

and Social Studies

Why immigration is good for all of us







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By Sally Hunt

The debate about immigration is also a debate about what kind of country we want to be. A fortress Britain, closed to new ideas, hostile to different cultures and fearful of social change. Or an open, confident, welcoming society facing the future with confidence.

For a union like UCU rooted in the power of education to provide social

and economic emancipation there could only ever be one choice. It is our members in universities who make the UK a top destination for academics and students the world over, creating a melting pot of creativity and a substantial economic boost into the bargain. And it is our members in colleges who in the face of cut after cut often provide the first learning opportunity in the UK for new arrivals hungry to learn and desperate to contribute.

The truth is of course that in our island nation we are almost all from somewhere else if you go back far enough and the idea that this country belongs to any one ethnic group or another is not just silly, it is dangerous. Yet the positive contribution that immigrants make to our society, and have made to our history is drowned out by a toxic bidding war between the parties to be "tough" on the issue.

In fact, as this timely pamphlet shows, far from being a drain on our economy immigrants contribute a net £25 billion and of course fill many of the crucial jobs in health, education and technology that our aging economy needs most. These economic arguments matter of course, especially at a time when it is becoming common currency to blame immigrants for lower wages and great job insecurity. As this pamphlet shows, the real root of low wages is the deregulation of the labour market and the greater power that now rests with employers, not those who come here looking for a better life.

When the debate about immigration has become so poisonous, education and educators have a great responsibility. For our students, knowledge is power and we owe it to them to ensure that whoever they are and wherever they are from they get a fair chance.

This pamphlet in providing the facts about immigration is a powerful contribution to that never ending struggle for social justice for all to which thousands of UCU members have dedicated their lives.

Sally Hunt

UCU General Secretary



Patterns of migration

It is helpful to put Britain's migration figures in a global context. In 2010 migrants made up **11.3%** of the UK population, not far above the European average of 9.4%¹. Britain has a smaller proportion of migrants than the US (13%)², Canada (20.6%)³ and Australia (25%)⁴.

In 2011

350,000

people emigrated from the UK

Between 2001-9

3 million

the majority of the

people left London, and

who moved to London

UK - not from abroad.

came from the rest of the

Migrants make up **11.3%** of UK population... of US, and...

of Australian

13%

The movement of migrants is not just one way. 350,000 emigrated from the UK in 2011, of whom 43% were British and 57% non-British, 40% (136,000) went to other EU countries. 411,000 UK born citizens now live in Spain, 173,000 in France and 155,000 in Germany⁵.

There is also a great deal of internal migration within the UK. Between 2001 and 2009, London's population increased by 431,000, partly through natural causes (births exceeding deaths by 0.5 million) and partly through migration. London received 2.9 million incomers in that period but the majority came from the rest of the UK not from abroad and in the same period 3 million Londoners left London⁶.

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Migration and the economy

We are often told that migration is an economic disaster for Britain when, in reality, it is essential for keeping the wheels of a modern and multi-national economy turning. As migrants are, on average, younger than the total population⁷ (pensioners don't tend to migrate), they ease the problem of our ageing population. By paying taxes migrants help to fund pensions for the rest of us.

Research shows that between 2001 and 2011, migrants made a net contribution to public finances of £25 billion in taxes⁸. This huge amount would have been lost from the public purse and the deficit would have been even greater. Migrants use amenities much less frequently than British nationals and moreover, they don't increase the cost of certain services, like the armed forces, at all so their tax contributions are a national bonus. This acts as a stimulus, making the economy bigger.

Migrants made a net contribution of **£25 billion** to public finances between 2001-2011

COLOR IN

What if the Tories met their target of reducing net migration "to the tens of thousands – rather than the hundreds of thousands"?





Is benefit tourism a concern?

Spending on social protection benefits per inhabitant in 2011

Luxembourg €17.838.71

The term 'benefit tourism' is often bandied around by the media to conjure up images of lazy migrants heading abroad to live off benefits. If this really were the case, then presumably they would go to the country with the most generous benefits? This makes the UK a very strange choice as, thanks to the Coalition Government, we now have some of the lowest benefits in Europe¹¹.

The UK is far from being a soft touch when it comes to benefit eligibility. Regulations mean all EU citizens living in another member state (e.g. Britons in Spain) must be treated

Thanks to the Coalition, we now have some of the lowest social security in Europe

the same as nationals once they have been granted residency. These same regulations say that migrants only have the right to live in another state if they can prove they won't be a burden on social security. Even then, they can still be ineligible for benefits for their first three months of residence¹². These rules mean that there are only minor differences in eligibility between EU states so it would not be worthwhile to use the UK for 'benefit tourism'.

Why would anyone leave the security of family and friends, to go on an expensive journey across Europe? Refugees escaping war and oppression will travel to the unknown - life is always better than death. But migrating for welfare? It makes no sense.

Portugal €4,045.36

The impact on wages

Migrants increase the labour supply, growing the economy through increased consumer demand, which leads to the creation of more jobs¹³. In total, there is evidence that migration has positive effects on the average wage¹⁴. By adding the skill sets of migrant workers to existing sectors, there is an increase in overall productivity, which in turn increases the average wage.

If migrants have skills that are direct substitutes for existing workers and if collective agreements and minimum wage regulations are not enforced, then a slight downward pressure on wages might be felt at the lowest end of the labour market¹⁵. But the race to the bottom in the jobs market did not happen because migrants arrived in the UK.

When the skill-sets of migrant workers are added to existing sectors, there is an increase in overall productivity, which in turn increases the average wage

The root of this can be found in the deregulation of labour markets over the last 30

years and the introduction of a raft of anti-union laws¹⁶. This gave employers the go-ahead to push back against decent wages and working conditions. Deregulation, failure to

Failure to enforce minimum wage

Reduction in trade unionism

Failure to implement the Agency Workers Directive

Deregulation of labour markets

implement the Agency Workers

What is the real reason for the race to the bottom in wages?



Directive, which allowed agencies to recruit abroad in breach of national rates, the reduction in trade-unionism and the failure to upgrade or enforce the minimum wage, has been to blame for this race to the bottom.

The only way to ensure decent wages and working conditions for all groups of workers is by renewing the regulation of employment conditions, ensuring a stronger role for trade unions, and putting policies in place that can begin to tackle the squeeze on living standards across the board.

What is the impact of migration on jobs?

Anti-immigration organisations argue that there is a fixed amount of work to be done in the economy, and that ten more migrants means one less job for someone already living in Britain. In reality, **migrants not only increase the size of the economy but also the number of jobs available**¹⁷.

As migrants are spending money in local economies, they increase consumer demand which has the knock-on effect of creating jobs. Between 2005 and 2008, generally a period of economic strength and high migration in Britain, employment of existing British workers increased by 116,000¹⁸. Even in 2008, when migration was high, the number of UK unfilled vacancies reached 700,000 – the highest ever recorded level¹⁹.

Between 2005-8 during a period of higher migration to the UK, the number of employed UK nationals increased by 116,000.

Is housing under pressure?

Across the country as a whole, the housing crisis means that there are desperate shortages of affordable housing. But the picture is complicated. Even with significant immigration, some areas have lots of spare housing, while others are struggling to house people, even without migrants adding to demand. In this big picture, migration is a minor factor – a major house-building programme is urgently needed. Successive failure has meant that not enough housing has been built over a long period. The Government is the real villain but escapes hostility while migrants bear the brunt.

Myths of migrants 'jumping' social housing waiting lists are also completely untrue. Migrants are three times more likely to be in the private rented sector and 5% less likely to be in social housing²⁰. Research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission²¹ found no evidence of immigrants jumping social housing waiting lists. They found that 64% were privately renting, 17% were owner occupiers, and only 11% were allocated social housing. More recent research from JRF shows an even higher number of immigrants living in privately rented housing, often in "poor and exploitative" conditions where overcrowding and health risks are common²².

UK-born heads of household

Foreign-born heads of household





What is the impact of migration on the NHS?

"Epidemics of health tourists cost us billions"

The Daily Mail, 3rd April 2013

The phrase "health tourism" refers to the idea that migrants come to the UK with the sole intention of accessing free healthcare. We are told it is a major problem, but in reality this is not the case. A government report identified a "plausible range for health tourism" of just 5,000 to 20,000 visitors a year²³. This equals just 0.1% of total NHS spending²⁴ – far from the billions of pounds we are led to believe is being spent.

Most migrants are young and in good health. On average, more than a quarter of all healthcare consumed in someone's lifetime will be administered in the last year of

their life. This means that migrants make significantly less use of NHS services, and have little impact on demand for healthcare²⁵.

NHS professionals have reacted angrily to exaggerated reports of large-scale health tourism because it could scare people away from getting the early medical help they need. Putting people off seeking medical advice until the last minute might not only lead to unnecessary deaths, but could also increase costs as emergency treatment in A&E is much more expensive than early treatment or preventative care.

Overseas visitors currently account for about 0.1% of total NHS expenditure

The truth about unemployment rates and benefit claimants

The UK is the only EU country to have a lower unemployment rate for migrants - 7.5% - than nationals – 7.9%²⁶. The FU-wide rates are 12.6% and 10% respectively²⁷.

> Furthermore, amongst those migrants who are unemployed, an even lower proportion - 1% - actually claim unemployment benefits compared to UK nationals – 4%²⁸.



Non-UK Nationals 8.5%

Nationals of EU countries other than the UK 2.6%

> **A8** Nationals (recent EU accession countries) 0.9%

Source: 2011 figures. ICF GHK (2013) Page 173 http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1980&furtherNews=yes



Between 2011-2

foreign students

£8.8bn

to the economy

contributed

Students, migration and the skills shortage

Migrants frequently fill skill shortages. Training policy in Britain has been in long-term disarray, a fact reinforced as even in an economic slump massive skill shortages exist, meaning the skills of migrants are needed to keep our vital services working. Today, 36.8% of GPs and 40.4% of specialists gained their qualifications outside the UK²⁹. The NHS and many other industries would be in a state of crisis without overseas workers.

The UK Border Agency's points-based system for non-EU immigrants means that migrants are only permitted to take jobs where there are recognised skill shortages and if they can prove, before entering the UK, that they have the necessary qualifications. The UK attracts highly educated and skilled migrants. In 2011, compared to 21% of the British adult 32% of recent population, 32% of recent EU migrants **EU migrants and** and 43% of recent non-EU migrants had 43% of recent a university degree³⁰. In 2011-12 foreign students accounted for 17.4% of non-EU migrants had a the 2.5 million student population and university degree contributed an estimated £8.8 billion to the economy³¹.

Lower skilled workers from the Eastern European A8 Accession countries filled many jobs in the period before the crash, when unemployment was relatively low. If these migrants had been blocked, Britain as a whole would have been poorer and the economy would have suffered substantially more.

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