

*Time to get it right:  
Finding consensus on  
Britain's future  
immigration policy*

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About British Future:

British Future is an independent, non-partisan thinktank engaging people's hopes and fears about integration and migration, opportunity and identity, so that we share a confident and welcoming Britain, inclusive and fair to all.

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## I. Introduction: Time to get it right

Britain will leave the European Union in March 2019 – and will need to decide on a new approach to immigration. While the central fact of Britain’s referendum decision remains unchanged and the Article 50 clock keeps ticking, much of the detail has been thrown up in the air by the June 2017 General Election. Voters did not give Theresa May the large majority she requested, a personal mandate with which to steer through her own, unyielding vision for Brexit.

British businesses are worried about the impact of a ‘cliff-edge’ Brexit for which they are unprepared. They will need time to adapt to whatever new trade regime Britain has with the EU after we leave, and a new immigration system in place of businesses’ current freedom to hire freely from the large EU workforce pool. There is a growing consensus, within government as well as outside it, that a transition period after the UK formally leaves the EU in 2019, during which UK policy remains closely aligned to the current trade and immigration regimes, seems the most sensible way of avoiding an economic shock.

Just as Brexit means Brexit, however, transition must mean transition. A transition that looks like an attempt to cling on to EU membership indefinitely would not pass democratic scrutiny. And an open-ended transition will fail to achieve its objective for the economy, too - prolonging business uncertainty over when and whether the UK will really leave – and hence prolonging postponements of investment decisions. A clear, time-limited transition period of around 3 years, with a set end-date, could help provide certainty. But it will only be of real benefit if business knows, early on, what system it is transitioning to. Companies cannot plan towards a question mark or an open-ended series of possibilities.

So while the UK should seek a transition deal with the EU, we must also debate and decide now what immigration system will be in place after we leave. Brexit is a reset moment for UK immigration policy – but someone does have to press the reset button. That new system will need public and political consent too. It’s right that business voices are now being listened to, but they are not the only voices that need to be heard.

Britain’s noisy and divisive immigration debate is a symptom of low public trust in successive governments’ ability to competently manage immigration – from a post-accession EU migration surge that the Labour government failed to predict, to a net migration target that their Conservative successors failed to meet.

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Given the divisions uncovered by the referendum debate, consulting the public may sound like a thankless task - or even a hopeless one. But such defeatism underestimates the capacity for consensus among the public. There are many lessons for politicians and their parties from 2017's election. Chief among them must be to acknowledge the failures, in the referendum and this election, to really get a grip on what voters think and engage them in the choices that the country faces. It is an important step forward that Home Secretary Amber Rudd has commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee to provide the strongest evidence base on future policy options. It will be as just crucial for the Government to ensure that there are clear and visible opportunities for the public to engage directly in the big immigration choices ahead.

New research in this report uncovers the clear consensus views on which most voters can agree, including about different flows of immigration and different options for managing migration to Britain. This informs a proposal for a new immigration system that would, we believe, win the support of most of the public while also working for business. Such a preferential deal, favouring skilled migration from the EU but with a cap on low-skilled migration set by Parliament, could also form the basis of a strong offer to the EU during negotiations over our future trading relationship.

Our research through public conversations across the UK also finds just how closely aligned are issues of immigration and integration. People want to live well together and, on the whole they do – but they remain concerned about those places where integration isn't working, or where the pressures of rapid change is putting stress on communities. So part of getting immigration right for the future will be a new effort to get integration right too, at local and regional level but with support and direction from the top. It is remarkable that Britain has never had a properly-implemented integration strategy and, in its response to the Casey Review, the Government has a chance to put one in place.

On integration there is clear potential to find public and cross-party political consensus. This should mean progress can be achieved in this parliament, despite the pressures on parliamentary time and the Government's lack of a clear majority. But it is not only on integration that people can agree. With greater public engagement, consensus can be found on the big issues of immigration policy with which the Government must now wrestle. That process should start straight away – because the time to get things right on immigration is now.

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## 2. Lessons from the 2017 General Election

### 2.1 May's missing majority

The General Election did not go to plan, certainly for the Prime Minister who chose to call it. The public premise, to seek a personal mandate for the Brexit talks, belied a bigger ambition - to run the type of 'realignment election' that could shift the contours of British politics for a generation to come. The Prime Minister took the divisions of post-referendum Britain, and sought to convert them into a new dominance for the Conservative Party. This was Theresa May's "Somewheres versus Anywheres" election.

While flawed campaign execution does go some way towards explaining the failure to win any majority at all, despite a highly auspicious electoral context, there are key insights from the Conservative experience of 2017 that go well beyond personality and performance. The reasons why this ambitious realignment strategy failed go rather deeper, casting important light on the nature of the post-referendum divisions in British society – and what they mean for politicians seeking sufficient trust and support to govern.

To a large extent, the Conservative election strategy involved taking the referendum divisions of post-Brexit Britain and picking one tribe, asking the 52% 'Somewheres' to grant Theresa May a personal landslide to negotiate Brexit for Britain. The Prime Minister's political strategists were among those impressed by writer David Goodhart's<sup>1</sup> anatomy of the increasing polarisation of British society around age, education and cultural worldview. Their key oversight may have been to mistake an important demographic story of social and cultural polarisation for a potential election-winning manual for a political party.

Ultimately, this bid for an historic political realignment fell short on both fronts. The Conservatives did advance with blue-collar Brexit voters, but could not secure sufficient trust to persuade most of the northern towns, which had not elected a Conservative MP for decades, to do so in 2017. If the core point about "Somewhere" voters is their deeply rooted sense of attachment, allegiance and memory, then the campaign significantly underestimated what this would mean for a Conservative bid to become the party of the blue-collar north of England. Added to that, the polarising pitch of the 2017 campaign helped to persuade many "Anywhere" voters to turn up and vote, while failing to strike the right balance for the large numbers of "inbetweeners" who don't fit neatly into the polarised tribes of British society.

The Conservative recipe for a much increased majority appeared to have many of the ingredients needed for success: a strong pre-campaign advantage on leadership and the economy; a strong pitch for most of the 4 million who had voted Ukip last time by promising a robust approach to Brexit; and an appeal to the national interest, asking voters

to strengthen the British Prime Minister heading into crucial talks with foreign governments. The hope was that this mix would attract a significant proportion of Brexit voters from other parties, while also retaining the support of millions of Conservative Remainers who found themselves with little alternative but to support Theresa May over Jeremy Corbyn.

Several aspects of that strategy did go to plan. The party won 2.3 million more votes than in 2015, a rise of 6% of the vote to 42%, or 43.6% in Great Britain outside Northern Ireland. Most of David Cameron’s voters did stick with Theresa May, and over 2 million of Nigel Farage’s 2015 voters switched to the Conservatives too. The party did advance with the voters it was targeting: it did particularly well in the north-east (up 9%) and took 50% of the votes across the Midlands, up 7%. The Conservatives did advance more with working-class than with middle-class voters. But British General Elections are decided by seats, not votes. Here, the Conservative plan failed. Only five Labour seats fell to the party in England and Wales. The party failed to win any of their more conventional marginal seats – and suffered a significant number of losses, including in seats where the sitting MP did not realise they were in danger and so spent much of the campaign in a different marginal constituency.

What the Conservative strategy badly underestimated was how there are two sides to the coin when making a polarising election pitch. A very public appeal to unite the Conservative and UKIP vote could deter other voters from supporting the governing party – and mobilise opponents too. Ultimately, it was only the party’s spectacularly good performance in Scotland - where they ran with a rather different tone and approach under Ruth Davidson – that kept a bruised Prime Minister and party in office at all.

Even while their national vote share rose, the Conservatives went backwards not just among first-time voters, but among all age groups under 44, among graduates, among ethnic minority voters, and among Londoners.

### **Dramatically increased polarisation by age**

	Conservative share	Conservative Change	Labour share	Labour Change	Two-party swing	2017 lead	2015 lead
18-24	27%	-1%	62%	+20%	11% to Labour	Labour +35	Lab +14
25-34	27%	-6%	56%	+20%	13% to Labour	Labour +29	Lab +3
35-44	33%	-2%	49%	+14%	8% to Labour	Labour +16	Level
45-54	43%	+7%	40%	+8%	0.5% to Labour	Cons +3	Cons +4
55-64	51%	+14%	34%	+3%	5.5% to Cons	Cons +17	Cons +3
65+	61%	+14%	25%	+3%	5.5% to Cons	Cons +36	Cons +25

## The closing gap by social class

	Conservative share	Change	Labour share	Change	Two-party swing	2017 lead	2015 lead
AB	42%	+2%	37%	+11%	4.5% to Labour	Cons +5	Cons +14
C1	44%	+2%	40%	+12%	5% to Labour	Cons +4	Cons +12
C2	45%	+13%	41%	+9%	2% to Cons	Cons +4	Level
DE	38%	+12%	47%	+6%	3% to Cons	Lab +9	Lab +15

(Ipsos-Mori, *How Britain voted 2017 and 2015*)

The 2017 result underlines that “the 52%” and “the 48%” were always rather illusory chimeras - temporary alliances on one issue alone. And while half of the referendum voters on each side were certain about their choice, four out of ten Leavers and Remainers only made their minds up in the last four weeks. Those uncertain referendum voters have more in common with each other – in their concerns about the economy and their views about migration and identity – than they do with the core supporters of their own side.

The ‘Somewheres’ may be mostly pro-Brexit but they are not a monolithic, single-issue bloc. The Leave majority had seen two-thirds of Conservatives join a third of the Labour vote, four million Ukipers and a quarter of the supporters of the SNP, along with two million people who don’t usually vote in General Elections. One third of Conservatives joined most Labour voters on the other side. If the Conservatives had a potential target market of 10 million Leavers who hadn’t voted Conservative in 2015, this was a pretty motley vote to aim for. They all had different reasons for believing Britain would be better off out – but that didn’t mean they would find themselves on the same side in the next election contest between political parties.

The voting patterns suggest that Brexit was an important factor for some General Election voters but was outweighed by other issues for many others. In hindsight, that isn’t so surprising when you think about who the Somewheres are. They are characterised as voters with a deep sense of identity and roots. Many cared as much about the impact of spending cuts on the local fabric of public services as they did about pressures brought by immigration. The Conservatives may have been the party promising a robust version of Brexit, but they were also the party of tight controls on public spending. The oft-repeated “there is no magic money tree” critique of Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour party may have been pitch-perfect for 2015 Conservative voters, but it had less appeal for the pro-Brexit Labour and UKIP target voters, for whom the contentious Vote Leave pledge of ‘millions for the NHS’ had sounded like a change they wanted to see.



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## What happens next?

The 2017 experience suggests a significant dilemma for future aspirant Conservative party leaders thinking about its overall economic and cultural approach.

Theresa May's Conservative party relied too heavily on a narrow appeal which resonates strongly only with the over-65s. It found that being tough on immigration may not necessarily prove to be a winning strategy, securing most of the UKIP vote but putting off others. In the Britain of the 2020s, the Conservatives will struggle to win majorities again if they cannot find a broader appeal to graduates, younger voters and ethnic minorities. Language like 'go home' and 'citizens of nowhere' will repel voters that a party needs to attract in order to win a majority.

If the Conservative party wants to be a socially conservative party of the blue-collar north, it may have to become less committed to a small state, low tax agenda and be considerably more open to state intervention in the economy. If, as seems more likely, the party will remain sceptical about the size of the state, then it may need to pitch to more socially liberal younger voters in the south of England, adopting a more measured approach to managed migration that could fit more comfortably with a generally pro-market philosophy.

Perhaps the key lesson for the governing party, drawn from the failed strategy of 2017, is about the politics of polarisation. If we are entering an age of political and social polarisation, then smaller parties aiming for a 10% to 15% vote-share – whether UKIP at one end of the political spectrum or the Liberal Democrats at the other – have little to lose from simply picking a side in Britain's culturally polarised debate and amplifying one side of the argument as loudly as possible. The lesson of the Conservatives' failed political realignment of 2017 is that parties who want to govern may not prosper by polarising. Any party that wants to form a majority government needs to find common ground across British society, with a broader One Nation agenda that can bridge divides and bring people together.

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## 2.2 Labour's surprise surge: what does it mean for the immigration debate?

The General Election result was as much a surprise for the party of opposition as it was for the Conservatives. Right up to the moment the exit poll was published, Labour had been written off and expected to lose many seats and the support of core voters. In the end, Labour took 40% of the vote and 262 seats, leaving the Conservatives to form a minority government. Compared with the 2015 general election, the Labour Party had a net gain of 30 seats (36 wins and 6 losses). The predicted Tory advance into Labour's Midlands and northern heartlands simply did not happen.

Labour significantly increased its vote everywhere but Scotland. It also gained in vote share in all age groups, but the gains were greatest among younger people, with polling suggesting that 62% of voters aged 18-24 supported Labour<sup>2</sup>. The party increased its vote share among all social grades, particularly among higher social classes (AB and C1) where support was up by 11% and 12% points respectively.

A post-election YouGov study found that around 45% of 2015 UKIP voters, who were disproportionately coming from lower socio-economic backgrounds, switched to the Conservatives in 2017. Among BME voters, Labour increased its support by 11 percentage points, while the Conservatives saw their vote share fall by 4 percentage points. While Labour voters were more likely to have backed Remain, around a quarter of Leavers and 18% of those who voted UKIP in 2015 are thought to have voted for Labour<sup>3</sup>. What emerges from post election analysis is that Labour gained votes and seats in both ethnically metropolitan areas – often aided by the student vote – as well in the post-industrial Leave- supporting North. Labour wins stretched from Brighton to Bury, Canterbury to Crewe and from Kensington to Keighley.

When Labour's gains are put on a map, it is clear that its support comes from two types of voters. The first are typically young, university educated and live in London or a university town that voted Remain in the EU referendum. If not from a minority ethnic group themselves, they are likely to have friends from ethnic minorities and to be generally comfortable with present levels of immigration.

But Labour's support also comes from the UK's post-industrial regions, with a second group of core supporters spanning all age groups and including many non-graduates. This group is more likely have voted Leave and to have concerns about the impacts of immigration on their neighbourhoods, on public services and on their conditions of

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employment.

Many commentators have suggested that the Labour Party now has the task of keeping happy two distinct groups of voters with opposing views on both immigration and Brexit. The political problem for Labour is that it may well risk failing with both: sceptical voters in northern seats will believe Labour remains more pro-migration than they would like, while pro-migration metropolitans believe that ending a commitment to freedom of movement is heresy.

Although some think that keeping these two groups content is impossible, there are three actions that the Labour Party could take to start bridging this divide and building consensus across both strands of support.

### **Clarity**

First, the Labour politicians need to sing from the same hymn sheet. The party's manifesto stated clearly that free movement for EU nationals, in its current form, will end after the UK leaves the EU but that the party would not make immigration a 'red-line' issue:

*"In trade negotiations our priorities favour growth, jobs and prosperity. We make no apologies for putting these aims before bogus immigration targets".*

During the election campaign and afterwards, most senior Labour spokespeople have tried to fudge or avoid the 'either/or question' of whether to prioritise market access over UK controls on immigration, for fear of alienating either of the party's core groups of supporters.

Labour's new approach to the transitional period, set out by Shadow Brexit Secretary Keir Starmer<sup>4</sup>, means that the party would propose to remain in the single market and customs union after March 2019, for the duration of a transitional period, lasting between two and four years, and so would accept freedom of movement during this phase. This appears well-judged as a position which most of the party will be able to unite around this Autumn, but that is partly because it defers the question of what happens beyond the transition. The proposal has therefore been welcomed by those who see a transitional period as a necessary bridge during a well-organised exit, but also by pro-EU MPs who hope that the temporary case could be extended indefinitely into something more permanent.

The official policy in the longer-term is to maintain the benefits of the single market ending freedom of movement in its current form with the new controls on immigration. Many in Europe (and also in the Labour party) think that this is unrealistic.

It is, of course, perfectly coherent to adopt one or the other position. Labour could opt to put single market membership first and make a

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case for the continuation of free movement, perhaps by emphasising the controls available within the current rules; or it could concede that single market access is not feasible without freedom of movement and back an alternative model to access as much of the EU market as possible, from the outside. Either way, the party leadership will need to set out its long-term view, beyond the transitional phase, if it does want to have a voice in shaping the debate about the right immigration settlement for Britain after Brexit. Having a clearer position on Labour's approach to a temporary transition phase is a step forward - but does not yet represent a party position in seeking to influence and shape the long-term immigration choices that the country faces. While some may see tactical political positioning advantages in hoping to duck this question for as long as possible, that would remove the Labour party from having a clear and coherent voice in this crucial debate about the future of immigration.

### **Dealing with the impacts - locally**

Addressing some of the impacts of migration - on neighbourhoods, housing and public services - would also help to keep the support of Labour's working class and non-metropolitan voters. In places such as Bradford, Middlesbrough, Preston and Stoke migrants have, understandably, tended to settle in neighbourhoods where there is a supply of private rented housing, some of it of poor quality and over-crowded. As we later argue, rapid migration has become associated with population churn, neighbourhood decline and pressures on public services.

The Labour Party has committed to a new Migration Impacts Fund to address these local impacts, boosted with a contributory element from the investments required for High Net Worth Individual Visas. It is proposed that the fund should be used to deal with local pressure points, for example improving the regulation of privately rented accommodation, a move that might also be popular with students. But to be successful, the changes made by such a fund need to be visible in the neighbourhoods it targets. Local Labour MPs and councillors need to get out and listen to communities, involving them in spending decisions about the new Migration Impacts Fund. They should also take action on other pressure points that can lead to the scapegoating and resentment of migrants.

### **A decent conversation**

Third, Labour needs to talk about its differences on immigration, but decently. The Labour Party has never been very good at dealing with internal debate and diverse policy positions, with its history of bitter conflict, of cabals hatched in smoke-filled rooms and, more recently, streams of abuse sent out through social media. The Labour movement needs to find a way to hold a civil debate with its voters and members. Involving trade unions and local parties and adapting the methods used

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in British Future's National Conversation on Immigration<sup>5</sup> is one way to hold such a discussion. It is also clear that this debate has to bridge geographical divides, as well as differences in politics.

There will be some who may oppose such an idea, voicing fears that migration policy is being handed to the mob and those who shout the loudest. But this is precisely the type of debate that happens at present, one that has ill-served the party and its voters. It is time for this to change and for the Labour Party to listen to those who don't get heard, on immigration and on other important issues.

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## 2.3 Purple Pain: will UKIP prove to be a victim of Brexit?

The public vote to leave the European Union was music to the ears of UKIP, a party founded to pursue that very goal. Yet the 2017 General Election suggested that the Eurosceptic party was more likely to be a victim than a beneficiary of this historic victory for its defining cause.

Having secured nearly 4 million votes in the 2015 General Election, Ukip saw three-quarters of those voters abandon it in 2017. The party's election pitch was that it was the essential 'watchdog' of Brexit, arguing that the 52% who had voted Leave should not trust other parties to deliver it. But 16.8 million of the 17.4 million who voted Leave in the referendum were not persuaded by that claim.

Ukip leader Paul Nuttall's resignation on the morning after the General Election saw the party prepare for its third leadership contest in a very turbulent twelve months. The new party leader – to be elected on 29<sup>th</sup> September – faces several formidable hurdles to a political recovery. The departure of the UK MEPs from the European Parliament on Brexit means it will lack elected representatives, and is a significant blow to the party's finances and staff capacity too. The lack of second places in 2017 means that Ukip will struggle to convince voters that it is a real contender in the next Westminster contest, exacerbated by the failure to sustain a local government base. The party's high media profile reflected the one in six votes that it won in 2015 – but its 2.9% vote share should see this reduce significantly too.

### How the purple wave broke: Ukip's 2015 and 2017 results compared

	May 2015	June 2017
Votes	3,881,099	594,068
National vote share	12.6%	1.8%
Candidates	624	378
Average votes/candidate	6,220	1,571
Seats won	1	0
Second places	120	0
Lost deposits	80	337
% of candidates lost deposit	12%	89%

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## Why did Ukip perform so poorly in 2017?

The party appears to have been considerably better prepared for defeat in the 2016 referendum than for the Leave campaign's victory. That win proved more discombobulating, and so the year after the referendum proved a turbulent and unhappy one with several senior politicians quitting the party. A new leader, Diane James, was elected and then quit almost immediately. Former immigration spokesman Steven Woolfe also left to sit as an independent after an altercation with another Ukip MEP left him hospitalised.

The party's sole MP, Douglas Carswell, left too, declaring that the party could declare its "job done" after the referendum. Carswell had always been an uneasy member of the Ukip tribe: his efforts to persuade Ukip to adopt a more inclusive tone to broaden its appeal created significant tensions with Nigel Farage, particularly over the issue of how central immigration should be to the party's pitch.

Amid so much internal turmoil, Ukip was unprepared for a snap General Election. It suffered heavy losses in the May 2017 local elections and in the General Election fielded just 378 candidates, over two hundred fewer than two years previously. Nine out of ten lost their deposits.

But Ukip's primary challenge in 2017 was an existential one. What was the purpose and point of a party founded to advocate Britain's departure from the European Union once that mission was secured? The party's characteristically populist public message to voters was that the political establishment could not be trusted, so that Brexit would be betrayed without its purple champions. That charge of betrayal will have appeared premature to much of its target audience: most Leave voters remained pleased by the Leave result, and keen to see it carried out. Ukip risked looking rather like bad winners, so used to railing against the political establishment that it could not quite work out what to do when a big political result went its way.

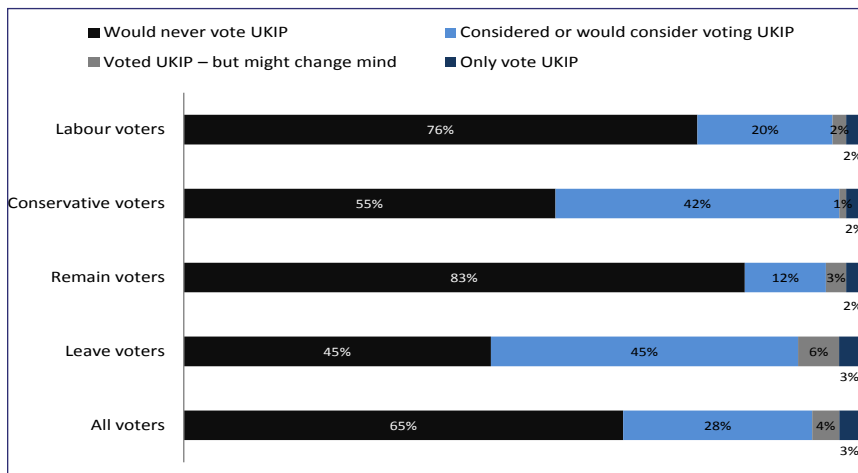
So the party struggled to make any significant contribution to the post-referendum debate about the form that Brexit would take. The red lines set by Theresa May over money, borders and sovereignty left little clear purple water to exploit. The party's (little known) official policy was that the UK should simply leave the EU without negotiations, ignoring the Article 50 process set out for a departing member state to leave the bloc. This had very little traction as a serious proposition, given the many practical and legal issues such an approach to Brexit would raise.

## Is there still a market for a Ukip style party?

The main impact of Ukip's demise is to reduce the pressure on the government from its populist right, with sharply contested arguments about Brexit and immigration now more likely to take place within both major parties. Ukip's 2017 failure does not mean, however, that this political space could not be filled again in the future, either by Ukip or another populist challenger.

The 2017 General Election result showed that Ukip is a long way from being able to claim to have a ‘core vote’. But there is a natural core constituency for the type of political pitch that the party makes, amounting to around 15% of the electorate. Indeed the ICM/British Future polling shows that nearly three out of ten voters considered voting for UKIP, though 45% of Leave voters say they would never do so. This places a formidable hurdle to the party’s chances of winning any first-past-the-post contests even while British politics remains polarised around the question of Brexit. Unsurprisingly, the groups most likely to say they would never vote Ukip include Remain voters (83%), Lib Dems (77%) and Labour voters (76%), non-white voters (74%), the under-24s (76%) and Scottish voters (77%). At the same time, clear majorities of DE voters (59%), C2 voters (64%), the over 65s (63%) and Conservatives (55%) also say they would never vote Ukip, and a majority of voters across every region is in the “never” camp.

Figure 1: Thinking about UKIP, which comes closest to your view?



### So what might the future hold for Ukip under its new leader?

Brexit is bad for business for the Eurosceptic party, making it much harder to retain a profile in British politics. The European elections will cease to be part of the British election calendar and the loss of the party’s MEPs will have a direct impact on capacity, staffing and funding. The party’s highest-profile elected office-holders will be 2 members of the London Assembly, one Scottish MSP and one Welsh Assembly member, alongside a much-reduced group of local councillors.

The ‘watchdogs of Brexit’ line clearly had little appeal to the public in 2017 and the new leader will be looking to re-boot the party’s offer to voters.

### The revolt against Remain

Ironically, the one thing that might transform Ukip’s prospects would be if its gloomy prognosis about Brexit being prevented were to come true. Were Remain campaigners to somehow snatch an unlikely victory from the jaws of defeat, it could well provide a new lease of life for Ukip. Its arguments



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about anti-democratic elites in Westminster and Brussels could well gain a new resonance.

### **The Home for Dissatisfied Brexiteers**

That will also be the party's response to a second, rather more likely, scenario: a phased Brexit, in which change comes too gradually and too slowly for the most hardline Brexiteers. That argument would, no doubt, be made in the name of the 52% who voted Leave, but Ukip would need it to resonate strongly with 10-15% of the electorate to try to get back into business.

### **A new cause: an anti-Islam party?**

A third future for UKIP after Brexit would be to develop a new cause, instead of the anti-EU issue that it was founded to pursue. The party leadership contest has been a very low-profile affair – because the party did so badly in the General Election and because of the low public profile of most of the contenders. But the election has highlighted a significant internal debate about whether Brexit or Islam should be its primary focus.

Uniquely, a woman who was banned as a parliamentary candidate is among the contenders for the party leadership. Anne Marie Waters was previously the co-founder of *Pegida UK* alongside Tommy Robinson, the former English Defence League leader. She was barred, by the party's national executive committee, from standing as a parliamentary candidate, with leader Paul Nuttall saying that her views were “well above and beyond party policy”. UKIP has banned former BNP and EDL members from the party leadership, but has not extended that prohibition to former Pegida members. So Waters has been able to contest the party leadership.

It is noticeable that strong criticism of Waters' candidacy has not come only from the modernising wing of UKIP, but also from strong supporters of Nigel Farage's robust line on immigration and integration. Farage loyalist Bill Etheridge MEP has warned against hardliners using the party “as a vehicle for the views of the EDL and the BNP” while Scottish MEP David Coburn has warned against “entryism” and Jane Collins has said that Ukip risks becoming “EDL lite”. Leadership front-runner Peter Whittle, a member of the London Assembly, issued a statement saying he had no intention of offering Waters a role as his deputy – though Whittle himself has also been challenged for placing an excessive focus on Islam and Muslim integration in the 2017 campaign. It has also been reported that 18 of the party's 20 MEPs have said they would quit the party if Waters was given a leadership role.

Nigel Farage was the most controversial and polarising politician of his generation. But he took a clear view, as party leader, that Ukip's credentials as a mainstream democratic party depended on rejecting any alliance or association with the BNP or the EDL in the UK, and keeping a distance from European populist parties, such as the French

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*Front National*, which had racist roots. This approach enabled UKIP to pitch itself as a mainstream party able to offer credible competition to the Conservatives for the support of those who believed most strongly in the Eurosceptic cause. It would be hard to see a party that routinely strayed across the line into prejudice having secured parliamentary defections from the Conservatives nor, indeed, winning European elections and becoming an electoral threat in Tory marginals.

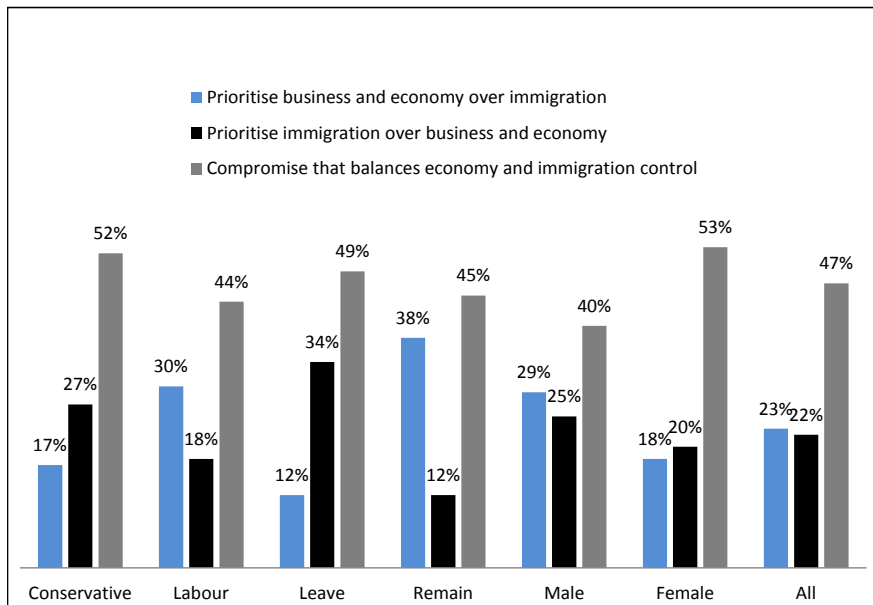
Ahead of the referendum, the central question about Ukip – inside the party and among Leavers beyond it – was whether it would hinder or help its side of the referendum when the winning post was set at 50%. With that pressure reduced, there will now be a much greater temptation for a party that has fallen to 3% of the vote to try to recover by appealing to the 5-10% of the electorate who are most open to the toughest version of its populist message. Whether or not that gets a hearing may depend on events and what happens over Brexit and other big identity and integration debates. But if the party loses its credentials as a mainstream rather than extreme party, its chances of returning to the national political stage will drastically diminish.

### 3. What the public wants on immigration

Our ICM poll asked over 3,600 people not just how they voted in the 2017 General Election and what they thought of the politicians and parties on offer, but also their views on one of the key issues that will dominate our politics over the next year: what approach to immigration should Britain take after it leaves the European Union? The findings offer some clues to the reasons for Theresa May’s failure to secure a majority with a polarised election pitch aimed squarely at the 52% who voted Leave and were assumed to take a hardline view on reducing immigration. The referendum offered people a one-off, yes/no question on Britain’s EU membership, with no middle option; but on immigration, most people are ‘balancers’: worried about numbers, about whether the system works and about pressures on public services but mindful of the benefits that migration brings to the economy.

When we asked people about their priorities on immigration after Brexit, only around one-fifth of people chose either to “*Prioritise immigration over business and the economy*” (22%) or “*Prioritise business and the economy over immigration*” (23%). Around half of the public (47%) didn’t put themselves into either of these polarised Brexit tribes but preferred a “*Compromise that balances the economy and immigration control*” (47%). Women were even more likely to choose this compromise option, with 53% of women choosing to balance the economy and immigration control, compared to 40% of men.

Figure 2: Following the EU referendum, the UK Government will now enter into negotiations with the EU to come to a deal on the conditions of the UK’s departure and our future relationship with the EU. Which of the following comes closest to your view of how the UK’s Government should proceed?

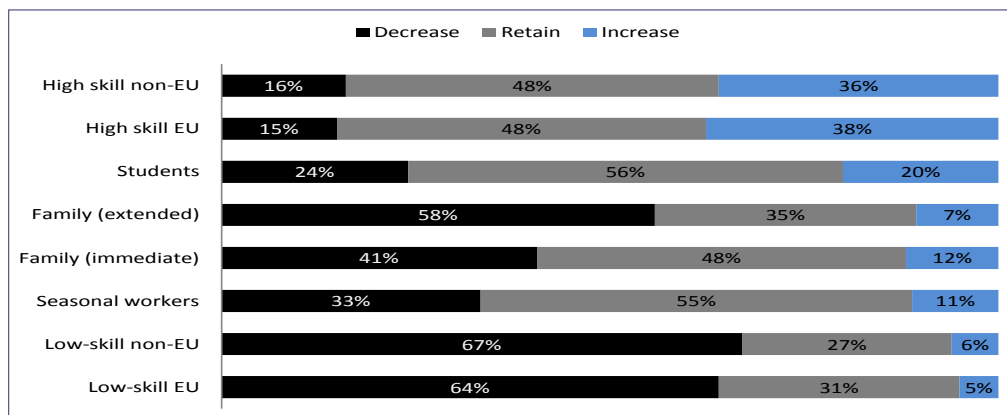


The extent to which people take a balanced and nuanced approach to immigration is brought out more clearly when we asked about their views on different flows of immigration: whether they would rather see the number of people coming to live in Britain increase, decrease, or remain about the same. Rather than taking a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach, most people make distinctions between different types of immigration. Some they would like to reduce, others they would keep at current levels or even increase.

Skill levels are a deciding factor, reflecting the majority view that the economy needs people who bring the right skills to help businesses and public services to thrive. Nearly four-in-ten people (38%) would like to increase the amount of high-skilled migration to the UK from EU countries and a further half (48%) want the current numbers to stay the same – meaning a total of 86% of the public want skilled EU migration to either increase or remain as it is. Strikingly, this recognition of the need for skills cuts across referendum divides: 82% of Leave voters would be happy for high-skilled migration from the EU to remain at current levels or increase (51% remain the same; 31% increase). That’s not so different to the responses of Remain voters, 90% of whom would either increase high-skilled EU migration (47%) or keep it as it is (43%).

There are similar levels of support, too, for highly-skilled workers from outside the EU. Only 16% of people would like to see a reduction in numbers of high-skilled, non-EU migrants. More than twice as many (36%) would rather numbers were increased; with around half the public (48%) preferring them to stay at current levels. Again, there is broad consensus between the referendum tribes, with 82% of Leave voters and 88% of Remain voters preferring numbers of high-skilled, non-EU migrants to increase or remain as they are now.

Figure 3. For each of the following groups, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of people coming to live in Britain to increase, decrease or remain about the same.



This pro-skills consensus is reinforced by data on attitudes to migration by profession. Majorities of over 75% support the numbers of migrant doctors and nurses, scientists, engineers, IT specialists and business and finance professionals either increasing or remaining at current levels. That support for skilled, professional migration stretches across Leave and Remain voters in the referendum.

Figure 4. For each of the following groups, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of people coming to live in Britain to increase, decrease or remain about the same.

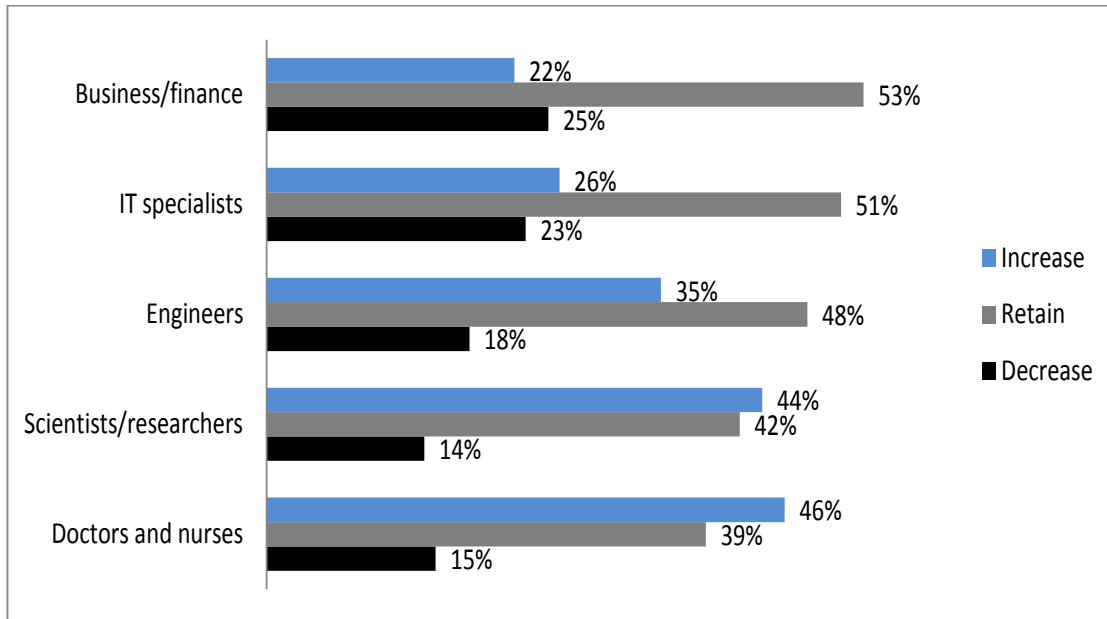
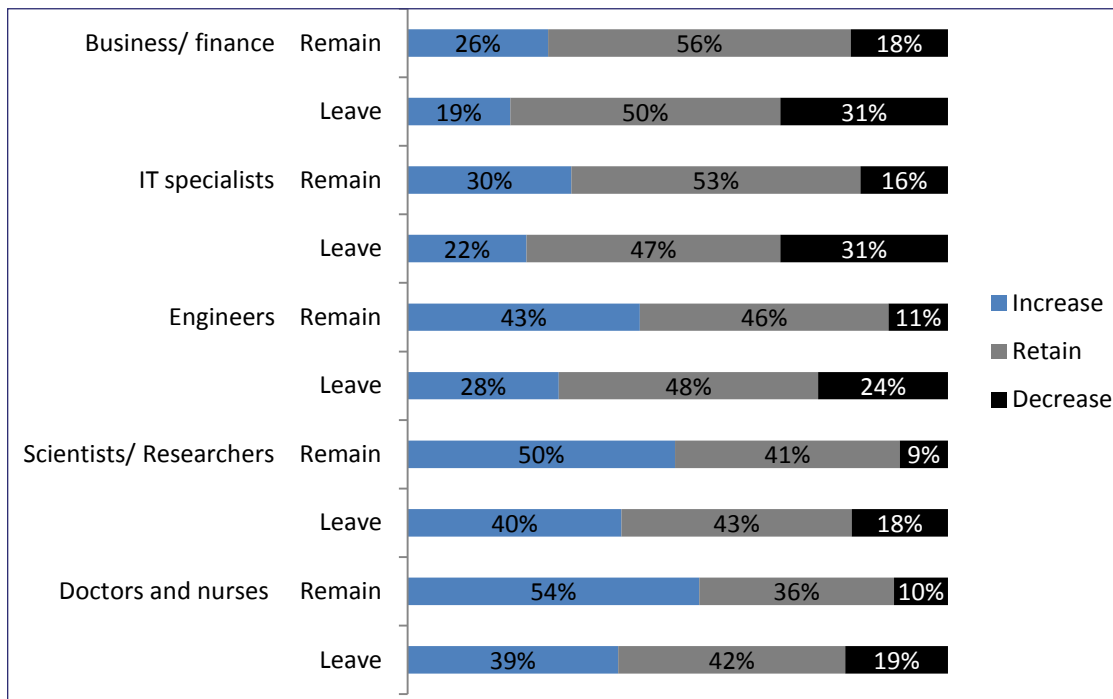
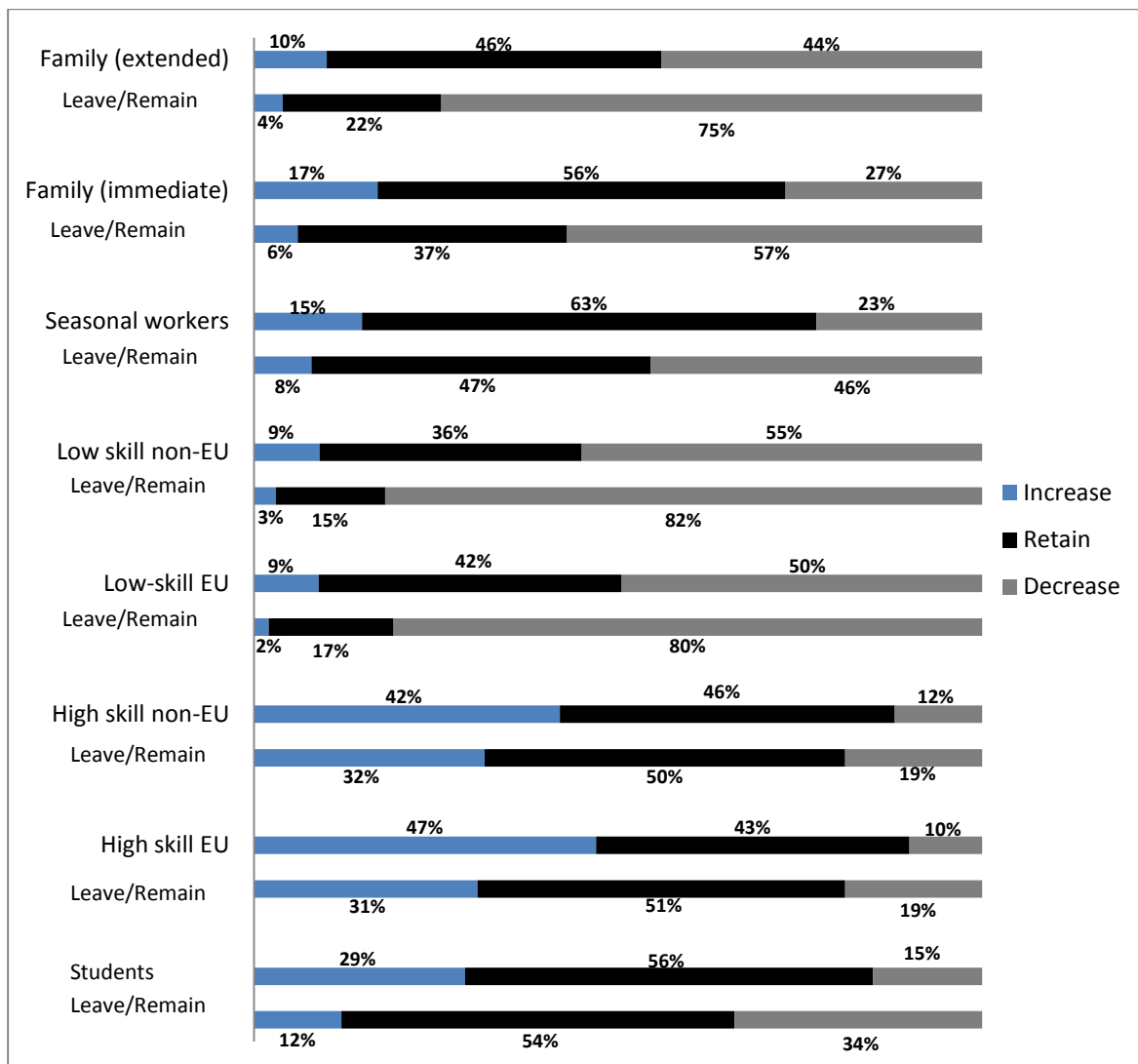


Figure 5. For each of the following groups, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of people come to live in Britain to increase, decrease or remain about the same



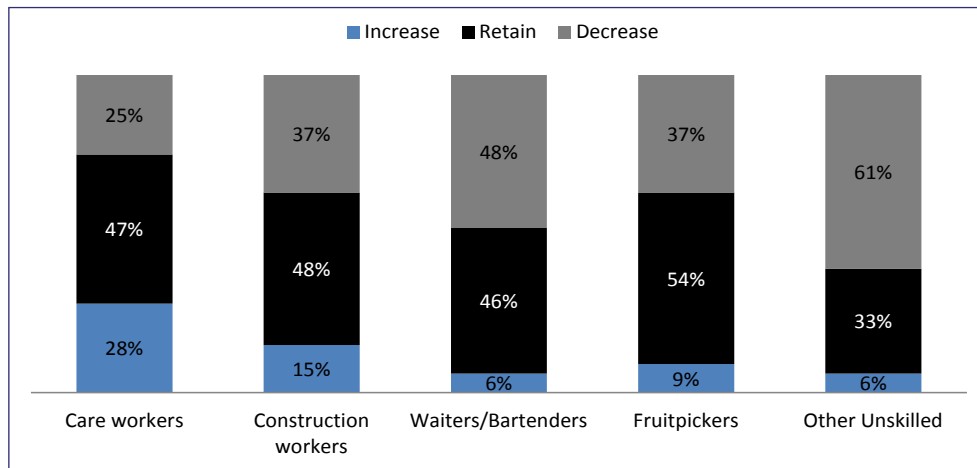
International students are also popular across the referendum tribes. There is difference at the fringes: Remain voters are nearly three times more likely to want to increase the number of international students coming to Britain (Remain 29%, Leave 12%) while Leavers are more than twice as likely to want to reduce them (Leave 34%, Remain 15%). But majorities on both sides of the referendum convene on the common ground of wanting to keep international students numbers the same (Leave 54%, Remain 56%) – resulting in a solid consensus among 76% of the public that we should not look to reduce international student numbers.

Figure 6. For each of the following groups, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of people coming to live in Britain to increase, decrease or remain about the same (by referendum vote)



Opinion is more divided on migration to join family members already living in the UK. Sixty per cent of people are comfortable with the numbers who come to the UK to join an immediate family member – such as a spouse, parent or sibling – remaining at current levels. Support drops below half (42%) when it comes to extended family members. Public support for asylum-seekers and refugees is also fragile, with only 44% preferring that the numbers stay the same or increase.

Figure 7. For each of the following groups, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of people coming to live in Britain to increase, decrease or remain about the same.

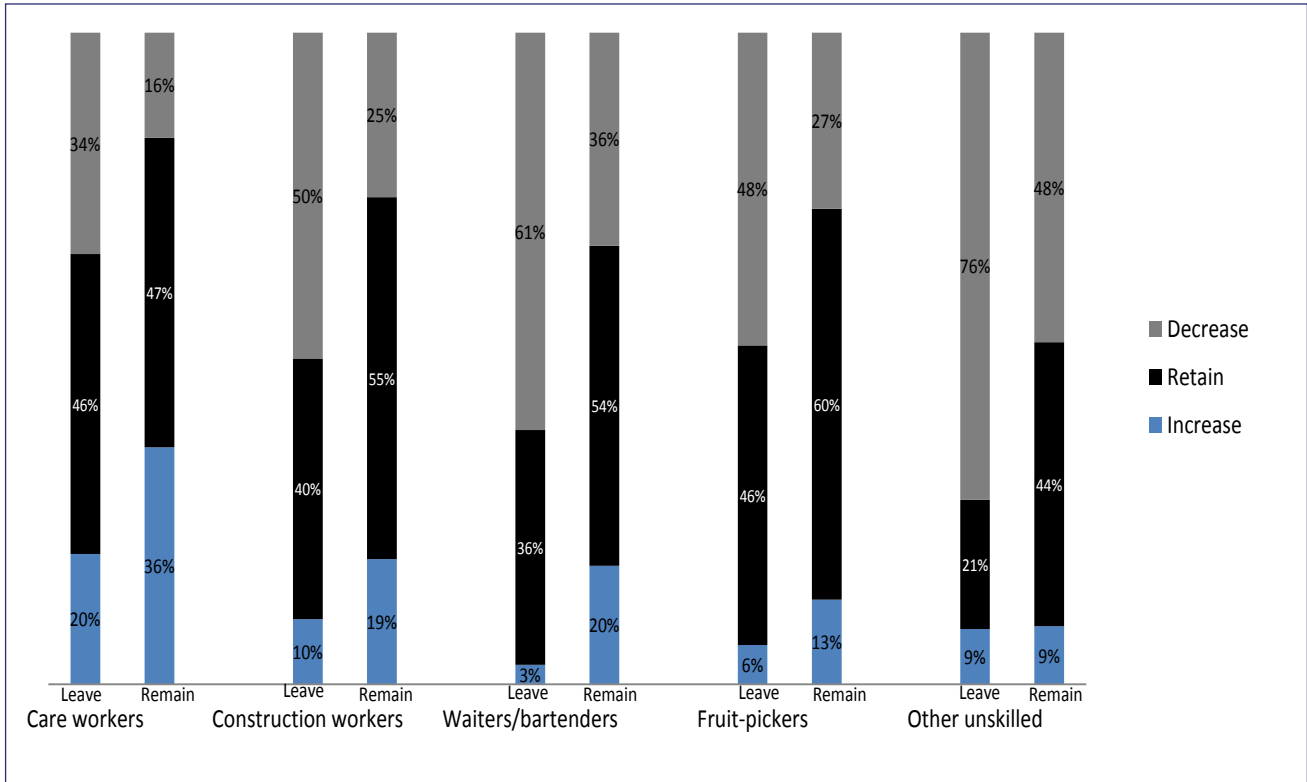


Our research finds that concern with immigration numbers is focused, primarily, on low-skilled migration. Only in this category do we see public majorities of more than 60% in favour of reductions in numbers. The current immigration system already excludes most low-skilled non-EU migrants from access to the UK so there is little a post-Brexit government could change in that regard; but it seems clear that it would be difficult to secure public consent for a post-Brexit immigration system that did not lead to reductions in low-skilled workers moving to the UK from the EU when that is the preference of nearly two-thirds (64%) of the public.

It is striking, however, that even within this category respondents are able to make pragmatic concessions to secure the economic gains of migration: two-thirds of people (66%) would be happy for the number of seasonal workers coming to the UK – to work on farms, food processing factories or in hotels, for instance – to remain at current levels (55%) or increase (11%). That view is also held by more than half (55%) of Leave voters in the referendum, and 78% of those who backed Remain.

Digging down into the detail of attitudes to different kinds of lower-skilled migration there is further nuance. While the public would like to reduce low-skilled migration overall, there are numerous exceptions. Attitudes soften when people are asked to give their opinion about people migrating to do a particular job – whether that is care work, fruit-picking or waitressing.

Figure 8. For each of the following groups, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of people coming to live in Britain to increase, decrease or remain about the same ( by referendum vote)



More than a third of people (36%) would like to see an increase in the number of migrants who come to the UK to work in care homes and a further 42% are happy for the numbers to remain at current levels. Only 37% of the public wants to reduce the number of people migrating to do construction jobs or to work in bars and restaurants. And 68% of respondents in our poll would rather keep the numbers of migrant fruit-pickers at current levels (52%) or increase them (16%). Only for the unspecific ‘Other unskilled’ category is there consensus for reductions, with 57% wanting numbers reduced.

One possible reason for this softening of attitudes to specific forms of low-skilled migration is that referring to people by a job title reassures respondents that people are coming to the UK to work. But it may also be that it triggers anti-prejudice norms – while people may feel more comfortable about rejecting an ‘unskilled migrant’, once that person is a waitress or a fruit-picker – both rather thankless and low-paid jobs – members of the public are more sympathetic to someone who is coming to the UK to work hard in a job that others may not want to do.

### What does this mean for post-Brexit immigration policy?

Support for putting a total stop to immigration from the EU is restricted to a hardcore minority of 26%, with the majority (52%) expressly saying they would disagree with such a policy. There is more support



for allowing freedom of movement of EU and British citizens to continue, particularly among the young: 39% of people agree that *“The Government should keep free movement rules for EU migrants in the UK and British citizens in EU countries”* while 34% disagree. Support increases to 47% of 18-24s and 50% of people who voted for the first time in the 2017 General Election. But most people want to find a compromise between these two extremes.

Our findings suggest that the public would support a new, post-Brexit immigration system that remained relatively liberal on skilled migration if it secured reductions in low-skilled migration. Voters would also listen to the requests of businesses that need to attract specific categories of employees from overseas to fill staffing gaps – including in specific low-skilled roles. But they also want a greater degree of UK control over who can and cannot come and live in the UK.

More than seven in ten people (71%) agree that:

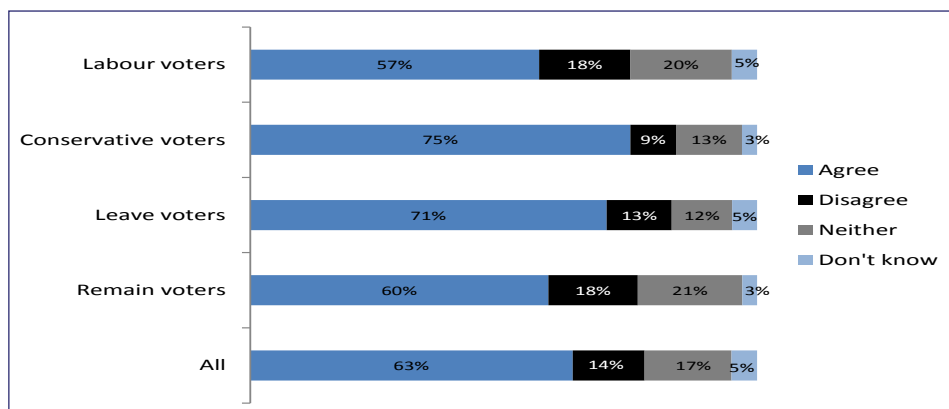
*‘Immigration brings pressures as well as gains and our decision to leave the EU gives us a chance to change the system. What we need now is a sensible policy to manage immigration so we control who comes here but still keep the immigration that’s good for our economy and society, and maintains our tradition of offering sanctuary to refugees who need our protection.’*

That includes 79% of Conservative voters and 73% of those who voted Leave in the referendum.

We set out a specific policy proposal for post-Brexit immigration later in this report, which seeks to square this circle. Proposing that *‘The Government should control low-skilled immigration through an annual cap while allowing skilled migrants to come to the UK as before,’* it secures 63% agreement from the public as a whole, including among three quarters (75%) of Conservative voters and 71% of Leave voters, with majority support among Remain voters (60%) and Labour voters (57%) as well.

Figure 9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement below about future EU migration to the UK after Brexit?

*‘The Government should control low-skilled immigration through an annual cap while allowing skilled migrants to come to the UK as before.’*



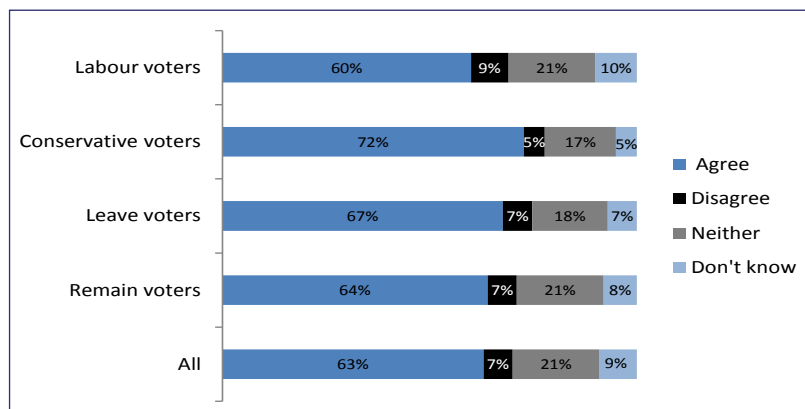
## Replace the ‘one size fits all’ net migration target and look at each flow of immigration in its own right

A new, post-Brexit immigration policy that distinguished more clearly between different flows of immigration would mean an end to the net migration target, which lumps all immigration together and offsets it against emigration of Britons moving overseas. Such a move would be popular, including with voters who supported Theresa May, its chief proponent, in the 2017 General Election.

Nearly two-thirds of people (63%), and 71% of 2017 Conservative voters, think the Government should drop its headline net migration target and replace it with separate targets for different types of immigration, like skilled and low-skilled workers. Just 7% of the public disagrees.

Support for the replacing the target is strongest among the over-65s – the demographic that has shown the greatest support for Leave and for the ruling Conservative Party – with three-quarters (75%) supporting separate targets for different types of immigration.

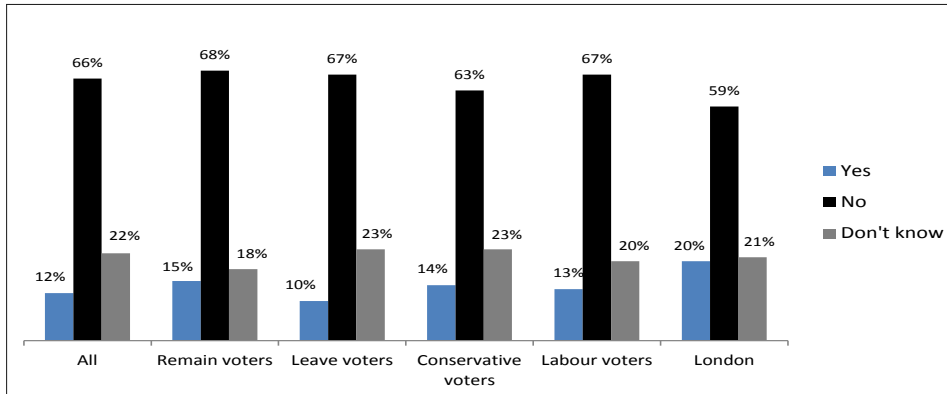
Figure 10. “The Government should replace the net migration target with separate targets for different types of immigration, like skilled workers and low-skilled workers.”



Support for replacing the net migration target reflects public scepticism that the Government will meet it, even once Britain leaves the European Union. Only 12% of the public – and just 14% of Conservative voters – think that the Government will meet its net migration target in the next five years, while two-thirds (66%) of the public and 62% of Conservatives believe it won't be met. This finding is quite striking, as the inability to control migration from the EU is frequently cited as the chief reason why governments have failed to come close to meeting the target – and net migration has started to gradually tick downwards since the referendum decision to leave the EU. It may be that successive failures to meet the target, with each quarter's migration figures compounding the impression that the government could not get a grip,

has fundamentally undermined public confidence in both the target as a measure and the government’s ability to control immigration. Starting afresh with a new system and new, specific and achievable targets may be a first step towards rebuilding trust.

Figure 11. “The government’s target figure for net migration is less than 100,000. Do you think the Government is likely to meet the net migration target in the next 5 years?”



### Voters want politicians to work together to deliver the best deal

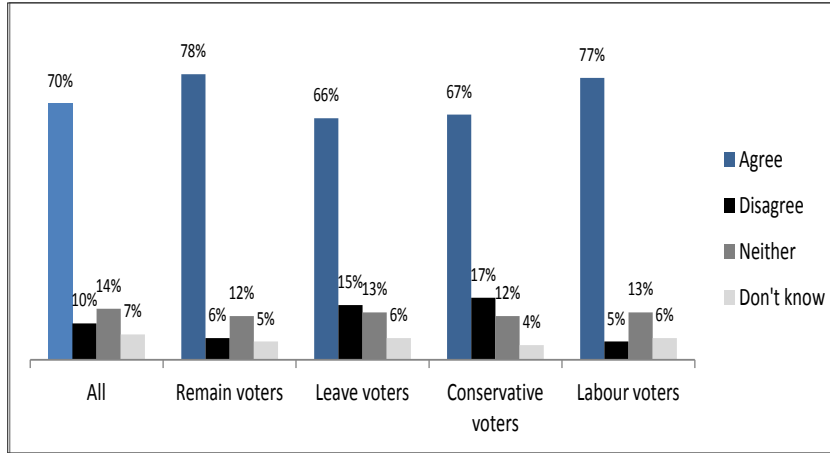
The next parliament is going to be a rocky ride. Theresa May’s government can only secure a majority in the commons with support from the DUP as it seeks to navigate the most complex process of any post-war government. The ruling party is divided not just among the backbenches but at cabinet level too. That may seem like a very challenging context in which to pass legislation on immigration, perceived as one of the most polarising issues in contemporary politics.

Yet a new immigration system is going to be needed once freedom of movement comes to an end. Brexit throws up a host of challenges for the new government but on immigration it also offers an opportunity - to seize on this ‘Reset moment’ to forge a new consensus on immigration which starts to rebuild public trust in the system. Doing so will require compromise from politicians and their parties - and voters would support a more consensual approach from them as we seek to steer the country through the many challenges of the Brexit negotiations and beyond.

Seven in ten (70%) members of the public, including two-thirds of Conservatives (67%) and Leave voters (66%) and three-quarters of Labour (77%) and Remain voters (78%) agree that:

*‘Voters have given no one political party a clear majority. As Britain enters the important negotiations on our future relationship with the EU there should be a new, cross-party approach to Brexit whatever government is formed, with parties working together in the national interest.’*

Figure 12. 'Voters haven't given one political party a clear majority. As Britain enters the important negotiations on our future relationship with the EU there should be a cross-party approach to Brexit whatever government is formed, with parties working together in the national interest.'



There is a public desire to ease the pressures brought by high levels of immigration, but in a way that secures the gains that migration can bring to our economy and society. On what has been viewed as one of the most uniquely polarizing issues in our politics, voters are willing and able to compromise and to seek common ground and practical solutions. They would like their politicians to do the same. Successfully building a new, post-Brexit immigration policy that works for the economy and also secures public trust will require both politicians and their supporters to look beyond political and referendum divides and find consensus.

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## 4. Are London and Scotland so very different from the rest of Britain?

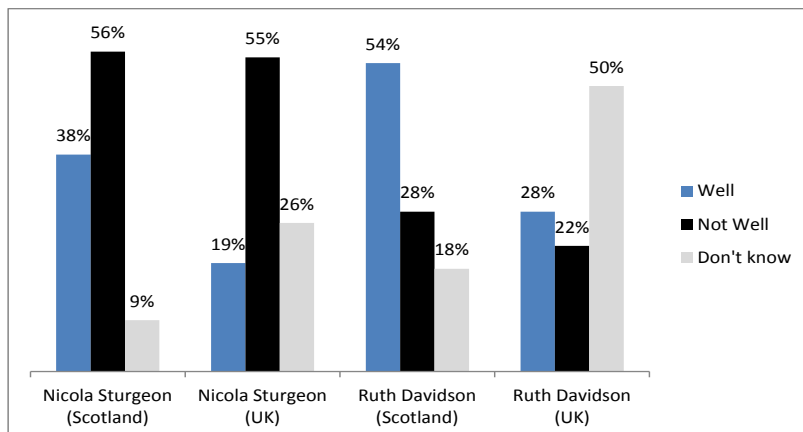
London and Scotland voted overwhelmingly for Remain in the EU referendum. Scots backed continued EU membership by 62% to 38% while in the capital, six in ten Londoners chose Remain and just 40% said they would prefer to Leave. The results prompted new demands for a second independence referendum from Scottish nationalists and even some calls from the most disgruntled Remain voters that London should become an independent city-state. The EU referendum result also reinforced the view that attitudes in London and Scotland are radically different to those in the rest of the UK: London a hotbed of metropolitan liberalism, out of touch with the rest of England; and Scotland also much more socially liberal than its southern neighbour and crying out for more immigration to boost its population.

The 2017 General Election did little to undermine that view of the capital: London overwhelmingly rejected Theresa May's vision for Britain, with Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party taking Croydon Central, Enfield Southgate, Battersea and Kensington from the Conservatives and extending its majorities in other London constituencies.

The story in Scotland was quite different: Ruth Davidson, leader of the Scottish Conservatives, fought a distinct campaign to that of Theresa May and their election nights could hardly have been less alike, with Davidson's Scottish Tories surging to 13 seats, effectively keeping her boss in Number Ten. Nicola Sturgeon's SNP were the biggest losers, with 21 SNP seats lost including those of Angus Robertson and Alex Salmond. Labour began to reverse its previous wipe-out north of the border, upping its Scottish numbers from one seat to seven.

Our ICM poll found that 54% of Scots thought Ruth Davidson had performed well in the election campaign, with just 38% saying the same for Nicola Sturgeon. Yet the Scottish Conservative leader still faces an uphill challenge to reach her goal of becoming First Minister: 55% of Scots say they would never vote Conservative, way beyond the 29% who would never vote Labour and 43% who would never vote SNP.

Figure 13. How well do you think the following politicians performed in the General Election campaign?



Ruth Davidson has since gone on to articulate her own, positive vision for immigration after Brexit and it does indeed strike a very different tone from that of Theresa May. Writing in the Telegraph<sup>6</sup>, Davidson called for a sensible conversation about immigration and began to set out a Conservative case for immigration, building public trust while ensuring that business can access the skills it needs.

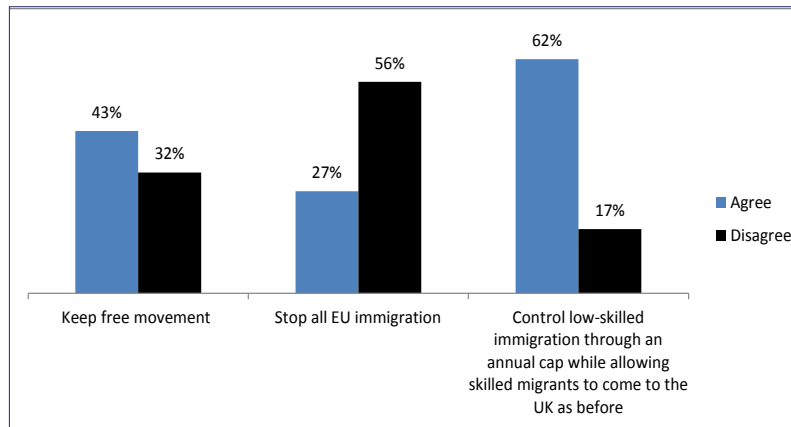
But are attitudes to immigration in Scotland and London really so different to those of the rest of the UK? Our post-election poll, which included a large sample of 1,052 people in Scotland, suggests not.

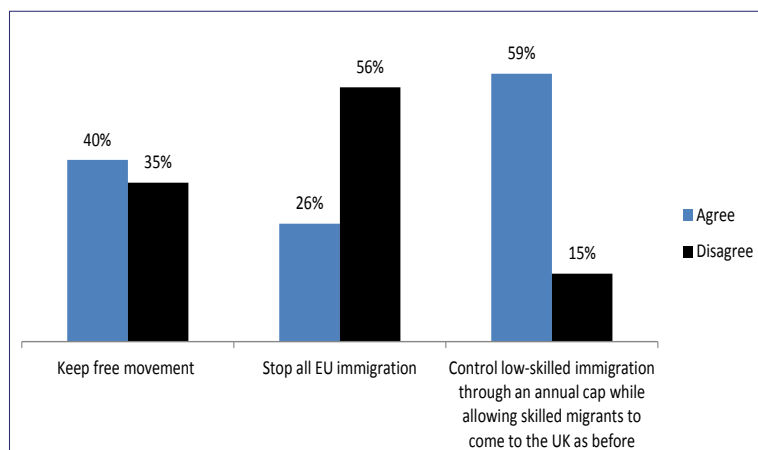
43% of people in Scotland said they would keep freedom of movement for EU citizens in the UK and Britons in EU countries, slightly more than the UK number of 39%, with a third (32%) saying they disagreed. But just over a quarter (27%) of Scots agreed with the anti-immigration proposal that Britain should stop all EU immigration. More popular was the compromise option, to control low-skilled immigration through an annual cap while allowing skilled migrants to come to the UK as before, with 62% of people in Scotland voicing their support.

London was closer still to the UK average, with 40% agreeing with continued free movement while 32% disagreed; a quarter (26%) wanting to stop all EU immigration and 56% disagreeing with that proposal; and 59% supporting our compromise proposal of skilled free movement with a low-skilled cap and just 15% opposed.

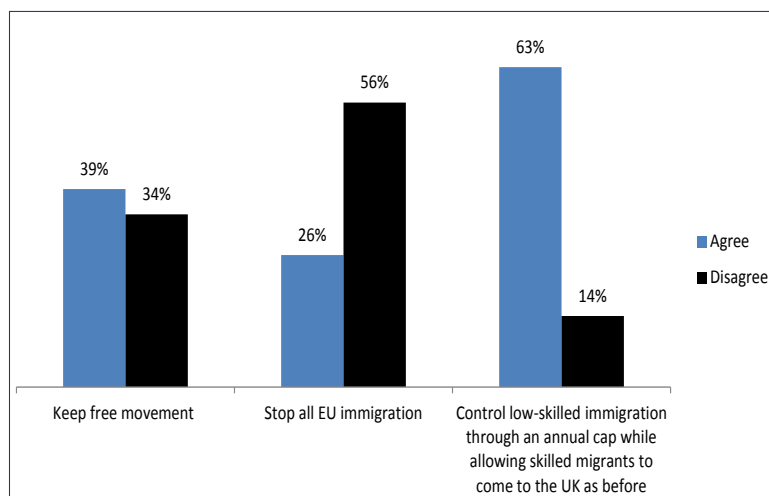
*Figure 14. After Britain leaves the EU, the rules governing immigration to the UK from EU countries are likely to change. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below about future EU migration to the UK after Brexit?*

#### Scotland





### London



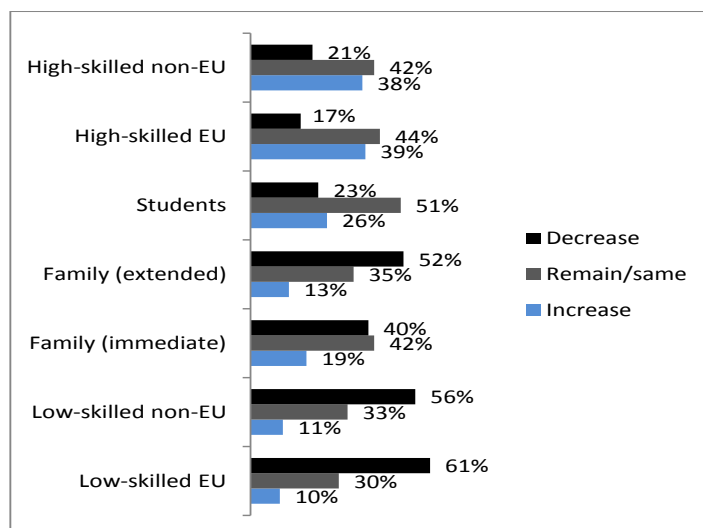
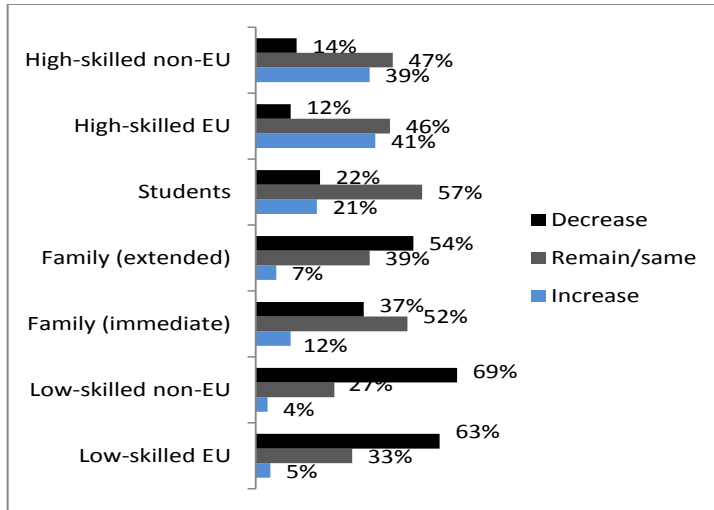
### All UK

Our poll dug deeper into public attitudes in London and Scotland to different flows of immigration. Again, the picture it paints is of two regions that are mildly more liberal than the rest of the UK but not significantly so – in fact most differences are within the pollsters’ margin of error. Scots and Londoners are slightly more likely than people in other parts of the UK to want certain flows to increase: for example 41% of people in Scotland would like *more* high-skilled EU migration, compared to 38% across the UK; and 26% of Londoners want more international students coming to Britain, while that figure is 20% across the whole country. Londoners are also more likely to support increases in immigration for immediate family members of UK citizens, perhaps reflecting the capital’s diversity.

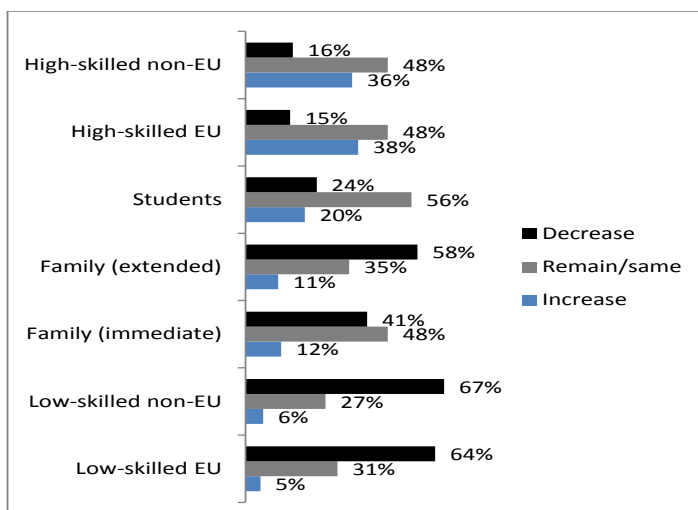
But the overall picture remains remarkably similar whether the question is asked of someone in Edinburgh, Enfield or Edgbaston: they would like the amount of skilled, student and family migration to remain the same or increase but want to see reductions in low-skilled migration. In Scotland, 63% would like low-skilled EU migration to be reduced, rising to 69% for low-skilled immigration from outside the EU. In

London slightly smaller majorities, of 61% and 56% respectively, say the same. Those figures are very similar to the ‘reduce low-skilled migration’ findings across the UK of 64% (EU) and 67% (non-EU).

Figure 15. For each of the following groups, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of people coming to live in Britain to increase, decrease, or remain about the



same.



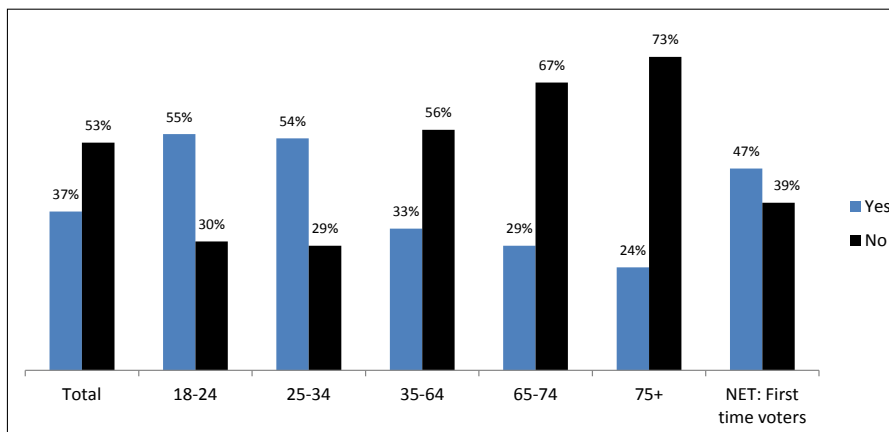


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Scotland

London

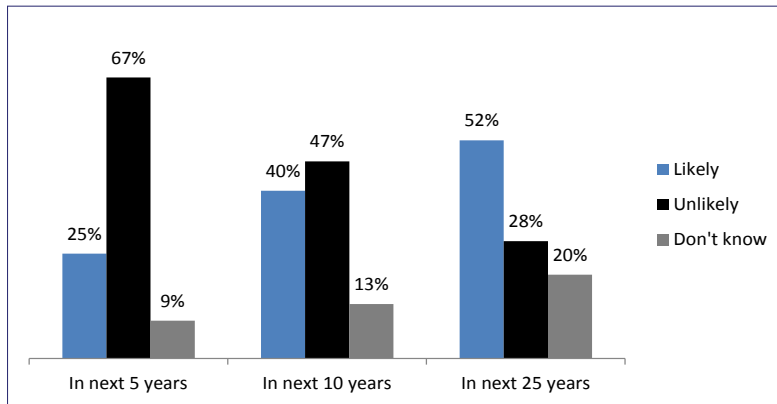
All UK



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It would appear that voters in Scotland and London are slightly more liberal versions of the British public as a whole – moderate balancers who see the upsides and downsides of immigration. Like 71% of the UK public overall, 69% of people in Scotland and 70% in London agree with the statement that:

*‘Immigration brings pressures as well as gains and our decision to leave the EU gives us a chance to change the system. What we need now is a sensible policy to manage immigration so we control who comes here but still keep the immigration that’s good for our economy and society, and maintains our tradition of offering sanctuary to refugees who need our protection.’*



Just 8% in either location disagree.

### **Will Brexit break the union?**

The shift in support at the General Election from the Scottish Nationalist Party to unionist Ruth Davidson and to Labour suggests that Scottish support for independence, despite anger at the Brexit vote, would be insufficient to secure over 50% of the vote in an Indy2 referendum. Our ICM poll draws a similar conclusion.

With Yes support at just 37% and No at 53%, even if pro-independence campaigners converted all of the ‘Don’t knows’ they would still fall short of the 50% tipping point. Support for independence is far stronger, however, among those younger voters who were energised by Scotland’s 2014 referendum, with 55% of 18-24s saying they would vote Yes to independence and just 30% choosing No, and 54% of 24-34s also backing a break from the UK.

*Figure 16. If Scotland held a referendum tomorrow on whether it becomes independent from the UK, would you vote yes or no to independence? (Scottish respondents only).*

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Yet most Scots see the prospect of an independent Scotland in the far distance rather than the near future. Only a quarter (25%) think it's likely in the next five years while two-thirds (67%) consider that unlikely. The 40% who think Scotland could be independent in 10 years are still outnumbered by 47% who doubt that will be the case. Only once you look ahead 25 years does the balance shift in favour of Scottish nationalism, with 52% in Scotland thinking that they could be separated from the UK by then – with just 28% in disagreement. That will offer little consolation to Nicola Sturgeon. “Independence by 2042” will hardly have the ring of a winning political slogan when the SNP next contests Holyrood elections in 2021. It will, however, please people in England and Wales - 57% of them said they would rather Scotland stayed part of the UK than went their own way.

*Figure 17. How likely do you think it is that Scotland will become independent? (Scottish respondents)*

## **5. Transition means transition: how to leave the EU safely**

### **5.1 Transition means transition**

The 2017 General Election result has changed the Brexit debate. It still remains extremely likely that the UK will leave the European Union - but quite how it does so has been thrown open to question.

The public refusal of Theresa May's request for a personal mandate

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considerably weakened the Prime Minister. Senior Cabinet ministers, notably the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Home Secretary, have sought to assert considerably more authority over key issues. The hung parliament puts the government in a more precarious political position, meaning small groups of government backbenchers could challenge government policy in alliance with opposition MPs.

The biggest early sign of these new political realities was that a new word moved to the centre of the post-election Brexit debate: transition.

Within a month or two of the election, the idea of a transition period moved from being a contested hypothetical scenario to an idea reported to have secured broad support across different wings of the government, and across the government and opposition parties too.

Many questions remain about whether there will be a Brexit transition in 2019 and what form it may take. Transitional arrangements might mean many different things in different areas. There has been no official government statement to clarify the form of transition being sought. The British political and media debate tends to underplay the fact that the transition arrangements are not something that Britain can decide – but something that would have to be negotiated between the UK and the EU.

The core case for a phased Brexit is practical. The two-year Article 50 timetable gives little time to agree on the ‘divorce’ terms dissolving the UK’s membership of the EU and to negotiate a new post-Brexit partnership, including the detail of how that would work in practice. Where Brexit involves significant changes to the status quo it would be challenging for new arrangements on trade, migration or other issues to be introduced on Brexit day itself.

The government’s 2016 White Paper expressed support for a ‘phased implementation period’, though the preference to avoid the language of a ‘transition’ signalled an intention to negotiate any full future deal by March 2019. However, the strong political emphasis placed on stressing that “no deal is better than a bad deal” – based on the theory that the UK’s negotiating strength depended on a credible threat to walk out – made the government’s appetite for any form of transitional phase harder to predict.

Though a ‘no deal’ Brexit in March 2019 remains a possibility, the political decision to seriously pursue a viable transition relegates the ‘no deal’ outcome back to a worst-case scenario. This is particularly true because of the significant increase in post-election pressure from business voices - not just about the need for a transitional period, but also the importance of securing this well in advance of Brexit day itself. As the Institute of Directors noted<sup>6</sup>, in its short study setting out the menu of potential transition policy options, planning to have a transition only delivers reassurance and time to prepare for change once it is clear what that transition arrangement is, and indeed what will follow beyond it. Securing a transition deal at five minutes to midnight

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in the negotiation timescale will be far too late to prepare properly – and so would fail to avert the ‘cliff-edge’ scenario that businesses are keen to avoid. If the case for a transition is practical, the objections are political.

Some pro-Brexit voices worry about a transitional deal becoming a trap to remain in the European Union, delaying Brexit not temporarily but interminably. The allegation that transitional arrangements are a ‘Remain conspiracy’ does rather overlook the long Eurosceptic pedigree of this case. A range of arguments for leaving the EU via a period in either the European Economic Area (EEA) or European Free Trade Area (EFTA) were made across the last two decades by the Bruges Group, by Eurosceptic writers including Richard North and Christopher Booker, who advocated a ‘flexcit’ approach to Brexit, by the Adam Smith Institute and others. But those arguments played little role in the 2016 referendum campaign – where the Vote Leave campaign consciously sought to duck the question of what ‘out’ would look like because it would expose differences among Leavers about the future, and complicate the case for exit.

Ex-Remain advocates have paid more attention to the EEA model – but this view is also contested. The most committed Remain advocates hold the contrary fear to that of their Brexit counterparts: that a transitional, phased Brexit can make Brexit possible, leading some to prefer the high-risk scenario of crashing out without a deal as one way that might persuade the public to crash back in instead.

The Evening Standard greeted the emerging consensus on a transition across the Cabinet with the splash headline, ‘Does Brexit still mean Brexit?’. This was an interesting example of a pro-EU newspaper promoting an argument primarily associated with pro-Leave critics of anything that sounds like a softer Brexit. Yet the answer is that Brexit does still mean Brexit, as long as transition means transition.

That suggests three key aspects to ensuring that a transitional deal works.

### **How to get the transition right**

Firstly, **the transition should take place with the UK outside the European Union**, rather than extending the Article 50 negotiations, which would mean the UK still remained in the EU after March 2019.

This could well be technically more complex, but a transition outside of European Union membership would make political sense for both Britain and the EU27. Under the terms of Article 50, Britain will leave the European Union on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019, with a deal or without one, unless there is mutual agreement between the UK and the EU27 governments to extend the negotiating period. The European Elections of 2019 would take place, without the election of British MEPs. The UK would not participate in meetings of the EU heads of government,

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though ad hoc summits could be held between the UK and the EU by mutual agreement. If communicated effectively, this could do a good deal to allay concerns about a transition period becoming a ‘stealth’ route to staying in the European Union.

That fact of Brexit need not necessarily end the argument in Britain about EU membership. But politicians or parties who believed in that cause would no longer be campaigning to ‘Remain’ but to ‘Return’. There may be fewer technical barriers to a subsequent UK return, if there had not yet been significant regulatory divergence during a transition period, but that overlooks the high political hurdles to a post-Brexit re-entry to the EU. UK ‘returners’ would have to shift their legal focus from Article 50 – which sets out how a member state could leave the European Union – to Article 49, the process by which any European state that respects the values of the EU can apply to join the club. Indeed, Article 50 states clearly that the standard application process applies to ex-members: *‘If a State which has withdrawn from the Union asks to rejoin, its request shall be subject to the procedure referred to in Article 49’*.

The (unlikely) event of the UK changing its mind about Brexit would be welcomed, in principle, by EU governments, but with some wariness about a half-hearted, deeply politically contested reapplication, if that led to a semi-detached UK returning but keeping half an eye on the exit door again. So most EU experts, both in Britain and on the continent, agree that an application to Return would be very likely to depend on an acceptance that the era of British rebates and opt-outs was over.

This would present British returners with a considerable political headache – having to persuade the British public to accept EU membership on terms considerably less attractive than the deal rejected by a majority in the 2016 referendum. Paying a greater net contribution into the EU budget, without the rebate, would be controversial; as would agreeing to drop the British opt-outs, joining the Schengen area or, especially, agreeing in principle to adopt the Euro in the future. Such a deal would be unattractive for a significant proportion of the 48% who had voted Remain, even before trying to convert those who voted to Leave.

Secondly, **a transition needs to be time-limited rather than indefinite**. A period of not more than three years fits both a strong political interest in the UK – that the transitional period should end by the time a General Election is due in 2022 – and the preference of the EU27, that a transitional phase should not become a device for indefinitely postponing Brexit decisions.

Liam Fox’s comments, that 24 months could be considered a ‘rounding error’ after four decades of EU membership provided the transitional period was concluded during this Parliament, demonstrates how a time limit would play an important role in generating broad political support across different strands of the post-referendum political debate. The time limit is important because it is likely that transitional arrangements

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will involve only minor changes to the current trade and migration relationship between Britain and the EU, for the duration of the transition period, mirroring the rights and responsibilities of members of the European Economic Area. In principle, bespoke transitional arrangements are possible, if negotiable and agreed on both sides, but that quickly runs into the core practical problem of securing an agreement in time to communicate it.

Thirdly, **the most important use of a transition must be to open and then to resolve the debate about the final settlement.** There are many important questions about the content and nature of the transitional deal itself, but it is important that the Brexit debate in the Autumn of 2017 does not get stuck only discussing the precise details of the bridge. It is imperative that it moves onto deciding what it is going to be a bridge towards. Otherwise, a ‘kick the can down the road’ approach to a transitional phase does nothing to deal with the cliff-edge risks of Brexit, other than to reschedule them from 2019 to a couple of years later.

On immigration, there is a strong practical case for maintaining freedom of movement during the transition period, while designing the post-free movement system of an eventual settlement. The most detailed public articulation to date of such an approach, in Amber Rudd’s July 2017 letter commissioning the Migration Advisory Committee to report on post-Brexit policy options, is clear that the government ‘do not envisage moving to a future system in a single step’. The Migration Advisory Committee has been asked to report in September 2018; that would be rather too late if the new system was meant to be designed and implemented by March 2019. It becomes a practical timescale if reforms are debated and designed in 2019, and implemented in 2021-22.

The government has risked continuing to send mixed messages about what a transitional period means for UK immigration policy. Claims that freedom of movement ‘would end’ in March 2019 clash with Rudd’s account. There may be a technical defence, in that freedom of movement would no longer take place under the EU directives. New arrivals would need to register in the UK. There would also be a substantive difference, in that the Government has indicated that those who arrive after Brexit day will have no guarantee of the rights to freedom of movement and settled status<sup>7</sup> as enshrined under the freedom of movement directive of 2004<sup>8</sup>.

The UK government’s proposals to safeguard the position of existing EU nationals in the UK includes a ‘grace period’ after Brexit day, during which those in the UK before the cut-off date do not need to have documented their status. This is a sensible response to the practical capacity demands of processing what might be three million cases. It is another reason why a transitional period makes sense in getting immigration reform right. Even if it were possible to implement a new system between 2019 and 2021, it would be extremely difficult in practice to enforce a post-free movement system between 2019 and

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2021 – because it would be very difficult for employers or landlords to differentiate between pre- and post-Brexit arrivals during any grace period. Trying to do so would create significant risks of discrimination against EU nationals in the UK. Getting this wrong could further damage public confidence in the government’s ability to manage migration competently, when a core task of post-Brexit migration reform should be to rebuild public trust in an effective and fair system.

It should be clear that the transitional phase is not a magic bullet for any of the key choices about Brexit. It does not, in itself, do anything to resolve the choices and trade-offs involved in creating a new partnership between the UK and EU, whether they are over the nature of a future trade relationship or Britain’s post-Brexit migration system. What a transition can do is to create the time and space to get the future right – but only if the time is used rather more productively than the first year after the referendum has been.

## **5.2 How to provide security for EU citizens in the UK**

Giving security to the EU nationals in the UK was always the only ethical, practical or legally defensible approach to the 3 million Europeans who have made their lives in the UK. The anxiety felt by many about their status on 24 June 2016 has been exacerbated by there being no secure guarantee for over a year. Considerable pressure for a



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unilateral guarantee for EU citizens in Britain was rejected by Theresa May, but both the UK and the EU27 did agree to make citizens' rights the first priority issue of the post-Article 50 negotiations.

After the initial round of negotiations, the two sides produced a colour-coded document setting out the areas of agreement and disagreement. There were two significant areas of disagreement, firstly over the future rights of family migrants: currently EU spouses, partners and dependent children, including some who are third country nationals, have rights that UK and non-EU nationals do not enjoy<sup>9</sup>. Second, there were disagreements about oversight mechanisms, though several alternatives to a direct role for the European Court of Justice – a red line for the UK – offer good prospects for an agreement.

The UK and EU must come to an agreement this Autumn on how citizens' rights are to be guaranteed. It is difficult to see how the broader Article 50 negotiations could succeed without agreement on citizens' rights before October's European Council meeting, at which the UK hopes that the EU27 will agree that "sufficient progress" has been made over the key withdrawal issues - citizens rights, the exit bill and Northern Ireland - to begin talks about the future post-Brexit relationship between the UK and the EU.

An agreement should see the UK confirming that its proposed 'cut-off date' would be Brexit day, so that all EU arrivals up to 29th March 2019 would get the chance to build up the five years' residence needed for settled status. The UK government's proposals only work in practice with a Brexit day cut-off date – but until this is formally confirmed, individuals and their employers cannot be certain whether a candidate interviewed for a job next week would still have the right to work in the UK on the 1st of April 2019.

EU citizens in the UK and Britons in EU countries also need more than a political commitment to secure their status. The focus of the citizens' rights debate in 2017 will shift from the principle of securing guarantees of status to the practical issue of putting into place a fit-for-purpose system to carry out the largest administrative task in recent UK history effectively and fairly.

Significant efforts will be needed to build trust and confidence, given the experiences of EU nationals who have sought to use the previous system. Government should demonstrate a willingness to engage with employers, civic society groups, devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and city-regions and, in particular, those with reach and representation among EU nationals themselves, to establish that it sees a shared interest in getting this right. Some key principles for resolving the status of EU citizens should include:

**Simplicity:** The government should greatly reduce the administrative burden for individual applicants, their employers and ex-employers of collating evidence, by using evidence that government already holds – from HMRC and DWP records – to verify applicants' information.

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This should make it possible to have a much more streamlined process. While there will still be some complex cases where people have changed status – between study, family responsibilities and work or self-employment – this approach should make it possible for a simple online process to clear the majority of applications.

**Advice and communications:** The government does not have any database or record of those whom it needs to contact. Employers, councils, civil society groups and others can play a significant role in reaching and helping those who need to apply for settled status. For those with complex cases, some funded professional advice will also be needed. Applicants for settlement are not the only audience, however: it will be important to ensure there is clear communication of the new system to employers, landlords and others.

**Cost:** The cost for EU citizens living in the UK to secure their status should be capped at or below the price of a first UK passport, alongside similarly affordable options for checking services. Where applicants had previously secured Permanent Residence under existing regulations, there should be no cost for an application to convert this to the new settled status.

**Appeals:** There needs to be a fair appeals system for those who are rejected for settled status. The UK government should also seek to make higher quality initial decisions, reducing the need for appeals. One in five (21%) Permanent Residence applications are currently being refused<sup>10</sup>, often on technicalities. This is a significant source of mistrust and reputational damage to the system. Ministers and senior officials should make sure there is a resolution procedure which reviews more complex cases prior to refusals, and which seeks to avoid refusals on technicalities. There is a public policy interest in assisting law-abiding EU nationals who are within the spirit of the rules, but who may face challenges in documenting this, to regularise their status in the UK.

**Path to citizenship:** The current Permanent Residence process requires five years' residence for permanent status, with those securing this becoming eligible for citizenship a year later. Given the huge administrative demands of dealing with up to three million cases, it would save the Home Office time and money if a citizenship route for EU nationals was offered at the same time as the application for the proposed new settled status. Based on the five years' residence required for settled status, this would involve applicants taking the citizenship and English-language tests that are required for naturalisation but could be wrapped together into one process.

Applying for British citizenship must be a personal choice; it will not be the right choice for everybody. All but a handful of EU member states do allow dual citizenship. The main difference between settled status and citizenship is full participation in British democracy, including the right to vote in General Elections. It would be good to facilitate a smooth route to citizenship for EU nationals settled in the

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UK who now see this as their permanent home.

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## 6. What does business need to prosper after Brexit?

Business will be one of the most prominent voices in the debate about Britain's post-Brexit immigration system and should be one of the most effective, enjoying 'expert' status on the economic benefits of getting it right and the risks if we get things wrong. It is certainly not a debate that business can afford to duck - economic actors have a stake in most of the key debates about Brexit, whether that is EU citizens' rights, Britain's future trade relationship with Europe and the rest of the world, or the immigration regime that replaces freedom of movement.

British businesses will be particularly keen to avoid the 'cliff-edge' scenario, of an abrupt exit from the EU without sufficient time for companies to plan and adjust to a new framework for trade and immigration. So while politicians may be keen to keep their cards close to their chests, economic actors would rather see them on the table. They will be one of the loudest voices urging a transition period during which companies can prepare for 'full Brexit'. The Institute of Directors has set out a menu of possible options for how a transition period could work in its August paper *Bridging the Brexit Gap*<sup>11</sup>.

So business voices start from a strong position as advocates for a business-friendly Brexit. The Migration Advisory Committee consultation<sup>12</sup> on the impacts and benefits of EU migration, announced by Home Secretary Amber Rudd at the end of July and reporting back in September 2018, looks set to hear extensively from industry and will view the pressures and gains from a predominantly economic perspective. New legislation on immigration will be passed in this parliament and business is sure to be a prominent voice seeking to ensure that changes to immigration policy are not damaging to businesses seeking to fill staff and skills gaps.

Yet there are risks, too, for economic advocates when engaging in the debate about how Britain leaves the EU – some of which reflect the lessons learned during the referendum itself. Some die-hard Brexiteers will already discount anything business says as 'Remoaner' attempts to derail Brexit, based on the strong support among UK businesses for the Remain campaign in the referendum. It would be deeply unfair to suggest that *all* organisations which played an active role in the referendum, for either Leave or Remain, must now be discounted as too biased to make a valuable contribution to post-Brexit debates – not least because it would rule out most people who *can* make a useful contribution to those debates. But business voices should be mindful of this critique all the same - making clear the foundational point that they accept that Brexit is happening and wish to contribute to a debate about how to make it work as well as possible for the economy.

This point is particularly true of calls for a transition period. Brexiteer anxiety and push-back will be intense if they sense that a proposed

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transition looks open-ended or like staging-point for a reversal of the referendum decision. Neither of those scenarios would sit well with UK businesses' need for certainty, in any event – so economic voices should be clear that the transition they seek is clear and time-limited; and that they would like an early resolution of the question as to what we are transitioning to.

In that debate about our future immigration system business will, of course, speak for its own interests - and it is true that the continuing success of Britain's economy is a common good for us all. But that is only one part of the debate. The question is how our future immigration system can meet the needs of employers *in a way that can secure public and political consent*. Seeking to ignore or dismiss that second requirement will do more than just undermine the credibility of business as a messenger; if the debate becomes a polarised argument between what business wants and what the public wants, they should not be surprised when politicians in a delicately-balanced parliament side with the latter.

So economic actors should seek to play a constructive role in the full debate about how we get this 'reset moment' right for immigration policy. That will include speaking up for the positive contribution that migration makes to the economy and the need for immigration to help fill staffing and skills gaps. But to be treated as a constructive voice, business will also need to engage with the public and political desire for sensible plans to manage migration.

At local level that could, for instance, include employers who bring large numbers of workers to sparsely-populated areas, as do many food and agricultural employers, giving greater consideration to their accommodation and its impact on local housing supply. At national level it will require business to develop and articulate plans to reduce the demand for immigration, whether by improving training to help produce more home-grown employees with the right skills, or reducing demand for low-skilled migrant labour, for instance by increasing recruitment in the UK labour market, increasing productivity or investing in automation.

Business will need to strike a balance in its approach to the post-Brexit immigration debate, making clear what it is willing to do in terms of skills and training development while also setting out what it expects from the government: an immigration system that means employers can still access the skills and labour that they are unable to find in the UK. Tactically, it may be wise for business voices to find common cause with public sector employers who share similar worries about staffing after Brexit. Joint advocacy approaches between business and NHS employers, for example, who are equally dependent on migrant workers, will resonate with a much broader range of public and political audiences and hence have greater impact.

Economic actors can and should be one of the most effective voices arguing for reforms that work for the economy. To achieve this will

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require a positive strategy, balancing critiques with constructive alternatives that go beyond what government can do for business to include changes employers can make, particularly to training and skills. And it will also require a recognition that there are other, equally valid, voices in that debate – with which they will need to engage as we look to build a post-Brexit immigration system that has the confidence of both business and the public.

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## 6.1 What business needs – and what business needs to do

**Seamus Nevin, Head of employment and skills policy, Institute of Directors**

For the UK to be prosperous outside the EU our economy must thrive. Ensuring employers can access the workers they need will be vital to helping achieve that prosperity. Given how contentious the issue of immigration was during the referendum, it is likely to be the most politically fraught area of policy post-Brexit.

The Leave majority was, in part, a vote of no confidence in how successive governments have managed immigration. Many voters feel that policymakers have not listened to their concerns or shown they can assert control. Businesses also cannot ignore those concerns. Yet, for employers, access to international workers and uncertainty about the future of their immigrant employees already resident here, or their British employees working overseas, are among their foremost concerns. Finding a way to accommodate these two, at times contradictory, objectives poses a considerable challenge for the civil servants tasked with designing the UK's future immigration system

Though there are many potential choices – including proposals for regional visas, an employer-led permit system, as well as various sectoral approaches – each option has its pros and cons. The task is to mitigate the worst excesses.

Those firms that rely on international workers need to help develop a clear plan to manage the challenges of immigration in order to keep the rewards. Businesses can start by playing a leading role in supporting the enforcement of labour market rules. Perceptions of 'job stealing' and 'wage undercutting', though essentially baseless, were significant contributors to anti-immigration sentiment. The public must see that the country's political and administrative bodies are fully engaged in protecting workers and preventing exploitation.

Employers must also do more to help educate British workers for the needs of the labour market. As the Institute of Directors has long made clear, the best way to reduce employers' reliance on recruitment from overseas is to increase the number of British workers with skills that are in demand.

In return, the Government should aim to tackle the employers' concerns by ensuring that the immigration processing system is kept as simple as possible and is responsive to the real time needs of businesses large and small. Politicians should also avoid setting crude and arbitrary targets, especially given such targets ignore the fluctuating needs of our economy. The consistent failure to meet the net migration target every year since 2010 has only eroded public trust in Government. We cannot afford to repeat that mistake.

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Starting with a clean slate also offers an opportunity to think afresh about how we manage our border controls. Evidence-based policymaking needs data that is fit for purpose but the Bean review highlighted the state's poor record keeping of people entering and exiting the UK. The post-Brexit system should be underpinned by updated border infrastructure.

However, borders are not the only infrastructure that needs to be responsive. For most Britons, concern is not about immigration itself, but with successive government's failure to prepare public services for the effects of immigration. Manufacturers, retailers and service providers have all expanded seamlessly but in Whitehall and town halls officials have not always adequately prepared the public sector's response. The Brexit vote has raised expectations that leaving the EU will somehow resolve Britain's wage disparity and woeful productivity record. But an economy that works for everyone can only be delivered if we get better at sharing the benefits of immigration to help communities adjust to demographic change.

Most British citizens recognise that immigration brings both costs and benefits. Higher population means increased demand for infrastructure and public services, but immigration also brings the skilled workers and cultural diversity that have made our economy and our country stronger. Employers cannot be blind to the public's concerns but we should also recognise the role the workplace can play in encouraging and enabling integration. It is only through working in partnership with government and other civil society bodies that the UK will be able to implement a new immigration system which supports economic growth, works for businesses and addresses public concerns.



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## 7. Designing the future of Britain's immigration policy

If Brexit is a reset moment for immigration policy, what post-Brexit system should Britain design?

The referendum decision was a vote for change on immigration policy, even if it was not the sole reason for the Leave vote. In their referendum post-mortems some politicians have been eager to interpret the 'voice of the people' to suit their own agendas on immigration. Our research for this report has looked in detail at public attitudes to immigration policy and finds majority support for neither continued freedom of movement nor across-the-board reductions in all flows of immigration. Most people hold different views about different types of migration, particularly with regard to high-skilled and low-skilled migrants. In this chapter we examine some of the immigration policy options proposed in the debate so far; and we set out a proposal that reflects the nuance within public opinion, offering greater control on low-skilled migration while preserving the skilled migration that the economy needs and with which the public is broadly comfortable.

### European migration after Brexit

There are three broad approaches to European migration after Brexit. The first is to take freedom of movement as the starting point, and to seek reforms within freedom of movement which might help to secure public consent for it after the 2016 referendum. This is the approach taken by those, like the Liberal Democrats and Green party, who believe two-way freedom of movement is a good thing in itself, and by a broader group whose priority is to secure membership of the single market, such as by proposing membership of the European Economic Area (EEA), not just as a transitional phase but as a potential long-term destination for Brexit.

A second approach is to accept that freedom of movement will end after Brexit but to be open to designing a managed immigration system with preferential access for the European Union. This is the approach taken by those who believe it might be possible to have a deeper trade partnership, covering goods as well as services, if there is a significant migration component to the 'deep and special partnership' with the EU that the UK government says it seeks. A new, preferential system for EU migration to the UK has been advocated by the Brexit select committee, among others.

The third approach is to design a new British immigration framework without reference to negotiations with the EU. This is the position of those in favour of a 'clean break' Brexit, who do not see any preferential trade agreement with the EU as necessary or desirable, being content to trade on WTO terms. It is shared by others who believe it should be possible to negotiate a trade partnership with the EU, outside the single market, without any significant migration element -

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as the EU has done with other partners outside Europe such as Canada. This is also the argument pursued by those who see it as important that a post-Brexit system does not involve any geographical discrimination between European migration and the rest of the world, but applies similar rules for applicants from anywhere.

There are significant potential challenges and hurdles to each of these approaches. Proposals to maintain free movement in a ‘tweaked’ form essentially depend on the argument that there is no need for Brexit to be a reset moment for immigration policy after all. That would require a significant public and political shift towards seeing single market access as a priority which should decisively trump immigration in the Brexit negotiations. It is often noted that there are some controls within the existing EU freedom of movement rules that the UK has not applied while it has been a member of the EU. But those would be minor changes – such as registration schemes and putting more resources into removing those who do not find work within three months. There is no evidence to suggest these could be salient or meaningful to the general public as a game-changing reform.

A moderately more significant change – freedom of movement of labour, dependent on a prior job offer – has been proposed by ex-Foreign Secretary William Hague<sup>13</sup>, among others. This would need to be negotiated with the EU27 and risks being primarily symbolic: the existence of visa-free travel could make a sensible and practicable scheme harder to design, and the existence of employment agencies and the internet means it may make little difference anyway. This proposal delivers little ‘control’ if the question is whether the decision to live and work in Britain is entirely up to the applicant.

Other British pro-Europeans, including Tony Blair and Nick Clegg, suggest that the UK could now secure a considerably more significant reform of EU freedom of movement than was available to David Cameron in 2016. This appears to largely consist of wishful thinking. Any nascent EU-wide agenda to reform freedom of movement will happen on a much more gradual timescale than the Article 50 process demands. Hopes of having significant changes to freedom of movement within the European Economic Area are similarly rose-tinted: the micro-state of Lichtenstein has migration limits within the European Economic Area, but these would be subject to negotiation, and no similar deal is likely to be offered to the UK. It would make little political sense for the EU27 to offer a departing member state a better deal on the single market and migration than David Cameron could secure when trying to keep Britain in.

Proposals for a new EU preferential system – particularly one which differentiated primarily by skills – certainly have strong potential to appeal across UK public opinion, as the new ICM poll for British Future demonstrates. They should have strong prospects across British party politics too. But what is not yet clear, from the early stages of the Brexit negotiations, is whether there is any appetite from the EU27 for

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a negotiation over migration outside a free movement framework, or whether such an offer would succeed in deepening the type of trade partnership that the UK could secure.

However, this is also because the EU largely sees it as the British government's responsibility to make the first move and set out what the 'deep and special partnership' might actually mean. If an EU preferential scheme is negotiable, advocates of this approach also need to consider how to get the right balance between EU and non-EU migration to the UK, alongside an EU-preferential approach. Proposals for a UK migration system without reference to the negotiations would put a ceiling on the type of trade deal that would be possible, making it considerably more difficult to agree a trade partnership covering services as well as goods. Choosing not to negotiate over migration would also mean not securing reciprocal opportunities for British citizens in the EU. Britons could still go to live and work in EU countries – but under whatever rules and restrictions EU nations apply to third country nationals, such as those seeking to enter from the United States, Canada and elsewhere.

### **A British offer for the EU negotiations**

British Future proposes a model for post-Brexit European migration to the UK that the UK government could put on the table in the Article 50 talks, as part of a broader UK-EU post-Brexit partnership.

The UK should propose maintaining 'skilled movement' – both ways – for those with a job above an agreed skills or salary threshold. Under such a scheme, there would be no numerical limit on the numbers of EU/EEA workers coming to take a job which is above the threshold. The threshold could be set using a salary level of £24,000 – though there could be advantages in using the national qualification framework and standard occupational classification codes instead. Setting a skilled movement threshold equivalent to NQF level 6, which is the minimum level used for tier 2 visas from outside the EU, would include nurses, teachers, web designers and civil engineers, but would not cover electricians and plumbers, hotel managers and senior care workers.

The UK government should be clear that it will put in place controls to limit the levels of low-skilled and semi-skilled migration – but could be willing to let EEA nationals have first option on all of the low-skilled migration that Britain has decided to accept, within those limits. There are various ways in which a quota system could be designed: it would be possible, for example, to reserve some quota allocations for specific sectors, such as hospitality, food and farming. Such a system would be both more responsive to public and political choices but less flexible for employers - so there is a trade-off to be struck about where the right balance lies.

Some versions of a migration system which differentiates by skill evoke a guest-worker model, where all lower-skill migration is on temporary visas, with settlement opportunities reserved to high-skill occupations.

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This approach would create greater ‘churn’ among those coming to work in the UK and that can make local community relations more difficult, exacerbating perceptions of a rapid pace of change in areas of higher migration. It would therefore be better for integration and social cohesion if these visas were renewable and included potential routes to citizenship and settlement, with all renewals counting against the quotas set and the number of places being made available to new arrivals. This is a considerably tighter system for EU/EEA migration than free movement – but it also offers greater access to the UK labour market for EU citizens than if there were no deal. In a ‘no deal’ scenario, EU/EEA nationals’ access to the UK labour market would be similar to that of non-EU migrants – though the UK would then need to adjust its current policies for skilled, semi-skilled and low-skilled migration to reflect economic needs and political preferences in a post-free movement world.

### **New migration deals outside the EU**

A successful ‘skilled movement’ deal with Europe could be supplemented by further skilled and post-study migration deals with the USA, Commonwealth countries or others, subject to political and public consent - though low-skilled, non-EU migration would remain heavily restricted, as now. If the UK is not able to secure an EU deal, however, a considerably more expansive reciprocal skilled free movement system with Australia, New Zealand, Canada and India, for those taking jobs above a skills or salary threshold, might be more attractive as part of an accompanying trade deal. Australia’s High Commissioner Alexander Downer has suggested that a migration deal might be a required component in any future free trade deal<sup>14</sup>.

If the EU talks were to fail, the UK would also need a strategy to source the low-skilled and semi-skilled migration that it did want. That could be a nationality-blind quotas scheme, available to European and global applicants alike, though the government could consider whether quota-based schemes with particular Commonwealth countries, or other trade or development partnerships, might supply part of the mix.

### **New migration targets to fit the post-Brexit system**

If Britain adopted such a new migration policy, the government should move away from a one-size-fits-all net migration target, replacing it with a new set of public measures. Specific targets would cover the forms of migration that the government has control over, and particularly identify the specific flows of migration where the government is seeking to either limit or reduce levels.

Since emigration levels are not subject to government control, it would make more sense to have desired targets for economic immigration below the skills threshold, or in particular categories. The government could take emigration trends into account in deciding on its targets

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and policies for the coming year. This would also involve reporting student migration separately, potentially setting targets for year-on-year increases so that the UK maintains and expands its share of a growing international market.

It will also be important to have political and public accountability and ownership of how decisions are made about migration policies and targets: an approach to do this in a sustained way is set out in chapter nine, *Engaging the public*.

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## 8. Getting it right on the home front: integration in Britain

Many of the public's concerns about immigration relate to what they see happening in their local communities. Over the last six months, we have heard about these worries in the National Conversation on Immigration's citizens' panels<sup>15</sup>. In the 24 towns and cities we have visited so far, we have listened to people talking about divided communities and neighbourhood decline where overcrowded properties are rented to transient groups of migrant workers. We have also heard about integration successes, for example of communities that come together to celebrate shared festivals. These visits have led us to conclude that action on the home front is just as important as what happens at our borders if we are to get a consensus on immigration. Where there is rapid or large scale migration there is a need for effective policy that addresses pressures on housing or public services. Action to promote integration helps bridge social divides and brings people of different backgrounds together to build a shared future.

### Dealing with local pressures

Successive governments have recognised that rapid migration into a particular area can result in negative impacts. There may not be enough school places or suitable housing. In many parts of the UK migrants, understandably, tend to settle in neighbourhoods where there is a supply of private rented housing, some of it of poor quality and over-crowded. Here they sometimes find themselves living alongside students, another transient population. With migrants wanting to save money, and much work poorly-paid, supply of affordable decent housing has not met demand and rogue landlords have been able to take advantage of this. In the eyes of many participants in the National Conversation on Immigration, migration has become associated with neighbourhood decline and pressurised public services.

The Government has recognised that it needs to act to deal with the local pressures that rapid migration may bring, re-introducing a funding stream in England to deal with such issues. The Controlling Migration Fund was brought in last autumn (2016) and provides £25 million each year to help English local authorities who are experiencing high or unexpected levels of immigration<sup>16</sup>. This round of funding lasts until 2020, with councils invited to bid for activities that may include conflict resolution, promoting social integration, tackling rough-sleeping or street drinking, improved regulation of the private rental sector or short term help for unaccompanied refugee children. Where migrants themselves may be the beneficiaries of these activities, councils who apply for this fund need to show that the activities also benefit the host community.

The Controlling Migration Fund is a good start and the Government is clear that this first, four-year funding round is about learning what

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works. There do not appear to be mechanisms in place, however, to share that learning; and on its own, the fund will not go very far to address the public's concerns about what they see happening in their neighbourhoods. For a start, it does not apply to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and not all English local authorities have applied for it. The fund's 2016 prospectus includes a long list of activities that may qualify for funding. As such, it risks becoming a small and tokenistic pot of money put forward to deal with the latest neighbourhood ills.

But there are ways that the Controlling Migration Fund could work if there is real commitment and leadership from central government and councils. Ministers need to voice the importance of this fund and ensure that local authorities can share their learning. Ideally, its budget needs to increase, but there may be economies of scale to be had if councils worked together on joint projects. Involving regional structures – City Mayors and Strategic Migration Partnerships – would encourage inter-authority collaboration and the sharing of good practice. Crucially, the work of the Controlling Migration Fund needs to be visible in the neighbourhoods it targets. What better way to do this than by talking to local communities - migrants and non-migrants alike – about the issues they face and involving them in spending decisions?

### **Integration can build a new consensus**

Integration is about creating a country that we can all share, and where different sectors of society live well together. It involves fairness, connectedness and participation. Social contact enables bridges to be built between people of different backgrounds, values to be shared and differences to be negotiated. Integration, therefore, helps to manage tensions and anxieties brought about by social and demographic change. As such, it is an essential part of building a consensus around the direction of immigration policy.

Despite its importance, the UK's integration record is mixed. But opportunities are now opening up which place integration much higher up the policy agenda. A Government response to the independent Casey Review of Integration,<sup>17</sup> in the form of a strategy or green paper, is imminent and there is a commitment from the very top of politics to take this issue forward. The establishment of Combined Authorities, with most headed by an elected mayor, enable integration policies to be implemented at a city-region level<sup>18</sup>. Already the city authorities in London, Manchester and Birmingham have deputy mayors or cabinet posts with responsibility for integration.

So what are the issues that integration policy needs to tackle if we are to develop a consensus on immigration and a shared future? Increasing the quality and quantity of English language provision is a priority, and something that most people consider important. Post-election polling for British Future showed that 67% of adults think that the Government should be providing more English language classes, an opinion that

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crosses all age, class and political divides<sup>19</sup>. Without a language in common we find it hard to make friends and build bridges across social divides. We need to find better ways of helping migrants who work long hours to improve their fluency in English.

Many of us live segregated lives, in the places where we live, work or are educated. It is hard to break down established patterns of residential segregation, but we need to be much better at providing spaces and places where those of different backgrounds can meet and mix. Planning powers should be used to make sure that new housing developments are of mixed tenure and there is enough attractive public space to promote social interaction. Evidence shows that volunteering is also a means of bridging spatial and institutional divides. Here, UK local and regional authorities could reasonably follow the example of many US city offices for integration, and promote volunteering opportunities that bridge social divides.

British Future's research shows that most people feel that schools are now places where integration takes place, and welcome the fact that children are mixing with others from different backgrounds in their classrooms. In pockets where this is not happening, action may be required. New faith schools can create divisions that need to be broken down. Where children are being taught in schools that are almost entirely made up of one social, ethnic or faith group, greater efforts will need to be made to ensure they get a chance to mix with children from different backgrounds. This is happening in some local authorities such as Bradford and there are already some excellent school-linking projects<sup>20</sup> across the UK.

Asylum-seekers and refugees are often among our most isolated social groups. Refugees' labour market participation is particularly poor, with over 50% of adults in some national groups unemployed or economically inactive<sup>21</sup>. This limits social interaction, as among adults the workplace is the most important integration 'space'. As a consequence, public misconceptions about refugees may develop, with resentment of a group that many people see as being welfare dependent rather than economic contributors. Refugees are also a mobile population and their transience can make it difficult for them to make new friends and put down roots. The Government needs to prioritise social and economic integration for refugees, putting local communities at the heart of their policies. It seems illogical that Syrian refugees, evacuated to the UK through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, are entitled to a package of local integration support while those granted UN refugee status after they make their own way to the UK are not.

We could also be much better at using the process of naturalisation to facilitate integration, using citizenship ceremonies in iconic locations to welcome and orientate new citizens as full members of their new communities.

It is hoped that national, regional and local integration strategies address these common and cross-cutting issues, as well taking local needs into account. There are balances to be struck between integration programmes that focus on all residents and those that target specific groups or

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communities; and between initiatives that celebrate integration and those that tackle difficult issues such as extremism and hate crime. But getting integration right is an essential part of building a new immigration consensus - breaking down the social divides between 'them and us' to form a new inclusive 'we'.



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## 9. Engaging the public

Brexit will require substantial immigration policy, offering an opportunity to reform to the current regime and to rebuild public trust in the system. That is long overdue - since 2000, opinion polls have listed immigration among the top five issues of concern to the public.

Much of that concern has been driven by perceived deficiencies in the way immigration is managed: the Labour government's failure to predict or respond to the surge of immigration from Eastern Europe after new countries joined the EU in 2004, for example, or their Conservative successors' failure to come close to meeting their headline performance indicator, the net migration target.

Public trust in the competence of government to manage immigration remains low. And while there is no shortage of criticism of immigration policy and practice, what is missing are workable policy solutions that have business, political and, crucially, public support.

There is no way that substantial reforms of immigration policy can be put in place without securing public support for them. Changes to some policy areas – such as pensions or infrastructure – can be secured by an elite consensus, persuading policy-makers of the hard facts of the case. That is unlikely to be true for such a high profile issue as immigration. Reforms will only be won if politicians perceive that voters will broadly agree with those changes.

So finding consensus on a post-Brexit immigration policy, which secures the immigration we need to fill skills and labour force gaps and meet Britain's international obligations, while managing the pressures from immigration on infrastructure and local communities, is a necessary first step as Britain formulates a new post-Brexit immigration policy.

That presents challenges to both sides of the immigration debate. Those who want to defend the economic and social gains that migration has brought to Britain need to rise to the challenge of rebuilding public confidence in it. They will need to engage constructively in debates about how to handle those pressures, including how we manage the impacts of migration and promote successful integration between new arrivals and the communities that they join. Those who are sceptical about the scale and pace of immigration will need to move beyond critiquing past failures and offer workable proposals to reduce immigration, in ways that recognise and meet the needs of our economy and public services.

Building that consensus might appear difficult on an issue that can often seem polarising and characterised by angry debate between two intractable tribes. Yet our research finds that most people do not fit easily into the 'pro' or 'anti' camp. While it will never be possible for everyone to agree, the majority of people are balancers,

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concerned about the pressures caused by immigration and aware, too, of the gains it brings to our economy and society.

What has been lacking in much of our political debate is a genuine attempt to engage with the public on immigration - to listen to people's concerns and seek compromise solutions that secure consent for the immigration that we need and decide to keep, and for the controls and targets that we put in place.

The National Conversation on Immigration, coordinated by British Future and Hope not Hate, is the biggest-ever public consultation on immigration, hosting 120 meetings in 60 locations across every nation and region of the UK, together with nationwide opinion polling and an online survey open to all. Concluding in spring 2018, the findings of the National Conversation form part of the parliamentary Home Affairs Committee's Inquiry on immigration. More information on the National Conversation can be found at [www.nationalconversation.org.uk](http://www.nationalconversation.org.uk)

British Future has also set out a proposal to make greater engagement with the public on immigration a fixture in our politics<sup>22</sup>. The Home Secretary should present an annual Migration Day report to the House of Commons, just as the Chancellor of the Exchequer has the annual Budget. This would detail the previous year's migration flows, the economic contribution from migration to the Exchequer and the measures taken by the government to manage impacts and pressures. It would make recommendations for future policy over the year ahead, informed by advice from the Migration Advisory Committee. In the event of some flows of immigration being higher than the government's targets, that should trigger a proportionate increase in the annual resources allocated to manage local impacts - demonstrating a clear commitment to ensure that public funding goes to services in the areas of most rapid change.

The House of Commons Migration Day report should become the focal point for a sustained and ongoing commitment to public engagement across the nations and regions of Britain. The government should actively seek submissions about its overall migration targets, or its component parts. Parliamentary Committee hearings and public debates in town halls and other settings could scrutinise proposals and recommendations from civil society. These could include proposals for reductions to migration, as well as reports on the economic needs of employers in the private and public sector or on how impacts on public services, housing and integration are being handled. Adopting this approach across the next Parliament would have the benefit of normalising a sustained, ongoing commitment to public engagement as part of the annual process of the oversight and review of immigration choices in the UK.

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## 10. Conclusion: Finding consensus on Britain's future immigration policy

A quick look at the 2017 General Election results, in which over 80% of voters chose one of the two main parties at a point when there was more ideological distance between them than any time since the 1980s, might invite the conclusion that our politics has seldom been more polarised. Overlay the divisions highlighted by the EU referendum vote, and the leading role that immigration played as an issue, and the prospects for consensus on immigration look weak.

Yet this analysis overestimates divisions in Britain and underestimates the public's capacity to hold nuanced views on complex issues of public policy. There is clear public support, across political and referendum divides, for a system that combines the UK control demanded in the referendum with the openness to skilled migration that our economy will continue to need, and which most people would welcome.

Most of the public hold a mix of views on immigration, some negative and some positive. They welcome the contribution that nurses and doctors from overseas make to our NHS while worrying about the impact that high migration levels could have on waiting times at hospitals and doctors surgeries. They're concerned about where the thousands of people who come to Britain each year will live, while acknowledging that we will struggle to build new homes without construction workers from other EU countries. They want overall immigration numbers to go down, while wanting to keep most flows of immigration at current levels. And they want the government to do something about these issues, while having very little confidence in its ability to do so competently.

Politicians have often written-off these views as confused and contradictory. There have been too few attempts to listen to what the majority of people think on immigration and too much reliance on our noisy and polarised media debate as a barometer of public opinion. Scratch beneath the surface and engage with the concerns and opinions of voters, however, and you find a range of views that are nuanced and considered – with ample scope to build compromise and consensus.

Doing so will be important as we seek to debate and develop a fit-for-purpose immigration system for Britain after Brexit. Business voices will be rightly vocal in defence of the benefits of migration for our economy, seeking clarity about the future trade and migration frameworks within which they must operate. They will look for reassurance about the status of their current European employees and their ability to fill skills gaps from overseas where needed. But theirs cannot be the only opinions heeded by decision-makers when fashioning future policy. A government that seems to ignore the public on an issue of such salience will only re-energise the populist fringes that were pacified by the Brexit vote and who deserted their main champions in the General Election.

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The reset moment for immigration, presented by the Brexit decision, is a chance to engage with the public and seek to rebuild consensus and trust in an immigration system which manages the pressures of mass migration in order to secure the gains; which is effective and efficient but also fair; and which secures support across politics, business and the public. This engagement should be deep and ongoing, and we advocate an annual Migration Day report to Parliament from the Home Secretary as a focal point for continuing transparency and public scrutiny of migration statistics and policy. It should also lead to action: responding to concerns about the impacts on public services and housing in areas where the pace of change is highest by directing resources to those areas via a better-resourced Controlling Immigration Fund. Concerns about local impacts could also be eased by paying greater attention to integration at both local and national level.

Immigration is not a uniquely polarising issue, nor is the shaping of a post-Brexit immigration system an intractable problem. The Brexit decision represents an opportunity to engage the public, find consensus and start rebuilding trust in an immigration system that works for our economy, preserves our values and secures broad support among business, politics and the public.

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## 11. Notes

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## 11.2 Tables

Figure 1. Thinking about the following parties, which comes closest to your view?

	All	Leave	Remain	Conservative	Labour
Would never vote UKIP	65%	45%	83%	55%	76%
Considered or would consider voting UKIP	28%	45%	12%	42%	20%
Voted UKIP – but might change mind	4%	6%	3%	1%	2%
Only vote UKIP	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%

Figure 2. Following the EU referendum, the UK Government will now enter into negotiations with the EU to come to deal on the conditions of the UK's departure and our future relationship with the EU. Which of the following comes closest to your view of how the UK's Government should proceed?

- We should prioritise the best deal for British business and the economy, even if that makes it harder to control immigration from the EU.
- We should prioritise control of immigration from the EU, even if that makes it harder to get the best deal for British business and the economy.
- We should seek a compromise that balances control of immigration from the EU with the best deal for British business and the economy

	Prioritise business and economy over immigration	Prioritise immigration over business and economy	Compromise that balances economy and immigration control
Conservative	17%	27%	52%
Labour	30%	18%	44%
Leave	12%	34%	49%
Remain	38%	12%	45%
Male	29%	25%	40%
Female	18%	20%	53%
Overall	23%	22%	47%

Figure 3. For each of the following groups, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of people coming to live in Britain to increase, decrease or remain about the same.

	Decrease	Retain	Increase
Students	24%	56%	20%
High skill EU	15%	48%	38%
High skill non-EU	16%	48%	36%
Low-skill EU	64%	31%	5%
Low-skill non-EU	67%	27%	6%
Seasonal workers	33%	55%	11%
Family (immediate)	41%	48%	12%
Family (extended)	58%	35%	7%

Figure 4. Thinking about the following parties, which comes closest to your view?

	Decrease	Retain	Increase
Doctors and nurses	15%	39%	46%
Scientists/ researchers	14%	42%	44%
Engineers	18%	48%	35%
IT specialists	23%	51%	26%
Business/finance	25%	53%	22%



Figure 5. For each of the following groups, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of people coming to live in Britain to increase, decrease or remain about the same.

		Increase	Retain	Decrease
Doctors and nurses	Leave	39%	42%	19%
	Remain	54%	36%	10%
Scientists/ Researchers	Leave	40%	43%	18%
	Remain	50%	41%	9%
Engineers	Leave	28%	48%	24%
	Remain	43%	46%	11%
IT specialists	Leave	22%	47%	31%
	Remain	30%	53%	16%
Business/ finance	Leave	19%	50%	31%
	Remain	26%	56%	18%

Figure 6. For each of the following groups, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of people coming to live in Britain to increase, decrease or remain about the same.

		Increase	Retain	Decrease
Students	Leave	12%	54%	34%
	Remain	29%	56%	15%
High skill EU	Leave	31%	51%	19%
	Remain	47%	43%	10%
High skill non-EU	Leave	32%	50%	19%
	Remain	42%	46%	12%
Low-skill EU	Leave	2%	17%	80%
	Remain	9%	42%	50%
Low skill non-EU	Leave	3%	15%	82%
	Remain	9%	36%	55%
Seasonal workers	Leave	8%	47%	46%
	Remain	15%	63%	23%
Family (immediate)	Leave	6%	37%	57%
	Remain	17%	56%	27%
Family (extended)	Leave	4%	22%	75%
	Remain	10%	46%	44%

Figure 7. For each of the following groups, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of people coming to live in Britain to increase, decrease or remain about the same.

	Increase	Retain	Decrease
Care workers	28%	47%	25%
Construction workers	15%	48%	37%
Waiters/Bartenders	6%	46%	48%
Fruitpickers	9%	54%	37%
Other Unskilled	6%	33%	61%

Figure 8. For each of the following groups, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of people coming to live in Britain to increase, decrease or remain about the same.

		Increase	Retain	Decrease
Care workers	Leave	20%	46%	34%
	Remain	36%	47%	16%
Construction workers	Leave	20%	46%	34%
	Remain	36%	47%	16%
Waiters/bartenders	Leave	3%	36%	61%
	Remain	20%	54%	36%
Fruit-pickers	Leave	6%	46%	48%
	Remain	13%	60%	27%
Other unskilled	Leave	9%	21%	76%
	Remain	9%	44%	48%

Figure 9. After Britain leaves the EU, the rules governing immigration to the UK from EU countries are likely to change. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below about future EU migration to the UK after Brexit?

The Government should control low-skilled immigration through an annual cap while allowing skilled migrants to come to the UK as before

	Agree	Disagree	Neither	Don't know
All	63%	14%	17%	5%
Remain	60%	18%	21%	3%
Leave	71%	13%	12%	5%
Conservative	75%	9%	13%	3%
Labour	57%	18%	20%	5%
London	59%	15%	21%	6%

Figure 10. The Government should replace the net migration target with separate targets for different types of immigration, like skilled workers and low-skilled workers

	Agree	Disagree	Neither	Don't know
All	63%	7%	21%	9%
Remain	64%	7%	21%	8%
Leave	67%	7%	18%	7%
Conservative	72%	5%	17%	5%
Labour	60%	9%	21%	10%
London	68%	4%	16%	12%

Figure 11. The government's target figure for net migration is less than 100,000. Do you think the Government is likely to meet the net migration target in the next 5 years?

	Yes	No	Don't know
All	12%	66%	22%
Remain	15%	68%	18%
Leave	10%	67%	23%
Conservative	14%	63%	23%
Labour	13%	67%	20%
London	20%	59%	21%

Figure 12. 'Voters haven't given no one political party a clear majority. As Britain enters the important negotiations on our future relationship with the EU there should be a new, cross-party approach to Brexit whatever government is formed, with parties working together in the national interest.'

	Agree	Disagree	Neither	Don't know
All	70%	10%	14%	7%
Remain	78%	6%	12%	5%
Leave	66%	15%	13%	6%
Conservative	67%	17%	12%	4%
Labour	77%	5%	13%	6%

Figure 13. How well do you think the following politicians performed in the General Election campaign?

	Nicola Sturgeon (Scotland)	Nicola Sturgeon (UK)	Ruth Davidson (Scotland)	Ruth Davidson (UK)
Well	38%	19%	54%	28%
Not Well	56%	55%	28%	22%
Don't know	9%	26%	18%	50%

Figure 14. After Britain leaves the EU, the rules governing immigration to the UK from EU countries are likely to change. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below about future EU migration to the UK after Brexit?

#### Scotland

	Keep free movement	Stop all EU immigration	Control low-skilled immigration through an annual cap while allowing skilled migrants to come to the UK as before
Agree	43%	27%	62%
Disagree	32%	56%	17%

#### London

	Keep free movement	Stop all EU immigration	Control low-skilled immigration through an annual cap while allowing skilled migrants to come to the UK as before
Agree	40%	26%	59%
Disagree	35%	56%	15%

All UK

	Keep free movement	Stop all EU immigration	Control low-skilled immigration through an annual cap while allowing skilled migrants to come to the UK as before:
Agree	39%	26%	63%
Disagree	34%	56%	14%

Figure 15. For each of the following groups, please tell us whether you would prefer the number of people coming to live in Britain to increase, decrease or remain about the same.

	Scotland Increase/remain same/decrease			London Increase/remain same/decrease			All UK Increase/remain same/decrease		
	Increase	Remain same	Decrease	Increase	Remain same	Decrease	Increase	Remain same	Decrease
Students	21%	57%	22%	26%	51%	23%	20%	56%	24%
High-skilled EU	41%	46%	12%	39%	44%	17%	38%	48%	15%
High-skilled non-EU	39%	47%	14%	38%	42%	21%	36%	48%	16%
Low-skilled EU	5%	33%	63%	10%	30%	61%	5%	31%	64%
Low-skilled non-EU	4%	27%	69%	11%	33%	56%	6%	27%	67%
Family (immediate)	12%	52%	37%	19%	42%	40%	12%	48%	41%
Family (extended)	7%	39%	54%	13%	35%	52%	11%	35%	58%

Figure 16. If Scotland held a referendum tomorrow on whether it becomes independent from the UK, would you vote yes or no to independence? (Scottish respondents only)

	Total	18-24	25-34	35-64	65-74	75+	NET: First time voters
Yes	37%	55%	54%	33%	29%	24%	47%
No	53%	30%	29%	56%	67%	73%	39%

Figure 17. How likely do you think it is that Scotland will become independent?

	In next 5 years	In next 10 years	In next 25 years
Likely	25%	40%	52%
Unlikely	67%	47%	28%
Don't know	9%	13%	20%



# British Future...

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