

# Winning the arguments: Setting the record straight on Immigration

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Following the 2010 general election, the coalition government have rushed through their austerity agenda pushing the most marginalised into unacceptable conditions including precarious low paid jobs and hard choices such as to pay the bills to eat.

The weakening of equality rights for workers, excessive cuts to services including severe job losses has given a green light, supported by some media sources to the scapegoating and victimisation of different communities.

The level of toxic discourse directed towards migrants recently ramped up during the 2014 European elections, fuelled by UKIP has been allowed to continue with very little opposition from any of the other political parties. However, we know that while the current focus is on Eastern European migrants, what is really meant is anyone who is “foreign” looking, creating a country of “them” and “us”. Myths perpetuated include:

- Taking our jobs
- Moving to the front of the queue for social housing
- Failing (or refusing) to integrate within ‘British society’
- Get benefits for which “they” have not paid into
- Burdening our healthcare system

It is sensationalist headlines and rhetoric that stokes up prejudice and fear.

The failure of Government to act in a responsible manner leaves the door open for racism and xenophobia to become acceptable. In January 2014, Ipsos Mori published their report ‘Perceptions and Reality: Public Attitudes to Immigration’. The report identified ten key messages:

1. **We weren’t always this worried about immigration:** national concern increased following the rise in numbers.
2. **People are massively wrong on many aspects of immigration:** including the size of immigrant populations but this partly reflects their concerns.

Reasons for concern also bear little relationship to “reality”. The most widespread concern tends to be about the impact on the public services and benefits.

3. **We have very different views about different types of immigration:** when migrants were described as professionals, net support for settlement in the UK is very positive, regardless of the migrants’ origin or motive for migrating as opposed to migrants who were described as unskilled labourers, net support was negative.
4. **Immigration quickly became a class issue but it is less so now:** different income groups have different reasons for concern
5. **Immigration quickly became a generational issue:** views change as we get older too – particularly among baby boomers
6. **Where we live matters too:** however, even in “cosmopolitan” and “superdiverse” areas the majority still call for reductions in immigration
7. **Immigrants worry about immigration too, particularly those who’ve been here for over 20 years:** the attitudes of immigrants themselves towards reducing immigration also shift over time – and they tend to become closer to the average for the UK population the longer they have been in the country.
8. **The newspapers we read says a lot about our attitudes to immigration although it may not cause them:** Some media coverage does seem to unreasonably exaggerate and scaremonger and there is enough evidence to suggest that the media have an independent effect on views of immigration and therefore that the accuracy and balance of their coverage needs careful scrutiny
9. **We like targets but have little faith the government will meet them:** the general consensus is that there should be targets for reducing immigration however there is doubt that the government will be able to deliver this.
10. **UKIP supporters have broken away in their level of concern:** (1) UKIP voters started with similar concern about immigration to Conservative voters (in 2002) but have since moved away as they attract more supporters with a particular concern (2) Lib Dem supporters are a long way from supporters of their Coalition partners (3) undecided voters tend to be closer to Labour and Lib Dem views than Conservatives.

Click [here](#) for the full report and [here](#) for the summary

What is clear is that all political parties must first address the debate on immigration in an honest and transparent way without the need for scaremongering tactics leading to political gain.

In order to facilitate that debate within our own union we have produced this briefing document. It is also in response to UCU Congress resolution 65 '*Opposition to racist and far right parties*' and resolution 66 '*Immigration and racism*' to help dispel the myths around immigration and its impact during this period of austerity.

We would like to build a collection of discussion papers and essays which support our commitment and policy to counteract the lies and distortions articulated by politicians and the press and are inviting you to submit for example, academic articles, local UCU newsletters or articles, opinion pieces that support our policies and any activities or campaigns we can publicise which will appear on the UCU website. Please send your contribution to [egadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:egadmin@ucu.org.uk).

UCU is committed to campaigning against all forms of xenophobia and racism including Anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia

# Contents

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What do we know about migration?	4
Public attitudes towards immigration	4
Why immigration is good for all of us?	5
Think piece: How can the European left deal with the threat posed by xenophobia?	5
Integration, Disadvantage and Extremism	6
Truth, lies and migrants: a guide to population and migration	7

**CReAM** is an independent and interdisciplinary research centre located in the Department of Economics at University College London. CReAM's research focuses on the causes, patterns and consequences of international population mobility and movements affecting UK, Europe and associated global processes.

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### **What do we know about migration?**

The document summarizes the key findings on 10 issues that relate to immigration, such as innovation and trade, fiscal and labour market effects, education, the health system and housing, and crime and international development. It points out the state of research on these issues, and at the same time explains the challenges to obtaining reliable figures. The document is intended as a resource for the interested observer, to inform about the state of research on these issues in relationship to the UK, and to provide further references for in depth study.

Download here at <http://www.cream-migration.org/files/migration-factsheet.pdf>

### **Public Attitudes toward Immigration**

Immigrant populations in many developed democracies have grown rapidly, and so too has an extensive literature on natives' attitudes toward immigration. This research has developed from two theoretical foundations, one grounded in political economy, the other in political psychology.

These two literatures have developed largely in isolation from one another, yet the conclusions that emerge from each are strikingly similar. Consistently, immigration attitudes show little evidence of being strongly correlated with personal economic circumstances. Instead, immigration attitudes are shaped by sociotropic concerns about national-level impacts, whether those impacts are cultural or economic. This pattern of results has held up as scholars have increasingly turned to experimental tests, and it fits the evidence from the United States, Canada, and Western Europe.

Still, more work is needed to strengthen the causal identification of sociotropic concerns and to isolate precisely how, when, and why they matter for attitude formation.

Download here at [http://www.cream-migration.org/publ\\_uploads/CDP\\_15\\_13.pdf](http://www.cream-migration.org/publ_uploads/CDP_15_13.pdf)

The Centre for Labour and Social Studies (Class) is a new think-tank established in 2012 to act as a centre for left debate and discussion. Originating in the labour movement, Class works with a broad coalition of supporters, academics and experts to develop and advance alternative policies for today.

Red Pepper is a bimonthly magazine and website of left politics and culture.

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### **Why immigration is good for all of us?**

Produced by Class (Centre for Labour and Social Studies and in association with Red Pepper Magazine) 'Why immigration is good for all of us' provides a powerful counterargument to sensationalised reports of the effects of immigration on Britain at a crucial time when media and political criticism is at its height.

Download here at

[http://www.classonline.org.uk/docs/why\\_immigration\\_is\\_good\\_for\\_all\\_of\\_us.pdf](http://www.classonline.org.uk/docs/why_immigration_is_good_for_all_of_us.pdf)

### **Think Piece: How can the European left deal with the threat posed by xenophobia**

This essay charts the rise of xenophobia as a Europe-wide phenomenon, which has become more of an urgent threat following the increase in popularity of far-right parties such as UKIP.

European far-right parties have succeeded thanks to the spread of misinformation about the effects of immigration, the ratcheting up of fear, and Euro scepticism: all of which have been assisted by a compliant media.

As UKIP looks to be successful in the forthcoming European elections, the essay calls upon progressives to take on far-right parties by exposing their xenophobia, addressing the social problems that have led to their rise, and mobilising the groups which may be negatively affected by xenophobic rhetoric.

Download here at [http://classonline.org.uk/docs/Glyn\\_Ford\\_Final.pdf](http://classonline.org.uk/docs/Glyn_Ford_Final.pdf)

Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) is an ESRC-funded Research Centre within the University of Oxford. Since 2003 COMPAS has established an international reputation for original research and policy relevance. It has undertaken a strategic programme of multi-disciplinary social scientific research, publication and dissemination, events, knowledge transfer and user engagement activities with a broad set of academic and non-academic users in the UK and abroad.

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### **Integration, Disadvantage and extremism**

A new report, 'Integration, Disadvantage and Extremism', produced by researchers from COMPAS and Birkbeck, University of London, for the All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism, examines what drives extremism in British society.

It suggests that Islamist and far-right extremism are often two sides of the same coin with radical ideologies being embraced by people who feel marginalised as they appear to offer an explanation for, or an answer to, a sense of grievance or lack of opportunity.

The report, which offers new insights from ten leading academics and thinkers, says extremism and integration cannot be tackled at a local level alone. Nor can they be addressed in isolation from tackling issues of disadvantage and inequality.

It suggests a unified national strategy is required to build community cohesion and integration, incorporating legal and policy responses, and with a renewed commitment to improving social mobility and racial justice.

Download here at

<http://www.pearsinstitute.bbk.ac.uk/assets/Uploads/PDFs/Integration-Disadvantage-and-ExtremismMay2014FINAL.pdf>

SERTUC, the Southern & Eastern Region of the TUC, is the largest of the TUC's six English regions and covers three of the former government regions: London, the South East, and East of England. Over two million trade unionists live and work within the region.

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### **Truth, lies and migrants: a guide to population and migration**

Truth, lies and migrants: a guide to population and migration <http://sertucresources.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/sertuc-myths-2014.pdf> SERTUC's guide to the realities and myths of migration within our Region. Hard copies are available from the office via Joanne Adams [jadams@tuc.org.uk](mailto:jadams@tuc.org.uk)