



# Global Brit

## Making the most of the British diaspora

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Tim Finch with Holly Andrew and Maria Latorre

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DEMOCRACY & CULTURE

MIGRATION

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# Global Brit: Making the most of the British diaspora

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# About the authors

**Tim Finch** oversaw the management of the project and wrote the final report. Tim is head of migration at ippr and director of strategic communications. Before joining ippr, he worked for the BBC, and then the Refugee Council as director of communications.

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# About the research team

This report is based on a major international research project undertaken by ippr in 2009. As well as research in the UK, we conducted case study research in Bulgaria, Dubai, India, Spain and the United States. The following people worked on the research and gave substantial input to the final report.

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# Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Consulate Services Directorate which funded this research – in particular to Despo Michael, the former head of the Strategy Team in the Directorate, who gave us much help and feedback throughout the project, and to Julian Braithwaite, Director of Consular Services. Many other consular officials, both in London and in various consulates abroad, agreed to be interviewed and were very helpful with our research.

We are also grateful to the consular, embassy and High Commission officials from the many other countries who we spoke to in London and elsewhere who gave us valuable insights into how other countries engage with their emigrant populations.

In the course of our research in the UK and abroad we were also helped by many other stakeholders and officials, from NGOs, business networks and other organisations. We would like to express our gratitude to them for their time, their interest in the project and their insights and ideas.

In particular we would like to thank all those individual Britons in our case study countries who gave up their time to be interviewed and who came up with most of the best ideas for making the most of the British diaspora.

In the latter stages of the project we had more opportunities to meet, learn from and exchange information with a number of experts and academics working on diaspora and emigrant issues. We would like to thank in particular Robin Cohen, Nick Van Hear and Alan Gamlen at Oxford University, Michaela Benson at Bristol University, Sonia Plaza at the World Bank and Kingsley Aikens at The Ireland Funds.

We would also like to thank our ippr colleagues (past and present) who gave helpful advice on this project and the report as it progressed – in particular Danny Sriskandarajah, Guy Lodge, Kate Stanley and Sarah Mulley. Georgina Kyriacou edited the report.

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# Executive summary

The importance of migration in the modern world has famously led to the late 20th and early 21st centuries being dubbed the ‘Age of Migration’ (Castles and Miller 2009). Such are the movements of people that many governments find that huge numbers of their nationals live not within the boundaries of the state, but in other countries. However, home states retain some key responsibilities for their citizens overseas. In addition to looking after them at times of need or crisis, more and more governments have recognised that these citizens represent a great asset. But for this asset to be supported and mobilised effectively, governments need to be able to engage with their overseas populations in a coherent and strategic way.

This is where the idea of seeing emigrants as a ‘diaspora’ becomes useful. There are very lively ongoing discussions in academic and policy circles as to what constitutes a diaspora. In using the term ‘British diaspora’ in this report we are referring to the total population of British nationals living overseas (that is, every Brit abroad who is not a tourist or travelling for business). We think the British population overseas has the following characteristics which qualify them as a diaspora:

- They are a clearly identifiable and self-identifying national group
- They have a sense of empathy and connection with other Britons in their country of residence and in other countries overseas
- They retain an attachment to the UK and an interest in its affairs
- They demonstrate at least some ‘diasporic consciousness’, through setting up British clubs or business networks
- They mobilise collectively or show a willingness to be mobilised.

The last factor above is important to this report. Most diaspora activity (among the British or any other nationality) involves self-mobilisation – and that is as it should be. But many governments these days are trying to engage actively with and to support their diaspora communities overseas to serve home state interests. The UK government is taking a growing interest in diaspora engagement (with the devolved Scottish government in the vanguard). This is to be welcomed, but we argue that it is important that any engagement strategy works in the British national interest, in the interests of British emigrant communities themselves, and – crucially – in the interests of wider global goals. This might sound rather grandiose, but we think that the British diaspora, one of the biggest, most diverse and talented in the world, genuinely can be a force for good in international affairs and that the UK government should orientate its diaspora engagement strategy to promote this outcome.

## Main findings

In one of ippr's best known reports, *Brits Abroad* (2006), we showed that there were more than 5.5 million British nationals living overseas permanently. Our analysis of the latest available figures shows that number has increased a little to 5.6 million – with around another half a million living abroad for part of the year.

However, we can now see that the boom in British emigration from 2000 onwards peaked in 2007 – when it was running at 200,000 a year – and since then it has dropped quite dramatically (by around a third). The latest estimates show that in the year to September 2009, British emigration was some 134,000 – a 23 per cent drop on the previous year and the lowest level since 2001 (ONS May 2010).

While there are communities of more than 1,000 Britons in more than 100 countries around the globe, the big expat populations are in Australia (more than a million), Spain, the United States, Canada and France. In some countries, the British community has grown substantially in recent years, including in:

- China – where our estimates suggest it has grown by 30 per cent since our 2006 study
- United Arab Emirates – where it has grown by 20 per cent in a similar period.

These increases probably reflect there being more job opportunities in those locations, although Dubai has since experienced a well-documented and dramatic downturn in employment. Other changes in patterns of Brits living abroad include:

- Second home ownership grew by nearly 20 per cent per year in the immediate years before the recession – with Spain and France the favoured locations, but other European countries gaining ground.
- By 2007 more households owned a second home overseas than a second home in England.
- An increasing number of British pensioners are living abroad – 9.2 per cent in 2009, up from 7.6 per cent in 2000 (although the increase has slowed recently, probably because of the economic downturn).

British emigrants tend to be moving abroad primarily to work – 55 per cent in 2008. They also tend to be younger, more highly educated and in higher earning jobs than the general British-born population. Latest figures show that emigration among professionals and the highly skilled has been slowing recently, with greater numbers returning home – but the UK is still experiencing 'brain drain'. There are advantages, however, as the UK received about £4.5 billion in remittances from abroad in 2006 – which represents 0.3 per cent of GDP.

Most Britons leaving the UK are doing so for the first time – in 2006, first-time emigration reached 80 per cent. Many also stay overseas for relatively short periods, with more than half of Britons returning in 2008 having been away for only one to four years.



## **Main findings from case study countries**

As well as analysing available data sources to see the scale and nature of British emigration, we carried out extensive life history interviews with British emigrants in five countries that have experienced significant, but diverse, inflows of Brits – **Bulgaria, India, Spain, United Arab Emirates (Dubai) and the United States**. We also interviewed people such as UK consular officials, UK network organisers, the editors of expat newspapers and NGO officials. This helped us build up a detailed picture of the experiences of British emigrants – their successes and difficulties, and their needs and aspirations. The main focus of our research was the extent of their integration into their country of residence and their continuing attachment to the UK.

The popular idea that Britons emigrate because they think the UK is a terrible place to live is not borne out by the evidence. In fact, most Britons who emigrate are moving to take up positive economic opportunities overseas or to enjoy a different lifestyle, not because of negative experiences at home. They tend not to do much in the way of preparation before they leave but although more preparation would be wise for some, it is only the minority who find themselves in real trouble: many Brits abroad are adventurers and risk takers, who thrive on the challenge of adapting to a new environment.

The extent to which they integrate successfully into their new country of residence varies considerably. Those who tend to integrate successfully:

- work for local companies
- have family or friends locally
- engage in community activities
- speak the local language.

Those who tend to integrate less successfully:

- are retired or work for British or multi-national companies
- have limited family and friends locally
- live in enclaves
- have poor language skills.

Perhaps even more important to successful integration is an emigrant's outlook. Those who are positive, entrepreneurial and looking to broaden their horizons do well. Those who take a safety-first approach and are living overseas primarily because they can enjoy a better standard of living in a warmer climate have a more limited experience.

We found that integration among British emigrants is greater in the US and Bulgaria than in Dubai and Spain, while the picture was mixed in India.

Even emigrants who have lived for many years abroad, or who feel they have committed themselves wholly to a new life in a new country, often maintain significant links and attachments to the UK. Most have family in the UK, travel back frequently, and, very

strikingly, use new forms of communication, like email, social networking sites and Skype, to keep in almost constant contact. These virtual links enable a scattered and diverse collection of people to feel part of an 'imagined' national community.

The British media, particularly the BBC, is very important to emigrants, who maintain a lively interest in UK affairs (almost all of our interviewees followed UK news online). While not all British emigrants are entirely positive about modern Britain, they tend to be rather proud that the British media (particularly the BBC) tells them what is happening in the old country, 'warts and all' – and contrast this approach with the media in their places of residence.

However, being interested in UK affairs does not extend, by and large, to wanting to influence British politics. Despite the fact that millions of emigrants have the right to vote in general elections, levels of voting are very low – only some 14,000 overseas Britons had registered to vote in the 2010 general election by the end of 2009.

Business networks, churches, charitable groups, book groups and a shared interest in sport, particularly traditional British sports, help British emigrants to socialise with each other and retain links with the UK. However, most emigrants were fairly pragmatic about 'home', not articulating nostalgic or sentimental notions of it, but designating it practically as where they currently live.

We found that emigrants are varied in their understanding of 'Britishness' and their attachment to it, with attitudes ranging from 'matter of fact' Britishness – 'that's what it says on my passport' – to expressions of strong pride in being British (or English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish). We also met people who had so-called 'hyphenated identities' – describing themselves as British Asian, for example. In keeping with the findings of previous research, we did meet some Britons abroad who had a fairly negative view of contemporary Britain and felt they had 'escaped' from the UK, but they nonetheless demonstrated very British identities. Very few of our interviewees rejected the British label completely and many see their British identity as positive in some way. This leads us to conclude that the notion of a British diaspora, conceptualised as a national population, dispersed overseas, that maintains some sense of trans-national identity and homeland orientation, is viable, even if emigrants themselves do not use such terminology or demonstrate much diasporic consciousness.

We found considerable enthusiasm among British emigrants for greater interaction with the UK government, albeit on their own terms. However, current engagement by the home state with the diaspora is, by international standards, limited – even though significant strides have been taken in recent years.

A lot of effort has been put into registering emigrants on the LOCATE database as a first step to greater engagement, but it is still proving difficult to convince Brits abroad of the benefits of signing up. The UK government does provide a good level of information and support services to expatriate communities in such areas as passport renewal, signposting

and advice. Campaigns such as ‘Know Before You Go’ provide comprehensive advice on living abroad, including legal and cultural differences in some countries. In these areas, the UK government is already doing an admirable job. It is also true that emigrants can have unrealistic expectations of the help that UK missions overseas can provide. To overcome this, more could be done in the way of outreach – going beyond leaflets, online information and media campaigns towards greater face-to-face interaction with British communities. Mobilising the diaspora as form of ‘soft power’ that could promote British interests is under-developed compared with other countries – although within Britain, the devolved administration in Scotland has become increasingly active in its diaspora engagement. Incidentally, we see no reason why broader engagement with the British diaspora, led by the UK government, should cut across or undermine diaspora engagement at the level of the constituent nations of the UK. Indeed, properly coordinated, such engagement at different levels could be complementary and mutually reinforcing.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The UK government needs to reconceptualise its approach to engaging with British emigrants. The good work that is already being done seems to us to be mainly tactical rather than strategic; a more coherent and joined-up approach would bring benefits both to emigrants and to the UK. In particular, the British government could be more ambitious and forward-thinking in its approach to the diaspora as an asset.

We believe that a significant proportion of the British diaspora can be categorised as ‘progressive global’ Britons, who have a dynamic international outlook, are already active in their local communities in many different ways and are interested in agendas around economic development and innovation, equality and human rights, global justice and sustainability, which the last Labour government espoused as foreign policy aims and which the new Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government may well take up. The focus of renewed diaspora engagement should therefore be to leverage the enthusiasm and commitment of this group in supporting these activities. Such a process would have a number of elements:

- Moving beyond a narrow focus on assisting and protecting British citizens
- Moving beyond ‘banging the drum’ for British business and encouraging loyalty to the ‘old country’
- Moving towards seeing British emigrants as capable and successful agents with whom it is possible to forge partnerships to promote shared goals
- Moving towards mobilising the diaspora in pursuit of long-term progressive and sustainable global goals.

Of course, not all Brits abroad would want to be partners in such a strategy, and the basic services of support, advice and documentation need to be maintained and continually developed. In fact, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has already taken significant steps to modernise and improve mainstream consular services. It is a world

leader in providing online and other information in supporting emigrants to be well prepared for life overseas and to avoid situations where they could put themselves in trouble or danger.

Beyond the broad change of mindset and approach outlined above, we have a number of recommendations aimed not just at the FCO but also at the wider UK government. Many other departments of government have key responsibilities in this area – while non-governmental organisations can also play a useful role (as some, such as Age UK, are already doing).

- In order to encourage Britons to register with the LOCATE database, a more meaningful and proactive outreach programme to engage with diaspora communities and existing diaspora networks needs to come first.
- A priority of the UK government should be to take simple and practical steps to encourage and support the integration of newly arrived emigrants into local communities.
- Low cost schemes to encourage and support civic activism by British diaspora communities should also be considered. These could take the form of small grants for innovative projects or awards and recognition schemes.
- The UK government should consider ways to grant formal recognition of British ancestry and should make the process of renewing British citizenship or registering the birth of British children overseas more meaningful and symbolic.
- The UK government should simplify the process of registering and voting in UK and European elections, and allow emigrants to vote in elections for devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- The UK government should be proactive and innovative in marketing the best and safest ways for Britons abroad to send and invest their money in the UK.
- Embassies and consulates should be transformed into inclusive and accessible hubs for a much wider range of activities and a wider range of diaspora groups.
- All missions should have some ‘community space’ and be as open as possible to ordinary Britons.
- The FCO should further develop strategies that it has already pursued in countries like Spain to ‘embed’ officials from other government departments and from relevant NGOs so that emigrants can find advice (such as on pensions and business support) at ‘one stop shops’.
- Learning from initiatives such as Global Scot and the New Zealand Kea network, the UK government should look to build a strong, worldwide ‘Global British’ network, first and foremost to support the diaspora in its activities but with the added benefit of promoting the UK.
- The FCO should establish a cross-departmental unit, with strong links to outside bodies, that has a specific remit to look at policy and practice on emigration and

diaspora affairs.

- The UK government should coordinate its diaspora engagement with that of constituent nations (and perhaps, in time, English regions with strong identities) to maximise the mutual benefits.
- A key segment of diaspora engagement should be maintaining strong contact and providing support to British emigrants from minority ethnic backgrounds, some of whom will see emigration as a return 'home'. Such a strategy would link with the greater support we believe should be provided for what we have elsewhere called the 'secondary diaspora' of former immigrants to the UK, who maintain a significant attachment to the UK and are also an under-utilised asset for the UK.
- While we do not support the idea of the overseas British communities having seats in Parliament, there should be a clearly identified Minister with responsibility for diaspora affairs who should have a regular question time slot in the House of Commons.

Overall, our research has identified significant opportunities for the UK if it were to engage more proactively with its large, diverse and fascinating diaspora, and recognise it as a real asset. We think that too often Brits abroad are caricatured in this country in ways that are dated and unfair. Popular images of drunken and boorish Costa Brits or reactionary colonial types in India are a long way from the modern reality. In our research we met many Britons living abroad who, as well as working in a wide range of professions and industries, often at senior levels, are active and progressive in the community in their new countries of residence. Although many expats want to be independent and self-sufficient - and certainly do not look to the UK government to 'hold their hands' - there are ways in which they could be supported and encouraged, which would help them to pursue their own objectives. If there were a genuine partnership between the UK government and its diaspora, we think the payback for the 'home state' would be increased further still.

We do not propose grandiose diaspora engagement schemes, partly because they are most unlikely to be taken up over the next few years because of budget restrictions, but also because we do not think this is the right approach. Rather our proposals are more about changing mindsets and outlook, building on the activities and initiatives that British emigrants are already engaged in, and which are not necessarily expensive.

Brits abroad are not a burden or an embarrassment: they are in many ways the best of Britain and we should be proud and supportive of them.

# 1. Introduction

Any country that has 5.6 million of its citizens living overseas, another half a million spending part of the year abroad, and some 57 million with a link to the country through passport eligibility or ancestry, as Britain does, has a great potential asset in a globalised world.

Our estimates suggest that the size of the British diaspora is equivalent to 10 per cent of the total population of the United Kingdom; if the broader group is included, the diaspora amounts to 1 per cent of the total world population – and is one of the biggest diasporas of any nationality (see Chapter 3). Of course, more accurately, it is a multi-national diaspora, made up of English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish – and in some cases these national identifications are stronger than a generic British one. Moreover, the diaspora is also – increasingly – multi-ethnic, including British citizens who may have been born in the country they now reside in. We shall be exploring these aspects of the British diaspora throughout this report.

Given these numbers, the UK government should be taking a lot of interest in what is known as ‘diaspora engagement’. This report will show that it is starting to do so, that policy and practice in this area have made significant strides, but that there is a lot more that could be done. In particular, the UK government could learn from other countries that have been engaging with their diasporas for many years and from British citizens overseas who have a lot of interesting ideas as to how the Government could better support and mobilise them.

Understanding patterns of British (and indeed non-British) emigration<sup>1</sup> matters too. Central, devolved and local governments need to know the numbers – and types – of people leaving the UK in order to set economic policy and plan services. Government needs to monitor the skills profiles of emigrants so that it can minimise the negative impacts of ‘brain drain’ and set immigration policy to compensate for this outflow.

This report stems directly from a groundbreaking report that ippr published in 2006 called *Brits Abroad* (Sriskandarajah and Drew 2006). That research stimulated a lot of interest in a hitherto rather neglected aspect of migration flows in and out of the UK, and prompted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s Consular Section to commission this follow-up report.

In *Global Brit: Making the most of the British diaspora* we update our demographic and socioeconomic data about British communities who live overseas using the same

1. ippr’s recent report *Shall We Stay or Shall We Go* (Finch *et al* 2009) looked in detail at the impacts and policy implications of non-British emigration.

methodology as *Brits Abroad*. The report explores in some detail the lives of British nationals overseas in our five case study countries<sup>2</sup> particularly their integration into local communities and their links with the UK. We look too at how negative migration experiences might be minimised and at the help and support that the UK government offers to British nationals living abroad. Finally, we examine how the British diaspora might be better supported to achieve its own multifarious aims, and mobilised to promote the interests of the UK overseas. We look at the record of other countries, particularly those which are similar to the UK and which have achieved some success in diaspora engagement (including, from within the union, Scotland, which is ahead of the rest of the UK in this regard [Rutherford 2009]).

The report challenges some of the lazy and rather offensive assumptions that still exist about the nature and outlook of British emigrants. In our research we found British emigrants to be generally hard working, outward-looking people, internationalist in spirit, with a lively interest in the countries they lived in, but also a strong attachment to the UK. Popular images of Britons abroad are often very unfair and out of date, but they persist and perhaps contribute to a sense in parts of government – until recently at least – that engagement with the diaspora is only about helping emigrants to keep out of trouble. Many other countries have a much more positive view of their citizens abroad – and in this report we will show that there is a lot that can be learnt from the strategies of other governments.

We hope the report will add to understanding of UK nationals living overseas, will be a useful addition to the growing literature in this field, and will inform all levels of government about emigration and diaspora engagement.

### **The notion of the British diaspora**

Using the very term ‘diaspora’ to refer to British nationals living abroad will probably seem strange to many. The historical origins of the word (which meant ‘scattering’ in Ancient Greece) link it to the dispersal of a national group (most famously, the Jews) and thus it has tended to be associated in the popular mind with expulsion or with people forced to emigrate from their homeland because of dire circumstances.

Of course, in previous centuries, Britons did emigrate in large numbers, particularly to the colonies, either as refugees or as forced economic migrants (Martin 2004). An earlier British diaspora was also created by the large numbers of Britons, of all classes, who were servants of Empire (Cohen 2008). Others have seen the British as one of the global ‘tribes’ who have long seized international commercial opportunities overseas (Kotkin 1992).

More recent British emigration – particularly since the Second World War and concomitant independence for the countries which made up the Empire – has been associated with dynamic, adventurous and often relatively prosperous individuals taking up exciting personal opportunities overseas. In the 1960s and 70s, most emigration involved long-

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2. Bulgaria, India, Spain, UAE (specifically Dubai) and the United States.

term settlement abroad – often in countries of the ‘Old’ Commonwealth, such as Canada or Australia. Since the 1980s there has been greater emigration by Britons into the European Union – a significant proportion of which is not traditional economic migration, but is better characterised as ‘lifestyle’ or ‘retirement’ migration. Other emigrants have taken up new employment opportunities created by increased globalisation and the opening up of new economies. Much of this emigration is relatively short term (these emigrants are, in the academic jargon, ‘sojourners’ rather than ‘settlers’) and in some cases it is seasonal – with people living abroad for only part of the year.

Outside academic circles, there has been little discourse around the notion of conceptualising this large number of diverse British emigrants as a single coherent ‘diaspora’. Emigrants have been seen – and have seen themselves – more as individual ‘Brits abroad’; or, if they have citizenship of their country of residence, ‘dual-nationals’; or in some cases as ‘global’ or ‘international’ citizens’ (see Chapters 4 and 6). Of course British emigrants clustered in certain places have often formed tight bonds with each other, creating their own ‘home from home’ communities, sometimes isolating themselves from local communities in the process. The classic example is of course the British on the Costa del Sol (O’Reilly 2000). But there has been little in the way of exchange – political, economic, social or cultural – between spatially separated British emigrant communities; some theorists (Van Hear 1998) would regard this kind of exchange as a key feature of any meaningful diaspora.

Certainly none of the Britons we interviewed used the term diaspora in their conversations with us. Moreover, many individual emigrants resist the idea of being ‘lumped’ together in this way – and our research suggests that may be particularly true of Britons overseas who prefer to stress their singularity. (Though, as we will see, constituent nationalities such as the Scottish may feel rather differently.)

If we take Cohen’s typology of classic diasporas it is not easy to see where the notion of a modern British diaspora fits. He identifies five types:

- **Victim diasporas** – those formed by exilic movements (such as by the Jews and the Armenians)
- **Labour diasporas** – those formed by mass economic migration (such as by the Indians and Turks)
- **Imperial diasporas** – those established by people serving and maintaining colonial empires (for example the British and the French in the 19th and early to mid 20th centuries)
- **Trade diasporas** – those created by people opening up trade routes (such as by Chinese and Lebanese merchants)
- **Deterritorilised diasporas** – those formed by post-colonial chain migration, (such as the Caribbean diaspora). This also includes religious (Muslim) and cultural (Roma) diasporas. (Cohen 2008: 18)



Over the last couple of decades there has been a lively conversation among diaspora scholars about how a diaspora can be identified (Safran 1991, Tololyan 1991), what its essential features or criteria are (Butler 2001, Van Hear 1998), how notions of diaspora fit with other concepts such as ‘trans-nationality’ (Brubaker 2005, Gamlen 2006, Vertovec 2009)<sup>3</sup> and whether the term is now so ubiquitous that it has been emptied of any value (Cohen 2008). It is rather good fun disputing all this – but we will resist the temptation to wade in too deep, restricting ourselves to the contention that enough of the generally accepted criteria of a diaspora – dispersion, group identity, interaction, homeland orientation, persistence over generations – apply to British emigrants as a group.

Faced bluntly with the question *What makes the British population overseas a diaspora?*, we would venture the following in response:

- They are a clearly identifiable and self-identifying national group.
- They have a sense of empathy and connection with other Britons in their country of residence and in other countries overseas, as well as Britons in the UK.
- They retain an attachment to the UK and an interest in its affairs.
- They demonstrate at least some ‘diasporic consciousness’ – for example through setting up British clubs or business networks.
- They mobilise collectively or show a willingness to be mobilised.

We might also add that the concept of ‘diaspora’ has certainly helped other governments to see their citizens abroad as a cohesive community that can be mobilised and utilised as a national asset. So, with all the caveats outlined above, we believe it is useful to think of Brits abroad, in all their variety, as a ‘diaspora’, if only as a way of conceptualising how the UK government can better serve them, engage with them and maximise mutual advantage from them.

In our concluding chapter (Chapter 6) we return to this subject and consider in more detail how the British diaspora could be conceptualised, while conceding that such a diverse set of individuals or collection of communities certainly cannot be engaged in any single way, however it is conceptualised. Like all nations, the British are only the British because they in some way ‘imagine’ themselves to be a national community. They do not connect in any concrete way but only through ‘reverberation’ (Anderson 1991: 77). But this imagining has an incredibly strong hold on modern man, even in an era of increased globalisation, and we argue that Britons abroad, however international their outlook or negative their view of contemporary Britain or attachment to a constituent nation, identify themselves essentially as part of this community. Certainly it is rare to find any other identity among British emigrants that is stronger.

The other part of the notion of the ‘British diaspora’ that is clearly contentious is the ‘British’ bit. For some years now, there has been considerable debate in political, policy

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For useful summaries of these academic debates see Samers 2010, Castles and Miller 2009 and Van Hear (1998).

and academic circles about British identity – a debate that was enlivened by Gordon Brown in a famous speech in 2006. A peculiar aspect of the British identity, of course, is that the UK is a fundamentally multi-national entity, constructed, as it is, from the union of proud and distinct nations that share the same isles. Moreover, the UK's ethnic profile has been much changed since the Second World War by successive waves of immigration from a wide range of countries. We recognise therefore that not all UK nationals who live overseas will define themselves as British; indeed that many will make much more of their English, Irish, Scottish or Welsh identity – or identify with other ethnic groups. Moreover, as we have already pointed out, the devolved governments and administrations of the nations of the UK are important players in engagement strategies.

Finally, we need to define the scope of the British diaspora. British nationals who hold full rights of abode in the UK are the prime subjects of our research. Their numbers include those who have settled abroad, those who divide their time between the UK and another country, those who are temporary or seasonal emigrants, and those who are returning in increasing numbers to the country of their birth but who are nonetheless British nationals.

In addition to British nationals who hold full rights of abode in the UK, there are those who do not possess these rights, but may claim some attachments to the country.<sup>4</sup> Other overseas nationals may feel they belong to the British diaspora through ancestry or colonial history, yet possess no formal citizenship or settlement rights.

Given all of the above, we acknowledge that for most, the 'British diaspora' will probably amount to little more than a useful 'catch-all' term. But the concept does have some real power and is particularly useful in allowing governments to frame policy responses. In taking this approach we agree with Alan Gamlen that:

*Just as it is meaningful to draw a ring around the heterogeneous set of territorially-based institutions and practices and call it 'the state', it is meaningful to draw a ring around the heterogeneous set of extra-territorial individuals and groups impacted by the state, calling it 'the diaspora' (Gamlen 2008a: 2).*

## Outline of the report

- Following this Introduction, in Chapter 2 we set out our research methodology.
- Chapter 3 draws on analysis of quantitative data and outlines the scale and nature of the British diaspora.
- Chapter 4 looks in some detail at the diverse experiences of UK nationals living overseas. It draws heavily on our fieldwork in five countries: Bulgaria, India, Spain, United Arab Emirates (specifically Dubai), and the United States.

4. These are: 1) Overseas nationals with indefinite leave to remain in the UK who have left before applying for UK nationality. 2) Stateless persons with British travel documents. 3) Categories of British citizenship that do not give a right of abode in the UK. These include British Overseas Territories Citizens, British Overseas Citizens, British Subjects, British Nationals (Overseas) and British Protected Persons. Many of these categories apply to a small (and decreasing) number of people, but in 2007 there were 3.44 million British Nationals (Overseas) created through the Hong Kong Act 1985. 4) Commonwealth nationals with at least one British grandparent who may be eligible for a UK Ancestry visa.

- In Chapter 5 we look at the ways in which the UK government and others are currently engaging with the British diaspora.
- Finally, in Chapter 6 we look at ideas for making more of the British diaspora. As well considering general ideas for greater engagement, we make particular suggestions for how the Consular Services might enhance their work in this area.

## 2. Research questions and methodology

Through our research we set out to answer the following sets of questions.

- **What is the scale and nature of the British diaspora?** What is its demographic and socioeconomic profile and how has it changed in the years since our 2006 report? We also touch on how might it change in the next few years (given the global downturn).
- **What is life like for British emigrants in different countries?** In particular, how well do British emigrants integrate into their new countries of residence? On the other hand, what links do they maintain with the UK and to what extent do they feel an attachment to the country?
- **What is the current range of UK consular (and other UK government) services and what demands are being put on them?** What use do British nationals overseas make of the overseas missions and institutions of the UK government and what expectations do they have of it? What are the strengths and weaknesses of current practice?
- **How might all parts of the UK Government better engage with the diaspora so that it can be utilised as a national asset?** What can the UK learn from other countries in this area? Should the UK be trying to reconceptualise its thinking on the diaspora and engagement with it – and if so, how? How could the ‘consular idea’ be redefined in the light of the above?

These research questions informed our research methodology, which comprised a literature review, an analysis of population datasets, key informant interviews and case study research about and with the British community in Bulgaria, Dubai, India, Spain and the United States. We also carried out a number of interviews with diplomats and officials from other countries about the extent of their links with emigrants and the nature of their diaspora engagement strategies. We should mention as well that we benefited from a number of discussions with academic experts on this subject.

### **Estimating the size of the UK population that lives overseas**

We set out to estimate the number and distribution of UK nationals living abroad in 2008, using the same methodology that we used for *ipp’s Brits Abroad* report in 2006. We drew on several empirical sources, some of which have incomplete coverage and varying degrees of reliability. We outline these sources of data and describe our methodology below.

We have reliable estimates of the total UK-born or UK national populations for only a small number of countries. This data usually takes the form of a census or a survey of a sample of the total population, such as the US Current Population Survey, which is then sized up to allow us to make an overall estimate. Census data is usually available in

countries with large British populations, although even the best censuses are likely to be underestimates. In some cases, too, the census is out of date, and there may have been significant growth in the population of UK nationals since census day.

Where robust and official time series data (either census or population surveys) does exist, we have, where necessary, updated it in line with previous rates of growth or decline so as to give a more realistic estimate of the number of UK nationals living overseas in 2008. In Spain, France and Portugal, where there is evidence of high rates of non-registration, we have further increased the official numbers of UK nationals in line with estimates of non-registration and other data.

Where there is accurate official data but trends cannot be calculated, we have generally extrapolated a 2008 estimate of UK nationals living permanently overseas using the growth rate in the number of UK state pensioners in that country (see below).

Where official data is absent, inaccurate or out of date and where UK state pensions data is too small or inappropriate to use, we have generally used an estimate of the number of UK passports issued during the last 10 years. The use of passports data is complicated by factors such as passports being issued overseas to replace those lost or stolen, and the fact that some dual nationals choose to use another country's passport. In some cases where we think that the passport issuing rates are anomalous, we have used local consular estimates. Finally, in some countries where passport data was not available, we have used consular estimates (for example, in high-risk countries where UK nationals are more likely to register with their local British mission).

### **Britons living overseas temporarily**

A sub-set of UK nationals who live overseas do so for part of the year only, often through second home ownership – so-called 'swallows'. As this form of seasonal or temporary migration raises specific public policy challenges, we set out to enumerate this group. To calculate the number of additional UK nationals who live overseas for part of the year, we have categorised selected countries into four main groups (far-flung settlement countries, Mediterranean retirement countries, European and other work destinations, and far-flung tourist destinations) and then multiplied our estimates of UK nationals living permanently overseas by factors based on survey data and other evidence.

### **Particular nationalities within the large British diaspora**

As the focus of this report on is on UK nationals as a whole and the UK government's engagement with them, we did not set out to enumerate in detail the composition of the British diaspora by national group – that is English, Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh. But we have cited some other attempts to enumerate these specific populations and included information from the Australian, Canadian and American censuses that shows the national breakdown in those countries.

### **Pensions data**

Significant numbers of UK nationals who live overseas are retirement migrants. It is

important that government is aware of the scale and nature of migration by older British nationals, as there are specific policy implications associated with this group, so we set out to map this population by using the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) pensions' data. However, it is likely that the DWP data underestimates this population, because not all older Britons living abroad will have informed the Department of their overseas residence. On the other hand, the data may overestimate the number of UK nationals living abroad as some foreign nationals are also entitled to UK state pensions (for example, some Yemeni women whose husbands worked in the UK during the 1960s).

### **Estimating the migration flows of UK nationals**

In addition to the stock of UK nationals who live overseas, we also wanted to measure the flows of UK nationals around the world. At present data on migration flows into and from the UK, including the migration of British citizens, is collated from the International Passenger Survey (IPS). This surveys a sample of passengers entering and leaving the UK by air, sea and the Channel Tunnel and collects data on their citizenship, destination and purpose of their journey. However, until recently the IPS sample was small and this limited its usefulness as a tool for estimating migration to or from particular countries or regions, or analysing particular social groups. Consequently, we are only able to draw some broad trends from the IPS at present. (In future, improved IPS data should lead to a more nuanced understanding of emigration.)

Additionally, IPS defines a migrant as someone moving abroad for a period of at least 12 months (Office for National Statistics 2007). This definition does not capture the movement of 'swallows' who live abroad for part of the year and who may be a significant group in countries such as Spain and France.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) enables us to profile British emigrants who have returned to the UK from overseas. The LFS is a quarterly survey of households that aims to provide information on the labour market, and forms part of the Annual Population Survey. It includes questions about country of birth, nationality and country of residence 12 months previously (the OYCRY variable). We took this variable as a proxy for a British immigrant and analysed it alongside other variables such as age, health status, housing tenure and income to profile British returnees.

### **Case studies**

The work also draws on five qualitative case studies, conducted in Bulgaria, India, Spain, Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and the United States. These countries were chosen to illustrate different aspects of emigration from the UK.

**Bulgaria** is a relatively new country of migration for UK nationals who have moved to exploit new business opportunities, or as lifestyle and retirement migrants. Our estimate (based on *Brits Abroad* methodology and considerably updated from official data) puts the British population in the country at some 18,000 with the largest community in the capital, Sofia. Outside the capital, the British population is more widely dispersed than in some countries and we were interested in how social networks in this new community

might develop. We interviewed migrants in Sofia, Varna, a city on the Black Sea, and Bansko, a small ski resort town.

An estimated 65,000 UK nationals live in the **United Arab Emirates**, although as many as 120,000 people may be entitled to a British passport. A history of significant British migration to the UAE dates back to the 1960s, with the scale of the flow increasing greatly in the last 20 years. Tax-free employment and a high standard of living are the prime drivers of British migration to the UAE – which boomed in recent years before the crash. The UK nationals who live there include significant populations of British Indians, Pakistanis and Somalis. The proximity to East Africa and South Asia is a factor that has attracted the latter groups, as is the presence of large non-British communities from India, Pakistan and Somalia.

We were interested in how UK nationals engaged with local communities, with each other, other expats and with British institutions in a country that is culturally very different from the UK. The economic situation that emigrants were facing – which was changing rapidly for the worse even as our research was taking place – was also of interest. All interviews took place in Dubai.

We estimate there are some 36,000 UK nationals live in **India** on a permanent basis. Consular estimates suggest that 35 per cent of UK nationals living in India are of Indian origin. Their numbers include a large proportion of retirement migrants who have returned to the country of their birth. This group is dispersed across urban and rural India, with the largest numbers living in the Punjab and Gujarat. (UK government estimates suggest 7,000 British pensioners live in Gujarat.) Seasonal migration is a lifestyle choice among older British Indians who may live for part of the year in India and part in the UK.

*There are about 16,000–18,000 people we call ‘swallows’ in India, Brits of Indian origin who come to spend time with their families. (UK Consular Official, Delhi, India)*

Among the non-Indian British community living in India, employment opportunities in the booming Indian economy have prompted much migration to the large cities – and there is also significant emigration by Britons to work with NGOs. There has also been some lifestyle migration to destinations such as Goa, where the consulate estimates there is small population of some 250 permanent British residents.

India was chosen as a case study as we were interested in how the UK government might better utilise the resources of highly-skilled and well networked emigrants in the country, as well as tapping into the growing dual-national community. For reasons of time and resources, all our interviews took place in Delhi.

An estimated 808,000 UK nationals live permanently in **Spain**, rising to above a million if part-time residents are included. We have uprated our estimates to take account of non-registration, but the population may still be under-numerated. The Consulate in Madrid estimates that 75 per cent of Brits do not register with the local authorities in Spain and

so are not entitled to use local services.

There are large demarcated British enclaves in Andalucia and Valenciana, particularly in the coastal areas of these two Autonomous Communities. There, UK nationals can find themselves cut off from local Spanish residents. Outside these enclaves, UK nationals are much less segregated.

UK nationals who have moved to Spain include both middle class and working class emigrants, as well as a high proportion of ex-Services personnel. Spain has a particularly high proportion of older migrants – around half are over 50 and some 14 per cent over 70 (according to the UK consulate in Madrid). We chose Spain as a case study because of the large size of the British diaspora and also because some UK nationals are perceived as a problem community that does not integrate. All our interviews took place in rural and urban locations on the Costa del Sol in Andalucia.

The **United States** was our final case study. An estimated 829,000 UK nationals live in the US on a permanent basis, although as many as 1,257,000 people may be entitled to a British passport as a consequence of much previous migration. Most British emigration to the United States is for economic or family reasons. High-skilled migration is a big element of economic movement, with Britons attracted to prestigious and high paying US companies and universities. UK nationals are dispersed across the United States with the largest concentrations living in California, New York City and Florida. In the latter state, consulate estimates suggest a British population of 400,000 people, many of whom have emigrated for lifestyle reasons.

We chose the US as a case study because we were interested in contrasting the integration experiences of migrants in an English-speaking country with those living in non-English-speaking countries. We were also interested in the experiences of UK nationals who had lived in the US for long periods of time whose attachments to the UK may be less strong. Our interviews took place in Florida, New York City, San Diego and rural Ohio.

In all, we undertook 65 detailed life history interviews with British emigrants – at least 10 in each location. (See details in Appendix A.) We also interviewed key informants and other experts working with the British diaspora. These included consular officials. Other stakeholders varied from country to country, but included people as varied as chaplains, bar owners, business group leaders, NGO officials and editors of expat newspapers. We also collated secondary sources about British communities in each of the five countries. The interviews and secondary sources were used to produce a summary report about each location which helped us to see common strands and so build up a broader picture for this, our final report.

In order to recruit emigrants for the life history interviews we used personal contacts, organisational contacts and sites of informal social association, such as bars and clubs. Contacts made in these places were used to assemble a database of potential interviewees



from which we selected a smaller purposive sample to interview. We attempted to ensure that our selection of interviewees was mixed in relation to gender, age, social class, ethnicity, reasons for migration and length of residency outside the UK – but inevitably we did not manage to reach quite such a wide a range of Britons as we might have hoped.

The life history interviews explored, in depth, the interviewees’ decision to migrate, the process of arrival and settling in, social relationships and local integration, and links with the UK – both informal and with government institutions. We also explored how interviewees’ experience and skills might be better mobilised in the UK’s national interest. In order to collect consistent data, we drafted an interview guide which was used as a prompt in each interview. We also gave interviewees some ‘open’ space to tell us what they thought mattered.

The interviews generally lasted between one and two hours and were recorded, then transcribed. In the report and in Appendix A we identify interviewees only by specifying their gender, the age range into which they slot, and their broad occupational category.

### **Key informant interviews in the UK**

We also conducted a number of key informant interviews in the UK. Through these we wanted to explore current thinking on services and engagement with diasporas, areas of good practice and ideas for the future. We interviewed officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and also representatives from overseas diplomatic missions of other countries. The countries covered were the United States, Australia, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, the Philippines, the United Arab Emirates (Dubai) and the United States

### **Reflections on the research methodology**

Review was built into the research process. As already noted, many countries do not record the country of birth or nationality of populations at frequent intervals, so we had to estimate the size of the UK diaspora in many countries by triangulating other data sources. The International Passenger Survey is far from adequate tool to assess the scale and nature of the emigration of UK nationals, although a greater sample size will, in future, help researchers.

We were concerned that data collected from life history interviews might be unreliable. Nostalgia for a time or place and the influence of collective versions of the past might also distort interview responses (O’Farrell 1979, Perks and Thomson 2006). Interviewees with limited contact with the UK might have overtly negative or, on the other hand, rosy nostalgic memories of the UK. We approached these issues by ensuring that researchers fully probed people’s memories.

While we attempted to recruit a wide range of interviewees who represented the diversity within the British diaspora, we were limited by budgets in our ability to travel to conduct interviews. For example, our India case study drew only from interviews conducted in Delhi and did not sample returnees of Indian origin who had moved to rural India. The

interviews in Spain took place along the Costa del Sol, which has a fairly distinctive (and much caricatured) British community. It has not seen much settlement by professional, middle class UK nationals, for instance. We acknowledge these shortcomings in our report.

# 3. The size and nature of the British diaspora

## Key points

- We estimate that some 5.6 million UK nationals were living overseas in 2008.
- Another half a million were living abroad for part of the year.
- Australia is the favourite country of emigration for UK nationals, with a British population of more than a million.
- The other countries in the top five are Spain, the United States, Canada, and France.
- Our estimates of the size of the British community in the United Arab Emirates suggest it grew rapidly – up 20 per cent (though our research and other reports suggest that return migration is taking place because of the economic crisis).
- Our figures suggest that the population of British nationals in China (including Hong Kong) has increased by 30 per cent since our last estimates – albeit from a relatively low base.
- The British population in the US also appears to be booming – up 20 per cent on our last estimates.
- An increasing number of Brits abroad are immigrants to the UK who have become British nationals and then returned to their country of origin, some permanently (often for retirement) or for part of the year – so-called ‘swallows’.
- Second home ownership has grown significantly, with big annual increases in 2004/5 (18.4 per cent) and 2006/7 (17.5 per cent).
- Spain and France remain the most favoured locations for a second home, followed by Portugal and Italy, but there was a large increase (43 per cent between 2004 and 2007) in Britons owning homes in other European countries.
- By 2007 second home ownership abroad had overtaken second home ownership in the UK.
- Net British emigration accelerated significantly in the years from 2000, peaking in 2007.
- Since 2007, the annual rate of emigration has dropped by a third.
- Between 60 and 80 per cent of Britons moving abroad are first-time emigrants.
- An estimated 85,000 UK nationals migrated back to the UK in 2008.
- Most emigrants are of young to mid working age (25–44), though there has been an increase in emigration among older working people.
- British emigrants tend to be more highly educated and have higher-level skills than the general UK population.

- In 2008, 36 per cent of emigrants had professional or managerial positions prior to migration, while some 17 per cent were educated to tertiary level.
- The UK received US \$7,339 million (£4.5 billion) in remittances from overseas in 2006 – which represents 0.3 per cent of GDP.
- The UK ranked eighth in the world in terms of the amount of money remitted to the country in 2007.

Drawing from a range of quantitative datasets, this chapter looks at where UK nationals live and in what numbers, that is to say, the stock of British emigrants. It also profiles these different British overseas communities, highlighting particularly interesting aspects. In addition, the chapter examines recent flows of Britons to and from the UK and considers emerging trends. Finally, we look at the available evidence on the extent of remittances from the British diaspora. The chapter is intended to update and amplify the information on emigration patterns which ippr identified in the *Brits Abroad* report in 2006.

### **The worldwide stock of British emigrants**

Chapter 2 discussed some of the methodological challenges associated with estimating the stock of UK nationals living abroad. Since accurate and up-to-date data is only available in a small number of countries, we have, as mentioned, used a ‘triangulation’ method to estimate the stock.

Our estimates suggest that there were 5.6 million UK nationals living overseas in 2008. This rises to 6.1 million when those living abroad for part of the year are included (see Appendix C). These numbers are roughly the same as the calculations ippr made in 2005, when we estimated that there were 5.5 million UK nationals living abroad on a permanent or semi-permanent basis, rising to 6 million when seasonal migrants were included (Sriskandarajah and Drew 2006).<sup>5</sup>

If we broaden the category of ‘Brits abroad’ to include people eligible for British passports and those who can claim ancestry (based on consulate estimates and census data respectively) the size of the diaspora increases very significantly. In a number of countries, there are large populations who are entitled to a British passport as a consequence of the past migration of their forebears. For example, according to the 2006 Australian Census, 7.9 million Australian residents claimed British ancestry, while Canadian and US census data, also from 2006, show that 12.1 million Canadian residents and 28.6 US residents claimed British ancestry. There are also categories of British citizenship that do not have a right of abode in the UK (see Introduction). Many of these categories of citizenship were granted when the UK was a colonial power and so apply to small and ageing populations.

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Our estimate compares with one made by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2008 of 3.247 million.

Counting all these various cohorts, the British diaspora, by its broadest definition, could be said to number 56.9 million, or nearly 1 per cent of the world population. Though this number is very large, it is worth pointing out that other studies have put the figure as high as 200 million (Coleman and Salt 1992).

We touch on the role and potential of this broader (and more detached) diaspora later in this report, while acknowledging that people in this category are not really going to be the targets of any diaspora engagement strategy, given the tenuousness of their attachment to the UK.

### **The geographical spread of the British diaspora**

In the era from 1945 to 1980, most British emigrants moved to other Western European countries, to the US or to the countries of the old Commonwealth, such as Australia and Canada. More recently, the countries of destination have become more diverse and include:

- New states of the European Union, such as Bulgaria, which offer both economic and lifestyle opportunities.
- Emerging economies, both big and small, such as the United Arab Emirates, which acts as a business hub in the Middle East, and India, which has seen rapid growth since its economy was liberalised in the 1980s.
- Immigrant-producing countries, such as Pakistan and Jamaica, which have seen emigration from the UK in the last few years largely among people who were born in those countries, who have lived for some time in the UK and become British citizens, and who have then decided to return ‘home’, for retirement or other reasons.

Our new case study research has focused on some of these countries, as well as more traditional destinations.

However, analysis of datasets (first done for *Brits Abroad* and updated here) shows that there are communities of 1000 or more UK nationals living in almost every country in the world (see Appendix C). Table 3.1 shows the 10 countries where the largest resident populations of UK nationals reside. The first nine countries in this list are the same as in 2005; the new countries in at joint number 10, (replacing Cyprus) are the United Arab Emirates and Switzerland.

In most countries, there was not a notable change in the size of the British population between 2005 and 2008; in others changes may be explained by the availability of more recent data sources rather than a big in- or outflows. However, there are a few countries worth highlighting where the changes in estimated British populations may be significant. Both the United States and UAE saw an increase of 20 per cent, and in China the British emigrant community is up 30 per cent. In all cases, the most likely explanation is that Britons have been taking up economic opportunities – though the global downturn may have halted this trend.

**Table 3.1. Top 10 countries of residence of UK nationals\* living abroad in 2008 plus selected others**

	UK nationals permanently abroad	Including those who live abroad for part of the year	UK nationals permanently living abroad or living abroad for part of the year in 2005**
Australia	1,062,000	1,072,000	1,310,000
Spain	808,000	1,050,000	990,000
USA	829,000	838,000	685,000
Canada	608,000	614,000	609,000
France	253,000	330,000	261,000
Ireland	289,000	318,000	291,000
New Zealand	248,000	250,000	217,000
South Africa	219,000	222,000	214,000
Germany	97,000	107,000	115,000
UAE*	65,000	72,000	60,000
Switzerland**	66,000	72,000	45,000
China	47,000	47,000	36,000
India	36,000	53,000	32,000
Bulgaria	18,000	18,000	10,000

Source: Various sources and ippr calculations – See Appendix C for details. \* UAE and Switzerland are equal in 10th place. \*\*Figure comes from *Brits Abroad* (2006)

### Temporary/seasonal emigrants

In some countries a large proportion of Britons have emigrated for settlement or at least long-term residence. A large percentage of the British national populations in such countries as Australia, Canada and New Zealand fall into this category – some will have been living abroad for many decades. In our research, we found that a good number of the Britons we interviewed in the United States had emigrated many decades ago, some in childhood.

However because of factors such as globalisation, cheap air travel and the growth of new communications technology, more Britons are choosing to emigrate for shorter periods and are better categorised as temporary migrants or ‘sojourners’. We have not been able to establish from the data how many Britons abroad fall into this category, but our qualitative research with British emigrants suggests that in some countries (India and UAE

in particular among our five case study countries) a large majority of British emigrants do not tend to see their stay as long term. Many are working on short-term contracts or secondments, or classify themselves as ‘serial expats’ who have lived and worked in many other countries before their current country of residence and who envisage moving on again after a few years. (In the European context, these often highly educated and highly mobile professionals have been dubbed ‘Eurostars’ [Favell 2008]).

Even in countries where emigrants tended to suggest they have emigrated to settle (such as Spain and Bulgaria), there is some evidence that their stay may not end up being as permanent as they envisage. Previous research (see O’Reilly 2000 for example) and our own study of older returning British emigrants (Rutter and Andrew 2009) shows that changing economic and social circumstances can mean that a ‘dream retirement’ or new life in the sun can go sour – in which case return to the UK is sometimes the best – or only – option. O’Reilly has dubbed this syndrome the ‘myth of (no) return’ (O’Reilly 2000: 96).

In addition to those who emigrate for short periods, there are those who only live and work for part of the year in another country. Our calculations suggest that some half a million UK nationals are seasonal emigrants. In many cases these ‘swallows’, as they are sometimes called, are retirees or people of considerable prosperity who can afford to maintain homes in both the UK and another country and to move back and forth between them. We look at second home ownership in the next section; in addition to this particular category there is a small amount (by international standards) of seasonal migration for work. For example, the overseas tourism industry employs many young UK nationals at certain times of the year – and there are also employment opportunities in providing services to more established British communities. Some labour migrants work in two (or more) locations – one of which is the UK. There are also significant numbers of young Britons who study at foreign universities, particularly in the US, although we import many more students than we export.<sup>6</sup>

Although we think our overall data on seasonal migration is fairly robust, many countries find it difficult to enumerate these populations at the local level. UK nationals, particularly those who own second homes abroad, seem unwilling to register with authorities in some parts of the world, perhaps to avoid local taxation. In some EU countries, particularly Spain, the non-registration of seasonal (and other) emigrants is causing considerable resentment as it leads to overuse and underfunding of local public services. This is clearly an issue for the UK government. As one consular official in Spain told us:

*It is very difficult to get an exact figure but there is anything between 350,000 and 500,000 British residents living in the Andalucía region. Official figures from the padron [town hall] are around 200,000 Brits, but we know from our experience in Spain that usually only a third are registered so if you go on that it*

6. The total number of British students at American universities was ‘still less than 10,000’ in 2008 – though the number was increasing (Griffiths and Waite 2008, *The Times*).

*should be around 600,000. But you need to take into account the number of people that come here just for winter or for three or four months to a holiday home that they share with friends or family.*

## Second homes abroad

Much of seasonal migration is a consequence of second home ownership. As Table 3.2 shows that this has more than doubled in a decade – with particular spurts in 2004/5 and 2006/7. Indeed, as Figure 3.1 (overleaf) shows, by 2006/7 more English households owned a second home overseas than a second home in England – and a year later the figures were roughly equal (Communities and Local Government 2009). However, it is likely that the recession will have halted and even reversed the trend in rising second home ownership abroad.

**Table 3.2 English households owning a second home outside the UK, 1996–2007**

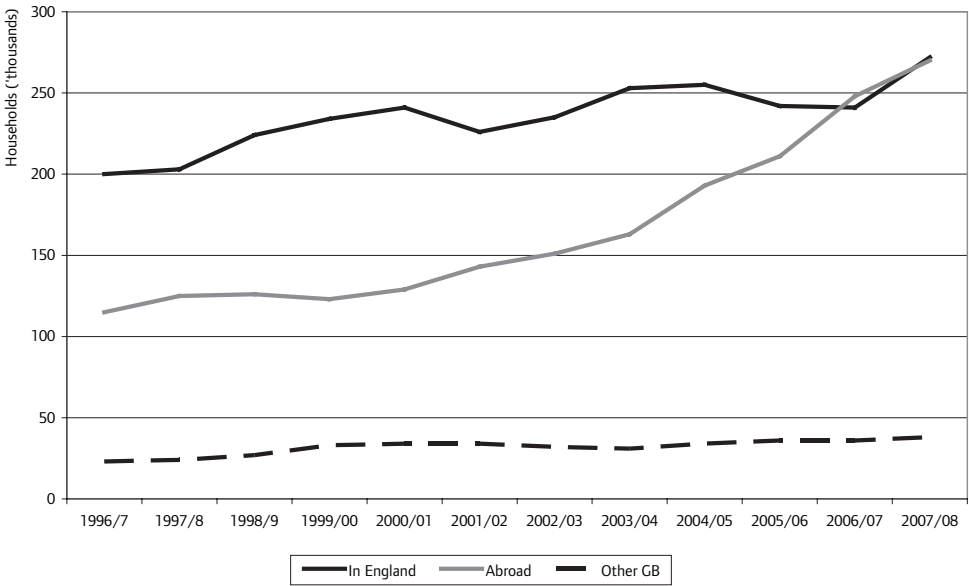
Year	Households	Annual increase (%)
1996/7	115,000	
1997/8	125,000	8.7
1998/9	126,000	0.8
1999/2000	123,000	-2.4
2000/1	129,000	4.9
2001/2	143,000	10.9
2002/3	151,000	5.6
2003/4	163,000	7.9
2004/5	193,000	18.4
2005/6	211,000	9.3
2006/7	248,000	17.5
2007/08	270,000	8.9

Source: Communities and Local Government (2009) (Reference available at: [www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1346249.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1346249.pdf))

Spain and France remain the most popular places to own a second home (between them they accounted for 53 per cent of total second home ownership by UK nationals overseas in 2008). However, second home ownership in ‘other European countries’ (that is countries other than France, Spain, Portugal and Italy) rose 43 per cent between 2004 and 2007. It appears that this is partly because of the expansion of the EU and because of recent weakening of sterling against the Euro, making countries outside the Euro zone more attractive. (We chose Bulgaria as a case study country for these reasons.)



Figure 3.1: Number of households in England with second homes, 1996–2008



Source: Communities and Local Government, Survey of English Housing 2009 (Reference available at: [www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1346249.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1346249.pdf))

Note: These figures are for households in England only.

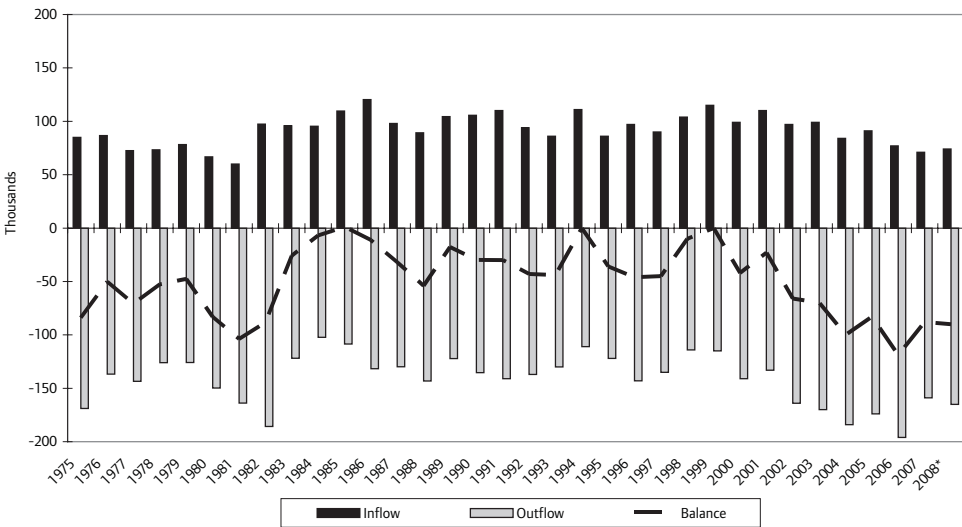
Although it might be expected that owning a second home outside Europe would be very much the preserve of the globe-trotting super-rich, the data suggests that this category accounts for more than a third of British second homes. One factor that may explain this is increasing numbers of immigrants to the UK increasing their personal wealth here and being able to afford to purchase another property ‘back home’ – in India the consulate in Delhi estimates that maybe some 16–18,000 Britons fall into this category. In some cases, they plan to retire there eventually. Our research also highlighted that there are pockets of relatively wealthy Britons, often retired, who own second homes in the United States – particularly in places like Florida which have a similar appeal to the Costas in Spain.

Of course, many Britons who emigrate temporarily maintain a house in the UK – many of the Britons we spoke to in Delhi and Dubai fell into this category. Often in these cases, emigrants are living in paid-for rented accommodation in their country of residence and continue to pay a mortgage on a UK property. Some saw this as their main ‘home’ to which they would eventually return but a higher number seemed to treat it as an investment or insurance policy.

## Flows of British migrants

As well as looking at the stock of British migrants overseas, it is also worth looking at the flows – both in and out (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 Migration of British nationals to and from the UK, 1975–2008



Source: International Passenger Survey and ippr calculations

## Outflows

Although Figure 3.2 shows that the balance between outflows and inflows changes a lot (and quite quickly) over the whole period of more than 30 years, net outflow has been much greater than the inflow. It also shows that net emigration accelerated dramatically in the years from 2000 (to reach a peak in 2006). In that year, some 200,000 Britons left the UK – one every three minutes! – the highest emigration rates since the Second World War. Three factors may account for the boom years of emigration:

- Increased prosperity in the UK (created by the long period of economic growth and the surge in house prices), enabling more Britons to move abroad to retire or to enjoy a better lifestyle
- More employment opportunities because of economic growth in the developed world and emerging economies, particularly because of the globalisation of the service sector, which has resulted in an increase in intra-company transfers
- Increased emigration by previous immigrants, who have acquired British citizenship and then re-migrated, either to their country of origin or a third country.

Recently there have been signs that British emigration is decreasing. The estimated figure for the year to September 2009 was 134,000, some 23 per cent lower than the previous year when the figure was 173,000, and down over 30 per cent on the high point of around 200,000 annually in late 2006/2007 (Office for National Statistics 2010). Previous figures showed that the ‘gross annual rate’ of British emigration – that is, the number of Brits emigrating per thousand of the UK population – dropped from 3.3 per thousand in 2005 to 2.7 per thousand in 2007. As already noted, it is often difficult to enumerate short-term migration flows and the data shown in Figure 3.2 do not capture the short-term flows of UK nationals who plan to leave or enter the UK for less than 12 months (Office for National Statistics 2007).

The majority of UK nationals emigrating from the UK are moving out of the country for the first time. Since 1991, first-time emigration has consistently accounted for 60 per cent or more of the total, and the trend has been upwards in recent years, reaching a peak of over 80 per cent in 2006.

### **Inflows**

An estimated 83,000 UK nationals migrated back to the UK in 2008 (according to the International Passenger Survey IPS) (and the most recent estimates suggest the inflow is increasing further).<sup>7</sup> More than half (56 per cent) of British ‘immigrants’ had been away for a relatively short period of between one and four years. Some 17 per cent had been away for more than 10 years, and the same percentage were immigrating to the UK for the first time. This group largely comprises the children of previous emigrants from the UK (Richards 2005).

Most UK nationals who migrate back to the UK are in the 25–44 age group, but data from the IPS suggest that 26 per cent of returnees are between 45 and 60–65 years and a further 10 per cent were over 65 years. ippr qualitative research on older Britons abroad (see Rutter and Andrew 2009) suggests that poor health and declining prosperity are causing some in this group to return to the UK.

### **Profiling the British diaspora**

Analysis of datasets such as the IPS enables some profiling of UK nationals who live overseas, by age, gender, occupation and qualifications. Clearly there is no such person as an ‘average Brit abroad’. Both within countries of emigration and between the different countries, the make-up of the British diaspora is highly varied.

### **Nationalities within the British diaspora**

Because the focus of this report is on the British diaspora as a whole and the role of the UK government in engaging with it, we have not attempted in any depth to break down the total population by constituent nationalities. In some cases, the census data in

7. The provisional IPS estimates show that in the year to September 2009 the number of British citizens immigrating long term to the UK was 92,000, ‘not statistically significantly different from the 80,000 in the year to September 2008’ (ONS 2010: 5).

countries of residence does not provide this level of detail anyway. However, recent Australian and Canadian censuses can give us some picture of the proportions of people identifying themselves as of English, Scottish or Welsh ancestry. (Although the Irish are identified, Northern Irish are not.)

**Table 3.3 Breakdown of population in Australia with British ancestry, 2006**

English	6,283,642
Scottish	1,501,204
Welsh	113,242

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2006

**Table 3.4 Breakdown of population in Canada with British ancestry, 2006**

English	5,202,890
Scottish	4,151,340
Welsh	413,855

Source: Statistics Canada, 2007

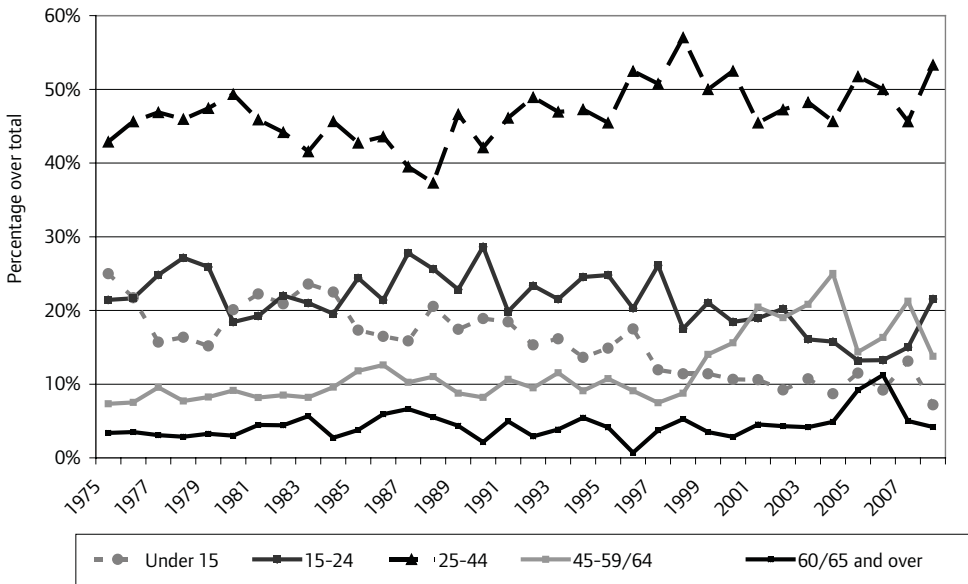
These figures come direct from the censuses and we have not attempted to re-estimate the populations using our own methodology. What they show, however, is that given the option people do identify with the constituent nations of the UK rather than (or as well as) Britain in general. In the case of Canada in particular (Australia less so) the proportion of people identifying as Scots is very high, suggesting that Scottish emigration is a significant component of overall British emigration. This, of course, chimes with history and national tradition, in which emigration is a very strong feature. (In the last few years, the Scottish and Irish governments have been engaging with each other on diaspora strategies because of the strong similarities between their histories of emigration.) A recent study estimated that more than 1.25 million native born Scots are now 'overseas' though nearly two thirds of them have only moved as far as England (Ancien *et al* 2009). Another report put the number of 'affinity Scots' worldwide as high as 40 million (Eirich and McLaren 2008).

Of course, the English make up the biggest element of overall British emigration because the English population is so much higher than that of the other nations. But Scottish (and to a lesser extent Welsh) emigration is an important phenomenon; moreover, Scots and Welsh emigrants are increasingly likely to identify with notions of Scottish or Welsh diasporas rather than a British diaspora. This clearly has implications for the UK government as well as the devolved administrations.

**Age**

While retirement migration from the UK has grown in recent years, UK nationals who emigrate tend to be people of young to mid working age (25–44) – though there has been a significant, if discontinuous, increase in the proportion in the older working group of 44-plus (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3. UK nationals emigrating from the UK by age, 1975–2008



Source: International Passenger Survey and ippr calculations

Of course, the age distribution varies considerably from country to country. A high proportion of UK nationals resident in countries of the old Commonwealth are over 50 (above 50 per cent in Australia, Canada and New Zealand). This is explained by waves of emigration that go back many years. The Britons living in these countries were mostly young when they arrived, but they have aged since. By contrast, the high proportion of older emigrants in Spain and Portugal (above 40 per cent) is a consequence of high rates of retirement migration (OECD Migration Database 2001). The number of UK nationals claiming a state retirement pension abroad has consistently increased in recent years. While 7.6 per cent of British pensioners lived overseas in 2000, this proportion rose to 8.8 per cent in 2005 and then to 9.2 per cent in 2009. Data on pension claims by country is given in Appendix C.

As we have mentioned previously, there is a growing trend of older emigration among British nationals of Indian origin to India (and indeed Pakistan) – and the same trend is happening in smaller ways in the countries of the Caribbean. However, most British emigration to the emerging economies like China is of younger people moving overseas to take up jobs. Similarly, in Japan and the Scandinavian countries, UK nationals are likely to have emigrated for work. Research also suggests that the British population who live in the UAE and Saudi Arabia tend to be young. They are often employed in sectors such as IT and financial services, as well as in project management and property.

### Pensioners

It is worth looking at pensioners as a distinct category because they often have particular needs, require different services from UK missions overseas and are an asset in a different

**Table 3.5. Top 10 countries of residence for British pensioners overseas, and annual rate of increase in numbers, 2005–August 2009 (thousands)**

Country of residence	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009*
Australia	239	242 1.3%	245 1.3%	248 1.2%	250 1.0%
Canada	153	155 1.2%	156 0.8%	158 1.4%	159 0.5%
USA	128	129 0.8%	131 1.8%	134 2.1%	137 1.9%
Ireland	101	103 2.3%	107 3.5%	110 2.7%	114 3.4%
Spain	71	77 8.9%	85 9.6%	91 7.3%	97 6.6%
New Zealand	46	47 3.0%	46 -1.2%	48 2.3%	49 2.8%
South Africa	37	37 0.7%	38 0.8%	38 1.6%	39 1.6%
Italy	33	34 3.0%	35 4.1%	36 1.7%	36 1.3%
France	32	36 12.0%	41 15.5%	46 11.5%	50 8.7%
Germany	31	32 3.2%	33 3.8%	34 2.6%	36 4.8%

\*Preliminary data to August 2009. Source: Department for Work and Pensions

way to working British emigrants. Although the largest proportion of British pensioners lives in Australia, followed by Canada, the United States and Ireland, the annual increases in these countries are significantly lower than in France and Spain where British pensioner populations are smaller but growing faster (though it seems the increase is slowing). As already mentioned, the growth was probably a consequence of the growth of second home ownership and retirement migration among Britons looking for ‘a place in the sun’. The recession may be denting these dreams now.

### Gender

Globally, approximately half (48 per cent) of all migration is by women, and this has been a stable trend since the 1960s (UNDP 2009). But this aggregate stability disguises gender biases in particular flows: for example emigration from the Philippines is largely female, whereas migration from Mexico is largely male (Kofmann 2004). Rather strikingly, UK emigration estimates show that more men than women go overseas: in 2007 the gender ratio was 61:39 male to female. We can only speculate as to why there should be such a marked discrepancy, though it is perhaps related to the fact that men continue to have greater employment prospects overseas than women. In our own research it was not obvious that men were more likely to be emigrants than women, though it is still true that emigration among couples results from the man getting a job abroad and the female partner accompanying him as a ‘trailing spouse’ – see Chapter 4.

### Educational and occupational profiles

Understanding the educational and occupational profile of UK nationals who emigrate is a key issue for policymakers. Of particular importance is emigration among the highly skilled, as they are increasingly important for economic development in high-tech and knowledge-based economies. Of course, immigration by high-skilled foreign nationals can help to compensate for such outflows, but there are adjustment costs (sometimes significant) associated with their integration into the UK.

Although ‘brain drain’ was part of the popular discourse in the post-war period up to 1980, the proportion of high-skilled to low-skilled British emigrants was roughly equal. After 1980, however, the outflow of highly skilled professionals exceeded that of manual and clerical workers, peaking in 2000. This trend was partly a consequence of changing migration regimes in traditional countries of destination, as most developed countries have adopted work visa regimes that select migrants on the basis of their qualifications and skills (Koser 2009). While there are large variations within and between countries, the British diaspora now tends to be more highly educated and higher skilled than the general UK population.

- While the emigration rate of all UK nationals is 6 per cent, the emigration rate for UK nationals with tertiary education is 16 per cent.
- 66 per cent of UK nationals over 45 living abroad in 2007 possessed a level 3 qualification (equivalent to A-level) compared with 49 per cent of UK nationals over 45 living in the UK (Labour Force Survey data).

- In 2008, 48 per cent of British emigrants were in professional and managerial occupations, 28 per cent in manual and clerical occupations, 8 per cent were children, 7 per cent students and 10 per cent other adults (International Passenger Survey data).
- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) calculates there are 1.1 million British university graduates living abroad, more than 300,000 of them with degrees in science and engineering (OECD 2008 cited by Winnet 2008).

There is some evidence of changes in this emigration trend in recent years. IPS data suggest there was a 16 per cent decline between 2006 and 2007 in the number of UK nationals in professional and managerial jobs moving overseas, while at the same time there was a 25 per cent increase in return migration to the UK among this group. However, our analysis shows that the UK is still experiencing a net loss of nationals in professional and managerial occupations.

### Remittances

The total amount of remittances from British nationals living overseas to the UK is hard to estimate due to a lack of data. According to the International Monetary Fund (2009), remittances consist of migrants' transfers (that is, all current transfers 'in cash' or 'in kind' made or received by resident households to or from non-resident households) and compensation of employees (that is, income of border, seasonal, and other short-term workers who work in an economy where they are not resident, and the income of resident workers who are employed by a non-resident entity). This methodology is generally based on survey data, which tends to exclude informal transactions. However, it is estimated that globally such transactions could amount to sums equivalent to between 35 and 75 per cent of official flows (Jiménez-Martín *et al* 2007).

**Table 3.6. Migration and remittances in the UK, 2000–2006 (US\$ million)**

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>Inward remittance flows</b>	3,614	4,825	4,485	5,029	6,350	6,722	7,339*
Compensation of employees	1,552	1,562	1,695	1,825	2,142	2,192	2,316
Migrants' transfers	2,062	3,263	2,790	3,204	4,208	4,530	5,023
<b>Outward remittance flows</b>	2,044	3,342	2,439	2,624	2,957	3,087	3,425**
Compensation of employees	1,336	1,472	1,582	1,728	2,015	2,086	2,194
Migrants' transfers	708	1,870	858	896	942	1,001	1,231

Source: Ratha and Xu (2008)



**Amount of remittances sent**

Table 3.6 shows the data available on remittances to and from the UK. Interestingly, inward remittance flows are higher than outward remittances. However, the proportion between categories differs between the two flows. While 68 per cent of inward remittances are migrants’ transfers, only 36 per cent of outward remittances are classified under that label. This could suggest that informal transactions are more popular for outward remittances.

The total inward remittance flow of US\$7,339 million (approximately £4.5 billion) represents 0.3 per cent of GDP in 2006. (Outward flows represent 0.1 per cent of GDP in 2006.) It is important to note that these remittances include not only money sent by British citizens overseas, but also by members of diasporas from other countries. Indeed, our qualitative research in five case study countries did not suggest that British emigrants were sending large amounts of money home. It should also be stressed again, however, that this table only reports officially recorded remittances. The true size of remittances, including unrecorded flows through formal and informal channels, is almost certainly much larger.

As Table 3.7 shows, the UK ranked eighth in the world in terms of the amount of money remitted to the country in 2007. The amount remitted *from* the UK is lower. It is important to note that this classification is only by total amount. The rank would differ if it were calculated per-capita or as a percentage of GDP. The UK is not in the top ten of countries receiving remittances as percentage of GDP – no developed country is.

**Table 3.7. Top 10 remittance recipient and senders countries, 2006 and 2007**

Top 10 remittance recipients (2007)		Top 10 remittance senders (2006)	
Country	US\$, billions	Country	US\$, billions
India	27.0	United States	42.2
China	25.7	Saudi Arabia	15.6
Mexico	25.0	Switzerland	13.8
Philippines	17.0	Germany	12.3
France	12.5	Russian Federation	11.4
Spain	8.9	Spain	11.0
Belgium	7.2	Italy	8.2
United Kingdom	7.0	Luxembourg	7.5
Germany	7.0	Netherlands	6.7
Romania	6.8	Malaysia	5.6

Source: Ratha and Xu (2008)

It is interesting to compare this quantitative data, with all its limitations, with our qualitative research in the five case study countries. We found that around a third of interviewees sent money back to the UK. Money remitted in this way was paid into mortgages or savings accounts. (A small number of interviewees paid money into offshore savings accounts.) Almost all of those sending remittances back to the UK did so for their own household benefit. Unlike remittance payments to developing countries, there was no tradition of supporting relatives through remittance payments. The two UK nationals who were supporting family members were from minority ethnic communities, where there may be stronger kinship ties.

## 4. The British diaspora: local integration and attachment to the UK

### Key points

- British emigration is largely driven by ‘pull’ factors in countries overseas rather than ‘push factors’ in the UK.
- Preparation for emigration varies a lot among emigrants, but generally we found that in all countries they did not do a lot of research before leaving the UK.
- However, lack of preparation does not necessarily lead to problems –especially among those who see themselves as risk-takers.
- Integration in the new country of residence varies considerably. We found that integration among British emigrants is greater in the US and Bulgaria than in Dubai and Spain – while in India the picture is mixed.
- There is an obvious distinction to be drawn between ‘sojourners’ – people intending to stay in a country for a short time – and ‘settlers’ – those intending to stay for good – in terms of their local integration. However attachment to the UK varies little between the sojourners and settlers.
- Factors that help integration are: working for local companies, having family or friends locally, ability to speak the local language and, most importantly, a positive and adventurous outlook and a desire to broaden personal horizons.
- Those who tended to emigrate primarily because they can enjoy a better standard of living in a warmer climate, who adopt a ‘safety first’ attitude, live in enclaves and have poor language skills are less well integrated.
- In the case of Spain, there is emerging evidence that isolation of British emigrants from the local community can have serious negative effects, particularly as people age and become ill.
- The UK government should be supporting British emigrants to integrate into their new country of residence – our research suggest this does not weaken their attachment to the UK.
- Even emigrants who have lived for many years abroad, or who feel they have committed themselves to a new life in a new country, often maintain strong links with the UK.

- Most have close family in the UK, and travel back frequently. New forms of media and communication, such as email, social networking sites and Skype, have become very important – allowing people to maintain almost constant contact.
- However, most emigrants feel ‘home’ is where they currently live. Almost half of our interviewees have maintained property in the UK.
- The British media, particularly the BBC, is very important in maintaining a link and attachment to the UK. Emigrants maintain a lively interest in UK affairs – more than two thirds follow UK news online, for example.
- Levels of voting in UK elections are very low – only around one in 10 are even registered to do so.
- Business groups, social networks, churches and in particular sport, such as rugby, football and cricket, help British emigrants to socialise with each other and retain links with the UK.
- Emigrants are varied in their understanding of ‘Britishness’ and their attachment to it, with attitudes ranging from ‘matter of fact’ Britishness to expressions of strong pride in being British (or English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish).
- However, few reject the label completely and many see their Britishness as positive in some way.

A chapter on the lives of UK nationals overseas could cover any number of aspects of the emigrant experience. We have limited ourselves to focusing in some detail on the two that we think are most important and relevant for this study – local integration and attachment to the UK.

At first sight, the extent to which Britons living abroad are integrated into local communities and the extent to which they retain links with the UK may seem to be pulling in different directions. We will argue, however, that engagement with the British diaspora is most likely to be successful if its members are both comfortable in their continuing attachment to the UK and well integrated into life in their country of residence. If we accept that there is a migration continuum with tourism at one end and exile at the other different types of emigration (short term or for settlement) clearly sit at different points along that continuum. By and large, the further along the continuum a British emigrant is, the more likely they are to be integrated into their country of residence, but interestingly we found this does not necessarily lessen their attachment to the UK – even though this attachment may not be manifested all that often and may only exist at a sentimental level.

By contrast, we found that some Britons who have only recently emigrated and are hardly integrated at all into their new ‘home’ country are keen to stress that they have made a clean break with the UK, even though their links there remain strong. What our research has shown (building on that of others) is that some enduring attachment to the UK as the

country of your birth (and usually formative years as well) is inevitable, even if a British emigrant articulates a complete rejection of it; while the extent of local integration seems to be largely unconnected with the strength or weakness of the continuing attachment to the UK.

This chapter leans very heavily on the interviews with British emigrants and other stakeholders carried out in our five case study countries: Bulgaria, India, Spain, the United Arab Emirates and the United States. So, while the literature has allowed us to draw on research done in other countries, it is unarguable that the observations we make about integration and links with the UK – and the conclusions we draw – are more applicable to our case study countries than to other countries around the world. However, we believe that our sample was reasonably diverse so that much of what we learnt is applicable to the wider British diaspora.

The other proviso about this chapter is so obvious that it almost goes without saying: emigrant experiences are as varied and numerous as the millions of individual Britons who live overseas. We are therefore painting in very broad brush strokes when we talk about UK nationals ‘thinking’ or ‘doing’ this or that.

Before we concentrate on the two aspects of emigrant life which we think are most important to this study, we touch briefly on two other issues – why UK nationals choose to emigrate and how they prepare.

### **Why UK nationals emigrate from the UK**

In our case studies we found that people chose to emigrate mainly because they saw the move as offering them exciting and rewarding opportunities. In other words, it was positive ‘pull factors’ (either of a specific country or, in some cases, of being overseas in general) that made them want to emigrate, not negative ‘push factors’ such as the economic or political situation in the UK. This was particularly true among those emigrants who had moved for work, but it also applied to those who moved for lifestyle or family reasons. These findings back up what we found in *Brits Abroad* in 2006 and are supported by other studies. Research on Britons in France, for example, shows that their emigration is strongly related to the pull of French rural life (though getting away from congestion in urban Britain is part of it too) (Drake and Collard 2007).

Although many of the Britons we interviewed had moved overseas for work because they had been transferred by their companies or were on secondments from NGOs or government departments, a significant percentage had initiated the move themselves, sometimes emigrating without a firm job offer in place. Perhaps surprisingly, we met some Britons who didn’t seem to care strongly what country they ended up in – being abroad was the point and they adapted to where they found themselves. In many cases, it is difficult to distinguish strongly between economic migration and lifestyle migration – the two were combined as a package. While we did find that lifestyle factors cited often involved better climate, a slower pace of life, cheaper housing and so on (factors now well known), we also found that in most countries emigrants saw themselves as adventurous

and risk takers – so emigration wasn't just about the search for an 'easy life'. Of course, this was particularly true in the locations where emigrants saw themselves as somewhat pioneering – Bulgaria and, for different reasons, India.

As noted already, there is now significant British emigration among nationals who were born in the country of emigration (or who have family roots in that country). In these cases, it is often family or cultural reasons that shape a decision to emigrate.

### **Lack of preparation for migration**

Interviews with UK emigrants, as well as consular services and local NGOs in the country of destination, highlighted the unplanned nature of much British emigration. This was a finding common to all our case study countries.

The majority of emigrants engaged in little or no pre-emigration planning. They did not research local conditions or welfare entitlements or plan for their future health and welfare needs. Some migrants simply 'upped and left'.

*Preparation – I can't say we did. We prepared ourselves for Hong Kong, but not for India. India was a move closer home, but also we had holidayed in India and felt an affinity with India. We were aware that health issues needed to be taken into consideration, but that was about it. (Male, 40–50, Businessman, Delhi)*

Our findings back up other case studies, for example of Britons in Pays d'Auge in France, some of whom reported buying houses without seeing them first, or signing contracts during a day trip (Drake and Collard 2007).

Those who engaged in some pre-migration planning were very much in the minority. Planning activities included taking preparatory trips to the area, tapping into existing contacts in the country of destination, research online and through books (including travel guides, histories and biographies of key figures in their country of choice). A small number of migrants, largely those moving as a result of intra-company transfers, utilised the assistance of their employer, or engaged a relocation agency to help with the move. For couples with children, schooling was the major concern, with locating a suitable school seen as the overriding priority, before looking for housing or sorting out any other aspect of their life abroad.

In many cases, this casual approach to emigration did not seem to have impacted in any particularly negative way on the emigrants we interviewed, but we should note that among older emigrants especially, a failure to plan for things like health care can have serious long-term consequences in some cases.

### **Integration with local communities**

Having very briefly sketched the main points around the decision to migrate and pre-departure planning we turn to the first of our main areas of focus – the extent of integration of British emigrants into local communities.

It is of course possible to live overseas, to be successful and enjoy the experience on your

terms while having minimal contact with local people in the country of residence. We met a number of Britons in all case study countries during our fieldwork who were doing just that. However, we argue that generally, and in the longer term, both for the benefit of individual emigrants and for how Britons abroad are regarded internationally, the UK government should be encouraging and supporting greater integration. Such an approach would be in line with government policy towards migrant communities in the UK, where strategies are in place to promote integration based on evidence that it leads to better outcomes for migrants and helps to build community cohesion. It also fits with the wishes of local governments and communities – but above all helps British emigrants to make the most of their lives overseas.

Integration is a complex and contested term. We define it as both a process and a condition or outcome that applies to all individuals. It comprises:

- Psycho-social contentment: happiness, fulfilment, a sense of security, the absence of anxiety and feelings of welcome and belonging
- Interaction between an individual or members of a household and wider society
- Participation in civil society, in public institutions, the workplace and in political life
- Equality of access – for example to the labour market, housing, education, healthcare and social welfare
- Equality of treatment within the workplace and public institutions, as well as progress towards equality of outcome within education and employment
- Respect for the rule of law and the values that underpin a society
- The possession of civil, political and social rights.

Integration clearly starts from the time of arrival in a new country, but it is not a linear process with a definite end (Gans 1992). While it can be hastened by personal inclination and active agency on the part of the individual emigrant, it also relies on the willingness of locals to welcome emigrants into their community and other factors that can make integration difficult. There are of course Britons who do not want to integrate because they have chosen a particular lifestyle or do not intend to stay in a country for long (we met a small number of these during our research) (Favell 2008, O'Reilly 2007). But there are others who are eager integrate but struggle to do so; this is what Smallwood *et al* (2007) cited by Benson (2009) found for example when studying Britons living in the Aquitaine region of France. This is because of the language barrier in some cases, but, to make an obvious point, just because a person does not speak the local language does not mean they don't want to; they may find language learning difficult or not know where to start.

In her study of the British living in the Lot region of France, Benson suggests that integration relies on a number of interlinking factors including: 'acceptance by the local population, scope for interaction; linguistic ability; and shared interests' (Benson 2009: 56). It also varies across different types of emigrant groups with what Benson calls 'mid-

life migrants and those with children in local schools tending to find integration easier than retirement migrants'. Her findings broadly mirror those of others who have researched retirement migration (King *et al* 2000, Casado-Diaz *et al* 2004, Warnes *et al* 1999, Oliver 2007), or lifestyle migration (Drake and Collard 2008, O'Reilly 2000 and 2009).

Generally, among the British emigrants in our case study countries, we found that a person was more likely to be well integrated if a good number of the attributes and conditions given in Box 4.1 below applied to them:

### Box 4.1. Well integrated

#### Attributes

- Cosmopolitan outlook
- Emigrated for adventure
- Emigrated as a result of 'pull factors'
- Adopted dual nationality or citizenship in country of residence
- Interested in country of residence
- Speaks local language

#### Conditions

- Family link to local community (for example married to a local)
- Local friends
- Children in local schools
- Works for local company or in workplace with lots of locals
- Lives in local community
- Country of residence culturally similar to UK.

It follows, therefore, that a British emigrant was generally less well integrated if the attributes and conditions in Box 4.2 applied:

### Box 4.2. Less well integrated

#### Attributes

- Insular outlook
- Emigrated for narrowly economic or 'better lifestyle' reasons
- Emigrated as a result of 'push' factors
- Retains British nationality
- Little interest in country of residence
- Does not speak local language

#### Conditions

- No family link to local community
- No (or very few) local friends
- Children in British or international schools
- Works for UK or multi-national company
- Lives in UK or expat enclave
- Country of residence culturally different to UK.

Inevitably, the extent of integration varied between individuals across all our case study countries. People do not leap neatly into boxes like those above. But in very broad terms, we found that integration among British emigrants is greater in the US and Bulgaria than



in Dubai and Spain – with the picture more mixed in India. That said, assessing the extent of integration is a largely subjective exercise.

For example, a researcher studying a community for a short time can have a different perception from members of the community themselves. As O'Reilly has shown in her study of the Britons in Fuengirola in Spain, they consider themselves to be more acculturated and integrated into Spanish life than outsiders think. They distinguish themselves proudly from British tourists; regard themselves as living in sympathy with a slower and less pressurised 'real' Spanish lifestyle (living 'the Spanish way'); like to portray themselves as international rather than an expatriate in outlook, and feel they have left behind a Britain that they regard as spoilt. Yet as O'Reilly points out, many of them also exhibit classic 'little Englander' or traditional British attitudes, have minimal contact with local Spaniards and construct a group identity from being marginal (O'Reilly 2000).

Our research found similar tendencies, in particular in Spain and Dubai. In India, the picture was more varied – but again there were interesting dichotomies. By and large, the Britons we met in Delhi were very keen to engage with the local communities and to immerse themselves in Indian culture. But they were realistic about the extent to which they actually did so – the cultural differences being so vast in many ways. One factor in Delhi is that it is a city of colonies, with the prosperous middle classes living quite separately from the poor, so within these colonies the sense of integration was greater. But of course these colonies are the most westernised and so can feel less like 'real India' to Britons living there.

At this point we should also draw some distinction between different types of emigration (though it can never be that sharp, as intentions and circumstances change). In very broad terms, emigrants can be divided into:

**Settlers** – People who view their stay in a particular country as permanent (or at least very long term)

And:

**Sojourners** – People who view their stay in a particular country as temporary (and usually short term).

Of course, being a sojourner does not necessarily imply that a person is only going to stay a short time away from the UK. Many of our interviewees had lived in many countries overseas, for shorter and longer periods, and intended to live abroad in the future. These people sometimes described themselves as 'serial expats' – in the literature they are often labelled 'super mobile'. As we saw in Chapter 3, there are also emigrants who could be better described as seasonal – in that they only spend part of the year abroad.

Table 4.1 shows how we categorise the British communities in our five case study countries – again, using a very broad approach.

**Table 4.1. ‘Types’ of emigrants in our case study countries**

Bulgaria	Largely settlers
India	Largely sojourners
Spain	Largely settlers
United Arab Emirates	Overwhelmingly sojourners
United States	Mixed

What is interesting about doing this exercise, artificial as it is, is that there is no direct read-across from this categorisation to our assessment of the extent of integration. A complicating factor of course is that a person can be categorised as a settler but not have been in a country for long, so is not well integrated by virtue of that fact. But even so, integration does not just stem from duration of stay. Rather it is more closely related to the factors set out in Boxes 4.1 and 4.2.

Within and cutting across these broad categories of settler and sojourner there are sub-groups. For example, O’Reilly identifies four types among the British community she studied in Spain: full term resident, returning resident, seasonal visitors and peripatetic visitors (O’Reilly 2000: 52). In the end the process of categorising and sub-categorising emigrants can go on for ever. What is interesting (and most relevant to this report) is that attachment to the UK – and therefore the potential for diaspora mobilisation – exists within all groups.

To pursue these themes in more detail we look at the differing individual experiences of settling into a country and becoming integrated into it across our five case study countries under four broad headings: family and friends; work; community and culture; and personal outlook.

### **Experiences – family and friends**

Of all the case study countries, the US was the one in which British emigrants are best integrated. As we will see in the other sections, there are many reasons for this, but having family and friends there is an important factor. Five of our 10 interviewees have an American partner which obviously weaves them more intimately into the fabric of American society. Having children and grandchildren who are American citizens and who have been born and brought up in the States further strengthens ties. A local spouse, and their family, can be one element in a web of relationships that helps the new immigrant develop a sense of belonging:

*[Antioch] College [helped]. Esther [his wife], Reid [his boss], and Reid’s family became like another family. I was part of the family. And then through one of them or one of Esther’s professors who was a sociologist. He invited us to dinner to meet them and then there were a couple more people from the college there.*

*Pretty soon there was a circle of friends. It sure wouldn't have happened like that in London! (Male, 70–80, retired designer, Ohio, USA)*

A number of our interviewees in India have family links with the country, including a British Indian young professional who reported that all her closest friends in Delhi were Indian, and were people she had met through family and friends of the family. Such links obviously help to make settling into the new country of residence easier. By contrast, we interviewed a husband and wife, both entrepreneurs, who have no family link to India, but very much wanted to live there. They spend some time with expats, but almost all their friends are Indian. One of the couple mentioned that he had one particularly good friend whom he counts as his Indian 'father'. In this case, no strong personal links existed before the couple arrived in India, but the development of them (largely through personal outlook and initiative) helped to create a sense of belonging quite quickly. Other Britons in Delhi did however speak of the difficulty of building close relationships with Indians, largely because of cultural differences.

*It is quite difficult to make friends, they [Indians] tend to judge you, to put you in categories, based on the sort of watch you are wearing or the handbag you are carrying! Of course they know you are only here for a short time, so they treat friendship like a business transaction – what can I get out of it – that sort of attitude. They're not unfriendly, and they are very generous with their hospitality, but we're so different. It would take a long time to become genuine friends. (Female 40–50, part-time project worker, Delhi, India)*

*If you are honest, you are always an expat. There is no way of getting away from it, even if you are someone like me who's been here for nearly 4 years. You are treated like a foreigner and always will be, by officialdom and bureaucracy, in the bank and in shops, and of course on the street you are treated differently, by and large extremely well, but sometimes very irritatingly, when they try to rip you off or something. (Male 40–50, businessman, Delhi, India)*

A number of interviewees in Bulgaria are married to locals. One woman we spoke to had clearly been helped by her husband and his family to settle in the country. However, at the same time, being the Brit who had married the local boy made her an object of some attention, and she maintains her British surname and identity, not least because it has business advantages. (This is a theme we will develop further when we look at continuing attachment to Britain later in this chapter.)

Making local friends is another obvious and helpful way of becoming integrated. Another of our interviewees in Bulgaria gave an example of how he feels at home because although all his neighbours are Bulgarian he had moved into what he considers a very British-style neighbourhood, which had helped him to foster friendships:

*I'm very lucky – we built a new development outside of the city, slightly in the mountains. There are 11 houses; all my neighbours are Bulgarian. Very strong*

*sense of community. Let's say almost English-style houses: big houses with big gardens, kids and dogs running wild, we even have an English-style hedge. Very good sense of community; very supportive. Our neighbours are over several times a week and vice versa, having a glass of wine or a barbeque. (Male, 30–40, chartered accountant, Sofia, Bulgaria)*

A British woman living in a small community in the Mid West United States described a similar experience of settling in because the 'British style' of her neighbourhood was conducive to making friends:

*If we had moved somewhere else ... I would have just cried every day until we went back home to England. I would have felt so isolated. Whereas here I can walk everywhere, see my neighbours all the time; there's a very good social network, loads of people with kids the same age that live really close. It's just perfect really. (Female 40–50, mother, Ohio, USA)*

Of course, most emigrants have a few different circles of friends and acquaintances. Many of the Britons we interviewed in the US have American friends, but also maintain friendships with other British emigrants. This was true too of UK nationals in India and Bulgaria, who also have friends from other expat communities.

*I have expatriate friends who are anything from French, Canadian, New Zealanders – things like that. Then there are those that are married to Bulgarians, quite a few guys like me. So we also have mixed friends. And then also my wife's friends are Bulgarian; they've become friends in their own right. So for myself it's very much three different [groups] – which is nice, it gives a much more international feel to the whole thing. (Male, 30–40, communications consultant, Bulgaria)*

In contrast, in Spain and particularly in Dubai, we met many more British emigrants who have very limited relationships with local people – and none had family from their adopted country. The British enclaves on the Costa del Sol are well-known, even notorious, and our research shows that the stereotype of the Brit in Spain who speaks no Spanish and lives in an almost exclusively British community still persists:

*There is a very big expatriate community here, and it's really geared to the expatriates because you get English newspapers, you get Sky television. In fact, it's like being transplanted from Britain but with a better climate and you get all the things that you get in [the UK]. (Male, 70–80, retired, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

Although generally we found that British emigrants in Bulgaria are more likely to be integrated into local communities than emigrants to other countries, there are some signs of 'Costa'-type enclaves forming in some of the parts of Bulgaria most attractive to Britons. The influence of property television programmes cannot be underestimated in this regard. For example, a large number of British people have bought property in villages near the historic town of Veliko Tarnovo, having seen the area featured in Channel 4's 'A

Place in the Sun'. One of the attractions was the relative cheapness of property compared with the traditional destinations of Spain and France.

*We came on holiday, had a look. We enquired how many Brits are in these villages. We were told there are quite a few Brits everywhere. And every time you go to a store, it's called Practica – it's basically B&Q – it's just a meeting place for Brits all buying taps and sinks and lawnmowers.* (Male, 50–60, retired, Bulgaria)

Some of the officials we spoke to in Bulgaria expressed concern about this type of British emigration, suggesting that the new emigrant communities could face difficulties in the longer term because of their lack of integration in a way that is already familiar to consular officials in Southern Spain.

In Dubai different factors were at work, but the British community there appears to have negligible contact with the local community. Friendships and social relationships are almost exclusively with other Western expats because people tend to live in residential communities that are geographically separate from the Emirate and because they are cut off from the local, Islamic, culture. What's more, in Dubai British children all go to British and international schools, whereas in Spain for example some expat children do attend local schools.

*I cannot count, after 15 years of living here, one local friend.* (Female, 50–60, team leader, market research company, Dubai)

*Obviously if you are mixing in a Western expat environment, you are not necessarily going to meet them [locals]...it's against the law for Muslims to drink, so you shouldn't bump into them in a local bar.* (Female, 30–40, unemployed operations manager, Dubai)

*My understanding is that they tend to keep themselves quite to themselves...my husband speaks to some locals through his work...his other colleagues might say let's go out for a drink or come over for dinner...I don't think it happens so much with the locals.* (Female, 30–40, housewife, Dubai)

Being employed makes a difference. In the US, probably the least well integrated of the Britons we interviewed were those not working.

*Most of my friends are British. Because I'm not working and I've met most of my friends through friends of friends, that's just the way it's worked out for me... I think if I was at work then I'd definitely meet more Americans.* (Female, 30–40, unemployed, New York City, USA)

In Bulgaria we identified two distinct groups of working British emigrants: those in and around Sofia who tend to be more highly educated and working in professional roles; and those residing in the coastal, lake and mountain areas, who tend more to small-scale entrepreneurship in areas like tourism and property. We found both groups to be reasonably well integrated into their local communities, to a large extent through their

employment. They have taken the trouble to learn Bulgarian (it is almost impossible to do business in the country without knowing something of the language) and have forged business and professional links with Bulgarians, which can lead to social links and friendships.

*There's only me and one other expat in the company, it's a Bulgarian company in effect, and I've made friendships through work. We've warmed to each other, and it's gone from there... I still play a lot of football, which is a big thing here in Bulgaria. So I play six aside with Bulgarians, and play six aside games against the Mayor and his team. It's great at building up good contacts and spirit between people.* (Male, 60–70, civil engineer, Bulgaria)

Although many of the Britons we interviewed in India had previously lived and worked abroad, most took a few weeks to settle in what is a very different culture. It was striking that the adjustment period was particularly difficult for the so-called 'trailing spouses', mainly women who follow husbands taking up job opportunities in India. A key factor here was that they, unlike their husbands, are not in the workplace. One wife related how she would sit at home feeling too shy to go to the weekly meeting of expats at the local hotel, regretting it afterwards as she saw only her husband and servants during the week. Another told of how she ended up seeking counselling to help with the adjustment process. She described how she tried to keep up her usual routines and habits but found it difficult. Wanting but not finding work made her settling-in process very challenging.

Single people also found settling in more difficult: in Dubai and Delhi in particular, social networks were formed around children's schooling and family activities.

*It's hard to put down roots here as a single person. As a family person with children, you do have a sense of belonging and involvement, integration within the community.* (Male, 30–40, teacher, Dubai)

In Dubai, a lot of the Britons were working for British or multi-national companies, but what little contact they did have with Emirati life and local people came through the workplace. However, we detected quite a lot of resentment among British emigrants towards local people – sometimes expressed quite forcefully.

*My husband works for an American company, and he doesn't mix with Emiratis at all. There are no Emiratis at his work. I work at a British school. The Emiratis that are there, we generally consider them to be a nuisance because they want everything to be the Emirati way and it's a British school... Muslims that work in the school, namely Syrians, Jordanians and Lebanese, we find them a nuisance because they want to change everything, same as the education board, they want so much Arabic and the Arabic teachers aren't of a very good standard, the children aren't learning anything... We're not allowed to have Christmas, things like that we find a nuisance, so we stay away from them.* (Female, 40–50, teaching assistant, Dubai)

In Spain, a good proportion of our interviewees were retired, although the pattern of British emigration to the Costa del Sol is changing. An Spanish officer at one town hall told us:

*During the last 10 years younger people have been coming down to open up their businesses here and to work here. We have a large number of foreign children in our local schools. There was a change in the law maybe 10 years ago that you no longer needed a work permit to come and work here so that opened up and changed the whole aspect of what type of Brits were coming here.*

Most of the retired people do voluntary work and spend time taking care of their houses and gardens. Their interaction with locals is often very limited. Younger people have set up their own businesses or found jobs, but those businesses and jobs too are usually related to the British community. We found that few Britons are accessing the Spanish labour market or business sector, largely because of a lack of ability in Spanish. (This is less true, however, in the major cities of Spain or towns or rural communities away from the coasts.)

*I'd quite like to work in a Spanish company to try and get a little bit more integrated...but it is very difficult and quite understandably, why would a company employ someone who doesn't speak the language perfectly? It is the same as in England. (Female, 40–50, works in a British bookshop, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

*If you could speak Spanish to them and you have English as well then that's a benefit. If you can speak English but only a little Spanish then yes, there is a resistance. That's why I spend most of my time dealing with English speaking businesses who are British expats. (Male, 50–60, business owner, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

## **Experiences – culture and community**

A shared sense of culture and community between emigrants and their new place of residence is clearly very important in aiding integration. In the US, most of our interviewees felt that they fitted relatively easily into the local community because of cultural similarity.

*I think most people from other countries, especially if they didn't speak English, would be in a community that spoke either Italian or German or whatever. Whereas coming from England, it was easier to get into the mainstream because you spoke the same language. You didn't need to search out other people to communicate with. In the US, you don't necessarily have English communities. You have Irish communities, you've got German, Italian, Korean... you don't seem to have [English communities except] in Southampton [in New York City], [which] was settled by British people. (Male, 60–70, car restorer, New York City, USA)*

Although the Britons living in the US are generally the most integrated into their local communities and the country as a whole, there are still cultural aspects that jar with them.

The lack of a welfare safety net, the very different health system and the religious nature of American life were all mentioned.

*We find the church thing quite odd. In England if you go to church, you're either very, very old or a bit mad.* (Female, 40–50, mother, Ohio, USA)

In India and Bulgaria, both places with very different cultures from the UK in differing ways, the levels of interaction with local communities is impressive, largely reflecting a proactive approach to integration shown by the individuals in that country (see below for more on this). However, there are of course aspects of life which the British emigrants find alien and even disturbing. In Bulgaria, people mentioned their frustration with the stifling bureaucracy and the traditional, and highly informal, ways of working. Of those who have been there for some time, there was frustration at the slow pace of change, especially the stagnant political situation. By far the biggest issue is the extent of corruption in Bulgarian life. This is something that emigrants have had to learn to negotiate their way around, and we did hear stories from officials (and through our research with older British returnees) that some UK nationals have got into difficult situations because they did not understand how the system works.

In India, British people find the poverty and inequality difficult to cope with, as well as the corruption and certain cultural practices. Many Britons clearly struggle with the caste and religious divides in India and find this alienates them from Indian colleagues and friends. A British businessman expressed himself pithily when asked about the downsides of Delhi, which he regards as his home.

*The infrastructure sucks and there are huge problems of governance.* (Male 40–50, businessman, Delhi, India)

New arrivals in Delhi often took some time to adjust to a very different culture in which they were very visible outsiders.

*I found it difficult to get used to the staring when I first arrived. You are waiting at traffic lights and all eyes are staring at you.* (Female, 20–30, teacher, Delhi, India)

Some people also struggle with the weather in India – particularly the very hot summers, the monsoons and the surprisingly (to them) cold winter nights. Overall, though, people stressed that they enjoyed living in a very different culture from the UK, in some cases because they are of Indian heritage themselves.

*You have absolutely no doubt you are alive in this place. It is so incredibly stimulating and fascinating.* (Male 40–50, businessman, Delhi, India)

*I feel a sense of belonging in Delhi...In Delhi I have seen much more of Indian culture.* (Female, 20–30, businesswoman, Delhi, India)

In Dubai, people did often say that one of the things they enjoy about their life there is the chance to mix with other cultures, but by this they tended to mean other expatriates, often other Westerners.



*What I like about Dubai are the people I meet, meeting people from lots of different countries, learning about their problems and about their customs...we connect with people rather than the place. (Male, 60–70, property manager, Dubai)*

The expatriate lifestyle is not generally compatible with the traditional cultural practices of the Muslim locals. But there are other dislocating factors as well – some associated with the rampant growth and modernisation of Dubai. Interviewees mentioned bureaucracy, dangerous driving, traffic, a lack of culture (generally meaning Western culture), discrimination in terms of differentials in pay for different nationalities, uncertainty in the law, preferential treatment of the locals and Dubai's ambitious plans for the future.

*Obviously I feel for folks that are paid a lot less than their counterparts that hold a different passport. I don't think that's right, certainly we don't practise that where I work, we pay people by the position not by the nationality...I can only do my part, I feel I am, by being equal in terms of opportunity and what we pay here. (Male, 40–50, university director, Dubai)*

*I think also that Dubai just has to be the biggest and the best at everything and that really wears you down...just be content with what you've got and actually start putting stuff back into the heritage and the traditional part of it rather than everything big and wonderful. (Female, 50–60, team leader in market research company, Dubai)*

There are not such obvious cultural differences between Spain and the UK, although the centrality of the extended family in Spanish life is a factor that appears to inhibit contact between some British expats and their Spanish neighbours.

*They have a different style of social life from the British people. A good example of that is ... Sundays in the summer for Spanish families are a family day. All the generations of the family get together, they go for a beach barbeque, they are there from midday until 8 o'clock at night, there could be 30 of them, there could be 70. There is nobody else who can get involved, it's just their family and that's a very strong Spanish tradition. (Male, 60–70, retired, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

Away from urban areas, Spanish communities can also be close knit and bonded to local traditions and customs, as one of our interviewees made clear to us:

*The rural Spanish life is still quite insular. We find it difficult to make [Spanish friends], we've got loads of acquaintances in the Spanish community but we've only got two couples who are our friends and both of them are not just olive farmers. I think the majority of people who live in our area have lived and worked in the olive fields for all their life and it's difficult for them to comprehend why we came. They are very friendly and they are very welcoming but they find it difficult to cross the boundary from neighbourliness into real friendship. (Male, 50–60, project manager, Andalucia, Spain)*

Because our Spanish field work was concentrated on the Costa del Sol, we did encounter the particular phenomenon of there being high concentrations of Britons, so numerous indeed that they can create and sustain self-sufficient communities. Even Britons who are determined not to live an insular British life in Spain can find it difficult to avoid doing so.

*One of the things that I said when I came here was that I didn't want to be part of what I call 'the Brits pack', which is all the British all sit together and all the Germans all sit together and all the Spanish all sit together... and yet you almost get funnelled into that, there is almost no way to break out of that. (Male, 50–60, retired, Andalucia, Spain)*

### Language

Above all, the British residents in Spain are excluded from Spanish life because too few of them speak the language. Language emerged as the key issue inhibiting contact with local people and thus integration.

*I think the language is incredibly important and I really don't know how people who don't speak Spanish can live their lives to the full here unless they live in what I call ghettos on the coast where really the only language spoken is English and they live a totally isolated life from the real Spanish culture. (Male, 50–60, project manager, Andalucia, Spain)*

Language classes in Spain are readily available, and both the Spanish Foreigners Department and the British consulates in Spain direct UK nationals towards them. However, as it is possible to get by speaking only English, many Britons do not want to learn Spanish.

*I find it very difficult to learn [Spanish]. You have to dedicate quite a lot of time and older people can't cope with doing that. (Female, 40–50, business owner, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

*I think a lot of the [Spanish] lessons here in Spain tend, in my view, to concentrate on the wrong things. I think what most people want when they are learning the language here is to be able to converse, so is about the conversational language, and a lot of the classes tend to get involved in the verbs and past participative [sic] and whatever, but I don't need to know that. I need to know how to go to that man over there and say that I need to get my eyes tested. (Male, 50–60, businessman, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

Most EU governments are placing greater emphasis on migrant integration and we can expect increasing scrutiny of the British diaspora in other European countries, including Spain. The Spanish government has already voiced concern about lack of integration of UK nationals, in particular in relation to their poor language skills. UK migrants' limited fluency in Spanish presents particular problems in old age, when a person may have to seek health or social care. Many older British retirement migrants find it difficult to communicate with home helps or carers in residential homes (Betty 1997).

The other case study country where few British emigrants spoke more than a handful of phrases in the local language was India. Only three of the 10 interviewees spoke Hindi – a journalist, a language teacher and a young woman of Indian origin. Among the others, though most had taken Hindi lessons, very few had made much progress. However, English is so widely spoken among the Indian middle class that a lack of Hindi hardly impacts at all on the ability of British emigrants to communicate with their peers in the local community.

Despite the absence of language difficulties most of the Britons we spoke to in India were living what might be described as a classic expat lifestyle – working for the British government, British NGOs or British/multi-national firms, often on short-term secondments; living in prosperous colonies of Delhi where concentrations of emigrants gather, sending their children to international schools; and socialising through expatriate networks, such as the Delhi Network, which has 500 mainly Western members.

### **Local civic participation**

Integration can also be significantly enhanced by active civic participation. Such activity helps to build up the emigrants' social capital in their new community through purposeful interaction with local residents. Such activity – what might be called inter-community networking – needs to be distinguished from social networking with other emigrants – intra-community networking. Our research suggests that local civic participation varies considerably across and within different countries of residence. Where participation is highest it does assist in local integration. The civil society organisations in which UK nationals in our research are involved include:

- Churches and faith-based social projects
- Sports clubs
- Arts organisations
- Human rights organisations
- Cultural organisations that aim to build links between migrants and the majority community
- Environmental projects
- Community groups
- Charitable groups
- Business organisations that aim to build links between migrants and the majority community.

Involvement in these local civil society organisations appeared greatest in Bulgaria and the US. Involvement in such organisations may stem from higher levels of social integration of UK nationals in these countries, or it may be that involvement in organisations leads to integration. It may also reflect the long-term migration intentions of UK nationals in these countries: those who intend to remain overseas for the rest of their lives obviously have a greater incentive to invest in social change in their destinations.

*I'm a keen mountain biker and I've worked with the municipality here and the forestry commission. Kind of a bit of an education for them and me... We were going to map trails, trying to kick start the whole mountain biking scene in the area because there is a stack load of potential here... We were so keen; we could see our life, another plan being set out: skiing in the winter, mountain biking in the summer. Not just furthering our careers but furthering Bansko as a town. I'll be here for the rest of my life and I want to make it a good place. (Male, 20–30, ski instructor, Bulgaria)*

In India and Dubai, some Britons were involved in charities – mainly organised by fellow Britons, sometimes with help from the British Embassy or High Commission – which focused on helping the poor and excluded in the country. These activities allowed Britons to engage with local people, though not on equal terms, and in some cases served to increase a sense of alienation from local political and cultural practices.

Involvement in local civil society organisations was less evident in Dubai and India – and in Spain. In Dubai, there are far fewer civil society organisations than in many countries, so fewer opportunities for engagement, while in Spain the lack of involvement may again stem from many Britons living in enclaves.

In Bulgaria, India, Spain and the US a proportion of UK nationals expressed an interest in current affairs in their new countries of residence. Most emigrants interviewed said they read local newspapers, usually English language editions. UK nationals living in Dubai expressed much less interest in current affairs there.

However, in these countries and in Dubai, we did hear from Britons who were put off some aspects of civic participation by what they saw as excessive or complicated bureaucracy or a sense that locals (including officialdom) did not welcome their involvement. O'Reilly (2000) has noted that in the case of the British community in Fuengirola many people actually enjoyed being marginal and living in some sense beyond the reach of the authorities.

In both Bulgaria and Spain, UK nationals had registered to vote in local elections and European elections. (Within the European Union, EU nationals may register to vote in local and European elections in their new country of residence.)

*I have a great affinity for Spain. I'm very interested in what goes on in Spain and I'm interested in Spanish politics and see what's going on with the government and local politics as well here. (Male, 70–80, retired, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

*I'd like to vote for the EU, to get some of the money back that's disappeared – these people [Bulgarian officials] need to be challenged. (Male, 50–60, semi-retired property developer, Bulgaria)*

Although our sample was small, the numbers of UK nationals voting in local and European elections in Bulgaria and Spain was larger than those who voted or wanted to vote in UK

general elections (see below). Many UK nationals who had secured citizenship in the US voted in elections in that country.

### **Experiences – personal outlook**

We turn now to what we argue is probably the single most important determinant of a British emigrant's level of integration: their own outlook. Put simply, those emigrants who have a positive and adventurous outlook, who take some risks and are looking to broaden their horizons, are more successful (in terms of integration at least) than those who take a safety-first approach and are living overseas primarily because they can enjoy a better standard of living in a warmer climate.

Both ethnographic and psychological research shows that emigration tends to select those who have the most economic and social capital (Van Hear 1998). An emigrant often needs high levels of qualification or skills, and sometimes considerable financial assets, in order to meet the visa requirements of their country of destination. But as important, at least in some countries, is social capital: that is, the skills to adapt to new cultures and to build new networks.

Emigration also selects risk takers and the most innovative, with pioneer migrants – those who move first in a migratory movement – taking the most risks (Halek and Eisenhauer 2001, Nemeth and Kwan 1987). Other traits associated with migration are innovation, creativity and strong problem-solving ability (Maddux and Galinsky 2009). In our research we found that these attributes both helped to drive emigration and to maximise its success.

A taste for adventure was high on the list of reasons why UK nationals were in the US. For example in the cases of three people we spoke to who had emigrated either as children or as very young adults there was some element in which they or their parents were taking a chance in a land of opportunity. The more recent emigrants had usually gone to the US for economic reasons, but at the same time they welcomed the chance to work in a dynamic and exciting economy.

*I thought, New York, two years? I was single at the time so I thought, 'yeah, I could probably do that'. (Female, 40–50, telecoms executive, New York City, USA)*

The US does tend to attract the entrepreneurial Brit – and in some cases the country brought out this side of their nature.

*You've got British-owned hair salons, pubs and shops, you've got British-owned insurance companies, mortgage brokerages, British-run hotels – there's quite a few of those. [British people] are in every field. Some of these people have bought a business to get their visa or in my case I married an American and ended up in America... There's a lot of people who have done that, reinventing themselves, running a business. In most cases, you have to do that; you can't do here what you did in the UK. (Female official, British Bureau of Florida)*

Interestingly, no one we interviewed in India cited economic opportunities in the country as a major reason for moving there, despite India's spectacular economic growth over the last few years. The pull factor was primarily a desire for adventure, and wanting to explore Indian culture and way of life. Four interviewees had previously lived abroad and were looking for an opportunity to do so again (or to move on from another foreign posting which they did not particularly enjoy). The fact that opportunities came up specifically in India was an added attraction, though in each case the people concerned would have considered other destinations. India appealed for being an exciting, interesting place due to its status as a rising global power, as well as its long history and rich culture and spirituality.

*We didn't particularly plan on coming to India, but when the opportunity came up we thought 'wonderful'. It's such a vibrant and exciting place to be, and probably – along with China – one of the hot spots in the world... And there are such a lot of different cultures and so many interesting things going on. (Female, 40–50, part-time project worker)*

Generally our interviewees in Bulgaria were people looking for exciting foreign work opportunities (one was pleased to tell us he had worked all over the world and at one time or another had lived in seven of the 10 countries that the Foreign Office advised against visiting). However, most of the group did not have Bulgaria high on their wish list – they ended up there either through being transferred by their company or because it was just where a job 'turned up'. Reactions on getting a job in Bulgaria, particularly among those who arrived a few years ago, were typically of the 'What have I let myself in for?' category. However, this sense of trepidation was offset by positive outlooks and a determination to make the most of an exciting opportunity.

*I wanted a fresh challenge. I wanted some international experience. I have two brothers who had followed the gravy train to London and I wanted something a little bit different. And actually at that time, I'll be honest... the financial rewards for working as a pioneer in some of these countries were quite attractive. (Male, 30–40, chartered accountant, Bulgaria)*

*I arrived 12 years after the Russians left. In a country where nobody has been encouraged to show any initiative, take a decision, to do anything off their own back, to take ownership of a problem and solve it, for around about 700 years, I get parachuted in. My job was to take a post-Communist employment agency and turn it into a telephone company. (Male, 40–50, telecoms executive, Bulgaria)*

Despite, or perhaps because, Bulgaria was a challenging place to move to, and not the sort of place Britons tended to choose a few years ago, our interviewees tended to have made a go of it, and to have become well integrated. The networks and enclaves that would have had a more negative effect did not really exist at the time of their emigration – though some are developing now. Perhaps one of the aspects of life in Bulgaria that

helped some of our interviewees to settle, even as pioneer emigrants, was that they could enjoy a more peaceful and relaxed lifestyle. This does not necessarily aid integration but it certainly helps with psycho-social contentment.

*My husband had a difficult job compared to a lifestyle here where we could work maybe for a few days and spend the rest of the time in the garden or whatever. It was a different lifestyle... Karl was very stressed before... We would finish work and just literally sit in front of the television and go to bed. Now we'll be eating outside, we'll be entertaining. It's a much more relaxed lifestyle and we get more out of our free time. (Female, 40–50, English teacher, Bulgaria)*

In Spain, as we have seen, it is possible to emigrate without taking many risks or embarking on any great adventure. Emigrants, particularly retirees, are often seeking the very reverse of adventure: all they want is peace and quiet – and sunshine. Such an outlook limits an emigrant's propensity for living a fully integrated life in another country – but there may well be limits on how far integration efforts could be pushed with groups who are really not very interested in it.

*I think it is all about an openness, and you can almost sense that the people who make no effort to learn Spanish are the people who are not willing to integrate and the people who do make an effort would be accepted whatever the limitation of their Spanish and they would integrate very well. (Male, 50–60, property developer, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

In Dubai, a number of interviewees did identify themselves as adventurous types who enjoyed the challenge of living in an exotic and different culture. But it can perhaps be argued that the expatriate life in the Emirates, with its high degree of creature comforts and mod cons, is 'exotic-lite'. It is certainly the case that it appeals most to a certain type of British emigrant, one who is not generally looking for an 'edgy' foreign experience.

*It was coming in with no grand expectations, we just wanted an adventure, we wanted a good living for our kids and an opportunity for them to learn another culture, for them to learn another language. (Male, 40–50, university director, Dubai)*

*In London I've had my purse nicked x amount of times and here you can leave a handbag at a table and you know it's going to be there when you come back. You feel that your children are secure here, so I can let her play in the garden... I don't need to worry about people abducting her. (Female, 30–40, housewife, Dubai)*

### **Attachment to the UK**

As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, we do not think that a strong sense of local integration and a continuing attachment to the UK necessarily pull British emigrants in opposite directions. Indeed, our research suggests to us that sometimes the opposite is true. A settled and integrated life abroad does not lead to links being cut with the UK.

Even emigrants who have lived for many years abroad, or who feel they have committed themselves to a new life in a new country, often maintain strong family, cultural and emotional links with the UK. In diaspora theory, a diaspora is defined by characteristics including ‘homeland orientation’, ‘boundary maintenance’, ‘trans-national identification’ and ‘trans-national activity’ (see Brubaker 2005, Gamlen 2008a, Snel *et al* 2006, Vertovec 2005). While the extent to which our British emigrant interviewees manifested these characteristics varied, we think it is reasonable to describe them as a group as diasporic, even if they do not think of themselves in such terms.

### **A sense of ‘home’**

When asked ‘where is home?’ the majority of our interviewees replied that it was their country of residence. This was particularly true in the US where a higher proportion of our interviewees than elsewhere are long settled and many have become citizens of the country. At its strongest, the sense of ‘home’ being the US is profoundly emotional:

*Home is where the heart is and my heart is not in England.* (Female, 70–80, retired, Florida, USA)

However, feeling that home is another country does not necessarily break the link with the UK – a theme we shall return to. The interviewee quoted above added:

*I’ll always treasure my years there [the UK]... I wouldn’t change one minute of my life in England.*

Other interviewees were somewhat more practical in describing the US rather than the UK as home.

*If I didn’t [call it home] I wouldn’t live here.* (Male, 70–80, retired designer, Ohio, USA)

*England has moved on in a way that I’ve not been part of whereas I am very much a part of what’s going on here.* (Male, 50–60, lawyer, New York City, USA)

One interviewee in the US reflected a view that was also expressed by other British emigrants in other countries: that home is not a settled concept for an emigrant. Interestingly, he resides in New York City, which he identified as a very international place.

*It is very easy to integrate here, particularly in New York, where everyone comes from other places. I’ve never felt a foreigner here. But it’s an odd thing because I feel just as at home when I’m in England. When I’m there, I feel at home... But when I’m on a plane returning here, I feel like I’m coming home.* (Male, 50–60, auctioneer, New York City, USA)

Part of the identity of many emigrants (particularly those who identify themselves as ‘serial expats’ or ‘global citizens’) is that they feel they can put down roots wherever they are. But that does not mean that they feel as if they have completely uprooted themselves from the UK.



*I don't think you have to be that tied to one particular place. Bearing in mind I have 50:50 family [British expatriate family, Bulgarian wife and in-laws]. So I don't think there's any problem flitting back and forth... I'm not someone who grew up in a village and feels that is their home as I've always travelled every few years. There are familiar places in London that I like and I'm always going back to or through. So London is probably the place I feel most at home. (Male, 30–40, project manager, Bulgaria)*

*Home for me is where we currently live – home is where our stuff is... So for the moment home is India. When we went back to the UK for Christmas for instance I was thinking when we got back here [India] we had got back home. But then one day I hope we'll move to another country in another continent, because I'm keen to experience new and different things. But then I'll always be British. Indeed you are more conscious of it because you are a foreigner. (Female 40–50, part-time project worker, India)*

Many of the Britons we interviewed, in all countries, had experienced significant life changes during their time of residence abroad, including having a family, which changed their sense of where home is:

*Home is Bulgaria and interestingly enough our son, the youngest, said 'my home is Bulgaria, it's not England, Mummy, any more', and that's taken four years. (Female, 30–40, housewife, Bulgaria)*

We saw in the previous sections of this chapter that many of our interviewees in Bulgaria had made efforts to integrate into the local community, and part of this process involved making a proactive decision to think of the country as 'home'.

*What changed my mind about Bulgaria, [was that] about five years ago I decided to call Bulgaria home. My wife and I made a conscious decision and our whole life here changed after that. So we put down roots, we invested in proper relationships, proper friends, property, other businesses, and treated this place like we were going to stay forever. We decided we didn't want to live like expats, always looking behind us with one foot in each camp. (Male, 30–40, chartered accountant, Bulgaria)*

In this case, the country of residence became home as an antecedent to integration rather than as a consequence of it. More generally – and we saw this in most of our case study countries – a place comes to seem like home in a more organic way. Time passes; the migrant settles in; what was once strange becomes familiar:

*This is my only home now, I have no other. When we go to the UK, when we are flying back it feels as if we are coming home. It started like that after four or five years in Spain. (Male, 70–80, retired, Spain)*

In what can perhaps be viewed as an archetypically British trait, a number of interviewees seemed to us to be rather practical and unemotional about the question of 'home'.

*I think because we moved so often, home is where you live, home is where all your belongings are and so we have not had a problem in feeling that home is here [in Spain]. Home has always been where we had lived in a particular point of our lives. (Male, 50–60, project manager, Andalucia, Spain)*

About 50 per cent of our interviewees across the case study countries have maintained property in the UK. Of those who have no property in the UK, around a fifth have property in another foreign country, as well as their current country of residence. Interestingly, keeping property in the UK is rarely indicative of a strong intention to return. Instead, it is a financial decision, to gain rental income – or a form of investment or insurance. But having property in the UK does assume significance for those who do return. Our research shows that secure accommodation is the most important factor promoting the early and successful re-integration of UK nationals who return to the UK (see Rutter and Andrew 2009).

Not having a physical home in the UK cuts the link in a very obvious way. Many of the British nationals living the US referenced the decision to sell flats or houses in Britain as a pivotal moment in their emigration experience, as it signalled a more enduring commitment to living on the other side of the Atlantic. That said, many interviewees who keep homes in the UK still express their intention to live in the US long term. The majority of our interviewees in Dubai have homes in the UK and yet described the Emirate as ‘home’. For these emigrants this feeling seems to stem from quite negative feelings towards the UK:

*I think it's unlikely that we would go back to the UK...we've chosen to leave the UK, I don't even like going back for holidays. I don't enjoy the time I spend there. (Female, 40–50, teaching assistant, Dubai)*

*It took me a long time to call the UAE home. I felt that the more I went back to the UK, almost the less I belonged. I certainly do not think the UK was what it was 10 years ago in many ways, so I kind of feel more and more alienated. I still love it, I still like it, probably I like it because I'm going there for a week...and then I feel it's time to come back home. (Male, 40–50, university director, Dubai)*

*We love the countryside, we love the spring, we love the seasons that we don't get here, but the people are so miserable, maybe its all those grey skies...the average British conversation circles round either what's on the TV or what's the weather or celebrities' lives. (Male, 60–70, property manager, Dubai)*

In Spain the picture is more mixed – but perhaps because of its relative nearness to the UK, even emigrants who have sold their UK property were less likely to be definitive in suggesting they had now established a new long-term, or permanent, home in that country:

*No, I wouldn't call it home and I don't know how long I will live in Spain. I am very happy here at the moment but I haven't made any long-term decisions. (Male, 60–70, retired, Costa del Sol)*

India presented a particularly interesting case study in this regard. None of our interviewees envisaged retiring in India or staying permanently; there was a strong sense that it was a place of temporary residence. However, most did not intend to return to the UK either, at least not permanently. Many thought that they might live elsewhere – Canada, Australia and France were mentioned, and some said that they hoped to live part of the year in one place (maybe the UK), and part of the year elsewhere. In this case study we see evidence of ‘super-mobility’ among British emigrants: a propensity to migrate more than once and live serially in different countries – and at least an aspiration to the ‘swallow’ lifestyle described earlier in this report.

### **Negative attitudes to the UK**

One way in which some British emigrants nurture a sense that their country of residence is now ‘home’ is not through a particularly strong sense of attachment to that country but rather through maintaining strong negative attitudes towards the UK as a place which has changed for the worse and to which they could never contemplate returning. This syndrome – the very opposite of an idealised view of the homeland that some diaspora groups cherish – has been noted by other researchers among the British community in Spain (in particular O’Reilly 2000) and we certainly noticed it among some of our interviewees. The British media can help to reinforce this sense that the UK has ‘gone to the dogs’. A consulate official on the Costa del Sol said of British emigrants:

*From my experience they are glad to be here and not there. Loads of people who move out of the UK only get to see the bad news so they get only a distorted picture of what the UK looks like because they are only reading the newspapers or seeing the news.*

However, as O’Reilly shows, the negative view of the UK among the community of Britons living in Fuengirola in Spain certainly does not lead them into close integration with the local community. Rather they create their own little British island cut off from both the UK and from Spain, but tightly bound together by a sense of ‘We are in this together’ (O’Reilly 2000: 92). Such emigrant communities present a real challenge both for local authorities and for the British government as to some extent they are beyond the reach of either because of this self-constructed orientation – what O’Reilly conceives as an attachment to an imagined home of the past. There is no myth of return among such groups and no homeland orientation – classic components of a diaspora (Safran 1991) – and yet they are weirdly very British.

A negative attitude to the UK is certainly not confined to Britons in Spain – we also heard it expressed in Bulgaria, Dubai and India, with people often describing the UK as depressing, expensive and miserable. One interviewee in India put it rather neatly:

*People over here [India] think things will be better tomorrow; back in Britain people always assume things will be worse (Female 40–50, part-time project worker, Delhi, India)*

### Links with family and friends in the UK

Almost all of the British emigrants we interviewed have family, often close family, back in the UK. Given that much air travel is now relatively cheap and easy, we found that many people are able to go back to the UK frequently. Some of the emigrants in countries closer to the UK are returning several times a year. In Bulgaria, for instance, our interviewees typically reported that they go back two or three times each year, mainly to visit siblings and parents, and to take children to see grandparents. In these circumstances, modern emigration does not involve the great physical disconnection from family, friends and homeland that it did even 20 years ago. Some trans-continental emigrants are making regular return trips too.

*It's so easy to get back. I didn't think I'd be going this much.* (Female, 20–30, real estate, New York City, USA)

Our interviewees in all countries tended to be quite prosperous and some talked of the ease of 'flitting back and forth' in a way that poorer emigrants would not be able to afford. Many emigrants spoke of how trips back to the UK to see relatives did help to renew their attachment to the UK, though for others return trips reminded them why they had left the UK in the first place.

As well as frequent trips to the UK, there is a lot of traffic the other way, with friends and family from the UK visiting emigrants, particularly if they live in attractive holiday destinations.

*People do come out here because it's a change and it's very pretty in the summer. And it's very inexpensive to fly back and forth.* (Male, 30–40, project manager, Bulgaria)

More striking even than the frequency of physical travel back and forth to the UK is the importance emigrants attached to using new forms of communication as a way of keeping in touch. The extent to which the dynamics of international migration and trans-nationalism and the dynamics of the information society are now closely inter-connected has been much written about elsewhere – and has even led some to talk of 'digital diasporas' in which trans-national communities are created and sustained through the internet, rather than personal contact (Brinkerhoff 2009). Across our case study countries, interviewees spoke of using email, Skype (software that enables calls to be made over the Internet) and social networking sites such as Facebook, to stay in almost constant contact with family and friends. One interviewee in India estimated that she spends on average two hours a day emailing the UK. It is clear that these technologies have transformed the ability of emigrants to talk to family and friends, helping them to overcome homesickness and loneliness, and to keep up relationships across distances, in a way that was unimaginable until quite recently.

*We chat to our friends probably more than we ever did because we're on Facebook all the time, which is great. It's a wonderful thing the Internet. Without*

*it, it would have made things a lot more difficult for us.* (Female, 40–50, mother, Ohio, USA)

*I don't know what people did before [Skype]. This would be such a different experience if Skype hadn't existed.* (Female, 20–30, real estate, New York City, USA)

While a large majority of our interviewees had frequent contact with friends and families in the UK, it was not true of all of them. One businessman we interviewed in India (and who had lived there for many years) said he didn't have 'week in, week out' contact with the UK even though all his family and many of his old friends live here. For him and his family the annual trip back to the UK was more important in maintaining a strong sense of attachment to the UK.

*California [his wife comes from there] and the UK form an important part of the family identity and that's clearly where our roots and our parents are and so on, so it is important for the children, and the kids do have people who they regard as close friends in the UK. So the trip back is an important way of docking, if I can put it that way, and it is interesting this question of identity because certainly my oldest son definitely regards himself deep down as British [though he is now a teenager and left the UK aged 5].* (Male, 50–60, businessman, Delhi, India)

Not surprisingly, those emigrants we spoke to in our case study countries who had more infrequent contact with the UK tended to be people who had lived outside the UK for substantial periods of time. In their cases, parents may have died, old friendships faded and links to the UK gradually diminished over the years:

*I think those things do die over the years because you don't have reasons to meet [with friends in the UK]. I have English friends who I met in Cataluña and we still meet but the others are too far distant.* (Male, 70–80, retired, president of non-profit community of owners, Costa del Sol, Spain)

## **The cultural link**

In this short sub-section we look at how British emigrants maintain a connection with the UK through media, politics and social activities. These can be important in maintaining an attachment to the UK even over many years of absence.

### **The British media**

A very striking feature of our research is the extent to which British emigrants remain consumers of the British media. More than two thirds of our interviewees told us that they frequently follow UK news online, using the websites of the BBC, national newspapers and magazines. The BBC World Service radio news is popular among Britons living on other continents.

*We have it on every morning at breakfast, on the computer... it's like a live feed.* (Female, 50–60, communications adviser, Dubai)

In Europe, British satellite and cable TV such as Sky and BBC World are popular. Overall, more than half of our interviewees said they watch British television – either via satellite or over the web. Fewer interviewees subscribe to newspapers and magazines from the UK – but one of the main reasons for this is the ease of accessing news and current affairs via the internet.

In some countries, the British media is probably consumed largely because it is familiar and in the English language. However, some felt it is of higher quality than what was available locally – this view was expressed most often in India and Bulgaria but quite a few British emigrants in the US also expressed this view, citing the BBC especially, which they regard as more reliable and less insular than the media in the US. Comments such as ‘massively better’ and ‘one of the more believable sources of information’ were frequently made about BBC services available in the US. This attachment to the BBC certainly helps to maintain the general sense of attachment to the UK, both because it keeps emigrants in touch with British affairs and because the quality of the services engenders some national pride:

*When I listen to the BBC... I can identify subjects that come over on the radio that make news on [the BBC] and don't make news on NPR [National Public Radio]. I'm aware of that. And that awareness makes me English! (Male, 70–80, retired, Ohio, USA)*

In Spain and Florida some interviewees subscribe to English language newspapers printed for the British community, such as the *Costa Del Sol News* and the *Union Jack*. The editor of the former publication stressed to us that the main objective of her newspaper is to provide information about Spain:

*A lot of Brits [here] don't speak Spanish so it's very easy for them not to know what's going on around them and it's important for the local media, newspapers and local English language radio to get the news across to people living here, otherwise they'll be very lost.*

Florida's *Union Jack*, by contrast, provides its readership with news and information about Britain. Its editor told us:

*[Our readers come from] across the board... from the most sophisticated businessman to a working-class person. We seem to have more women subscribers [than men]. One reason [for that] would be that [women] seem to have a lot more interest in what's going on in Britain and what [products] they can get in the US that are British.*

As we have noted already above, keeping in touch with the UK through the British media does not always increase a sense of attachment to the country. Although our research reinforces previous studies in showing that pull factors are much stronger than push factors in driving British emigration, some British emigrants do have negative perceptions of the UK, which can be reinforced by the British media.

*[We're] more interested in what is going on back home as it impinges on our families and their quality of life. The collapse of Woolworths, it's big news you know. How depressed everyone is. You're hearing it from all sides. It's important.* (Female, 40–50, housewife, Bulgaria)

### Voting

The high levels of engagement with UK current affairs are notable, but they are not reflected in voting behaviour. The UK, in common with 80 per cent of the world's states, does allow its overseas residents voting rights (see Collyer and Vathi 2007). British citizens living overseas can vote in European and general elections for up to 15 years, with the vote being counted in the resident's nominated home constituency. However, the level of voter registration among British emigrants is pitifully small – with some 14,000 registered to vote in the 2010 general election by the end of 2009. This figure actually represents a decline of some 2,000 on 2007 figures – though the Electoral Commission did conduct campaigns to improve registration which resulted in 7,400 forms being downloaded from its website in 2009.<sup>8</sup>

This low level of registration and voting was reflected among our interviewees, only around one in 10 of whom stated an intention to us to try to vote in the UK general election in 2010 – a low level of participation which reflects findings from earlier research.

Our research suggests that the laborious processes of voter registration and casting postal or proxy votes appear to deter all but the most committed individuals. We had one interviewee complaining that European Parliament voting forms were 'a heap of paper that needed an interpreter', for instance. Additionally, our study shows that there is a great deal of misinformation about the processes of overseas voting in European and UK general elections.

*Someone told me I couldn't vote in the US and UK. I also heard that I had to get a proxy vote, so I didn't bother to investigate it further.* (Female, 40–50, telecoms executive, USA)

*I'm not sure that I knew that I could [vote in UK elections], to tell you the truth. It's never anything that's mentioned. The British Embassy never sends anything out that you can go and register. If I knew they were dedicating a date and a time for you to go in and vote, and that it was very organised, I would definitely do that.* (Female, 50–60, market researcher, Dubai)

Interestingly, there were some indications that people were concerned about the fairness of their voting in UK elections when they did not live in the country or pay tax. It is also the case that some of the better integrated Britons were keen to involve themselves more in local politics, which perhaps inhibits participation in UK politics.

8. Figures from the Electoral Commission and from Annual Registration Data published by Office for National Statistics cited during Questions to the Electoral Commission, House of Commons, 21 January 2010  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100121/debtext/100121-0001.htm>

*I'm proud to be here, I'm proud to be part of this country, I vote [in the US]. I'm actively involved in things, politics and community and cultural stuff. (Female, 50–60, businesswoman, New York City, USA)*

On the other hand there are some emigrants who feel that if the UK government wants to maintain the link with its diaspora community it should not have a cut-off point for voter participation.

*I can understand that having been out of the country for 28 years I am less in touch with British policy than I would be if I was there, but I feel I should have a voice somehow at a national level and I have nothing so, what should I do for the British government? I can't even vote for them. (Female, 40–50, newspaper editor, Costa del Sol)*

### **Social networking**

There are numerous ways in which a sense of attachment to the UK is maintained and fostered among British emigrants through formal and informal social networking. One important way is through business, professional associations and chambers of commerce. While the primary purpose of such organisations is to promote business and trade, they also have a very significant social side to their activities. In all of the countries we studied, business groups are among the largest and most active bodies in bringing British expats together. In the UAE, the British Business Group has more than 1500 members. Its chief operating officer told us:

*We try to ensure that the members, who are not just British business people but also people who have connections to British industry, are able to cross network and get to know one another which provides a fertile ground for the business to be able to feed off one another, do business with one another, to trade with one another.*

In all the case study countries, we found that membership of some sort of business group was among the most frequently cited ways in which British emigrants met each other, and as we shall see in Chapter 5, such groups often work very closely with UK consular services.

Religious organisations also play a part in bringing together UK nationals living overseas. A number of interviewees cited attending church as an important part of their life, and for some emigrants going to an Anglican church was the focus of their engagement with fellow Britons.

*Church is important for us so we made, very early on, contacts through the church, which then gives you a base of people, who are all English because it is an English church, and then they introduce you to other people who almost by default are therefore going to be English people. (Male, 50–60, businessman, Costa del Sol, Spain)*



*After two weeks we went to an Anglican service at the British Ambassador's residence and we're still members of that community. So that has been very important. It only meets once a month which isn't enough but it's something.* (Female, 40–50, businesswoman, Bulgaria)

Even those people who are not particularly religious do like to mark religious festivals – even if it is only at home – and through doing so they manifest cultural loyalty.

*I'm not religious at all. We observed Easter in that we did an Easter egg hunt and at Christmas we send Christmas cards...that's kind of it.* (Female, 30–40, mother, Dubai)

*Christmas was always a big thing for us, so we're very conscious that we promote these sorts of things...which we wouldn't talk about at all if we were in the UK.* (Female 40–50, part-time teaching assistant, Dubai)

Sport is often important in bringing British emigrants together, particularly when the country of residence is not a place where the more popular British sports of football, rugby and cricket are played. Our interviewees talked of their involvement in 'exiles' rugby clubs, in cricket and football teams – while sailing and water sports clubs, often dominated by British expatriates, are very popular in places like Spain and Dubai. In Dubai there is even a polo club, 80 per cent of whose members are British; while in India one female interviewee was a member of a ladies football club.

Watching sport is also a way in which Britons overseas come together and bond. A bar owner in New York City who we interviewed was particularly struck by how fervent his large British clientele were about following their team in the Premiership or the lower leagues. In the literature on diaspora there is much discussion about maintaining different identities – in this case one of the most important identities that British emigrants manifest is as a supporter of Arsenal or Manchester United or another home team:

*Many of them over the years have said to me that it is the most important part of their week coming here [to the bar to watch the football on satellite television]. For them, the support they show for their club team is the most important part of their life over here. I've heard that story many, many times.* (Bar owner with substantial British clientele, New York City)

We also heard that one of the best ways the UK consul in one American city had found to bond with fellow nationals was by going to a bar at six in the morning to watch the rugby internationals. For that person, fellow nationals meant the Welsh, as distinct from the British. We explore the multinational aspect of British identity more in the following subsection, but it is worth mentioning at this stage that in many places where there are substantial British communities, Welsh, Scottish and Irish groups are important parts of the social scene. The existence of such groups (and the extraordinary tenacity of these identities) is well known in the US, but in all our case study countries Britons often chose to emphasise their distinct national identity. Some are part of formal groups and many

marked national days – if only as an excuse for a few drinks with fellow nationals. The English are not left out, incidentally. A bar owner in New York told us:

*I feel that, particularly in New York, any time you hear of a British music festival, film festival... there's a pub around the corner that has a special St. George's Day celebration. It's a way for them to show where they're from. There's a tremendous love and respect for their heritage and where they came from. They don't get to show it that often, but they do in here for the national team – it's something that has to be seen to be believed.*

The sporting organisations mentioned above tend to be male dominated; so perhaps to correct the balance, many female emigrants are members of women's groups. Some of the best organised are international women's groups that as well as helping British women living overseas to meet each other also aid local integration or enable women to meet a wider circle of women from other countries. Many of the women we interviewed in Bulgaria are active in such groups, and there is a thriving organisation operating in Dubai called Expatwoman.com. It provides information, news and advice about living in Dubai, hosts more than 600 events a year, helping newcomers meet and make new friends, and runs morning meetings on a range of themes, educational and social. In Dubai there is also an interesting initiative called 'The Bridgetes', named after the fictional character Bridget Jones, which is a network of career women whose promotional blurb makes the point that 'it can be lonely experience being on your own, especially in a new culture or country'. A number of women we spoke to in the US are involved with mothers and baby groups, often locally organised, and in Florida there seem to be a number of women's groups – and informal networks. The owner of a British Bureau in Florida told us:

*I had a lady last week [who is] typical. She's married to an American, they just moved down from Georgia, she doesn't know a living soul, she's living in the boonies [middle of nowhere]. I've created informational emails for every part of Florida with contacts to help them. I gave her this email with British contacts in her area and said, 'right, get on the phone' and they'll open up their own little world of Brits.*

In India, we generally spoke to British emigrants who are, or want to be, playing as full a part as possible in Indian life. But there is an expatriate social circle in the country that can play an important part in the life of British émigrés, even if some of our interviewees expressed some contempt for it.

*These groups are totally necessary, but I am allergic to them. There, people can spend three, four, five years without having any friends who are Indian. (Male, 30–40, UK NGO employee, Delhi)*

When we asked interviewees in all the countries we visited what personal and cultural things they tried to preserve while living abroad the range of answers was extraordinary and familiar, profound and trivial, touching and bizarre. In Dubai, for instance, the list

ranged across Easter and Christmas, Yorkshire puddings, shortbread, gin and tonic, preserving the sanctity of marriage, family unity and trying to retain a British accent. This list was not untypical, and it was clear that sometimes the little things – Marmite and teabags – help to preserve an attachment to the UK as much, if not more, than the big things – the health service, the Monarchy and respect for human rights.

*I've always felt quite strongly about my accent. No matter where I've lived in England, I've always wanted to keep my accent. That's part of being from Bury, rather than being from England. It's a working class thing, pride in my working class roots. Otherwise it is things like traditional recipes, food that we eat. Because I wouldn't say there was any kind of strong culture. (Female, 40–50, mother, Ohio, USA)*

In Bulgaria, one emigrant told us about the Christmas bazaar that helps to raise money for what she described as 'good social causes here'. The event is British to its core, but there was no tension between putting on an event in the local community, and for the local community, and asserting a sense of pride in British culture.

*It's a mixture of home made produce and stuff brought in from abroad. We have mince pies, proper tea and sausage rolls. Things you associate with the UK. And on the book stand we had lots of books – and people [including the Bulgarians] like the fact they are English books. We were all wearing Union Jack aprons and they all sold. (Female, 40–50, housewife, Bulgaria)*

Of course, a strong social scene among Britons living abroad can have downsides in terms of integration into local life on, as we found in Spain.

*One of the strong cultural things that we've got here in Fuengirola is a British theatre... it's a very important centre of the cultural life here. The availability of British books and newspapers is another strong cultural thing. One of the things I dislike which is very strong here are the British restaurants and pubs and bars. There are a lot of those in Fuengirola... There is a British supermarket here ... and some people only shop there, they only buy British things. I prefer to buy the Spanish stuff and go to Spanish shops where you can get much better value. (Male, 60–70, retired, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

The extent of some Britons' embeddedness in these social networks can serve to increase isolation not only from the local Spanish community but also, as O'Reilly has shown, from contemporary Britain, as the shared values of the network often draw on strongly held notions that they are 'escapees of a depressing modern Britain' (O'Reilly 2000: 125).

### **A sense of Britishness**

An important element in maintaining an attachment to the UK among British emigrants is their own sense of their 'Britishness'. There is an extensive academic literature about migrant acculturation and identity, drawing from psychological as well as sociological research. There are also a large number of studies that examine the collective identities of

diaspora groups, and most definitions of diaspora have at their core a sense of continuing national identity (Anthias 2001, Cohen 2008).

### **The Britishness debate**

British national identity is a relatively recent social construct and can be attributed to the industrial, military and political developments of the last 300 years. In promoting the economic and political interests of the UK, the state has demanded loyalty from its citizens, often to the point of fighting for king and country. A strong and cohesive national consciousness, as bestowed by the state, has been a powerful tool in exacting this obedience (McCrone 1997).

In the last 20 or 30 years the debate has focused on the need to renew a sense of Britishness in order to restore declining national prestige and pride. It has been given added urgency more recently as the concept of ‘community cohesion’ has become fashionable. This cohesion is perceived to have been weakened by high levels of immigration; by sporadic instances of social breakdown, sometimes based on race; by the home-grown terrorist attacks of 2005; and by increased support for the far right British National Party.

Discussions of the need to renew a collective sense of Britishness distinguish between two very different forms of national allegiance: ethnic and civic. Ethnic nationalism promotes an idea of biological ancestry that links an individual to the nation and its customs and traditions. Civic nationalism stresses a belonging to the nation on the basis of citizenship rights, shared political values, common civic institutions and a shared language (Fenton 2007). The former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, among others, has called for a civic Britishness not based on ‘blood, race and territory’ but on values such as individual liberty anchored in a sense of duty and an intrinsic commitment to tolerance and social justice:

*...the question is essentially whether our national identity is defined by values we share in common or just by race and ethnicity – a definition that would leave our country at risk of relapsing into a wrongheaded ‘cricket test’ of loyalty. (Brown 2006)*

Other political figures have supported this call, among them the long serving Labour Minister Michael Wills, who has argued that the essential components of Britishness are creativity built on tolerance, openness and adaptability, work and self-improvement, strong communities and an outward-looking approach (Wills 2002).

More recently, a number of politicians and social commentators have adopted the rhetoric of ‘contractual citizenship’, based not only on individual rights but also on mutual obligations to the nation and community. Others have called for the debate around Britishness to move away from the abstract notions of identity and to focus more on its practical application. They have referred to Britishness as an active, participatory identity, rather than simply an emotional bond, and have argued that a renewed Britishness needs to focus on political and community engagement (Breslin 2007). The new process of

‘earned citizenship’ outlined in legislation now obliges a potential new citizen of the UK to learn English, to conform to British values and to demonstrate active citizenship through such things as volunteering in the community.<sup>9</sup> Goodhart (2006) argues that a sense of shared British identity should be underpinned by a contract of national citizenship formed both by ‘horizontal’ solidarity between citizens (in a social contract) and a ‘vertical’ relationship between the citizen and the state (in a political contract).

A complicating but also enriching factor in this debate has been the twentieth century resurgence of Welsh and Scottish nationalisms and a strengthening of Welsh and Scottish identity, sometimes at the expense of Britishness (Stone and Muir 2007). Devolution of political power to Wales and Scotland, while arguably conceived and designed to preserve the Union, has given a further boost to the development of separate Welsh and Scottish identities.

### **Emigrants’ engagement with Britishness**

Almost without exception our interviewees in the five case study countries felt themselves to be British to some extent. But their ideas about their Britishness were extremely diverse, and often highly personal and idiosyncratic. The complexities and nuances of the debate around Britishness which we outlined above came out in our discussions with British emigrants, who found it challenging to articulate what ‘being British’ meant at all and what it meant to them – a difficulty most people living in the UK would recognise.

*You have to ask yourself the question, what is British? If you look at the British, it’s such a mish mash and such a complex set of cultures, values and beliefs. And it’s dynamic, it’s changing all the time. (Male, 50–60, Bulgaria)*

*We can’t tally the two: no particular message about what British means and yet we want to be British. (Female, 40–50, Bulgaria)*

It is tempting to suggest that to be British these days is to be someone who struggles to say what that really means but who nonetheless feels that it must mean something – and that something is surprisingly strong and compelling. Of course, the defining difference between a British national living in the UK and a British emigrant is that the latter is living in another country, so it is the impact of emigration and living abroad on a sense of Britishness which most interested us in our research.

First of all, let us deal with the small minority of Britons living overseas who do not have any real sense of being British. In India we met a working couple who said they had never really seen themselves as British. Living abroad had strengthened that feeling but had not led them to take on any other national identity. They just felt that all concepts of national identity were less relevant in the modern world and they preferred to describe themselves as ‘global citizens’. (We take up this idea of UK nationals as global citizens in Chapter 6,

9. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/7829265.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7829265.stm)

but argue that it does not usually or necessarily depend on an explicit rejection of some sense of British identity.)

For some UK nationals living in Europe, migration has activated a stronger sense of identification with Europe and European values (which are seen as progressive) than they possessed before they emigrated – and this has led to a diminution in the importance, or relevance, of a narrow British identity.

*It's probably made me more European. I was never really a little Englisher, I've been lucky I've always travelled a lot. There are a lot of young people nowadays who are perfectly happy being European. They may not necessarily like the whole political process, in fact they are not really part of that, you know, hardly anyone can name their MEP. But people are more and more getting used to the idea of Europe as an entity. (Male, 30–40, project manager, Bulgaria).*

A more common explanation for a diminished sense of British identity is that emigrants have been away many years. These emigrants – we met a number in the US – have experienced a large amount of indigenisation of their national identity and many have taken up American citizenship. Although members of this group may visit the UK, they see themselves as tourists and not as returning UK nationals.

*When I first came here, maybe the first 10 years, I still felt British all the way through, 100 per cent. And I loved it because everybody said, 'Oh, where did you come from?' Because the accent was so pronounced. I feel American now, I'm 100 per cent American. (Female, 70–80, retired, dual-national, Florida, USA)*

We did meet some emigrants with such negative conceptions of modern Britain that in their own minds they had turned their backs on the UK. But in common with other researchers (see Benson 2009 for example) these emigrants seem to us to have identities that are very much shaped by having been born and brought up in the UK – identities they cannot 'escape' or throw off through emigration. Generally, denial of British identity was unusual and the majority of the British emigrants we met did feel in some sense British. How, then, did they articulate that sense? To help us answer this question we have set out some broad categories of Britishness among emigrants:

- Matter-of-fact Britishness
- Declining Britishness
- Britishness abroad
- Emotional Britishness
- Britishness-plus
- Global Britishness

### **Matter of fact Britishness**

This category is the most straightforward articulation of British identity among UK nationals living overseas and arguably rather typically British in character. It is

characterised by factual, no-nonsense statements: ‘I am what I am’, ‘I was born in England, so...’, ‘that’s what it says on my passport’ and so on.

However, this conception of Britishness is sometimes more complex and interesting than it at first seems. For a start, as we found in India, a bald assertion of matter-of-fact Britishness can be accompanied by statements from individuals about how living abroad has not changed them. This at least implies that their British identity is actually quite strong, as in other contexts life in another country does weaken a sense of country-of-birth nationality. In Spain, similar sentiments were voiced. But in this case, they perhaps demonstrated relatively weak integration into the country of residence.

*I’ll always be British. I simply am what I am, but living in another country.*  
(Female, 60–70, retired, Costa del Sol, Spain)

In other cases, interviewees voiced a certain frustration about the fact that they are British as a matter of fact. There is no great pride in the identity, but rather recognition that it is a (stubborn?) reality.

*You can’t really change who you are. I’m slightly more relaxed and laid back about things but I’m still British and I don’t think however hard you try you can really change your fundamental character.* (Female, 40–50, bookshop employee, Costa del Sol, Spain)

Among long-time emigrants, their sense of Britishness has a matter-of-fact quality by virtue of it being part of their distant personal history. It is a part of them, but not a big part.

*Having lived abroad most of my life you still think, well I was born in England, that’s where I come from, but not that I ever had any Britishness, really. I went to a boarding school in England and spent time there but I lived out of England more than I lived there.* (Female, 70–80, retired, Costa del Sol, Spain)

Quite a number of the British nationals we interviewed in the US have lived there for a considerable time – some since childhood, others since young adulthood. They have generally cut formal links with the UK and many have become US citizens. But in a number of cases they expressed a sense that the acquisition of a new citizenship was as much a matter of convenience as it was of a strong orientation to the US. You could say they had become matter-of-fact Americans, but this could not alter their matter-of-fact Britishness, which would always remain. Unsurprisingly, some, as we will see below, have maintained a stronger sense of Britishness.

Of course, this category – as with the rest – is artificial and no individual is fully captured within its boundaries. The only category into which an individual fits perfectly is the category of ‘me’. One of our interviewees in Dubai articulated this very point, while also expressing some matter-of-fact Britishness.

*I’ve only ever thought of myself as ‘me’. I don’t look at it as saying, ok you’re*

*British, you're Indian, you're Emirati, or whatever. Your environment makes you what you are. I wouldn't want to call myself international. I'm a holder of a British passport, but the UAE is my home and if I have more of an opportunity to integrate into that and to still benefit the UK and the UAE then I would. (Male 30–35, internet businessman, Dubai)*

### **Declining Britishness**

While we claimed at the beginning of this section that almost all of the British emigrants we interviewed feel in some sense British, it is right to point out that many feel that their experience of living abroad has weakened this aspect of their identity. This, we contend, is an inevitable consequence of emigration, so what is most interesting about declining Britishness is not its existence, but its extent.

The most straightforward way in which emigrants feel they are less British was that they did not live in the UK any more and so are not active in British life.

*If I had to come down to one side or the other, probably less [British] just for the simple reason that because I'm not there I feel I'm not contributing to Britain as such. (Female, 20–30, bookshop employee, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

*I feel less British because I don't pay taxes, I'm not involved in whatever is happening in Britain...so in that way I feel detached from Britain. (Male, 30–40, communications manager, Dubai)*

An alternative to this somewhat passive sense of declining Britishness is an active sense of a developing loyalty to the country of residence, which incidentally weakens the link with UK.

*I'll always be Scottish and I don't think you can lose your national traditions, but you have to realise that you are in another country and try to embrace the marvellous parts of that country. (Female, 60–70, retired, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

*I'm living in this interesting place, the culture and history for instance, so although I'm British, English, that is not really important. I don't want to be defined just by that. (Male, 30–40, teacher, India)*

A couple of other interviewees in India said living there had made them feel less British because they felt they had stepped out of British society and the constraints it placed on them. There was a sense of liberation in not being tied to what they saw as a narrow and stifling identity. Other emigrants in other countries occupy a liminal cultural space between the UK and the country of destination. They feel detached from the UK, but at the same time they did not identify with their new country. One feature of this 'betwixt and between' identity is a difficulty negotiating social interactions with other British nationals, particularly those whose class or ethnic origins are different from their own.

*Other British expats, the way they behave, the way they dress...you don't want to be tarnished with the same brush. Of course, this recent thing, the scandal on the beach [referring to British couple being arrested for extra-marital sex on a*



*Dubai beach] ... they're just so culturally insensitive, so I suppose you want to be seen as a world citizen rather than just British. (Female, 50–60, market researcher, Dubai)*

*I have no time for failed second-hand car salesmen who come over here trying to buy and sell apartments and pushing the property price beyond the reach of the local guys... The English brand then becomes one of greed, drunkenness and chasing their girls. (Male, 40–50, telecoms executive, Bulgaria)*

In Dubai and Bulgaria, some interviewees said that their feeling of being less British stemmed from the fact that living abroad had made them more international in outlook. This is a theme we develop under 'Global Britishness' below.

Of course another way in which a sense of Britishness declines is when emigrants have a very negative view of the UK. We noted above that there are Britons abroad who feel very alienated from contemporary Britain which they regard as undynamic, crime ridden, socially divided and generally cold, wet and miserable. However as O'Reilly (2000) among others has noted, and we saw in our research, these emigrants sometimes still retain an affection for a 'lost' or imagined Britain which they often try to recreate in some way among fellow British emigrants in their new country of residence.

### **Britishness abroad**

For some British emigrants, Britishness is not so much a personal choice as something imposed on them by people in their country of residence. However much they try to fit in they remain 'the Brit' because others see that as a major part of their identity. This is not necessarily a negative thing – in both Florida and Bulgaria, we met people who said being British gives a distinct business advantage. But for some emigrants the Brit tag can become a drag.

The Britons living in the US – some of whom had become American citizens – have largely learnt to get used to it. Many voiced opinions along the lines of:

*In an odd way, you may feel more British because you are here, because you're different. People say, 'Oh gee, where are you from? What's your accent?' and you then identify yourself as British. You stick out, whereas in England I'm just like any other person on the street. (Male, 50–60, car restorer, New York City, USA)*

Other interviewees in other countries also noticed that they were made conscious of being British just by virtue of being a foreigner in their country of residence. (Although as the following quote makes clear, a Briton, even overseas, is never really the foreigner!)

*I feel more British when I'm talking to foreigners. I try even harder to speak clearly in that British way and explain myself and sometimes when I'm with Brits, I don't think I talk the same way. (Male, 40–50, university employee, Dubai)*

Other interviewees said they felt more British abroad because being in an environment with other nationalities made them realise what Brits have in common – and what there is

to appreciate about Britain. Some of this they articulated in terms of traditional values.

*I think people respect the British over here. I think it comes from my father. When it comes to money, I'm old school. I think British always think of Americans as big spenders. I think I'm fairly controlled. And I've probably kept onto that. (Male, 60–70, airline executive, New York City, USA)*

*You're taught to be very proper, very polite, do the correct thing. This is stuff I got from my mom. I think that's carried over to me being here. I think my values are probably based upon what I grew up with in England more so than what I got here. (Male, 60–70, retired, Florida, USA)*

One interviewee in India, who said she would never describe herself as a 'flag waving Briton' and was 'very much a socialist', said living abroad had nonetheless made her appreciate some British values.

*I'm British in many ways, I appreciate that here. For instance the British education system is second to none... and what we do for equal rights and opportunities is fantastic. I think British people become more British overseas and we appreciate British values. (Female, 50–60, Delhi, India)*

Although the vast majority of our interviewees in all the case study countries were extremely positive about their country of residence there were always things about the place which remained strange or alienating or just annoying – and it was these negatives which often led emigrants to feel their sense of foreignness and their essential Britishness.

*Of course I remain immensely British, as British as I have ever been, and even though I live here [India] and have done for many years and feel very settled, it is a complicated and alien society. I would never presume to understand India fully and I think it would be presumptuous to suggest I could fully integrate. (Male 50–60, Businessman, Delhi, India)*

### **Emotional Britishness**

The preceding categories have not given much scope for more positive expressions of Britishness (either articulated explicitly as pride in being British or in being English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish). In our research we found that such attachments do exist – and quite widely. One way in which respondents talked about their sense of Britishness was to say that it is a fundamental part of who they are and it forms the bedrock of their character.

*I think at the core of me is an Englishness that's there and I don't have the core American history. But I love America and I like living here and it's home. There's all these English traditions that were part of life when I was growing up. (Male, 70–80, retired, Ohio, USA)*

This sense of being forever attached to Britain in some form manifests itself in a number of ways. In our discussions with UK officials they mentioned that they are struck by the

extent to which emigrants, some whom had been living abroad for decades, clung to their British passport. This might seem to be a prime example of matter-of-fact Britishness, but one official at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office passport and documents services group felt it went deeper than this:

*They still retain a very strong link to the passport. In Australia we continue to issue around 60–70,000 passports, and most of those are renewals. Even in the States – you imagine people are setting up a new life, change themselves – it’s extraordinary how many of these young professionals will still want to retain the passport.*

Another way in which the tie to Britain can manifest itself is in a continuing interest in UK affairs. Several interviewees expressed the sentiment that they liked to hear that Britain was doing well.

*I read Bulgarian news as well but I still maintain a significant emotional tie there [to the UK] and want to know what is going on. Calling somewhere home doesn’t rule out anything, it just is the place where you invest your emotional energy right now. I will never be Bulgarian. So I guess I will continue to be British. (Male, 30–40, chartered accountant, Bulgaria)*

*I’m very proud of the historical achievements of Britain and there are many things in Britain which I think are superb and hopefully would be preserved. Just because we live in Spain I don’t want to lose my affection for things in Britain. (Male, 70–80, retired, Andalusia, Spain)*

*We’re all interested that Britain’s okay. We’re all happy we don’t live there, to a degree. But we’re all proudly American. We’re always happier when the [US and UK] governments are in alignment even when Thatcher and Reagan were in power. You feel like you’ve made a good choice, like you’ve come to a cousin. We’re all the same, and that’s always a nice thing. (Editor of the Union Jack newspaper, Florida, USA)*

Among older and more traditionally minded Britons there is often a strong sense – sometimes enhanced by living overseas – that there is such a thing as an essential British character; a way of doing things that is different and – it must be said – better. Examples given of this British character were fairly predictable: good manners, a sense of fair play, incorruptibility.

Some interviewees were surprised at the emotional attachment they felt for the UK and found that being abroad increased that feeling. We heard a number of examples of what might be called ‘absence makes the heart grow fonder’ nationalism.

*I never knew I was a ra-ra God Save the Queen kind of person. But you get quite keen on somewhere when you’re not there. I suppose it’s made me more like, ‘There are things that are great about England!’ (Female, 20–30, unemployed, New York City, USA)*

This feeling can manifest itself most strongly when a UK national comes to think about taking up long-term residence or citizenship in their new country.

*[Spanish] residency was easy and it is actually a necessity. Citizenship, no, because I feel that eventually we are going to return to Britain and because I feel I am British. I spent 34 years as a servant of the Crown. (Male, 50–60, retired, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

*I think the words ‘proud to be British’ are important. When I finally put my hand up and said allegiance and became an American citizen, I didn’t feel I was losing my British citizenship. I like to think I’m hanging on to dual citizenship. But I don’t think the American looks at it that way because I think now when you put up your hand, you basically relinquish anything else. But I haven’t. And I’m proud to be both British and Welsh. (Male, 60–70, airline executive, New York City, USA)*

### **Britishness-plus**

Under this category we put British emigrants who told us they felt they were in some important sense British, but that this was not their sole identity. Commonly, ‘Britishness-plus’ was articulated in a similar way to the airline executive quoted above: ‘I’m proud to be both British and Welsh.’ Many interviewees in all case study countries defined themselves as Scottish, Welsh, Irish (and very occasionally, English) as well as or rather than British. It might be argued that this would be better described as ‘Britishness-minus’ – as the most important affinity is with the nation rather than the Union. But, perhaps surprisingly, we found no UK nationals overseas who rejected the British label outright – other than those mentioned previously who rejected any national identity at all. This suggests to us that the UK government can pursue engagement strategies with all parts of the British diaspora without cutting across the efforts that devolved administrations (particularly the government of Scotland) are making to link up with their expats. Indeed, the strategies can and should be complementary.

Among UK emigrants who have a minority ethnic heritage, the experience of living overseas often seems to enhance their sense of their Britishness, but not at the expense of their ethnic identity. In India, we spoke to a British Indian who said she felt more British because she found some aspects of Indian life strange, but also more Indian because she enjoyed lots of aspects of modern Indian culture.

*If I do end up living in the West when I am older, I will have a stronger sense of being Indian. (Female, 30–40, international NGO employee, Delhi, India)*

Similar sentiments were expressed by minority ethnic British interviewees in Dubai:

*In some ways I would say [I felt] more British because when I moved here there weren’t as many Brits as there are now, so your British identity, I felt I was reinforcing that more. But now I would say being British is a large part of my personality and it is a part that I love, it’s a part that I’m proud of, but I’m proud as well of being a Muslim. (Female 30–40, mother, Dubai)*

*As I'm living in a multicultural environment, being British is probably something that defines me much more than if I was living in Britain. I wouldn't define myself as being British, because everybody around me would also define themselves as British, so I suppose it accentuates my ethnic background more by being an expatriate. (Male, 40–50, university employee, Dubai)*

In both Bulgaria and Spain we spoke to British emigrants who were keen to try to develop a sense of identity that embraced both their Britishness and their commitment to their new country of residence. In the US, British nationals sometimes expressed the duality of their identity through reference to the so-called 'special relationship' between the two countries, and the bonds of history and heritage.

*There's that connection between the US and the UK going back to how Britain and the US worked together in World War II. My parents lived through that. They're remembering how much the two countries owe each other in common heritage. I love reading books about the founding fathers and how Britain and the US separated and how they have stayed together over time... (Male, 50–60, lawyer, New York City, USA)*

### **Global Britishness**

In Chapter 6 we develop an argument that if the UK wants to 'make the most' of its diaspora it should be thinking of how its nationals overseas can assist in the achievement of wider global goals rather than narrow national interests. This line of argument is partly based on our view that contrary to some unfair and dated caricatures and stereotypes, British emigrants (like most emigrants) are dynamic, entrepreneurial, positive and outward-looking individuals, who are internationalist by nature and by dint of their actions. They are interested in the world and in particular in their country of residence and often reject what they consider the narrow nationalism and inward-looking tendencies of Britons who have not 'seen the world' in the way they have.

Of course, British emigrants are not some wholly benign force spreading good practice and good will, and many people around the world will be rightly sceptical of any view that paints the UK government, British business and the British diaspora as paragons of progressive ideals. It is also true that we found varying degrees of interest in what might be termed a global progressive agenda among emigrants in our case study countries, perhaps reflecting the very different states of development and types of society in those countries. Interest was highest, predictably, in countries such as India, UAE and Bulgaria – and less so (because it seemed less relevant) in fellow Western developed countries like Spain and the US. However, our research did show that across all countries many UK nationals overseas want to use what they see as positive and forward-thinking ideas to improve society in their countries of residence.

This tendency was visible in the private sector, for instance, where positive outcomes include the spread of CSR (corporate social responsibility). Our research suggests that British emigrants play important roles in multinationals and in local companies in

spreading ethical business practices and high quality standards:

*I would say that that has been the key, bringing in international best practice to Bulgaria. And that has built a framework around which other local businesses are crystallising their own policies. It's the norm now to do business in an ethical fashion. (Male, 30–40, chartered accountant, Bulgaria)*

Even in the US, some interviewees felt there were ideas and practices they could bring to business there.

*I'm starting to hear things on the news, and I'm thinking, 'we did that four years ago!' (Female, 40–50, telecoms executive, New York City, USA)*

Many British emigrants are active in the third sector, either as employees of non-governmental organisations, such as Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) or the big aid charities, or as volunteers in local community charities, such as the International Women's Club, which champions social causes. Many are also involved in setting up civil society organisations.

*In the UK there is no need for me to set up a book club. There is umpteen million. Here, if you don't put yourself in that position and set it up, it probably won't ever happen. (Female, 30–40, mother, Bulgaria)*

*There are opportunities for charitable work and I've been involved a tiny bit with that. I know other people who have been involved much more ...there are one or two Brits I know who got heavily involved in Spanish charities and I've been to a number of British organised fundraisers for a Spanish council charity. (Male, 50–60, retired, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

In Dubai we came across a particularly activist couple, long-time residents of the Gulf, who had set up a charity called 'Helping Hands UAE' which helps labourers, domestic workers and distressed families:

*When we first started doing it, so many of [our donors] said, 'we've been in Dubai a long time and wanted to give back' but didn't know how to do it. It's a win situation for the men and for the donors. We just feel grateful and privileged actually to be able to do it. It's something we didn't plan to do when we came here by any means, but it's something that's grown; it has a life of its own now.*

It is important not to make too many grand claims for the altruism and benevolence of Brits abroad. Not all have the inclination or the time to 'do good', and many community or charity activities revolve around the British community itself and could be seen as self help. However, we did observe – as other researchers have done before us – that expat communities can generate considerable social capital which, particularly if it is encouraged and supported, could be deployed to help local communities.

In countries like India, UAE and Bulgaria, a number of the British emigrants expressed an interest in promoting what they saw as more progressive ideas about environmental

protection and sustainability in their new country of residence.

*Rivers are clogged up with plastic bags and cartons and cigarettes and rubbish. It is a mess. It just seems such a shame in such a beautiful country. There is no collective 'keep it clean' mentality. I know it was late to come in England but I think we're there now, people are more socially responsible about litter. We're not there yet here. We're celebrating the fact now that we can recycle our litter, that's a new thing that's come within the last year. This is new thinking, this is good, moving ahead. (Female, 40–50, businesswoman, Bulgaria)*

More generally, we found many British emigrants who were interested in agendas around the promotion of human rights and democracy.

*Now I can vote here in the EU elections and local elections, I want to get rid of some people, they are so old. This might be a turning point, it could get to the point where it is 60 per cent towards the EU green friendly party who run it a bit nicer and that aren't so corrupt and don't take backhanders. (Male, 30–40, Bulgaria)*

The sense among British emigrants that they can bring some positive ideas to the country in which they now live is not restricted to those who could be portrayed – or would described themselves – as liberals or progressives. In Dubai, for instance, mention was made of more traditional civic institutions such as the St George's Society, Girl Guides, Scouts and Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

*All of these things I think help to support British ideas and British values. Britain is certainly viewed by many people as a very positive place. I know people who I've met when I'm travelling often describe Britain as a place they'd love to live in, because it's a very tolerant society. I don't think the British government is doing all it can to accentuate its positives... it's probably doing a good job of boosting British business. (Male, 30–40, teacher, Dubai)*

In line with other researchers, we found that most emigrants see themselves as pioneers, who have shown spirit and enterprise in forging a life abroad, and through so doing represent a positive force in the countries where they live. This doesn't have to manifest itself through go-ahead business or voluntary work, but rather through different ways of living. A number of interviewees in countries as diverse as Bulgaria and India felt they were living a more satisfying and fulfilling way, less driven by selfish and materialistic targets. Other researchers (see Benson 2009) have observed that some British emigrant communities (in her case in the Lot in South West France) could be viewed as adherents of 'counter urbanisation' – getting back to simpler, slower, truer ways of living. While this might be seen as a reactionary tendency among some, the emigrants themselves see it proudly as positive and enlightened.

Generally, our interviewees in the five case study countries were keen to be respectful to the cultures, customs and traditions of their country of residence – even if only by keeping a



distance. In this context, it is important for members of the diaspora to calibrate their enthusiasm for being agents of change so that it does not look patronising or arrogant.

*It's not the British colonialism you're actually coming across here, implanting their values and belief sets. The values and beliefs sets that we have are very much based on our social upbringing, mixed with our work, training and experience. And in the small way that we can influence, through the teaching and business cultural work we do, we can hopefully make some kind of impression. (Male, 40-50, project manager, Bulgaria)*

## Conclusions

In this chapter we have focused on the integration of British nationals in their new countries of residence while also considering the degree of attachment they maintain to the UK. We suggest that the evidence shows, perhaps counter-intuitively, that a British emigrant who is well integrated into his or her local community, and is making the most of the opportunities that living overseas offer, is quite as likely (in some cases, more likely) to retain a sense of British identity as a British emigrant who lives in a separate British or multi-national enclave abroad. Moreover, and crucially, we argue that this is likely to be a much more productive characteristic than being distanced from the local culture and community.

Those Britons we met and spoke to overseas who were fully functional in the society in which they were living were able to utilise their attributes (many of which they identified as part of their British identity) in a positive and outward-looking way. This British identity (or English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish identity) was never expressed as a narrow, nationalistic one – indeed in a number of cases, our interviewees had dual nationality – but generally they felt the attachment actively and keenly and wanted to make something of it. As we shall see in the next chapter, there was some sense that the UK government was not making as much of this as they might, and there was general enthusiasm for greater engagement in appropriate and forward-looking ways with UK missions overseas.

By contrast, the British emigrants who are much less integrated in their countries of residence appeared to maintain a narrower and less positive sense of attachment to the UK. These emigrants are both isolated from the society in which they reside and are alienated from the homeland. This does not always lead to negative experiences of life abroad – some thrive in international expatriate colonies, seeing themselves as international citizens. In places like Dubai, in some ways a rather artificial construct, this is perhaps inevitable. However, generally we contend that living a life that is cut off from local communities in the country of residence is not conducive to a full and satisfying émigré experience for the individuals involved and in a wider sense is damaging for the image and interests of the UK.

Given these conclusions, we argue that the UK government should be at the forefront of encouraging and supporting its citizens overseas to be active citizens in the society in which they live and, through so doing, to help in the promotion of the UK abroad. These are arguments that we develop in Chapter 6.



# 5. Current engagement with the British diaspora

## Key points

- The UK government's current engagement with the British diaspora is, by international standards, under-developed, but significant strides have been taken in recent years.
- The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has had some success in its efforts to encourage British emigrants to register with the British consulate through the LOCATE database, but many emigrants still do not see what benefits they will get from registering and the level of sign-up remains low.
- The UK government makes little effort to encourage the diaspora to exercise their right to vote in UK and European elections, though the political parties are now more active in courting the emigrant vote.
- The basic information and support that the UK government provides to emigrants is of a high standard and our research and independent evaluation shows high levels of customer satisfaction.
- Campaigns such as 'Know Before You Go' do provide emigrants with comprehensive information on living abroad, but some emigrants still seem to be unaware of it and to feel that more could be done to provide them with information pro-actively.
- The UK government is doing more 'outreach' work with emigrant communities, but it could learn lessons from other countries which seem to foster more in-depth relationships with their diasporas and could do more to mobilise the British diaspora to support British state interests.
- While networks of UK businesses operating abroad do get support, more could be done (learning from other countries such as Australia, Canada, Ireland and New Zealand) to support and encourage other diaspora initiatives.
- There have been more active efforts by the Scottish government in recent years to engage with its diaspora, but it is not obvious that this is being closely coordinated with the UK government's own engagement.

Until quite recently, there seems to us to have been a tendency, not least at the UK government level, to view some British emigrant communities with nervousness, even embarrassment. In the popular mind, some Brits abroad have been caricatured as reactionary types prone to old colonial-style arrogance, while other groups have been associated with the tawdry end of mass tourism. Our research shows that these stereotypes and notions certainly paint a false picture now. Likewise, British diplomatic and consular missions have moved a long way from their old-fashioned image to become more modern, inclusive and responsive to 21st century problems and opportunities. There are, we will argue, conditions in place for a dynamic partnership between state and diaspora, if the right policies are pursued.

### **What does diaspora engagement involve?**

In this chapter we focus on how the UK government, through its various missions overseas, currently engages with the British diaspora, and examine how this compares with the policies and practices of other governments. As we have seen in Chapter 4, UK nationals stay in touch with each other, and organise and mobilise, first and foremost through their own efforts, formal and informal. So this chapter places particular emphasis on the question of how direct state action, through consular and other services, can support *voluntary* British diaspora interaction and engagement. Helping Britons abroad to help themselves is sensible policy at the best of times, but given the economic constraints that will face the FCO in the next few years it is doubly so.

Such an approach chimes with what Ancien, Boyle and Kitchen (2009a:11) identify as the ‘Kuznetsov Problem’, as articulated by the World Bank expert Yevgeny Kuznetsov: ‘how can government provide a coherent centralised framework to assure diverse bottom up initiatives that fit specific local circumstances?’ The same authors draw on the work of O’Riain (2004) to suggest there are five levels of home state action:

- **Absent** – simply put, the state leaves the diaspora to organise itself and its engagement with the homeland
- **Custodian** – the state nurtures new and emerging diasporic connections
- **Midwifery** – the state identifies specific champions but leaves initiatives in their hands
- **Husbandry** – the state works closely with existing diaspora organisations and networks
- **Demiurge** – the state takes charge of diaspora activities.

This schema was presented at a seminar on how the Irish and Scottish governments could learn from each other, and it is interesting to note that while the Irish approach thus far has been quite light touch, allowing ‘a thousand flowers to bloom’, the Scottish government’s approach has been more state-centric and controlling. In Chapter 6 we will be making more detailed recommendations as to how the UK government might progress its own diaspora engagement strategy, but at this point we would only say that, for a variety of reasons, the Irish model seems more appropriate.

This means the UK government should focus less on setting up state institutions to

govern and control the diaspora (though some are necessary), and less on extending rights and extracting obligations (though these are important in some ways) (Gamlen 2006), and more on:

- **Capacity-building initiatives** aimed at encouraging voluntary diaspora development and the fostering of a partnership between the home state and the diaspora, based on mutual interest and the interest of the country of residence.

This approach avoids the concern expressed by some (Basch *et al* 1994) that home state diaspora policies may be a heavy-handed attempt to exert control over nationals who have exercised their right to exit the state. De Haas (2007) cited by Gamlen (2008b) highlights a notorious example of this syndrome in which the Moroccan government set up a grouping of state-controlled networks for émigrés called Fédération des Amicales des Marocains (or Amicales, for short).

This takes us back to Kuznetsov, who with Sabel (2006), argues that the best way to maximise the success of diaspora engagement is to strengthen the intrinsic motivation of emigrants through *appropriate* extrinsic interventions. Although in most diaspora engagement situations the aim is to get emigrants to support development back in the home country, we think it also can be applied to supporting them to succeed in their country of residence in ways that elaborate the home state's broader foreign policy aims. Diaspora communities supported in this way can then become what Kuznetsov and Sabel call 'bridges and antennae' for their home country states.

Once the level of diaspora is decided upon, the question of the type of engagement arises. We have set out below a list (which we believe to be fairly exhaustive).

- Providing pre-departure information for emigrants
- Registering emigrants
- Providing documentation and re-documentation services
- Providing emergency assistance and crisis support (including return where necessary)
- Providing welfare assistance to the diaspora living abroad
- Providing ongoing advice and information of interest to the diaspora
- Extending and upholding citizenship rights
- Promoting and supporting remittance transfers
- Encouraging direct diaspora investment in the home state
- Encouraging philanthropy to support the homeland
- Supporting schemes of skills and knowledge transfer to the home state
- Encouraging and facilitating short-term and tourist home visits
- Programmes for return migration (particularly of highly skilled or high value emigrants)
- Supporting or signposting services that help with local integration (language or orientation classes, local voter registration, and so on)

- Signposting, supporting or initiating opportunities for national celebration or bonding (such as receptions and events to mark independence days or national events and awards and citizenship ceremonies)
- Signposting, supporting or initiating business and employment networks to aid the diaspora in its pursuance of business and employment development in the overseas country
- Supporting diaspora community or charity groups
- Establishing business mentoring and student intern schemes
- Voter registration and campaigns to encourage voting in home state elections
- Supporting emigrant knowledge, social and cultural networks
- Mobilising diaspora to support home state interests and to project home state image abroad – political, economic and cultural.

Some of these activities are less relevant to UK diaspora engagement than others, and of course a number can be bundled together. Below we discuss those that we think are most applicable to the UK government and the British diaspora, under the headings of: registration, basic support, outreach and mobilisation. We will also consider as a special case study the diaspora engagement strategy of the government of Scotland, which has obvious relevance to the UK as a whole.

## Registration

### LOCATE

It is common for states to encourage their nationals living abroad to register so that they have some way of keeping track of them and keeping in contact. This provides the consulate and other bodies with a database of information about citizens overseas that can be used to reach people in times of crisis and emergency, if nothing else. The development of online technologies in the last 20 years has made this process easier, but our research shows that it still remains a considerable challenge for governments to encourage their nationals to register and to keep their databases up to date.

Developing the UK's online registration tool LOCATE is seen as a priority for the UK consular service. A representative at the FCO in London told us:

*We are asking consulate posts 'how do you get people to register?' and 'what information can you provide to the people that register, and pass on via email and SMS?' 'How can we use it to boost voter turnout and to bring people together for wider purposes?' A lot can be achieved by getting people online to register, if it is done right.*

The FCO has worked hard to ensure that emigrants are aware of LOCATE and understand the importance of registering. When it was first set up in 2007, a major media launch was held, and it is still widely advertised on nearly 400 commercial partner websites and on posters at UK airports, underground stations and bus routes to and from airports.

In the course of our research, we heard about many innovative initiatives to encourage registration, including partnerships with travel companies, providing information about LOCATE in places where Britons will see it (such as advertising on free city maps), and using the Internet to alert different audiences to its existence. For example, a UK consulate representative in San Francisco told us they are now using Facebook and Twitter to encourage people to register online. In other initiatives, consulates have produced LOCATE beer mats which are distributed to bars where British expats drink or they have staged road shows. A centrally administered fund called 'In-Resort' has financed nine specific 'in-country' campaigns focused on LOCATE registration. As of September 2009, there were 57,000 registered users.

These kinds of initiatives are to be applauded for their energy and creativity, but it is clear that many British emigrants still do not sign up, largely because, according to officials in UK missions in our case study countries, they do not see the point of doing so. Recent scandals in the UK in which official databases containing sensitive personal information have been lost or stolen have further encouraged people to be wary. A consular official in Dubai told us that they had very low registration partly because British emigrants are fearful of the taxman.

In Bulgaria, too, there is low sign-up – with 'swallows' not engaging at all (official information about temporary emigrants is very sketchy as a result), and permanent residents questioning the value of registering:

*If you're based permanently, it doesn't meet your needs and it requires constant updating, so I'm not happy with the website. (Male, 30–40, businessman, Bulgaria)*

In many countries, the emigrants we talked to did not know about the registration process, were confused about its purpose, or having registered initially, had not subsequently updated their personal information. Our researcher in the US did not meet a single person who had registered for the LOCATE programme. All the British emigrants said they had not done so because they were unfamiliar with the programme or saw no need for it. In Dubai there was a general uncertainty among those who had registered in the past as to whether they needed to renew their registration annually. Others who had registered felt the online system seemed more geared towards visitors than residents. In India there was a mixed response, with some interviewees ignorant of LOCATE and others strongly supportive of it.

One obvious limitation on extending registration is the cost. A consulate official we interviewed in Delhi estimated that only around 3 per cent of British residents in India were registered with LOCATE. He told us that in the aftermath of the Mumbai bombings in 2008, the consulate wanted to run adverts in three newspapers advising registration and linking to the FCO website and giving advice, but they were unable to do so because the hundred thousand pound-plus cost was judged prohibitive.

The UK is not alone in struggling to make registration work, as our discussions with the consular services of other countries revealed.

*We would like to do more to get people to register. We did have an advertising campaign two years ago, to register online, but a lot of Australians don't do it. Mainly because of the effort it takes: it's one more job when you are going overseas.* (Australian consular representative, London)

The Canadian consulate in London calculated that 'maybe 2500 Canadians have registered when we know there are hundreds of thousands'. The US puts a lot of effort into registration of its nationals overseas, but it too has issues with registration, including problems with finding the resources to maintain the database and considerable suspicion among their emigrants about its purpose. Their representative told us: 'I think people don't want to be tracked; they don't know what we do with the information.' As it happens, not much is done with the information – which is also part of the problem.

Things are different in countries where emigrants feel less safe and secure, and where they anticipate they may need the help from their government's missions overseas. We heard time and again from UK officials, and from consulate officials from other countries, that registration is much higher in developing countries or countries where security is more of an issue.

*In countries with crisis cases it's much more necessary and is also promoted more.* (German consulate official, London)

*We found worldwide that people tend to register when there is a crisis. So we had thousands of people registering in Lebanon a couple of years ago, and you will see people now probably registering around Congo and for Iran who weren't registering before.* (United States consulate representative, London)

*We do notice that if there is an issue [online registrations rise]. For example, we had very few registrations for the Kokoda Track [a walking trail in Papua New Guinea popular with Australian tourists] over the last couple of months, but we know that there are hundreds of people on the track. Now when two people died on the track, our online registration just zoomed up.* (Australian consulate representative, London)

*If it is a dangerous country, you will hear about them because they will register. If it's a country like Spain, they probably feel quite happy and not so interested in keeping those contacts.* (Canadian consulate representative, London)

British emigrants registered in greater numbers in Dubai during the Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In other cases, British emigrants we spoke to were not registered in their current country of residence, but did register in places where they had lived previously. For instance, a Briton now living in the United States had registered when living in Prague in the early 1990s because he saw living there as 'more of a situation when you might have to call on it', but he viewed registration in the US as unnecessary.

It is clear to us that while the FCO has been making great efforts to market LOCATE and encourage registration, it will remain a difficult task to get widespread, never mind blanket, sign-up because unless emigrants are in obviously unstable and dangerous countries they will not see how it is useful to them.

### **Registration for voting**

As we saw in Chapter 4, a lot of British emigrants, for many different reasons, do not exercise their right to vote in British general and European parliamentary elections. Our research suggests that UK missions overseas do not put very much effort into voter registration. Some basic information about keeping your vote by registering as an overseas elector is included in the standard leaflets distributed to emigrants, but there seems to be very limited marketing of voting entitlements. As mentioned previously, the Electoral Commission has been running a campaign to encourage voter registration.<sup>10</sup> It has had some limited success – 7,400 people downloaded the registration form from their website during a campaign in 2009. However, even if all these downloads were converted into actual registrations it would only increase total registration to around 20,000 – a minuscule proportion of those eligible among the British overseas population.

The political parties are becoming more active in trying to mobilise British emigrants to support them. For instance, the Conservatives have the Conservatives Abroad association, which held a conference in Mallorca in the autumn of 2009, and Labour International represents the Labour Party's members and supporters who are abroad either temporarily or permanently. However, these efforts are clearly limited in scale and are not having much success as yet in encouraging British emigrants to exercise their right to vote in general elections. By way of contrast, nearly one million ballot papers were sent to military and overseas citizen voters in the United States Presidential Election in 2008 – and 69 per cent were returned (United States Election Assistance Commission 2009).

Other countries put more effort into voter registration and voting in elections and some make it a priority. Israel, to take an extreme example, has actually encouraged its overseas nationals to fly home to vote, with political parties paying the air fares; while Indonesia and Algeria have set up facilities for large-scale voting at their overseas embassies (Rogers 1999). We heard that Australia is running an extensive advertising campaign in the UK to encourage voting in national elections, while an Irish consulate representative told us there has even been some discussion of having elected seats for the overseas populations, 'to give them a voice'. This is an idea that some states have already instituted, notably the French who give representation in their parliament to expatriates through the Assembly for French People Abroad. In 2009, 11 new overseas constituencies were created, including one for Northern Europe which, because it is dominated by French expats in London, has been dubbed the 'South Kensington' seat (see Rawlinson 2009). The Filipino consulate in London has put a strong priority on voter registration in the last five years,

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<sup>10</sup> The Electoral Commission has produced a downloadable form available at <http://ukinnl.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/3190590/electoral-info>

but this has not had as much success as was hoped for. As mentioned above, Americans overseas vote in large numbers and the culture of voting is so strong among the American diaspora that US consular officials told us the government does not have to market registration very actively. There are, however, very active and well funded NGOs dedicated to encouraging overseas voting, such as the Overseas Vote Foundation.<sup>11</sup>

In our view, the American model may well be the best way of encouraging voter registration, with the UK government providing basic information about entitlements but the political parties themselves making the effort to mobilise emigrants to support them in elections. In order to do so, they may well have to design policies which specifically appeal to overseas Britons and do more to ensure that expats have a voice that is listened to in British politics (see more below).

### **Basic support**

Our discussions with consulate officials in London highlighted the fact that the expat enjoying life overseas is generally happy to be left alone. However, when something goes wrong... they come running. Indeed, this is the only time that many people overseas will have anything to do with their overseas missions.

*The more temporary person will come straight to us, and certainly the traveller will. And you won't hear from an expat for a long time, but if they break the law, they do prefer to be treated as an Australian citizen!* (Australia consulate representative, London)

*The main purpose is still consular support for Germans in distress.* (German consulate representative, London)

*People seem to find us when they are in trouble.* (United States consulate official, London)

The FCO issues a leaflet, 'Going to Live Abroad', outlining its main services, distributing five million each year. It focuses on the basics – such as issuing replacement passports – and on providing help in times of trouble – for example support and help in cases such as child abductions, deaths of relatives overseas, missing people and kidnapping. The leaflet also has a long list of things UK missions will not do. These include sorting out disputes with local authorities and, in particular, helping out individuals in financial difficulty.

To reinforce the key message that there are limits on the help that Consular Services can provide, and so to manage people's expectations, a number of targeted campaigns have been run in the last couple of years. These include short 'fillers' and information slots on TV and radio. Slogans have included:

- 'We'll give you a hand, not a hand out'
- 'Find out what the British Embassy can do for you'

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11. See <https://www.overseasvotefoundation.org/overseas/home.htm>



- ‘Embassy, my jam won’t set, can you help?’ – which highlighted the bizarre requests that UK missions can receive.

Our interviewees in the case study countries generally reported that embassies, high commissions and consulates provided a fairly good service – but then few had any reason to make great demands on them. In the US, older emigrants struggled to remember when they last went to the consulate. The quote ‘I went in 1972 to get an emergency passport to return to the UK for a funeral... it was pretty good’ gives a flavour of the general response. Several people did mention, however, that it is very difficult to get through to speak to someone on the phone and that the embassy had contracted out customer service to a company that charges for calls.

*Even with passports, they do it all out of Washington now. They put you on hold and you’re paying for it. You’re paying for it!’* (Editor of the *Union Jack* newspaper, Florida, USA)

In Dubai, most emigrants found staff to be helpful and efficient in dealing with the services they used most often, such as passport renewals, registration of births, deaths and marriages, attestation of certificates and visa renewals. But a couple we met in the Emirate told us that the two times they approached the consulate regarding legal advice, once for a friend who had been jailed for their involvement in a car accident and once for a friend who had fallen into distressed circumstances, they were simply given a list of lawyers to contact and were offered no other help.

*What makes me a little bit uncomfortable are the laws and the uncertainty of the laws...one day the law could be this and then in a few weeks’ time the laws have changed. Even though we are British, we have a British passport, I think if God forbid we were to ever get into any kind of trouble, the stories that I hear...you’re really kind of left on your own.* (Female, 30–40, housewife, Dubai)

The FCO response to this sort of complaint is to emphasise that its consular staff are not legal experts and that they can only really signpost emigrants to appropriate services. The message that Britons abroad (holiday makers as well as emigrants) should take responsibility for their own safety and well-being and not ‘come crying’ to UK missions when they get into trouble is one that can sound harsh, and more to the point, it often doesn’t seem to get through. However, in our view some emigrants do have unrealistic expectations of their consulates in such situations.

A number of emigrants in Dubai suggested that the UK government should play a more proactive role in educating emigrants coming to the Emirate so that Britons would not fall foul of local customs and laws.

*The British government have it in their hand to inform...they really should make this a priority, the laws, the dress code, general behaviour. I’m sure the UAE government would appreciate that, if the British government took the initiative to educate their nationals coming here, and then I’m sure that other European*

*countries would do likewise. Because of our position and the respect that we hold here, we ought to take the lead.* (Male, 60–70, property manager, Dubai)

In fact, as part of its 'Know Before You Go' (KBYG) campaign the FCO has addressed these issues, with an internal evaluation exercise estimating that 69 per cent of KBYG PR activity (equating to more than 500 media articles or mentions) has been devoted to advice and warnings about local laws and customs.<sup>12</sup>

Specific communication activities have included:

- The Britons Bare All campaign (summer 2009) which had the main message that Brits abroad risked imprisonment and heavy fines for breaking local indecency laws
- The *British Behaviour Abroad* report which focused on encouraging Britons to behave responsibly and sensitively while overseas.

The 'Know Before You Go' campaign which the FCO operates with the help of more than 300 partners, including airlines, financial companies, holiday firms and charities, is of course specifically designed to help people emigrating (as well as those simply travelling abroad) to be well prepared.<sup>13</sup> It has been going since 2001 and is one of the most comprehensive information campaigns run by any government.

Recent initiatives to help people plan for emigration include:

- A regular slot with *A Place In The Sun* magazine, where FCO staff answered questions posed by the readership over 12 months.
- A stand and speaking slots at the *A Place In The Sun* travel show.
- A video released in 2009 highlighting issues faced by expats in Spain and the help that consulates and the Department of Health can provide
- A radio filler 'Going to live abroad' which is played on both UK radio stations and English language stations overseas.

It is hard to see how the FCO could do much more, unless its resources were unlimited. However, in our research for this project and for an earlier project (Rutter and Andrew 2009) we spoke to older British emigrants who had returned to the UK, sometimes because of health problems or financial difficulties, and we still found that many emigrants did remarkably little pre-departure preparation. This issue is becoming more pertinent in countries like Spain where significant numbers among the British community are finding that their dream retirement or new life in the sun has gone sour. Older people are a particular concern, but the recession is also hurting younger British emigrants, particularly in Spain and the UAE.

*What is significant is finding more families that were working here going back. They came out with good intentions, happily settled down, then the big economic turnaround came, they can't pay the rent and they have to go.* (NGO president, Spain)

12. Information supplied by FCO Consular Directorate

13. See website at [www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/about-kbyg-campaign/](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/about-kbyg-campaign/)

Generally, the range of basic support and information provided by the UK consulates seems to be of a high (and improving) standard – and to compare well with the services of other countries. In October 2009, an internal National Audit Office report for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office concluded:

*On the whole, we found the Consular Directorate to have successfully implemented the majority of recommendations made by both the NAO and PAC, with the beneficial effects of these now being evidenced.*

The FCO also points out that its consular services received 94 per cent customer satisfaction from feedback questionnaires (June 2009).<sup>14</sup>

Support is also provided, through signposting and basic information, on such things as accessing legal advice, finding accommodation and securing employment. In most cases, of course, British emigrants sort these things out themselves – and are happy enough to do so. Among our interviewees who worked for bigger companies, such support was often provided by the company as part of a relocation package. However we did hear some criticism that the UK government could be doing more to help emigrants to find work and to set up businesses:

*The consulate needs staff who have an accurate idea of how the job market works here... to be open to the different sorts of people who might need help... I'd also like to see them offering loans to set up small businesses, or supporting people to find suitable vocational training. (Female, 20–30, teacher, Delhi, India)*

## Outreach

The traditional consulate model was based on the idea that emigrants who need a service or some help at a time of difficulty will approach the consulate. These services were not widely marketed and it was not seen as the job of the consulate to reach out to the emigrant community. This is a very dated model and most countries, including the UK, now have active outreach programmes.

In 2008 and 2009, UK consulates held outreach events with British communities in many locations including a number of cities in China, Almaty, Dhaka, Geneva, Havana, Hanoi, Lisbon, Madrid, Mexico City, Santiago and Karachi.

In Spain and Portugal, there has been an outreach campaign involving:

- 22,000 leaflets/posters in key locations
- Road shows to signpost to services
- Radio advertisements on English language stations
- 2,000 folder handouts
- 20,000 flyers in passports issued in country.

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<sup>14</sup> Information provided by FCO Consular Directorate

These initiatives are welcome, but as the FCO would be the first to admit, there is still room to enhance the scope and depth of contact with the British diaspora.

### **Disseminating information**

All the consulate officials we spoke to in our research told us about initiatives to push out more information to their diasporas (and to tourists). The Australian government puts a consular handbook in every passport and Canada has a similar scheme. Australia also provides pamphlets about assistance to Australians, dual nationals, women travellers, information about sexual assault, what happens if you go to prison, and travel advice (where there is a strong emphasis on the traveller contacting an embassy overseas). An Australian consulate representative in London told us that the Australian foreign minister, ‘especially the previous one’, pushes the fact that ‘consular services are there to be used’.

As we have seen, the UK government also disseminates leaflets, including ‘Going to Live Abroad’ and its pre-departure advice ‘Know Before You Go’ but it now finds it is more effective to direct emigrants to websites where they can download the information. In a similar vein the US consulate has stopped printing its monthly newsletter for its nationals in the UK; it had become ‘too unwieldy’, according to the representative we spoke to. The newsletter has been replaced with a blog and web chats that attract around 50–100 participants per session.

Like most governments, Germany uses a range of approaches, but for its diaspora in fellow developed countries it assumes that most people have a computer and so distributes most information online. We have already seen that UK consulates are using email, Facebook sites, twitter feeds and staff blogs.

However, our research suggests that the results of this kind of approach are patchy at best. In the US, for instance, many emigrants said they thought there needed to be more publicity about the services available to them. The editor of Florida’s *Union Jack* newspaper confirmed this view:

*Most people have no idea what the British consulate does, other than when you’re abroad and get in trouble you call the British consulate. That’s it. You lose your passport, you get mistreated. That’s about it really.*

In Dubai, too, a lot of interviewees felt that there should be greater dissemination of information, possibly in the form of a newsletter or website that gives advice on cultural activities and events, British clubs, code of conduct, and changes in the law concerning employment and business regulations. Consulate officials were candid about how hard it was to reach the diaspora: ‘It is really difficult to get messages out to everybody’, but also in how limited their efforts had been: ‘We haven’t done anything through the media.’

In Dubai and India we noted something of a ‘chicken and egg’ situation: consulate officials bemoaned the fact that they could not reach the diaspora because they would not sign up to LOCATE, while the diaspora could not see the point of registering when they did not get much in the way of useful information as a result. This is a problem that is

recognised in the FCO. One of its officials in the UK passport and documents services group said:

*In the past we have talked about the LOCATE scheme being our interface with the community. Not just about them registering at a crisis... it could have been a bit nanny state, big brother, whatever. But some thought went into thinking about how can we become more proactive in our messaging and our communications with people?*

Lessons could perhaps be learnt from the Canadians, whose consular service in the UK has a strong focus on finding out what information its nationals want and need and then trying to provide it. To help with the process they have used straightforward 'out there' techniques – including having a booth in Trafalgar Square on Canada Day to conduct an informal survey. The consulate representative in London told us that the key to their approach is to be helpful and not too intrusive:

*What we are trying to do for the resident community is to find a way to communicate information relevant to them, to keep those ties alive, without infiltrating their existence and without imposing any kind of connection.*

The broader issue for the UK government in this area is that services overseas for British emigrants are not properly informed by the client group, as a senior consulate official conceded:

*Ours is not a customer-led service. We get feedback from various sources, but it's very unsystematic. We need to aggregate, spot trends and see where problems are arising and demand is growing.*

Furthermore, much of the information put out is aimed at both British tourists and businesspeople travelling overseas and British emigrants. The director of FCO consular services told us:

*We don't really have a separate and distinct marketing campaign for the expat community.*

## **Wardens**

We saw above that UK nationals in Dubai were keen to get information from the UK government on issues that affect them. Consulate officials there were quite open that they were not providing that information at present.

Emigrants specifically mentioned a desire to have more information on the UAE's Code of Conduct regarding the public decency laws. The UK consulate official there was candid in his response:

*It's on my list of things to do...that we could send out...put a link on our website...but because of the demand on our services, for passports etc we haven't been able to do. Occasionally we've done some things... if, for example, we've noticed a change in the immigration laws...if we see something like that that's specific,*

*we'll reflect it in our travel advice, we'll send the message out to all our registrants, to all our wardens. So that sort of ad hoc thing we do.*

The official mentions the warden system, which still operates in Dubai, as it does in other places, despite the introduction of online registration and email communication. Volunteer wardens, of which 100 are retained in Dubai, pass information back and forth between the consulate and their 'flock' (the word used by consulate officials). The system may seem outdated but it clearly still has a value in the eyes of officials:

*We do know that numbers of Brits registered with us are very small. But we also know that our wardens know lots of people, for instance they might work at a school, so they've got all those Brits who work at that school and parents who have children at that school. We know that the messages are getting out far and wide even though the numbers of Brits registered with us perhaps are quite small.*  
(UK consulate official, Dubai)

Our research did not clarify the extent to which wardens are used elsewhere by the UK government. Other governments seem to use the system in countries where the emigrant community is small and tight knit, and where crisis situations are likely, such as in some countries in Africa.

*In places where you might have to evacuate, they [consular officials] have to find a way to reach all of their registrants and then they would assign them to a warden.* (US consulate representative, London)

The US consulate in London still retains 200 volunteer wardens who are linked to bodies such as educational establishments and women's clubs. The wardens receive email updates, which they are expected to pass on to the wider diaspora. In this way warden systems can provide consulates with an interpersonal link with its diaspora, albeit at second hand. There is clearly some value in these schemes and in some places they work well, but in our view it is important that they are not seen as the only form of interaction between overseas missions and the diaspora.

### **Events and other forms of interaction**

In our research we found very little evidence that much effort is made by UK overseas missions to engage with British emigrants face to face. Of course, there are exceptions. Links with the British business community are maintained, certain social circles get invited to events, and there are occasional parties and celebrations where the net is cast a little wider. But many British emigrants feel that UK officials overseas are lofty and distant and move in a completely different orbit from them. Interestingly one of the people who articulated this view was formerly a very senior British diplomat in India, the country he now lives and works in. He had a very sophisticated understanding of the institutional constraints, the pressures and capacity issues, and the difficult contexts in which British diplomatic missions have to operate, which if anything make his observations about what he called the 'tone' of those missions even more striking:

*From the outside they seem very self-focused and self-regarding. I've recently had four or five communications with the High Commission with regard to business and other things, and the whole tone is one of huge self regard. It's not intentional, and I understand the pressures, but they slip into this tone which is hugely off-putting to many expats... They do sometimes exude this air of self-confidence and a certain smugness and you'll hear expats use phrases like 'they are very up themselves'. (Male 50–60, businessman, Delhi, India)*

However, this perception may be unfair and somewhat out-of-date, and senior officials at the FCO Consular Directorate have been at pains to point out to us that the 'image problem' their services can face has been actively addressed and that services are now much more open, modern and customer focused. The British emigrants we interviewed also sometimes praised particular embassy or consular officials who they had found friendly and helpful – and others recognised that better services required more funding, which was not available. One of the issues may be that the expectations of emigrants are unreasonably high.

That said, opportunities for UK officials to interact with British emigrants are limited in many places. UK consulate officials we spoke to conceded that they did not really 'do' events, even when there appeared to be an appetite for them among the local British community.

*I used to work in a British embassy in another country and even though it was small, we always celebrated the Queen's birthday. There were more events. Not here. We have people living here who are retired and they write to us and say, 'I just moved here, I'm going to live here now. Is there any events that you do on a regular basis?' And we have to say, 'not really'. (UK consulate official, Miami, USA)*

Others argued that it was not their business to hold events out of public funds, unless there was a very specific purpose:

*The reason to hold an event would be if there's a business reason to, so for instance last night we had the Queen's birthday party here, there were lots of British expats at that party, but not because they were British... There were many reasons for people to be there, but not just because they're a British expat and we're going to invite them along to have a glass of wine. (UK consulate representative, Dubai)*

The issue of capacity and resources was also raised:

*Part of what I do with the alumni work, we have certain limitations. For example, at the residence where we hold events, we have a capacity of about 150 people. We don't have the resources to have a bigger event. For something like my alumni outreach, it would have been possible to invite a lot more people but because of the facilities we have, that was the maximum we could do. That's why*

*we're talking about making the events more regular.* (Representative of the UK Trade and Investment Office, New York City consulate)

Some genuine issues are being raised here, as it is clearly not the role of UK government missions overseas to host parties at the taxpayer's expense for the amusement of British expats. But at the same time some themes are emerging that suggest to us a rather narrow mindset about the sort of social interaction embassies and consulates might have with the diaspora. As we saw above, registration is proving a challenge, and it may be, as one British emigrant suggested to us, that this task would be easier if there were first contact between officials and diaspora:

*We need the British government to interact... to have a closer connection with British nationals. Very basic: invite people to events, that's where you start; build a database of email addresses of British nationals; keep them informed; make them feel as if they have a government that really takes an interest in them and wants to be informed about changes in the laws in the UK for example.* (Male, 60–70, property manager, Dubai)

Looking at the experience of other countries in this area is instructive. The Canadian government has a very rich, diverse and proactive programme among its diaspora in the UK, endeavouring to reach out to the community. Interestingly, the consulate adopts what it calls a 'mosaic approach', which involves engaging with Canadians to help them fit in with local community and other ethnic groups. (See Chapter 6 for more on this.) The consulate supports groups such as Network Canada, the chamber of commerce UK-CAN, the Canada Women's Association, and the Canadian's Study Programme. It also has a Canadian Pensioners Group, with thousands of members in the UK. With all these groups the emphasis is on speaking at meetings, face-to-face contact, and high levels of interactivity between consulate and diaspora.

*The public diplomacy department have a very proactive approach – a whole section dedicated to the function of reaching out to that community, tapping into that community and making sure that we use that community in terms of advancing Canada's efforts in the UK.* (Canadian consulate representative, London)

The Americans also take a very proactive approach: 'We'll go talk to any group that wants to see us when we have the resources to do so.' Again, they use established networks to market this approach and their emphasis is typically 'can do'.

The Irish consulate in London told us that the funds to do any meaningful outreach had only been available since 2000 – but around the world in the last decade Emigrant Support (run by the Irish Abroad Unit) has invested some US\$60 million in strategic community and heritage projects, include community centres, welfare programmes and websites (Aikins *et al* 2009). In the UK, as elsewhere, the Irish approach has been to work with established Irish community groups. The range of outreach is impressive. It extends



from helping the large groups of old and vulnerable Irish emigrants in the UK, often long resident, to promoting Irish music and dance and Irish sports like Gaelic football and hurling to UK-born children from Irish families. Some funds are put into capital projects, such as the refurbishment of community centres.

*In all, we fund about 140 organisations all over Britain – including business networks, Federation of Irish Societies and Enterprise Ireland. (Irish consulate representative, London)*

The experience of the Filipino government in this area is also worth considering as its diaspora is one of the biggest worldwide and its engagement strategy one of the most developed. The consulate in London told us that it does not have resources to fund community networks, but they exist in most places, and the embassy helps with referral and other support, while also directing its emigrants to appropriate local services.

Other countries have much more developed diaspora networks – some which operate on a huge, global scale but which also enhance contacts between emigrants at the local level. Among the better known are Advance Australia – a network of Australians across all professions with 13,000 members which organises a wide range of events, as well as organising local networks and online communications; the Global Chile network – mainly made up for business owners and top-level executives; and Kea – New Zealand’s ‘global talent community’, which has 25,000 members, four full-time regional managers, 20 active groups and networks and organises 200 events each year.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, all these initiatives are funded by a combination of private sector partners, membership income and government support.

British networks are most obviously developed among top end businesses, where the benefits are very obvious. The British American Business Council, with 2,500 members including many large multi-nationals, is an example – but there are smaller groups of this nature in most centres of British emigration. Among the more interesting of such organisations involving other nationalities is the Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE), a not for profit body founded in 1992 by Indian businesspeople in Silicon Valley, which promotes entrepreneurship globally. It has been credited with playing a key role in helping economic development back in India.

These examples are being drawn on by the UK government which is realising that the best form of diaspora engagement is to support and tap into initiatives which are already out there. The British diaspora, as we saw in Chapter 4, are an enterprising group who do not, as one consular official put it, want their ‘hands held’. The UK government’s best strategy is ‘supporting people to support themselves’, as another senior official said.

Our research showed that some UK consular officials are, *de facto*, pursuing this sort of approach – but it seems highly informal (which may be no bad thing). The UK proconsul

<sup>15</sup>. For a comprehensive summary of these initiatives see Aikins et al 2009: 47–51.

in Florida, for instance, is a good networker: building up a varied contact list of people that can be phoned about this and that and establishing a volunteer network of people who give 'on-the-ground information'. In New York there seemed to be similar enthusiasm for getting involved, but in this case the degree of informality was striking:

*Until recently, we didn't really know about a British community as such. We've realised in the consular section – through the internet actually – about 'Meet-ups'. There's a website... that has 'Meet-ups' for Brits if they want to join it. I was really excited about it myself, being British over here and not knowing anybody. I think it really is a fantastic resource. I think in that community there are [about] 300 people, but I've yet to go to an event.'* (UK consular representative, New York City, USA)

At one level, this shows both that Brits abroad are simply getting on with the business of engaging with each other, and that enthusiastic and forward-looking consulate officials are excited to join in. In this context, formalising the UK government's interaction with emigrant groups could risk imposing the dead weight of officialdom on energised networks. One Indian interviewee was very explicit in pointing out this danger, saying more funding to support Briton emigrants should be made available but appropriately channelled:

*I'm very suspicious of anything that involves committees and people at a high level – much better to give the money to people so they can do their own thing, the things they are already doing. So if there was to be more funding it should be at the grass roots level. That would be great.* (Female, 50–60, teacher, Delhi, India)

There is clearly a problem if home states are seen as 'jumping on the band wagon' and only involving themselves with emigrants' own modes of transnational networking when they see the economic and political benefits of it (Portes *et al* 2007). On the other hand, appropriate engagement by the consulate could be mutually beneficial if it is not overly intrusive.

We mentioned earlier that the consul in one US city joins fellow Welsh expats in a bar to watch the rugby internationals. It is clearly as productive in terms of making contacts as it is enjoyable in social terms. A UK consular representative in the city told of how his Welsh colleague had made contacts at the pub on Sunday mornings:

*People will find out he's the consul general and he's Welsh. And then someone will say, 'Oh, you know what? I work at Google and I'm the director of development there and I'm from the UK'.*

Among British emigrants in all our case study countries we found considerable enthusiasm for greater engagement across a number of areas. Our interviewees suggested that current engagement is primarily focused on professional elites, often in capital cities. Contact with the embassy or consulate is also frequently restricted to those who are

considered the 'right sort' to socialise with the ambassador, by virtue of class, a military background or some other elite connection, or to those who have links with embassy staff. Those emigrants who did mention relatively frequent connections with UK missions overseas talked of functions for the Queen's birthday, cocktail parties, garden parties and skiing weekends. Outside of narrow and elite circles, contact seems to be minimal.

*I would have liked to have seen the consulates more interested. I got the horrible impression from my visits to Barcelona consulate that we were talking really to career diplomats who didn't have a great concern about being touch with the local people. (Male, 70–80, retired, Costa del Sol, Spain)*

*You don't feel that you really are British because they don't treat you as if you're of any value; you're just somebody in a queue. I know it's a busy consulate but they should be able to do more for their nationals than they do, apart from issuing visas. (Male, 60–70, property manager, Dubai)*

*I went to try and see the consul once on a business issue, with the usual Bulgarian approach to hospitality... and I could see he clearly wasn't interested... he's kind of like some guy who gets a kick out of being called the consul. What value he has, I have no idea. The person is not approachable... trying to get access to the person [the Consul] or somebody is very, very difficult. (Male, 50–60, business management consultant, Bulgaria)*

Another interviewee who complained about a lack of contact with the diaspora by lofty and distant embassy staff in Dubai had enjoyed a better experience while living in Malaysia, where the embassy had social nights. In our research generally we found that the extent of engagement with British emigrants partly relied on the personal style of senior officials, who often set the tone for their missions. What is clear, however, is that the broader British diaspora is interested in greater engagement.

Interviewees in Bulgaria, where the British community is well organised, mentioned that UK government missions could help with providing the expertise and support their networks lacked. An emigrant we talked to was involved in a small-scale network of British business people, which he felt was below the level that the embassy considered. He talked of his network's desire for the embassy to be:

*...helping to link the association with specialists we might need, helping to point us to EU funds. It's simplistic, but needs to be done – and it needs to be maintained. Maybe the embassy runs a more top-level business group, but we need more proactivity to get people together. (Male, 30–40, chartered accountant, Bulgaria)*

The importance of networking was continually raised by British emigrants in Dubai, and although individuals were aware of the British Business Group and its networking events, many felt more networking forums would be useful, as *who* rather than *what* you know is important in the Middle East. Comparative references were made to other expatriate

communities in Dubai, such as the Indian, American, Australian, Dutch, Swedish and Norwegian communities, who, it seems, network better. There is a role here for the UK consulate.

*Networking is absolutely essential when you move here, talking to people, asking questions, otherwise you are completely lost... maybe they could have a British Networking Group. (Female, 50–60, communications adviser, Dubai)*

In Spain, too, there was a sense that more networking would be welcome in the expatriate community. The editor of the *Sun Spanish News* suggested:

*They could form more organisations and get together more and the consulate could do that. The consul could say: 'we are going to have meetings for different organisations or charities.'*

In rounding off this topic it is worth mentioning again that many British emigrants felt that other countries did things differently, and that there was a closer link between other embassies and consulates and their national diaspora:

*The Irish ambassador, for example, there are only a few Irish people registered here, he invites all the Irish people to the Irish bar in the centre and has a drink with them and buys them drinks. I thought that was quite nice. I wasn't expecting that from a British ambassador but just to come in and say hi and meet the British people here might have been nice. (Male, 30–40, teacher, Bulgaria)*

Other examples were given of the US embassy in Dubai, and of French groups in New York City, where 'they basically just spread the word so that anyone French who shows up here can go to these things'.

## **Diaspora mobilisation**

Our research suggests that at present the UK government does very little to mobilise its diaspora, with the exception of the business community. The link between consulates, diplomats and business is a close one – sometimes made manifest by business groups or trade bodies sharing premises with UK government missions (as we found in Dubai and San Francisco, for example). But throughout this report we have noted the lack of engagement with the initiatives of British emigrants on other issues.

Many of our interviewees felt they had more to offer – but they lacked support from the UK government overseas. Often what British emigrants were talking about was being helped to maximise their own potential, but many articulated this in ways which suggested that if they were given assistance they would be able to give more to the country of residence in a way that advances broader British interests.

*They [the Consulate] could be putting people in touch with NGOs so they could use their skills to help the countries they are in. I know people who have done voluntary work in their own time, but they have organised that themselves – more could be done. (Female 20–30, teacher, Delhi, India)*

Although things are changing, the missions of the FCO abroad do not seem as alert as they could be in utilising the diaspora as an asset in the promotion of its own goals. This is in contrast with the approach of other governments we looked at, such as Canada's and Australia's. More striking still is the approach of developing countries, which view their emigrant communities as a vital source of investment, knowledge and skills which they simply cannot afford to ignore.

Internationally, the Indian, Israeli and Chinese governments are noted for their proactive approach to mobilising their diasporas in their own interests and the interests of the home state. We spoke to representatives of the Philippines government in London, and some of their initiatives give a picture of the range of support to the diaspora that is available. A consulate representative described a new group within the Filipino community called 'Philippine Generations', set up in the last year, and led mainly by a second generation group of young Filipino-British nationals from the fields of marketing, law, healthcare and the cultural sectors. They initiate projects to 'bring back something to the Philippines and to help the community [there]'. Further, the government puts on annual road shows informing people about how and where they can invest and what the benefits would be.

This active engagement with the diaspora is driven by the understanding of what a vital asset it is to the government and the country. As the members of the diaspora prosper in countries of emigration, sometimes with help from their home government, they can move from being senders of remittances to potential investors in the Filipino economy.

It is clear from our research that other countries have moved faster than the UK in moving to view their emigrants not simply as customers, or people with needs to be met, but as people who can contribute to the achievement of various goals. At the heart of this approach is an understanding that the diaspora as active agents can nonetheless be mobilised in the interests of the home state, if the relationship developed is mutually beneficial.

### **In the vanguard: Scotland leading the way**

It is worthwhile to consider what the devolved Scottish government is doing in the way of diaspora engagement. As we saw in Chapter 3, a high proportion of overall British emigration involves Scots, and the devolved administration (particularly under the leadership of the SNP) has taken engagement with its emigrant population very seriously. Indeed Scotland has been cited as an exemplar by the World Bank for best practice in establishing business networks.

Among initiatives in place are:

- **Global Scot** – a business network connecting top end executives and professionals (see more below)
- **Global Friends of Scotland** – a social and community network linking Scottish

emigrants to one another

- **Tartan Day and Scotland Week** – An official day – and linked week – set aside in the United States and other countries to celebrate the heritage and legacy of Scottish emigrants
  - **Scotland.org** – a web portal that serves as a ‘one stop shop’ for a variety of user groups
  - **Fresh Talent Initiative and Talent Scotland** – Agencies such as the Relocation Advisory Service established to promote skilled migration, including return migration, to Scotland
  - **Scottish Diaspora Forum** – An event held as part of the Homecoming 2009 campaign (see below)
  - **The Scottish Centre for Diaspora Studies at Edinburgh University** – A new research centre serving as a focal point for research on the Scottish diaspora.
- (List adapted from Aikins *et al* 2009)

A particular boost was given to diaspora engagement by a high profile and extensive campaign called **Homecoming 2009**, which aimed to encourage ancestral Scots, as well as more recent emigrants, to visit Scotland in the 250th anniversary year of Robert Burns’s birth. Part of the point of the initiative was to build a longer term relationship between Scotland and its diaspora. More than 400 events took place during the year. As far as we are aware there has not been a full evaluation of the campaign (or it has not been published). Some media reporting suggested it was not as successful as hoped, but of course the real test of that will be over a longer time frame.

We mentioned above **Global Scot** – one of the best known and most often cited diaspora business networks. Founded in 2001, it is clearly one of the most dynamic and successful of such initiatives, helping Scottish emigrants to maximise their business opportunities and at the same time bringing benefits to the Scottish economy as well. Its website estimates that it has generated over £30 million of Gross Value Added (GVA) for Scotland.

The Scottish government has been looking at how it can build on its current strategy, by learning from similar countries like Ireland. It seems obvious to us that the Scottish and UK governments should also work very closely together to pursue complementary strategies and avoid duplication or contradiction. It may often be the case that Scottish emigrants are more likely to engage with the government of Scotland, but this will not always be true. Certainly the FCO can – and presumably is – looking at the vanguard initiatives which the Scottish government has taken to see if they can be adapted for the UK (or other parts of the UK). Incidentally, the devolved administration in Wales has not pursued diaspora engagement as vigorously as the Scottish government.

## Conclusions

While the UK government's services through its missions overseas are generally of a high standard, the range of those services is rather limited and active engagement with the diaspora is minimal.

A lot of effort has been put into encouraging British emigrants to register, so that consulates know who is living in overseas countries and they can communicate with them when necessary. But there is considerable under-registration – a problem by no means unique to the UK government – because many UK nationals do not see the point of the process. There is a clear mismatch between the perceptions and expectations that the emigrants we spoke to have of UK consulates and other government missions, and the FCO's own estimate of its success in fulfilling its missions. Considerable strides have been taken to provide more information, to reach out and be more open, but more could be done, particularly to take proactive steps to engage face to face with the wide variety of diaspora communities.

As we have seen in this chapter, many other countries, while dealing with similar issues, have been more active and more accessible and more creative in their dealings with their emigrant communities. There are obvious lessons here for the UK government.

# 6. Making more of the British diaspora

## Key points

- The UK government is lagging behind comparable governments in engaging with its diaspora.
- ‘Banging the drum’ for British business is important, but it is time to move away from trading on the loyalty of Brits abroad to the ‘old country’ as a way of advancing narrow UK interests.
- The key aim of the UK government’s diaspora engagement strategy should be to mobilise the diaspora in pursuit of long-term progressive and sustainable global goals.
- Of course, not all Brits abroad would want to be partners in such a strategy, but the sections we identify as ‘progressive global Britons’ are already interested in such ideas.
- The UK government should therefore focus on leveraging the existing activities of the progressive globally-orientated sections of the diaspora.
- The FCO should move way from an approach focused narrowly on assisting and protecting British citizens towards one that looks on them as capable and successful agents with whom it is possible to forge partnerships to promote shared goals.
- The FCO should continue its successful efforts to encourage British emigrants to prepare for and take responsibility for their life overseas. Consulates should aim to enable and empower British citizens to look after their own well-being as much as possible, rather than stepping in when they get into trouble.
- Before the FCO can encourage more Brits to register with the LOCATE database, a more meaningful and proactive outreach programme to engage with diaspora communities needs to come first.
- A priority of the UK government should be to take simple and practical steps to encourage and support the integration of newly arrived emigrants in local communities.
- Low cost schemes to encourage and support civic activism by British diaspora communities should also be considered. These could take the form of small grants for innovative projects or awards and recognition schemes.
- The UK government should consider ways to grant formal recognition of British ancestry and should make the process of renewing British citizenship or registering



the birth of British children overseas more meaningful and symbolic.

- The UK government should simplify the process of registering and voting in UK and European elections, allow emigrants to vote in elections for devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and increase campaigns to encourage voter registration.
- The main political parties should step up their efforts to mobilise overseas voters.
- The UK government should be proactive in marketing the best and safest ways for Britons abroad to send and invest their money in the UK.
- Embassies and consulates should be transformed into inclusive and accessible hubs for a much wider range of activities and a wider range of diaspora groups.
- All missions should have some 'community space' and be as open as possible to ordinary Britons.
- The FCO should further develop strategies that it has already pursued in countries like Spain to 'embed' officials from other government departments and from relevant NGOs so that emigrants can find advice (such as on pensions and business support) at 'one stop shops'.
- Learning from initiatives such as Global Scot and the New Zealand Kea network, the UK government should look to build a worldwide 'Global British' network, first and foremost to support the diaspora in its activities but with the added benefit of promoting the UK.
- The FCO should establish a cross-departmental unit, with strong links to outside bodies, that has a specific remit to look at policy and practice on emigration and diaspora affairs.
- While we don't support the idea of the overseas British communities having seats in Parliament, there should be a clearly identified Minister with responsibility for diaspora affairs who should have a regular question time slot in the Commons.
- The UK government should coordinate its diaspora engagement with that of constituent nations. As and when further devolution takes place, English regions or even cities with strong identities could develop their own diaspora strategies.
- A key segment of diaspora engagement should be maintaining strong contact and providing support to British emigrants from minority ethnic backgrounds, some of whom will see emigration as a return 'home'.
- Such a strategy would link with the greater support we believe should be provided for what we have elsewhere called the 'secondary diaspora' of former immigrants to the UK who maintain a significant attachment to the UK and are also an under-utilised asset for the UK (Finch *et al* 2009).

We suggested in Chapter 1 that to describe so large and diverse a population of UK nationals living overseas as a ‘diaspora’ may seem strange to some – not least to emigrants themselves. In Chapters 4 and 5, we showed that Britons living abroad have a wide range of attitudes towards the UK, and that their attachments to and links with the country differ considerably.

In Chapter 1, we pointed out that it is hard to see Britons living abroad fitting into any of the classic types of diaspora defined by Cohen (2008). The modern British diaspora is certainly not an obvious ‘victim diaspora’, ‘labour diaspora’, ‘imperial diaspora’, ‘trade diaspora’ or ‘de-territorialized diaspora’. Different parts of it could be better described as a *global economy diaspora*, a *lifestyle diaspora*, a *retirement diaspora*, or a *post-colonial diaspora*. Of course, as we mentioned briefly in the introduction, there are some who would dispute that the diverse British population has enough diasporic features to be characterised as a diaspora at all, and that really it is a collection of overseas communities, some so well integrated in their countries of residence as to hardly qualify as emigrants at all, others who are better described as economic trans-nationals or sojourners (ibid).

Even so, we believe it is reasonable to conceptualise British emigrants as a whole as a diaspora, as many other countries do when thinking about their total population of overseas nationals. For although British emigrants – in our research and others – do not use the word diaspora to identify themselves, they do seem to possess some implicit ‘diaspora consciousness’ (Vertovec 2009), particularly, it seems to us, through maintaining a sense of continuing ‘Britishness’ alongside other identities and new attachments. More to the point, we argue (leaning, perhaps rather cheekily, on Sokefeld), that even if a British diaspora does not exist now, it can be socially constructed through mobilisation (Sokefeld 2006 cited in Cohen 2008)<sup>16</sup> because the bonds and motivations to act as diaspora, though often latent, do exist.

Of course the British diaspora is spread across many countries and is often very different from country to country. Moreover, and just as obviously, groups and individuals *within* different British diaspora communities are very different and will want highly varying levels of engagement with each other and with the UK state. However, the UK state does have a duty to and a legitimate interest in British nationals overseas, particularly in an increasingly globalised world in which processes of governance and notions of national identification are becoming so complex that the traditional ‘identities-borders-orders’ triad is being radically reconfigured (Held *et al* 1999 and Albert *et al* 2001 cited in Vertovec 2009).

Gamlen (2007: 17–18) suggests that there are three ways of envisioning state–diaspora relations, with the state seeing itself either as a *transnational state* (in which the diaspora is deeply integrated into the home state) or as a *strategically selective state* (in which the home state picks and chooses how it seeks to control and influence the diaspora) or as a

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<sup>16</sup> Martin Sokefeld argues that diasporas need a) opportunity structures, b) mobilising practices and c) frames.

*disinterested and denouncing state* (in which the home state treats emigrants as if they no longer belong at all). Although Gamlen argues these are not options which states can just choose between (not least because they depend on factors beyond the control of state actions) it does seem to us that the middle course is the best way for the UK government to view its future diaspora engagement policies. Such an approach goes with the grain of emigrant attitudes (they want to live their lives abroad free from interference in most cases, but would not be averse to help from the UK government where appropriate) and it is appropriate to the existing attitude of the UK government (which wants to make more of its diaspora but does not seek to control it wholly or integrate it into home state affairs).

To address these complex issues we attempt in this chapter to break down the diaspora by characterising certain broad types of British emigrant – and then suggest that the UK government should prioritise engagement with the type we argue are most amenable to engagement. The process is essentially artificial for it is obviously true that every individual defies such categorisation at some level. The *reductio ad impossibile* of this truth, however, is that to engage *really* productively and successfully with the British diaspora would involve devising tailored strategies to meet the needs and enhance the abilities of every *single* British emigrant. Given the impossibility of that – and assuming that diaspora engagement is worth trying at all – our approach of some ‘lumping together’ takes on an attractive plasticity.

Our aim therefore is to consider the following questions:

- Which elements of the British diaspora are the most likely to be interested in and to benefit from engagement with the UK government?
- Given the above, how are these diaspora communities already organised and operating in their countries of residence?
- What, then, are the best ways in which different government departments can reach out and support them (to help them and to gain benefit for the UK)?
- What social, economic and other objectives are being pursued?
- What concrete outcomes will result?

At the same time, it is useful to keep in mind a handy checklist of the pitfalls that diaspora engagement strategies face, which has been drawn up by Aikens *et al* (2009). They conclude that any government devising a diaspora engagement strategy needs to be aware of the following:

- Such strategies are easy to start, but difficult to maintain.
- Enthusiasm without proper execution is the downfall of many diaspora strategies.
- Any strategy must appreciate the diversity of the diaspora.
- Quality is more important than quantity (many will not want to engage but only a small fraction need to do so to make a difference).

- Realistic goals with measurable outcomes need to be set.
- Most government initiatives to establish ‘brain gain’ networks have failed.
- Initiatives need to make an impact locally (that is in the local community in the country of residence) as well as nationally.
- An active web presence does not indicate much tangible impact.
- Change needs to be monitored constantly.
- Such strategies are for the long term and patience needs to be shown.

This is a very sensible set of warnings (see also Agunias 2009) but the authors of this list were not arguing against diaspora engagement: quite the opposite (the list appears in a report which encourages the Irish government to step up its diaspora engagement efforts). In Chapter 5 we saw that the UK government has increasingly come to see its nationals overseas as an asset that can be mobilised in a positive way, and not just as a burden that has to be serviced and helped in times of difficulty. However, as many UK consular officials acknowledged to us, the UK lags behind many other comparable countries in active diaspora engagement. A 2006 study identified 70 countries using diaspora engagement policies ‘to varying degrees’ and the UK was not among them (Gamlen 2006). Among the countries which were included were the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and 16 European states, including all the major ones. The UK has much in common with these countries and often seeks to learn from or emulate their immigration practices and policies; therefore the UK would seem to be out of step with its peers and rivals when it comes to emigration policy and diaspora engagement.

Below we set out to suggest ways in which the UK government could improve in this area (particularly, though not exclusively, through its consular services). We consciously take quite a ‘blue skies’ approach to making recommendations, not least because we were invited to do so when this project was commissioned. Some of the ideas we are proposing are unlikely to be implemented in the short to medium term because of the very tight constraints on spending which UK government departments will face in the coming years. We advance them nonetheless as ideas which can stimulate further discussion and serve as longer term aspirations.

### **ippr’s central concept**

A recent paper presented at the Global Forum on Migration and Development by the African Foundation for Development (Chikezie 2009) sets out a five-stage schema for operationalising diaspora engagement which has helped our own thinking. The stages are:

- Initial conceptualisation
- Diaspora outreach
- Project formulation
- Implementation
- Review, evaluation and learning.

In line with this schema, our suggested initial conceptualisation is as follows:

- The UK government's international aspirations now extend beyond immediate national interests to encompass long-term progressive and sustainable global goals. The key aim of the UK government's diaspora engagement strategy therefore should be to mobilise the diaspora in pursuit of these wider goals. To achieve this mobilisation, the UK government needs to **reconceptualise its understanding of the British diaspora and its relationship with it**. That reconceptualisation involves **building on the existing potential of the diaspora to be an active partner in a progressive global programme**.

We think this is a strong concept for the following reasons:

- It is in line with the more forward-thinking notions of Britishness and active citizenship promoted by the UK government
- It brings diaspora policy closer to the stated best intentions of UK foreign and overseas development policy
- It would enrich the diaspora experience for many British emigrants by building on their own aspirations and actions in their new countries of residence
- It allows for the appropriate and sensitive deployment of the diaspora as a form of 'soft' power.

Before considering how the British diaspora 'fits' with this concept, we examine briefly the question of the UK's international goals.

### **The UK as progressive global power?**

The British diaspora can only be deployed as an asset in the pursuance of the UK's wider international goals if it is true that such goals exist. Many would question the sincerity of the UK's commitment to pursuing progressive global outcomes, and many more would regard its record of achievement as thin and patchy at best. However, we argue that there is, at the very least, a growing recognition that the UK operates in a world of increasing international interdependence, of countries, communities and citizens. The reality of that interdependence has been brought home by the global firestorm of the credit crunch.

In such a world, a middle-sized power like the UK thrives not through the pursuance of narrow and short-term national interests, but by taking a lead in proposing long-term international solutions. Such a strategy is not naïve and idealistic altruism: it is shrewd and hard-headed state craft. In policy areas from climate change to nuclear proliferation, from debt reduction to banking regulation, this strategy was being articulated by ministers and pursued by government departments – albeit far from perfectly – during the 13 years of Labour rule (and, as we argue below, we think a broadly similar approach will be taken by the new coalition government that came to power in May 2010).

Strategic and policy documents of the last 10 years make clear that the UK's vision for the world is one that is sustainable and socially just, built on global economic prosperity and underpinned by democracy and human rights, with a flourishing global civil society. A few examples can illustrate these aims:

- The Government has been in the vanguard of world states pushing for solutions to climate change. The Climate Change Act (2008) committed the Government to building a low-carbon Britain, while the *The Road to Copenhagen* (2009) set out its commitment to a new international agreement on climate change. The then Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, was active in pushing other world leaders to achieve concrete results at the Copenhagen Summit, though ultimately with little success.
- The United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide a framework for development in the 21st century, which the UK government has incorporated as a basis for its global poverty reduction work. The Government also made a substantial commitment to international development through the Gleneagles G8 summit in 2005, where notable promises were made to increase aid and reduce debt. Following this the Government published its white paper *Making Governance Work for the Poor* (2006), which was followed by a white paper on international development, aimed at tackling global poverty and helping the world's most vulnerable.
- The G20, with the UK in the vanguard, has called for sustainable globalisation and rising prosperity. Indeed, one of the FCO's four policy goals, set out in its strategy *Better World, Better Britain* (2008), is to promote a low-carbon, high-growth global economy.
- *UK International Priorities: A Strategy for the FCO* (2003) set out the FCO's strategic priorities. These include security, an international system based on the rule of law, and sustainable development, underpinned by democracy, good governance and human rights.

This commitment to a progressive international agenda was repeatedly reaffirmed by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown and by other senior ministers. For example, former Foreign Secretary Jack Straw has said:

*The strongly activist foreign policy we have pursued since 1997 has been as much about values as about interests. And the values which we promote abroad are those that guide us at home: respect for human rights, democratic accountability, transparent government which responds to its citizens. We do so because it is a progressive, internationalist agenda in its own right. (Straw 2006)*

Of course, the 2010 general election saw Labour replaced in power by a coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats which has, in many areas of policy, a different set of priorities. At the time of publication (June 2010) it is too early to say with confidence whether the key strands of UK foreign policy will change under the new administration. In opposition, the new Prime Minister, David Cameron, focused more on domestic issues. But what we know of his world vision suggests that there will not be a significant change of direction on foreign policy. In a speech on foreign affairs in Berlin in 2007, Cameron sketched the concept of 'liberal conservatism' to supersede 'liberal interventionism', and he said he was 'sceptical about grand Utopian schemes to remake the world'. But his biographers tell us that 'those close to him say he shuns the idea of a

foreign policy based solely on a narrow defence of British interests and is sympathetic to the idea of Britain doing good where it can' (Elliot and Hanning 2007: 350).

### **The UK emigrant as progressive global citizen?**

Not all British emigrants will have sympathy for the world view of the UK government and many will fall outside any attempt to reconceptualise the diaspora as a collective of progressive global activists. Indeed, if we try to categorise UK nationals overseas in terms of the extent of their attachment to the notion of the British diaspora and their expectations of and demands on UK government missions overseas we come up with four broad groups, of which only one fits neatly into our thesis. Our categories are:

1. **'Just in case' UK nationals** – Individuals in this group have a weak sense of British identity, possibly as a result of living abroad in one country for many years and having strong integration and identification with that country, or because they have lived in lots of different countries over many years so could be called 'super-mobile' (or, as some of interviewees described themselves, 'serial experts'). (The group may also include UK citizens who are previous immigrants to the UK but have now returned to their country of birth.) Individuals in this group generally do not envisage returning to the UK. They only want the lightest of engagement with UK government missions overseas (to renew their passport, for instance).
2. **'Demanding but disappointed' UK nationals** – Such nationals have a strong identification with a sense of Britishness, which they perceive as lost. Their emigration may have been partly spurred by this sense – that the UK is a place of high crime, social breakdown and so on. They have 'washed their hands' of Britain, but are possibly not well integrated in their country of residence. They can be demanding of the consulate to sort out problems, but not interested in positive engagement.
3. **'Proud to be British' UK nationals** – These individuals have a strong sense of British identity (or English, Scottish or Welsh identity) which they manifest proudly in life as an emigrant. In some cases they are well integrated into their country of residence, but whatever their level of integration they maintain strong orientation to Britain. Enthusiasts for engagement with diaspora and UK government, they currently possess rather traditionalist ideas about what this should involve.
4. **'Progressive global' UK nationals** – Individuals with a strong continuing sense of identity, and yet very cosmopolitan in outlook. They identify with and articulate liberal values, which they see as in some sense British or Western, but are respectful of local cultures and values. They are likely to be well-integrated in the country of residence, but maintain some orientation to the UK. They see the opportunity to use the mobilisation of diaspora to promote progressive ideas. They are sometimes frustrated by the traditional approach taken by UK government missions overseas at present.

This categorisation is a deliberate attempt not to over-idealise British emigrants as agents of progressive change. In his paper, Chikezie (2009) points out that even emigrants from developing countries are unlikely to aspire in great numbers to becoming development

activists, so ‘rather than proceeding on the basis that it would be more desirable to have more diaspora development actors, it might be more fruitful to look for and maximise the development outcomes of the everyday diaspora practices’. This is a useful warning, and in advancing our argument we will suggest that to engage the British diaspora in pursuance of progressive global goals is to build on the actions and aspirations that a key part of the diaspora already demonstrate, rather than to mobilise the whole diaspora in that direction from a standing start. Such an approach also fits with the ideas of others on ‘leveraging’ diaspora support (Kuznetsov 2006).

Moreover, it is our contention that a diaspora engagement strategy focused on building a productive partnership with the fourth of these groups need not exclude the other three. Pragmatically pursued, such a strategy would win round many emigrants in groups 1 and 3, while the core business of the consular service would continue to provide the services demanded by group 2. All British nationals are entitled to the basic services of passport renewal, help with other documentation, and assistance at times of crisis or difficulty – and ways of delivering these services need to be updated and modernised constantly. This is already happening in some places, notably Spain, where a new ‘one stop service point’ in Madrid opened in 2009. However, its aim of wanting to ‘integrate the British diaspora into the society they are living in and ensure that they have access to the right services and support they need’<sup>17</sup>, while laudable and a step forward, still seems to us to lack ambition. We argue that our concept provides a way for the UK government to move beyond its present limited (and rather dated) approach to engaging with its citizens abroad.

### **Engaging the British diaspora for progressive global ends?**

Previous research looking at engagement with British nationals overseas, including ippr’s own, has tended to focus on the role that the British diaspora can play in strengthening the UK’s economic interests. Our 2006 report urged the Government to foster a business network that would capitalise on the skills, expertise and contacts of the diaspora (Sriskandarajah and Drew 2006). Such a network would promote British industry overseas, create commercial relationships abroad and channel investment towards the UK.

Clearly, utilising the diaspora to aid domestic economic success will always be an important element of any UK government’s diaspora engagement strategy. This is particularly so at a time of economic difficulty, when strengthening the UK economy is a key objective for the Government. However, we believe it is time ‘to raise the gaze’ of all those interested in British diaspora engagement to look beyond immediate economic interests.

We are emboldened to do this as a result of our analysis of the evidence provided by our extensive new research. The in-depth interviews we have conducted with British nationals overseas, and with many other stakeholders, have enabled us to understand the

17. Quote from ‘The One Stop Service Point for the British diaspora living in Spain’, Internal FCO Concept Paper, 2009



relationships and interactions that UK emigrants have both with the communities they have joined and with UK institutions, giving us a much greater insight into both their needs and their potential.

In both Chapters 4 and 5 we saw that British emigrants are working across a wide range of fields, often at the top of their professions. Many of them, though not all, are well integrated in the communities in which they live – or aspire to be so. They are active in business, civic and voluntary life, sometimes taking leadership roles. They aspire to do more to help their countries of residence thrive and develop, and they bring new ideas which they are eager to promote. Even in places where the British community is less well integrated and is sometimes characterised as insular in outlook there is usually some sense among the emigrants themselves that they are bringing new ideas to the area (see O’Reilly 2000 and Drake and Collard 2007). British emigrants also, by and large, retain a strong attachment to the UK.

By any standards this population is a potential asset to its home state and it is clear to us that much more could be done to engage with the diaspora and to mobilise it, on its own terms, to promote further the UK’s wider progressive goals. Senior officials are recognising this and thinking about how it can be achieved:

*We have this view of the UK as a global nation – and Brits abroad are a great asset, but if we are to reap the benefits, we need to review how we interact with them. The way we deal with them pre-dates the internet, the Berlin Wall, globalised travel – we haven’t really updated it. The consular services are managing this relationship but there is a wider benefit for government to develop it. (Consular service representative, FCO London)*

*We are not like other countries where they certainly make a lot more of their diaspora and are unafraid to make them wave the flag for them. The British community – they are a massive resource, underused and we certainly ought to be doing a bit more to bring them in. (Senior official, passports and documents service, London)*

A key issue here is that while senior consulate officials see the potential of greater diaspora engagement, and some consulates are active in outreach, the consular service is not funded to do such work. We argue that a new model of consular services, building on changes that are already taking place, would involve much more active engagement with the diaspora. Such a ‘step-change’ in policy may, of course, have to be a long-term aspiration, as it would require extra resourcing (a challenge at the best of times) – though it would in the end pay back on the investment.

However, even if resources to expand the range of consular activities did become available, the question of where to focus those activities would remain. We turn to this next.

### **Beyond narrow Britishness**

An obvious way in which the diaspora could be engaged to further the UK's goals is as conscious champions of Britain and 'Britishness'. There are already a number of initiatives in this area and we think they are useful as far as they go, but the concept of 'Britishness' in this context needs to extend well beyond getting emigrants to extol traditional British 'virtues'. Notions of trading on loyalty to the 'old country' to advance narrow British interests should be replaced with an approach that views Britons living overseas as partners in promoting the goals that the UK wants to advance internationally.

Although British emigrants obviously have different ideas about what it means to be a Brit abroad, based on the evidence from our research and other studies it appears they generally see themselves as people who have broadened their outlook as a result of living abroad and therefore do not like narrow concepts of Britishness. We therefore contend that the British diaspora is particularly well placed to develop and promote more progressive and forward-thinking concepts of Britishness that are based on universal and inclusive values. Incidentally, we believe that the Scottish government's diaspora engagement (which will always be, to some extent, autonomous from the UK government's approach) is in tune with this idea.

Of course, particularly negative projections of British identity are manifested by some sections of the British diaspora – and these can repel both other emigrants and locals in the country of residence. But we argue that by pursuing a diaspora engagement strategy, based on a more positive and outward sense of what it means to be British, the UK government would meet the aspirations of those emigrants who already share this sense, and provide the appropriate challenge to those who do not.

### **Going with the grain of British diaspora activity**

Key elements of the British diaspora, we argue, are already acting as agents for positive and progressive change in their countries of residence. Among the most successful British emigrants are those who are international in temperament, see themselves as having a key stake in their countries of residence and, while showing due cultural sensitivity, are keen to develop innovative and progressive ideas.

Therefore, the UK government already has a strong cohort among the British diaspora with which to engage if it wants to pursue wider global goals.

*The FCO try to represent Britain here in India but they can't do that on their own. They only have a certain number of staff and certain contacts. Even if they did that as effectively as they could, that wouldn't match up to what we – the British people living here – do every day. It's our business people who represent the UK every day, our charities. We do much more than they could ever do. (Female, 40–50, NGO executive, India)*

The policy implications of this approach are that making the most of the British diaspora is not about championing Britain overtly by banging the drum for British business or cultural

interests or building a British 'brand'. Instead, the UK government should aim to support and encourage its citizens overseas who are already successfully engaging in positive and progressive activities. Through these activities the reputation of Britain abroad is greatly enhanced in ways that no centrally directed campaign could ever achieve.

The approach we are recommending is not a revolutionary concept and our research has shown that many countries are already pursuing elements of it successfully. For example, an Australian consulate representative in London said:

*We do view Australians working here as a form of 'soft power'. We have good relationships with Australian people in UK business, in the arts, in media, across think tanks.... They provide contact-making opportunities for us – we find they are happy to help – and it's a two-way street... The people-to-people links are so strong we don't really need to meddle or promote Australia explicitly in that way.*

However, while we believe our concept of the most productive form of diaspora engagement is one that goes with the grain of the British diaspora, it will require some rethinking of the consulate idea (though even here, some of this rethinking has already begun).

### **Redefining the role of the consulate**

To advance the agenda set out above, there needs to be a change in thinking within the FCO over the role of its missions in dealing with British nationals overseas. We define this change as follows:

- To move away from the mindset that the role of consular services is primarily about assisting and protecting British citizens, towards one that looks on them as capable and successful agents with whom it is possible to forge partnerships to promote shared goals.

Of course, helping British nationals in difficulty, responding to crises affecting British nationals and issuing documents, will remain core functions of the consular service. But we would like to see the mission widened to include engaging and supporting the British community in their own endeavours and helping them to integrate into their country of residence.

It is our sense that the FCO is already moving in this direction, but that there is still some uncertainty about the viability of such a redefinition:

*Is it [the diaspora] actually an asset? It's split, country to country, region to region. Senior businessmen in the community, yes they are assets, but there are others who... just want to be nannied. My personal view is that the British diaspora is not as tapped as it perhaps should be and we ought to be making more of it. (Senior FCO official, London)*

### **Beyond registration**

A first step in this process is to ensure that more British emigrants do register with the LOCATE database, not just so that the consulates can keep tabs on people, but more

importantly so that there can be a two-way flow of information. We saw in Chapter 5 that at present the UK, in common with other countries, struggles to persuade its nationals to register because individuals do not see the value of doing so. In our view, one of the issues here is that registration is seen as the starting point for engagement, whereas our research suggests that success is more likely if more proactive outreach comes first. Other governments are making much more effort to have an extensive and interesting programme of outreach that is seen as relevant and helpful by its citizens abroad. Canada's is one example.

Encouraging registration needs to be seen as providing an opportunity to keep in touch with people as well as knowing more about them. It needs to be a process and not an end, one that is reciprocal in nature and promotes shared learning. In particular, British emigrants need to feel that if they register they will get something back. At present, while marketing of LOCATE is dynamic and creative, the actual registration process is quite static, leading to little follow-up. Done well, however, registration provides an opportunity to build an ongoing and mutually beneficial relationship.

We recommend:

- Consulates should step up, if financially possible, their active marketing of the LOCATE registration process, building on the success they have already achieved.
- The FCO should investigate the potential for adding more questions to the registration process to gather information about the skills, interests and needs of British emigrants. Registration could then be used as the 'jumping off point' for a continuing relationship between the British state and the person registering, determined by the characteristics and level of engagement desired by each individual.
- Consulates should do more to advise Britons that registration is important in times of crisis or emergency.
- Above all, the registering of emigrants should be integrated into a dynamic and meaningful outreach programme which demonstrates the benefits to diaspora community of two-way information flows.

### **Helping British emigrants to integrate**

In Chapter 4 we highlighted the extent of integration by British emigrants and showed that the picture was variable. We concluded that integration was one of the keys to success as an emigrant and that it was also greatly in the interests of the UK government if its nationals overseas can function effectively in the society in which they live. Integrated emigrants are less likely to be a burden on UK missions overseas, and at the same time are more likely to be active champions of broader British interests.

Given this, we believe that an important objective of enhanced diaspora engagement should be giving support to local integration overseas. As a start, the FCO could think about a very simple idea for a 'buddy scheme', as proposed by a British citizen in Dubai: Britons willing to help other expats could register their names at the British Consulate which will then contact them with the names of new arrivals. It is then up to the registered

person to make contact with the newcomers, ‘even if it’s just a coffee a couple of times, just to put them in the right direction’. As this interviewee said, there may be lots of websites with information but ‘there is nothing like the personal touch’.

We recommend:

- The FCO, working with other government departments, the devolved governments, key NGOs and host governments should develop national strategies to encourage the local integration of British emigrants. These strategies should be focused on simple, practical actions most likely to bring about achievable outcomes. Countries where British nationals are not well integrated should be a priority for the development of these strategies.
- Consulates should extend and amplify their excellent programme of information to emigrants about the local laws, regulations and customs – particularly in countries that are culturally and political dissimilar from the UK.
- The FCO should look at updating the role of voluntary community wardens and extend it to countries where they are not currently present. Some community wardens could be tasked to encourage local integration among their compatriots, disseminating information and suggesting language classes, for example.
- The UK should take a lead in the EU in reviewing residents’ obligations towards learning the local language. The UK government should be proactive in encouraging and assisting its nationals overseas to take language classes –through better signposting, giving out lists of recommended teachers or even by helping to subsidise language learning.
- Consulates and embassies should form stronger links with civil society organisations and migrant integration services in countries which have significant British populations. Such organisations should be an integral part of an accessible and open mission that sees itself as a hub.
- The FCO should pilot some ‘buddy schemes’, where settled emigrants provide help and assistance to newly arrived Britons.

Our research in our case study countries suggests that an inhibiting factor in the promotion of local integration by British emigrants is the lifestyles and outlooks of some embassy, consulate and other government staff. They are often viewed as among the least integrated Brits abroad – cut off, living in luxurious British enclaves on (often walled) compounds, and sometimes having limited local-language skills. In reality, this is rather an out-of-date caricature of British diplomats overseas, and in fact the FCO has taken considerable strides to diversify its workforce, modernise its working practices and adopt a more open and inclusive approach in its missions overseas. The question that then arises is why do the old stereotypes still persist? We would suggest that the FCO (and other British overseas missions, such as the British Council) still need to do more to market the undoubted changes they have made, while continuing to open up their recruitment processes so that British officials overseas represent a wider cross section of British society.

## **Promoting better planning for migration**

As we saw in Chapter 5, the UK government has put a priority on providing wide-ranging advice to would-be emigrants (and indeed travellers) on how to make a success of their life (or trip) abroad. Unfortunately, we found that British emigrants often still do very little in the way of pre-departure preparation. To a large extent this should remain the individual's responsibility, but poor planning often leads to consuls picking up the pieces.

Two groups appear to be particularly poor at planning and therefore particularly vulnerable: retirement migrants and those returning to their country of birth after a long period in the UK. Retirement migrants often fail to plan their health and social care provision in their new countries of residence, while minority ethnic UK citizens may perceive their migration as 'going home' and associate home with safety and the support of relatives only to discover that things do not always work out that way.

We recommend:

- The FCO, in partnership with NGOs, should research how British migrants access, understand and use web-based advice material about migration and their social welfare entitlements in the UK.
- Material on planning for travel should be focused more on potential emigrants rather than on travellers in general.
- The Government could make greater use of its own contacts with Britons moving abroad – for example a requirement of drawing a UK pension overseas could be that a person receives an information pack from the Department for Work and Pensions on moving to and living in another country.
- FCO staff based in London should step up their contact with minority ethnic community groups and faith groups to deliver messages targeted at members of minority ethnic communities who are considering moving back to their countries of origin.
- The experiences of emigrants (successful and unsuccessful) should be collected to increase the 'case study' evidence available to the FCO in devising its campaigns to encourage greater pre-departure planning.

## **Promoting active citizenship**

We believe that the British diaspora is, at its best, a dynamic force for growth and development in overseas countries and a force for progressive change. Our research showed that many British emigrants are already active and engaged in the life of the communities in which they live. These UK nationals are setting up new companies, championing British business and cultural interests, and involving themselves in civil society organisations that promote human rights, community development or sustainable environments. In this context, government strategy in this area should be about supporting Britons to support themselves.

Such an approach follows international best practice in diaspora engagement. For example, an Australian consulate representative in London emphasised that the consulate is keen to support diaspora organisations in non-financial ways and has strong relationships with them, but, ‘the people-to-people links are so strong that we don’t need to meddle or promote Australia’.

Unobtrusive, low-key support would, we contend, be greatly valued by already active British emigrants. In particular, our research suggested that people working for small and medium sized enterprises overseas do not always feel that they get much support from the Government and similarly, smaller NGOs also seem to feel neglected.

An important consideration for the UK government when thinking about how it promotes active citizenship by British nationals overseas should be the concept we heard about from the Canadian consulate representative in London. He spoke of taking a ‘mosaic approach’ which emphasised supporting nationals to pursue their goals by fitting into and being active in the local community.

The Irish government’s example of providing funding to support Irish diaspora community projects is worth considering, although we accept that funding will be severely constrained in the next few years. The idea of providing small grants for business set-up or to support vocational training also seems to us attractive.

**We recommend:**

- The FCO should consider how its overseas missions link with civil society organisations and how it might encourage volunteering among UK nationals, as part of rethinking the role of overseas missions.
- Consulates should be active in helping British nationals to get involved in local politics and other forms of civic activism by providing easily accessible information and organising talks and seminars.
- Consulates should be encouraged to run information campaigns to encourage Brits abroad to take up rights to vote in local elections in countries where they are living.
- The FCO should consider providing an amount of funding to its consulates which they could use to provide small grants to particularly innovative and progressive projects involving British citizens in their local communities overseas.
- The FCO should also look at ways in which small grants for businesses or training could be made available, perhaps on a competitive basis, for individual British emigrants.
- Active citizenship by Britons overseas should be recognised and honoured through awards or other forms of celebration.

### **Supporting a positive, continuing attachment to the UK**

Even an emigrant who is long settled and well integrated in another country usually retains some attachment to the UK, as we showed in Chapter 4. Often this is through family and friends, or via the extraordinary reach of British culture and the media. Things

like foods and British traditions can also help to maintain the link with the 'old country'. In most cases, there is no role for the UK government in fostering such attachments; the intervention of the state might even be counterproductive. However, we do think the UK government could do more to maintain a positive and active attachment between diaspora and home state.

### **Extending and renewing citizenship**

The UK has a relatively generous approach to citizenship, allowing its nationals to take on citizenship in other countries without requiring them to revoke their British nationality. The arrangements are not always reciprocal. We believe that the UK's acceptance of dual nationality is a very positive way of maintaining the link with the British diaspora.

Of course, in the past all the subjects of the British Empire (and later Commonwealth) were deemed to have full citizenship rights in the UK (and with it the right of entry and settlement). The tightening of immigration rules has eroded these rights over time (understandably enough), but we think the UK may look at ways in which those with 'British roots' or even 'British connections' – such as former immigrants to the UK who have now returned home – could have some form of special recognition. India, for instance, has its different categories of overseas Indians, Non-resident Indians (NRIs), including People of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Overseas Citizenship of India (OCIs) – who while not enjoying dual citizenship are offered benefits such as multiple entry and lifelong visas. This is seen as a way of enlarging the pool of the Indian diaspora (Bhusan 2009). Similarly, the Polish government has a *Karta Polska*, which is granted to foreign nationals who can supply documented proof of Polish roots, and which allows them various benefits that are not accorded to other foreign nationals.

In the UK some consulates are now carrying out citizenship ceremonies for foreign nationals who have become British citizens. However, for British nationals living overseas, the renewal of passports or registration of births of children is simply a bureaucratic (and sometimes rather tiresome) matter. Some of these processes could be given a greater symbolic significance, perhaps through citizenship renewal ceremonies for those who would be interested.

**We recommend:**

- The UK government should consider some sort of certificate of British ancestry which it could grant to foreign nationals who can document their connection with the UK and which would carry some privileges not accorded to other foreign nationals.
- Ceremonies to celebrate British citizenship should be held when UK nationals living overseas renew passports or register the birth of their children.

### **Voting**

Research has shown that the nations that are most successful at diaspora engagement are those that encourage emigrants to register and vote in home elections. Voting is a strong symbolic act for a citizen overseas, showing they retain an active interest in their country



of origin. However, evidence from our interviews indicates that much confusion persists among British expats about their eligibility to vote, and voting is very limited as a consequence.

The arduous process of casting a vote in a UK general election contrasts with systems adopted by other states. The US, for example, allows online voter registration and voting. Homeland political parties are also active overseas and this helps to increase interest and turnout, while a number of independent American organisations work to encourage voter participation among overseas residents. The UK government could learn from such initiatives and make overseas voting easier.

Given the strong ties of many emigrants to the individual nations that make up the UK, we also recommend that the Government should consider extending overseas voting rights to the devolved assemblies or parliaments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

**We recommend:**

- The FCO and the Electoral Commission should increase their campaigning efforts to get Britons overseas to register to vote in UK and European elections.
- The FCO should simplify the approach to allowing emigrants to vote, to include online registration and voting and mobile voting stations (utilising UK government buildings).
- The law should be changed to allow emigrants to vote in elections for devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- Consideration should be given to extending the right to vote for British citizens beyond the current 15-year time limit.

Further, while it is beyond the scope of state action, we would urge the political parties to step up efforts to increase democratic engagement with the diaspora. This would involve expanding initiatives such as Conservatives Abroad and Liberal Democrats Overseas. The parties should learn lessons from the Democrat and Republican parties in the United States.

More thought could also be given to how the interests of emigrants could be better represented in the Houses of Parliament. Some countries do allow emigrants direct representation through seats in their legislature. It is our opinion that this is a step too far, and extremely difficult to devise in a constituency system, but that there should be improved channels through which emigrants can raise issues with MPs.

**We recommend:**

- There should be a clearly identified Minister responsible for diaspora affairs who should have a regular question time slot in the Commons.

(See more on how the UK government should organise responsibility for diaspora engagement below.)

### **Global British**

The Global Scot network has proved to be very successful in projecting the image of Scotland abroad and in generating business opportunities for Scottish emigrants in ways

which have also benefited Scotland directly. The Irish Government is looking at the idea of a 'Global 1000' – involving one thousand leading Irish expatriates in promoting Ireland and supporting diaspora activity. The New Zealand diaspora network Kea is on an even bigger scale and connects tens of thousands of Kiwi emigrants through a well organised network that coordinates thousands of activities.

We recommend:

- Working with existing diaspora groupings and business networks, the UK government should look to build a worldwide Global British network, first and foremost to support the diaspora in its activities but with the added benefit of promoting the UK.

### **Remittances and direct investment**

The diaspora transfers very large sums of money back to the UK in various forms, as Chapter 3 showed. However, the function of remittances – which are such an important part of the idea of diasporas and home states in the development field – is not widely appreciated or understood by the British emigrants we interviewed.

Our research suggests that many Britons living overseas are not using the most efficient or cost-effective ways to transfer money to the UK, partly because information about doing so is not widely disseminated. A number of banks and financial institutions are now heavily promoting their services to the diaspora, but independent and trusted sources of advice are sorely needed. The UK government could play a useful role in this area.

More could also be done to encourage the diaspora to consider direct investment back to the UK. At a time of great financial uncertainty the idea of a UK version of a 'patriotic bond' – a guaranteed, but low-yield investment instrument specifically marketed to loyal Britons to help the British economy – could be looked at. Such bonds are calculated to yield more than £1 billion for the Israeli economy, while India has benefited from a similar diaspora bond scheme.

We recommend:

- At a time when many banks and financial institutions are targeting the British diaspora, the UK government should be proactive in marketing the best and safest ways for Britons abroad to send and invest their money in the UK.
- The idea of promoting some sort of 'diaspora bond' which allows British emigrants to support the UK and protect their foreign earnings should be considered.

### **The embassy as an open and accessible hub for diaspora activity**

Our research with British emigrants showed that perceptions of UK embassies and consulates were rather negative. They were generally seen as elitist, remote, grand – off-putting to most Brits abroad, and as such an impediment to successful diaspora engagement. Yet the FCO has been making considerable strides to throw off this old image, and in many areas – at least when it comes to frontline consular services – many

reforms and innovations have been undertaken. These include:

- 16 Consular Regional Directors appointed worldwide to ensure greater consistency of service and high quality delivery
- Refurbishment of consular waiting areas in locations including Munich, Guangzhou, Beijing, Belgrade, Mombasa and Madrid
- An extension in outreach activities in many places worldwide
- A huge improvement in online, out-of hours, and easy-pay facilities for registration and documentation services.

Moreover, much has been done to tackle the stuffy image of diplomatic staff and we saw in our research that they are encouraged to find innovative ways to be more open and inclusive.

We acknowledge this progress and recognise that some issues that create distance between the embassy and diaspora, such as the need for security measures, will be difficult to get round. However, we still contend that some of the outdated paraphernalia of diplomatic life needs to be swept away. The Australian consular representative in London told us that 'Australia House has always been important to Australians and community life'. We doubt that many British expats would have a similar sense of connection, even affection, for any UK government building overseas – though new services such as the 'one stop shop' in Madrid, mentioned earlier, are certainly a step along the way. It was very encouraging to see that the FCO is increasingly using its facilities overseas to house relevant staff from other government departments which traditionally have been seen as domestic – such as the Department of Work and Pensions. This is to be welcomed because many emigrants do need advice on things such as benefits and pensions – and it is obviously helpful if they can talk directly to expert officials in one central location. Moreover, the idea of 'embedding' staff from relevant NGOs in consular buildings – such as is happening with Age UK staff in Spain – is very sensible.

More developments of this nature would be useful, and we would argue for as much openness as possible between UK missions and the diaspora. It would be a good idea to follow the example of countries like Ireland and Australia where embassies are much more of the diaspora, rather than remote from it. British emigrants in India spoke somewhat enviously of how American nationals in Delhi have access to the American club, which has a pool, a bowling alley and many other 'fantastic' facilities.

To that end, we argue that embassies and consulates should be transformed into inclusive and accessible hubs for a much wider range of activities. Currently, trade bodies and business groups (and some NGOs) do sometimes share facilities, but this could be extended to small and medium sized enterprises, which many expats are involved in, and which do not feel they get the same support from the UK government's missions. We would also like to see similarly strong support for smaller NGOs, with physical spaces

opened up and partnerships fostered with environmental groups and civil society groups.

The embassy as a hub could provide support in different forms, financial and through providing access to networks or information. Embassies and consulates could also run volunteering fairs or awareness-raising events targeted at the British diaspora.

The consular and other services also need to be more mobile and more visible, going out on the road to where British emigrants are clustered. As we saw in Chapter 4, the FCO has run road shows in a number of countries, but these have tended to involve marketing campaigns, and we think there is more scope for genuine interactivity between UK missions and British emigrant communities. Other countries (for example, the Philippines and the US) stress the importance they place on visiting their diaspora outside capital cities, providing speaking engagements with question and answer sessions on a weekly basis with groups across the country in question.

Alongside the embassy and the consulate, another institution that could review its focus, at least in some locations, is the British Council. Our evidence suggests it operates very differently in different places, being most successful in places where it acts as a convenor for culture and art, even that which is tangentially connected to the UK. (Our interviewees in Delhi were hugely supportive of the British Council in India for instance.) This fits very well with the idea that promoting Britain's international interests does not necessarily involve tagging things as British but rather promoting wider values which Britons and others share. Our research suggests that the British Council is also more effective where it reaches out beyond the cities and elites – which again it does successfully in some places and less so in others.

**We recommend:**

- The FCO should carry out a comprehensive review of its property overseas with a mind to making as much use of it as possible for proactive diaspora engagement activities.
- In particular, all missions should have some 'community space' which could be used by groups connected with the diaspora.
- The FCO should extend its initiatives to make its facilities 'one stop shops' which house not just consular officials, but officials from other government departments and staff from NGOs too.
- A review should take place to see how feasible it is to open up embassy facilities to ordinary members of the British community overseas.
- The FCO should look at ways in which it can recruit active members of the diaspora to advise it on diaspora issues and advancement. This could involve an extension and redefinition of the warden role or setting up advisory councils.
- The mission of the British Council should be reviewed to ensure it can contribute effectively to a programme of government engagement abroad, in terms of building coalitions for the advancement of progressive goals and values. Spending on British Council activities should also be increased.

## **A high-level, cross-departmental office on emigration and diaspora engagement**

Many of our policy recommendations will require the involvement of a range of government departments, as well as non-departmental government bodies. If the above recommendations are to be taken forward in a coherent way, a clear lead is needed in central government, as well as structures that promote strong cross-departmental working and the close involvement of the third sector.

Many countries' governments have dedicated offices, sometimes with ministerial-level competencies, to support diaspora engagement. India's Ministry for Overseas India Affairs is an example, and there are similar departments in Armenia, Jamaica and Lithuania. In the Philippines government, diaspora engagement is a priority activity across a range of government departments including the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Labour, and there are two major agencies concentrating exclusively on this area: the Philippine Overseas Employment Authority (POEA) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Association (OWWA). In Chile, DICOEX – the Direction of Chilean Communities Abroad, a state agency set up in 2000 – is responsible for the development and coordination of policies aimed at engaging Chilean nationals living abroad.

Diaspora engagement is not of such importance to the UK as to require this level of government intervention. We do suggest, however, that the Government consider establishing an Emigration and Diaspora Office or unit – we understand that the FCO consular section is already considering this. The director of the consular service in London told us: 'The sort of unit I would imagine having here would be people from the Foreign Office but also from DWP and Department of Health.' There is a historical precedent for such a body: an Emigration Board was established by the Colonial Office in 1840.

The new office or unit might be constituted as a non-departmental government body agency, or sit as a unit within the FCO. Its remit would include building a better evidence base on emigration, promoting planned emigration and local integration, and actively promoting and supporting the British diaspora. We argue that it should also involve relevant NGO bodies.

The proper role and focus of this body would have to be further researched, but it is clear from our work that it would need to be formally designated as taking the lead on diaspora engagement as a significantly expanded area of work, and properly resourced to fulfil it. Otherwise there is a danger that existing consular services, which would remain vital under any new model, would be damaged by a squeeze on funds. In the current funding climate such expansion will obviously be difficult, but it should at least be a longer term aspiration of government.

It is also important in our view that whatever sort of unit or cross-departmental body is set up has strong ministerial oversight, and that a minister in the Foreign Office takes an active interest in emigration and diaspora affairs as part of his or her portfolio. This minister, as mentioned above, should be able to report to the Commons and be

questioned about these issues.

We recommend:

- The FCO should establish a cross-departmental unit, with strong links to outside bodies, that has a specific remit to look at policy and practice on emigration and diaspora affairs.
- This unit should have enhanced funding to ensure that basic consular services are maintained, but that more can be done to support the British diaspora to advance UK interests abroad.
- An FCO minister should take on clear responsibility for British emigration and diaspora affairs as a signal of the UK government's increased interest in this area.

### **UK-level diaspora engagement and national-level diaspora engagement working hand in hand**

As we have seen, the government of Scotland is, if anything, well ahead of the UK government in diaspora engagement. With that in mind the UK government should obviously ensure that its enhanced diaspora engagement is coordinated with that of constituent nations. If this is done there is no reason why there should be competition or duplication of effort; indeed the work should be mutually reinforcing. There is obviously the potential for increased work in this area by the devolved administrations in Wales and Northern Ireland – and even, as and when further devolution takes place, by English regions or even cities with strong identities. The North East region and London, to take two obvious examples, could be looking to build their links with British expats who continue to have a strong attachment not just to the UK but to their home area or city. The UK government has the scope therefore to pursue diaspora engagement in a multi-level way.

We recommend:

- The UK government and devolved administrations should work together on diaspora engagement.
- The UK government should take a lead in encouraging and supporting devolved administrations to engage with and mobilise British emigrants from the nations of the UK – and also look into how English regions and cities could support a joined-up effort.

### **Linking engagement with the British diaspora with engagement with the 'secondary diaspora'**

In a previous ippr publication called *Shall We Stay or Shall we Go?* (Finch et al 2009), we showed that the previous immigrants to the UK who have now returned home (or even moved to a third country) often still retain an affection or active links with the UK and that many would welcome that being formalised. For instance, many foreign students keep in touch with their universities through overseas alumni programmes. We dubbed these foreign nationals a 'secondary diaspora' made up of people who could be called 'honorary Brits abroad'. We therefore suggest that the FCO considers not just those British

nationals for whom it has direct responsibility, but also former immigrants to the UK, when it comes to enhancing its diaspora engagement.

### **Further recommendations**

The ideas and recommendations set out above are the most important changes that we would like to see the UK government consider in relation to diaspora engagement, but to end this chapter we also set out some brief additional recommendations that we believe are worth mentioning.

### **Collecting and disseminating better migration and population data**

Data on emigrants, as well as on immigration and emigration trends, is limited. One consequence is that central government, local service providers and NGOs are not able to plan as well as they might for movements of Britons in and out.

We recommend:

- The sample size of the International Passenger Survey should be increased to enable better analysis of migration flows to and from the UK.
- The Department for Work and Pensions should require all those in receipt of a state requirement pension to register in their country of residence.
- The FCO should conduct an annual population audit of British nationals who live overseas, using a range of data, not just consular registration records. This audit should be made available to local government and NGOs such as Age UK, the Red Cross and the British Legion.
- Central government should examine the experiences of states with compulsory registration schemes for overseas nationals, as well as the future use of embarkation control data, to assemble better migration data.
- Using better migration data, NGOs working overseas should review the populations with whom they have regular contact. This review should highlight unmet needs among the British diaspora.
- The Migration Unit in Communities and Local Government and its devolved equivalents should disseminate information about the scale and nature of British migration to the UK, ensuring this information reaches local government and relevant NGOs.

### **Updating contingency planning**

The presence of a large British diaspora also requires that the Government has a coherent strategy and comprehensive evacuation plans for emergency situations. While we were undertaking this research, an evacuation programme for elderly British residents in Zimbabwe was announced; the organisation of such evacuations is dependent on the UK's overseas missions having up-to-date information about British communities overseas, including contact details. Inevitably, the limited registration of UK nationals with consulates makes the process of emergency planning much more challenging.

Government evacuation plans also need to account for the increasing diversity among

communities of UK nationals who live overseas. For example, we are seeing the emergence of new countries of retirement migration in southern Europe, the Caribbean, South Asia and West Africa. These changes may result in different patterns of demand for consular services or the support services offered by NGOs. It is also essential that FCO-led contingency plans for the evacuation of British nationals reflect changing migration patterns.

We recommend:

- FCO strategic plans, including evacuation plans, need to reflect changed settlement patterns of British nationals and hidden populations with whom consulates may have limited contact.
- More registration with consulates should be encouraged through advertising and networking with organisations that serve British communities. Community wardens could also be mobilised to encourage their contacts to register.

### **Supporting planned return to the UK**

Since 2000 between 50,000 and 100,000 British nationals have returned to the UK every year. In the immediate future, return migration to the UK is likely to increase as a consequence of the economic crisis and the uncertain value of sterling against key currencies such as the Euro. Return migration, too, requires policy responses from the UK government.

A minority of UK nationals leave their adopted countries of residence very soon after arriving, for reasons including sudden illness or political unrest. But our research shows that most UK nationals who return make that decision over a period of weeks, months or longer. Thus most have time to plan their return migration, but not all take this opportunity. As with emigration from the UK, lack of prior planning makes integration back into the UK much more difficult. In particular, less wealthy and older returnees fail to plan for their housing or check their entitlements (for example to state benefits). The FCO has tried to encourage planning for return to the UK through road shows, and printed and online information targeted at UK nationals in Spain. Such initiatives could be extended to France and Portugal, which both host large British communities.

Much less consideration has been given to targeting the younger traveller who may not be aware of the requirement, for example, for three years' prior residency before enrolling on a course as a home student. Careers advisers in schools, colleges and universities need to impart this information before a young person sets off.

The dissemination of information that encourages planning for migration is welcome. But there will always be some emigrants or returnees who fail to locate or absorb information about issues such as benefit entitlements or healthcare. We need to know more about this group and to research other ways of reaching them with key messages.

We recommend:

- The UK government, led by the FCO, needs to work to ensure that return migration is a



planned process. The FCO should consider extending its road shows, perhaps to include Portugal, France, Cyprus and Bulgaria, to impart information about return to the UK.

- The FCO should work in partnership with civil society organisations that work with British communities outside the UK to recruit British volunteers as integration champions who could communicate planning behaviour within their own communities.

### **Making the most of returnees**

Many UK nationals who we interviewed abroad wanted to use the skills they had gained overseas on return to the UK. Some emigrants felt their skills and overseas networks were of commercial importance to UK-based businesses. A significant number of migrants felt that their knowledge could be used to prepare others for emigration. Other UK nationals wanted to use their language skills, but often did not want to teach full-time.

Some UK nationals who had lived in developing countries wanted to use their overseas experience to raise awareness about issues such as global poverty and to promote better intercultural understanding.

Despite these sentiments, few returnees were able to utilise their skills on return. Apart from UK-based NGOs that use volunteers to campaign about global poverty or human rights abuse, there are few organisations and limited infrastructure to channel the skills of UK nationals who have lived overseas. The use in the UK of individuals with overseas business networks is unplanned. There are no programmes or projects that are able to support and channel linguists into volunteer or paid employment in schools.

The inability to channel the skills of UK nationals who return to the UK may have at its roots the many negative perceptions of UK nationals who live abroad. Media portrayal of this community tends to focus on the retired criminals and unhappy, inward-looking expatriates. Given such perceptions, it is not surprising that UK nationals are not seen as an asset. There is a need to change the perceptions of emigrants in the UK.

We recommend:

- The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, together with the FCO, should review how it might better utilise the business networks and skills of UK nationals who have lived overseas.
- The Department for Children, Schools and Families and its devolved equivalents should consider how to utilise the language skills of returning UK nationals. These departments should consider ways that returning nationals might be employed as language assistants in schools.
- Public events that aim to celebrate migration, such as International Migration Day, should incorporate the experiences of UK nationals who migrate and portray them as assets. Organisations that advocate for migrants should consider how they communicate messages about UK nationals who migrate.
- National volunteering strategies should prioritise UK nationals who return to the UK.

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# Appendix A.

## Details of interviews

### British emigrants

#### Bulgaria

22 interviewees

- Male 60-70 – General Manager for UK multinational
- Male 50-60 – Project Management Consultancy
- Male 50-60 – Builder
- Female 50-60 – Credit Control manager
- Female 50-60 – Estate Agent
- Male 40-50 – Telecoms executive
- Male 40-50 – Project Manager in Pharmaceutical Industry
- Male 40-50 – Small business owner
- Female 40-50 – Sales and Marketing Manger in Car Rental business
- Female 40-50 – Runs small business
- Female 40-50 – Teacher
- Female 40-50 – Estate Agent
- Female 40-50 – Runs language school
- Female 40-50 – Nurse
- Male 30-40 – Chartered Accountant
- Male 30-40 – Project Manager
- Male 30-40 – Runs communications business
- Male 30-40 – Runs a tourism information website
- Male 30-40 – Teacher
- Male 30-40 – Teacher
- Female 30-40 – Teacher
- Male 20-30 – Ski instructor

Interviews took place in three locations:

- Sofia (capital city)
- Bankso (ski-resort)
- Varna (city on Black Sea)

## India

10 interviewees

- Female 50-60 – Teacher
- Male 40-50 – Businessman
- Male 40-50 – Writer
- Female 40-50 – Part-time project work (Wife of diplomat)
- Female 40-50 – Businesswoman
- Female 30-40 – Trade and Investment Promotions
- Female 30-40 – Housewife
- Female 20-30 – Teacher
- Female 20-30 – Communications intern with NGO
- Female 18 – Student

All interviews took place in Delhi.

## Spain

10 interviewees

- Male 70-80 – Retired
- Male 70-80 – Retired
- Female 70-80 – Retired
- Male 60-70 – Retired
- Female 60-70 – Retired
- Male 50-60 – Project manager in building industry
- Male 50-60 – Marketing Consultant
- Female 40-50 – Works in a bookshop
- Female 40-50 – Works in rental holiday business
- Female 20-30 – Works in a bookshop

Interviews took place in three locations in Andalucia province:

- Malaga (coastal city)
- Fuengirola (coastal town)
- Mijas Pueblo (village near Fuengirola)

## United Arab Emirates – Dubai

13 interviewees

- Male 60-70 – Property management
- Female 60-70 – Property management



- Female 50-60 – Manager in market research company
- Female 50-60 – Communications adviser
- Male 40-50 – Unemployed (formally worked in property development)
- Male 40-50 – Campus director at university
- Female 40-50 – Part-time teaching assistant
- Male 30-40 – Head of corporate services with law firm
- Male 30-40 – Unemployed (formally worked in financial sector)
- Male 30-40 – Teacher
- Female 30-40 – Unemployed (formally working in recruitment)
- Female 30-40 – Housewife
- Female 30-40 – Unemployed
- Female 30-40 – Unemployed (formally worked part-time at university)

All interviews took place in Dubai city.

### **United States**

10 interviews

- Male 70-80 – Retired designer
- Female 70-80 – Retired
- Male 60-70 – Runs British shop and tea room
- Male 60-70 – Car restorer
- Male 50-60 – Estate agent
- Male 40-50 – Corporate lawyer
- Female 40-50 – Head of customer services, IT company
- Female 40-50 – House wife
- Female 20-30 – Estate agent
- Female 20-30 – Unemployed

Interviews took place three locations:

- New York city
- Fort Lauderdale, Florida
- Yellow Springs, Ohio

## Key informant interviewees

### Bulgaria

- Senior diplomat, British Embassy, Sophia
- Senior trade official, British Embassy, Sophia
- Editor, English language newspaper

### India

- Senior consular official, British Embassy, Delhi
- Chaplain, Anglican church, Delhi
- Senior official, British-Indian business network, Delhi

### Spain

- Senior consular official, British Consulate, Malaga
- Official of local foreigners department, Mijas Pueblo
- Local chair, elderly person's charity, Fuengirola
- Editor, English language newspaper, Fuengirola
- Editor, English language newspaper, Malaga
- Chaplain, Anglican Church, Malaga
- Official, British campaign group, Mijas Pueblo

### United Arab Emirates

- Senior consular official, British Consulate, Dubai
- Senior officer, British business group, Dubai
- Chaplain, Anglican church, Dubai
- Officials, British-run charity, Dubai

### United States

- Consular official, British Consulate, New York
- Consular official, British Consulate, Miami
- Consular official, British Consulate, San Francisco
- Senior trade official, British Consulate, New York
- Editor, newspaper for British expats
- Senior official of British association, Miami
- Owner, British bar, New York

### **Interviews in the UK**

- Senior consular official, Australian High Commission, London
- Senior consular official, American Embassy, London
- Senior consular official, Canadian High Commission, London
- Senior consular official, German Embassy, London
- Senior consular official, Irish Embassy, London
- Senior consular official, Philippines Embassy, London
- Senior official, Directorate of UK Consular Services, FCO London
- Official, UK Consular Services, FCO, London
- Senior official, UK Passports Group, FCO, London
- Official, Irish emigrant liaison group, London

# Appendix B.

## Annual international migration flows (thousands), 1966-2008

Year	People of all citizenships			British nationals		
	Inflow to UK	Outflow from UK	Net emigration	Inflow to UK	Outflow from UK	Net emigration
1966	219	-302	-82	78	-230	-152
1967	225	-309	-84	83	-238	-155
1968	222	-278	-56	93	-208	-115
1969	206	-293	-87	82	-221	-139
1970	226	-291	-65	95	-215	-119
1971	200	-240	-40	92	-171	-79
1972	222	-233	-11	111	-160	-49
1973	196	-246	-50	83	-176	-93
1976	191	-210	-19	87	-137	-50
1977	162	-208	-46	73	-143	-71
1978	187	-192	-5.4	73	-126	-53
1979	195	-189	6.2	78	-126	-48
1980	173	-228	-55	67	-150	-83,
1981	153	-232	-80	60,	-164	-104
1982	201	-257	-56	97	-186	-88
1983	202	-184	17	96	-122	-26
1984	201	-164	37	95	-102	-6.9
1985	232	-174	58	110	-109	1.1
1986	250	-213	37	120	-132	-11
1987	211	-209	2.2	98	-130	-32
1988	216	-237	-21	89	-143	-54
1989	250	-205	44	104	-122	-18

Year	People of all citizenships			British nationals		
	Inflow to UK	Outflow from UK	Net emigration	Inflow to UK	Outflow from UK	Net emigration
1990	267	-231	36	106	-135	-30
1991*	328	-285	44	109	-154	-45
1992*	268	-281	-14	93	-155	-63
1993*	265	-266	-1.3	86	-149	-63
1994*	314	-238	77	108	-125	-17
1995*	312	-237	75	84	-136	-52
1996*	318	-264	54	94	-156	-62
1997*	326	-279	47	89	-149	-60
1998*	390,	-252	139	103	-126	-23
1999*	454	-291	163	116	-139	-23
2000*	483	-321	163	104	-161	-57
2001*^	481	-309	171	110	-159	-48
2002*^	516	-363	153	98	-186	-88
2003*^	511	-363	148	100	-191	-91
2004*^	589	-344	245	89	-196	-107
2005*^	567	-361	206	98	-186	-88
2006*^	596	-398	198	83	-207	-124
2007*^	574	-341	233	74	-171	-97
2008*	590	-427	163	85	-173	-87

1. All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

\* Data for 1975-1990 is based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS) only. Total International Data (TIM) is used for 1991-2008 and is based mainly on data from the International Passenger Survey but includes adjustments for (1) those whose intended length of stay changes so that their migrant status changes; (2) asylum seekers and their dependants not identified by the IPS; and (3) flows between the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

^ The 2001-2007 TIM estimates were revised following changes to source data in November 2009. Therefore they may not agree with estimates published previously.

# Appendix C.

## Estimates of Brits abroad by country of residence

Country	Passport est. (ippr calculations)	Census/other official source		UK state pensioners (DWP)		Brits abroad for year or longer		Including living abroad for part of the year	
		Official figures	Year						
Australia	574,762	1,035,526	2006	250,440	e	1,072,000	*	1,083,000	
Spain	206,070	269,470	2007	96,990	b	808,000	**	1,050,000	i
USA	498,823	829,402	2007	136,600	c	829,000	*	838,000	
Canada	236,660	594,790	2006	158,810	e	611,000	*	617,000	
France	207,850	84,493	2000	50,000	b, d	253,000	**	330,000	i
Ireland	99,428	271,781	2006	113,710	e, a	299,000	***	329,000	
New Zealand	201,548	244,800	2006	49,350	e	257,000	*	260,000	
South Africa	219,407	129,767	2001	38,600	h	219,000	*	222,000	
Germany	159,848	97,100	2007	35,630	c	97,000	***	107,000	
Switzerland	60,518	25,378	2000	8,020	e	66,000	***	72,000	
UAE	65,530	-	-	550	h	66,000	***	72,000	
Cyprus	58,955	11,871	2001	16,450	h	59,000	***	65,000	
India	27,655	5,743	2001	4,870	f	36,000	*	53,000	(ii)
Turkey	12,667	18,914	2000	1,350	e	51,000	***	56,000	
Singapore	47,760	-	-	490	h	48,000	****	60,000	
Thailand	46,427	-	-	2,210	h	46,000	****	58,000	
Netherlands	53,846	43,502	2006	9,090	g	44,000	***	48,000	
China (inc HK)	714,993	35,718	2006	1,740	e	47,000	*	47,000	
Greece	25,698	13,206	2001	4,720	e	35,000	**	45,000	
Pakistan	43,165	-	-	4,740	h	43,000	*	44,000	
Israel	43,413	18,900	2002	4,350	h	43,000		43,000	
Portugal	19,108	18,005	2006	8,220	b	30,000	**	39,000	
Italy	44,462	24,491	2003	36,480	e	28,000	**	37,000	
India	27,655	5,743	2001	4,870	f	36,000	*	53,000	(ii)
Belgium	33,527	26,176	2001	4,620	e	28,000	***	31,000	
Sweden	16,938	17,175	2005	3,020	e	26,000	***	29,000	
Barbados	23,003	2,843	1980-1	5,260	h	23,000	****	29,000	

Country	Passport est. (ippr calculations)	Census/other official source		UK state pensioners (DWP)		Brits abroad for year or longer		Including living abroad for part of the year	
		Official figures	Year						
Saudi Arabia	25,478	-	-	170	h	25,000	***	28,000	
Kenya	25,358	-	-	710	h	25,000	***	28,000	
Jamaica	21,928	4,626	1960	20,380	h	22,000	****	27,000	
Japan	22,272	10,411	2000	1,510	h	22,000		22,000	
Bulgaria	1,895	81	2001	420	f	18,000	#	18,000	(iii)
Jerusalem	11,385	-	-	0	f	20,000		20,000	
Malaysia	14,753	-	-	760	h	15,000	****	18,000	
Philippines	13,540	6,634	1990	1,500	h	14,000	****	17,000	
Norway	17,580	14,675	2006	2,060	g	15,000	***	16,000	
Nigeria	15,257	-	-	3,230	h	15,000		15,000	
Indonesia	11,270	8,640	2000	160	h	11,000	****	14,000	
Egypt	13,705	-	-	240	h	14,000		14,000	
Brazil	10,508	-	-	610	h	11,000	****	13,000	
Mexico	7,915	2,688	2000	380	e	10,000	****	13,000	
Denmark	17,582	10,778	2006	2,170	g	11,000	***	12,000	
Bahrain	11,733	-	-	120	h	12,000		12,000	
Trin & Tobago	9,032	2,090	2000	1,490	h	9,000	***	11,000	
Malta	8,645	6,223	1996	4,650	h	9,000	**	11,000	
Qatar	9,545	-	-	60	h	10,000		10,000	
Bangladesh	8,682	-	-	2,390	h	9,000	*	9,000	
Luxembourg	7,545	4,331	2001	330	e	7,000	***	8,000	
Oman	7,822	-	-	90	h	8,000		8,000	
Argentina	7,815	-	-	260	h	8,000		8,000	
Jordan	7,565	-	-	80	h	8,000		8,000	
Czech Rep	6,703	1,436	2001	290	h	7,000	***	7,000	
Kuwait	7,173	-	-	50	h	7,000		7,000	
Austria	11,845	5,447	2001	5,140	e	6,000	***	7,000	
Malawi	6,833	-	-	90	h	7,000		7,000	
Romania	2,077	318	2002	60	f	6,000	***	7,000	
Russia	6,458	-	-	90	h	6,000		6,000	
Macao (China)	-	6,308	1991	10	g	6,000		6,000	
Brunei	6,300	2,522	1981	20	h	6,000		6,000	
Ghana	5,987	-	-	910	h	6,000		6,000	

Country	Passport est. (ippr calculations)	Census/other official source		UK state pensioners (DWP)		Brits abroad for year or longer		Including living abroad for part of the year	
		Official figures	Year						
Poland	5,388	2,630	2001	1,400	h	5,000	***	6,000	
Venezuela	5,918	-	-	80	h	6,000		6,000	
Bahamas	—	-	-	280	f	5,000	****	6,000	
Hungary	4,970	1,186	2001	810	h	5,000	***	5,000	
Tanzania	5,143	-	-	60	h	5,000		5,000	
Lebanon	6,117	-	-	80	f	5,000		5,000	
Chile	4,748	1,815	2002	250	h	5,000		5,000	
Vietnam	4,503	-	-	40	h	5,000		5,000	
Botswana	4,478	3,559	1991	160	h	4,000		4,000	
Sri Lanka	4,473	-	-	870	h	4,000		4,000	
Libya	4,400	-	-	-	h	4,000		4,000	
Finland	4,190	2,762	2005	820	h	4,000		4,000	
Costa Rica	4,250	-	-	70	h	4,000		4,000	
Peru	4,230	730	1993	100	h	4,000		4,000	
Iraq	—	-	-	-	f	4,000		4,000	
Zimbabwe	21,592	10,654	1992	1,760	e	4,000		4,000	
South Korea	3,695	1,184	2000	20	h	4,000		4,000	
Gibraltar	-	3,607	2001	1,230	g	4,000		4,000	
Uganda	3,378	2,086	2002	80	h	4,000		4,000	
Colombia	3,497	-	-	120	h	3,000		3,000	
Grenada	—	-	-	1,490	f	3,000	****	3,000	
Morocco	2,523	-	-	110	h	3,000	****	3,000	
Iran	3,150	-	-	30	h	3,000		3,000	
Zambia	6,933	2,909	1990	200	e	3,000		3,000	
Yemen	2,667	-	-	2,870	k	3,000		3,000	
Antigua & Barbuda	—	-	-	450	f	2,000	****	3,000	
Azerbaijan	2,425	-	-	-	h	2,000		2,000	
Sudan	2,403	284	1993	-	h	2,000		2,000	
Ecuador	2,310	-	-	50	h	2,000		2,000	
Swaziland	2,270	1,136	1986	100	h	2,000		2,000	
Nepal	2,252	-	-	40	h	2,000		2,000	
Neth. Antilles	-	1,849	1992	50	g	2,000		2,000	



Country	Passport est. (ippr calculations)	Census/other official source		UK state pensioners (DWP)		Brits abroad for year or longer		Including living abroad for part of the year
		Official figures	Year					
Syria	1,827	-	-	40	h	2,000		2,000
Guyana	1,688	-	-	410	h	2,000		2,000
Namibia	1,672	-	-	80	h	2,000		2,000
Seychelles	1,535	140	1997	130	h	2,000		2,000
Gambia	1,522	-	-	80	h	2,000		2,000
Sierra Leone	1,513	-	-	80	h	2,000		2,000
Mozambique	1,440	-	-	10	h	1,000		1,000
Tunisia	1,428	-	-	50	h	1,000		1,000
Serbia	1,415	-	-	410	h	1,000		1,000
Belize	1,007	263	2001	70	f	1,000		1,000
St Lucia	-	557	2001	1,330	k	1,000		1,000
Ethiopia	1,248	-	-	30	h	1,000		1,000
Mauritius	6,670	458	2000	640	e	1,000	****	1,000
Dom. Republic	955	192	2002	50	h	1,000	****	1,000
Cote d'Ivoire	1,170	-	-	0	h	1,000		1,000
Panama	1,113	224	2000	40	h	1,000		1,000
Dominica	-	206	1981	1,070	k	1,000		1,000
Guatemala	1,020	-	-	10	h	1,000		1,000
Cambodia	—	190	1998	0	f	1,000		1,000
Slovakia	867	105	2001	40	h	900	***	1,000
Honduras	950	73	2001	20	h	1,000		1,000
Macedonia	950	-	-	60	h	1,000		1,000
Croatia	850	94	2001	370	h	900	***	900
Falklands & dependencies	-	925	2001	60	g	900		900
Ukraine	920	79	2001	130	h	900		900
Iceland	877	-	-	60	h	900		900
St Vincent & Grenadines	—	368	1991	810	k	800		800
Papua NG	753	4,699	1971	10	h	800		800
Estonia	657	56	2000	40	h	700	***	700
Kazakhstan	690	-	-	-	h	700		700
Bermuda	-	-	-	650	k	700		700

Country	Passport est. (ippr calculations)	Census/other official source		UK state pensioners (DWP)		Brits abroad for year or longer		Including living abroad for part of the year	
		Official figures	Year						
Angola	645	-	-	-	h	600		600	
Algeria	630	-	-	10	h	600		600	
Uruguay	627	509	1996	60	h	600		600	
St Kitts & Nevis	-	-	-	480	k	500	****	600	
Bosnia & Herz.	540	-	-	20	h	500		500	
Fiji	1,340	716	1986	100	f	500		500	
Nicaragua	410	37	-	10	h	400		400	
Rwanda	0	-	-	-	f	400		400	
El Salvador	390	74	1992	10	h	400		400	
Latvia	383	118	2000	120	h	400		400	
Slovenia	330	74	2002	160	h	300	***	400	
Monaco	-	-	-	350	k	400		400	
Paraguay	330	-	-	20	h	300		300	
Mongolia	317	80	2000	-	h	300		300	
Lithuania	280	247	2001	70	h	300	***	300	
Afghanistan	-	-	-	-	f	300		300	
Vanuatu	270	289	1989	20	h	300		300	
Cameroon	295	-	-	10	f	300		300	
Anguilla	-	260	2001	150	g	300		300	
Bolivia	1,510	472	1992	30	f	300		300	
DR Congo	340	-	-	-	f	200		200	
Georgia	-	-	-	-	f	200		200	
Senegal	220	-	-	-	h	200		200	
Andorra	-	-	-	210	k	200		200	
Albania	-	-	-	10	f	200		200	
Burma	373	-	-	-	f	200		200	
Tonga	190	-	-	10	h	200		200	
Cuba	520	-	-	0	f	200		200	
Curacao	160	-	-	0	h	200		200	
Moldova	-	-	-	-	f	200		200	
Cayman Isles	-	-	-	150	k	200		200	
Solomon Isles	170	-	-	10	f	100		100	
Montserrat	-	-	-	120	k	100		100	

Country	Passport est. (ippr calculations)	Census/other official source		UK state pensioners (DWP)		Brits abroad for year or longer	Including living abroad for part of the year	
		Official figures	Year					
Uzbekistan	85	-	-	0	f	100	100	
St Helena & dependencies	-	-	-	110	k	100	100	
Tajikistan	-	-	-	0	f	100	100	
Armenia	95	-	-	0	h	100	100	
US Virgin Isles	-	-	-	90	k	+	+	
Djibouti	0	-	-	80	k	+	+	
Eritrea	-	0	0	0	f	+	+	
Mali	-	0	0	-	f	+	+	
Turkmenistan	20	-	-	0	f	+	+	
Guinea	-	-	-	-	f	+	+	
Norfolk Island	-	44	1986	10	g	+	+	
Somalia	-	-	-	40	k	+	+	
Samoa	-	36	2001	-	g	+	+	
Liechtenstein	-	33	2001	40	g	+	+	
Taiwan	-	-	-	30	k	+	+	
Turks & Caicos	-	216	1990	30	k	+	+	
Kyrgyzstan	-	29	1999	-	g	+	+	
Central African Republic	-	27	1998	-	g	+	+	
Fr. Polynesia	-	-	-	20	k	+	+	
Belarus	70	84	2001	10	f	+	+	
Tuvalu	-	13	1991	-	g	+	+	
Lesotho	770	-	-	10	k	+	+	
Cape Verde	-	-	-	10	k	+	+	
Cook Islands	-	-	-	10	k	+	+	
Faroe Islands	-	-	-	10	k	+	+	
Puerto Rico	-	-	-	10	k	+	+	
Laos	-	0	0	10	k	+	+	
North Korea	-	-	-	-	f	+	+	
Br. Virgin Isles	-	312	1980	0	k	+	+	
Madagascar	-	-	-	0	f	+	+	
Mauritania	-	-	-	-	f	+	+	

Country	Passport est (ippr calculations)	Census/other official source		UK state pensioners (DWP)		Brits abroad for year or longer	Including living abroad for part of the year	
		Official figures	Year					
Gaza Strip & West Bank	-	-	-	0	h	+	+	
Myanmar	-	-	-	0	h	+	+	
Benin	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
Bhutan	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
Burkina Faso	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
Chad	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
Greenland	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
Guam (US)	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
Haiti	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
Kiribati	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
Liberia	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
Maldives	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
New Caledonia	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
Niger	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
San Marino	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
Suriname	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
Togo	-	-	-	-	k	+	+	
East Timor	-	-	-	0		+	+	
Total	4,272,200	3,954,949	171,816	1,119,790		5,657,000	6,173,000	

## Key to Appendix C

† – one hundred or fewer

For estimates of Brits permanently abroad:

a uprate longitudinal data with constant rate of growth

b uprate official data in holiday regions by rate of estimated non-registration

c use average value of longitudinal data

d uprate longitudinal data with exponential rate of growth

e uprate official figures using pensions extrapolation

f use consular estimates

g use official data

h use passport estimate

k use pensions data

For estimates of Brits living temporarily abroad:

\* far-flung settlement countries – uprate by 1%

\*\* Mediterranean retirement countries – uprate by 30%

\*\*\* Other European destinations – uprate by 10%

\*\*\*\* far-flung tourist destinations – uprate by 25%

# estimate due to recent growth in housing market

For additional upratings of estimates

- (i) multiply census figure by 3 to overcome lack of registration
- (ii) uprated to take account of consular estimates of 'swallow population'
- (iii) uprated to account of continuing growth in housing market