

BRIEFING

# FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND THE EU REFERENDUM

Marley Morris

March 2016  
© IPPR 2016

## ABOUT IPPR

IPPR, the Institute for Public Policy Research, is the UK's leading progressive thinktank. We are an independent charitable organisation with more than 40 staff members, paid interns and visiting fellows. Our main office is in London, with IPPR North, IPPR's dedicated thinktank for the North of England, operating out of offices in Manchester and Newcastle, and IPPR Scotland, our dedicated thinktank for Scotland, based in Edinburgh.

Our purpose is to conduct and promote research into, and the education of the public in, the economic, social and political sciences, science and technology, the voluntary sector and social enterprise, public services, and industry and commerce.

IPPR  
4th Floor  
14 Buckingham Street  
London WC2N 6DF  
T: +44 (0)20 7470 6100  
E: [info@ippr.org](mailto:info@ippr.org)  
[www.ippr.org](http://www.ippr.org)  
Registered charity no. 800065

This paper was first published in March 2016. © 2016  
The contents and opinions in this paper are the author(s) only.

NEW IDEAS  
for CHANGE

# CONTENTS

<b>Preface: Independence, neutrality and transparency .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
The evidence.....	4
Public attitudes.....	5
<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Freedom of movement: What do we know?.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Migration flows .....	7
EU migrants in the UK labour market .....	14
Welfare and public services.....	16
<b>3. Freedom of movement: What do the public think? .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Our focus groups.....	21
Discussing views on free movement.....	22
Discussing challenges for Remain and Leave .....	24
<b>References .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Annex: Notes on methodology.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Methodology for primary data analysis .....	30
Selection process for deliberative focus groups.....	30

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Marley Morris** is a research fellow at IPPR.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This briefing would not have been possible without the generous support of the Barrow Cadbury Trust and Unbound Philanthropy. In particular, I would like to thank Ayesha Saran and Will Somerville for their advice and support. I would also like to thank Michael O'Connor for his invaluable comments on an earlier draft of the data section of this briefing.

While this report has been supported by Barrow Cadbury Trust and Unbound Philanthropy, the contents and opinions in this report are those of IPPR alone. IPPR is an independent thinktank and retains editorial control of all its publications.

At IPPR, many thanks to Phoebe Griffith, Chris Murray, Josh Goodman, Izzy Hatfield, Alfie Stirling, Clare McNeil, Harry Quilter-Pinner, Paul Delaney, Bill Davies and Jonathan Clifton for their advice and comments on this briefing.

---

### Download

This document is available to download as a free PDF and in other formats at:

<http://www.ippr.org/publications/free-movement-and-the-eu-referendum>

### Citation

If you are using this document in your own writing, our preferred citation is:

Morris M (2016) *Free movement and the EU referendum*, IPPR.

<http://www.ippr.org/publications/free-movement-and-the-eu-referendum>

### Permission to share

This document is published under a creative commons licence:

Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 UK

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/uk/>

For commercial use, please contact [info@ippr.org](mailto:info@ippr.org)



# PREFACE: INDEPENDENCE, NEUTRALITY AND TRANSPARENCY

## Independence and neutrality

IPPR is an independent registered charity. It does not take a corporate position on whether the UK should remain in, or leave, the European Union. This briefing intends to contribute to an informed and constructive debate on migration ahead of the referendum.

For more information, see: <http://www.IPPR.org/about/eu-referendum>

## Transparency

With the date for the EU referendum now announced, in the interest of transparency IPPR acknowledges that it has received funding from the EU for some of its past work. IPPR has not received any funding from the EU for this report.

Over the past five financial years, EU funding has made up the following proportion of IPPR's total annual income:

- 2015: less than 1 per cent
- 2014: 2 per cent
- 2013: less than 1 per cent
- 2012: 9 per cent
- 2011: 8 per cent

IPPR recognises that there is a public interest in the funding of thinktanks and we are committed to increasing transparency in this area. Every year, we publish our annual report,<sup>1</sup> which outlines how our funds are raised and spent. WhoFundsYou.org has awarded IPPR a top transparency rating of 'A'. In 2015, Transparify.org awarded IPPR its four-star 'broadly transparent' rating, making us the only one of the 11 British thinktanks assessed to be rated as 'transparent'.

All of our funders for the last financial year are listed on our website at: <http://www.IPPR.org/how-we-are-funded>

---

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.ippr.org/about/annual-reports>

## SUMMARY

The first EU referendum in a generation will take place on 23 June. People's views on EU migration are likely to play a crucial role in how they vote. This briefing seeks to inform the debate by setting out some of the key evidence on freedom of movement and exploring public attitudes to EU migration. This briefing is not intended to persuade readers to support or reject Britain's membership of the EU, and IPPR is not taking a position on either side of the referendum question.

Our review of the evidence shows that the UK has seen sharply rising inflows of EU migration in recent decades and now has the second highest inflows of EU migrants in the EU. EU migrants have high employment rates, although migrants from central and eastern European countries experience low pay and overqualification. EU migrants tend to be less likely to claim out-of-work benefits but more likely to claim tax credits and child benefit than UK nationals.

Our focus groups with over-40s in Glasgow, Havering and Peterborough highlighted a range of concerns about EU migration, particularly focused on EU migrants' access to welfare and pressures on public services. Participants also noted advantages of free movement, notably the opportunities for UK citizens to live and work easily in other EU countries and the benefits of EU migrants filling skills gaps.

### The evidence...

#### ... on past flows of EU migration

- In the 1990s, EU migration flows to the UK were roughly in the range of 40,000–80,000 per year, while net EU migration was almost zero. After the 2004 accession, EU migration flows rose dramatically to over 100,000 per year and have remained high over the past decade. There are now more than 3 million EU-born migrants in the UK. Compared to other EU countries, the UK has the second highest inflows of EU migrants, after Germany.
- Approximately 1.2 million Britons live in other EU countries – mainly in Spain, Ireland, France and Germany. The EU countries with the highest number of emigrants in other member states are Poland (3.5 million), Romania (3.0 million), and Germany (1.8 million).

#### ... on future flows

- If the UK remains in the EU, then the proposed reforms set out in the European Council's decision on 'a new settlement for the UK within the EU' (more commonly known as the prime minister's 'renegotiation deal') are unlikely to have a significant impact on future EU migration flows. These are instead likely to be driven by differences in labour market conditions (such as wage levels and unemployment rates) between the UK and other EU countries.
- If the UK leaves the EU, then future flows from EU countries will depend on the immigration system the UK chooses to adopt. If the UK continues to participate in EU free movement as part of a new trade deal with the EU, then Brexit is unlikely to have an impact on EU migration to the UK. If the UK adopts a new policy to treat EU migrant workers similarly to how it currently treats non-EU migrant workers, then this will most likely lead to a fall in low-skilled EU migration. However, this alone will probably not be sufficient to meet the current government's net migration target (to bring net migration down to the tens of thousands); to meet that target, further action would be needed.

### ... on EU migrants in the labour market

- EU migrants have higher employment rates than UK nationals. The employment rate of migrants from EU15 countries is 75 per cent, while the employment rate of migrants from NMS13 countries (including the A10 countries and Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia) is 83 per cent, higher than for UK-born nationals (74 per cent).
- However, central and eastern European migrants tend to be in low-skilled work and on low pay. The median gross hourly pay of NMS13 workers is £3 less than for UK nationals.

### ... on EU migrants and welfare and public services

- EU migrants are less likely to report claiming unemployment and sickness/disability benefits than UK nationals, but are more likely to report claiming tax credits and child benefit. They are also roughly as likely to live in social housing as UK nationals, and more likely to live in the private rented sector than UK nationals.
- There is little data on EU migrants' use of healthcare in the UK, but estimates based on their age profile suggest that they make proportionately low use of the NHS.
- In education, analysis of the national pupil database suggests that those who speak central and eastern European languages as their first language tend to perform worse at key stage 4 than those whose first language is English.

## Public attitudes

- We spoke to three groups of over-40s, in Glasgow, Havering and Peterborough, targeting members of the public who did not have firm views on freedom of movement.
- Many participants raised major concerns about EU migrants' access to welfare, pressures on public services, crime and personal security, and wage undercutting. Many participants welcomed EU migrants that came to work and contribute, but were worried about those who they believed were taking out of the system before putting in. Others felt that the current system of free movement was unfair, given that flows across Europe were unbalanced. A number of people said they wanted restrictions on EU migration to the UK.
- But we also found that a number of participants spoke of the benefits of free movement for UK citizens, as well as the advantages of EU migration in filling skills gaps in the UK economy.
- In Peterborough, we discussed with our participants some challenges for both sides of the referendum debate. With respect to challenges for the Remain campaign, our participants agreed with the two arguments that the UK's membership of the EU prevents the government from properly controlling EU migration and puts unsustainable pressures on public services. They were less certain about the argument that staying in the EU would mean that in the long term refugees would acquire free movement rights and be able to come to the UK.
- With respect to challenges for the Leave campaign, our participants were unconvinced by the arguments that leaving the EU would not lead to a significant fall in net migration and would endanger the rights of British citizens living in EU countries. They were less certain about the argument that there is a trade-off between access to the single market and restricting freedom of movement.
- Overall, our participants in Glasgow were most positive about freedom of movement and our participants in Havering were most negative.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

On 23 June, the UK will have its first opportunity since 1975 to vote on whether to remain in or leave the European Union. This decision will depend on a range of considerations, from the economy to Britain's place in the world. But one crucial factor in the campaigns will be immigration from other EU countries. The free movement of citizens of EU member states has been a major feature of the debate on the European Union in recent years, and has become one of the most contentious aspects of EU policy in the UK. More than half of voters say this will be one of the top three issues influencing their choice (ComRes 2016). Attitudes to EU migration could therefore make the difference between a 'Remain' and 'Leave' result.

This briefing explores the issue of freedom of movement in the context of the EU referendum campaign. We analyse some of the evidence on EU migration flows and impacts in the UK and explore public attitudes to freedom of movement. This briefing is not intended to persuade readers to support or reject Britain's membership of the EU, and IPPR is not taking a position on either side of the referendum question. Instead, we aim to inform the debate by analysing the evidence on EU migration and public attitudes.

Our research suggests that, whatever the final decision, the public want a sophisticated, intelligent debate about the issue of freedom of movement, and are wary of inflated claims on either side of the divide. There are signs that, on both sides of this debate, some campaigners are resorting to dubious claims and exaggeration on immigration in a bid to sway voters. To make a broad, inclusive offer and secure a majority of voters, it is in all campaigners' interests to ensure that the debate on migration remains balanced and level-headed in the months ahead.

## 2. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT: WHAT DO WE KNOW?

The rules for EU free movement originate from the 1957 Treaty of Rome. The original treaty called for ‘the abolition, as between Member States, of obstacles to the free movement of persons, services and capital’ and ‘the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality between workers of the Member States, as regards employment, remuneration and other conditions of work and employment’.<sup>2</sup> Originally it focused on facilitating the movement of workers.

Over time, legislation and European Court of Justice (ECJ) rulings on intra-EU migration have developed and generally extended rights to free movement to all citizens of EU countries. In particular, the Maastricht Treaty introduced the concept of ‘EU citizenship’, whereby all nationals of EU member states have the right to move and live anywhere in the EU and to vote in local and European parliamentary elections. This for the most part confirmed pre-existing law. The EU has also developed secondary legislation on various aspects of free movement, including EU migrants’ access to welfare benefits, while the ECJ has made a number of rulings in recent years to clarify the extent to which EU nationals are eligible for benefits in other member states. Free movement rules currently apply to all citizens of EU member states, as well as European Economic Area countries outside the EU (including Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and Switzerland.<sup>3</sup>

A full analysis of the nature and consequences of EU migration since the introduction of free movement is beyond the scope of this briefing. We will instead focus on some of the key issues of contention central to the EU referendum debate: flows of intra-EU migration, the role of EU migrants in the UK labour market, and the impacts of EU migration on welfare and public services.

### Migration flows

#### EU migration to the UK

EU migration flows to the UK have shifted substantially over recent decades. In the 1990s, EU migration to the UK ranged between approximately 40,000 and 80,000 people per annum. Net migration was for the most part very low – indeed, in 1991 net migration from the EU to the UK was estimated to be negative, at approximately -1,000 over the course of the year (although these numbers have significant margins of error) (ONS 2015a).

In 2004, the accession of 10 new member states to the EU meant that free movement rules were expanded to include these countries, mostly from central and eastern Europe: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. (Often these countries are referred to the ‘A10’, or the ‘A8’ if the smaller member states of Cyprus and Malta are discounted, where the ‘A’ stands for ‘accession’.) Existing member states were given the option of imposing transitional labour market controls for a period of up to seven years for migrants coming from these accession countries. The UK (along with Ireland and Sweden)

---

2 See: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3Axy0023>

3 While the rules for free movement apply to (non-EU) EEA countries and Switzerland as well as EU countries, unless stated otherwise the analysis in this section focuses on EU migration. This is in order to maintain consistency, as much of the available data and evidence only includes migrants from EU countries.

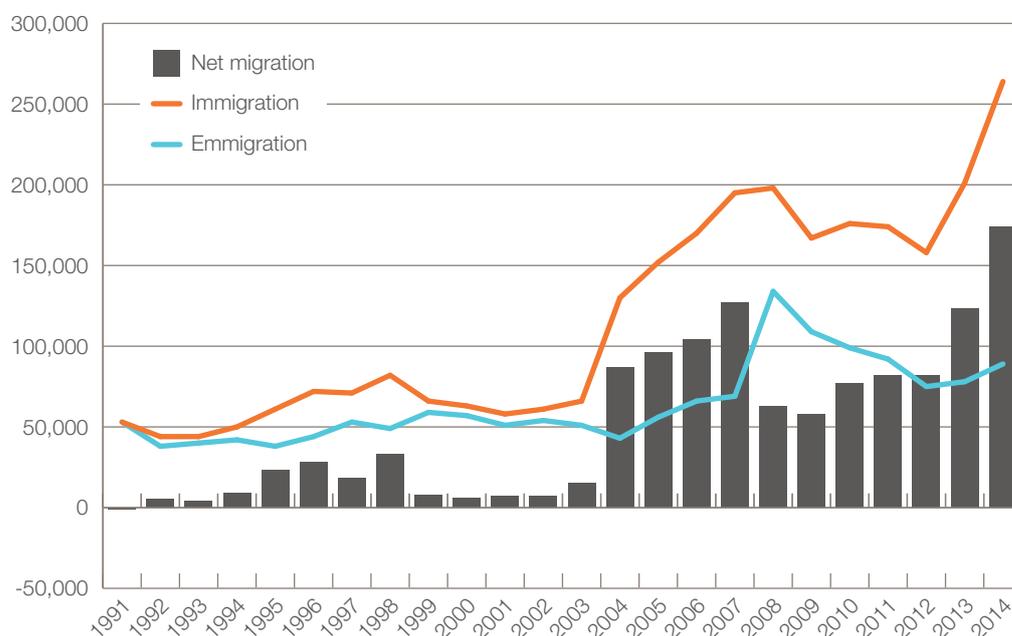
chose not to impose full labour market controls – which meant that A8 workers were free to come to work in the UK immediately – but as a transitional measure the government introduced a temporary worker registration scheme with which all A8 migrants working for an employer in the UK for at least one month had to register.

As a consequence, EU immigration rose considerably, to over 100,000 in 2004, and – other than a temporary fall between 2008 and 2012, as a consequence of the recession – continued to rise over the subsequent decade, as figure 2.1 shows (ONS 2015a). According to the Labour Force Survey, there are now just over 3 million EU-born people in the UK (ONS 2016a).

However, the makeup of EU migration over this time period has changed. A8 migration from central and eastern Europe overtook migration from EU15 countries – the ‘old’ EU member states – in 2005, but peaked in 2007. Now, by comparison, migration from A8 countries is lower, while migration from the EU15 member states has increased (ONS 2015a), probably due to relatively high levels of unemployment in southern Europe. For example, national insurance number allocations to people from Italy, Spain and Portugal roughly doubled between 2011 and 2015 (DWP 2016). More recently, since the lifting of transitional controls on Romanian and Bulgarian nationals in 2014, migration from these two member states has risen dramatically, from around 10,000 in the year ending December 2010 to 55,000 in the 12 months to September 2015 (ONS 2016c).

**Figure 2.1**

Net migration to the UK has risen over the past 15 years  
*EU immigration, emigration and net migration, 1991–2014*



Source: ONS 2015a

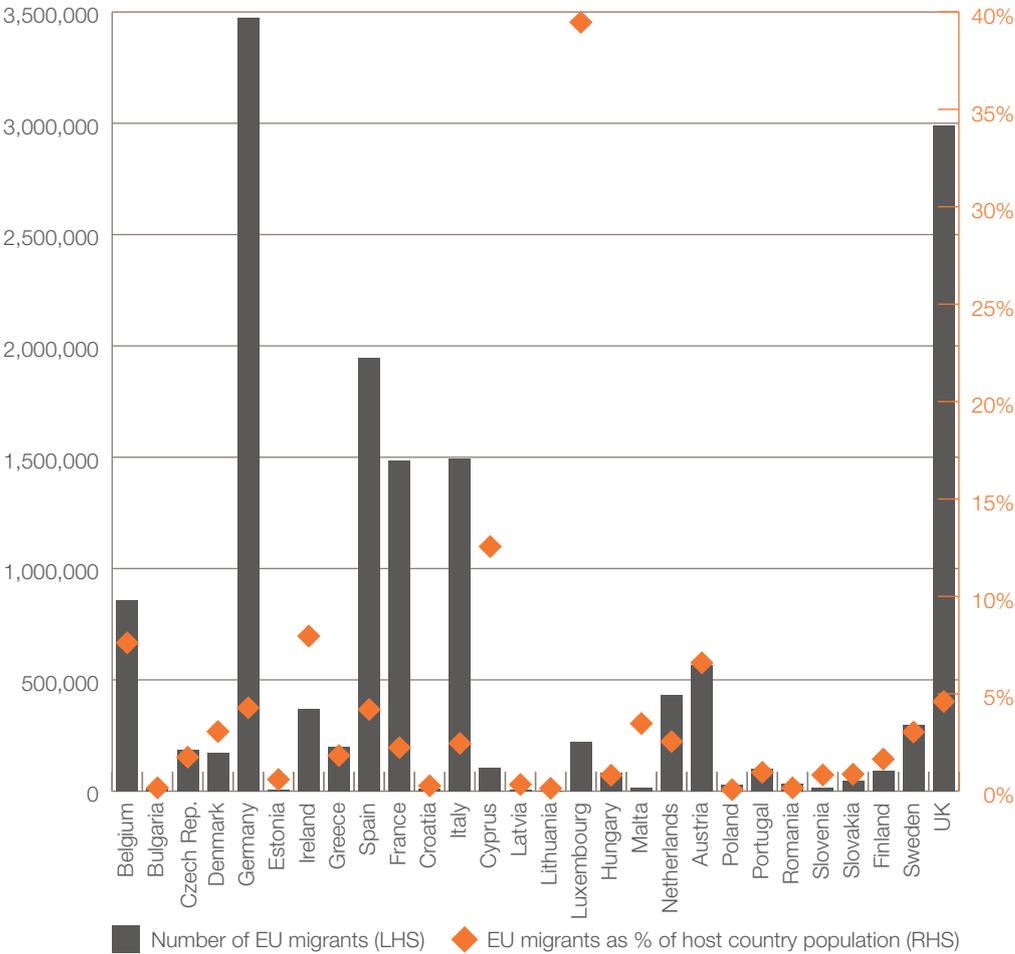
### Comparing the UK to other EU countries

In terms of absolute numbers, the UK has relatively high EU inflows. In 2013, just over 200,000 EU migrants (by citizenship) came to the UK. The only other member state with higher absolute levels of EU immigration was Germany, with 354,000. After the UK and Germany, the next highest inflows were seen in France and Spain, with 91,000 and 90,000 respectively (Eurostat 2015).

In terms of net EU migration, the figures reveal a slightly different story. Germany again had the highest absolute levels of net EU migration in 2013 – with 266,000 – followed by the UK (123,000), France (71,000) and Italy (58,000). By contrast, Spain’s net EU migration figure was the lowest in the EU, at -74,000, as high levels of inward migration were significantly outweighed by far higher levels of EU emigration (ibid).

Finally, when comparing stocks (as opposed to flows), the countries with the highest numbers of EU migrants in 2015 (by citizenship) were Germany (3.5 million), the UK (3.0 million) and Spain (1.9 million) (Eurostat 2016a). When accounting for population size, the countries with the highest percentages of EU migrants were Luxembourg (39 per cent of the total population), Cyprus (13 per cent), Ireland (8 per cent) and Belgium (8 per cent), compared to 5 per cent for the UK (ibid).

**Figure 2.2**  
EU migrant populations by country, 2015, stock numbers (left, grey) and as a proportion of the total population (right, orange)



Source: Eurostat 2016a

Of course, freedom of movement in the EU works both ways, and many UK nationals live and work in other EU countries. While accurate data on British people living abroad is hard to find, the United Nations Population Division’s estimates on international migration provide a guide. These figures are based on official government statistics and do not account for rates of non-registration, and so may

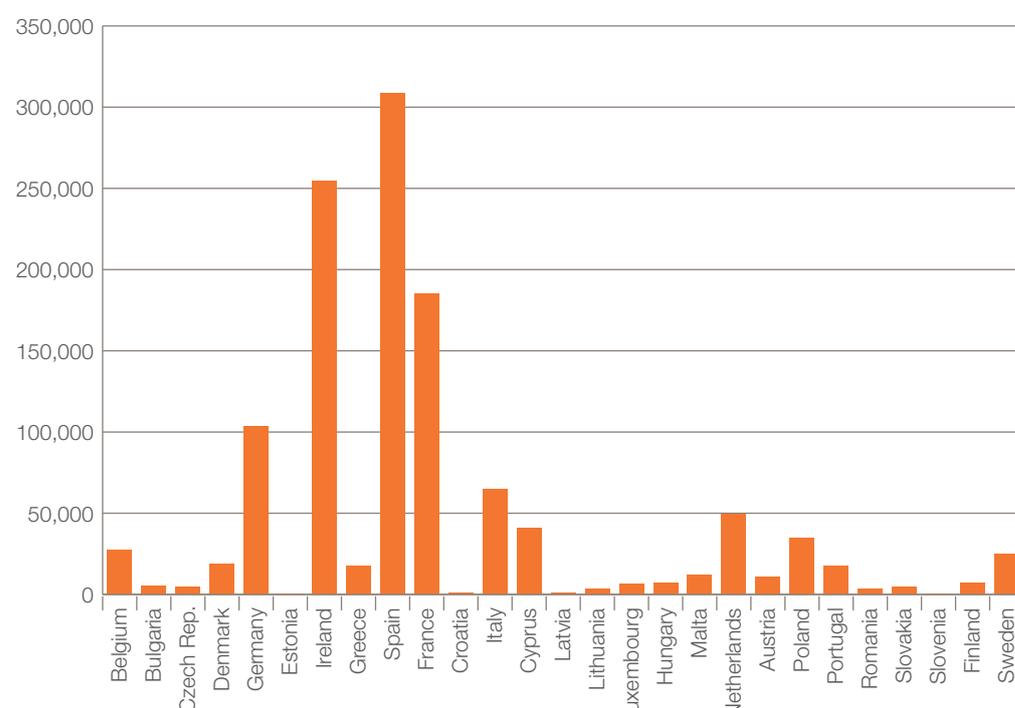
underestimate total levels.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, they suggest that 1.2 million UK-born migrants were living in other EU countries in 2015. As figure 2.3 shows, the most popular destination countries were Spain (310,000 UK nationals), Ireland (250,000), France (190,000) and Germany (100,000) (UNPD 2015).

Compared with other EU origin countries, therefore, the UK has the fifth highest number of emigrants living in other EU countries, after Poland (3.5 million), Romania (3.0 million), Germany (1.8 million) and Italy (1.4 million) (ibid).

**Figure 2.3**

The most popular countries for UK emigrants are Spain, Ireland, France and Germany

*UK nationals living in other EU countries, 2015*



Source: UNPD 2015

### Anticipating future flows

Of course, EU migration flows to and from the UK over the coming years and decades will depend in part on the outcome of the referendum – and regardless of the outcome, it is impossible to predict future flows with any certainty. However, in terms of anticipating future shifts, there are important considerations in the event of either result.

#### *In the event of a Remain outcome*

If the UK votes to stay in the EU then the European Council’s decision on ‘a new settlement for the UK within the EU’ (more commonly known as the prime minister’s ‘renegotiation deal’) will take effect.

<sup>4</sup> There are some limitations to this data. In particular, it is important to note that: (1) There are some inconsistencies across countries in how migrant stock estimates are produced. In most countries, estimates refer to the foreign-born population; however, in Belgium and the Czech Republic the estimates refer to the number of foreign citizens. (2) The figures for Cyprus include Northern Cyprus, which does not fully uphold free movement with the rest of the EU.

The reforms to free movement are comprised of three parts (European Council 2016, Peers 2016):<sup>5</sup>

- **Changes to welfare rules:** The main welfare reforms are the ‘emergency brake’ and the child benefit changes.
  - The ‘emergency brake’ restricts full access to in-work benefits for newly arriving EU migrants for their first four years after beginning work in the UK. It can only be used if the UK can show that exceptionally high levels of EU migration have affected essential aspects of the welfare system, led to serious and persistent difficulties in the labour market, or placed excessive pressure on public services, and if it is authorised by the Council of Ministers (that is, by the other EU member states). Once used, the brake will last for seven years. The restriction is graduated, so that EU migrants who arrive will have no in-work benefits immediately, but access will increase over the first four years.
  - The changes to child benefit mean that EU migrants with children living in other EU member states will no longer be eligible for child benefit paid at UK rates; instead they will receive benefits according to the conditions of the countries where the children live (where ‘conditions’ factor in both living standards and the child benefit rates in those countries). The changes will be phased in, so current claimants will be paid at the new rates in 2020. For the most part, this means that EU migrants with children abroad will receive lower rates of child benefit.
- **Restrictions on public security grounds:** EU rules state that free movement can be restricted on the grounds of public security (or public health or public policy). The deal clarifies the rules to give a more expansive interpretation of when such restrictions can be used. For instance, it is made clear that free movement rights can be restricted on preventative grounds, even if the individual concerned does not have a prior criminal conviction. The renegotiation agreement also states that the European Commission will re-examine the legislation on public security restrictions when the Citizens’ Directive is next revised.
- **Restrictions for non-EU migrants:** EU rules currently allow family members of EU migrants to be treated as EU citizens for the purposes of free movement law, even if they are non-EU migrants. This means that EU migrants who apply for their non-EU spouses to come to the UK are not subject to the same immigration rules that UK nationals with non-EU spouses face (such as the government’s minimum income requirements). The changes will amend this rule to ensure that the following two groups of non-EU migrants are not treated as EU citizens and are instead subject to UK immigration law: (i) non-EU migrants who had no prior lawful residence in the EU before marrying an EU citizen, and (ii) non-EU migrants who marry EU migrants only after those EU migrants have moved to the UK. These changes are primarily designed to prevent the use of ‘sham marriages’ to circumvent UK immigration rules (although in practice they are likely to have a broader effect on EU migrants with genuine marriages as well).

For the most part these reforms comprise legislative changes. They will therefore have to be proposed by the European Commission and approved by a qualified majority in the Council of Ministers and a majority in the European Parliament before they come into force. They may also be legally challenged in the European Court of Justice.

However, if and when they are implemented, it is unlikely they will have a significant impact on future flows. The measure which is primarily designed to limit future flows is the emergency brake on in-work benefits. However, evidence from the International Passenger Survey suggests that the primary motivation for EU

---

5 The changes apply across the EU, not just to the UK; however, for clarity, we have focused on the implications for EU migrants in the UK.

nationals moving to the UK is work. The majority of incoming EU immigrants (71 per cent in the 12 months to September 2015) say they are coming to the UK for work-related reasons (with over half of this number having a definite job to go to), and the majority of outgoing EU emigrants (54 per cent in the 12 months to September 2015) state work as the reason for moving on (ONS 2016b). There is also evidence that eastern European migrants are attracted to the UK because of its higher wages (Portes 2015a). For instance, the UK minimum wage is more than three times higher than the Polish equivalent (Eurostat 2016b).

There is little evidence that EU migrants come to the UK in order to access benefits (Portes 2015a).<sup>6</sup> Only an estimated 84,000 EEA migrant families claiming tax credits in 2013/14 had arrived in the UK or registered for a national insurance number in the previous four years, suggesting that a relatively small number of EU migrants will be affected by the so-called emergency brake (Nardelli et al 2016). Therefore, while the government's renegotiation on social security rules for EU migrants is likely to address some public concerns about the fairness of the current system of free movement, it is unlikely to have much impact on future EU migration flows.

Instead, the largest factor influencing EU migration flows in the near future is likely to continue to be the relative performance of different labour markets. If the southern European economies recover and job opportunities there increase, then all other things being equal, fewer migrants from southern Europe are likely to come to the UK, while more of those already in the UK might return home. However, this may not necessarily bring down net EU migration significantly, given the UK's relatively flexible labour market and the wage gap between the UK and many other EU countries (which will grow further when the new national living wage comes into effect – see Portes 2015b). Reducing net EU15 migration to its pre-crisis level would bring down total net EU migration by around 44,000 to around 128,000. All other things being equal, such a fall would still leave net EU migration, by itself, above the government's 100,000 per year target. Barring a major economic crisis in the UK, it is therefore likely that EU net migration will remain high in the near future.

In the long term, while accurate forecasting is extremely difficult, a number of factors may have a significant impact on future EU migration flows. First, it is possible over the long term that migration flows between EU countries will fall as central and eastern European economies grow and their ageing populations reduce the pool of people likely to migrate for work, who tend to be younger (Benton and Petrovic 2013: 21). Second, further EU enlargement could lead to a rise in EU migration to the UK, as new accession states in eastern Europe – and, further out, potentially Turkey as well – join the free movement area. It is expected that in this event the UK government would impose labour market controls for the seven-year transitional period, and may be able to negotiate further transitional measures in future accession treaties. But over time any further accessions – particularly of larger member states – could increase flows to the UK.

Finally, some have also noted the possibility of the large number of refugees in other EU countries becoming EU citizens and making use of their free movement rights to migrate to the UK in the future. While such a route is possible, it is very hard to determine whether it will have a significant impact on future flows, as this depends on a number of factors, such as the naturalisation rate of refugees (the percentage who acquire citizenship) and the future migration patterns of those refugees who become citizens of EU member states.

---

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, qualitative research with EU migrants in the UK suggests that many have inaccurate information about the welfare system, face language barriers when accessing services, and have strongly negative attitudes towards welfare abuse and dependency (SSAMIS 2016).

### *In the event of a Leave outcome*

If the UK is no longer a member of the EU, then there are many options available for how it handles EU migration.

The first key choice for the UK government after deciding to leave the EU will be whether to continue free movement between the UK and the EU. A number of experts believe that there is likely to be some trade-off (other things being equal) between, on one hand, the depth of the UK's new trade deal with the EU, and, on the other hand, whether the UK rejects freedom of movement (Giles 2016). Countries such as Norway (and other non-EU EEA countries) and Switzerland have freedom of movement as part of their trade deal with the EU.

If the UK retained free movement in its current form, then flows from other EU countries would be unlikely to be significantly affected by Brexit. It might, however, be possible to retain a version of free movement that allows the UK slightly more control over migration flows than at present. For example, EEA countries (including Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein) have the option of using 'safeguard measures' to limit EU migration in the case of 'serious economic, societal or environmental difficulties of a sectorial or a regional nature liable to persist'. Joining the EEA might thus allow the UK more power to temporarily limit flows in emergency situations than it is set to wield under the 'emergency brake' provisions. However, given that free movement of people is a central principle of the EEA Agreement, it seems unlikely that the UK would be able to use these safeguard measures in a way that significantly affected migration flows over the long term without threatening its membership of the EEA. Nevertheless, it is possible to imagine that the UK might be able to strike a new, bespoke deal with the EU that involved a different version of free movement from that which currently exists under the EEA Agreement. However, it is hard to see how any system that could credibly be called 'free movement' would lead to radically lower EU migration into the UK than if the UK remained in the EU.

On the other hand, if the UK were to opt out of free movement, then future flows would depend on the details of the new immigration system it adopts.

One option would be to apply the points-based system that currently applies to non-EU migrants to EU migrants as well. The government would be unlikely simply to restrict the number of EU migrants entering the UK at the border, given that this would most likely mean enforcing the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland – and in any case, Leave campaigners have advocated maintaining visa-free travel with the EU. Instead, the UK could impose visa requirements on EU nationals who want to work or study in the UK.

Under this scenario, in order to migrate to the UK to study, EU nationals would have to pay fees at the same rate as non-EU migrants, not UK nationals as they do now. In order to migrate to the UK to work, EU nationals would typically have to apply for a tier 2 visa, which in general would require a basic knowledge of English and a job offer paying £20,800 or more per annum at degree level or above or on the shortage occupation list. A large number of EU workers would therefore no longer be eligible under such a system: around 80 per cent of EU migrants in work who have arrived since 2004, according to one estimate (Migration Watch 2016). There is also currently an annual cap of 20,700 on the number of tier 2 (general) visas (not including intra-company transfers). The government might choose to raise this cap level in order to account for the new EU migrants coming through this route, on the grounds of economic need and public support for highly skilled migrants coming to the UK to fill skills gaps. The government might also choose to consider expanding the shortage occupation list – or potentially opening up a new route for low-skilled or seasonal migration – in order to support sectors that currently rely heavily on EU migrants.

For EU migrants currently in the country, it is likely that the government would decide that they would be free to continue to live and work legally in the UK, with the same rights to benefits and access to public services. This is likely because leading proponents of Brexit have supported such a measure. It would also increase the likelihood of maintaining the rights of British citizens in other EU countries.

If the government were to state that any EU migrant in the UK after Brexit could retain their free movement rights, this could result in a surge in flows of EU migrants trying to settle in the UK before the date of the UK leaving the EU. On the other hand, this could be avoided if the government made such a commitment retrospectively – so that only EU migrants living in the UK before the referendum would continue to have these rights.

It is clear that such a system would give the government greater control over EU migration to the UK. According to one estimate of the impact of one version of such a system (ibid), net EU migration would fall from around 180,000 to around 65,000.<sup>7</sup> Overall, all other things being equal, according to this estimate, total net migration to the UK would fall from around 323,000 to 208,000, significantly below current levels. However, it would still be twice the government's target of 100,000, which suggests that if, after leaving the EU, the UK government wanted to make further progress towards reaching its net migration target, then it would need to take further measures to restrict both EU and non-EU migration.

One final scenario is that the UK government, as part of its trade agreement with the EU, could opt for a migration system that gives preferential treatment to EU migrants without retaining EU free movement. For instance, the UK could opt out of free movement but still give EU migrants priority over others through the skilled workers visa route in situations where the limit on tier 2 visas is reached, or it could create a separate visa for EU migrants with more generous conditions than the current tier 2 visa. Such an arrangement would have a smaller impact on EU migration levels than a policy that treats EU and non-EU migrants equally.

### EU migrants in the UK labour market

EU migrants in the UK have high rates of employment.<sup>8</sup> The employment rate of migrants from EU15 countries (the 'old EU') is 75 per cent, while the employment rate of migrants from NMS13 countries (the A10 countries plus Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia) is 83 per cent. Both are higher than the employment rate of UK nationals (74 per cent) and non-EU migrants (62 per cent) (ONS 2016a). This compares favourably with Germany, the member state with the highest EU migrant inflows, where employment rates of EU migrants tend to be lower (Stirling 2015). This is likely to be due in part to the UK's comparatively flexible labour market.

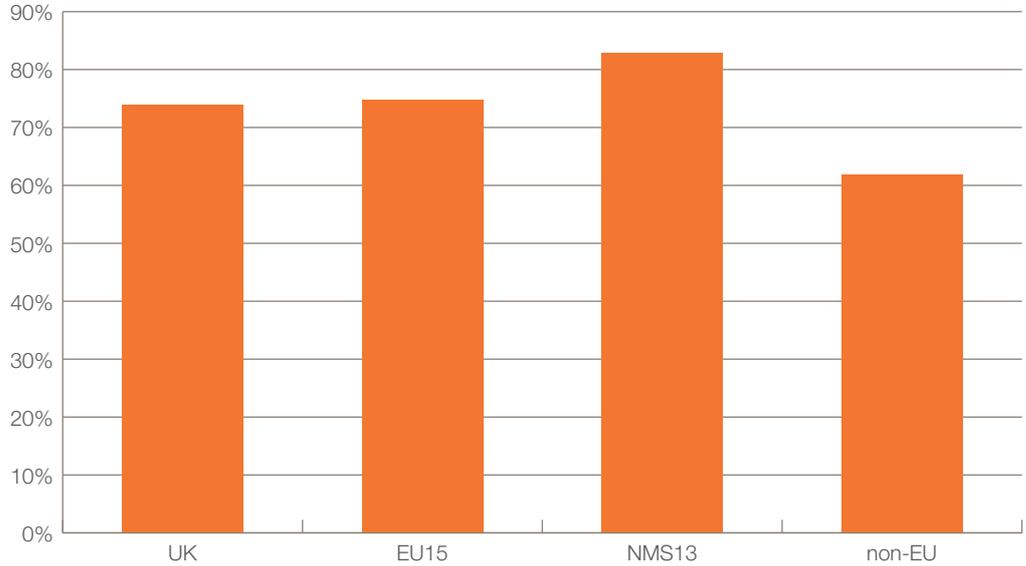
---

7 Under MigrationWatch's proposals, the UK would exit the free movement arrangements and EU migrants would only be allowed to work in the UK if they had work permits, which would be restricted to those with higher skilled jobs (or jobs where there are skills shortages). There would be no cap on students from the EU and no restrictions on family members of UK citizens or self-sufficient persons from the EU. Visa-free travel would exist for EU citizens for leisure or business visits.

8 Unless stated otherwise, the figures in the section are calculated from the Labour Force Survey 2015, Q1–Q4 (combining the four waves) (ONS 2016a).

**Figure 2.4**

EU migrants in the UK have a higher employment rate than UK nationals  
*Employment rates for migrants in the UK, by nationality*



Source: ONS 2016a

However, while EU migrants have high rates of economic activity in the UK, NMS13 migrants tend to congregate in certain low-skill sectors – notably in manufacturing, construction and hospitality. Indeed, some sectors have become increasingly reliant on migrant workers from central and eastern Europe (McCollum and Findlay 2012). The share of EU migrants in food and drink, for example, increased from 2 per cent to 27 per cent between 2005 and 2014 (Rolfe 2015), while the share of EEA migrant workers in manufacturing increased from 3 per cent in 2006 to 9 per cent in 2014, and from 4 per cent to 9 per cent in administration and support services (Migration Observatory 2016). In sectors such as food processing, hospitality and construction, EU migrants are employed in large numbers in part because they allow for increased flexibility and seasonal demands (Rolfe 2015).

Our analysis of Labour Force Survey data indicates that EU migrants are more likely than UK nationals to work in elementary occupations or in process, plant and machine operation. They are also more likely to be in temporary and agency work. In some sectors – notably food processing – there is evidence of exploitation of EU migrant workers, particularly from eastern Europe (MAC 2014). The median gross hourly pay of NMS13 workers is around £3 less than for UK nationals: £8.00 compared to £11.00 (excluding the self-employed) (ONS 2016a). In large part this is related to occupational differences, as EU migrants tend to work in occupations with low wages. But one recent study suggests that the wage gap at the lower end of the income distribution might occur in part because A8 migrants tend to be temporary and therefore more likely to accept lower wages (Rosso 2013). This raises the possibility that recent high levels of EU migration have contributed to sustaining low wages and poor employment conditions in some low-skilled sectors of the economy. One study has found that immigration has a small negative impact on wages in the semi/unskilled services sector, where a 10 percentage point rise in the proportion of immigrants leads to a 2 per cent fall in pay (Nickell and Saleheen 2015).

There is also a prevalence of ‘over-education’ among EU migrants. According to one study, an estimated 61 per cent of A8 migrants in the UK are over-educated for

the job they hold, compared to 26 per cent of UK nationals (Campbell 2013). IPPR's recent paper comparing migrant employment outcomes across Europe found that EU migrants tend to be relatively highly qualified: 59 per cent of EU15 migrants in the UK have tertiary qualifications, compared to 34 per cent of UK non-migrants. NMS13 migrants have significantly lower qualification levels than their EU15 counterparts: 31 per cent have tertiary qualifications, which is more similar to the educational profile of UK nationals (Stirling 2015).<sup>9</sup>

## Welfare and public services

As we discuss in the next section, a lot of public concern about freedom of movement is focused on EU migrants' access to benefits and the pressures on public services. Our previous briefing discussed access to benefits in depth (see Morris 2015), so here we simply highlight some of the key themes from the available evidence.

### Access to benefits

EU law guides how EU migrants should be treated by EU member states' welfare systems.<sup>10</sup> 'Social security' benefits – which include pensions, contributory unemployment benefits, sickness and disability benefits and family benefits – are regulated by the EU regulation on social security coordination. The regulation is guided by four principles: the equal treatment of citizens of EU member states; the ability to use periods of contribution in other member states in order to meet the host member state's requirements for claiming benefits; the prevention of overlapping benefits claims from multiple member states; and the ability in particular cases to export certain benefits from one's former country when moving around the EU. These principles apply to all EU migrants seeking social security benefits, including UK nationals that move to other EU countries.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, access to 'social assistance' benefits – defined by the European Court of Justice as 'all assistance schemes established by the public authorities ... to which recourse may be had by an individual who does not have resources sufficient to meet his own basic needs and those of his family' (CJEU 2015) and typically means-tested and non-contributory – is specified by the 2004 Citizens' Directive and recent ECJ case law, which allow for these benefits to be restricted for EU migrants for their first five years in the host member state if they are inactive and have sufficient resources so as not to place a burden on the country's social assistance system or if they are EU jobseekers.<sup>12</sup> This means that first-time EU jobseekers have no automatic right to 'social assistance' benefits. The UK's welfare system – which is less contributory than other member states – therefore allows restrictions for newly arrived EU jobseekers with respect to certain benefits, including housing benefit and the newly introduced universal credit. In recent years, the UK has also introduced a range of rules to partially limit access to other types of benefits for out-of-work migrants (including income-based jobseeker's allowance) and, if the proposed reforms in the UK–EU renegotiation become law, rules to partially limit access to in-work benefits as well.

---

9 The figures in this 2015 IPPR paper are calculated using 2012 EU Labour Force Survey data.

10 These rules also apply to migrants from EEA countries outside the EU.

11 See Regulation (EC) No 883/2004: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3Ac10521>

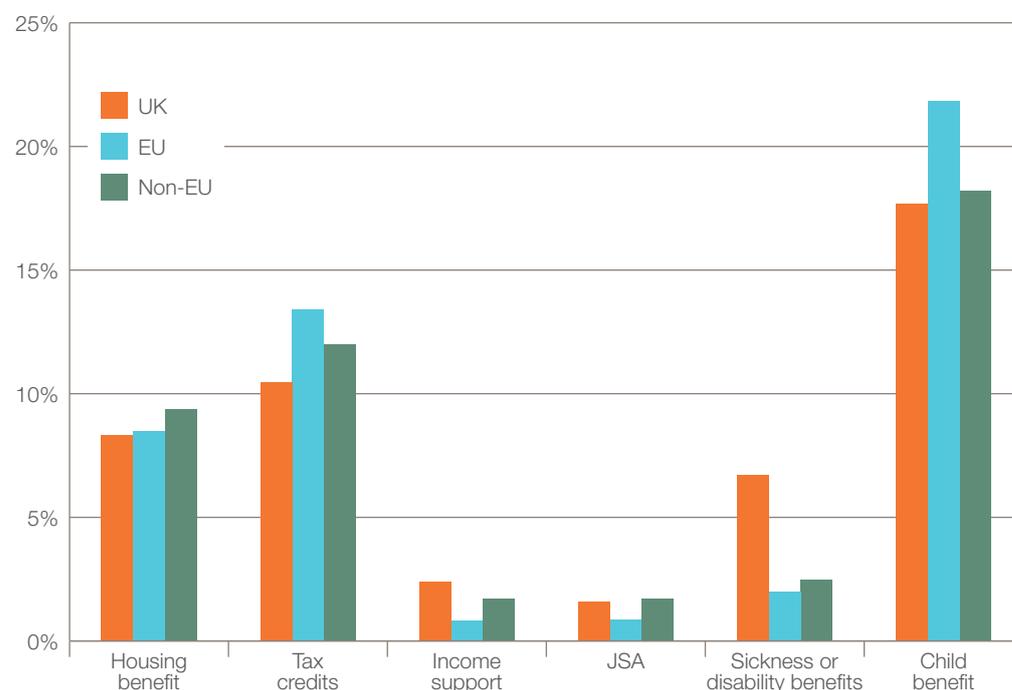
12 See Directive 2004/38/EC: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2004:158:0077:0123:en:PDF>. 'EU jobseekers' in this briefing refers to those who have a right to reside in the UK based solely on their status as a jobseeker. Some unemployed EU migrants therefore would not be included in this category. This includes EU migrants who become involuntarily unemployed and thereby retain their worker status for at least six months; those who have been in the UK for a continuous five-year period and thus have permanent residence; or those who have family members who are employed or self-employed in the UK.

These recent rule changes in the UK have led to a renewed focus on the extent to which EU migrants can and do access benefits. The evidence suggest that EU migrants are, on average, less likely to claim out-of-work benefits than UK nationals, but are more likely to claim tax credits. Administrative data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) indicates that working-age EU migrants are less likely to make use of key DWP-administered out-of-work benefits than UK nationals (Keen and Turner 2016, Portes 2015a).<sup>13</sup> The share of working age EU migrants claiming key out of work benefits (2.2%) is disproportionately low compared to their share in the working age UK population (5.9%, according to the Labour Force Survey 2015 Q1).

Our own analysis of the Labour Force Survey suggests that EU migrants are more likely to report claiming tax credits and child benefit than UK nationals, but less likely to report receiving jobseeker’s allowance and other out-of-work benefits (see figure 2.5), as well as pension benefits.<sup>14</sup> This higher take-up of tax credits is likely due to the tendency for EU migrants to be in low-paid work (as discussed in the previous section). Other research suggests that EU migrants tend to be more likely to access tax credits the longer they have been in the UK, once they have settled, become more familiar with the welfare system, and have children (Portes 2015a).

**Figure 2.5**

EU migrants are more likely than UK nationals to claim tax credits and child benefit, and less likely to claim key out-of-work benefits  
*Reported claim rates for selected UK benefits, by migrant group (UK national, EU migrant, non-EU migrant), 2015*



IPPR analysis based on ONS 2016a

13 The nationality of claimants is recorded in the process of registering for a national insurance number, so this analysis does not account for people who change their nationality after registering. Key out-of-work benefits include jobseeker’s allowance, income support, employment and support allowance, incapacity benefit, severe disablement allowance and carer’s allowance.

14 Labour Force Survey data typically undercounts benefit claimants; however, assuming that EU migrant benefit claimants are no more likely to be undercounted than UK nationals, or vice versa, it can be used to compare claimant rates (see for example Sumption and Allen 2015 for a similar analysis of the Labour Force Survey).

### **Key services: health**

The situation for public services is more complex, particularly as there is limited data on how EU migrants interact with key services, such as schools and the NHS. Because the UK's health system is free at the point of delivery – unlike the insurance-based systems that exist in most other EU member states – it is more easily accessible to EU migrants, who are treated the same as UK nationals. However, there is some indication of certain localised pressures on health services in some communities. For instance, a study of central and eastern European migrants living in Salford highlighted language barriers and migrants' limited knowledge of the UK health system as placing pressure on healthcare workers' time and resources (Scullion and Morris 2010).

At the same time, recent analysis by the Institute of Employment Studies and Eurofound suggests that the demographic profile of EU migrants – who are on average younger than UK nationals – means that they tend to not make heavy use of the NHS. The study estimated (based on EU migrants' age profile) that about £4.5 billion is spent on healthcare in the UK for EU migrants, which accounts for 3.3 per cent of UK health expenditure – which is lower than the proportion of EU migrants in the UK population, at roughly 4.1 per cent (Eurofound 2015).<sup>15</sup> (For EU10 migrants – from the A8 countries plus Romania and Bulgaria – the equivalent figure is about £1.9 billion, or 1.4 per cent of total health expenditure; again this is less than proportion of EU10 migrants in the UK population, at roughly 2.1 per cent.)

Similarly, a recent local authority level analysis of the Labour Force Survey and administrative hospital data by the University of Oxford found that an increased share of Polish immigrants tended to correspond to a reduction in waiting times for outpatients (and had no significant effect on waiting times for elective care and accident and emergency) (Giuntella et al 2015). On the other hand, increasing numbers of children are being born in the UK to EU migrants: 9 per cent of births in England and Wales in 2014 were to mothers from EU countries, significantly higher than the 5 per cent of EU-born migrants in the UK population (ONS 2015b).

These findings are reflected in the results of a study by the county council in Lincolnshire, an area with a considerable EU migrant population. Using administrative NHS data from 2011/12, this study found that A8 migrants were less likely than the overall Lincolnshire population to use most hospital services, other than maternity services (LCC 2013). An earlier study conducted in Cambridgeshire, comparing national insurance and GP registrations, found that only 1 in 4 eastern European migrants was registered with a GP (CCC 2008).

Of course, EU migrants also contribute to the NHS directly through the workforce: according to 2014 NHS Hospital & Community Health Service (HCHS) monthly workforce statistics, well over 40,000 EU migrants work in the NHS (HCHS 2014), including 6,248 Polish, 4,851 Spanish, 4,438 Portuguese, 2,807 Italian, 2,377 German and 2,148 Greek. According to the Migration Observatory, in autumn 2015, 12 per cent of nurses and midwives who had started within the previous two years were EU-born (Migration Observatory 2016).

### **Key services: education**

In education, there is evidence that in some areas new EU arrivals have placed pressures on schools, particularly in terms of school places and language demands (see for example BBC 2013). Evidence from the English National Pupil Database indicates that those whose first language is an eastern European language<sup>16</sup> have tended to perform less well at GCSE level, relative to those

---

15 The figure for the total population of EU migrants in the UK is slightly out of line with other figures in this briefing, as it is based on the authors' calculations from the 2012–2013 Annual Population Survey.

16 'Eastern European language speakers' includes those whose first language is recorded as Bulgarian, Czech, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian and Russian.

whose first language is English, but have shown considerable improvement over time: from a total of 49.4 per cent receiving five or more A\*–C GCSEs or equivalent in 2008/09 to 71.6 per cent in 2012/13 (compared to 69.8 per cent in 2008/09 and 83.0 per cent in 2012/13 for all pupils in England) (Tereshchenko 2014). Those who had arrived in the UK more than two years beforehand reached higher levels of educational attainment than those who had arrived more recently (ibid).

A separate analysis of the National Pupil Database suggests that, within the ‘White Other’ ethnic group, there are significant differences in performance at key stage 4 between different language speakers: pupils whose first language is Spanish and Italian tend to perform similarly to those whose first language is English and better than those whose first language is Polish, Portuguese, Lithuanian, Romanian, Slovak or Latvian (Strand et al 2015).<sup>17</sup> Finally, there is little evidence to suggest that EU migration has driven down standards: one LSE study using the National Pupil Database found no association between the proportion of non-native English speakers and the attainment of native English speakers, once demographic and school characteristics are controlled for. It also found evidence, using as a test case the influx of Polish students to Catholic schools over time to control for other factors, to suggest that eastern European migrants were in fact raising standards of native English speakers in mathematics in these schools, though not for reading and writing (Geay et al 2012).

### **Key services: housing**

Finally, with respect to housing, while EU migrants generally have a right to social housing through free movement rules, some categories of EU migrants – notably EU jobseekers – are ineligible (Wilson 2015). Our evidence from the Labour Force Survey indicates that EU migrants are roughly as likely to be using social housing as UK nationals (15.9 per cent for EU migrants versus 17.0 per cent for UK nationals) and are more likely to be privately renting.<sup>18</sup> However, this does not account for increased demand for social housing that occurs due to displacement in the private rental sector (McNeil 2015). EU migrants are roughly equally likely as UK nationals to be claiming housing benefit (see figure 2.4).

Moreover, the high inflow of EU migrants in recent years has contributed to increased demand at the lower end of the private rented sector. Some have suggested that migrants can displace UK nationals because they tend to tolerate poorer housing conditions (Glennie and Pennington 2013). This is reflected in evidence from Eurostat, which suggests that EU-born migrants are more than four times as likely to live in an overcrowded household than UK nationals (Eurostat 2016c).

### **Fiscal contributions**

Evidence on the overall fiscal contribution of recent EEA migrants suggests that their contribution is broadly neutral or slightly positive. One study by economists at UCL suggests that EEA migrants arriving in the UK since 2000 have been estimated to make a small positive fiscal contribution to the UK in the period 2001–2011, paying more in taxes than they take out in public expenditure (and making a consistently higher relative fiscal contribution than UK nationals).<sup>19</sup> According to this estimate, between 2001 and 2011, recent EEA migrants made in aggregate a net fiscal contribution of around £20 billion (Dustmann and Frattini 2014). For scale, this is less than 1 per cent of UK gross domestic product. The

---

17 The National Pupil Database does not break down educational attainment by nationality, which should be borne in mind when interpreting these figures.

18 Social housing includes those who state their landlord is a local authority or housing association. Our calculation includes all age-groups.

19 The results are weaker and more mixed for the subgroup of A10 migrants, but overall for the period 2001–2011 their fiscal contribution is also positive.

study does not provide estimates for the fiscal impacts of EEA migrants after 2011. Migration Watch has criticised this study on the basis that it overestimates revenues from recent EEA migration (among other things) and has recalculated the fiscal contribution of recent EEA migrants as -£0.25 billion (which rounds to -0.00% of GDP). Another estimate by the economist Robert Rowthorn, which made different adjustments to the original UCL study, suggests that the overall fiscal contribution of recent EEA migrants is either -£0.3 billion or +£9.5 billion, depending on how it is measured. As the -£0.3 billion also rounds to -0.00% of GDP, Rowthorn concludes that 'depending on the method of estimation, recent EEA migrants to the UK have either paid their way or generated a modest surplus' (Rowthorn 2015).

### 3.

## FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT: WHAT DO THE PUBLIC THINK?

Public attitudes to freedom of movement are complex. Nearly two-thirds of the UK public say they support the free movement of EU citizens to live, work, study and do business anywhere in the EU (Eurobarometer 2015). On the other hand, large numbers of people express considerable concerns over EU migration. According to a recent Ipsos MORI study, only 11 per cent believe that free movement should be kept in its current form, while 58 per cent believe there should be greater controls on free movement and 14 per cent believe there should be no right to free movement at all (Ipsos MORI 2015). This suggests that there is a significant group in the ‘middle’ of public opinion who want to see significant changes to free movement but do not necessarily want to end it altogether. As the thinktank British Future has argued, this middle bloc of voters will be crucial in the upcoming EU referendum (Katwala and Ballinger 2016). The main reasons given for imposing restrictions include pressures on public services (72 per cent of those who say they want more controls), people coming to claim benefits (59 per cent), and pressures on housing (55 per cent) (Ipsos MORI 2015). The same three issues are put forward as the main negative effects of EU immigration in a separate YouGov survey (YouGov 2014a).

However, opinions on free movement, as with attitudes to immigration more broadly, vary across different demographic groups, including age, social class and education level. With respect to age, young people (including 18–24-year-olds and, to a lesser extent, 25–39-year-olds) are less likely than their elders to believe that EU migration is bad for the country (YouGov 2014b) and are significantly more likely to be convinced by the argument that free movement gives British people the advantage of being able to live, work and retire in the rest of the EU (YouGov 2015a). For younger voters, then, concerns about EU migration are likely to be moderated by the benefits of the freedom to move to other EU countries.

### Our focus groups

For the purposes of this project, we are interested primarily in the views of those who do not have very firm views on the issue of freedom of movement. We conducted three sets of deliberative focus groups in three parts of the UK: Glasgow, Havering and Peterborough. We chose these three locations because we wanted a balance in our sample of:

- those living in an area that is currently leaning towards ‘Remain’ (Glasgow)
- those living in an area that is currently leaning towards ‘Leave’ (Havering)<sup>20</sup>
- those living in an area that has faced high levels of EU migration in recent years (Peterborough).

We chose to focus on over-40s in our sample because, as we note above, they are typically less convinced than younger participants about some of positive impacts of EU migration. They are also more likely to vote in the referendum (Sayers 2016). We also selected participants in the ‘middle’ of the debate on EU migration by asking a question to filter out those who held strong views in either direction.<sup>21</sup> In this way

---

20 See Hanretty and Vivyan 2014 for a constituency breakdown of EU attitudes.

21 See the annex for further details of the selection process and questionnaire.

we were able to hone in on a group of voters who are crucial for both Remain and Leave campaigners. In total we held eight sessions and spoke to 47 people across the three locations. These focus groups are not representative of the UK population and cannot be used alone to infer the British public's attitudes to free movement. However, our findings reflect the body of public opinion research on freedom of movement and provide a more detailed insight into public attitudes than is possible using only opinion polling.

### Discussing views on free movement

We began each of our deliberative focus groups by asking participants for their views on freedom of movement and what they perceived as its advantages and disadvantages. Across each of our three locations, participants spoke of both pros and cons of freedom of movement. However, in most of our sessions, concerns about freedom of movement dominated the conversation.

In many cases, while participants said they were comfortable with EU migrants coming to the UK to work, they felt that others were exploiting the welfare system and public services. Many framed their views in terms of the contribution of migrants to the UK. (This is in line with our previous research on public attitudes to migration – see IPPR 2014.)

*'A: I think it's different if they're coming in to work in the country and they've got skills to offer. But I think now it's getting to a situation where it's looking after them with our NHS and schooling...'*

*'B: And then all the benefits as well that they're entitled to when they come!'*  
Glasgow

*'I'm all for immigration and the movement of people provided people contribute. But if people are coming and they're not contributing, that's where I've got a particular problem with it.'*

Havering

Others argued that the principle of freedom of movement could only work if EU countries had similar standards of living, and that the current rules had led to imbalanced flows and pressures on housing and public services.

*'The issue is really that you're looking at a playing field that isn't level, though. Especially when you had the eastern European countries become part of the EU ... in a perfect world it's a great idea, freedom of movement is wonderful. In reality you're not using the same standards for each country. So clearly we are becoming – if you believe what you read in the papers, and I'm sure looking at the schools, the hospitals, the police service – completely overwhelmed with the amount of people who are coming here compared to probably what is happening over abroad. I don't know many people who go to Poland, or Lithuania, or wherever, from England, go and work, make a living, make their lives better, but clearly they do here.'*

Peterborough

Crucial to this argument was a concern about the reciprocity of the current system. Many of the participants believed that, despite the formal reciprocity of free movement arrangements, they were unfairly skewed to the UK's disadvantage because of its higher living standards and more advanced social security system and public services.

*'It does seem very one-way. As much as we know everyone does go and live in Spain because the sun shines there, they're not really going there mainly for work. I think the majority of people are probably retired people ... With all the eastern Europeans coming in – my problem is that we are good here, we've got a good system, everything works well, everyone wants to come and take part of it. And because we're in the EU they're allowed to. But there doesn't seem to be anything – we're not all rushing out to go to their countries. Why? Because they've joined the group of people, and they haven't got the same baseline as we have. So it's a little bit of an unfair team that we've all joined, I think.'*

Havering

Our participants expressed mixed views on how these concerns could be dealt with. Some advocated restrictions on benefits or on access to public services; others suggested that greater restrictions on EU migrants coming to the UK (say, in the form of quotas) were needed.

A number of participants also highlighted advantages of free movement, primarily in two respects. First, people spoke positively of the ability for UK nationals to live and work in other EU countries, often citing examples of family and friends abroad.

*'I think [freedom of movement's] a good thing ... I've got two sons out of uni, one of them's going to work in Berlin.'*

Glasgow

*'But I agree with being able to move round the EU, being able to work anywhere you choose to work, obviously with various checks and what have you, and I believe people should come here and work.'*

Peterborough

Second, our participants spoke of the benefits of skilled workers filling jobs in the UK. They were particularly positive about EU migrant workers themselves – many described them as hardworking and committed people.

*'We don't necessarily have the qualifications to do some of these jobs, but the Polish are genuinely hands-on workers ... and they are good workers, and honest people. So you can't categorise every European country as being "we've got too many, there's too much of an influx".'*

Peterborough

*'We've got two Lithuanians and Romanians [where I work], and they work really, really hard. They are genuinely lovely people, and they work, and they're paying their taxes. That's what I haven't got a problem with – I haven't got a problem with that.'*

Peterborough

Other participants also raised concerns about crime and security, wage undercutting, and the integration of EU migrants.

Concerns about personal security exemplified the belief that the current system lacks sensible controls.

*'I think it's good because you can learn about other cultures, other countries, and stuff like that, which is nice. But on the flip side, if we're having no visas and you can just go, who are we letting in? Rapists? Paedophiles? Armed robbers? We don't know who these people are, where they've come from, if they've got criminal records in their own country. It's just frightening. It's very, very scary.'*

Havering

Despite the wide recognition that many EU migrants worked hard, others suggested that they had had the effect of driving down wages in some sectors.

*'... we had a lovely wee lady in work who's a cleaner, and like most cleaners she works seven jobs. I remember I met her one morning and she was absolutely deflated because she said that, within a month, five of her jobs had gone because some Polish workers – lovely young girls – had come in and they'd cut them to the bone.'*

Glasgow

Finally, some participants noted that some EU migrants tended to live apart from other communities and found it difficult to communicate with them.

*'I go to child groups with my little girl, she's two, and a lot of them are Polish – I say Polish, eastern European, I don't know specifically ... And I can't always strike a conversation [because they don't speak English] ... You try, you interact, you get eye contact, you smile, but you can't have a conversation.'*

Peterborough

Overall, our participants in Glasgow were most positive about freedom of movement; participants in Havering were most negative. This reflects the available data on attitudes to EU and immigration, broken down to the parliamentary constituency level (Hanretty and Vivyan 2014). The data suggests that (central) London and Scotland tend to be the most pro-EU areas of the UK, while there are strong pockets of Euroscepticism in the east of England, the Midlands, Yorkshire, the North West and greater London. There is a strong correlation between attitudes to immigration and the EU.

## Discussing challenges for Remain and Leave

Our session in Peterborough took place shortly after the first draft of the UK–EU deal was published by Donald Tusk. Consequently, our focus in the Peterborough sessions turned to the challenges facing both Remain and Leave campaigners on the issue of freedom of movement. We set out three arguments posing challenges to the Remain position and three arguments posing challenges to the Leave position on EU migration policy, and asked our participants to evaluate each of these arguments.

In terms of challenges for Remain campaigners, we discussed two arguments that the UK's membership of the EU prevents the government from properly controlling EU migration and puts unsustainable pressures on public services. There was broad agreement with both of these points from our participants.

Our third and final argument concerned the refugee crisis. We presented the claim that if the UK stayed in the EU then the refugee crisis could lead to additional future migration pressures as refugees became EU citizens and used their free movement rights to move to the UK. This argument appeared to resonate less strongly with our participants: conversation typically shifted towards a debate about the number of refugees the UK should admit rather than one focused on the merits of freedom of movement, and a number of our participants expressed sympathy for taking in refugees. Some were highly discerning about the distinction between freedom of movement and the refugee crisis.

*'The thing is, the refugee crisis and the European movement are two different issues, really.'*

Peterborough

In terms of challenges for Leave campaigners, we discussed the argument that rejecting free movement would mean reduced access to the EU single market.

For most participants, the response was one of confusion: many were uncertain or unconvinced about the benefits of the single market.

*'I don't think any of us really know enough about the trade situation.'*

Peterborough

We then discussed the argument that Britain leaving the EU – even exiting free movement rules – would not lead to a significant reduction in migration levels. This was broadly met with hostility in each of our groups. Some participants responded that they were more concerned about having control over who could migrate to the UK rather than the exact numbers. Others who said that they wanted EU migration to fall were unconvinced by claims that EU migration levels would remain high in the event of the UK leaving the EU and opting out of free movement, countering that such arguments were hard to believe and defeatist.

*'That's the [argument] I find hardest to believe – that if you did stop freedom of movement we'd still have a problem with migration.'*

Peterborough

Similarly, our participants were for the most part not convinced by the argument that leaving the EU and restricting EU migration would endanger the rights of Britons living in other EU countries. Generally, participants felt that British people wouldn't be affected by the UK exiting the EU – and in particular thought that Britons currently living in the rest of the EU would be protected, just as EU migrants living in the UK would be safe from deportation. Others believed that restrictions on UK nationals' rights to live and work in other EU countries would be a price worth paying for restricting freedom of movement. According to some participants, tougher rules for Britons looking to move elsewhere in the EU would be fair, just as they would be for EU migrants coming to the UK:

*'If you choose to go and live in another country surely that's down to you ... You go by their rules, live by their rules, integrate with them, because that's where you want to be.'*

Peterborough



This briefing is designed to inform the debate on freedom of movement ahead of the EU referendum by summarising the key evidence and data on freedom of movement and exploring public attitudes to EU migration. Immigration is likely to play an important part in the decision of many voters and, whatever the outcome of the referendum, the result is almost certain to have an important impact on immigration policy in the years to come. It is therefore crucial that, as voters make their decision, the debate on immigration and free movement is an informed and constructive one.

## REFERENCES

- BBC (2013) 'Migration pressure fears for school places', 3 December 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-25207124>
- Benton M and Petrovic M (2013) *How free is free movement? Dynamics and drivers of mobility within the European Union*, Migration Policy Institute. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/MPIEurope-FreeMovement-Drivers.pdf>
- Cambridgeshire County Council [CCC] (2008) *The Demographic Impact of International Migration in Cambridgeshire*. <http://www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/population-and-demographics/migration-0>
- Campbell S (2013) 'Over-education among A8 migrants in the UK', May 2013, Department of Quantitative Social Science discussion paper, Institute of Education. <http://repec.ioe.ac.uk/REPEc/pdf/qsswp1309.pdf>
- ComRes (2016) 'ITV News – EU Referendum Survey', 15 February 2016. [http://www.comres.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ITV-News\\_EU-Referendum-Poll\\_15-February-2016.pdf](http://www.comres.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ITV-News_EU-Referendum-Poll_15-February-2016.pdf)
- Court of Justice of the European Union [CJEU] (2015) *Case C-67/14, Judgment in Jobcenter Berlin Neukölln v Nazifa, Sonita, Valentina and Valentino Alimanovic*. <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?docid=167661&doclang=EN>
- Curtice J (2016) *How deeply does Britain's Euroscepticism run?* NatCen Social Research. <http://whatukthinks.org/eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Analysis-paper-5-How-deeply-does-Britains-Euroscepticism-run.pdf>
- Department for Work and Pensions [DWP] (2016) 'National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals to December 2015', 25 February 2016. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-insurance-number-allocations-to-adult-overseas-nationals-to-december-2015>
- Dustmann C and Frattini T (2014) 'The fiscal effects of immigration to the UK', *Economic Journal*, 124(580): F593–643. <http://www.cream-migration.org/files/FiscalEJ.pdf>
- Eurobarometer (2015) 'Standard Eurobarometer 84: Public opinion in the European Union (Annex)', Autumn 2015. [http://open-data.europa.eu/en/data/dataset/S2098\\_84\\_3\\_STD84\\_ENG](http://open-data.europa.eu/en/data/dataset/S2098_84_3_STD84_ENG)
- Eurofound (2015) *Social dimension of intra-EU mobility: Impact on public services*, Publications Office of the European Union. [http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_publication/field\\_ef\\_document/ef1546en\\_3.pdf](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1546en_3.pdf)
- European Council (2015) 'European Council meeting (18 and 19 February 2016) – Conclusions'. [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2016/02/EUCO-Conclusions\\_pdf/](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2016/02/EUCO-Conclusions_pdf/)
- Eurostat (2015) 'Immigration and emigration by five year age group, sex and citizenship, 2013', data. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/MIGR\\_IMM1CTZ](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/MIGR_IMM1CTZ) and [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/MIGR\\_EMI1CTZ](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/MIGR_EMI1CTZ)
- Eurostat (2016a) 'Population on 1 January by five year age group, sex and citizenship, 2015', data. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/MIGR\\_POP1CTZ](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/MIGR_POP1CTZ)

- Eurostat (2016b) 'Monthly minimum wages – biannual data, 2016S1', data. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/EARN\\_MW\\_CUR](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/EARN_MW_CUR)
- Eurostat (2016c) 'Overcrowding rate by age, sex and broad group of country of birth (total population aged 18 and over), 2014', data. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/ilc\\_lvho16](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/ilc_lvho16)
- Geay C, McNally S and Telhaj S (2012) 'Non-Native Speakers Of English In The Classroom: What Are The Effects On Pupil Performance?' Centre for the Economics of Education, London School of Economics. <http://cee.lse.ac.uk/ceedps/ceedp137.pdf>
- Giles C (2016) 'What are the economic consequences of Brexit?' *Financial Times*, 22 February 2016. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/70d0bfd8-d1b3-11e5-831d-09f7778e7377.html>
- Giuntella O, Nicodemo C and Vargas Silva C (2015) 'The effects of immigration on NHS waiting times', IZA discussion paper no 9351. [http://www.nuffield.ox.ac.uk/economics/papers/2015/giunt\\_nic\\_silva2015.pdf](http://www.nuffield.ox.ac.uk/economics/papers/2015/giunt_nic_silva2015.pdf)
- Glennie A and Pennington J (2013) *In Transition: Romanian and Bulgarian migration to the UK*, IPPR. <http://www.ippr.org/publications/in-transition-romanian-and-bulgarian-migration-to-the-uk>
- Goodwin M and Milazzo C (2015) *Britain the European Union and the Referendum: What Drives Euroscepticism?*, Chatham House. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/britain-european-union-referendum-what-drives-euroscepticism>
- Hanretty C and Vivyan N (2014) 'Opinion Estimates for 632 British Constituencies', 23 November 2014. <http://constituencyopinion.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/estimates-longtab-neat.pdf>
- Hospital and Community Health Service [HCHS] (2014) 'Monthly workforce statistics – nationality by main staff group', data. <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/nhs-workforce-nationality>
- IPPR (2014) *A fair deal on migration for the UK*. <http://www.ippr.org/publications/a-fair-deal-on-migration-for-the-uk>
- Ipsos MORI (2015) 'EU Referendum: Controls on movement of EU citizens key issue for majority of Britons', 9 October 2015. <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3631/EU-Referendum-Controlsonmovement-of-EU-citizens-key-issue-for-majority-of-Britons.aspx>
- Katwala S and Ballinger S (2016) *How (not) to talk about Europe*, British Future. <http://www.britishfuture.org/articles/how-not-to-talk-about-europe/>
- Keen R and Turner R (2016) *Statistics on migrants and benefits*, House of Commons Library briefing paper CBP 7445. <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7445>
- Lincolnshire County Council [LCC] (2013) *Ensuring Inclusive Healthcare in Lincolnshire*. <http://www.research-lincs.org.uk/UI/Documents/Ensuring%20Inclusive%20Healthcare.pdf>
- McCollum D and Findlay A (2012) *East-Central European migration to the UK: policy issues and employment circumstances from the perspective of employers and recruitment agencies*, ESRC Centre for Population Change working paper no 20. [http://www.cpc.ac.uk/publications/cpc\\_working\\_papers/pdf/2012\\_WP20\\_East\\_Central\\_European\\_Migration\\_Perspective\\_of\\_Employers\\_McCollum\\_et\\_al.pdf](http://www.cpc.ac.uk/publications/cpc_working_papers/pdf/2012_WP20_East_Central_European_Migration_Perspective_of_Employers_McCollum_et_al.pdf)
- McNeil R (2015) *Migrants and Housing in the UK: Experiences and Impacts*, Migration Observatory. <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/migrants-and-housing-uk-experiences-and-impacts>

- Migration Observatory (2016) 'Project unclear: Uncertainty, Brexit and migration', 10 March 2016. <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/commentary/project-unclear-uncertainty-brexite-and-migration>
- Migration Watch UK (2016) *UK immigration policy outside the EU*, MW 371, 27 January 2016. <http://www.migrationwatchuk.org/briefing-paper/371>
- Migration Advisory Committee [MAC] (2014) *Migrants in low-skilled work: The growth of EU and non-EU labour in low-skilled jobs and its impact on the UK*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migrants-in-low-skilled-work>
- Morris M (2015) *Freedom of movement and welfare: A way out for the prime minister?* IPPR. <http://www.ippr.org/publications/freedom-of-movement-and-welfare-a-way-out-for-the-prime-minister>
- Nardelli A, Mason R and Pegg D (2016) 'Revealed: tax credit data exposes limits of Cameron's "emergency brake"', *Guardian*, 4 February 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/feb/04/revealed-tax-credit-data-exposes-limits-of-camerons-emergency-brake>
- Nickell S and Saleheen J (2015) 'The impact of immigration on occupational wages: evidence from Britain', Bank of England, staff working paper no 574, December 2015. <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/research/Documents/workingpapers/2015/swp574.pdf>
- Office for National Statistics [ONS] (2015a) 'Long-term International Migration into and out of the United Kingdom by Citizenship. Calendar Years 1991 to 2014', data.
- Office for National Statistics [ONS] (2015b) 'Parents' country of birth', data. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/datasets/parentscountryofbirth>
- Office for National Statistics [ONS] (2016a) 'Quarterly Labour Force Survey', Q1–Q4 2015, dataset, UK Data Service. <https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/series/?sn=2000026>
- Office for National Statistics [ONS] (2016b) 'Emigration from the UK' in *Migration Statistics Quarterly Report: February 2016*. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/migrationstatisticsquarterlyreport/february2016#emigration-from-the-uk>
- Office for National Statistics [ONS] (2016c) 'Provisional Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates', data, accessed February 2016. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration#datasets>
- Peers S (2016) 'The final UK renegotiation deal: immigration issues', EU Law Analysis blog, 20 February 2016. <http://eulawanalysis.blogspot.co.uk/2016/02/the-final-uk-renegotiation-deal.html>
- Portes J (2015a) 'Migrants, benefits and the UK's renegotiation: questions and answers', NIESR blog, 9 November 2015. <http://www.niesr.ac.uk/blog/migrants-benefits-and-uks-renegotiation-questions-and-answers-updated>
- Portes J (2015b) 'A budget for hard-working Poles', NIESR blog, 9 July 2015. <http://www.niesr.ac.uk/blog/budget-hard-working-poles>
- Rolfe H (2015) 'The impact of free movement on the labour market: case studies of construction, food processing and hospitality', presentation, NIESR, 8 December 2015. [http://www.niesr.ac.uk/event/103#.VtI9R\\_mLSig](http://www.niesr.ac.uk/event/103#.VtI9R_mLSig)
- Rosso A (2013) 'Skill Premia and Immigrant-Native Wage Gaps', Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies [LLAKES] research paper 45. <http://www.llakes.ac.uk/sites/llakes.ac.uk/files/45.%20Rosso.pdf>

- Rowthorn R (2015) *The costs and benefits of large-scale immigration*, Civitas. <http://www.civitas.org.uk/publications/largescaleimmigration/>
- Sayers F (2016) 'Polls suggest Brexit has (low) turnout on its side', *Guardian*, 26 February 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2016/feb/26/brexit-low-turnout-on-side-eu-referendum-older-vote>
- Scullion L and Morris G (2010) *Central and Eastern European migrant communities in Salford and Bury*, Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit, University of Salford. [https://www.salford.gov.uk/d/Final\\_Report\\_Salford\\_and\\_Bury\\_June\\_2010.pdf](https://www.salford.gov.uk/d/Final_Report_Salford_and_Bury_June_2010.pdf)
- Social Support and Migration in Scotland [SSAMIS] (2016) 'Interim report: January 2016'. [http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_445785\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_445785_en.pdf)
- Stirling A (2015) *Migrant employment outcomes in European labour markets*, IPPR. <http://www.ippr.org/publications/migrant-employment-outcomes-in-europeanlabour-markets>
- Strand S, Malmberg L and Hall J (2015) *English as an Additional Language (EAL) and educational achievement in England: An analysis of the National Pupil Database*, University of Oxford. [https://www.unboundphilanthropy.org/sites/default/files/EAL\\_and\\_educational\\_achievement2\\_0.pdf](https://www.unboundphilanthropy.org/sites/default/files/EAL_and_educational_achievement2_0.pdf)
- Sumption M and Allen W (2015) 'Election 2015 Briefing: Migration and Welfare Benefits', Migration Observatory. <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/election-2015-briefing-migration-and-welfare-benefits>
- Tereshchenko A (2014) *New migration, new challenges: Eastern European migrant pupils in English schools*, Department of Education and Professional Studies, King's College London. <http://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Research%20and%20Information/Documents/Tereshchenko%20%20Archer%20-EastEuroPupilsReport2014.pdf>
- United Nations Population Division [UNPD] (2015) 'International Migrant Stock: By Destination and Origin', data. <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml>
- Wilson W (2015) *EEA migrants: access to social housing (England)*, House of Commons Library briefing paper no 04737. <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN04737>
- YouGov (2014a) 'Voters across Europe back EU migrant curbs: survey results'. [http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus\\_uploads/document/dpm8pminx9/November\\_Eurotrack\\_EU\\_Website.pdf](http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/dpm8pminx9/November_Eurotrack_EU_Website.pdf)
- YouGov (2014b) 'YouGov / Sunday Times survey results'. [https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/vibey5ti4y/YG-Archive-Pol-Sunday-Times-results-281114.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/vibey5ti4y/YG-Archive-Pol-Sunday-Times-results-281114.pdf)
- YouGov (2015a) 'Analysis: EU referendum – the state of public opinion: survey results'. [https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/yllngwksjn/EuropeResults\\_18-Sep-2015\\_formatted.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/yllngwksjn/EuropeResults_18-Sep-2015_formatted.pdf)
- YouGov (2015b) 'EU referendum polling: is the 'Leave' number soft?: survey results'. [https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/1d6iphzuzx/EUResults\\_November2015-WebsiteV2.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/1d6iphzuzx/EUResults_November2015-WebsiteV2.pdf)

# ANNEX: NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

## Methodology for primary data analysis

For our primary data analysis in the data section of the report, we have appended together four datasets from the Quarterly Labour Force Survey: January–March 2015, April–May 2015, June–September 2015, and October–December 2015. We have selected EU migrants by using the ‘Nationality’ variable (NATOX7) to select all respondents who are nationals of EU countries other than the UK. Our analysis focused on those aged between 16 and 64.

## Selection process for deliberative focus groups

In order to screen for our focus groups, we screened for respondents who were aged 40 and older. We also asked respondents the following question:

*All citizens of EU countries have the right to live and work in other countries within the EU, including the UK. Do you think...*

- (a) These rules are definitely a good thing – EU citizens should have the right to live anywhere in the EU*
- (b) These rules are mostly good but there are some downsides – the EU should try to make changes but if it can't find agreement it should keep things as they are*
- (c) These rules are mostly bad but there are some benefits – the EU should try to make changes but if it can't find agreement it should get rid of the rules altogether*
- (d) These rules are definitely a bad thing – EU countries should scrap these rules and decide for themselves who to let in*
- (e) Don't know*

We then screened for respondents who answered either (b), (c) or (e).

In total, after the selection process, we spoke to 18 participants in Glasgow (split into two groups), 16 participants in Havering (split into three groups), and 13 participants in Peterborough (split into three groups).