

FINDING COMMON GROUND

Our vision and
future programme



British Future
www.britishfuture.org
Twitter: @BritishFuture
Registered charity
number 1159291

British Future is an independent,
non-partisan thinktank and
registered charity, engaging people's
hopes and fears about integration
and immigration, identity and race.

Cover photo: Pupils from
Girlington Primary School
and Eldwick Primary School
in Bradford take part in the
Remember Together project
with the Linking Network.



Refugee Jubilee street party with the Refugee Council, 2012.

Many of today's debates – about history and identity, integration and combating prejudice or our approach to immigration and protecting refugees – can seem noisy and polarised.

Securing political consent for policy change requires public support. British Future has developed a unique, in-depth understanding of public attitudes, uncovering the common ground on which people can agree. Our research helps understand how to reach the toughest audiences who are least comfortable with Britain's diversity; how to appreciate the concerns of young, ethnic minority Britons impatient for change; and how to communicate persuasively with the majority of the public in between.

We help organisations seeking to navigate these issues to unlock public support. We identify narratives and messages that reach and persuade across divides by politics, generation and ethnicity.

We work to understand where people are and the issues that concern them, offering constructive policy solutions in response.

Our communications expertise helps ensure that British Future's research findings inform national debates and influence decision-makers. We demonstrate how 'show not tell' communications can have reach and shift attitudes.

We build, catalyse and incubate new coalitions for change, mobilising others to play their part. British Future helped set up the Together Coalition to bridge divides and promote social connection; and we house the Welcoming Committee for Hong Kongers, an independent umbrella group for all those who care about the integration of new arrivals from Hong Kong.

Our long-term aim is a country where we are no longer 'Them and Us' but rather a confident and welcoming Britain, inclusive and fair to all.

A more confident, inclusive and welcoming Britain – the mission at the heart of British Future’s agenda – resonates because we live in a more anxious, more fragmented society than any of us want.

BRITISH FUTURE: OUR VISION FOR THE DECADE TO COME

British Future has emerged as a thought leader on issues of identity and immigration, race and integration. We engage people seriously in how we handle the issues that divide us, so that we can work to strengthen our common ground.

This volatile decade showed how high the stakes are. Brexit, Covid and the Black Lives Matter anti-racism protests each brought previously unknown words into our public conversation. Yet each also illuminated long-standing divisions. Social change is often felt differently in cities and towns, across our nations and regions, across ethnic groups and generations.

While most of us were aware of our society’s divides, the pandemic response showed that we retain more in common than we perhaps realised. Britain is not America – because more of us try to be ‘balancers’ on identity questions. We must never duck the difficult conversations but should be wary of importing over the internet, or emulating in our media and politics, that all-too Trumpian cycle of mutual polarisation, where the volume and temperature get ever higher.

Most people will agree with British Future’s aspiration for our shared society. What is distinctive is how we work towards it.

Understanding the public: British Future is best known for its deep insight into how people think about immigration, race and identity, including major projects

of unprecedented scale and depth. The National Conversation on Immigration visited 60 towns and cities. Some 140,000 people told us about what divides and unites for the Talk Together project during Covid. Inter-ethnic conversations and in-depth polling on race have offered insight into what is changing in this generation, challenging caricatures of both minority and majority attitudes. We engage with public attitudes for a purpose: helping to shift media and political understanding about how people really think about immigration, race and identity. We communicate effectively with tested frames and messages that we know work – and help others seeking to bridge our divides to do so too.

Strategic and responsive communications:

This era of dizzying volatility demands an agility to respond in real-time to how the public conversation about identity can be reshaped at pace – not just by referendums, wars or pandemics, but sporting and cultural controversies too. Being rooted in a robust theory of change has ensured we ground effective responses in a vision of the society we want to forge.

Proposing constructive solutions:

We want to see effective change happen. We know we get a hearing, whether at the school-gate or from key decision-makers, when we are more than voices of challenge and critique, but advance constructive solutions to the questions of our time.



Unusual allies make for winning coalitions:

We believe in bringing unusual allies together, across political tribes and social groups, for a shared purpose. Our Remember Together partnership with the Royal British Legion works for inclusive remembrance; other partnerships champion an inclusive Englishness. We have forged broader alliances to protect migrants, refugees and promote citizenship. Work with the Together Coalition advances our aim to make this a decade of reconnection, grounding positive narratives in the policy and practice that invites all sectors, institutions and citizens to play our part.

So what are British Future's renewed ambitions for the future?

A new era for welcoming. Making migration work for those who come to Britain and the communities they join is a shared task. So let us bring together the welcomers and the welcomed. Building on our role housing the Welcoming Committee for Hong Kongers, and participating in efforts to welcome both Ukrainians and Afghans, we will help shape a welcoming movement that can realise the mutual benefits of social contact on a scale never before seen.

Shared past, common future. Every institution needs to develop more confidence in talking about the future of a changing Britain. We are committed to a public conversation about identity, race and integration that finds common ground across generations, social classes and ethnic groups. Unlocking the growing public

appetite to understand the making of modern Britain provides important foundations for this. We do not accept that engaging with the complexity of our past must be a recipe for a culture war. By providing strategic advice on how inclusive history can navigate contestation, scaling up our work on inclusive Remembrance and helping make the 75th anniversary of the Windrush in 2023 a major national moment, we will show how history can unite, not divide us.

Expanding our do-tank role. British Future is increasingly a do-tank as well as a think-tank. Our insight into public engagement and our communications expertise is a strong foundation for broader practical change. We are building the strongest hub of change-makers – linking those across every minority and majority group who are champions for the common good. By growing our active engagement and partnerships with businesses and major charities, sporting institutions and social media platforms, we can strengthen our impact by helping partners more confidently unlock the benefits of Britain's diversity for the common good.

We look forward to working together for the shared future we want.

Sunder Katwala
Director, British Future

MAKING WELCOMING WORK



Building broad public support for refugee protection in the UK is key to defending the protection framework and changing policy. Our research into public attitudes and messaging helps voices in civil society and politics make the most effective case for refugee protection.

We work with existing networks, including Together With Refugees and Refugee Week. We also help build new, broader coalitions for change – such as how to turn the challenge of effective crisis responses to Hong Kong, Afghanistan and Ukraine into a sustained new era of welcoming.

British Future houses the Welcoming Committee for Hong Kongers, an independent umbrella group for all those who care about the integration of new arrivals from Hong Kong.

IDENTITY: SHARED HISTORY, SHARED FUTURE



British Future's in-depth attitudes research helps increase understanding of ethnic minority and white British perspectives on our changing society – to inform efforts to advance race equality that can mobilise broad coalitions of support.

We help organisations and other actors to understand and navigate polarised debates about identity and history.

We also put this thinking into practice, developing narratives of shared identity that can challenge and defuse efforts to divide our society. Our Remember Together initiative, working in schools and supported by civil society, political and military voices, demonstrates how inclusive history can help to bridge divides and bring people together.

The 75th anniversaries of the NHS and the Windrush, in 2023, offer further opportunities to bring people together to tell an inclusive story of Britain's history. The Windrush 75 network, convened by British Future, encourages participation in Windrush Day and broadens public awareness of the contribution made by the original Windrush Pioneers.

OUR CURRENT ACTIVITIES AND FUTURE PROGRAMME

BRIDGING DIVIDES AND MAKING INTEGRATION MATTER



Britain's approach to integration so far has been piecemeal. British Future advocates for a coherent, proactive strategy to make integration an 'everybody' issue, bridging community divides and shaping a 'New Us' so we can all feel we have an equal stake in our shared society.

We research, develop and advance concrete policy ideas to improve integration, from English language learning and celebrating new citizens to increasing contact between people from different backgrounds.

We implement our thinking in the real world, working with anti-prejudice organisations to communicate more effectively and helping voices seeking to bridge divides to get heard. Our Shared Goals project works with football clubs to understand and demonstrate how they can harness local fans' feelings of pride and togetherness to promote integration across divides and build shared, place-based identities.

British Future co-founded and incubated Together, a broad coalition working for a closer, kinder and more connected society. We are also the secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration, supporting parliamentarians to research and engage with new thinking on integration.

RESTORING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE THAT IMMIGRATION CAN WORK FAIRLY FOR ALL OF US



Britain's post-Brexit immigration approach needs to rebuild public confidence and secure political consent, while meeting the needs of the economy, public services and our global obligations. That will require a deeper level of public involvement, to address people's anxieties and respond with a system that manages the pressures and secures the gains of immigration.

We work with civil society, employers and political voices to develop public messages, policy agendas and broader coalitions to engage concerns effectively by proposing constructive solutions.

British Future's immigration attitudes tracker research with Ipsos, which monitors shifts in public attitudes to immigration, ensures our advice is based on the most comprehensive understating of public opinion. We communicate its findings to inform public, media and political debate.





2012 BRITISH FUTURE LAUNCHES

British Future launched in 2012 with a report exploring the hopes and fears of a nation that was anxious about the economy but quietly optimistic that Britain would pull through. Our *This Sceptred Isle* report later that year asked how people feel about identity and belonging in Britain, while *The melting pot generation* researched changing attitudes to race.



2013 RESPONDING TO THE MURDER OF LEE RIGBY

The murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby in Woolwich on 22 May 2013 shocked the UK. British Future brought together local community members, faith leaders and MPs at the Greenwich Islamic Centre to show that the community would remain united. They then took a message of peace to the Woolwich barracks.

THE STORY SO FAR: BRITISH FUTURE'S FIRST DECADE



2017 NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON IMMIGRATION

The National Conversation on Immigration is the biggest-ever public consultation on immigration and integration. Working in partnership with the Home Affairs Select Committee, it comprised over 130 meetings with local citizens and stakeholders in 60 locations across every nation and region of the UK, together with an online survey and nationally representative research. In total 19,951 people took part. Its final report provided a comprehensive evidence base of public views on immigration.



2018 REMEMBER TOGETHER

As Britain marked 100 years since the end of WW1, our Remember Together project with the Royal British Legion brought people from different backgrounds together in remembrance of shared history.

Remember Together builds on our research into attitudes to history, identity and the World Wars, dating back to 2013. Activities in schools, communities and the media – including the ‘Poppy hijab’, launched with the Islamic Society of Britain – raise awareness of the contributions of servicemen and women of all creeds and colours, helping make Remembrance feel relevant and inclusive to everybody in Britain today.



2019 MAKING CITIZENSHIP MATTER

Our independent inquiry into UK citizenship policy, chaired by Alberto Costa MP, called for a more positive and welcoming approach to citizenship, with a range of practical proposals for reform that could secure cross-party support. The inquiry called for a reduction in the cost of citizenship; reform of the Life in the UK test; and for citizenship ceremonies to become higher-profile, public-facing and celebratory events, held in iconic locations with members of the local community invited.



2014 HOW TO TALK ABOUT IMMIGRATION

In 2014 we published *How to talk about immigration*, an evidence-based guide featuring advice for all those engaged in the immigration debate, based on extensive attitudes research. It was welcomed and utilised by migration advocates in the charity and business sectors and across political parties, and widely covered in the media.



2015 #WALKTOGETHER

British Future brought Muslim and non-Muslim voices together to agree a shared activity to mark the 10th anniversary of the 7/7 London bombings. The #WalkTogether project engaged the public at scale with a positive message of inclusivity and unity. There were nearly 400 news items about the project across all national news media, with the #WalkTogether hashtag trending at No.1 in the UK and No.2 worldwide.



2016 EU REFERENDUM

Ahead of the EU referendum, British Future's *How (not) to talk about Europe* pamphlet offered advice to both campaigns on how to engage voters on key issues.

After the referendum decision, we immediately recognised the importance of guaranteeing the rights of EU nationals in the UK. Our independent inquiry brought together influential voices across Leave and Remain divides to agree recommendations as to how these rights could be secured.



2020 COVID AND BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

British Future co-founded and incubated Together, a broad coalition working for a closer, kinder and more connected society. As Covid forced people further apart, nearly 160,000 people took part in our *Talk together* research project, the UK's biggest-ever conversation about what unites and divides us and what could bring us closer together. The APPG on Social Integration, of which British Future is the secretariat, also conducted an inquiry into the impact of Covid on social connection.



2021 RACE AND IDENTITY

A year after the Black Lives Matter protests brought fresh urgency to calls to address inequalities, the UK government's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, chaired by Tony Sewell, published its report. British Future published in-depth research, submitted to the Commission, examining attitudes among people from minority and majority backgrounds to issues of race, prejudice and inequality.

Our 'Beyond a 90-minute nation' report, with the Centre for English Identity and Politics, examined English identity, race and football as England's multi-ethnic football team prepared to compete in the Euros.



2022 A NEW ERA FOR WELCOMING

Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparked an exodus of refugees and a huge outpouring of public compassion in the UK. British Future has been working to help shape the policy agenda in response: from getting the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme right, to extending that welcome to help Afghan refugees still in temporary hotel accommodation.

We are also housing the newly-formed Welcoming Committee for Hong Kongers, an independent umbrella group bringing together all those who care about the integration of new arrivals from Hong Kong under the British National (Overseas) scheme.

SUPPORTING AND WORKING WITH BRITISH FUTURE

British Future partners with organisations on events, research and other projects to help address challenges from strategy and messaging to reaching decision makers and the public.



EVENTS

We work in partnership with other organisations on events ranging from ministerial speeches and conference fringes to all-day conferences, training events, roundtables and research launches. Our partners to date have included major corporates, charities and media organisations: from KPMG, Fragomen and PwC to the British Red Cross and Eastern Eye.

If you would like to find out more about our events programme and opportunities to partner with us, please contact lucy@britishfuture.org for more information.

RESEARCH

British Future is a thought leader on migration, integration, race and identity. Our timely research regularly reaches a wide and influential audience. We partner with organisations on research projects related to these issues and welcome approaches regarding joint research projects.

ADVICE

Securing political consent for policy change requires public support. British Future has developed a unique, in-depth understanding of public attitudes, uncovering the common ground on which people can agree.

We can help partners develop new strategic approaches to difficult issues, as well as helping to shape policy solutions and more effective communications. We commission and draw on the latest attitudes research to help our partners in civil society and in the public and private sectors to unlock public support. We identify new messengers and help build coalitions for change.

NETWORKS

British Future convenes a series of networks across civil society, local government, faith and the private sector to help share knowledge and best practice on issue areas such as integration and countering hatred and prejudice. We are also proud to be a founding member of the Together Coalition. We work in partnership with other organisations to build effective coalitions that find constructive, common-ground solutions to key policy questions.

We have convened independent, cross-party inquiries into issues such as citizenship reform and the rights of EU nationals after Brexit. British Future also provides the secretariat to the All-party parliamentary group on social integration, chaired by Peter Gibson MP.

SUPPORT BRITISH FUTURE

British Future is a registered charity. The support of funders and partners, from sponsorship of events and publications to project or core funding, enables us to continue our work to build a positive, inclusive and welcoming Britain that we can all feel proud to call home. To find out more about supporting or partnering with British Future, contact our Director of Research and Relationships Heather Rolfe at heather@britishfuture.org

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We would also like to thank our board of trustees: Alasdair Murray (Chair); Ayesha Saran (Vice Chair); Shailesh Solanki (Vice Chair); Howard Jackson; Qari Asim; Andrea Als; Bobby Duffy, Ed Greig and Sam Jacobs.

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“What I value about British Future is that it provides a confident, constructive and informed voice on issues of identity and integration that focuses on what can bring people together.”

Sajid Javid MP

“I have read this insightful report [Calling Out Hatred], and I want to pay tribute to British Future and all the vital work they do in advancing the debates around identity, integration, migration and extremism. As an organisation, the work you do, as this report shows, is timely and much needed.”

Sara Khan, UK government’s Independent Adviser for Social Cohesion and Resilience

“British Future have helped to lead the public conversation on national identity, showing how we can confidently hold difficult and overdue conversations about our past and future, always looking to bridge and find our common ground.”

David Lammy MP

“British Future provides intelligent analysis, insight and commentary on public attitudes towards refugees, which has been invaluable to our work. It has led the way in seeking to build a cross-party approach, reaching across political divides, to make the case for refugee protection. Our joint project to mark the 70th anniversary of the Refugee Convention showed their ability to communicate in a way that reaches and persuades the broadest possible audience.”

Enver Solomon, Chief Executive, The Refugee Council

“Their strategic generosity and well-timed advice has immeasurably improved how Save the Children has approached questions around the rights of children on the move. They are an indispensable partner for our campaigns and a powerful thought leader for all of us who want a kinder and fairer future”.

**Kirsty McNeill,
Save The Children**

“The thoughtfulness and quality of British Future’s research has informed and improved countless other titles. They have helped us, as a sector, to improve how we listen to the public and to think harder about how we talk to them.”

**Ian Robinson,
immigration law partner.**

“British Future’s success stems from its commitment to open and supportive collaboration that has helped grow a movement of allies. For a relatively small organisation that truly operates nationally, it is remarkable how far its reach is and how transformative its impact.”

**Zehra Zaidi,
We Too Built Britain.**

“It is now impossible to imagine a debate over national identity, diversity, immigration, multiculturalism or racism and discrimination without British Future’s distinctive voice in the room, calmly laying out evidence of progress, highlighting the challenges still to meet, and offering tools and stories to help us meet these challenges.”

**Rob Ford, Professor of Political Science,
Manchester University**