

National Institute
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Changing the debate: video animation on the impact of immigration on the UK

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As authors, we are responsible for the content of the report, its analyses and conclusions.

Summary

Opinion polls have shown for some time that the public sees immigration as one of the most important issues facing Britain (Ipsos Mori, 2015). At the same time, public understanding of evidence on the economic impacts of immigration is poor and strongly influenced by the media. This in turn affects the quality and content of public debate and the policy formulation process. The question behind this report is whether attitudes towards immigration can be influenced by evidence, presented in a simple and straightforward way, through a short video animation.

The video

With the support of the City of London Corporation, NIESR scripted a short video animation in a cartoon format conveying some statistics and simple messages taken from research findings on the impacts of immigration. These principally concern the economic and labour market impacts of immigration but also the implications for services.

The video is framed within a ‘cost-benefit’ narrative, which considers the positives and negatives. It presents evidence of the economic benefits of immigration to the UK and to London, but acknowledges that there has been some impact on pay, and that there are ‘winners and losers’. It also includes issues of fairness, in looking at the contribution of immigrants and how policy can help to reduce negative impacts on jobs, wages and services. The video is targeted at a wide audience who lack accurate information about migration impacts from which to form their opinions. It is intended to stimulate thinking and debate. It includes some key statistics as a way of clearly communicating the evidence rather than ‘fact checking’.

The research

A pilot of the video was shown to focus groups representing three different audiences: school pupils studying economics at ‘A’ level; the general public; and employers who recruit immigrants. Participants largely occupied the majority ‘middle ground’ in relation to their attitudes towards immigration. In addition to piloting the video and discussing its format, the focus groups included discussion of the issues covered by the video, before and after viewing. Through these discussions we explored responses to the information presented in the video and wider migration-related issues.

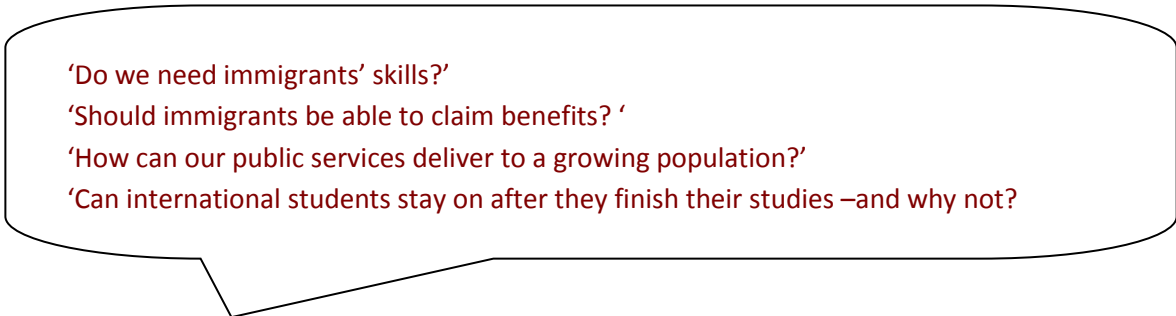
The findings

Our findings suggest that some views are open to change through improved understanding about the economic impact of immigration through fact-based evidence. This might sound uncontroversial, but existing research has suggested that excessive reliance on statistical and economic evidence in the immigration debate is likely to be counterproductive, that it leaves people more confused and ‘hardens’ opinion (British Future, 2014).

Some statistics are useful

To some extent our research confirms that the public is not very interested in overall numbers, such as the number of migrants in the UK. For many participants, big numbers meant little, though

percentages were more meaningful. Research participants found the use of some statistics useful in exploring their views on some, but not all migration issues. Those which they found useful included rates of benefit claims among migrants, effects on wages, effects on jobs and the economic contribution of migrants. They also wanted more information from which to answer questions they had about the costs and benefits of immigration, though not necessarily just in the form of statistics. These included:



'Do we need immigrants' skills?'

'Should immigrants be able to claim benefits? '

'How can our public services deliver to a growing population?'

'Can international students stay on after they finish their studies –and why not?'

Our findings suggest that the use of statistics in the immigration debate is useful when linked closely to specific issues that are of direct concern to the public. There is a role for careful and accurate explanation of the evidence, and indeed there is considerable demand for this among interested members who do not have strong preconceptions on the immigration debate. At the same time, the clear message from the focus groups was that statistics should be kept simple and that anything complicated would make them feel they were being 'misdirected'. Participants wanted to be sure that the statistics they were given were from credible and unbiased sources, such as official government figures or independent academic research.

Participants were critical of the coverage of immigration issues in the media which they saw as inaccurate and sensationalist. Our participants also felt that some of the most commonly voiced beliefs about immigration are either not true or not as pertinent as often suggested, but this was expressed as distrust for the narrative, not just statistics. Principal among these are that migrants are taking jobs from British workers and reducing pay. They also questioned whether pressures on services could be explained by immigration and whether other factors such as inadequate investment play a role. Most participants saw migration as a much more complex issue and its impacts as more nuanced than commonly portrayed. At the same time, the simple idea conveyed in the video that there are 'winners and losers' from immigration was meaningful to research participants.

Costs and benefits are not the only consideration

Participants saw the 'costs and benefits' narrative of the video as meaningful. The message that immigrants contribute to their costs through the taxes they pay was accepted, although sometimes with a degree of skepticism. Participants from the general public found assessing the costs and benefits difficult. This was because 'immigrants' are seen to include people from very different places and backgrounds, with a range of motivations and potential to contribute. With the exception of the school students interviewed, participants were also more concerned about the perceived

impact of immigration on communities and culture than on jobs and services, where 'costs and benefits' are seen as most applicable. Our findings suggest that behind headline figures showing high levels of concern about immigration there may be a more nuanced set of views which involve people weighing up the costs and benefits, as well as wider issues such as fairness and rights.

The indications are that the public is ready for a more sophisticated debate on immigration, which considers the widest range of impacts, assisted by a limited use of statistics. At the same time, issues of principles and ethics are important to the public and our research found a particularly strong appetite for such issues among young people. But even on such issues, a few salient facts, such as the number of individuals granted refugee status in the UK, could improve the quality of the debate. Our overall conclusion is that statistics can be useful, in small doses, from credible and unbiased sources and when used to answer specific questions, in particular relating to migration costs and benefits.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of a project aimed at understanding how attitudes towards immigration can be influenced by evidence. With the support of the City of London Corporation, NIESR scripted a short video animation in a cartoon format. In four minutes, the video conveys some statistics and simple messages taken from research findings on the impacts of immigration. These findings, drawn from research carried out at the London School of Economics, the Migration Observatory, the Kings Fund and our own research principally concern the economic and labour market impacts of immigration. They also include the implications for services.

The video presents evidence of the economic benefits of immigration to the UK, and to London. At the same time, it acknowledges that there has been downward pressure on pay in some sectors, and that there are 'winners and losers'. In its 2014 report 'A Fair Deal for Immigration', IPPR identifies three ways of framing immigration impacts: 'restrictionist', 'cost-benefit' and 'fairness'. The video is presented within a 'cost-benefit' framework, examining both the positives and negatives. It also includes issues of fairness, in looking at the contribution of immigrants and how the negative impacts on jobs, wages and services might be addressed.

Public attitudes towards immigration are undoubtedly influenced by misconceptions of the scale of and reasons for immigration, as well as its impact on public services. While including some key statistics on immigration, the video is not intended to be a fact-checking exercise and is careful not to include too many statistics. Its aim is to stimulate thinking and debate about immigration impacts through clearly communicating the evidence. The video includes links to the statistics it presents so that viewers can see the evidence base and find out more.

The video is targeted at a wide audience, including people who lack accurate information about migration impacts. During the development phase it was shown to focus groups representing three different audiences: school pupils studying economics at 'A' level; the general public; and employers who recruit immigrants. In addition to piloting the video and discussing its format, the focus groups included discussion of the issues covered by the video, both before and after viewing. These groups were chosen to represent a range of interests and opinions on immigration: members of the public were sampled to represent the majority view, screening out those strongly pro or anti immigration; students, as a group who may be more likely than others to see immigration as positive, yet lacking evidence based information; and employers who recruit immigrants as a group whose perspectives are likely to be different, and more closely related to the economic impact of immigration.

2. Public attitudes towards immigration

Levels of concern

There has been relatively little research on public attitudes towards immigration. Much of the data comes from opinion polls, which provide an indication of levels of concern about the issue, though not about the reasons for any concern and particular aspects of immigration which are more or less worrying. In recent years, opinion polls show immigration as among the most important issues facing Britain, rising steadily for the last 10 or so years. Just over half of the general public now see it as one

of the most important issues, and 40 per cent see it as the single most important issue for the country (Ipsos MORI, 2015). This is an all time high, probably explained by migration across Europe during the summer of 2015.

Although no other issue is seen as more important overall, attitudes vary by social class, age and voting behaviour. These differences are well known, with higher social class groups, younger people and left of centre voters more favourably inclined towards immigration. However, there has been a shift in attitudes in recent years so that, while younger people and those in higher social class groups continue to be more positive about migration, the gap narrowed since the late 1990s, with more negative attitudes now prevalent across the board (Page, 2009). Some geographical variation is apparent so that, while immigration is the most important issue in all parts of Britain, in London it is second to housing.

Comparisons between the attitudes of people in Britain to those elsewhere have found British people more likely to hold negative views about immigration and, in particular, to regard the scale of migration as too high (Blinder, 2012). This is despite, as Page points out, foreign-born residents make up a smaller population than in some other Western European countries where attitudes towards migration are more liberal.

Views on the impacts of immigration on jobs and services

While levels of concern about immigration are undoubtedly high, they have been interpreted differently. Current debate links concern about immigration to high net levels yet pollsters have argued that immigration is not a recent concern: back in 1989 when net migration was negligible, the majority of the public agreed 'there are too many immigrants' (Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014). It is also argued that public attitudes are fuelled by some misconceptions about immigration, including the proportion of foreign born citizens living in the UK and the impact of immigration on public finances (Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, 2015).

While much attention is given to headline figures of concern about immigration, responses to more specific areas of questioning find attitudes to be more nuanced. The public reports consistently more positive views about immigrants in the local areas than nationally, indicating that they see it as a national political issue rather than a personal one (Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014). The public is more positive about immigration of 'professionals' or those whose skills are needed; almost three-quarters of those polled in 2010 supported inward migration of doctors and nurses and more than half supported inward migration of care workers (Blinder, 2012).

Research shows consistently that employers are strongly convinced of its economic benefits, indeed its necessity (George et al, 2012) and some of their views are shared by the general public (Rolfe et al, 2013) However, as Ben Page points out, members of the public have different priorities and perspectives to those of employers and government bodies:

'....an individual's perception of the benefits may be very different from the benefits envisioned by the Treasury or the Confederation of British Industry. Both these institutions have concluded that immigration has allowed Britain to remain competitive and encouraged economic growth with more benefits than disadvantages in terms of increased costs to public services saying 'In the long run, migration to the UK is still likely to mean a net fiscal transfer to the native population' (Page, 2009:149).

While individual perceptions undoubtedly do differ from economists and employers, the public is also divided on some key principles: 45 per cent say that British born workers should have priority for jobs while 47 per cent argue that allocation should be based on skills and qualifications rather than nationality (Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014). Contradictions and tensions in beliefs and views are also found as much in attitudes towards social impacts as in economic effects. Public concern about demands on services and access to welfare benefits has led to widespread belief that immigrants should have fewer rights than UK citizens; a poll carried out in July 2015 found restricting benefit access to EU migrants the most popular item on David Cameron's list for renegotiation (Ipsos MORI, 2015). Integration is also a topic of frequent debate with concern principally expressed in relation to the UK as a whole and more often by people in non-diverse communities (Saggar et al, 2012).

How fixed or flexible are attitudes?

While levels of concern about immigration are high, it is also argued that this should not lead to the conclusion that the British public is anti-immigration. Bringing together evidence from a series of polls and focus groups, British Future argues that the public is generally moderate about immigration, with 61% of the population occupying what they call the centre ground (British Future, 2014).

British Future's review found widespread acknowledgement by the public of the economic benefits of migration, including from skilled migration and from international students, combined with concern about impact on jobs and services. Research has also identifies concern about integration and 'Britishness', linked not to prejudice as such but to concern about the pace of change in some communities. At the same time, people in neighbourhoods with immigrant populations tend to view them favourably; friendship and contact with individual immigrants leads to a more positive outlook, explaining why attitudes are more favourable in London and other areas with diverse communities (Blinder, 2011 and 2012).

Concern about immigration is also connected with lack of trust in Westminster politics. The coalition and now Conservative governments' failure to meet the Party's immigration target is seen by the public as evidence that promises about immigration are not kept (British Future, 2014). Concerns are also likely to be fuelled by public sector expenditure cuts and concerns about the quality of services. For these reasons it may be, as British Future argues, that 'the assumption of public hostility is a mistaken one' and that views are both more malleable and receptive to fact-based evidence. The purpose of this video, and the accompanying research, was to explore how attitudes responded to the presentation of accessible, but evidence-based, information on the impacts of immigration in the UK.

3. The video animation

NIESR wrote the video script which was then developed into an animation by designers at [Quattrogatti](#). A pilot version was shown during the focus groups. The script and some of the animations were edited in the light of feedback from participants and a final version was produced. The script is presented in Figure 1 and the key slides reproduced in our report of the findings.

Figure 1 Video script

Immigration is a big issue. In a recent poll, it topped the list of the most important issues facing Britain. But what evidence do we have about its impact, on jobs, on services and on the UK?

The first thing we know is that the number of immigrants has been increasing and they are now about 8 million people. Just under half of new immigrants are from the European Union. Most of these come here to work. Most immigrants from outside the European Union come here to study.

Some people believe immigrants are taking jobs from British workers. It's true that if an immigrant takes a job then a British worker can't. At the same time, immigrants create new jobs by setting up their own businesses and by spending the money they earn. Immigrants also enable employers to recruit to less desirable jobs, sometimes allowing British workers to carry out better paid and more desirable tasks. While immigration has reduced pay in some jobs, it has increased it in others. Overall, the result is a larger, more diverse and more productive economy. Almost 2 million more people are in work now, compared to 2010: half are immigrants, half are British.

Immigrants are not just workers. Like everyone else they use services and this worries some people. They are concerned about the impact on our schools and believe that British children can't get school places. New immigrants are often single and childless; however, if they stay then it's no surprise that they create their own families here. While some people believe that children who speak another language at home perform badly, research evidence shows that they often do well and so do other pupils in the same schools.

It's also said that immigrants are a drain on our health service. No-one knows exactly how much immigrants cost the NHS. What we do know is that recent immigrants are younger than the average UK resident and it's older people who make the most frequent trips to the doctor. And, with 26% of doctors born outside the UK, you are more likely to be treated by an immigrant than meet one in the waiting room.

We hear a lot about 'benefit tourism' yet only one in twenty immigrants claim out of work benefits, half the rate of British people.

Immigrants also help pay for public services, through income tax and other taxes such as VAT. In the long run, much lower immigration would almost certainly mean higher taxes for the rest of us - or worse public services.

Some people believe that immigration only benefits London. Because of its opportunities and long history of immigration, 40% of the UK's immigrants live there. This brings the city both benefits and costs. In the end London makes a major £34 billion positive net contribution to UK public finances. Everyone benefits from a thriving capital city and strong economy and immigrants help that to happen.

The evidence shows that immigration is overall a good thing for the British economy, although there are winners and losers. That is also true of other types of economic and social change, for example globalisation, technological change, or equal rights for women. The question is whether government and policy can limit the negative impacts of immigration and spread the benefits. This might take a bit of working out.

4. The research project

As we explained in Section 1, the aim of the project was not just to produce a video but to conduct research to help understand how attitudes towards immigration can be affected by evidence, presented in a simple and straightforward way. In addition to a review of existing evidence, we

carried out new research with a range of audiences, structured around the pilot video and the issues it covered.

Research methods

We carried out three focus groups with the general public, involving a total of 24 people and two focus groups with 'A' level students, involving a total of 17 young people. We also interviewed four employers with a professional interest in immigration. These groups were chosen to represent a range of interests and opinions on immigration: members of the public were sampled to represent the majority view, screening out those strongly pro or anti immigration; students, as a group who may be more likely than others to see immigration as positive, yet lacking evidence based information; and employers who recruit immigrants as a group whose perspectives are likely to be different, and more closely related to the economic impact of immigration.

The research took place in London. All focus groups and interviews were an hour in length. Those with the general public and students included 30 minutes discussion before and after the video viewing. Pre-video discussion covered: general views about immigration and sources of information; perceptions of the scale of and reasons for immigration; the impact on jobs, pay, on services and on London. Post-video discussion returned to the themes discussed in the first half but included views on the video itself, its style, format, presentation, content and balance. Employer interviews differed in focusing more on the video itself and were hosted by the sponsor, the City of London Corporation. All interviews took place during August and September 2015.

As a small scale and qualitative research project, we do not claim that our findings can be generalised to the population as a whole. Participants were a cross-section of the British public, living in London and interviewed at a particular point in time. However, we feel participants' responses are likely to reflect those of other people in the UK who occupy the 'middle ground' on immigration. More importantly, for the purposes of our project, they are unlikely to have different perspectives on the role of evidence, including statistics, in questions about immigration.

Focus Group participants

We carried out three focus groups with the general public. Participants were recruited by an independent Market Research organisation using a sample frame provided by NIESR. Of the 24 people who took part, 12 were male and 12 female. Participants were of mixed age groups, ranging from 19 to 75. There was a concentration within the middle age range, with 10 participants aged 41 to 60. Participants were from a range of social class groups: five in A/B, twelve in C1/C2 and seven in D/E. Seventeen were currently employed, while the other six were either unemployed or retired. All were based in London. Sixteen participants were White British. The remaining eight were from a variety of ethnic groups including African Caribbean, Asian and mixed heritage. Potential participants' views on immigration were screened prior to recruitment in order to select those who occupy the majority, 'middle ground' on immigration issues. Only those answers to the following questions scored in the middle range were selected:

1. There are too many immigrants in Britain
2. Laws on immigration should be much tougher
3. Immigrants take jobs away from British workers
4. Immigrants receive preferential treatment in accessing housing and public services
5. I am concerned about too many cultures coming into the country and lack of cohesion

Two focus groups, involving 17 pupils, were carried out at a comprehensive school in London. Pupils were aged 17 and 18, in the final year of 'A' levels. All eligible pupils took part, with no screening.

All participants in the general public and student focus groups were asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning and end of the focus group in order to provide a further check on attitudes and also to gauge any shift in opinion resulting from the discussion and video viewing. This questionnaire consisted of five statements to which they were invited to agree or disagree on a five point scale. The responses of general public participants are presented in Table 1, and those of school students in Table 2.

Table 1 Attitudes of participants in general public focus groups

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/no opinion	Total
Migrants are taking jobs from British workers and reducing wage levels	0	4	9	9	3	0	24
The country benefits from migrants' willingness to do less desirable jobs, allowing British workers to focus on more skilled and better paid work	1	9	11	2	1	0	24
Migrants are placing a strain on public services	1	9	9	1	1	2	24
Migrants contribute to their costs through the taxes they pay	6	8	10	0	0	0	24
Migration only really benefits London rather than the rest of the UK	0	3	8	8	2	3	24

Participants in the general public focus groups tended to occupy the middle ground in their attitudes towards immigration, often responding 'neither agree nor disagree' to most statements. How such a response should be interpreted has been the subject of some debate within survey research. This mid-point response is sometimes seen as indicative of a lack of knowledge, or alternatively as indifference or potential ambivalence to the statement in question. The presence of a 'don't know / no opinion' option, however, arguably mitigates these concerns. Moreover, we observed that participants took some minutes in answering the five short questions and appeared to be

considering their responses carefully. This applied to the school students even more than the general public.

Attitudes towards migration were clearly somewhat issue-led. Participants, for example, tended to disagree more than agree that migrants are taking jobs from British workers and reducing wage levels. Furthermore participants tended to agree more than disagree that the country benefits from migrants willingness to do less desirable jobs, allowing British workers to focus on more skilled and better paid work. Participants also tended to disagree more than agree that migrants are placing a strain on public services. Arguably the most definitive response came from participants' attitudes toward migrants contributing to their costs through the taxes they pay, to which no respondent disagreed. From these responses it could be argued that participants were more likely to see immigration as positive rather than having negative impacts.

Participants tended to disagree more than agree with the statement that migration only really benefits London rather than the rest of the UK. However the relatively high proportion of 'don't know / no opinion' responses to this statement raises some questions regarding the questionnaire's ability to appropriately reflect attitudes on this subject.

Table 2 Attitudes of participants in school student focus groups

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/no opinion	Total
Migrants are taking jobs from British workers and reducing wage levels	0	3	6	7	1	0	17
The country benefits from migrants' willingness to do less desirable jobs, allowing British workers to focus on more skilled and better paid work	1	10	4	2	0	0	17
Migrants are placing a strain on public services	1	3	6	5	0	2	17
Migrants contribute to their costs through the taxes they pay	6	8	2	0	0	1	17
Migration only really benefits London rather than the rest of the UK	0	1	6	5	1	4	17

Participants in the student focus groups tended to diverge more from the middle ground when compared to the general public. Overall students' attitudes could be described as comparably more pro-immigration than the general public, with a high proportion disagreeing that migrants are taking jobs from British workers and reducing wage levels, and agreeing that the country benefits from migrants willingness to do less desirable jobs, allowing British workers to focus on more skilled and

better paid work. Students definitively agreed that migrants contribute to their costs through the taxes they pay. Views on whether migrants are placing a strain on public services, however, were mixed, with relatively equal proportions of respondents agreeing or disagreeing.

Like the general public, students tended to disagree more than agree with the statement that migration only really benefits London rather than the rest of the UK. However, again, the relatively high proportion of 'don't know / no opinion' responses to this statement raises some questions regarding the questionnaire's ability to appropriately reflect attitudes on this subject.

An analysis of post-focus group questionnaires showed an overall very slight positive effect on attitudes toward immigration in the UK, amounting to around 0.5 points. This positive effect was not concentrated on any particular issue or statement. Since the number of participants was small and many participants had quite nuanced views or had said the issues were complicated, we would not like to draw any implications from this.

5. Research Findings

As we explained in Section 4, focus groups with the general public and students included discussion before and after the video viewing. Pre-video discussion covered: general views about immigration and sources of information; perceptions of the scale of and reasons for immigration; the impact on jobs, pay, on services and on London. Post-video discussion returned to the themes discussed in the first half but included views on the video itself, its style, format, presentation, content and balance. Employer interviews differed in focusing more on the video, its script and format.

General thoughts on immigration

At the beginning of the focus groups participants were asked to share some thoughts on immigration and to talk about their sources of information. The issues raised by members of the public were wide-ranging and featured the then current refugee crisis in the Mediterranean, which was then at its height. The issue featured strongly in the public groups at points when immigration was discussed in more general terms. As one participant explained later in the interview:

'That's partly why [immigration] is a big issue now, because of Wars in Syria and things that have happened in Libya and the TV footage of all the people leaving. I think that's the answer to it. That's' why that aspect of it, because it's on the news every day. We're all seeing it.'

This raised awareness through media coverage led some participants to distinguish between 'types' of immigrant, in particular refugees and 'economic migrants' and the different benefits or demands they make to the economy and services. Some felt that the tendency to conflate immigrants into one group was problematic and the fault of the media, as expressed by these two statements:

'It seems to be lumped together: economic migrants, asylum seekers, people just fleeing from desperate circumstances and they all seem to be in the media and particularly in the newspapers to be all lumped together and of course they're not all the same.'

'I hate the way they're all lumped into one big category, this great mass coming over here to take over our country. I think that's wrong, I think it's much, much more complex than that.'

Refugees, for example, were seen as a more 'needy' group, requiring assistance to settle in and to learn English.

Another common theme raised by participants was the long history of immigration to Britain, with references made to Jewish immigration in the early 20th century and even earlier arrivals. Another view, from individuals who had lived elsewhere in Europe, was that the UK is more accepting of cultural differences and is a safe and relatively pleasant place for immigrants to live.

School students made fewer references to the refugee crisis or to longer term immigration, focusing on economic impacts. This was possibly because the focus group took place during an economics class. Students expressed generally positive views about immigration. In relation to employment, these were that immigrants have the right to jobs if competition is fair, that immigrants do jobs that British people are not willing to do and therefore do not affect job opportunities for British workers. Some students also argued that the UK gains from attracting highly skilled immigrants such as doctors. Immigration was also seen as good for the Higher Education sector and for enterprise, with immigrants seen as bringing with them new ideas and practices.

The scale of low skilled immigration from Eastern Europe was also raised both by students and by participants in the public focus group, who referred to the dependence on immigrants among employers in sectors such as agriculture. Some participants also expressed concerns about exploitation of migrant workers.

Some students, and a few in the public focus groups, raised the issue of services. While members of the public talked about 'scarce resources' and the 'strain' on housing and the health service, some students argued that immigrants pay their way and felt they are unfairly blamed for causing such problems. One view which gained some agreement in the student groups was that services should be improved rather than immigration reduced.

Some participants raised the issue of cultural impacts. Students raising this issue saw immigration as good for culture, while members of the public referred to concerns about the integration and change at community level. One participant said of his own area in South London: 'There's no fish and chip shop, there's no social clubs, there's no community'. Another view was that immigrants integrated better in the past than they do now, with some participants referring to their own immigrant parents' efforts to integrate. Some wider issues of principles and human rights were also raised, with some students stating that immigrants should have the opportunity for a better life and that individuals have a right to live where they choose. Students returned to these issues of principle during the course of the discussion.

Sources of information about immigration

Members of the public drew on a wide range of information sources, including printed and on-line newspapers (The Daily Mail, Telegraph, Guardian, Sunday Times, Financial Times and London

Evening Standard), BBC television and radio stations and on-line sources such as Facebook and blogs on a range of websites. Many participants also referred to gaining information through discussion with friends and family, colleagues and social contacts made through places of worship. A number also said they learned about immigration through living in a diverse city and, in some cases, through having immigrant relatives, friends and colleagues.

School students referred very largely to news, particularly the BBC and on-line sources, discussions with family and, again through their experience of living in London in a diverse neighbourhood. Employers again referred to on-line sources, including BBC and government websites and social media. Because of their professional interest in immigration they were also informed about immigration policy both through expert groups and networks.

Participants in all of the groups, but particularly the public, were critical of media handling of immigration issues. One of the public groups discussed the lack of reliable and in-depth information about immigration available through the media. One participant referred to what she felt was sensational reporting:

'You would think that anybody who comes to the country brings a host of problems with them and they're all coming here for the benefits, and this is just not true... you know not everybody has 22 children and lives in an 8 bedroom house paid for by the state.'

The need for more accurate information about immigration was a recurring theme of the focus group discussions.

Scale of and reasons for immigration

Participants in the general public focus groups were able to guess the proportion of immigrants in the UK population with reasonable accuracy, although rarely the number. While opinion polls find the public consistently over-estimates their share of the population, focus group participants had a tendency to under-estimate it. The size of the immigrant population did not appear to be an issue of great interest to them. They were, however, interested in the reasons for immigration, referring to employment opportunities and better pay. More in line with opinion poll findings, school students generally over-estimated the scale of immigration to the UK, yet did not view this negatively. Again, as with the general public, they focused on the reasons for immigration, referring particularly to economic reasons – jobs and better pay. Study was also mentioned by some participants in general public and student groups.

With the current refugee crisis in their minds, participants also mentioned the motivation of some immigrants to leave difficult environments with limited opportunities. Political stability and peace, rule of law and less corruption was also seen as part of the UK's attraction. Family or historic links to Britain was also mentioned as a draw for some immigrants by the public and by students and employers. Students also referred to the perception that the UK is a rich country offering opportunities to succeed; as one student put it 'kind of like the American dream'. Students also thought the health service could be an attraction for some, although services were generally not mentioned by participants.

Through the examples they gave, students and the public appeared to perceive immigration as both from within and beyond Europe. Employers, however, spoke of Europe as the main source of immigration, with economic reasons paramount. However, they also referred to family ties for immigrants from outside the EU and to international students.

Employers and the public also referred to the unreliable nature of official migration figures resulting from poor recording systems. These groups also referred to undocumented immigration. Some in the public groups thought the scale of this is large with one participant believing there are 8 million 'illegal immigrants' living in the UK.

'The first thing we know is that the number of immigrants has been increasing and they are now about 8 million people. Just under half of new immigrants are from the European Union. Most of these come here to work. Most immigrants from outside the European Union come here to study.'



Participants were asked about the migration statistics presented in the video. Most participants expressed relatively little interest in these statistics, expressing mild surprise at most. Students expressed surprise that so many non-EU immigrants come to the UK to study, rather than work. They were also not aware that students do not have an automatic right to live in the UK once they have finished their course. They expressed the view that restricting this right involves turning away a skilled worker and represents a loss to the UK. As one participant stated:

'To me it doesn't make that much sense. Obviously it makes sense if they want to reduce numbers and they want to meet a target but if you're sending away the skilled people who you've trained up...'

At the same time, they felt that there are other ways of increasing the supply of skilled workers, in particular through increasing university places for home students.

Some participants said they would have liked a further breakdown of 'types' of migrants, for example the proportion of refugees. The number of people leaving the UK each year was also of interest to some participants. While most participants saw the presentation of these initial figures in the video as unbiased, employers felt the representation of the '6 in 10' figure as negative, feeling that it raised the question of what the other 4 in 10 were doing.

Impact on jobs: taking or creating?

In the pre-video discussion, school students were largely opposed to the view that immigrants take jobs from British workers, reflecting their responses to the questionnaire. Immigrants were seen as helping to meet the demand for high skilled workers and to do less skilled and undesirable jobs. Employers were also quite firmly of the opinion that immigrants do not take jobs from British workers. They also referred to the employment of immigrants in posts which are hard to fill because they are inherently unattractive, for example work in the poultry farming. They also talked of the need to recruit highly skilled professionals with language skills and cultural understanding in sectors such as banking and engineering. Employers also expressed the view that without free movement across the EU, companies would move out of the UK because they would not be able to meet their skills needs. Participants in the public groups were less sure about whether immigrants take jobs from British workers. They focused much more strongly than the students or employers on low skilled work. Where higher skills were mentioned, they were largely in medicine, nursing and to a lesser degree skilled trades such as plumbing.

Members of the public were of the view that immigrants are motivated and 'driven', sometimes because of disadvantaged origins. For some participants, this made it more reasonable that they should take jobs which might be done by a British worker. One view which gained some support in the student groups was that immigrants have the right to a job as long as competition is fair. At the same time, the willingness of some immigrants to work for less money was seen as impacting on British workers and as unfair, given the difficulty of living on low pay. As one student stated:

'It's going to be British people who can't survive [on low pay] so they're not going to take the job and the migrant would.'

Members of the public referred to the growth in zero-hours contracts and, although they did not appear to believe immigration was responsible, it was suggested that British workers on such contracts might be resentful of competing with immigrants. Making specific reference to London, some participants agreed that, while there is currently a surplus of jobs, concern about immigration could increase when demand falls.

School students referred unprompted to entrepreneurship, with immigrants seen as 'bringing in new ideas and ways of doing things'. It was also thought that some immigrants set up their own businesses because they cannot find work. In response to prompting, participants in one of the public groups gave examples of entrepreneurship among immigrants locally which had created jobs for locals as well as other immigrants. Not surprisingly, employers also saw migrant businesses as creating jobs for British people as well as for other immigrants.

Immigrants were also seen by school students as increasing the demand for goods and services, and therefore positively contributing to the economy in ways other than employment. Particular reference was made to the need for 'bigger factories' to supply increased demand for goods, more supermarkets and more teachers for a growing population. Alternative views were expressed on skills contributions, with some students referring to skills gaps in areas such as medicine and nursing, and others referring to low skilled immigration.

'Some people believe immigrants are taking jobs from British workers. It's true that if an immigrant takes a job then a British worker can't. At the same time, immigrants create new jobs by setting up their own businesses and by spending the money they earn. Immigrants also enable employers to recruit to less desirable jobs, sometimes allowing British workers to carry out better paid and more desirable tasks.'



'Overall, the result is a larger, more diverse and more productive economy. Almost 2 million more people are in work now, compared to 2010: half are immigrants, half are British'.



Discussions after the video screening included expression of similar sentiments to those aired earlier. Participants in the public groups restated their view that it is too simplistic to state that immigrants take jobs from British workers. They had already stated that immigrants carry out less desirable tasks and did not elaborate further.

Some students felt that the distinction made in the video between immigrants and British workers was unhelpful. They argued that if an individual is working and making a contribution to society, whether they are British or not has no relevance. It was also agreed that recruitment decisions should be made on suitability for the job and that an individual's country of origin is not importance. It was felt that if a migrant is the better candidate they should get the job and that restricting immigration is bad for the economy. Members of the public also stated that the skill and quality of work of immigrants is sometimes higher than among British workers. At the same time, participants from all groups identified an issue in the skills and training levels of British workers. Participants in one of the public groups saw a problem in lack of appeal of apprenticeships to young people compared to university education. Similarly, one student group discussed the 'second-rate' status of vocational training.

Employers did not like the video image of a migrant taking a job from a British worker, feeling that this conveyed the idea that immigrants displace British workers directly rather than compete for jobs. Employers felt that the video put too much emphasis on migrant entrepreneurs as a source of job creation. The role of larger international companies in creating jobs for British workers was seen as an omission, as was the need for such companies to relocate international staff to UK offices to establish and grow a UK presence. Students had a different point about entrepreneurship, feeling it important to point out that immigrant entrepreneurs help to create jobs for everyone, not just other immigrants, with one student arguing:

'I feel like that video was just saying, "Yeah, they creating jobs." But it's got to be, "They're starting a business and they're providing jobs for EVERYONE." I think that is what's important, especially. It's not just creating jobs for other migrants. It's not just creating jobs for British workers. It's creating jobs for everyone. Well, not quite everyone, but you know what I mean.'

Among the public, there was some agreement that immigration leads to an increase in economic activity. At the same time, some participants questioned how many new jobs are created. One view expressed by employers was that the message of the video that half of the 2 million new jobs created since 2010 had gone to immigrants was negative.

Impact on pay

As discussed earlier, discussions before the video was shown focused on the impact on low skilled work. Participants in the public and student groups generally believed that if immigration had any impact on wages, this would be at the low skilled end. However, a range of views was expressed on whether immigration or other factors were more important. Employers responses focused on more highly skilled roles where they felt immigration had if anything the opposite effect: one employer gave an example of where current immigration policy has increased pay by setting minimum salary levels for posts filled by Tier 2 visa holders.

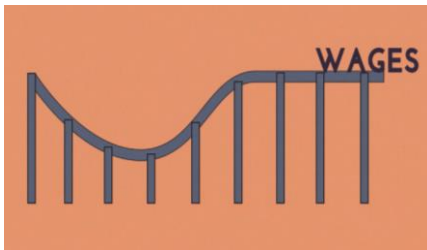
Some participants in the student and public groups argued that immigrants will work for lower pay than British workers because they have smaller out-goings, for example by living in shared multi-occupancy accommodation. Some participants felt that employers benefit from immigrants' willingness to work for less:

'You see people being prepared to work for what seems to be very little money. That has to have an impact somewhere down the line.'

'These employers should be going to prison because it's quite unacceptable to treat people, to take advantage of them, like some Victorian sweatshop.'

Some participants also questioned whether businesses employing immigrants sometimes avoid paying their tax and national insurance contributions.

'While immigration has reduced pay in some jobs, it has increased it in others'



The statement about pay in the video did not trigger much debate, since participants either did not believe immigration had a strong effect or felt it was not a major issue. Some employers felt that the statements about pay in the video were speculative and set up an erroneous link between immigration and pay levels. They saw pay levels as determined by a much wider range of influences and conditions.

‘Money can go up and down based on the economy and immigration is a factor within the economy but to link the two directly, seems a bit difficult to quantify’. [employer]

The video originally stated that ‘while wages have gone down for some people, they have gone up for others – mostly these effects seem to balance out’. This statement attracted the comment that this process does not amount to a ‘balance’ for those whose wages are affected by immigration. Some participants felt this statement was unhelpful in referring to individual pay levels than rates across sectors and industries, where they felt any impact would be felt. This view was felt most strongly by employers.

Impact on services

The general public and students responded differently to questions about the impact of immigration on services in the initial survey. The public tended to be of the view that immigration does have an impact and raised some concerns in the initial discussion. Despite being somewhat less concerned, school students raised the issue more strongly in the first part of the interview. At the same time, they saw such impacts as less problematic than the public participants. Some students were aware of research findings on the contribution made by immigrants to public finances, but were not sure of its validity. Students expressed concern at expenditure costs, with one stating that:

‘Services in general are stretched more because there are more people and less spending; it just gets worse.’

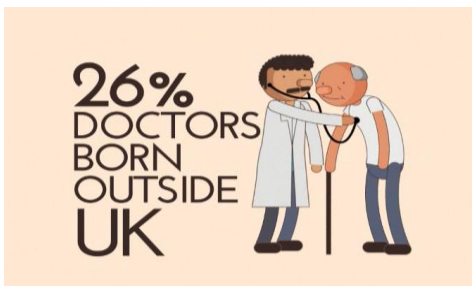
But expenditure cuts rather than immigration were seen as responsible for the problems experienced by UK services, by both students and the public. Employers were not inclined to see immigration as having a negative impact on services. While they believed there is a current shortage of school places in London, this was seen to result from general overcrowding rather than through immigration. Before watching the video employers stated that immigrants’ usage of the health service is low. Other focus group participants also referred to the reliance of some public services on immigrants, particularly the NHS.

'Immigrants are not just workers. Like everyone else they use services and this worries some people. They are concerned about the impact on our schools and believe that British children can't get school places. New immigrants are often single and childless; however, if they stay then it's no surprise that they create their own families here. While some people believe that children who speak another language at home perform badly, research evidence shows that they often do well and so do other pupils in the same schools.'



School students generally took the view that immigration is not the major cause of strain on the UK's services. However, some students expressed the view that immigration is problematic in some areas of the UK, though not theirs, despite this being an area with a sizeable immigrant population. Some students felt that the video dismissed the issue of school places, which they felt resulted from population increases resulting partly from immigration. A number of students were immigrants themselves and one individual felt strongly that her additional language needs had not impacted on her classmates' learning. Education was also the service mentioned most often in the public groups, triggering discussions about the support needs of pupils with English language needs, the value placed by immigrant families on education, the economic benefits of international students at UK universities and the need to plan future demand for school places.

'It's also said that immigrants are a drain on our health service. No-one knows exactly how much immigrants cost the NHS. What we do know is that recent immigrants are younger than the average UK resident and it's older people who make the most frequent trips to the doctor. And, with 26% of doctors born outside the UK, you are more likely to be treated by an immigrant than meet one in the waiting room.'



While participants readily accepted that immigrants make less use of the health service than British people, School students felt that consideration should also be given to the longer term impact of immigrants, as they age and make more demands on the health service.

Participants also commented that the NHS is in 'crisis'. This was not seen as the fault of immigrants but that consideration needs to be given to the capacity of the service. This was seen as a reason to control immigration. Other participants expressed the view that immigration is not relevant and that the NHS simply needs improvement and investment.

Participants engaged with the view that the NHS is reliant on immigrants to fill professional roles, with some arguing that some services could not exist without them. While expressing this view, many participants were surprised that the percentage of doctors born outside the UK is as high as 26 per cent. At the same time, concern was also expressed at the 'brain drain' effect that the UK health service has on those of the sending countries.

'We hear a lot about 'benefit tourism' yet only one in twenty immigrants claim out of work benefits, half the rate of British people.'



School students were surprised at the video's statement that only 1 in 20 immigrants claims benefits, even though they understood this refers to out of work benefits. They had thought the figure to be much higher. At the same time, they felt it would be unfair to prevent immigrants from claiming benefits, on the grounds that benefits are available to help disadvantaged people and to support them in finding work. One student expressed disagreement with restrictions on the rights of new immigrants to benefits:

'I think like the argument of them not getting benefits is that they haven't paid in tax but children haven't paid tax and they get benefits. It's the same thing. We're going to pay tax at some point in the future. Migrants are probably going to pay tax in the future and probably quicker than children would so it's weird to be like, "sorry" just because you weren't born in this country.'

Students also expressed agreement with the statement in the video that immigrants contribute to benefits through taxes. This was also generally agreed by the public.

School students generally rejected the idea of 'benefit tourism'. Among other reasons, they felt that there are better places than the UK for people to live on benefits. While the public were also sceptical, some participants argued that even small benefit payments can be larger than wages in immigrants' home countries.

School students also discussed access to in-work benefits, believing that migrants disproportionately claim these, because of low wage levels. The general view was that the government should not be subsidising low pay and that employers should pay a full living wage.

'Immigrants also help pay for public services, through income tax and other taxes such as VAT. In the long run, much lower immigration would almost certainly mean higher taxes for the rest of us - or worse public services.'



Responses to the initial survey indicated quite high levels of agreement with the statement that 'Migrants contribute to their costs through the taxes they pay'. School students were more strongly supportive of this statement than the public, who tended to be more uncertain. The video message therefore triggered little comment and additional discussion. Employers felt that the messages of the pilot video relating to the contribution of immigrants were too defensive. One view was that the video should state more strongly that immigrants pay tax and are therefore entitled to use public services. Employers generally liked the message of the video that immigrants help to finance public services and that they are disproportionately young and single.

Impact on London

Both students and public tended to disagree with the statements in the survey that immigration only really benefits London. When asked in the focus groups, employers agreed that the impact on London is strongly positive. Talking before the video screening, one employer stated:

'It's vibrant, it boosts the economy. Makes us successful, makes us be one of the best cities in the world to live, without a doubt'.

This view was shared by school students who expressed the view that London benefits culturally from immigration. While some the public agreed, a number also felt that services such as education are under strain and that London has changed in character. The costs of immigration were also mentioned by school students, who referred to the lack of affordable housing in the city and the additional demands that immigration places on limited housing resources. Students and the public also referred to foreign investment in luxury accommodation and the implications of this for Londoners:

'You've got really wealthy migrants who don't live here. They're not using the resources. They're taking houses and then sitting empty'.

One of the public groups raised the issue of the disparity in wealth and investment between London and the rest of the UK, feeling that this leads to support for 'a UKIP-type discourse' in communities that feel they have been 'left behind'.

'Some people believe that immigration only benefits London. Because of its opportunities and long history of immigration, 40% of the UK's immigrants live there. This brings the city both benefits and costs. In the end London makes a major £34 billion positive net contribution to UK public finances. Everyone benefits from a thriving capital city and strong economy and immigrants help that to happen.'



Discussions after the video screening focused more strongly on the costs to London and particularly on housing shortages. These were seen to principally affect people on low incomes. Immigration was not seen to blame for London's housing problem, with participants generally agreeing it has been caused by the housing market and insufficient investment in social housing.

There was some discussion about other issues relating to London, resulting in some school students saying it was not clear to them that the rest of the UK benefits as much from immigration as London, suggesting that other areas did not experience the cultural as well as economic benefits. Employers discussed the reasons why migrants are attracted to London rather than elsewhere in the UK. Their views on this were informed by their professional experiences, including with High Net Worth individuals who find London attractive partly for cultural reasons:

'It's a cosmopolitan city and in many respects a well integrated city where migrants feel safe'.

Other issues

Outside of the discussion of the main areas of questioning, participants raised additional issues of interest to them. Changing communities and integration was the principal additional issue raised by the public focus groups. While immigration was seen as having a generally positive impact on culture, some concerns were expressed at the values and practices of some ethnic minority communities. Some participants in the public groups expressed antagonism towards practices such as wearing the hijab and 'forced' marriage. References were also made to terrorist activity. The following exchange took place between three participants in a public group:

'[the video] doesn't take in feelings, does it? It doesn't take in how you feel if lots of people move into Boston, Lincs. I don't know what percentage is Polish now. But it doesn't touch the effects totally. They are very important...'

...I think the culture benefits massively. Culture is one of the areas where there are pure benefits, really. I don't really know if there's a downside to being in touch with other cultures and other origins...

...I don't think there's a downside to it, but what some people do find scary, frustrating, is what comes with them.... The society that you may have come from, are you going to bring that with you in the fact that we know that the Russians come over here and they bring the Mafia with them? There's lots of underlying bits of society that come with these immigrants. Whether we know that for a fact, I can't say. But we've got ISIS, we've got Syria, we've got all of those.'

Non-diverse ethnic minority communities and (Muslim) faith schools also were also viewed negatively, as was non-integration more generally. Participants in one focus group also expressed concern at what they saw as dissatisfaction among more disadvantaged or 'unsuccessful' immigrant communities. Some of these views were not expressed coherently but revealed some animosity and prejudice towards some long-standing immigrant communities in the UK.

Impressions of the video

The video was regarded differently by different audiences and individuals. Mixed views were expressed on the video format. Some felt that its cartoon format and relatively simple structure made it appeal more to younger than older viewers. Some participants had expected a different format, for example film or talking heads. We therefore changed the title to make it clear that the video is intended to simplify the evidence through the cartoon format.

Some participants felt it was somewhat biased, either in favour or against immigration, with school pupils feeling more than others that the video focused on the positive impact to the neglect of more negative ones. Some participants felt that it was not biased if the statistics are correct. However, some felt that bias was apparent in the video's omission of issues such as change to communities.

The validity of some points made in the video was questioned by focus group participants. First, it was felt that the wording of the pilot video 'While immigration has meant wages have gone down for some people, they have gone up for others' seemed to state that immigration had the effect of bringing about a pay cut. The script was therefore changed to 'While immigration has reduced pay in some jobs, it has increased it in others'. Some participants also felt that the video placed too much emphasis on entrepreneurship without mentioning other ways in which immigration generates employment. The script was therefore changed by adding a reference to the impact of spending by immigrants, alongside the contribution they make through entrepreneurship: 'At the same time, immigrants create new jobs by setting up their own businesses and by spending the money they earn'.

Participants generally liked the use of statistics in the video: it was seen to include some key figures but not to bombard the viewer with too many. One participant in a public group stated:

'It's altogether and it gives you an overall perspective about immigration. Because if those are the facts... I think it's a good idea because that's what we're lacking, is specific information on immigration and the effect that has

on the culture and the economy here. There's not enough information given out.'

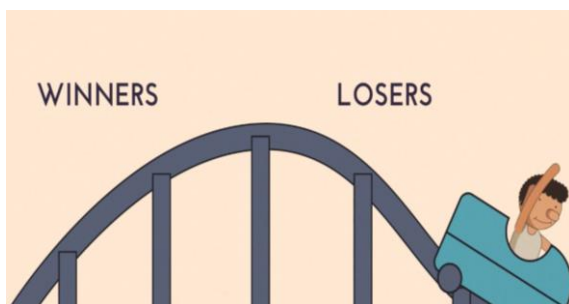
One of the public groups agreed that keeping the statistics simple was good and that anything more complicated would make them feel as if they were 'misdirected'. Statistics were seen to enable a more constructive and 'sensible' debate which did not deteriorate into accusations of racism. Some participants felt that the video would not change the minds of individuals who are strongly opposed to immigration.

Some participants did, however, want more detailed information on the composition and activity of immigrants including, for example, refugees and movement in and out of work. While believing the statistics used were credible, some participants were concerned that they were used without direct reference to their sources and could therefore be perceived as unreliable. The figure of '1 in 20' migrants claiming benefits was singled out by some (employers) as one which was unclear, since the pilot video did not make it clear that this figure refers to unemployment benefits. This was clarified in the final version.

While welcoming the use of statistics, some participants were not sure that they could be trusted. They welcomed the suggestion that the final video might include links to the statistical sources. Some students said they might be prompted to look into these, given the limited number of figures featured in the video. In response to this feedback we included an additional slide of sources of further information on each of the main points covered by the video

Some participants felt that the original video had an apologetic tone and would have preferred a stronger statement that immigrants are good for the economy and make a positive contribution. This was felt particularly by employers but also some members of the public. Another view was that the video was repetitive in putting forward claims and then challenging these with counter-arguments and statistics. As a result of this feedback, we changed some the script to use less 'apologetic' language and make fewer counter arguments.

'The evidence shows that immigration is overall a good thing for the British economy, although there are winners and losers. That is also true of other types of economic and social change, for example globalisation, technological change, or equal rights for women. The question is whether government and policy can limit the negative impacts of immigration and spread the benefits. This might take a bit of working out.'



Not all participants accepted the video's message that there are 'winners and losers'. One employer remarked that 'It makes it seem very binary, either you win or you lose' when the benefits and costs are much more complicated. However, another view from an employer was that the idea of 'winners

and losers' is accurate and that their existence is the reason why policy making is so difficult. Some students said they would have liked to be told more about who winners are and who loses out. In particular they would like to know how immigration impacts on pay in highly skilled roles, believing this would be positive. Participants in one of the public groups felt that the 'losers' include immigrants themselves, who fail to realise their dreams, struggle with life in the UK and sometimes express their discontent.

Some participants felt the video omitted some key issues in the current debate on immigration. For the general public and employers a key omission was integration. This was not raised by students, since they did not regard integration as a problem. Employers and the public did acknowledge that integration would be difficult to convey in a short video format. School students felt that human rights issues were missing and, in particular the role of war and poverty as a driver to immigration.

6. Conclusions

Our research suggests that many people see immigration as a complex set of issues rather than as something they are 'for' or 'against'. This was apparent from the start of the interviews with participants taking some time to choose their responses to only five questions. The mid-way responses of many participants, and the views they expressed during the interview itself, reflected their tendency to see that the issues are not straightforward, that 'immigrants' include people from very different places and backgrounds, with a range of motivations and potential to contribute. Participants also believed that assessing the benefits and costs of immigration is difficult and is dependent on a range of factors. This finding suggests that the headline figures produced by opinion polls showing high levels of concern about immigration mask what is a much more nuanced set of views. Some of these are open to change through improved understanding about the economic impact of immigration, including through accurate presentation of the evidence.

Can statistics influence attitudes towards immigration?

The purpose of the video, and the accompanying research, was to explore how attitudes responded to the presentation of accessible, but evidence-based, information on the impacts of immigration in the UK. Participants in our research were less uninformed about immigration than opinion polls usually show. Many participants were in fact able to estimate the proportion of immigrants in the UK with some accuracy. However, they also questioned what was meant by the term 'immigrant', as well as whether official statistics could be trusted.

Other research has suggested that excessive reliance on statistical and economic evidence in the immigration debate is likely to be counterproductive, concluding, for example

*'The problem with trying to "just give people the facts" is that it offers a textbook example of **how not** to have a conversation'* (British Future, 2014)

It is argued that this approach can leave people more confused and 'harden' opinion. Our findings suggest that there is a role for careful and accurate explanation of the evidence, and indeed that there is considerable demand for this among interested members who do not have strong preconceptions on the immigration debate. It was also clear that the statistics about overall

numbers were not of the primary concern of research participants; while some felt that numbers needed to be reduced, they were more interested in issues such as whether we need immigrants' skills, whether immigrants are claiming benefits and how our public services can deliver to a growing population. This suggests that statistics used in the immigration debate should relate more to specific issues that are of direct concern to the public than overall numbers. Issues which participants wanted to know more about included the reasons why people come to the UK, for study, work or as refugees. They were unaware of current restrictions, for example on international students, and wanted to know more. On service impacts, they wanted more information about immigrants' access to benefits.

Issues for a more constructive debate

Our research suggests that people who occupy the middle ground are interested in more than the headline findings about net migration figures and immigration impacts. They also feel that some of the most commonly voiced beliefs about immigration are either not true or not as pertinent as often suggested. Principal among these are that migrants are taking jobs from British workers and reducing pay. Participants were especially critical of the coverage of immigration issues in the media which they saw as inaccurate and sensationalist. Almost all focus group participants saw the real picture as considerably more complex and the impacts as more nuanced than commonly portrayed. The use of some statistics was useful in considering some, but not all, of these issues.

The focus groups identified an issue in degree to which immigration is singled out as the cause of a number of social changes and problems. These include hospital waiting times and shortages of housing and school places. Participants believed this view, frequently conveyed by the media and politicians, to be simplistic at best. It was also seen as unfair to suggest that individuals who are motivated to improve their lives and those of their families are to blame. With the exception of the school students interviewed, participants were much more concerned about the perceived impact of immigration on communities and culture than on jobs and services. Our findings suggest that the public is ready for a more sophisticated debate on immigration, which considers all of these impacts. This would be one in which the contribution of immigrants is recognised – to our economy and competitiveness, to public finances and to our culture.

Focus groups with young people suggest that the debate might include issues of principles and ethics, as well as accurate statistics. These participants raised questions such as whether an individual has any more or less right to a job because of their nationality and wider issues of human rights. These matters may have been more strongly in participants' minds given that focus groups took place at the time of the refugee crisis across Europe.

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