



UK Immigration Policy

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Overview

Immigration trends
Policy change
Explaining change, tentatively

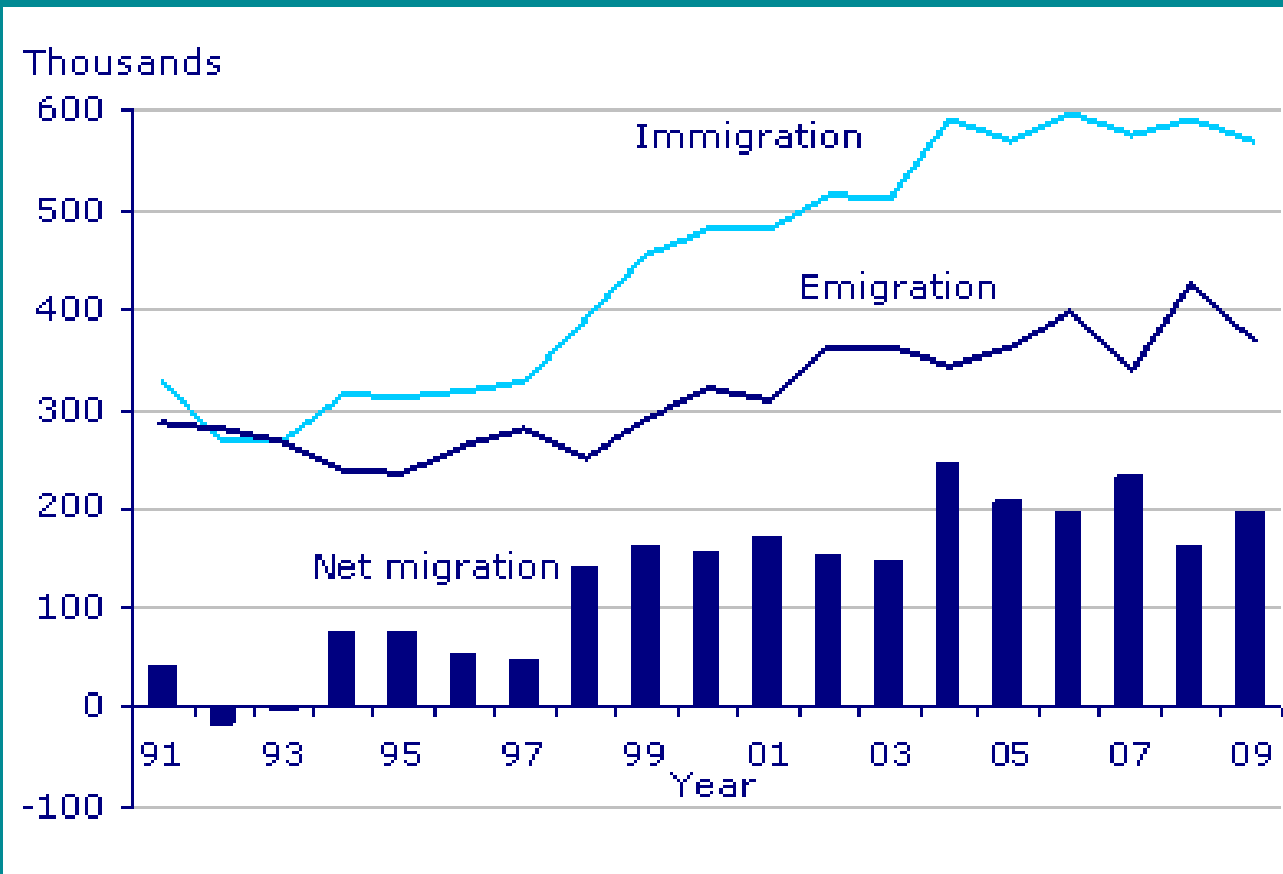


Context: A reasonably well-known story

Large immigrant population
Increasingly mobile
Future trends

Increase in flows

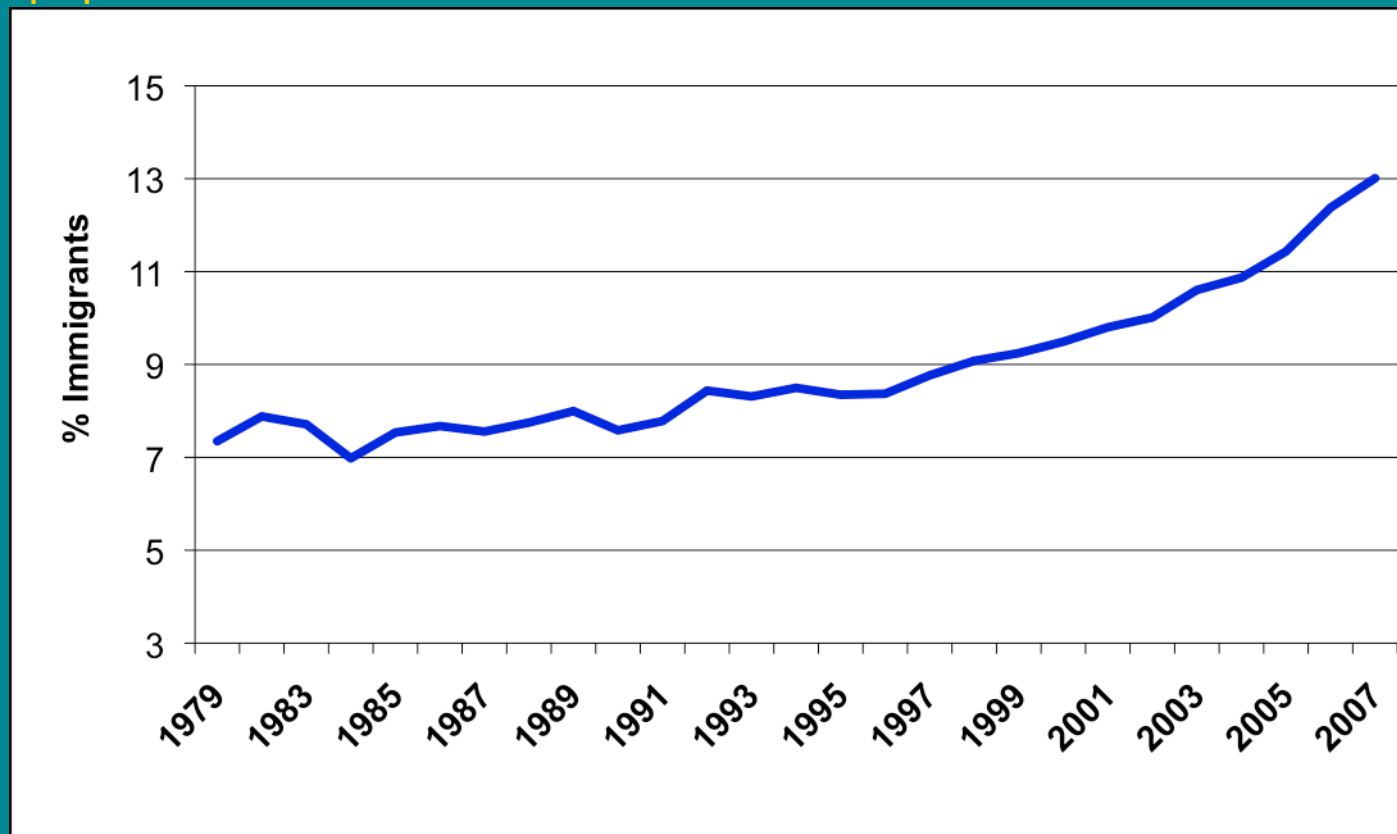
Net migration 2001-2009



Source: Long-term International Migration 2001-2009

Increase in immigration population, absolutely and relatively

Share of immigrants in the UK working age population



Source: Labour Force Survey (1979-2007)



The character of immigration has changed

- More *diverse*, from a greater number of countries
- More *transient*, people move on more quickly
 - Approximately 55% of female immigrants move on within five years
- More *dispersed*, as immigrants increasingly live outside traditional urban cores
- Alongside this, short-term mobility has *increased*
 - Around 33 million overseas visitors to the United Kingdom for less than six months, up 45 percent since 1990.
 - International arrivals have increased by over 30 million per year since 1997.

In short, mobility is the developing paradigm



Drivers of immigration continue ...

- Net immigration is likely to continue at current levels.
- Key drivers include:
 - Growth in labour demand at both the high and low end
 - Economic restructuring and the rapid growth of specific industries where insufficient numbers of locally-trained workers exist
 - Demographic decline reducing the overall size of the workforce
 - Global economic integration which increases employers' demand for certain skilled workers
 - Established migrant communities that can provide information and assistance to new immigrants, reducing the cost of migrating abroad
 - Large and growing populations of young people in source countries

Like most immigrant origin and destination societies, the UK has become more socially conflicted about migration. Yet, the economic importance of migration is growing and will grow stronger in the next two decades.



Policy change

From 1971 until David Blunkett
2001: year zero
Points system



40 years of stability, albeit creaking

- The immigration policy settlement for most of the post-war period was created in the 1960s. The dominant policy model was limitation with integration.
- The idea behind *limitation* was restriction on immigrant flows with an aim of zero-migration. The relevant laws were enacted in 1962, 1968, and—in what constitutes the single most important Act of the last 50 years—the 1971 Act. The 1971 consolidated previous Acts and set out the structure of immigration policymaking as it exists, more or less, today.
- The work permit model was formalised in 1980 (with reference to local labour market conditions); saw minor developments in the 1990s (tiers and GATS Mode 4) but was largely unchanged since 1948. NB Such routes were easily amended by the executive.

It is critical when thinking through the politics of immigration to consider immigration as a series of different legal regimes (work, humanitarian etc.) grafted together inot one system.



2001-02 changes

- In 2001-02, a new approach to immigration was developed that marked a fundamental break with the past. It included:
 - Relaxation of work permit rules. Work permits rose three-fold between 1997-2007. Now under Tier 2, work permits (especially relaxed rules on intra-company transferees) has facilitated large numbers of workers.
 - New schemes (especially the HSMP)
 - Easing transition between visa categories (the ability to apply in-country was extended) and in particular, easing the routes to attract and retain students. Tony Blair was personally concerned with increasing the numbers of international students through two “Prime Minister’s Initiatives” in 1999 and 2006



Points system

- The points system began life as the 2005 “five year plan” which would simplify the structure into four tiers (eventually five), reducing the 39 work routes into three tiers
 - Tier 1 is aimed at the highly skilled and does not require a job offer. Instead, it is based on applicants’ skills and characteristics for which points are awarded
 - Tier 2 incorporates the main body of the work permit system and offers entry to those with a confirmed job offer in a sector of labour market shortage (advised by the MAC)
- Recent policy placed interim caps on Tiers 1 and 2 (21,700) and there are proposals for changes on Tier 4 (students)



Explaining change

Three major policy shapers:

1. Global trends

II. Networks

III. Political salience

Policy shapers

- There is a great deal of explanation about how immigration policy change in the UK has happened. Most work dates to explaining the previous model of limitation.
- There are perhaps three policy shapers today:
 - Globalisation. Increased political and economic integration of the European Union space has meant that the theory of mass movement (EU citizens have always been free to cross borders to live and work) has finally become reality alongside increasing global market integration
 - Networks. The political elite of Westminster, while not disbanded, has been complemented and divided: in précis, power is more dispersed
 - Political salience. Immigration is a hot and toxic issue, especially from 2004



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