

# *EU migration from Romania and Bulgaria*

*What does the public think?*

British  
Future...

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## It may not be popular but it is going to happen

On 1 January, Britain opens its borders to Romania and Bulgaria. It is a moment being greeted not with fanfares of Beethoven's Ode to Joy, but with the more reluctant mantra 'we have no choice'. Seven years after the two countries became full members of the EU, temporary transitional controls on free movement will end.

A heated public debate polarises around two viewpoints. Some demand that the government must stop this anyway, though the Home Office says it is simply not legally possible. The failure to act, on this view, would just prove that the public will never be listened to on immigration. A counter-view, occasionally heard from a passing EU Commissioner or their embattled British allies, is that the entire debate about free movement is irrational at best and often downright xenophobic. This can quickly lapse into the unfortunate view that the noisy political and media debate shows precisely why the public should not be listened to on immigration or Europe.

This study of public attitudes reports what we found when we *did* listen to the public's views. We held deliberative workshops in Southampton, Reading and Bolton to find out how much people knew about the issues and what they thought could be done to respond, followed up by a nationally representative ICM poll to look at views across Britain.

Despite heated polemics from all sides, we found considerable public uncertainty about the choices that Britain should make.

This extension of free movement, and especially its timing, are certainly not popular – though a minority of one in six actively welcome it. But most people are sceptical that the government could actually break the law in order to stop it: there is a broader, grudging acceptance that these are the rules of a club of which Britain is a member.

Whether to stay in that club seems very much in the balance too: people are taking the option of getting out of the EU pretty seriously – currently leaning more out than in – but can also see several risks in actually taking the leap. Most people say they have yet to firmly decide. Yet those with different views on being in or out of Europe could often find much common ground on the type of reasoned, practical responses that could help to handle immigration more effectively.

The public do want more information about what is happening – but it is not hard to see why Bulgarian and Romanian immigration has been a difficult issue for the politicians.

They have to admit that the choice is not in their hands. All of the major British parties supported EU enlargement, but none appears enthused by the idea of actively championing the free movement that comes with it. The politicians have to admit, too, that they don't know what will happen. After the widely mocked under-estimates of Polish accession, there is no appetite for offering any official estimate of possible numbers this time.

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The timing also highlights some inconvenient gaps in immigration policy and politics.

Romanian and Bulgarian free movement highlights that David Cameron's headline net migration pledge depends on factors beyond the control of government policy. Immigration from outside the EU has fallen, but any significant new inflow from Romania and Bulgaria is likely to guarantee that the 'tens of thousands' target will be missed in this Parliament.

One of Ed Miliband's main immigration talking points has been that Labour should have applied transitional immigration controls when Poland joined the EU. Romanian and Bulgarian free movement shows that transitional controls come to an end too – highlighting that wishing you had done something different, in hindsight, in 2004 does not yet amount to having a contentful policy for 2014.

So what could be done now?

Surprisingly, even with the first of January a fortnight away, the main question on the Westminster backbenches is still whether the government could simply tear up the rule-book. Both the legal and the political obstacles to doing this are formidable – and insurmountable. The dual crisis that this would create – quite probably calling both the survival of the Conservative-LibDem Coalition, and Britain's EU membership, into question – may make the day-dream more attractive for some of those with no love for either. But this is fantasy politics. In the real world, the Government isn't going to break the law (nor, indeed, wreck David Cameron's broader ambition to renegotiate a better deal in the EU).

Since this is going to happen, people want to know more about what is being done to make it work. The public often have clear views about more grounded, practical responses to managing immigration and integration more effectively: ensuring employers can't undercut existing workers by exploiting newcomers; addressing local pressure points for public services; promoting integration and contact; and ensuring that free movement does not leave the benefit system vulnerable to abuse.

Some suggest that engaging with any of these public concerns would be a mistake, and involves pandering to ill-informed prejudices. But that over-sweeping generalisation fails to make the key distinction: how to differentiate reasoned concerns from irrational prejudices.

Managing migration effectively does depend on restoring public confidence. That means neither dismissing all concerns about immigration as inherently wrong-headed, nor stoking up anxieties with impossible slogans, which then simply corrode trust further when they can't be kept.

Indeed, engaging reasonable anxieties with constructive, workable solutions is the most effective way to also challenge the prejudices of those who do have toxic views – when, for example, there are expressions of ugly prejudice about the Roma of a kind that we now seldom hear about other minority groups.

At a time when most Britons have little confidence in how immigration has been handled, people are anxious to see national and local government do more to manage any new flow effectively.

But many are at pains to point out that they do not have a problem with those who may have crossed a continent to work hard, or seek a better life for them and their family. Rather, the core concern is whether we have a system that handles migration fairly for all – citizens and migrants alike.

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It will be for Britain to decide whether we stay in the EU. While we are in the club, we have to play by the rules. That does mean accepting that those who come to Britain to work are playing by the rules too.

So the headline rows over immigration may have obscured another truth. If Romanians and Bulgarians do arrive next year, most Britons believe it is important that those who come here with the right motives – to work, pay taxes and contribute positively to our society – do see that Britain is a society that welcomes those who make the effort.

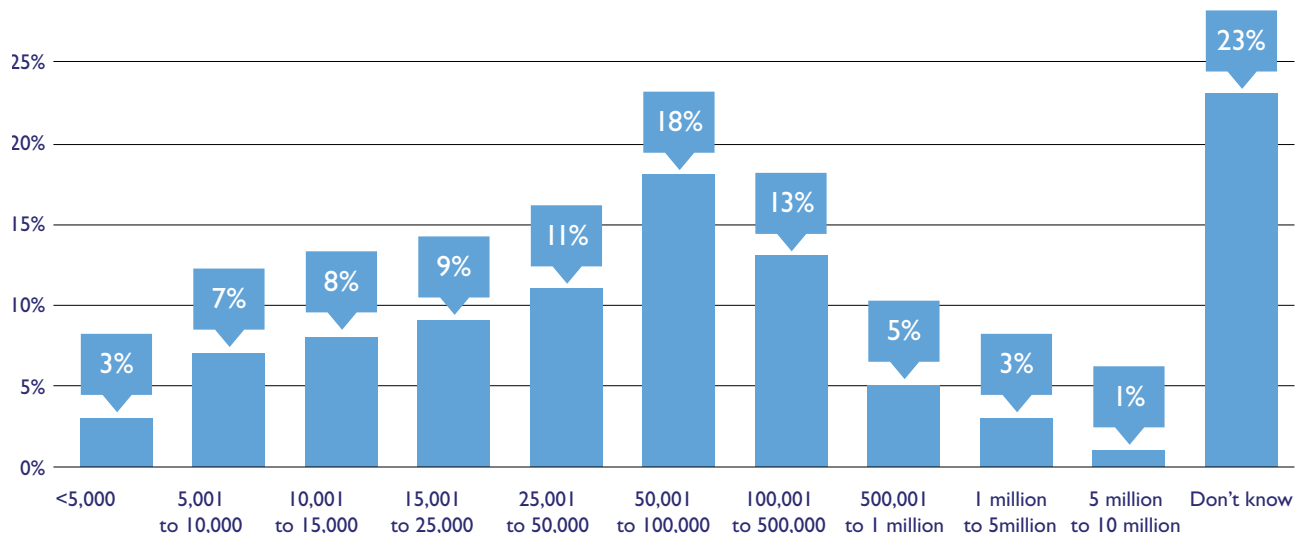
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## What do people think will happen?

*Most people in Britain are aware of what's happening on 1 January 2014. 70% of people know that EU citizens from Romania will have new rights to live and work in the UK, with slightly lower awareness of the same rights for Bulgarians (65%). When we probed in more detail, however, our research groups in Southampton revealed underlying uncertainties. Some didn't know at all that Romanians and Bulgarians would gain the right to live and work in the UK, with one or two participants quite shocked at the news. There was uncertainty about why people from Romania and Bulgaria would be able to move to the UK and how this policy had been decided or by whom. Once prompted, however, people recalled seeing stories in the newspapers about Romanians.*

People are unsure how many people might come here next year. Around four in ten (38%) think up to 50,000 people from Romania and Bulgaria will move to the UK in 2014. Nearly a fifth (18%) think the figure will be between 50–100,000. And 22 per cent think it will be more than that, with nearly one in ten (9%) predicting over half a million. With British politicians and officials refusing to estimate numbers and various interest groups publicizing their own estimates, it's perhaps unsurprising that nearly a quarter of people ticked "don't know" (23%).

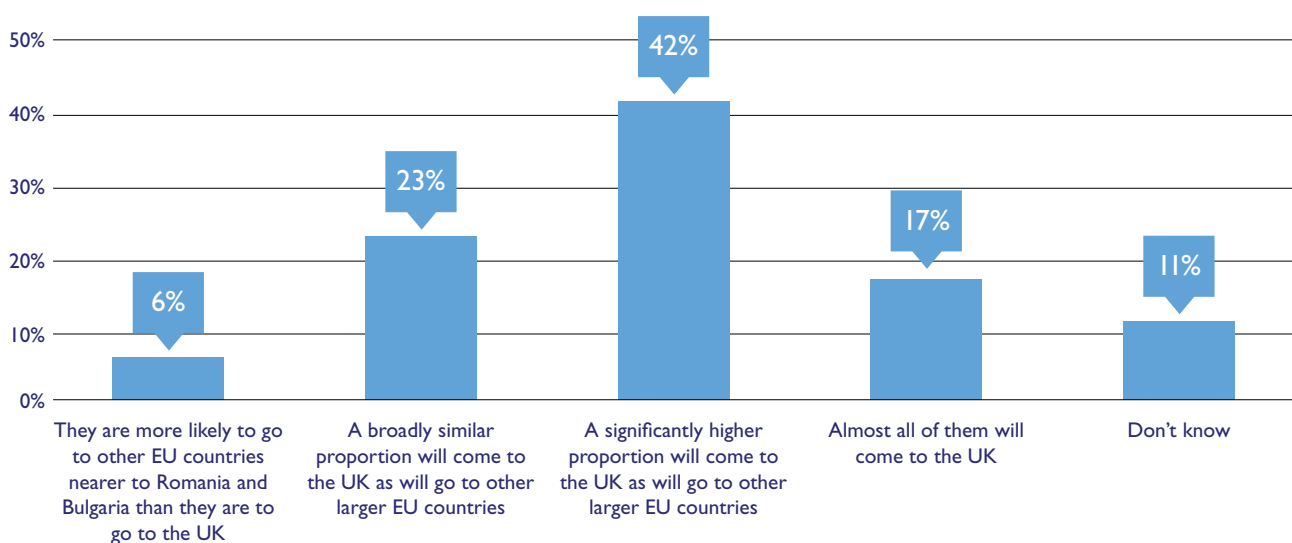
## How many people from Bulgaria and Romania do you expect to come to the UK in 2014?



Most people (63%) know that controls on free movement will be lifted by countries across the EU, giving people from Romania and Bulgaria the right to work in any EU country. Just under a fifth (18%) think they will only be able to come to the UK, with a similar number unsure ('Don't know', 19%).

People are still expecting, however, that most Romanians and Bulgarians who do decide to up sticks in 2014 will come here. 59 per cent of people think a significantly higher proportion – or almost all (17%) – will come to the UK. Only 6 per cent think they are more likely to go to other EU countries. In our Southampton groups, some people confused EU economic migrants with people seeking asylum, saying it was unfair that migrants could travel through other countries to get to the UK, when “they should have to claim in the first country they get to”.

## Will Romanian and Bulgarian migrants come to the UK?

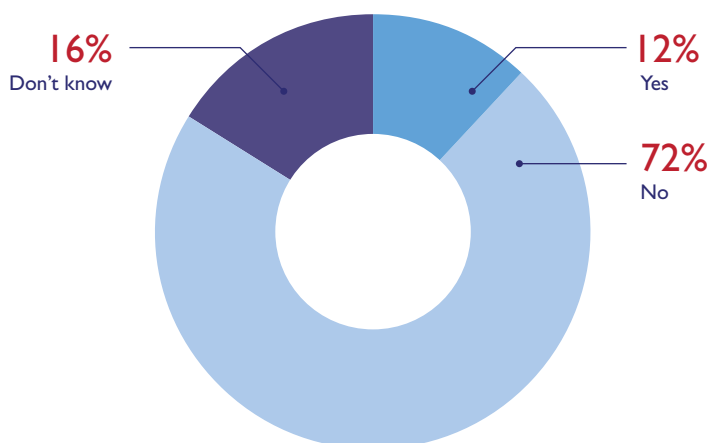


It's worth noting that this view, of the UK being a disproportionately attractive country to people from Romania and Bulgaria, doesn't reflect current patterns of migration within the EU. To date, by far the most popular destination for Romanian and Bulgarian migrants is Spain, which has attracted 43 per cent of mobile Romanians and 38 per cent of Bulgarian migrants. Italy, Germany and Greece were also popular destinations for migrants from A2 countries, much more so than the UK.<sup>1</sup>

Yet despite these relatively high levels of public knowledge, people feel strongly that they have not been given enough information about what is going to happen on 1 January. Nearly three quarters (72%) said the government had not provided enough information, compared to just 12 per cent who think they had.

They have not heard very much on this issue from politicians in general. Prime Minister David Cameron has achieved a degree of cut-through, with 43 per cent people saying they had heard him talking about the changes, though this may be partly down to timing: the fieldwork for this poll had already been scheduled when Cameron made his announcement about restrictions to benefits for EU migrants. The only other politician breaking the 20% barrier was Nigel Farage (22%), with nearly a third of people (32%) saying they hadn't heard any of the main political leaders talking about changes to working rights in the UK for Romanians and Bulgarians.

### Has the government provided enough information on what will happen in January 2014?



1. Source: NIESR, *Potential impacts on the UK of future migration from Bulgaria and Romania*, 2013 <http://niesr.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publications/NIESR%20EU2%20MIGRATION%20REPORT.pdf>

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## What would people do about it?

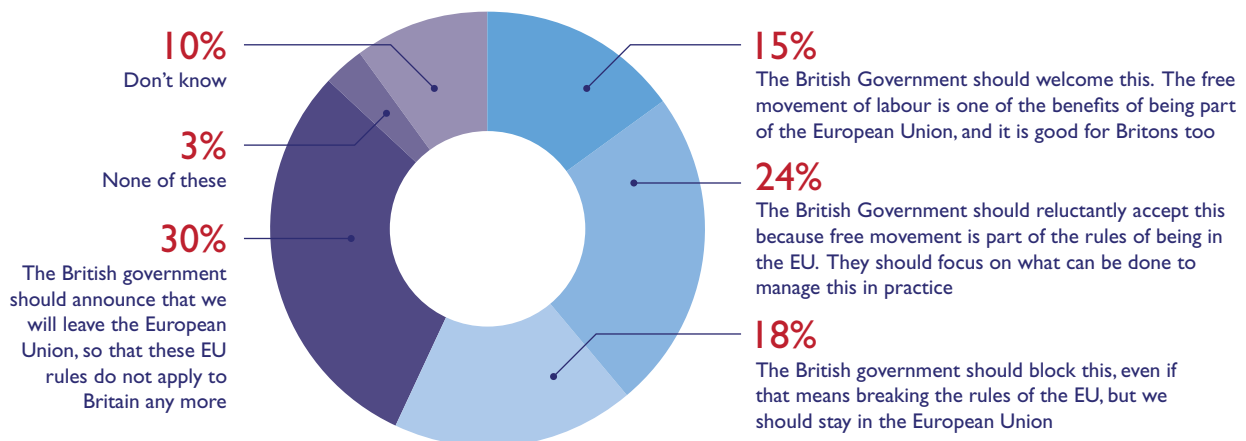
*Can Britain prevent the free movement rules from coming into force on 1 January next year? Much of the media space on EU migration has been dominated by those calling for Britain to break EU rules and block working rights for Romanians and Bulgarians, or to leave the EU altogether to prevent further free movement.*

The Home Office says this isn't legally possible, a point endorsed by some of those who want to leave the EU. Others, however, say that Britain can 'defy Europe' and extend controls preventing Romanians and Bulgarians from working here. A backbench amendment to the Immigration Bill attracted support and publicity, though the debate on the Bill has now been rescheduled until after the 1 January deadline.

Neither of these responses, however, has majority support. Remaining in the European Union but breaking EU law to block working rights for Romanians and Bulgarians wins the support of less than a fifth of people (18%). Three in ten people (30%) think the UK should leave the European Union altogether so that free movement rules would no longer apply.

A liberal minority (15%) is comfortable with free movement and think it's good for Britain. And just under a quarter of people (24%) say that we should reluctantly accept free movement within the EU as part of the deal – they'd rather we roll up our sleeves and focus on practical measures to manage the impact of EU migration.

### What should the Government do in response to Romanians and Bulgarians gaining working rights in the UK?

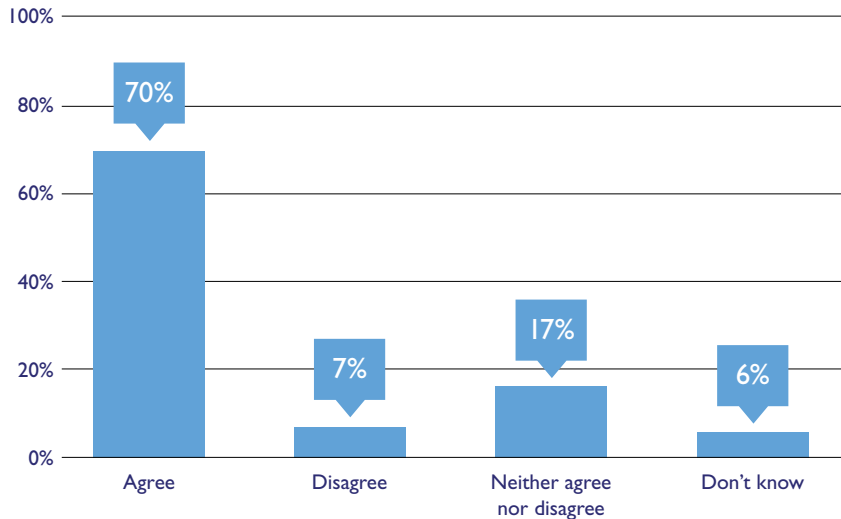




Interestingly for policy-makers looking to engage public anxieties about immigration, practical measures to mitigate the impact of new arrivals from Romania and Bulgaria secure broad public support.

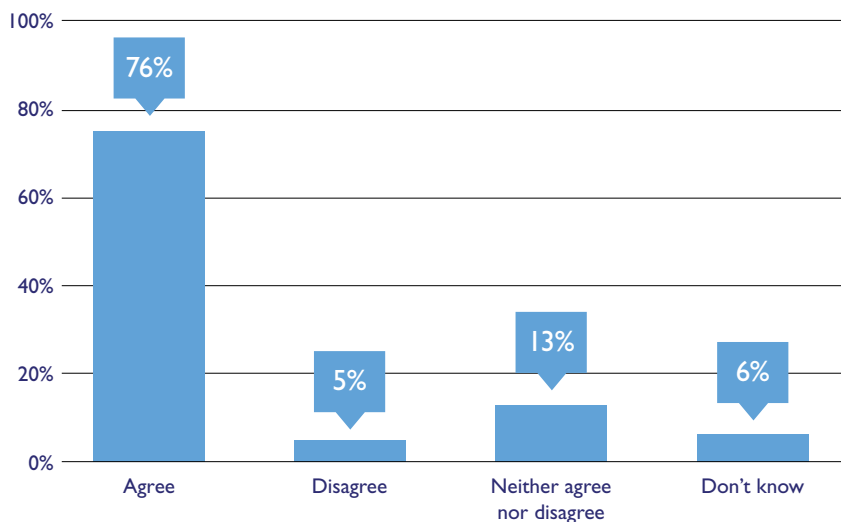
As touched upon earlier, people want more information nationally and locally about what's happening and what's being done to ease any pressures that immigration might cause, with 70% of people supporting this statement.

Immigration from Romania and Bulgaria may be unpopular but it is happening and it will affect our communities, so we need more information nationally & locally about what's happening, and what's being done to ease any pressures it might cause



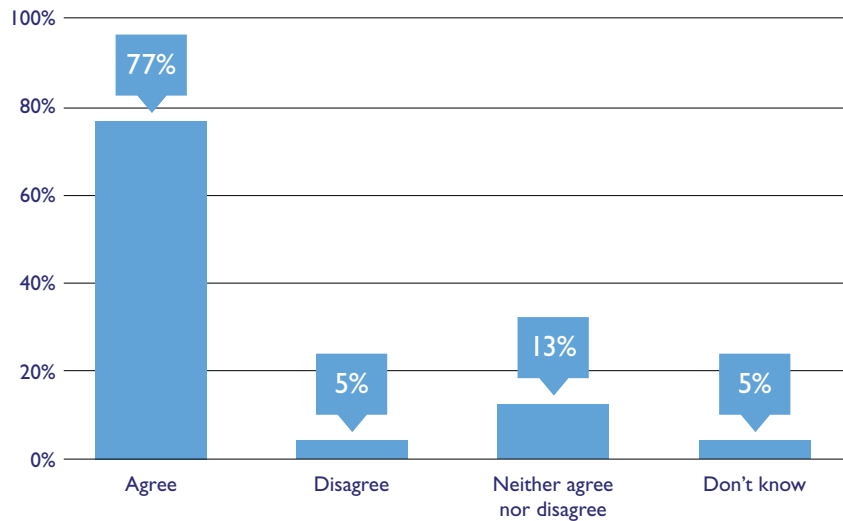
Concerns about the potential impact of immigration on jobs and wages came through strongly in our Southampton and Bolton groups. In our poll, 76% of people say that the government should enforce the minimum wage to ensure a level playing field, against just 5% who disagree.

The government must enforce the minimum wage so employers can't squeeze out British workers by employing Europeans on the cheap. But if we have a level playing field and Bulgarians and Romanians want to work hard and pay their taxes, they will be playing by the rules



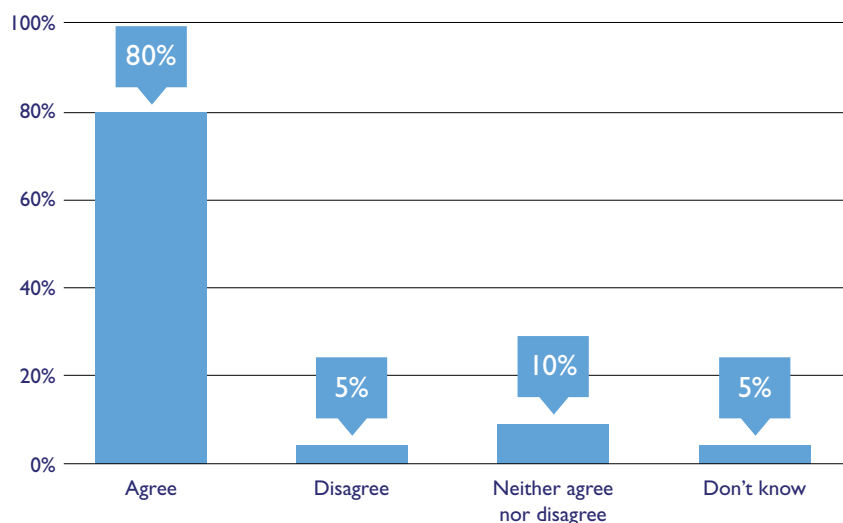
People also recognise that integration is important if immigration is to work for us all. If migrants do their bit – learn the language, work hard and pay taxes, be part of the community – then people are far more willing to accept them.

**If Romanians and Bulgarians want to stay in Britain they've got to work hard and pay taxes, learn the language, be part of the community. If they do that they'll find we welcome people who make the effort**



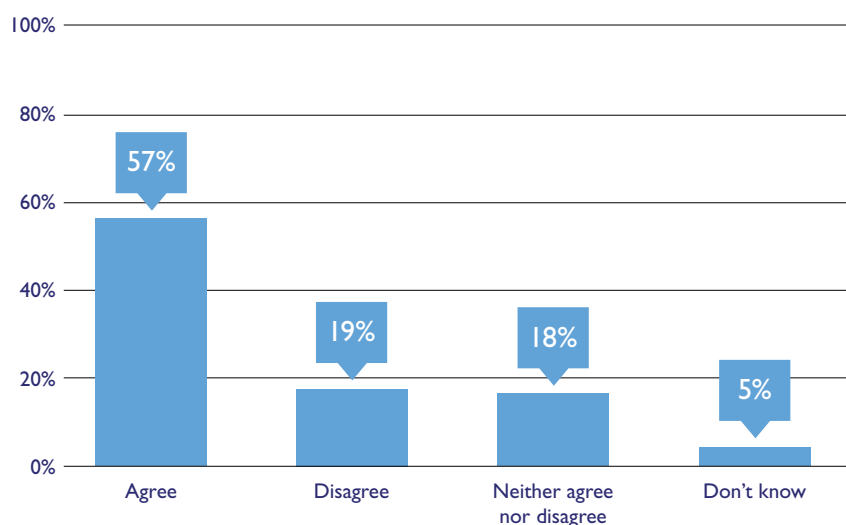
Attitudes to EU migrants who come to the UK to work hard and pay taxes are broadly positive, but our Southampton group and nationwide poll found strong support for controls on benefits to ensure that people are coming to the UK to work, not to claim. Although there is limited evidence of widespread “welfare tourism”, evidence-based claims about this seem unlikely to offer sufficient reassurance. This is partly because people want to protect the principle that people need to be willing to make a contribution in order to take something out.

**The government's right to put tough limits on access to benefits for new European migrants. People come here to work hard, pay taxes and contribute to Britain, but not if they're looking for an easy ride**

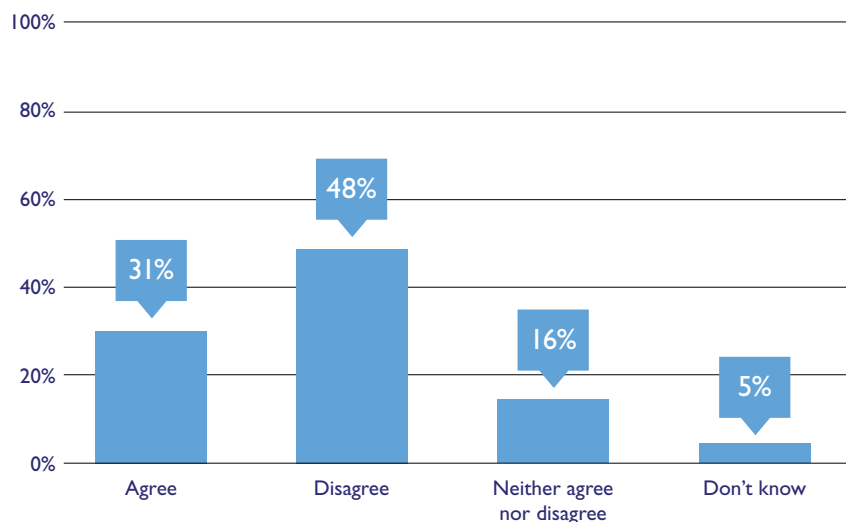


People are also keen to make clear that their anxieties are founded on genuine, real-life concerns, not on prejudice. While people do feel that further immigration from Europe will create pressures in the UK – for example on public services – they are opposed to those who would stir up tensions before anyone has even arrived in the UK. Yet public anxiety about these pressures does need to be engaged and discussed: people don't agree that we should "stop worrying and get on with it". They don't want to be told not to worry: they want their worries to be acknowledged and addressed, but in a way that creates solutions, not prejudice and further tension.

People are worried that immigration from Romania and Bulgaria will put pressures on local public services and we need to manage that. But let's not prejudice people and stir up tensions before they've even got here, we can deal with issues without being prejudiced



We should stop worrying about immigration from Romania and Bulgaria. It's EU law and it's going to happen, so let's just get on with it and try to make it work



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## Does this mean decision time on Europe?

It is highly unlikely that the government could try to put an emergency brake on free movement this month. But the longer-term question of Britain's membership of the EU is clearly a live political question. David Cameron has proposed a referendum for 2017, while a strong UKIP performance in the 2014 European elections will keep the 'in or out' question high on the political agenda.

We wanted to know where people stand on the bigger picture of Britain's place in Europe. How many people are thinking that Britain would be better off out? And what are some of the key issues that may influence the decision on whether to stay or go?

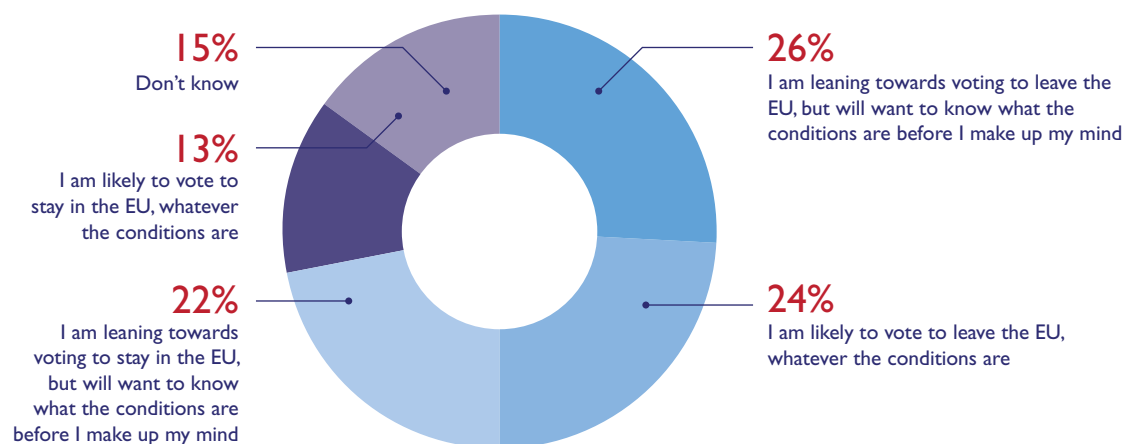
The EU debate tends to be dominated by those, on both sides, who have absolutely no doubt about which side they are on. But the majority of people are not in either of those groups. Most people are uncertain about Europe, unconvinced that the benefits outweigh the costs; yet many are also unconvinced that the answer is to leave the EU.

At this stage, the most telling finding may be that only just over a third of people feel confident of which way they will cast their vote. Most want to know more about the terms of membership that may be on offer.

Of the 35% who say they are likely to vote to stay in the EU, nearly two-thirds say that they could change their minds. Just 13% of the public say they are likely to vote yes in all circumstances.

Of the 50% who are thinking of voting to leave the EU, just over half are similarly undecided, saying that they will want more information to decide. But a quarter of people (24%) are firmly committed to the exit.

### Voting intentions in a future referendum on whether Britain should leave the EU



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We found an interesting division in our Southampton deliberative workshops. These had focused on migration from Romania and Bulgaria, but ended with participants being asked about the broader issue of whether they thought the issue of free movement could be a reason to leave the EU, and also whether doing so might carry risks to Britain.

The all-female group in Southampton was heavily in favour of getting out of the EU. Their rationale was not that they were unconvinced about the arguments for staying in; it was rather that none of the participants could readily identify what any of those arguments might be.

Yet the research group of Southampton men, having been similarly sceptical about A2 free movement, were equally clear that this was not a reason to leave the EU. They saw jobs and trade as an important benefit of EU membership. A British exit, they felt, could damage the local economy, from the docks to the rest of the country. It would be very much a “last resort”.

The contrasting views of the two workshops, with similar socio-economic profiles, may be partly chance, reflecting the dynamics of those specific groups. Our national poll results show that men are more decided on Europe, whether that is to stay in or get out, with women twice as likely to tick ‘don’t know’. What both the deliberative groups and national polling show, however, is that there is still more indecision among the public on EU membership than the confident views expressed by both ‘pro’ and ‘anti’ camps would perhaps have us believe.

The findings suggest that those who want to keep Britain in Europe will have an uphill struggle. People could be persuaded to stay in, but pro-EU support is also quite soft. While the advocates of the status quo tend to have an advantage in a referendum argument, the results also show that the ‘better off out’ camp could extend its support, rather than being pulled back.

Any referendum result will, naturally, be decided not by the pro-European minority nor the most vocal Eurosceptics, but by those in the centre who hold nuanced and moderately sceptical views about both the EU and immigration. Success for pro-Europeans would depend on making a positive case for EU engagement that doesn’t just preach to the already converted. We look in more detail at this group, the “Sceptical Centre”, later on in this report.

## 5. Young Europeans and Ye Olde England – the Generation Gap

We also asked people what they feel about the potential risks of leaving the European Union as, in the Southampton group at least, awareness of potential risks seems to be a key factor in deciding whether they want to ‘stay in’ or ‘get out’. The results show an interesting difference in opinion between young and old.

We provided a list of potential risks of leaving the EU and asked people to rate how important they consider them to be. The ‘Generation Gap’, between the responses of 18–24s and those aged 65+, is marked throughout, but particularly so when it comes to free movement and the right to work abroad, where the two groups are separated by 28 percentage points. Along with jobs from inward investment, this is an important concern for the under-24s, but it is the least important risk for the over 65s, though 49% do say it will be a factor.

Which of the following risks would be important to you when deciding how to vote in a referendum?

Respondents saying ‘very important’ or ‘somewhat important’ rather than ‘not at all important’ or ‘not relevant: don’t believe it is a risk’

	GENERATION GAP	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	TOTAL
Jobs and economy	20%	82%	74%	71%	67%	65%	62%	69%
Lose right to work in EU	28%	77%	67%	65%	59%	54%	49%	60%
Less influence in the world with US,	18%	75%	69%	67%	63%	55%	57%	63%
Less influence on cross-border issues	19%	77%	68%	67%	63%	53%	58%	63%
Could lose European funding for disadvantaged regions of UK	22%	76%	66%	66%	60%	53%	54%	62%

This Generation Gap carries through into the attitudes of the two groups to an in/out referendum on Britain’s EU membership – suggesting that a referendum on Europe may be one of the first political issues to be divided more on generational grounds than by class or gender. The lesson for pro-Europeans is that they need to work out how to engage and mobilise younger voters; while Eurosceptics may want to ensure that the referendum happens sooner rather than later.

Under-24s would vote to stay in the EU; Over-65s would get out

	IN/OUT (NET)	FIRMLY IN	LEANING IN	LEANING OUT	FIRMLY OUT	NONE/DON’T KNOW
18–24	+8%	20%	21%	18%	14%	26%
65+	-25%	12%	23%	32%	28%	9%
All voters	-15%	13%	22%	24%	26%	15%
Generation Gap	33%	+8%	-2%	-16%	-14%	+17%

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## Poles apart – what do people think about the last wave of migration from Europe?

“Hard working” was the sentiment that came across most strongly when we talked to research groups about people from Poland who have come to live in the UK. This view was reflected in further nationwide research. People are generally positive about the hardworking Poles, though they would like them to integrate a bit more.

It may be that public anxiety about migrants from particular countries fades as people become more familiar with them. Talking with a group in Reading about immigrants in the town, one woman said: “I don’t mean Asian people – they’ve always been here”. While many British Asians in the town are likely to have been born in the UK, it is interesting that public anxiety tends to focus on the most recent arrivals or those who have yet to arrive. One Southampton participant said: “We don’t know if this next lot will be like the Poles” – implying that if they were, that would be a good thing.

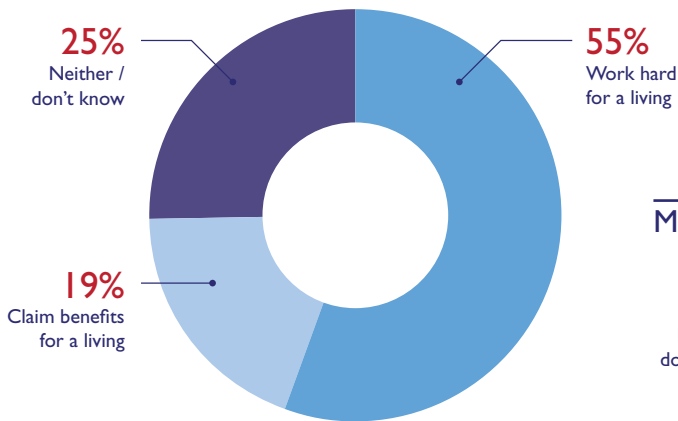
Our groups knew almost nothing about Bulgaria and were more focused on Romanians. There was some conflation of Romanians and people from the Roma ethnic group, towards whom we encountered some strongly prejudiced views, though only from one or two participants. Some members of the Southampton and Bolton groups felt that Roma had a propensity towards claiming benefits, poor hygiene and criminality.

In contrast, our national poll shows that attitudes towards Poles are relatively accepting. People think Polish immigrants work hard, don’t cause trouble and make a contribution to Britain. 55 per cent of people said that Poles “work hard for a living” versus just 19 per cent who think they claim benefits; 52 per cent say that Polish migrants make a contribution to Britain, against 24 per cent who say they don’t; and 57 per cent say they “don’t cause trouble in my community” compared to 19 per cent who say they do.

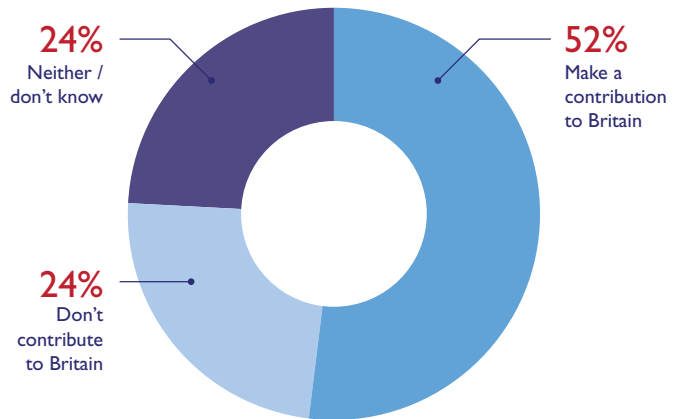
They could, however, do more to integrate. 40 per cent say that Polish migrants “Don’t make enough effort to integrate”, though 35 per cent feel that they do (the remainder saying ‘neither’ or ‘don’t know’). People in Southampton and Reading talked about areas of the city that are now predominantly Polish. And while the presence of their shops and small businesses may be a sign of how Poles are ready to work hard for a living, people expressed concern that these are clearly *Polish* shops, with signage in the Polish language.

In 2004, EU citizens from Poland became entitled to live and work in the UK. Which of these statements best matches your opinion of them?

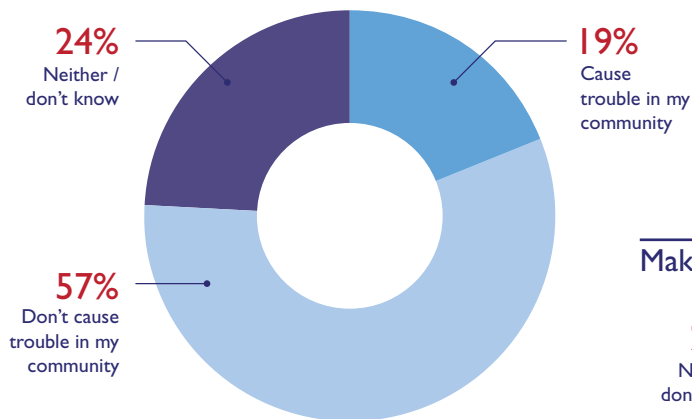
Work hard for a living



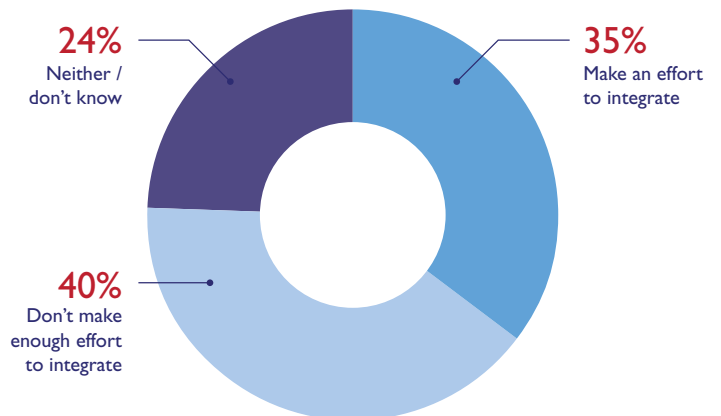
Make a contribution to Britain



Don't cause trouble in my community



Make an effort to integrate





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## So is public opinion really polarized on this?

To help us to analyse the results, we conducted an experiment to look at how responses to the policy and political challenges of free movement and the EU reflect people's attitudes to immigration per se.

Participants in the poll were asked to give a 0–10 score for the contribution of immigration to Britain, with 0 being very negative and 10 being very positive.

Almost a quarter of people (23%) gave immigration either 0 out of 10 (17%) or 1 out of 10 (6%). This group can be considered hardline anti-immigration, seeing almost no redeeming features for what they consider its overwhelming costs and pressures. In other polls, about a quarter of people tend to say that “shut the border” and stop all immigration is their preferred policy. It is unlikely that this group is amenable or reconcilable to many real world policy options that any government could offer (perhaps including a UKIP-led government).

At the other end of the spectrum, almost a quarter of people (23%) gave a score of 7 out of 10 or higher. 6% gave a score of either 9 or 10. This is a similar sized group to those who are content with current levels of immigration to Britain in the British Social Attitudes survey.

This leaves 54% of people in the ‘Sceptical Centre’, giving immigration a score of between 2 and 6 out of 10 – and an average score of 4.1

The liberal minority is younger, comprising 1 in 3 of those under 24 compared to 1 in 6 of those over 65. Those age proportions are reversed for the hardline opponents. Similarly, those in the liberal group are twice as likely to be AB professionals than DE manual workers; those in the hardline group are twice as likely to be DE than AB.

The liberal group is much stronger in London than elsewhere, making up 45% of all Londoners. In this poll, almost two-thirds (62%) of non-white participants form part of the liberal minority. The hardline group is much whiter: only 4% of ethnic minority respondents form part of it, though a third of non-white respondents are part of the sceptical centre group.

While the age and class profiles of the liberal and hardline groups are not surprising, what is striking is how evenly the sceptical centre reflects the general profile of the British population, containing 52% of AB professionals and 54% of DE workers, and over 50% of each age cohort.

Of course, neither the strongly “pro” nor the “anti” minorities are sufficiently large to determine political and policy outcomes. Our analysis of public views towards possible responses to A2 free movement therefore looks at which issues unite the ‘sceptical centre’ with either side of the spectrum, and also at whether there are issues and responses which unite people across this wide spectrum of views about immigration.

For those who wish to be part of a constructive conversation about responses to migration from Romania and Bulgaria, the results are encouraging. Politicians who encounter members of the Sceptical Centre group on the doorstep will not find themselves being shouted down if they engage their anxieties and offer practical solutions. If they tell this group to

“stop worrying” about immigration they will be given sort shrift; if they ask what those worries are, they will find people willing to talk about what could be done to address them.

## Responses to proposed solutions to immigration anxieties, by attitude to immigration

Positive and negative scores indicate net agree vs net disagree scores in response to statements

	GB TOTAL	LIBERAL MINORITY 23%	SCEPTICAL CENTRE 54%	HARDLINE MINORITY 23%
Accept the government can't break the law to block free movement	+20	+69	+25	-39
We need more information about what's happening	+63	+68	+64	+53
Enforce min wage standards	+71	+82	+70	+60
The government is right to put tough limits on benefits for EU migrants	+75	+57	+80	+84
Welcome those who integrate	+72	+78	+76	+56
Address issues without stirring up tensions & prejudices	+39	+74	+50	-2
Stop worrying about it	-17	+45	-22	-74

In addition, while the ‘Sceptical Centre’ has concerns about the scale and pace of immigration and efforts to handle the pressures this has brought, their attitudes to the Poles show that this is not equivalent to their being anti-migrant. They are strongly of the opinion that the Poles have made a contribution to Britain, though equally divided on whether they could do more to integrate.

These findings reinforce a claim that participants were often keen to make in our research groups – that they do not have a problem with the migrants themselves, rather with the system and with the pressures that they feel immigration is bringing to their communities.

By contrast the hardline minority has a strongly negative view of Polish immigrants, pretty much across the board, though they are divided on whether the Poles cause trouble in their community.

## So, what have the Poles done for us?

	GB TOTAL	LIBERAL MINORITY 23%	SCEPTICAL CENTRE 54%	HARDLINE MINORITY 23%
Work hard for a living	+35	+68	+41	-6
Make an effort to integrate	-5	+42	-6	-47
Make a contribution to Britain	+28	+72	+35	-27
Don't cause trouble in my community	+38	+48	+46	+6

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## So, what can be done?

British people have, on the whole, accepted the Poles as making a positive contribution to Britain, even as they worry about the timing and unpredictable consequences of the potential next wave of EU migration

One instinct of liberal commentators has been to argue that concerns about A2 migration are simply irrational and ill-conceived. This is unconvincing.

Firstly, the attitudes evidence in this report casts a great deal of doubt on the claim that all public concern is irrational and xenophobic. The good news is that attitudes are much more nuanced than that. The positive attitudes towards Polish immigrants held by most of those in the 'sceptical centre' demonstrate that, while many of those in the 'hardline minority' group can be fairly described as 'anti-migrant' as well as 'anti-immigration', theirs is a minority view.

Secondly, the fact that EU migrants are, on average, net contributors overall to the British economy is important – but it should not be treated as a catch-all 'slam dunk' argument that means there are no issues to address, or that all concerns are irrational.

Thirdly, those who believe that Britain benefits, economically or culturally, from free movement or EU membership should have a particularly important stake in how well this is managed. If there were to be an A2 inflow of 25,000 to 50,000 a year, that would amount to 5–10% of annual immigration to Britain. That is a significant proportion, though not an overwhelming one. The high profile of the issue means it could have profound impacts on public views about Britain's ability to handle future migration flows, and whether or not being in the EU remains in the national interest.

So, what can be done to address people's anxieties?

### *i) Enforce minimum standards and fair rules*

Now that Britain is part of a labour market of several hundred million people, there is strong public interest in ensuring there are proper protections against undercutting the wages of British workers and exploiting those from Europe willing to work for less.

This is clearly an important theme around which solidarity can be built between citizens and migrants, and it offers opportunities for trade unions, civic society groups and others to promote a fairness agenda. This is much more likely to engage those concerned about the economic impacts of migration than statistical claims about the lack of any aggregate impact for the average worker.

However, the deliberative groups did not suggest that enforcing the minimum wage is a 'magic bullet'. Rather it is simply a basic foundation, like respect for the rule of law. It does not address all concerns about the potential impacts of unskilled immigration on jobs and wages.

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## *ii) Deal with the pressures that rapid change can place on public services*

The fact of a net fiscal contribution means that newcomers do pay into the pot from which additional service provision may need to be funded. To address public concerns about public services, that economic fact needs to be combined with a clear plan to move resources in a timely way to areas of rapid population change.

They may otherwise find local services underfunded, based on the population in place at the last census, not that which is actually there in real time, on school rolls or surgery waiting lists. It was a national-local mismatch of this kind that eroded confidence about how the unanticipated migration flows after 2004 were handled. Explaining that migrants make a positive contribution to the public purse overall is of little consolation to people who feel the local pressures have been inadequately prepared for.

More regular and transparent public reporting at national and local level on what is known about population change and responses to it, together with parliamentary scrutiny of how these issues are handled, would help to ensure the fair allocation of services in places experiencing the most rapid population changes.

## *iii) Take contribution seriously – but do it fairly*

Welfare access is also a significant public concern. The ICM polling shows that this is a concern shared by most in the liberal pro-migration minority, as well as by the sceptical centre. The strength of view on this issue does undoubtedly partly reflect an exaggerated view of benefit claims, though it is also part of a broader debate about a contributory welfare system.

David Cameron's recent intervention was criticised from two perspectives: that it was excessively punitive, and that it did not do much more than reiterate and reinforce existing rules. Yet there is certainly an important case for reiterating that rules are in place when the public have little awareness of this.

The crux of the welfare debate is the issue of contribution. People are willing to accept those who do contribute as 'club members' – and so prefer contributing migrants to non-contributing fellow citizens – but worry about how to prevent the system being open to exploitation, whether by citizens or migrants. There is anxiety about where this debate can lead, in terms of distinctions between the deserving or the undeserving, but the principle of contribution is central to public consent for social security.

The welfare debate can be framed on 'them and us' terms. Those seeking to secure consent for making free movement work might want to challenge this. How far do British citizens, from diverse backgrounds, and EU migrants to the UK, from Germany or Poland, Romania or Bulgaria, agree on the principles and practices which should underpin the free movement to work, and rights to welfare access? In an appropriate deliberative forum, this might be an issue which could help to inform the UK and other EU governments as they discuss possible future reforms to how free movement works in practice.

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## iv) Engage anxieties in order to challenge prejudices

One impact of the A8 migration after 2004 – among the largest migration flows in British history, of white, Christian Europeans – was that it helped to do something overdue: to put more distance between race relations and immigration.

There are occasional references to the immigration debate being “more toxic than ever” and even “Powellite” but neither claim could survive even a cursory re-reading of Enoch Powell’s 1968 speeches on immigration, repatriation and the impossibility of a multi-racial society. Views about discrimination, equal opportunity and integration of settled minorities after two or three generations in Britain are rarely primarily issues of immigration today.

There has been a clear and sustained reduction in prejudice across recent generations, while anxiety about immigration has grown over the last decade. Britain is now, in comparative international studies, an outlier in having some of the highest levels of concern about immigration, while having perhaps the most liberal attitudes to race relations, certainly in Europe. This also helps to explain the fatal demise of the far right BNP, likely to leave the national stage forever after the 2014 European elections, and the rise of UKIP, a populist Eurosceptic party which is not racist, and so which offers a more mainstream expression of the anxieties of those most deeply unsettled by change.

This does not mean that there is no prejudice in the immigration debate. There is prejudice over immigration, which needs to be tackled head-on. To do this effectively we must recognise that it drives only a minority of the public concern, while most of those who favour reduced migration have nuanced, pragmatic and selective views. The British Social Attitudes survey sets out persuasive evidence that skill levels weigh more heavily than cultural preferences in views about who should come to Britain.

There is an important responsibility and opportunity for politicians to make clear where the line needs to be drawn. Senior figures from government – and all mainstream parties – should be speaking up about the need to recognise discrimination, against the Roma in particular, as well as identifying practical steps needed to challenge this, elsewhere in Europe as well as at home.

This polling suggests there would be strong public resonance for the message that real issues need to be dealt with, without stirring up prejudices.

Anti-prejudice norms are put at risk if they appear to be used, illegitimately, to close down debates about issues of migration and integration. They are reinforced when reasonable anxieties are engaged and, ideally, offered constructive solutions that bring together migrants and existing citizens for common causes.

The EU should work with the UK and national governments to ensure that EU funds for Roma inclusion are directed to local integration projects in cities that receive most new Roma migrants.

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## v) Give people a choice about Europe

The A2 free movement debate is foundationally part of a bigger debate about whether being in the European Union is in Britain's interests or not. This is one of the biggest political and economic choices for Britain – and it explains why this report shows that the public is undecided about what choice to make, despite the opening up of free movement being unwelcome.

Immigration was simply not an important part of the domestic EU debate before 2004, with free movement in western Europe being perceived as broadly reciprocal. And the EU was not a significant part of the domestic immigration debate either because the flows, of Britons out and other Europeans in, tended to be fairly even.

Both of those things have changed. The claim by advocacy groups like the Parliamentary Balanced Migration group that Britain could reduce net migration to levels well below 100,000 while remaining in the EU was plausible prior to EU enlargement, but is extremely unlikely in an EU of 27. It is certainly possible to open negotiations about the future rules for free movement, though the foundational principle is not likely to be significantly altered, and significant changes are likely only in the case of new accessions to the EU.

While public attitudes to immigration are nuanced, sceptical and pragmatic, the fact of EU membership means the choices that people might want to make are not on the menu.

Having no choice about EU immigration is difficult unless we understand that this is a consequence of another choice that we do have. Britain can decide whether to be in the EU club or not. If we choose to be in the club, then we have to accept the rules, subject to changes that we may be able to agree with our fellow club members.

If politicians want the public to understand these dilemmas, then they need the public to own the trade-offs. It is difficult to be an effective member of a multilateral body as significant as the EU, and therefore to participate in a labour market of 400 million people, without public consent. This will be a big choice for Britain to make – and it is increasingly difficult to see how it can be satisfactorily settled, one way or the other, without the public clearly having the chance to settle the question in a referendum.

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## Polling data

Polling was conducted on behalf of British Future by ICM Research from 29 November to 1 December 2013, and surveyed a representative sample of 2,027 adults aged 18+ in GB online. Surveys were conducted across the country and the results were weighted to the profile of all adults.

Deliberative groups were run by Britain Thinks in Southampton, Reading and Bolton in October and November 2013 and focused on people's attitudes to immigration, the pressures it creates and possible solutions.

### Q1. Citizens of which countries will have new rights to work in the UK from January 2014?

	%
Romania	70
Bulgaria	65
Hungary	14
Poland	13
Croatia	12
Turkey	6
India	3
Don't know	20

### Q2. In January 2014 there will be changes to the right to work for Romanian and Bulgarian citizens. As far as you know, which of the following will be the case?

	%
Romanians and Bulgarians will have the right to go to work in any of the EU countries from January	63
Romanians and Bulgarians will have the right to go to work in the UK from January 2014 but most other EU countries won't allow them to work	18
Don't know	19

### Q3. Romanians and Bulgarians will have the right to work in 25 EU countries including the UK from January 2014. Comparing the UK to other large Western European countries such as Germany, France, Italy and Spain, which one of the following choices do you expect Romanian and Bulgarian migrants, who decide to leave their country, to make?

	%
They are more likely to go to other EU countries nearer to Romania and Bulgaria than they are to go to the UK	6
A broadly similar proportion will come to the UK as will go to other larger EU countries	23
A significantly higher proportion will come to the UK than go to other larger EU countries	42
Almost all of them will come to the UK	17
Don't know	11

**Q4. How many people from Bulgaria and Romania do you expect to come to the UK in 2014?**

	%
Under 5000 people	3
5001–10000	7
10001–15000	8
15001– 25000	9
25001– 50000	11
50001–100000	18
100001– 500000	13
500001–1 million	5
1 million – 5 million	3
5 million – 10 million	1
Don't know	23

**Q5. In your view, has the government provided enough information on what will happen in January 2014 when Romanian and Bulgarian citizens are entitled to live and work in the UK?**

	%
Yes	12
No	72
Don't know	18

**Q6. Which, if any, of the following politicians have you heard talking about changes to UK working rights for Romanians and Bulgarians?**

	%
David Cameron	43
Nigel Farage	33
Nick Clegg	13
Ed Miliband	10
Boris Johnson	6
Nick Griffin	4
None of the above	32
Don't know	15

**Q7. In regards to UK working rights for Romanians and Bulgarians, which one of the following comes closest to your view?**

	%
The British government should welcome this. The free movement of labour is one of the benefits of being part of the European Union, and that is good for Britons too.	15
The British government should reluctantly accept this because free movement is part of the rules of being in the EU. They should focus on what can be done to manage this in practice.	24
The British government should block this, even if that means breaking the rules of the EU, but we should stay in the European Union.	18
The British government should announce that we will leave the European Union, so that these EU rules do not apply to Britain any more.	30
None of these	3
Don't know	10



**Q8. Below are a number of statements about possible approaches to immigration from Romania and Bulgaria. To what extent do you agree or disagree with them?**

	AGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW
	%			
I don't think our government should break the law, even if that means we have to let new workers in from Romania and Bulgaria. There are pros and cons to being in the EU and we should settle it with a referendum. Until then we've just got to get on with it and make things work.	40	33	20	7
We can choose to remain in the EU or to leave it. Whatever we decide, the British government can't break the law and for now that means we can't begrudge Romanian and Bulgarians who want to come and work in the UK	47	27	19	7
Immigration from Romania and Bulgaria may be unpopular but it is happening and it will affect our communities, so we need more information nationally & locally about what's happening, and what's being done to ease any pressures it might cause.	70	7	17	6
The government must enforce the minimum wage so employers can't squeeze out British workers by employing Europeans on the cheap. But if we have a level playing field and Bulgarians and Romanians want to work hard and pay their taxes, they will be playing by the rules.	76	5	13	6
If Romanians and Bulgarians want to stay in Britain they've got to work hard and pay taxes, learn the language, be part of the community. If they do that they'll find we welcome people who make the effort.	77	5	13	5
The government's right to put tough limits on access to benefits for new European migrants. People come here to work hard, pay taxes and contribute to Britain, but not if they're looking for an easy ride.	80	5	10	5
People are worried that immigration from Romania and Bulgaria will put pressures on local public services and we need to manage that. But let's not pre-judge people and stir up tensions before they've even got here, we can deal with issues without being prejudiced.	57	19	18	5
We should stop worrying about immigration from Romania and Bulgaria. It's EU law and it's going to happen, so let's just get on with it and try to make it work.	31	48	16	5

**Q9. In the future, Britain may hold a referendum on whether to stay in the EU or leave the EU. The Prime Minister has also discussed the possibility of renegotiating the conditions of the UK's membership of the EU. Thinking about a possible referendum on Britain's EU membership, which of the following best sums up your current voting intention?**

	%
I am likely to vote to leave the EU, whatever the conditions are.	24
I am leaning towards voting to leave the EU, but will want to know what the conditions are before I make up my mind	26
I am leaning towards voting to stay in the EU, but will want to know what the conditions are, before I make up my mind	22
I am likely to vote to stay in the EU, whatever the conditions are	13
Don't know	15

Q10. In 2004, EU citizens from Poland became entitled to live and work in the UK.  
Which of these statements best matches your opinion of them?

i.

	%
Work hard for a living	55
Claim benefits for a living	19
Neither/don't know	25

ii.

	%
Make an effort to integrate	35
Don't make enough effort to integrate	40
Neither/don't know	24

iii.

	%
Make a contribution to Britain	52
Don't make a contribution to Britain	24
Neither/don't know	24

iv.

	%
Mainly rent or buy their own home	29
Mainly live in council housing	32
Neither/don't know	39

v.

	%
Cause trouble in my community	19
Don't cause trouble in my community	57
Neither/don't know	24

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About British Future:

British Future is an independent, non-partisan thinktank seeking to involve people in an open conversation, which addresses their hopes and fears about identity and integration, immigration and opportunity, so that we feel confident about Britain's future.

# British Future...

*British Future is an independent,  
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