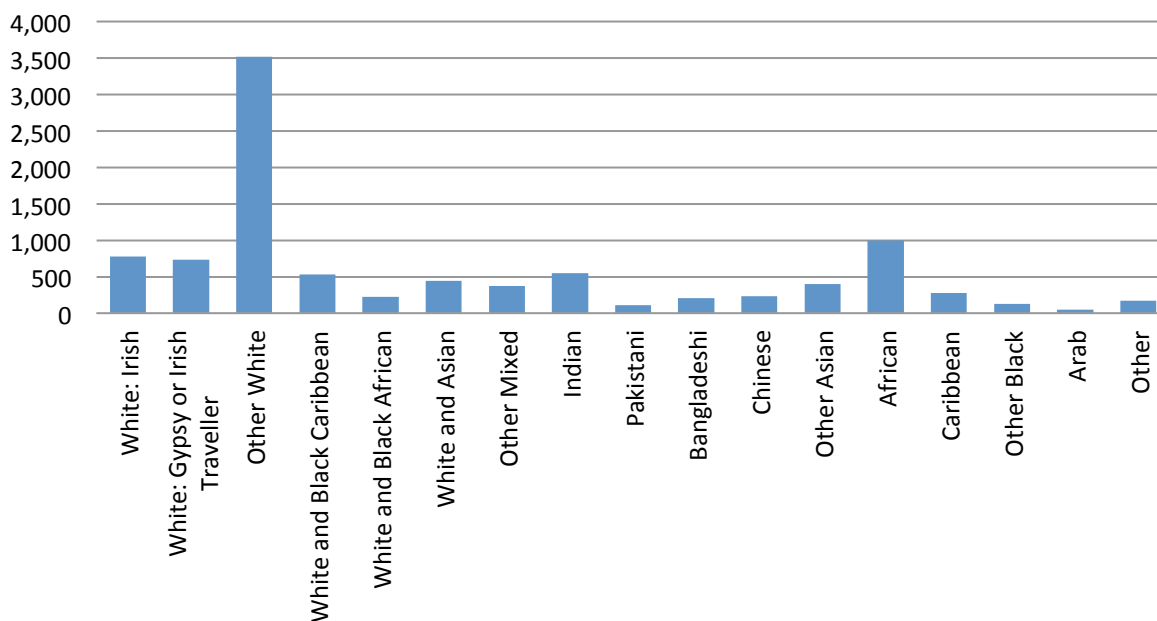


Figure 18. Swale Population by Ethnicity
 Source: Census 2011.

Figure 19 provides Census 2011 for Swale passport holders (excluding those with a United Kingdom and 'No Passport'), and shows the largest proportion of non-UK passport holders to be from 'EU countries' (2685), followed by 'Africa' (584) and then 'Middle East and Asia' (426)

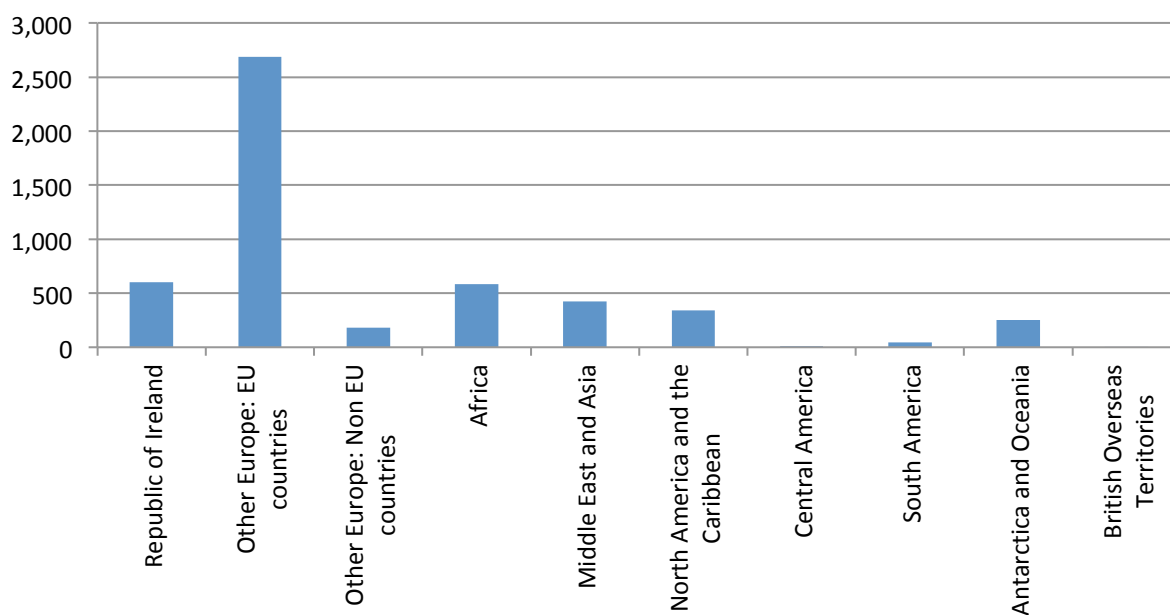


Figure 19. Swale Population by Passport Held
Source: Census 2011.

Appendix 4: Summary analysis of changes in responses over time

SUMMARY OF CHANGES FOR MAIN ITEMS AND SCALES

ITEM/SCALE	MEDIAN (MEAN) AT PRE	CHANGE IN MEAN: PRE TO POST	MEAN CHANGE BY CONDITION	CHANGE IN MEAN: POST TO FOLLOW-UP	MEAN CHANGE BY CONDITION
Overall feelings about EU immigration <i>On a scale of 1-10, do you think EU migration has had a positive or negative impact on Britain?</i> (1 = Very negative, 10 = Very positive)	5 (5.39)	+0.53** (n = 95)	Listening (n = 33) Biased assm. (n = 25) In-group bias (n = 18) Control (n = 19)	-0.04 (n = 63)	Listening (n = 25) Biased assm. (n = 17) In-group bias (n = 11) Control (n = 10)
Policy preference (numbers) <i>The Government should use Brexit as an opportunity to cut down EU immigration. (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree, nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.)</i>	4 (3.54)	-0.27* (n = 95)	Listening (n = 33) Biased assm. (n = 25) In-group bias (n = 18) Control (n = 19)	+0.26* (n = 64)	Listening (n = 25) Biased assm. (n = 16) In-group bias (n = 13) Control (n = 10)
Policy preference (skills) <i>The UK should grow its own skills rather than rely on EU immigration. (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree, nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.)</i>	4 (3.99)	-0.08 (n = 96)	Listening (n = 33) Biased assm. (n = 25) In-group bias (n = 20) Control (n = 18)	+0.03 (n = 65)	Listening (n = 25) Biased assm. (n = 17) In-group bias (n = 13) Control (n = 10)
Economic perceptions Scale from 1 to 5 (higher value = more positive perceptions), derived from items on EU migrants taking jobs from British workers, driving down wages for British workers, and having helped create jobs. ¹	3 (2.82)	+0.37*** (n = 96)	Listening (n = 33) Biased assm. (n = 25) In-group bias (n = 20) Control (n = 18)	-0.22* (n = 65)	Listening (n = 25) Biased assm. (n = 17) In-group bias (n = 13) Control (n = 10)
Fiscal perceptions Scale from 1 to 5 (higher value = more positive perceptions), derived from items on EU migrants contributing more than they take out, or having a negative impact on the NHS, schools, and housing. ²	2.5 (2.64)	+0.25** (n = 96)	Listening (n = 33) Biased assm. (n = 25) In-group bias (n = 20) Control (n = 18)	-0.12 (n = 65)	Listening (n = 25) Biased assm. (n = 17) In-group bias (n = 13) Control (n = 10)
Cultural concerns <i>I am concerned about too many cultures coming into the country. (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree, nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.)</i>	3 (2.91)	-0.13 (n = 97)	Listening (n = 33) Biased assm. (n = 25) In-group bias (n = 20) Control (n = 19)	0 (n = 65)	Listening (n = 25) Biased assm. (n = 17) In-group bias (n = 13) Control (n = 10)
Concerns about numbers (national) <i>There are too many EU immigrants in Britain. (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree, nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.)</i>	4 (3.39)	-0.19 (n = 97)	Listening (n = 33) Biased assm. (n = 25) In-group bias (n = 20) Control (n = 19)	+0.05 (n = 65)	Listening (n = 25) Biased assm. (n = 17) In-group bias (n = 13) Control (n = 10)
Concerns about numbers (local) <i>There are too many EU immigrants in my local area. (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree, nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.)</i>	3 (2.95)	+0.08 (n = 97)	Listening (n = 33) Biased assm. (n = 25) In-group bias (n = 20) Control (n = 19)	-0.06 (n = 65)	Listening (n = 25) Biased assm. (n = 17) In-group bias (n = 13) Control (n = 10)

* $p < 0.05$ ¹ Scale constructed using participants' median response across items; alpha for items at *pre* stage: 0.76.

** $p < 0.01$ ² Scale constructed using participants' median response across items; alpha for items at *pre* stage: 0.85.

*** $p < 0.001$

Appendix 5: Survey questions at focus group

About you

Full Name

Views on the impact of EU immigration

1. On a scale of 1-10, do you think EU migration has had a positive or negative impact on Britain?

Very negative			Neutral				Very positive		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about EU immigration?

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

There are too many EU immigrants in Britain

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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There are too many EU immigrants in my local area

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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I am concerned about too many cultures coming into the country

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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3. To what extent do you think the following groups of migrants are good or bad for the UK economy?

Very bad	Bad	Neutral	Good	Very good

High-skilled EU migrants

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Low-skilled EU migrants

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Students from the EU

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Asylum seekers and refugees

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the impact of EU immigration on jobs?

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree, nor disagree Agree Strongly agree

- EU migrants take jobs away from British workers**
- EU migrants drive down wages of British workers**
- EU immigration has helped to create jobs in the UK**
- The UK should grow its own skills rather than rely on EU immigration**

5. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree, nor disagree Agree Strongly agree

- EU migration contribute more than they cost to public services through the taxes they pay**
- EU migrants have a negative impact on the NHS**
- EU migrants have a negative impact on schools**
- EU migrants have a negative impact on housing**

6. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree, nor disagree Agree Strongly agree

- The Government should use Brexit as an opportunity to cut down EU immigration**

7. For each of the sectors, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of EU migrants coming to live in the UK to be increased, reduced or remain about the same.

Reduced a lot Reduced a little Remain about the same Increased a little Increased a lot

Health and social care

Agriculture

Hotels and restaurants

Packing and distribution

8. Imagine there was an easy way to cut EU immigration to the UK, but that it came with a cost. What is the maximum amount you would personally be prepared to pay to cut EU immigration in half?

- Nothing. EU migration stays the same
- £10 per year
- £50 per year
- £100 per year
- £500 per year
- I would be willing to pay more than £500 per year
- Don't know
- Other (please specify)

Appendix 6: Materials for defence proposal treatment

Hand-out:

PLEASE WRITE AND SIGN YOUR NAME AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS PAPER TO CONFIRM THAT YOU VOLUNTARILY GIVE YOUR CONSENT TO TAKING PART IN THIS EXERCISE.

A Proposal for Government Funded Legal Aid for EU Citizens in the UK

A working group at *the National Institute of Economic and Social Research* (NIESR) is considering a proposal that EU citizens currently living in the UK be given access to a free, one-hour phone consultation with an immigration solicitor. Advice would be given on how to secure their right to stay and work in the country post-Brexit, in the manner they currently are under EU rules. The service would be government funded. The estimated cost of an hour's consultation with an immigration solicitor is £200. There are currently around 3 million EU citizens currently in the UK who would be eligible for this free service.

Your defence of the proposal:

Your Name: _____

Your Signature: _____

Appendix 7: Materials for devil's advocate treatment

Hand-out:

Your Name:

I share this concern:

Here are three (or more) reasons why I might be wrong in thinking that I should be concerned about this:

Appendix 8: Analysis of treatment compliance

A8.1. Proposal defence treatment

A total of 26 participants across four focus groups were exposed to the proposal defence treatment, in which they were asked to consider a pro-immigration proposal (see Appendix 6). The analysis of their answers show that 13 people complied with the exercise, 8 people complied in a very narrow sense by suggesting modifications to the proposal, and 5 people did not defend the proposal.

The most common defence of the proposal was to acknowledge that migrants contribute to the UK economy and public services as workers and taxpayers, and that it could be beneficial if they were supported to stay in the UK. Another main defence of the pro-immigration proposal was to stress the importance of providing clarity to how migrants can address their residential and legal issues, acknowledging that this can be a difficult task especially during a potentially distressful period. The last main defence used was to acknowledge the injustice of deporting migrant families and to stress the principles of fairness and equal rights.

In addition to this, there was a large group whose only defence of the proposal was to suggest modifications to the proposal, specifying under what conditions migrants should be allowed to receive the legal support. Usually, participants argued that only migrants who had made a contribution to the British economy through working and living in the UK for a number of years should be allowed the service.

The group who were not deemed to be compliant either refused to write an answer or focused on the need to deport migrants, or suggested to spend the money on UK public services instead.

In many responses across all categories of compliance, people noted their concerns about the cost of the service, demonstrating that the exercise worked as intended as participants acknowledged that it would be a costly proposal. Invariably, people suggested ways to reduce this cost. Suggestions included providing the money as a loan, making their origin country or the EU pay for the support, or only provide the service at a discounted cost rather than as a free service.

A8.2. Devil's advocate treatment

A total of 27 participants across four focus groups were exposed to the 'devil's advocate treatment', in which they were first asked to list a number of concerns about immigration, and then attempt to play 'devil's advocate' with them, by providing reasons for why they might be wrong about these concerns (see Appendix 7). The analysis of their answers show that 25 people complied with the exercise and two people didn't comply. Compliance was defined narrowly: if a respondent at any point during his or her answer demonstrated any reflection on why their concerns might have been wrong, it was recorded as compliance.

There were four different types of immigration concerns that participants played 'devil's advocate' with. These will be explored in turn below.

Overcrowding/housing crisis

Participants were concerned about how immigration had caused overcrowding leading to a housing crisis and homelessness among UK nationals as well as pressure on public services. The most common way participants played devil's advocate with this concern was to acknowledge that they may have overestimated the problem in the first place. This focused on the fact that people often

stay for short periods and eventually return to their home countries, that British people are also leaving as part of freedom of movement, and that the UK have plenty of space.

Another common theme was to acknowledge that migrants are often used as scapegoats for overcrowding and the housing crisis rather than acknowledging that these problems are likely complex and caused, at least partly, by other factors. In this context, several respondents noted that the housing crisis was ultimately caused by Governments' consistent failures to build more houses including social housing.

The third main aspect that was brought up was to acknowledge migrants as contributing to the economy and public services as workers and taxpayers, including the fact that EU workers formed a large part of the construction workforce which meant they could contribute to solving the housing crisis.

Finally, there were a number of arguments that were only brought up once across the responses. These included the acknowledgement that overcrowding is not a problem in all areas of the UK, to refer to the principles of fairness and equal rights of immigrants to have somewhere to live, and to express sympathy with immigrants fleeing violence in their home countries.

Impact of public services

Participants were also concerned about immigration's impact on public services, particularly the NHS and schools. The first main argument used against this concern was to acknowledge that migrants do not only use public services but also contribute through filling skill gaps in the public sector and paying taxes. The other main argument was to acknowledge that migrants are often used as scapegoats for existing problems that are caused by other factors, primarily policy failures by the UK government. Another argument was to acknowledge the effort and experiences of many immigrants who have sometimes fled violence, and that they have an equal right to support and help regardless of nationality and ethnicity. Other less common arguments included acknowledging that immigration could bring benefits due to multiculturalism and diversity as well as social capital; and that they may be overestimating the problems.

Integration

Most participants who were concerned about the lack of integration and limited English language skills of immigrants argued against their concern by acknowledging that often immigrants made an effort to integrate, but that this may be hard and may take time. Some participants noted that they may be overestimating the problem and recognised that it was not all immigrants who hadn't successfully integrated into Britain. Some participants also argued that the difficulties of integrating and learning the English language could be compounded by the failed support systems in the UK, and some said that maybe Brits including themselves could make more of an effort to help integration.

Taking jobs away from British people

Participants were also concerned about how immigration impacted the labour market, and in particular that immigrants take jobs away from natives. The two main arguments used against this concern was that migrants are willing to take jobs that are deemed undesirable by UK workers and that migrants contribute to the economy as workers and taxpayers. The most common argument was the former, with people arguing that migrants take up work in agriculture, hospitality and distribution, including seasonal work, unskilled work and work at the minimum wage. Another

argument was to accept the negatives of EU immigration as it allowed UK workers to enjoy the advantages of freedom of movement by making it easier to relocate to Europe.

Other less used arguments was to acknowledge that unemployment didn't appear to be increasing amid high migration; that it was ultimately UK employers who decided to hire immigrants rather than immigrants themselves; and that it was important to maintain the UK tradition of free enterprise in which all people are treated equally in the labour market.