

Attitudes to Immigration: A view from Scotland

SEPTEMBER 2023

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Acknowledgements

This report was written by Dr Sarah Kyambi and Dr Rebecca Kay from Migration Policy Scotland. It draws on an earlier report on the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes Survey findings by Haley Barnes and Scott Edgar from Diffley Partnership.

The authors are grateful to Dr Heather Rolfe, British Future, for help designing the survey. We are also indebted to Dr Fraser McMillan, University of Glasgow, and Prof Ailsa Henderson, University of Edinburgh, who provided advice and assistance on the analysis of the survey's findings.

The Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes Survey and this report were made possible by funding from Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Unbound Philanthropy. We are grateful for their support.

Citation: If referring to this report our preferred citation is:
 Kyambi, S. and Kay, R. (September 2023) Attitudes to Immigration: A view from Scotland, Migration Policy Scotland. https://migrationpolicyscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Attitudes_Scotland_Sept23.pdf

About Migration Policy Scotland

Migration Policy Scotland offers a home for open dialogue and informed response to migration. We harness insights from lived and learned experience to drive work that is grounded in the realities of migration in Scotland.

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Introduction

Migration has been a consistently important issue in UK politics over several decades. In 2023, rising net migration figures combined with heated political discussions and disagreements both between and within the main political parties have put migration prominently back in the headlines. In parliament we have seen the enactment of two pieces of immigration legislation and a Prime Ministerial pledge to stop small boat crossings in the Channel. At UK level, debates around migration often focus on economic impacts and labour market needs, but also on culture, integration, and security concerns, with different types of migration routes and impacts conflated. From all sides claims are made about public attitudes to immigration, yet these remain notoriously hard to pin down as they differ between places and social groups, shift over time, and are often contradictory.¹ The view from Scotland has looked somewhat different. A long-standing cross-party consensus on the need for immigration brings together demographic, cultural and economic arguments, arguably driven by elite political perspectives. What does the Scottish public think about immigration? Until now it has been hard to tell.

This report presents the key findings of a national poll of adults in Scotland on their perceptions of and attitudes towards immigration. This is the first representative poll on attitudes to immigration in Scotland since 2014.² Data on attitudes to immigration are generally gathered at UK level. Large UK surveys like the Ipsos/British Future immigration attitudes tracker³ include a small unweighted Scottish sample from which it is difficult to draw firm conclusions. Where large scale social research does focus on migration, the number of migration-specific questions included tends to be limited.⁴ These limitations impact reliability and scope for further analysis.

The Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes Survey is a first step in our work towards building a more robust evidence base of attitudinal data on immigration in Scotland. In developing this evidence base Migration Policy Scotland does not take the position that migration policies should be defined by public views on immigration. The factors that should be weighed up by policy makers in this area are much more complex than those that can be captured through public opinion polling. Nonetheless, better understanding of attitudes, and how these change over time, can play an important role in identifying opportunities for policy change and highlighting areas of alignment, divergence or miscommunication, between political messaging and wider public views.⁵

Attitudes to immigration are usually measured using specifically designed surveys, such as the Ipsos/British Futures immigration attitudes tracker, or as part of a wider survey of social attitudes, for instance within the Eurobarometer, or British and Scottish Social

1 Rolfe, H., Katwala, S., and Ballinger, S. (October 2022) *Shifting Views Tracking Attitudes to Immigration in 2022: Findings from the Ipsos/British Future immigration attitudes tracker*, British Future

2 Blinder, S. (February 2014) *Immigration and Independence: Public Opinion on Immigration in Scotland in the Context of the Referendum Debate*. Migration Observatory report

3 For latest (September 2023) release, see *Dilemmas of control: What does the public think about immigration and how should politicians respond?*

4 The British and Scottish Social Attitudes Surveys carried out in 2017 included the same two questions on attitudes to immigration. See further Curtice, J. and Montagu, I. (December 2018) *Do Scotland and England & Wales Have Different Views About Immigration*, NatCen Social Research

5 For a discussion see Blinder, S. (May 2013) *Public Opinion and Public Policy: Complexities of the Democratic Mandate*, Migration Observatory policy primer

Attitudes surveys. Interpreting attitudinal survey data is fraught with difficulty as responses are sensitive to question wording and answers may be inconsistent or contradictory. It is important to factor in the limitations of this kind of data when drawing conclusions.⁶ Findings from survey data are sometimes combined with other methods of public consultation such as focus groups and public meetings that can provide additional insight and opportunities for deeper engagement with the complexities and contradictions of public attitudes.⁷

Alongside specific surveys on attitudes to migration, wider polls tracking the importance ascribed by the public to a range of different issues, place migration concerns within a broader context and show how these shift over time. YouGov's "most important issue" tracker⁸ saw the salience of 'asylum & immigration' peak in September 2015, when 71% of the public thought this was the most important issue facing the country. This was followed by a consistent decline in salience as attitudes softened. The salience of 'asylum and immigration' reached its lowest point in April 2020 at just 14% - placing it fourth behind concerns about health (65%), the economy (51%) and the environment (23%). This is likely unsurprising given the impacts of the pandemic in 2020. Since then, perceptions of the importance of 'asylum & immigration' in the YouGov tracker have risen again to 40%, making it the third most important issue after the economy (61%) and health (44%). This sustained reduction in salience is mirrored in the Ipsos Mori Issues Index⁹ where immigration averaged a score of 17.5% in the six-month period Jan-June 2023, compared with an average of 44% at its peak in 2015.¹⁰

As noted above, this report marks a first step at Migration Policy Scotland in developing an improved evidence base on attitudes to immigration in Scotland. It is currently a single set of findings on 8 survey questions and we are wary of over-interpreting the data - especially on a topic where views are complex and contradictory, as well as shifting. A wider set of questions would have provided helpful space to unpick what people think, why they think it, and to build clearer understanding of what kinds of immigration people have in mind when responding to questions. Given the confines of the current survey we focused on core questions regarding preferred levels of immigration and views on its impacts. Additional questions sought to foreground the particularities of the Scottish context in our data gathering. We explore how attitudes to immigration in Scotland are affected by attitudes to diversity and levels of social contact with immigrants. We also investigate preferences for long-term or short-term labour migration in view of Scotland's migration debate involving both labour market needs and demographic challenges.

Our Key Findings:

1. A greater proportion of the Scottish public want immigration to be increased (38%) rather than decreased (28%), although those wanting an increase mainly support a modest increase, while those wanting immigration to decrease want it to be reduced 'a lot'. A sizeable proportion want immigration to 'remain the same as it is' (34%).
2. The impacts of immigration are seen as positive by the majority of people in Scotland. This is true of impacts at both Scotland (59%) and local area level (48%).
3. People in Scotland have a strong preference for labour migrants to have the option to remain in Scotland for the longer term 'to settle and integrate' (66%).

⁶ See Blinder, S. and Richards, L. (January 2020) *UK Public Opinion toward Immigration: Overall Attitudes and Level of Concern*, Migration Observatory briefing

⁷ See for example, Rutter, J. and Carter, R. (September 2018) *National Conversation on Immigration: Final report*, British Future and HOPE not hate

⁸ *The most important issues facing the country*, YouGov UK

⁹ *Issues Index:2018*, Ipsos Mori

¹⁰ Ford, R. and Morris, M. (November 2022) *A New Consensus? How public opinion has warmed to immigration*, IPPR

Methodology and presentation of findings

Migration Policy Scotland drafted the survey questionnaire in consultation with Diffley Partnership. Invitations to complete the survey between 17-19th January 2023 were sent out through the online ScotPulse panel.¹¹ This yielded 1,162 responses from across all 8 Scottish Parliamentary regions. For the purpose of statistical analysis, responses have been weighted to the Scottish population by age and gender. The questionnaire contained 8 questions and is reproduced in appendix 1.

This report summarises the key findings of this polling, including between-group differences, with the aid of data visualizations. Aggregate percentages (e.g. 'agree'/'disagree') are calculated from absolute values, therefore aggregate percentages may differ from the sum of the individual scores due to rounding.

As well as gathering data on respondents' socio-economic profiles such as age, social group and geographic location, the survey asked a question about respondents' social contact with immigrants and a series of questions about their attitudes to diversity. This was done to develop insight into the relationship between people's attitudes to immigration, their attitudes to diversity and their experience of immigration. This is especially relevant in Scotland where there are lower densities of immigration than in England, despite a marked growth and spread of immigration in Scotland over the past 20 years. The responses to the attitudes to diversity and the social contact questions are described in detail in the final sections of the report. Where relevant throughout the report we detail how these relate to the attitudes measured.

11 Scotpulse

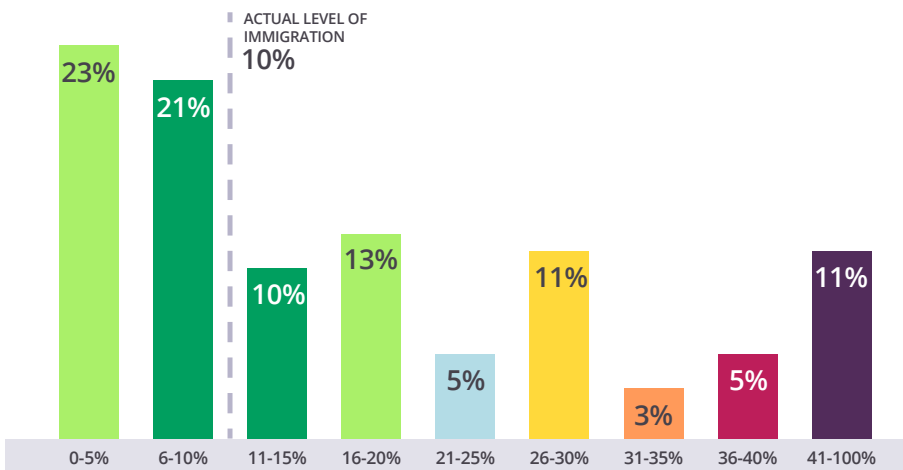
1. Levels of immigration – perceptions and preferences

1.1. Perceived level of immigration

Attitudinal data is about perceptions not reality. And perceptions are often incorrect. When asked about levels of immigration people may be thinking of either non-British citizens, or people born outside of the UK, or both groups simultaneously. On either measure the tendency is for considerable overestimation when people are asked to estimate levels of immigration. The same is borne out in the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes Survey data. Approximately 10% of Scotland's population is born outside of the UK and 7% are citizens of another country.¹² Nearly half of our survey respondents (47%) sizeably **overestimated** this proportion – believing immigrants to make up over 15% of the Scottish population. Perhaps more surprisingly, over 1 in 5 respondents (23%) sizably **underestimated** the proportion of Scottish residents who are immigrants, estimating that fewer than 5% of the population are immigrants.

Figure 1: Most people overestimate current levels of immigration

In your opinion, what percentage of the total Scotland population are immigrants?
You can answer any number between 0 and 100.



Data presented in increments of 5, excluding the last category where data segments were merged for clarity

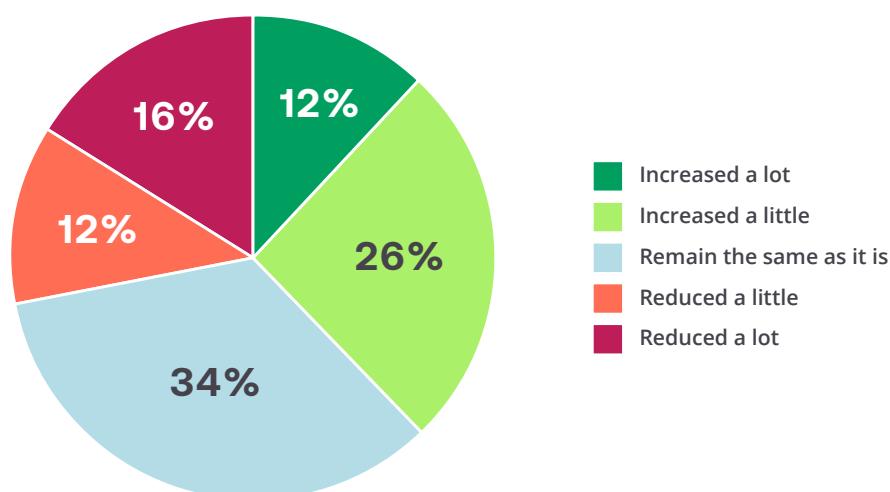
12 Population by country of birth and nationality (Discontinued after June 2021) - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

1.2. Preferences for increasing or decreasing levels of immigration

Surveys on attitudes to migration regularly investigate people's preferred levels of immigration, asking respondents whether they would like to see levels increased, reduced, or remain as they are. When interpreting these results, one should keep in mind that people's estimates of the current level of immigration exhibit wide margins of error, as shown above. The Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes Survey found that people in Scotland are less likely to wish for reductions in migration (28%) than to desire an increase (38%), with 34% wanting numbers to stay about the same.

Figure 2: Less than a third want to see immigration levels reduced

Do you think the number of immigrants coming to Scotland nowadays should be increased (a lot, a little) remain the same, or reduced (a little, a lot)?



Within the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes Survey data we can identify significant differences between the opinions of different demographic subgroups.

Age. Older respondents - those aged 55+ - were most likely to say immigration should be reduced (35%), particularly in comparison to the youngest age group - those aged 16 to 34 (16%). Additionally, they were more supportive of larger reductions in immigration than the youngest age group, at 22% and 5% respectively. The youngest age group - those aged 16 to 34 - were also most likely to support immigration levels remaining the same (41%).

Social grade. Those in ABC1 social grades were significantly more likely to say that immigration should be increased (45%), while those in C2DE were significantly more likely to say that immigration should be reduced (35%). However, those ABC1 were most supportive of small increases in immigration (33%), while those in the C2DE were most supportive of substantial reductions in immigration (21%).

Location. Urban residents were more supportive of increases in immigration (40%), including large increases (14%), than those resident in rural areas (31% and 7%). Those in the Glasgow Scottish Parliamentary Region were most likely to say immigration should be increased by a lot (23%), and almost half supported increased immigration in some form (47%).

Social Contact. Those with no direct contact with immigrants were most likely to call for reductions in immigration; 34% of those who reported that they neither regularly spoke to immigrants, nor had friends or family that were immigrants, nor were themselves an immigrant, supported reductions in some form.

By comparison with data for the whole of the UK, our survey shows Scotland leaning towards support for an increase in immigration, although it should be borne in mind that most of those who want an increase prefer a modest one. Our data also demonstrate a considerably lower appetite for reducing migration in Scotland than is apparent in UK-level data. The table below compares our findings to recent UK-wide polls on attitudes to immigration.

Table 1: Comparison with UK-wide data on preferred level of immigration

	Ipsos/British Future Tracker ¹³	MPS Attitudes Survey ¹⁴	Kantar Public & Migration Observatory ¹⁵
Increased (a little, a lot)	22	38	14
Remain the same	22	34	22
Reduced (a little, a lot)	48	28	52
Don't Know	8	NA	12

The surveys compared above were all conducted separately with slightly different questions and response options meaning comparisons should be treated with caution. The last survey that allowed for direct comparison between results from Scotland and other parts of the UK on this question was conducted in 2014. At that time the majority of people in Scotland wanted immigration to decrease (58%), but this was significantly warmer than views in England and Wales, where 75% wanted to see numbers reduced. The proportions in favour of an increase were similar for both regions at 10% (Scotland) and 8% (England and Wales); 23% and 13% respectively wanted immigration to remain the same.¹⁶

13 Ipsos/British Future (September 2023) Question: Do you think the number of immigrants coming to Britain nowadays should be increased a lot, increased a little, remain the same as it is, reduced a little, or reduced a lot? (3,000 respondents, fieldwork period: 14th July - 8th August 2023)

14 MPS Attitudes Survey (2023) Question: Should the number of immigrants coming to Scotland should be increased a lot, increased a little, remain the same as it is, reduced a little, or reduced a lot (1,162 respondents, fieldwork period: 17-19th January 2023)

15 Kantar Public and Migration Observatory (June 2023) Question: Do you think the number of immigrants coming to Britain nowadays should be increased, reduced or should it remain the same? (2,300 respondents, fieldwork period: 18-24th April 2023)

16 Blinder, S. (February 2014)

2. Impacts of immigration for Scotland and local areas

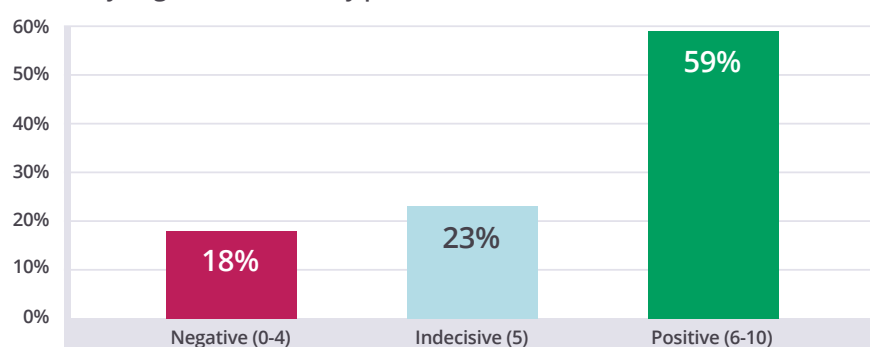
Scotland has differentiated itself from the rest of the UK for over a decade with its public and political narratives about a need for immigration. Political, public and media debates have discussed potential economic and demographic benefits for the country, and indeed for specific areas where labour shortages or demographic imbalances may be particularly keenly felt. With this in mind, the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes Survey included questions exploring the extent to which public attitudes may be seen to match this narrative. Respondents were asked a series of questions about perceived benefits and/or costs of immigration at both national and local levels.

2.1. Overall impacts at Scottish and local levels

We found that a majority of people living in Scotland believe that immigration has a positive impact both on Scotland and on their local area. When asked to score the positive or negative impact of immigration on a scale of 0 to 10, those surveyed give an average score of 6.31 and 5.82 respectively. When grouped together into negative (0-4), neutral (5) and positive (6-10) scores, this shows a largely positive perception of the impacts of immigration for Scotland as a whole.

Figure 3: A majority believe immigration has a positive impact on Scotland

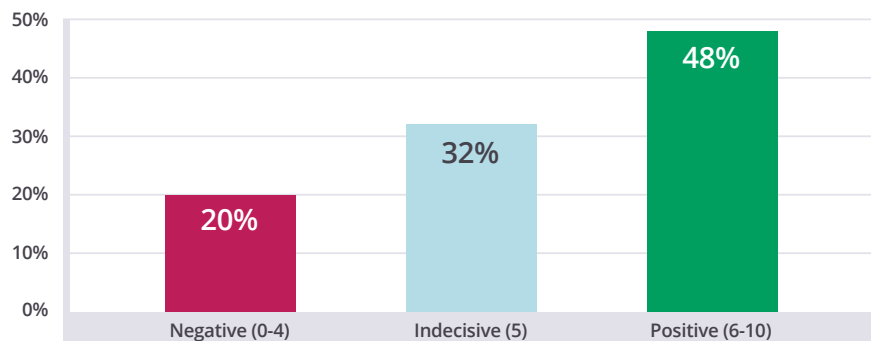
On a scale of 0 to 10, has migration had a positive or negative impact on Scotland?
(0 is "very negative", 10 is "very positive")



At the local level, our survey found that Scots are more likely to give a neutral score of 5 when considering the impacts of immigration for their local area. When responses are grouped together, we can see that perceived negative impacts are still relatively low at 20%. This may suggest that residents are unsure about the local impacts of immigration and select 5 as a proxy for 'don't know' rather than that they are decisively less positive about the potential benefits of immigration for their local area. This is a particularly interesting finding in the light of earlier research which conversely found higher levels of concern and more negative views on impacts reported when respondents considered immigration on national (UK) level than at the local level.¹⁷

Figure 4: People are slightly less sure about positive impacts of immigration in their local area

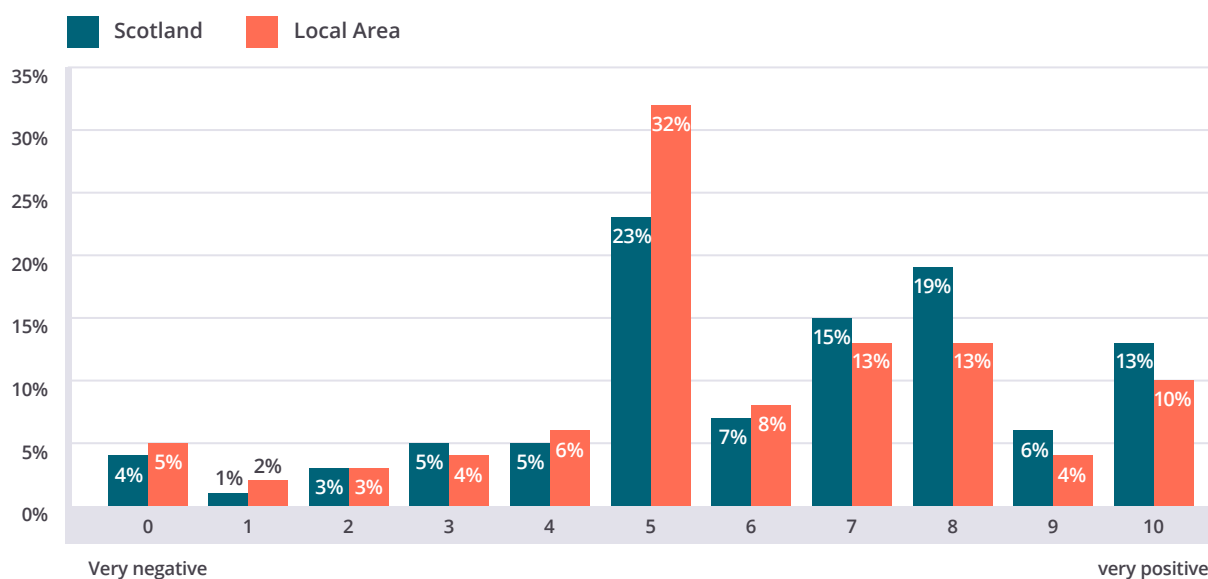
On a scale of 0 to 10, has migration had a positive or negative impact on your local area? (0 is "very negative", 10 is "very positive")



The distribution of responses can be seen more clearly in the graph below which also allows for direct comparison between responses in relation to Scotland and local areas.

Figure 5: Comparison of perceived impacts on Scotland and local areas

On a scale of 0 to 10, has migration had a positive or negative impact on ...? (0 is "very negative", 10 is "very positive")



Within the data on these questions, we can identify some significant differences between the opinions of different demographic subgroups.

Scotland. Of all age groups, those aged 16 to 34 are most likely to say immigration has a positive impact, with a mean of 7.15. Beyond age, those ABC1 social grade (6.72) or in full-time employment (6.52) tend to echo this view.

Local area. Similar trends exist when Scots are asked to state immigration's impact on their local area: those aged 16 to 34, ABC1 social grade (6.20), or full-time employment (5.98) are more likely to view immigration positively.

Placing the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes Survey results in the context of other recent UK-wide surveys makes apparent the high level of respondents who view immigration as broadly positive for Scotland (59%). This is a much higher figure than in the September 2023 Ipsos/British Futures immigration attitudes tracker poll where 43% viewed immigration as having a positive impact on Britain, and even more so when compared to the April 2023 Kantar Public and Migration Observatory poll where only 31% viewed immigration as having a positive impact on Britain.

Table 2: Comparison with UK-wide data on attitudes to impacts of immigration

	Ipsos/British Future Tracker ¹⁸	MPS Attitudes Survey ¹⁹	Kantar Public & Migration Observatory ²⁰
Positive	43	59	31
Indecisive	15	23	30
Negative	37	18	33
Don't Know	6	NA	6

Comparing the results of these different surveys can only give an indication of what a more directly comparable sample with identical questions might have found. Nonetheless, these results appear to echo the findings of a 2014 study in which people in Scotland viewed the impacts of immigration more positively than people in England and Wales.²¹

18 British Future Ipsos 2023 Question: On a scale of 0 to 10, has migration had a positive or negative impact on Britain? (0 is “very negative”, 10 is “very positive”)? (3,000 respondents, fieldwork period: 14th July - 8th August 2023)

19 Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes Survey 2023 Question: On a scale of 0 to 10, has migration had a positive or negative impact on Scotland? (0 is “very negative”, 10 is “very positive”) (1,162 respondents, fieldwork period: 17-19th January 2023)

20 Kantar Public and Migration Observatory (June 2023) Question: On the whole, do you think immigration is a good or a bad thing for Britain? (Very Good, Good, Neither Bad nor Good, Bad, Very Bad, Don't Know) (2,300 respondents, fieldwork period: 18-24th April 2023)

21 Survey respondents in Scotland were asked “Would you say that it is generally good or bad for Scotland that people come to live here from outside the UK?”. Results found 49% saw migration as generally good for Scotland and 32% as generally bad. Respondents in England and Wales were asked the same question about Britain. Results here were reversed with 49% scoring migration as generally bad for Britain and 35% as generally good. Blinder, S. (February 2014), p. 6.

2.2. Perceptions of economic, demographic, social and cultural impacts of immigration

Drilling down further into the ways in which impacts of immigration are viewed both nationally and locally the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes Survey asked a series of questions about economic, demographic, social and cultural impacts.

In general, people were considerably more likely to agree with statements that supported a positive view of immigration. Over half agreed that immigrants have a positive impact on the economy (56%), help to fill jobs for which it is hard to find workers (76%), bring new ideas and/or boost innovation (52%), bring new people to areas which need them (58%), and enrich Scottish cultural life (60%). They were also more likely to disagree than to agree with statements that supported a negative view of migration. 65% disagreed that immigrants take jobs away from Scottish workers, with only 15% agreeing, 47% disagreed and 30% agreed that immigrants are a burden on welfare services, 41% disagreed and 23% agreed that immigrants worsen crime problems.

The survey repeated the same questions about impacts with a focus on local areas rather than Scotland as a whole and found broadly similar attitudes. Those surveyed were again more likely to agree or agree strongly to positive statements, but there was a slightly less decisive lean towards the positive, reflecting the difference in findings on overall impacts at Scottish and local levels. This discrepancy and the more complex attitudes and experiences that might be driving it are worthy of further investigation by both survey and qualitative research.

Figure 6: People support positive and reject negative statements on the economic, demographic, social and cultural impacts of immigration.



Responses to some statements showed significant differences between demographic subgroups and according to levels of social contact. We also found some correlation between preferred levels of immigration and perceptions of impacts.

Age. Participants aged 55+ were more likely than other age groups to agree with negative statements, particularly statements linking immigrants to burdens on welfare (42%) or increased crime (33%).

Social contact. Those with no regular interaction with immigrants were more likely than those with stronger social contact to agree that immigrants burden the welfare system (37%), take jobs away from workers (20%), and worsen crime problems (29%).

Location. There was some difference in response due to urban/rural status, with urban residents expressing more agreement to positive statements and more disagreement to negative statements in general.

Preferred levels of immigration. Unsurprisingly, those who would like to see immigration to Scotland reduced either a little or a lot were more likely to agree with negative statements and disagree with positive ones, while those that would like to see immigration increased are more likely to disagree with negative statements and agree with positive ones.

These questions were intended in part to see in how far public attitudes correspond or not to some of the most prominent messaging from the media and political elites, either Scottish or UK-wide, about the potential impacts of immigration. All except the question about demographic benefits were taken from a Special Eurobarometer survey on the integration of immigrants (2018).²² Therefore an earlier UK-wide dataset exists, but it is not possible to discern the extent to which responses from Scotland would have differed. On demographic benefits, it is particularly striking that our data shows appreciation that migration can ‘bring new people to areas which need them’. This contrasts with findings from the National Conversation’s public meetings in 2018 where demographic arguments for increased migration appeared not to resonate with Scottish participants.²³

²² Eurobarometer, Special Eurobarometer 469: Integration of immigrants in the European Union – Data Europa EU

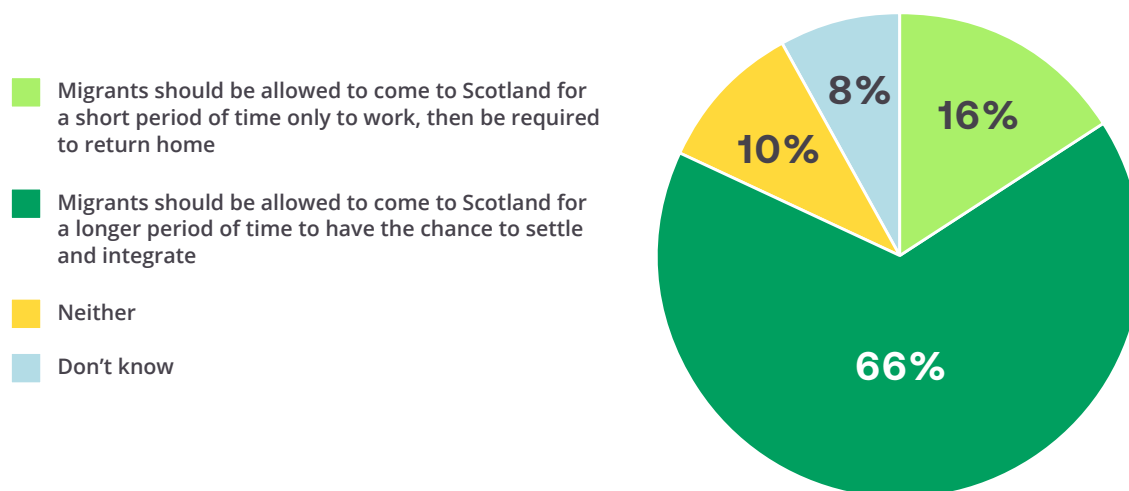
²³ Rutter, J. and Carter, R. (2018)

3. Attitudes to length of stay

Attitudinal surveys frequently explore people's views of different kinds of immigration. Surveys can pose questions to better understand attitudes towards different immigrant categories (labour migrants, international students, migrants joining family, refugees and asylum seekers). They can gather data regarding preferences for different skill levels or countries of origin or to check where people see international recruitment as a good way to fill labour shortages. Constrained by a short survey we focused just one question on peoples' preferences regarding migration for work and whether people in Scotland preferred labour migrants to be offered the prospect of long-term stay and settlement. The potential for immigration to Scotland to contribute to demographic as well as labour market needs, makes understanding appetite for long-term/settlement immigration important. Our data show a strong preference for long-term stays and routes to settlement. 66% of those surveyed support long-term immigration, with the opportunity to settle. In contrast, 16% wanted labour migrants to come to Scotland for a short time only with a requirement to return home.

Figure 7: There is a clear preference for labour migration to be long-term allowing settlement

Thinking about migration to Scotland for work, which statement comes closest to your preference?



While this demonstrates a clear preference in Scottish attitudes for long-term immigration routes, some populations were much more supportive of such policies.

Age. Those aged 16 to 34 were most supportive of long-term immigration (78%), followed by those aged 35-54 (67%), and those aged 55+ (57%).

Social grade. Along with age, social grade also influenced responses. Those in ABC1 grades were more supportive of long-term immigration than those in C2DE, at 72% and 59% respectively.

Social Contact. As seen in other questions, social contact with immigrants also related to differences in support for long-term immigration. Those with no regular interaction with immigrants were least supportive of long-term immigration (57%) in comparison to those with regular interaction with immigrants, which varied between 79% and 88% depending on their relationship to immigrants.

Location. Rural respondents were more likely to primarily support short-term immigration, with 21% of rural respondents choosing this option, in comparison to 14% of urban respondents.

An overall preference for long-term immigration is evident in other UK-wide surveys. Even surveys finding attitudes to be far less positive overall find a preference for longer stays. Kantar Public and Migration Observatory (June 2023) found that ‘When asked what group of migrants should be given preference to come to Britain, a greater proportion of respondents (28%) chose ‘people who stay in Britain permanently’, in contrast to those who would prefer migrants to come to the country for ‘less than a year’ or ‘between one and five years’ (12% each).²⁴ The National Conversation on Immigration research made a similar finding in 2018 when attitudes were more restrictive. In that research over 58% of respondents wanted a reduction in immigration, nonetheless 61% agreed that “It is better when migrants commit to stay in Britain, put down roots and integrate,” compared to just 39% agreeing with the statement: “It is better when migrants come here to work for a few years without putting down roots and then return home.”²⁵

Such consistent preferences for long-term immigration may seem surprising. In the name of being ‘tough’ on migration, immigration regimes often restrict not only migrant numbers but also length of stay and opportunities to switch visas that would enable migrants to extend their stay. However, survey data indicate a more complicated set of views. People’s preferences regarding overall levels of immigration and the kinds of immigration they prefer are not always consistent. Further research, combining more, and more detailed, survey questions with qualitative insight, for example from focus groups, would allow for greater understanding of such apparent contradictions and how they might be better addressed.

²⁴ Kantar Public and Migration Observatory (June 2023)

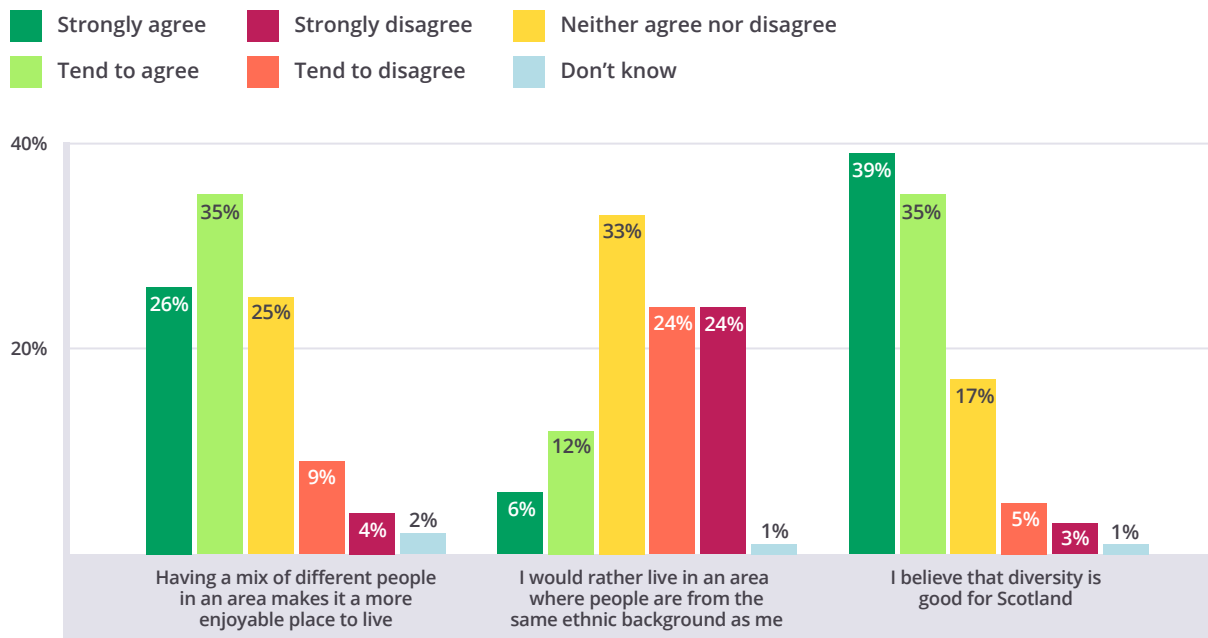
²⁵ Rutter, J and Carter, R (September 2018)

4. Attitudes to diversity

Until recently Scotland has experienced relatively low and stable levels of national and ethnic diversity within its population. At present, roughly 10% of the Scottish population were born outside of the UK and 7% are citizens of other countries.²⁶ This represents a fairly modest level of immigration when compared to England where 16% of the population is foreign-born and 10% are citizens of other countries.²⁷ The migrant population in Scotland has seen a marked and steady increase since the early 2000s (in percentage terms Scotland has seen the fastest increase within the UK nations). Nonetheless, and in spite of a growing spread of migrants into rural areas, Scotland's migrant populations remain relatively concentrated in its cities and large towns.

With this context in mind, the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes Survey included questions about attitudes to diversity, seeking to understand both whether people view diversity as positive in general, and whether they would prefer to live in more or less diverse areas. Survey respondents displayed strong, positive attitudes on diversity. Nearly 3 in 4 (74%) believe that diversity is good for Scotland, while 3 in 5 (60%) believe that diversity makes an area more enjoyable to live in, and less than 1 in 5 (18%) would prefer to live in an area where people are from the same ethnic background.

Figure 8: Attitudes toward diversity are strongly positive



Responses to these questions showed only limited variations between subgroups of respondents based on age, location, and levels of social contact.

²⁶ Population by country of birth and nationality (Discontinued after June 2021) - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

²⁷ In Wales 6% of the population is foreign born and 4% are non-UK citizens, in Northern Ireland 8% are foreign born, and 7% are non-UK citizens.

Age. Younger people were the most likely to agree that diversity is good for Scotland, although a majority of all age groups agreed with this statement.

Location. A majority of both urban and rural residents stated that having a mix of different people in an area makes it a more enjoyable place to live, although those in urban areas were slightly more likely (63%) than those in rural areas (53%) to agree.

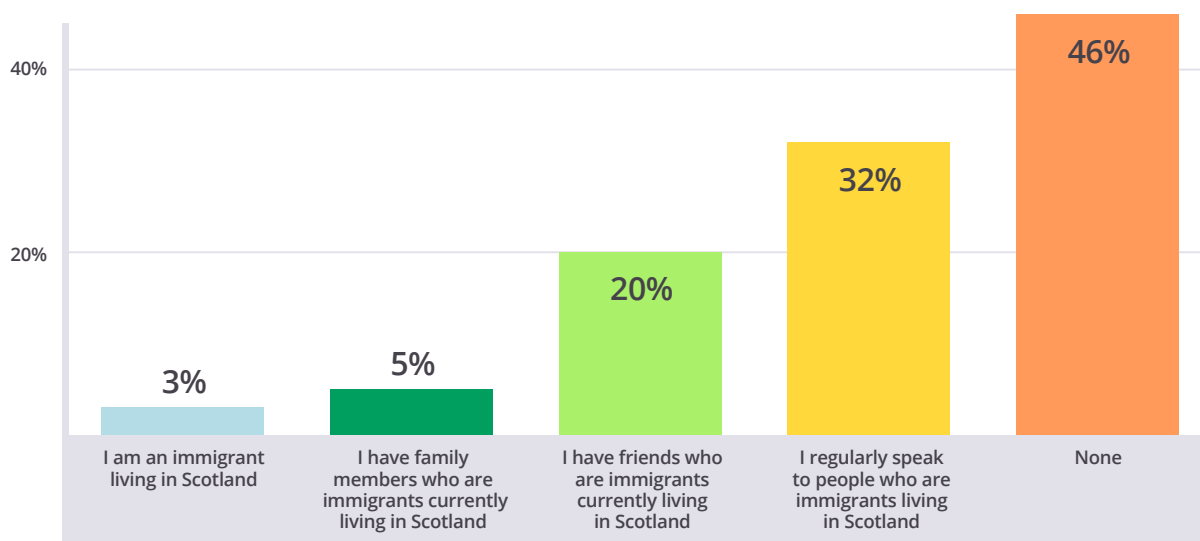
Social Contact. Those with the least social contact with immigrants were the most likely to prefer to live in an area where people are from the same ethnic background. However, even amongst those who reported having no social contact with immigrants, 40% agreed that having a mix of different people in an area makes it a more enjoyable place to live, and only 19% disagreed.

5. Experiences of immigration

As outlined above attitudes to immigration in Scotland are formed in the context of lower levels of diversity. Fewer people in Scotland have direct, personal relationships or interactions with immigrants or experience of living in an area with significant levels of immigration. To understand this better the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes Survey gathered data on levels of social contact with immigrants. In each of the preceding sections we have discussed how differing levels of social contact related to attitudes and preferences.

The survey asked respondents to select from a number of statements those which best described their degree of social contact with immigrants. Nearly 1 in 2 respondents (46%) have no regular interaction with immigrants in their community and only one in five (20%) have friends who are immigrants currently living in Scotland. Around 1 in 3 (32%) say that they regularly speak to people who are immigrants.

Figure 9: Levels of social contact with immigrants remain low – nearly half have no regular contact with immigrants



Individuals were allowed to select multiple categories of social contact

Degrees of social contact differ considerably across locations within Scotland and demographic subgroups.

Location. In a close reflection of the spread of immigrant populations across Scotland, respondents in the Lothian Scottish Parliamentary region (which includes Edinburgh) were the most likely to report having friends that are immigrants (34%), followed by Glasgow (28%). West Scotland and South Scotland Parliamentary regions have the largest proportion of respondents with no interaction with immigrants, at 63% and 59% respectively.

Age. The youngest generation — those aged 16 to 34 — are more likely to have friends that are immigrants (33%) than those aged 35-44 (18%), 45-54 (18%), 55-64 (12%), and 65+ (11%). In contrast, older respondents — those over 55 years of age — are significantly more likely to have no social contact with immigrants (55%), especially when compared to the youngest generation (36%).

Social grade. Those in higher social grades (A, B, and C1) are significantly more likely to regularly speak to immigrants (35%), whereas those in lower social grades (C2, D, and E) are more likely to have no relationship or interaction with immigrants (50%).

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Appendix 1: Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes Survey

Introduction

Immigration is an important topic for Scotland and the United Kingdom. However, while there are polls to capture public attitudes to immigration within the UK, none of these are representative across Scotland. This survey, commissioned by an independent Scottish thinktank (Migration Policy Scotland), will be the first of its kind, asking a few short questions about your opinions on and experiences of immigration and its impacts. It should take about 5 minutes to complete.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Age
- Gender
- Area (Scottish Parliamentary Region)
- Employment status
- Household type- size of household, presence of children
- Urban/Rural Classification
- Social Class

OPINION ON IMMIGRATION LEVELS

Q1. Do you think the number of immigrants coming to Scotland nowadays should be increased a lot, increased a little, remain the same as it is, reduced a little, or reduced a lot?

- 1) Increased a lot
- 2) Increased a little
- 3) Remain the same as it is
- 4) Reduced a little
- 5) Reduced a lot

Q2. In your opinion, what percentage of the total Scotland population are immigrants? You can answer any number between 0 and 100.

OPINION ON IMMIGRATION IMPACTS

Q3. On a scale of 0 to 10, has migration had a positive or negative impact on...? (0 is "very negative", 10 is "very positive")

- Scotland
- Your local area

Q4. There are different views regarding the impact of immigration in Scotland. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Overall immigrants...

- Have a positive impact on the Scottish economy
- Are a burden on our welfare system
- Take jobs away from workers in Scotland
- Help to fill jobs for which it's hard to find workers in Scotland
- Bring new ideas and/or boost innovation in Scotland
- Enrich Scottish cultural life (art, music, food etc.)
- Worsen crime problems in Scotland
- Bring new people to areas of Scotland which need them

SCALE: Strongly agree, Tend to agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Tend to disagree, Strongly disagree, Don't Know

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Overall immigrants in my local area...

- Have a positive impact on the local economy
- Are a burden on local resources
- Take jobs away from local workers
- Help to fill jobs for which it's hard to find local workers
- Bring new ideas and/or boost innovation in the local area
- Enrich local cultural life (art, music, food etc.)
- Worsen local crime problems
- Bring new people to an area that needs them

SCALE: Strongly agree, Tend to agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Tend to disagree, Strongly disagree, Don't Know

OPINION ON WHAT TYPES OF IMMIGRATION ARE DESIRABLE OR UNDESIRABLE

Q6. Please now think about migration to Scotland for work. Which of the following two statements comes closest to your preference?

- 1) Migrants should be allowed to come to Scotland for a short period of time only to work, then be required to return home
- 2) Migrants should be allowed to come to Scotland for a longer period of time to have the chance to settle and integrate
- 3) Neither
- 4) Don't know

EXPERIENCE OF IMMIGRATION

Q7. Which of the following statements applies best to you?

1. I am an immigrant living in Scotland
2. I have friends who are immigrants currently living in Scotland
3. I have family members who are immigrants currently living in Scotland
4. I regularly speak to people who are immigrants living in Scotland
5. None
6. DK/NA

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

- Having a mix of different people in an area makes it a more enjoyable place to live
- I would rather live in an area where people are from the same ethnic background as me
- I believe that diversity is good for Scotland

SCALE: Strongly agree, Tend to agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Tend to disagree, Strongly disagree, Don't Know

SEPTEMBER 2023

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Attitudes to Immigration: A view from Scotland

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