

Attitudes to Immigration in Scotland: Changing, complex, contradictory

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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

The 2025 Migration Policy Scotland survey of attitudes to immigration is the third in our annual series of representative studies of Scottish public opinion. This growing dataset allows us to explore the ways in which Scottish attitudes are changing over time. Over the last three years, we find a consistent cooling of attitudes across virtually all questions covered by the survey. The greatest change in opinions occurs between 2023 and 2024, but the trend towards more negative views continues between 2024 and 2025, albeit at a slower pace. Attitudes to immigration are clearly changing, but they remain complex and contradictory. The Scottish public's views on impacts of immigration mix appreciation of its economic benefits (particularly in terms of filling jobs), its enrichment of cultural life and its role in meeting population challenges, with concerns relating to social conflict, burdens on welfare and services and worsening crime. Despite cooling views, a plurality continue to view the impact of immigration on Scotland positively (47%). Views expressed in general terms are often contradicted where respondents are asked more specific questions.

With less than 6 months remaining before Scottish parliamentary elections, polls show that the political salience of migration as a concern for Scottish voters has risen considerably. Over the past year, immigration and asylum have consistently ranked in the top three issues of concern for Scottish voters, alongside the economy and health. This is a similar pattern to UK wide polling, although immigration and asylum are more likely to rank 3rd or 2nd in this list for Scotland, compared to a ranking 1st or 2nd in the UK.¹ High levels of immigration are often accompanied by higher political salience of immigration as an issue.² Certainly Scotland, like the UK has seen historically high levels of net migration in recent years, as well as heavily polarized political and public debate. Whilst elite political and public narratives in Scotland have for many years maintained a positive consensus on immigration as beneficial to Scotland, the Scottish public is neither absent from nor immune to wider media narratives, public debate or indeed protest. Scotland, like the rest of the UK, has seen angry protests and counter protests in recent months with immigration, and the accommodation of asylum seekers, acting as a lightning rod for wider discontents. This is an issue of growing concern, and one which has prompted calls to end any complacency linked to a notion of Scottish exceptionalism on this matter.³

The Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration survey is the only regularly undertaken representative survey of Scottish public opinion on these issues. It is designed to complement UK attitudinal data on migration by providing a representative sample within Scotland while also covering issues of particular importance to the Scottish context. Conducted at the same time each year and reaching over 2000 respondents⁴ the Migration Policy Scotland survey allows for analysis across a range of socio-demographic and socio-economic variables and by voting preferences. Our analysis of between-group differences throughout the report reveals tendencies familiar from other UK surveys, including strong differences between those voting Conservative or Reform and those voting for other parties.⁵ In our 2025 data the cooling of support for immigration to Scotland is reflected in a growing

1 You Gov The most important issues facing the country

2 Hatton, TJ (2021) Public opinion on immigration in Europe: Preference and salience, *European Journal of Political Economy*, Volume 66

3 Eardley, N. Scotland becoming less tolerant to immigration – Humza Yousaf, BBC News, 18 September 2025

4 The survey has been part of the Understanding Scotland (www.understanding-scotland.co.uk) series since 2024. In 2023, the MPS survey reached a more modest but still representative sample of 1162 respondents.

5 Humphrey, A., Wilson, H. and Ford, R. (June 2024) *British Social Attitudes 41: Immigration*, National Centre for Social Research; Rolfe, H. Katwala, S. and Balinger, S. (March 2024) *Immigration and the Election: Time to choose*, British Future.

proportion of respondents (45%) who state that they would prefer for the number of immigrants coming to Scotland to be reduced. This is in stark contrast to the 28% stating this preference in 2023. This increased appetite for reductions, however, is not consistent with the preferences expressed when respondents are asked about numbers arriving on specific visa types. Here we find that a substantial majority (70% and above) wish the number of people holding any of the three main work visas, as well as study and humanitarian visas to increase or remain the same.

Positive attitudes regarding immigration for work are reflected in other parts of the survey. We find strong support for employers' ability to recruit workers from abroad, particularly in sectors with critical shortages (76%) or for temporary and seasonal work (74%). Support is less strong when respondents are asked whether employers should be able to recruit from abroad to any job, although a majority (56%) agree, compared to only 22% who disagree. Respondents are asked about a range of positive or negative impacts of immigration at either Scottish or local area level. Here the highest levels of positive agreement are with the proposition that immigration fills jobs for which it is hard to find workers (67% Scotland; 55% Local Area) and the lowest levels of negative agreement are with the statement that immigration takes jobs away from other workers (24% Scotland; 22% Local Area). This appears to reflect findings from the World Values Survey (2022) which showed that the UK public is less likely than the publics of many other countries to agree that immigration controls should be used to prioritise native-born workers (30%).⁶ Taken together these findings suggest that job competition is not the current focus of public concerns regarding immigration.

Attitudinal data is not well suited to determining policy choices that require deeper consideration of trade-offs and interdependencies. Nonetheless, governments frequently do claim that they are introducing policy changes in order to align immigration policy more closely with public preferences. This has been one rationale provided for proposals in the UK White Paper 'Restoring Control over the Immigration System'⁷ which aims to reduce net migration. Assessing the White Paper proposals in terms of their alignment with the Scottish public's preferences shows that while there is general alignment with the preference for a reduction in immigration level, specific proposals are less clearly in line with public views. The White Paper proposals include the closure of the health and social care visa route, a reduction to the length of the post-study graduate visa and reduced access to long-term settlement for immigrants, the latter also restricting immigrants' access to social security. The Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey finds public opinion at odds with most of these measures. On health and social care visas 70% prefer to maintain or increase numbers on this route with only 19% preferring a decrease. The graduate visa is supported by over half (59%) and opposed by less than 1 in 5 (19%) of respondents. A plurality support longer-term immigration leading to settlement (48%) compared to short-term immigration for work only (25%). A majority of respondents support immigrants who work and pay taxes being eligible to social security within 5 years (58%). Polling amongst the wider UK public also finds low support for reducing numbers of social care or student visas⁸ and strong support for working immigrants to gain access to social security in 5 years or less.⁹

6 Duffy, B. et al (March 2023) *UK Attitudes to Immigration: How the public became more positive*, The Policy Institute.

7 Home Office (May 2025) *Restoring Control over the UK Immigration System*, HM Government

8 Balinger, S. (May 2025) *New poll finds public support for migration to work or study*, British Future

9 Humphrey, A., Wilson, H. and Ford, R. (June 2024) *British Social Attitudes 41: Immigration*, National Centre for Social Research

KEY FINDINGS

1. Scottish public attitudes to immigration have cooled considerably over the last 3 years, most notably in the period from 2023 to 2024. As views on immigration change, they remain complex and often contradictory.
2. Immigration for work and employers' ability to recruit from abroad receives some of the strongest public support. This is accompanied by low levels of concern about competition for jobs, although there is a desire for measures to protect wages and contribute to skills development within the native workforce.
3. While UK government proposals align with the overall preference for a reduction in immigration levels, specific immigration policy proposals do not align well with public preferences. Our data shows little support for closures, restrictions and exclusions relating to the health and social care worker visa, the graduate visa, access to settlement and entitlements to social security.

Methodology and Presentation of Findings

Migration Policy Scotland commissioned Diffley Partnership to conduct the third wave of our annual Attitudes to Immigration Survey in February 2025. The survey is part of a national poll of adults in Scotland, exploring experiences and perceptions of immigration. Since this report examines comparisons with previous waves of the survey conducted in February 2024 (Wave 2) and January 2023 (Wave 1) it is useful to set out the similarities and differences in methodology as the survey has evolved.

The questionnaires in each year have been designed by Migration Policy Scotland with advice from Diffley Partnership and other experts. The table below sets out consistencies and changes across the three waves.

Table 1. Differences in methodology across waves

Wave	Date	Number of Questions	Changes to question wording compared to last wave?	Administration	Total responses	Weighting scheme
Wave 3	4-10 February 2025	15	No	ScotPulse, Understanding Scotland	2,194	Gender and age to Scottish adult population estimates 2021
Wave 2	1-5 February 2024	15	Yes	ScotPulse, Understanding Scotland	2,305	Gender and age to Scottish adult population estimates 2020
Wave 1	17-19 January 2023	8	N/A	ScotPulse	1,162	Gender and age to Scottish adult population estimates 2020

Invitations to complete the survey for all three waves were sent out through the Scotpulse panel¹⁰ allowing for analysis of variables by age, gender, geographical location (urban/rural classification, Scottish Parliamentary region, Local Authority area), employment status, and a composite variable on social grade. Inclusion of Waves 2 and 3 in the Understanding Scotland series,¹¹ significantly increased the numbers of responses gathered and added further variables for comparison by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and highest education level, as well as ethnicity (Wave 3 only, question added to Understanding Scotland 2025).

In addition to these standard variables, the survey includes questions on respondents' levels of social contact¹² with immigrants and attitudes to diversity (all waves), as well as vote choice at the most recent UK General Election (Waves 2 and 3). These questions allow for further comparisons between subgroups of respondents by experiences of immigration, social attitudes and political views.

For the purpose of statistical analysis, responses have been weighted to the Scottish population by age and gender. The questionnaire for Wave 3 is reproduced in Appendix A along with topline findings across the three waves.

This report summarises the key findings of Wave 3 of the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration in Scotland Survey, with the aid of visualisations. It includes descriptive statistics of the overall sample and of between group differences. To look for relationships or variations between subgroups, two-sample t-tests for difference in means were applied. Statistical differences between groups are reported at the 95% level. Differences are only reported when statistically significant and reporting does not include the result of every statistical test conducted; the most relevant and salient results are highlighted. Where interesting, or indicative of a potentially significant trend, comparisons to findings from Waves 2 and 1 are discussed.¹³

Where percentages do not sum to 100%, this is due to rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' or 'N/A' categories or multiple answers. Aggregate percentages (e.g. 'agree'/'disagree') are calculated from the absolute values. Therefore, aggregate percentages may differ from the sum of the individual scores due to rounding of percentage totals.

10 Scotpulse (www.scotpulse.com)

11 Understanding Scotland – Understanding Scotland (<https://understanding-scotland.co.uk>)

12 Where social contact is discussed as a variable throughout this report, we compare the responses of those who report no social contact, with the responses of those who report at least one form of social contact. For full wording of the social contact question and the list of options, please see Appendix A.

13 Due to updates to the survey wording for some questions between Waves 1 and 2, some differences between these waves cannot be directly attributed to changes in opinion amongst the population. However, due to limited changes to question wording between Waves 2 and 3, these findings are directly comparable. Where wording has changed this is made clear in Appendix 1.

1. Levels of immigration – perceptions and preferences

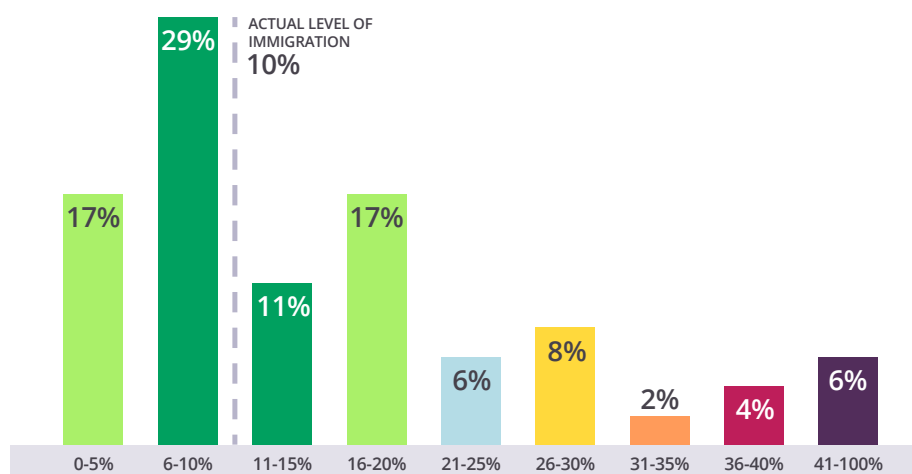
The Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey includes a series of questions to understand what the Scottish general public believe the current level of immigration to be and whether they prefer this to be maintained, decreased or increased over time. These are questions included in many attitudinal surveys, which facilitates comparison with other surveys in the UK and further afield. In this chapter we also report on people's preferences for increasing or decreasing immigration levels in relation to a range of visa types and whether they prefer longer-term or more temporary forms of immigration.

1.1 Perceived level of immigration

At the time of the most recent Scottish Census, published in 2022, roughly 10% of the Scottish population was born outside of the UK.¹⁴ High levels of net migration in the years following the census mean the size of Scotland's migrant population will have grown since, however there is no updated data available on current levels at the time of publication, so we continue to use 10% as a baseline figure.¹⁵ When asked about their perceptions of the current immigration level, defined in the survey as 'people born outside of the UK who have moved to Scotland to work, study, join family or because they need protection', a plurality of respondents sizeably overestimate the level of immigration. In 2025, 43% of the Scottish public believe that immigrants make up over 15% of the Scottish population and more than a quarter (26%) believe the level to be over 20%. In contrast, 17% of respondents believe immigration to be significantly lower than it is (0 to 5%). 40% of respondents have a roughly accurate idea of the percentage of immigrants living in Scotland (between 6 and 15%).

Figure 1: Perceptions of current immigration level (Wave 3, 2025)

*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

¹⁴ Home | Scotland's Census

¹⁵ Office for National Statistics (2025) National population projections, migration assumptions: 2022-based, Table 1.

Perceptions of the level of immigration differ between some of the main socio-demographic groups captured in the survey:

Gender. Men are more likely than women to underestimate the percentage of immigrants living in Scotland (21%; 14%). They are also more likely than women to estimate broadly accurately (46%; 33%). In contrast women are more likely than men to overestimate the level of immigration in Scotland (53%; 33%).

Social Grade. Those in higher social grades (ABC1) are more likely than those in lower social grades (C2DE) to underestimate the level of immigration (21%; 13%). Correspondingly, those in lower social grades are more likely than those in higher social grades to overestimate the level of immigration (48%; 39%).

Social Contact. Those who have social contact with immigrants are more likely than those with no social contact with immigrants to estimate the level of immigration broadly accurately (44%; 37%).

2024 UK General Election vote. Reform UK voters are more likely than SNP voters to estimate the level of immigration broadly accurately (55%; 38%), whilst SNP voters are more likely than Labour voters to underestimate the level of immigration (22%; 16%).

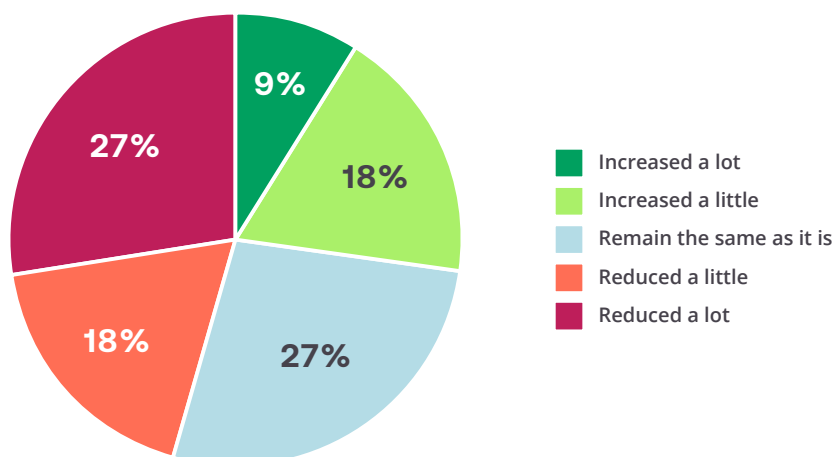
1.2 Preferences for increasing, maintaining or decreasing levels of immigration

The Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey asks respondents about their preferences for increasing, maintaining or decreasing levels of immigration to Scotland. When interpreting the data on preferences, which are laid out in more detail below, the inaccuracies in perceived levels of immigration discussed above should be born in mind.

In 2025, the largest group of survey respondents state a preference for a decrease in immigration level (45%), while 27% would prefer immigration levels to be maintained as they are, and 28% prefer levels to increase. Amongst those who would prefer the level to be reduced, more think that it should be reduced a lot (27%) rather than reduced a little (18%). Conversely, those in favour of increasing immigration tend to believe that immigration should be increased a little (18%) rather than a lot (9%).

Figure 2: Preferred level of immigration (Wave 3, 2025)

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)?



There are significant differences between the preferences of distinct socio-demographic groups for increasing, maintaining or decreasing immigration levels:

Age. Those under 55 years old are more likely than those who are 55 or older to think the number of immigrants should remain the same (32%; 21%).

Social Grade. Those in higher social grades (ABC1) are more likely than those in lower social grades (C2DE) to think immigration should be increased (30%; 24%) or remain the same (30%; 23%). Those in lower social grades (C2DE) are more likely than those in higher social grades (ABC1) to think that immigration should be reduced (53%; 39%).

Neighbourhood deprivation. Those in more deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 1 and 2) are more likely than those in the least deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 5) to think immigration should be reduced (50%; 38%). Those in the least deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 5) are more likely than those in more deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 1 and 2) to believe immigration should be increased (32%; 22%).

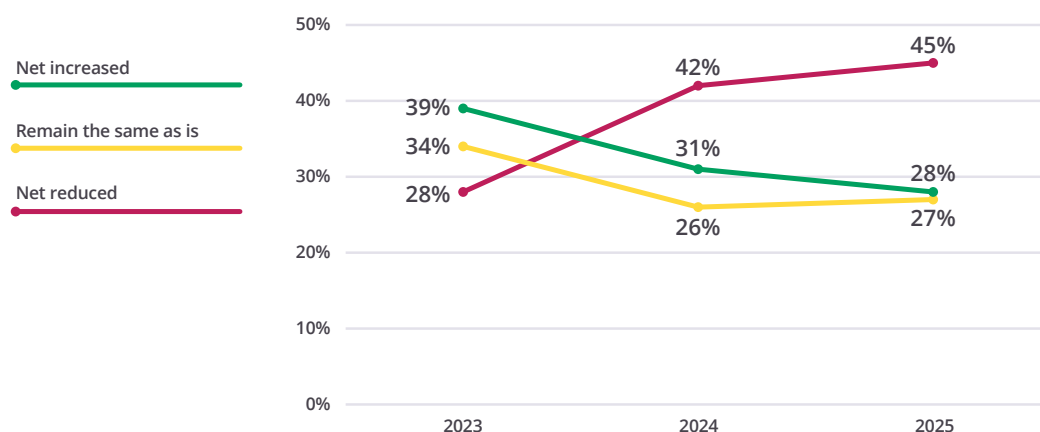
Social Contact. Individuals who have social contact with immigrants are more likely than those with no social contact to think immigration should be increased (35%; 22%) or remain the same (32%; 24%). Those who have no social contact with immigrants are more likely than those with social contact to think immigration should be reduced (54%; 33%).

2024 UK General Election vote. Those who voted for the Conservative Party (70%) or Reform UK (86%) at the 2024 UK General Election are most likely to think the number of immigrants should be reduced. Support for increasing immigration was higher among those who voted for the Green Party or SNP (39% and 43% respectively) when compared with those who voted Conservative, Reform UK, and Labour (12%, 8% and 22% respectively).

1.2.1 Changes over time to preferred level of immigration

Examining findings across the three waves of the survey we find that preferences regarding immigration levels in Wave 3 (2025) have changed relatively little when compared to those observed in Wave 2 (2024), but much more so by comparison to Wave 1 (2023).

Figure 3: Changes over time to preferred level of immigration, Waves 1-3 (2023-2025)



Over the last year, the proportion of respondents preferring a reduction in immigration levels has increased by just 3 percentage points (45%, 42%). Correspondingly the proportion of respondents who would prefer levels to increase has fallen by 3 percentage points (31%, 28%), whilst the proportion who prefer immigration levels to remain the same has barely changed (27% compared to 26%).

The split in emphasis within cohorts favouring reduction and those favouring increase is consistent across all three waves of the survey. Around 60% of those favouring a reduction in immigration prefer it to be 'reduced a lot', while around 58% of those favouring an increase only wish to see it 'increased a little'.

1.3 Preferences for increasing or decreasing levels of immigration by visa type

A set of questions introduced at Wave 2 of the survey and repeated in Wave 3 asked respondents about their preferences for levels of immigration to increase, decrease or remain the same with reference to specific types of visas. This allows us to examine the extent to which generalised views on levels of immigration align with preferred levels for specific groups of immigrants. This comparison reveals some persistent inconsistencies.

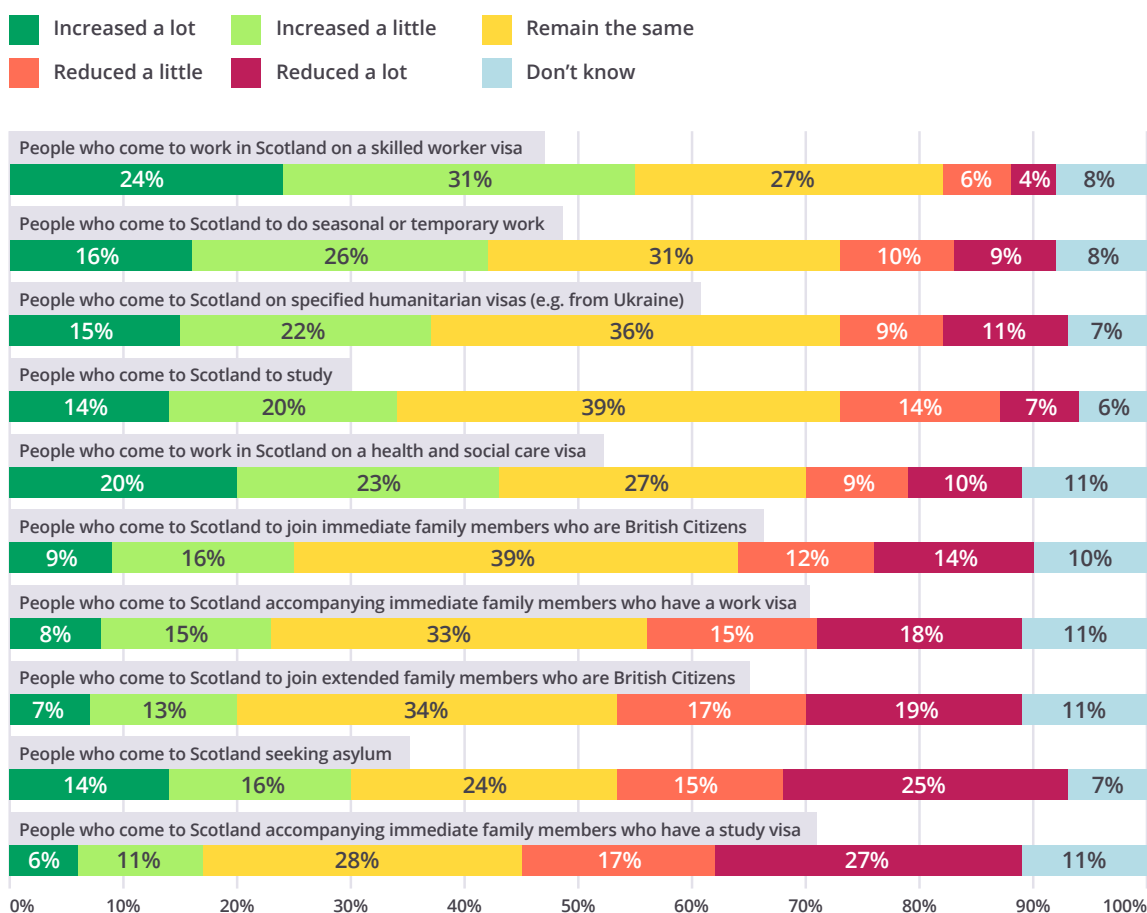
Results from Wave 3 of the survey show that public preferences on immigration levels vary by visa type. Nonetheless, a clear overall pattern is that people are more likely to say that they wish levels of immigration to increase or stay the same when asked about specific visa categories, than when they are asked about their preferred level of immigration in general terms. For 5 visa routes (the three main work visas, study visas and humanitarian visas) the proportion wishing levels to remain the same or increase is at 70% or above. There are only two visa categories (dependants on study visas (45%) and people seeking asylum (53%)) where the proportion preferring levels to increase or remain the same falls below 55% (the proportion favouring immigration levels in general to increase or stay the same).

This contradiction between peoples’ preferences when asked about immigration levels in general terms compared to their views relating to specified immigration routes has been a consistent finding in recent Scottish and UK attitudes to immigration surveys.¹⁶

Examining preferences by specific routes more closely, our Wave 3 findings show that the most favoured visa routes are those associated with immigration for work, while those routes which allow people to accompany or join family members are amongst the least supported. 82% of respondents think the number of people arriving on skilled worker visas should increase or remain the same. For those arriving to do seasonal and temporary work or on health and social care visas the proportions in favour are 73% and 70% respectively. By contrast, only 45% would prefer to increase or maintain current numbers of people accompanying immediate family members with a study visa. Views on immigration for protection vary based on the type of protection. There is considerably more support for those arriving on humanitarian visas than for people arriving to seek asylum. For humanitarian visas 73% of respondents are in favour of numbers increasing or remaining the same, whereas only 53% are in favour of the number of people arriving to seek asylum increasing or remaining the same.

Figure 4: Preferred level of immigration by visa type, Wave 3 (2025)

Should each of the following types of visa be increased, kept the same or reduced?



16 See for example: Kyambi, S. and Kay, R. (May 2024) Attitudes to Immigration in Scotland: Cautious pragmatism?, Migration Policy Scotland; Rolfe, H. Katwala, S. and Balinger, S. (March 2024) Immigration and the Election: Time to choose, British Future

When considering the relationship between certain demographic characteristics and preferences for different levels of immigration by visa type, we find some similar patterns to those found in preferences for levels of immigration overall.

Social contact appears as a significant factor. Across all visa categories, those respondents who report that they have social contact with immigrants living in Scotland are significantly more likely than those who do not to prefer an increase in levels of immigration, while those who report that they do not have any social contact with immigrants are more likely than those who do to prefer a reduction.

Social grade also plays a role. For every visa type, those in lower grades (C2DE) are more likely than those in higher grades (ABC1) to desire a reduction in numbers.

2024 General Election Vote. Those who voted for Reform UK at the 2024 general election are more likely to think immigration should be reduced across all visa types when compared to other major parties. Those that voted for the Conservative Party are also more likely than those who voted for other major political parties (apart from Reform UK) to think immigration should be reduced across almost all visa types, although the relationship is less pronounced for those that voted for Conservatives than for those who voted for Reform UK.

Other differences between socio-demographic groups are more mixed or seen only for specific visa types.

Gender. Men are more likely to seek a reduction in immigration than women for many but not all visa types. Men are more likely than women to prefer a reduction in numbers when asked about Skilled worker visas (12%; 7%); visas for immediate family members of those who have a work visa (38%; 29%) or a study visa (47%; 41%); visas for immediate family members of British citizens (31%; 23%); humanitarian visas (22%; 17%); and asylum seekers (44%; 36%). However, there is no significant difference between men's and women's preferences concerning levels of immigration on visas for health and social care, for seasonal and temporary workers, students, or for those who want to join extended family members who are British Citizens.

Neighbourhood deprivation. Those in more deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 1) are more likely than those in the least deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 5) to desire a reduction in numbers for the following visa types: seasonal or temporary work (25%; 15%), health and social care (22%; 18%), study (26%; 17%), immediate family of British citizens (31%; 23%) and humanitarian visas (23%; 15%).

Location. Those in rural neighbourhoods are more likely than those in urban areas to desire a decrease in numbers of people who come to Scotland seeking asylum (46%; 37%), immediate family members accompanying those who have a study visa (49%; 42%), or extended family members of British citizens (40%; 34%).

Age. Those aged 55 and over are more likely than those aged 35-54 to desire an increase in levels of immigration for seasonal and temporary work (46%; 37%). In contrast, those aged 55 and over are more likely than younger age groups to desire a reduction in people who come to Scotland accompanying immediate family members across both work and study visas. Those aged 35 and over are more likely than those aged 16-34 to desire a reduction in those coming to Scotland seeking asylum (43%; 32%). Those aged 16-34 are more likely than all other age groups to report that they don't know if immigration should be increased, kept the same or reduced for various visa types, particularly those pertaining to family, humanitarian and asylum visas.

1.3.1 Changes over time to preferred level of immigration by visa type

A comparison of the data from Waves 2 and 3 shows that the distribution of support for immigration by visa types follows the same pattern across both waves. Work related routes are consistently associated with higher levels of preference for increases, whilst those accompanying or joining family members as well as those seeking asylum are the least preferred. There is however a decline in support for increasing immigration for each visa route and increased appetite for reductions. In most cases, increased appetite for reductions is less pronounced than the decline in support for increases.

Figure 5: Changes over time to preferred level of immigration by visa time, percentage change in responses, Waves 2 and 3 (2024-2025)

Should each of the following types of immigration be increased, kept the same or reduced?



The starkest shift is a decrease of 8 percentage points in the proportion of respondents who wish to see an increase in the number of immigrants on specified humanitarian routes. However, this reduction in support for increased numbers is largely absorbed by a growing preference for numbers on this route to remain the same (5 percentage point increase), whilst the proportion of respondents who prefer numbers on this route to decrease has grown by just 2 percentage points.

Other notable shifts are seen for those who come to Scotland seeking seasonal or temporary work, those on health and social care visas, those who are joining immediate family who are British citizens and dependents of those on work visas and. The proportion of respondents wishing to see an increase in immigration on these routes decreased by between 5 and 6 percentage points from 2024 to 2025. However, again, this declining support for increased numbers is for the most part absorbed by increasing proportions of respondents who either

wish numbers to remain the same or say that they do not have a clear preference. It is only in relation to people who come to Scotland accompanying immediate family members who have a work or study visa and those arriving to seek asylum that the reduced preference for increasing numbers is matched by a similar growth in preference for reductions.

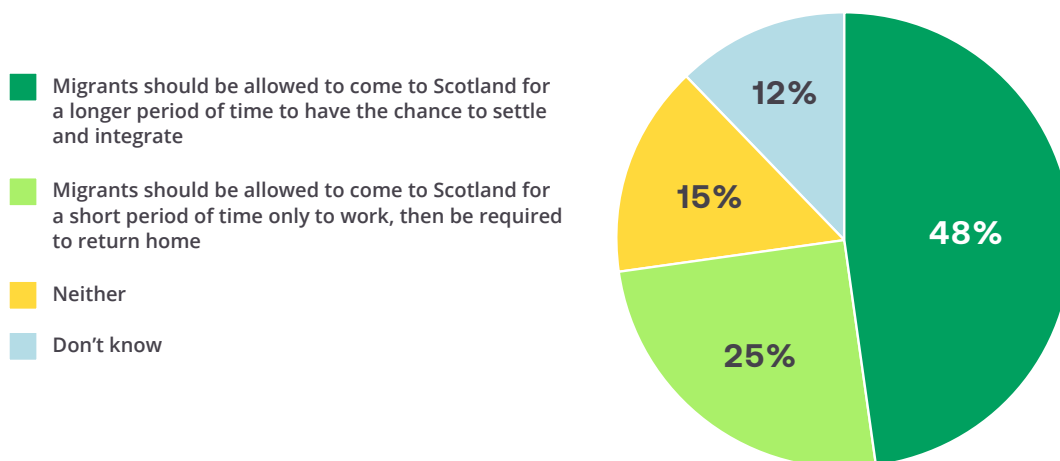
1.4 Preferences for types of immigration by length of stay

Another way of differentiating between types of immigration is by length of stay. Policies governing length of stay and ability to extend or transfer between visa routes can be restrictive or liberal and offer mechanisms by which governments seek to shape immigration to meet economic, social and demographic needs. Public attitudes towards and preferences regarding levels of immigration also vary in relation to whether intended length of stay is temporary or longer-term with pathways to settlement. Across all three waves of the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey, respondents have been asked about their preferences for immigration by length of stay in the Scotland.

Results from Wave 3 show that about half (48%) support longer-term immigration for work, allowing migrants the chance to settle and integrate, while 1 in 4 (25%) believe migrants should be allowed to come to Scotland for a short period of time only to work, then be required to return home. Sizable minorities, over 1 in 10, support neither option (15%) or responded don't know (12%).

Figure 6: Preferences by Length of stay (Wave 3, 2025)

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



There are some noteworthy differences between socio-demographic groups with regard to preferences for types of immigration by length of stay:

Gender. Men are more likely than woman to prefer solely short-term immigration for work, with a requirement to return home, (29%; 22%), while women are more likely than men to say they don't know (16%; 8%).

Age. Those aged 16-44 are more likely than those aged 45 and older to prefer longer-term immigration (56%; 41%), and those aged 55 and over are more likely than those aged 16-54 to prefer short-term immigration for work (32%; 21%).

Social Grade. Those in higher social grades (ABC1) are more likely than those in lower social grades (C2DE) to prefer longer-term immigration (54%; 40%), while those in lower social grades (C2DE) are more likely than those in higher social grades (ABC1) to prefer short-term immigration (29%; 22%).

Neighbourhood Deprivation. Those in the least deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 5) are more likely than those in more deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 1-3) to prefer long-term immigration (54%; 44%).

Social Contact. Those who have social contact with migrants are more likely than those with no social contact to prefer long-term immigration (63%; 37%), while those reporting no social contact with migrants are more likely than those who have social contact to prefer short-term immigration (32%; 16%).

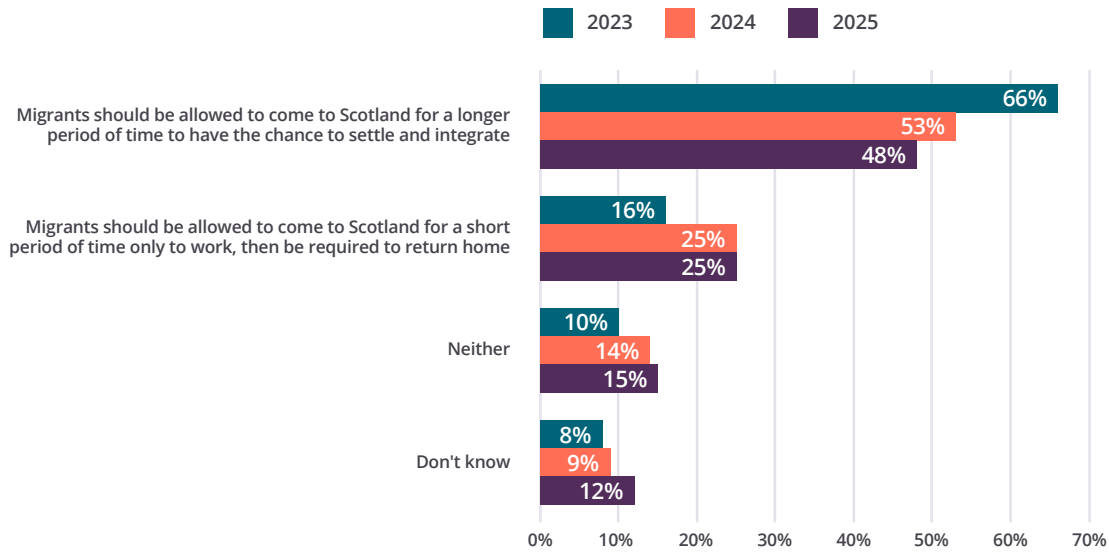
2024 General Election Vote. A majority of those who voted Conservative (54%) and Reform UK (57%) prefer short-term immigration, while a plurality of those who voted Labour (45%), and a clear majority of those who voted Liberal Democrats (68%), Green Party (66%) and Scottish National Party (63%) prefer longer-term immigration.

1.4.1 Changes over time to preferences by length of stay

The general preference for longer-term migration found in Wave 3 of the survey is in line with findings from Waves 1 and 2. However, looking across all 3 waves there is a clear decline in support for allowing migrants to come to Scotland for a longer period to settle and integrate. The proportion of respondents supporting this option fell by 13 percentage points between Wave 1 (2023) and Wave 2 (2024) and a further 5 percentage points between Wave 2 (2024) and Wave 3 (2025). Likewise, the population is becoming more supportive of policies which define immigration as short-term only for work and with a requirement for migrants to leave at the end of that period. The proportion supporting this option increased by 9 percentage points between Wave 1 (2023) and Wave 2 (2024) but remained the same between Wave 2 (2024) and Wave 3 (2025).

**Figure 7: Changes over time to preferences by length of stay
(Waves 1-3, 2023-2025)**

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



2. Immigration policy preferences

This chapter includes findings on immigration policy preferences, including attitudes towards recruiting from abroad, graduate visas, welcoming programmes and eligibility for social benefits. It repeats questions which were first added to the survey in Wave 2 to gather data relevant to policy areas where there is recent or proposed policy change. The questions focus on understanding public views in relation to four key areas: the role of migrant labour in the economy, support for immigration for the purposes of study, enthusiasm for welcoming programmes which can help integrate immigrants and views on how long after arrival the public believe immigrants become eligible to access social security.

The Labour Government's Immigration White Paper 'Restoring Control over the Immigration System', published in May 2025¹⁷ has a clearly stated aim to reduce net migration. Proposed policy changes to achieve this include: tightening restrictions on, or closing, some of the largest work and study routes, recalibrating the balance between international recruitment and investment in skills development by employers, imposing stricter language requirements and extending the pathway to settlement for immigrants, the latter also restricts immigrants' access to social security. The White Paper claims to be rectifying 'a political choice [of the previous Government] that was never put before the British people' to excessively liberalise the immigration system (p. 3), implying that the proposals laid out in the White Paper are better in line with public opinion.

And yet, some of the central policy proposals laid out in the White Paper do not seem well-aligned with public attitudes. Following the proposals laid out in the White Paper, overseas recruitment of care workers and senior care workers through the social care visa route was ended in July 2025, with temporary measures in place to allow individuals already in the UK to switch into the Skilled Worker route or extend their existing visas until July 2028.¹⁸ However, polling published by British Future¹⁹ just ahead of the White Paper found only 22% of respondents preferred a reduction in care home workers when asked their preferences to increase, reduce or maintain numbers of specific groups of migrants. This finding is broadly in line with Migration Policy Scotland most recent attitudes data which found just 19% in support of reducing numbers in this group (see section 1.3). The White Paper also proposes tightening requirements on international students and sponsoring institutions as well as restricting access to post-study work visas. These measures are aimed at reducing overall student numbers, as well as ensuring that study visas are not 'misused' and that those transferring into post-study visas are moving into graduate level roles. Both the British Future report and Wave 3 of the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey, however, find that students are not a key priority for reduction for the majority of respondents. Only 21% in the Migration Policy Scotland survey, and 29% in the British Future report wish to see numbers reduced for this group.

Migration Policy Scotland does not take the view that migration policies should be defined by public attitudes alone. However, where changes are proposed on the basis that these bring the immigration system into better alignment with public preferences it becomes pertinent to assess whether those claims are supported by the attitudinal data available.

17 Home Office (May 2025) *Restoring Control over the UK Immigration System*, HM Government

18 Home Office (July 2025) *Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 997*, HM Government

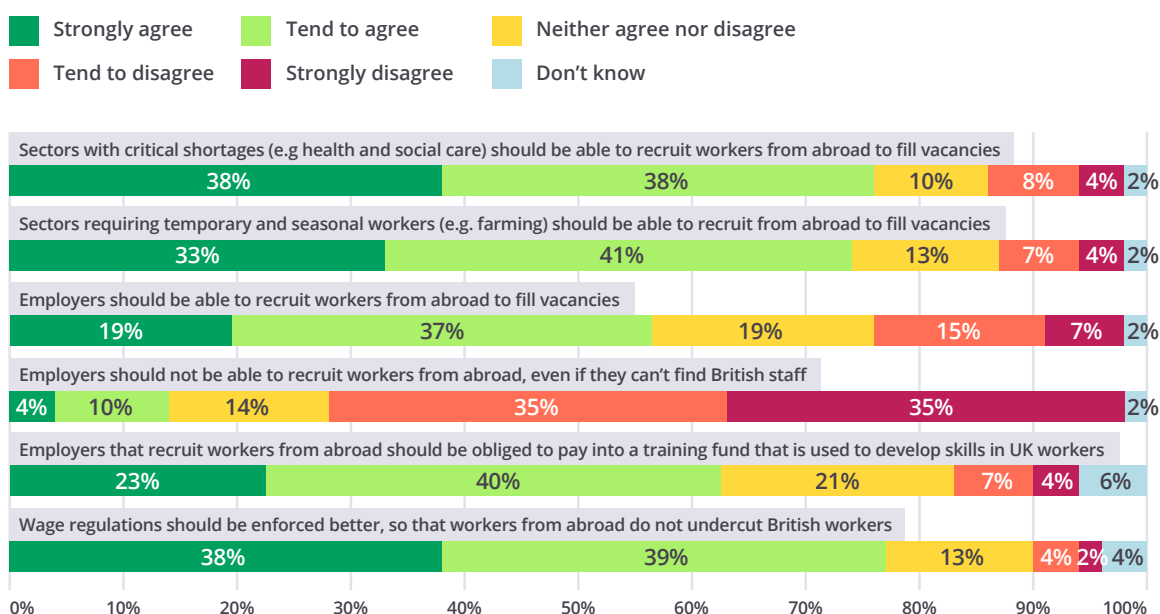
19 Ballinger, S. (May 2025) *New poll finds public support for migration to work or study*, British Future

2.1 Recruiting from abroad

Restricting employers' ability to recruit workers from abroad is a clear policy mechanism by which governments can seek to control immigration. It is one that is often contested by businesses, who argue instead that international recruitment is crucial to filling vacancies and can make businesses more competitive internationally whilst boosting local economies.²⁰ The Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey explores the views of the wider Scottish population. The survey asks respondents to what extent they agree or disagree with a range of statements about recruitment of workers from abroad.

Figure 8: Recruiting from Abroad (Wave 3, 2025)

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



The results from Wave 3 (2025) show that there is broad agreement (76%) (either 'tend to agree' or 'strongly agree') with recruitment of workers from abroad to fill gaps in sectors with critical shortages such as health and social care. Similar support is seen for allowing sectors requiring temporary and seasonal workers to recruit from abroad (74%). In both cases disagreement (either 'tend to disagree' or 'strongly disagree') is low, at 12% and 11% respectively. When sector is not considered and respondents are asked whether any employers should be able to recruit workers from abroad to fill vacancies, a majority (56%) agree, compared to 22% who disagree. These findings do not deviate greatly from the views of Scottish business leaders, The most recent 'Understanding Business' survey published by Diffley Partnership and 56° North found that 61% of Scottish business leaders think employers should be able to recruit from abroad for all jobs and 76% believe that sectors with critical shortages should be able to recruit workers from abroad.²¹

Alongside this broad support for employers filling job vacancies with foreign workers, there is also strong agreement with wage regulation enforcement, so that workers from abroad do not undercut British workers (77%). Additionally, 62% of respondents agree that employers who recruit workers from abroad should be obliged to pay into a training fund that is used

20 Diffley Partnership and 56° North (June 2025) *Understanding Business- Wave 9*, Diffley Partnership

21 Diffley Partnership and 56° North (June 2025) *Understanding Business- Wave 9*, Diffley Partnership, p. 13

to develop skills in UK workers. Whilst these same questions are not asked in the 'Understanding Business' survey, business leaders were asked about their most important considerations for a 'Scottish visa' were one to be introduced. The two priorities selected by respondents to that survey were 'maintaining a balance between migrant workers and investment in upskilling local talent' and 'protecting job opportunities for Scottish workers and preventing wage suppression'²² suggesting public views and those of business leaders are broadly aligned on this issue as well.

Support for recruitment from abroad in the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey differs between subgroups of the population. Some patterns appear across all statements:

Social Grade. Those in social grades ABC1 are more likely than those in grades C2DE to agree with statements about recruiting from abroad in general (63%; 48%), where there are critical labour shortages (81%; 71%), or to seasonal and temporary work (79%; 66%). Those in grades C2DE are more likely than those in grades ABC1 either to disagree or to neither agree nor disagree with the same statements. On more protective measures, those in lower social grades (C2DE) are more likely than those in higher social grades (ABC1) to agree that wage regulation should be enforced to prevent undercutting (81%; 74%); that employers recruiting workers from abroad should be obliged to pay into a training fund to develop skills in UK workers (67%; 59%) or that employers should not be able to recruit from abroad even if they cannot find British staff (17%; 12%).

Neighbourhood deprivation. Those in the least deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 5) are more likely than those in more deprived neighbourhoods to be supportive of recruitment from abroad. Those living in SIMD 5 neighbourhoods are more likely than those in SIMD 1-2 to agree that employers should be able to recruit from abroad to fill vacancies (63%; 52%). They are also more likely than those in SIMD 1-2 to agree with recruitment from abroad to fill critical shortages (82%; 71%) or for seasonal and temporary work (83%; 65%). Those in SIMD 1-4 are more likely than those in SIMD 5 to agree that employers should not be able to recruit from abroad even if they cannot find British staff (16%; 7%).

Social Contact. Individuals who have social contact with immigrants are more likely than those with no social contact to be supportive of recruitment from abroad. Those who have social contact with immigrants are more likely than those who do not to agree that employers should be able to recruit from abroad to fill vacancies (67%; 50%) to fill critical shortages (85%; 70%) or for seasonal and temporary work (80%; 69%). Those who do not have any social contact with immigrants are more likely than those who do to agree that employers should not be able to recruit from abroad even if they cannot find British staff (18%; 9%)

2024 General Election Vote. Those who voted for the SNP are more likely to agree with statements pertaining to recruitment from abroad than those who voted Conservative, Labour, or Reform UK. In contrast, those who voted for Reform UK are most likely to disagree with all statements about recruiting from abroad and are more likely to agree that employers should not be able to recruit from abroad.

22 Diffley Partnership and 56° North (June 2025) *Understanding Business- Wave 9*, Diffley Partnership, p. 14

Other differences by socio-demographic subgroups are notable for just one or two statements:

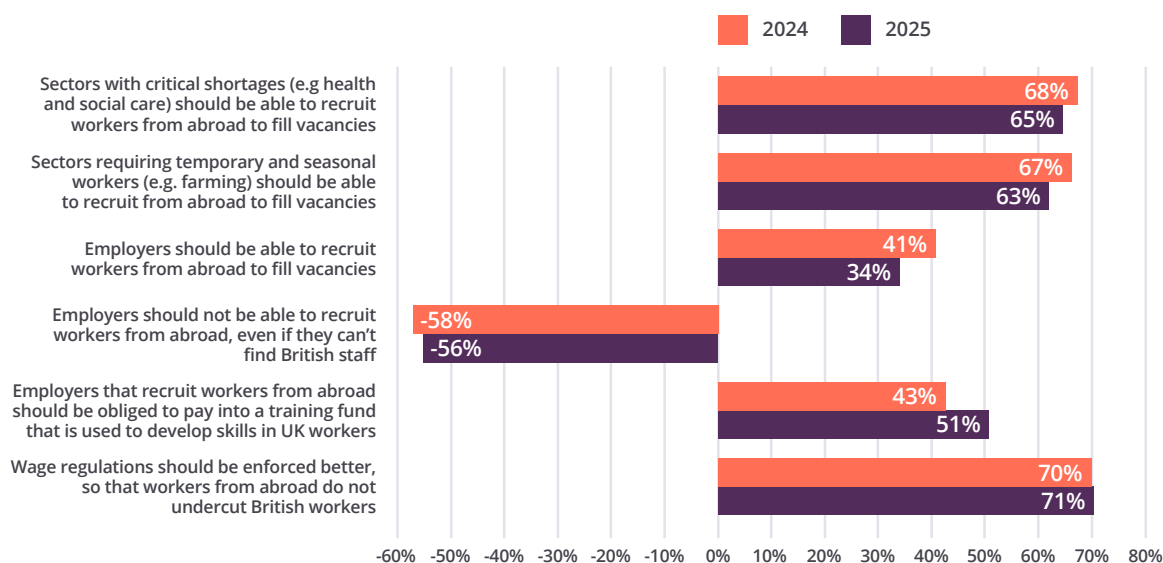
Age. Those aged 55-64 are less likely than all other age groups to agree that employers in general and sectors with critical shortages should be able to recruit from abroad to fill vacancies. The youngest generation – those between 16 and 34 years old – are more likely than those aged 35 and over to disagree with the statement ‘wage regulations should be enforced better, so that workers from abroad do not undercut British workers’ (10%; 4%). Those aged 35 and over are more likely than the youngest generation to agree with the same statement (81%; 68%).

2.1.1 Changes over time to support for recruitment from abroad

Questions on recruitment were introduced at Wave 2 (2024) of the survey, and we can therefore explore changes between Waves 2 (2024) and 3 (2025). One way of understanding these changes is to calculate net agreement by subtracting the proportion who disagree from the proportion who agree with each statement for each wave.

Figure 9: Changes over time to support for recruitment from abroad, net agreement, Waves 2 and 3 (2024-2025)

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



There is a consistent decrease in net agreement with statements about recruiting workers to fill vacancies between the two waves of the survey. The most significant of these is a decrease of 7 percentage points in net agreement with recruitment from abroad to fill vacancies in any job (41%; 34%). Net agreement decreased more modestly when respondents were asked about sectors with critical shortages (68%; 65%), and sectors that require temporary or seasonal workers (67%; 63%). There is also a significant change - an increase of 8 percentage points - in net agreement that employers recruiting from abroad should be required to pay into a training fund to develop skills among UK workers (43%; 51%).

These changes in levels of agreement with recruitment from abroad since Wave 2 (2024) will be explored further in subsequent waves of the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey. As yet, they do not appear to signal a reversal of the significant shift

in UK public opinion on these issues found by the World Values Survey. The most recent wave of the World Values Survey (2022) found only 30% of UK respondents agreeing with the statement “when jobs are scarce employers should prioritise the native-born population over immigrants”. This positioned the UK third amongst countries with the lowest levels of agreement that immigration controls should be used to prioritise native-born workers – a remarkable change from the findings in 2009 when a far larger proportion (69%) of the UK public agreed with the same statement and the UK ranked towards the middle of the countries surveyed.²³

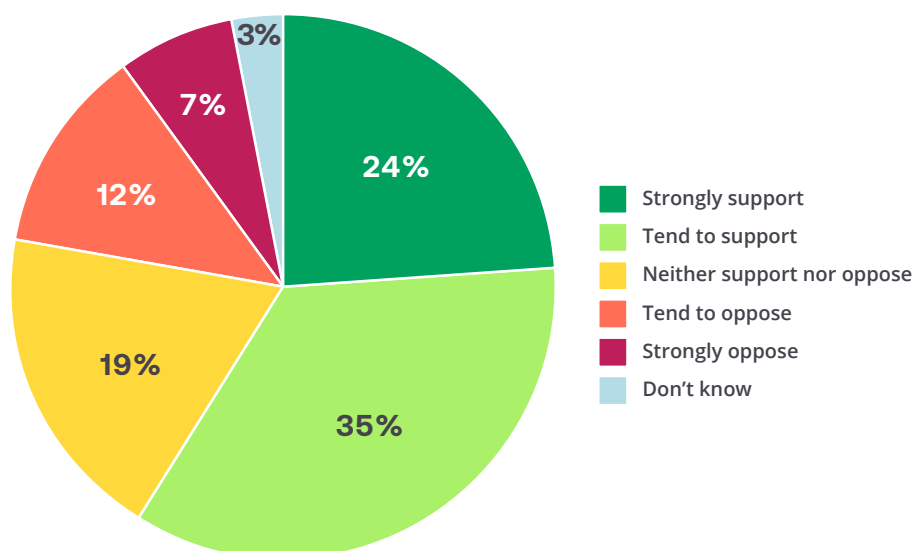
2.2 Graduate visas

The Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey also asks respondents about their support for the graduate visa route, where international students are allowed to remain in the UK for up to 2 years after graduation, to work in any job. The Scottish Government has been very much in favour of this visa route, viewing it as potentially significant to both growing the Scottish economy and tackling population challenges, and had laid out proposals for a dedicated Scottish graduate visa in January 2025.²⁴ The UK government however, rejected this proposal and in its White Paper ‘Restoring Control over the Immigration System’ proposes changes to the existing visa, including a reduction in the permitted length of stay to 18 months after graduation.²⁵

Results from Wave 3 (2025) of our survey show that the graduate visa is supported by a majority of the Scottish public. About 3 in 5 (59%) respondents either ‘strongly support’ or ‘tend to support’ this visa route, whilst only 1 in 5 (19%) either ‘tend to oppose’ or ‘strongly oppose’.

Figure 10: Support for graduate visa policy, Wave 3 (2025)

Do you support or oppose the 2-year post-study visa policy?



²³ Duffy, B. et al (March 2023) *UK Attitudes to Immigration: How the public became more positive*, The Policy Institute.

²⁴ Scottish Government (January 2025) *Scottish Graduate Visa Proposed*, Scottish Government.

²⁵ Home Office (May 2025) *Restoring Control over the UK Immigration System*, HM Government, p. 39, para 131.

There are clear differences in support for the graduate visa between socio-demographic groups.

Gender. Men are more likely than women to oppose the graduate visa policy (22%; 15%).

Age. Those aged between 16 and 44 are more likely than those aged 45 and over to support the graduate visa (66%; 53%). In contrast, respondents aged 45 and over are more likely than those aged 44 and under to neither support nor oppose this policy (24%; 14%).

Social Grade. Higher social grades (ABC1) are more likely than lower social grades (C2DE) to support the graduate visa (65%; 50%), while lower social grades (C2DE) are more likely than higher social grades (ABC1) to oppose it (24%; 14%).

Neighbourhood Deprivation. People living in more affluent neighbourhoods (SIMD 3-5) are more likely than those in more deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 1-2) to support this policy (61%; 54%).

Social Contact. Those with any degree of social contact with immigrants are more likely than those who report no social contact with migrants to support this policy (71%; 51%).

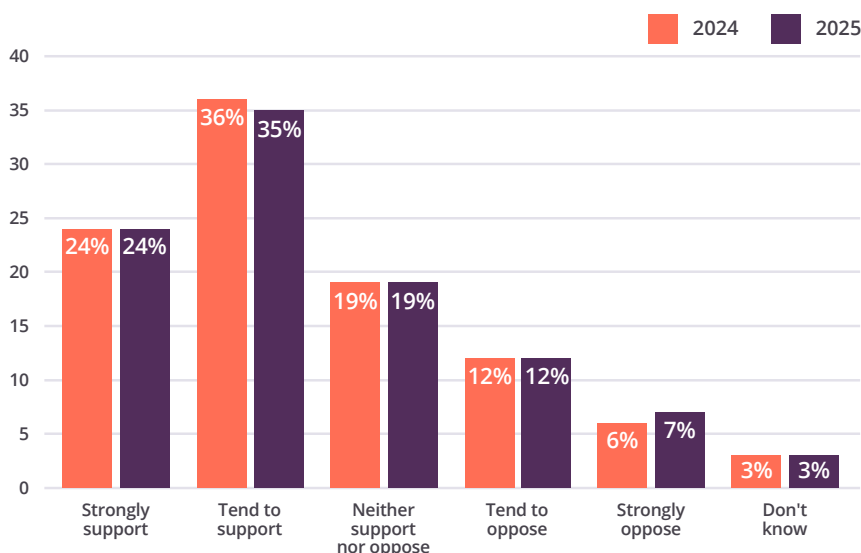
2024 General Election Vote. Those who voted Liberal Democrat (75%) or SNP (70%) are more likely to support the graduate visa policy than those who voted Labour (59%), Conservative (43%), or Reform (18%). Those who voted Reform (49%) or Conservative (31%) are more likely to oppose this policy than those that voted Labour (18%), Liberal Democrat (11%), SNP (10%) or Green Party (3%).

2.2.1 Changes over time to support for graduate visas

A comparison of findings between Wave 2 (2024) and Wave 3 (2025) of the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey shows that support for the graduate visa has changed very little. A one percent decline in the number of respondents who 'tend to support' the policy (36%; 35%) is matched by a one percent increase in the number who 'strongly oppose' the visa (6%; 7%). All other groups remain unchanged.

Figure 11: Changes over time to support for graduate visas, Waves 2 and 3 (2024-2025)

Do you support or oppose the 2-year post-study visa policy?



2.3 Welcoming programmes

The past year has seen rising tensions and a rhetoric of division stoking fear within and between many communities across the UK, including Scotland, as well as in other European and North American countries. In this context it can be forgotten that recent policies in many of the same places have introduced ‘welcoming programmes’ as a way of creating social links between settled residents and newly arrived migrants, and supporting new arrivals to find their feet in a new social context.

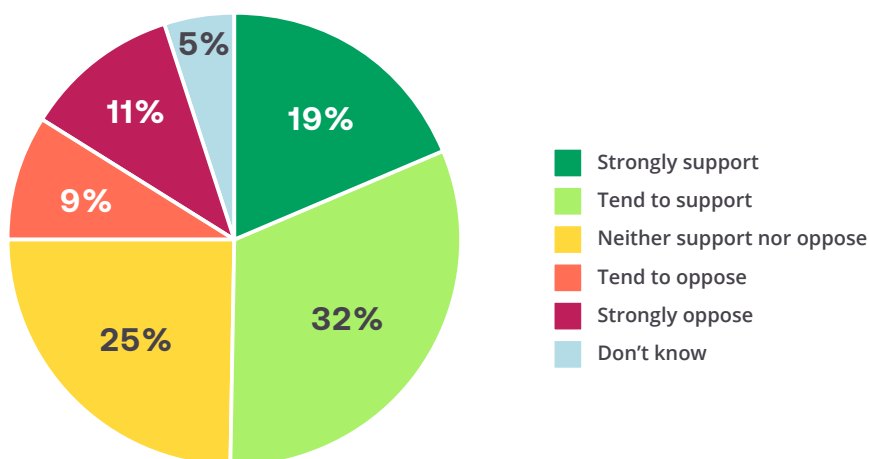
In Scotland, long-standing community-based support groups and activities to welcome and connect with asylum seekers and refugees have been complemented in recent years by government-funded and local authority run Welcome Hubs to support those arriving under visa and sponsorship schemes for Ukrainians and Hong Kongers. Significant work has also gone into updating the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy.²⁶

Whilst much of this work to date has focused on those arriving via a range of humanitarian protection routes, a broader strategy to welcome immigrants and support their integration becomes more important as immigration to Scotland increases and diversifies. Such a strategy could support Scottish Government programmes to attract and retain immigrants to Scotland. It could also contribute towards pre-empting divisions and tensions.

Since Wave 2 (2024) the Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey has asked how supportive respondents are of welcoming programmes for newly arrived migrants, with no reference to particular groups or routes. Results from Wave 3 (2025) show that around half of respondents (51%) either strongly support or tend to support welcoming programmes as a policy idea, and only 1 in 5 (20%) oppose (either strongly or tend to) the idea of such a policy.

Figure 12: Support for welcoming programmes, Wave 3 (2025)

How strongly would you support or oppose the Scottish Government creating a welcoming programme linking British people with newly arrived migrants to help them settle and integrate in Scotland?



26 Scottish Government (January 2018) New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 - 2022, Scottish Government

Support for the introduction of welcoming programmes in Scotland varies between socio-demographic groups:

Gender. Men are more likely than women to oppose the idea of a welcoming programme (25%; 16%).

Age. Those aged 16-44 are more likely than those aged 45 and over to support the idea of a welcoming programme (56%; 45%).

Social Grade. Those in higher social grades (ABC1) are more likely than those in grades C2DE to support the idea of a welcoming programme (57%; 42%), while those in grades C2DE are more likely than those in grades ABC1 to oppose this (26%; 16%).

Neighbourhood Deprivation. Those living in the least deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 5) are more likely than those in SIMD 1-4 to support the idea of a welcoming programme (59%; 48%), while those in SIMD 1-4 are more likely than those in SIMD 5 to oppose this (22%; 13%).

Social Contact. Those who report that they have social contact with immigrants are more likely than those who report that they do not to support the idea of a welcoming programme (65%; 40%). Those who do not have any social contact with immigrants are more likely than those who do to either oppose (27%; 12%) or to neither support nor oppose (27%; 20%) this policy idea.

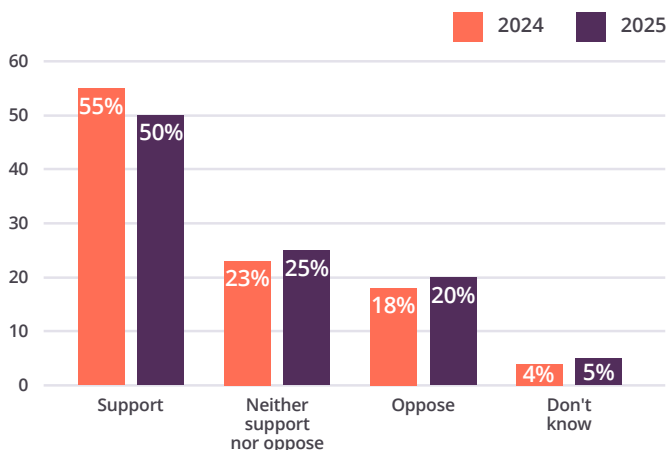
2024 General Election Vote. Those who voted for Reform UK (68%) and Conservatives (38%) at the 2024 UK General Election are more likely to oppose the idea of a welcoming programme than those who voted for most other political parties. Similarly, those who voted for Greens (74%), Liberal Democrats (67%), and SNP (65%) are more likely to support the idea of a welcoming programme than those who voted for Labour (48%), Conservatives (28%) and Reform UK (8%).

2.3.1 Changes over time to support for welcoming programmes

A comparison between Waves 2 (2024) and 3 (2025) shows a dip in support for welcoming programmes, accompanied by a less marked increase in opposition. The number of respondents who say that they would support the creation of such a programme has fallen by five percentage points, whilst the number opposing such a policy has grown more modestly by 2 percentage points.

Figure 13: Changes over time to support for welcoming programmes, Waves 2 and 3 (2024-2025)

How strongly would you support or oppose the Scottish Government creating a welcoming programme linking British people with newly arrived migrants to help them settle and integrate in Scotland?



2.4 Eligibility for social benefits

It is a long-standing policy of successive UK governments to restrict most immigrants access to social security through a No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition that applies to visa holders until settlement (indefinite leave to remain) has been granted. The same applies to those with irregular immigration status. The rationale is that people arriving should be able to support themselves and their families financially, to avoid a burden on taxpayers. Many organisations and individuals working with immigrants have expressed concerns that the impacts of NRPF exacerbate inequality, hardship and poverty. The transition to a new immigration system post-Brexit has seen growing numbers and a higher proportion of immigrants arriving through visa routes. The number of people holding visas to which an NRPF condition would usually apply has risen to 3.6 million in 2024 from 1.48 million in 2020.²⁷

The 2025 White Paper 'Restoring Control over the Immigration System' proposes to extend the period of time before settlement to 10 years for those arriving under the Points-Based System, while retaining the 5-year period for non-UK born dependents of British citizens. This would likely extend the period over which they are subject to NRPF restrictions to 10 years for a significant cohort of immigrants. Again, this proposal does not align well with evidence on public views. In 2024, the British Social Attitudes survey found 65% respondents believe immigrants should be able to claim welfare benefits and British citizenship after 3 years of which 27% thought this should be immediate.²⁸

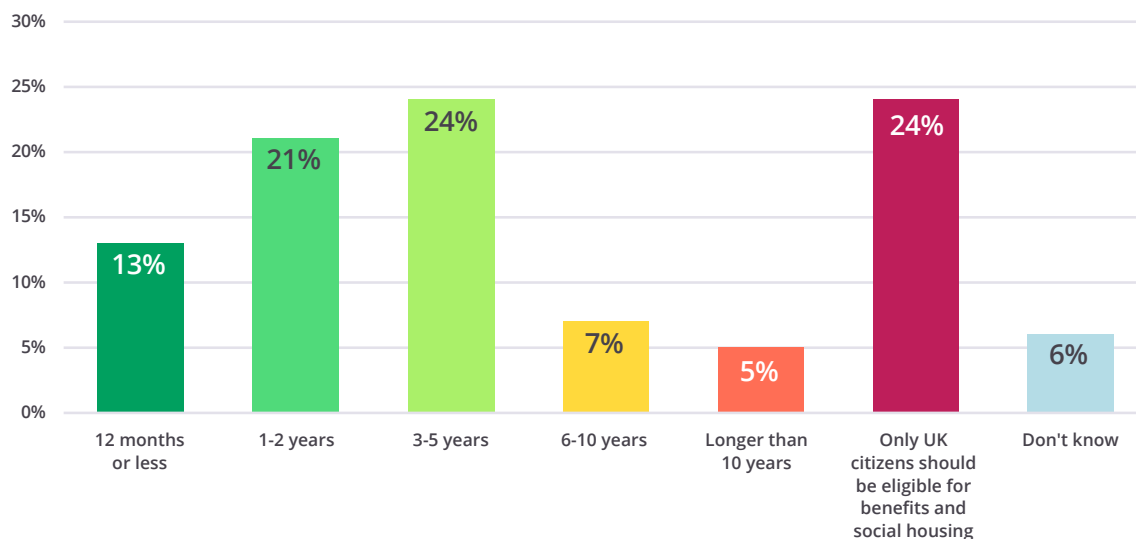
The Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey asks a very similar question regarding the length of time for which immigrants, excluding asylum seekers and refugees, should work and pay taxes in the UK before they are eligible for benefits and social housing. A majority of respondents (58%) believe it should take no more than five years for immigrants to be eligible, including 34% who believe it should take no more than 2 years, while 12% believe it should take six years or longer. A notable plurality of 24% believe that only UK citizens should be eligible for benefits and social housing.

²⁷ See: Cuibus, M. and Fernandez-Reino, M. (November 2023) *Deprivation and the No Recourse to Public Funds Condition*, Migration Observatory; McKinney, C. J., Kennedy S., Gower, M. and Sturge, G. (June 2025) and *No Recourse to Public Funds Research Briefing*, House of Commons Library. It should be noted that not all immigrants subject to an NRPF restriction will face situations of financial hardship.

²⁸ Humphrey, A., Wilson H. and Ford, R. (June 2024) *British Social Attitudes 41: Immigration*, National Centre for Social Research

Figure 14: Attitudes to eligibility for social benefits

How long should immigrants work and pay tax in the UK before they are eligible for benefits and social housing?



Prominent differences in attitudes to eligibility for social benefits between socio-demographic groups include:

Social Grade. Those in social grades C2DE are more likely than those in grades ABC1 to think that immigrants should work and pay taxes longer than 10 years in order to be eligible for benefits (6%; 4%), or that only UK citizens should be eligible for benefits and social housing (27%; 20%).

Neighbourhood Deprivation. Those in SIMD 1 and 2 are more likely than those in SIMD 5 neighbourhoods to think that only UK citizens should be eligible for benefits and social housing (27%; 17%).

Location. Those in rural areas are more likely than their urban counterparts to think that immigrants should work and pay taxes for longer than ten years to be eligible for social benefits (8%; 4%).

Social Contact. Those with any degree of social contact with immigrants are more likely than those with no social contact with immigrants to say that eligibility for social benefits should begin within 12 months or less (18%; 9%). Those with no social contact with immigrants are more likely than those with any degree of social contact with immigrants to think that only UK citizens should be eligible for benefits and social housing (29%; 17%).

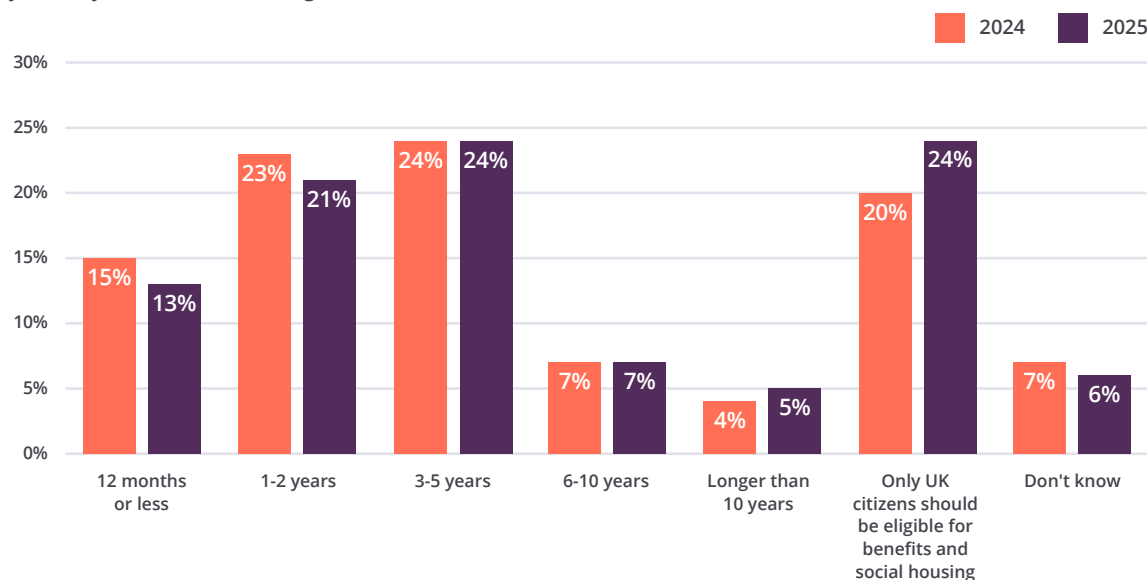
2024 General Election Vote. Those who voted for Reform UK at the 2024 UK General Election are more likely than those who voted for other major parties to believe that only UK citizens should be eligible for benefits (45%). In addition, Conservative (29%) and Labour (25%) voters are more likely than those who voted Green (5%) or SNP (18%) to think only UK citizens should be eligible for social benefits.

2.4.1 Changes over time to support for eligibility for social benefits

Attitudes towards eligibility for social benefits remain relatively stable between Wave 2 (2024) and Wave 3 (2025) of the survey. There has been a decrease of four percentage points in the proportion who believe social benefits should be available to immigrants within 2 years. This brings the proportion that favour immigrant eligibility to social security and social housing within 5 years down from 62% to 58%. At the other end of the scale, the proportion of respondents who believe that only UK citizens should be eligible for benefits and social housing has increased by four percentage points to 24%

Figure 15: Changes over time to support for eligibility for social benefits, Waves 2 and 3 (2024-25)

How long should immigrants work and pay tax in the UK before they are eligible for benefits and social housing?



3. Impacts of immigration for Scotland and local areas

Scotland's long held political consensus on the need for immigration to meet demographic and economic challenges and as enriching Scotland socially and culturally is under increasing pressure. This section explores Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey findings on the Scottish public's perceptions of the impact of immigration. First, we present views on the overall impact of immigration on Scotland and on Local Areas. Then we discuss perceptions of the impact of immigration on specific economic, demographic, social and cultural phenomena, again at both national and local levels.

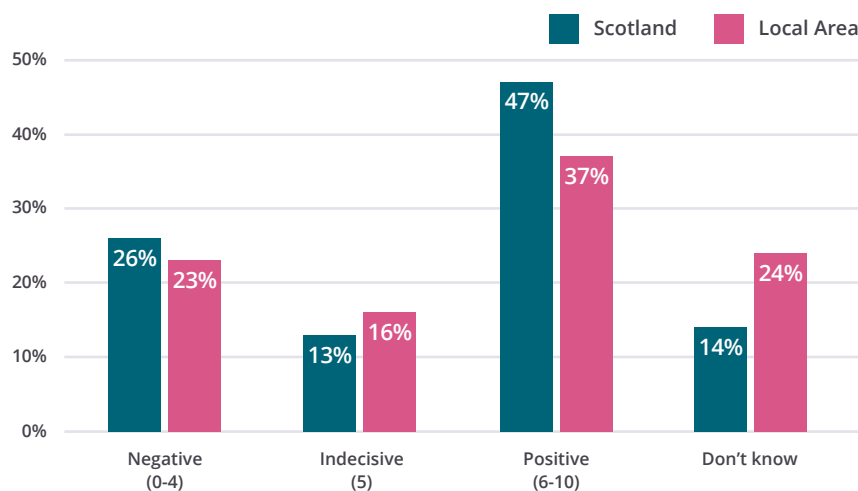
3.1 Overall impact at Scottish and local levels

Respondents were asked to rank their assessment of the overall impact of immigration on Scotland and their local area using a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is very negative and 10 is very positive. A plurality of respondents (47%) chose a score of 6 or higher, reflecting their overall assessment of immigration as having a positive impact on Scotland. At the other end of the scale, 1 in 4 respondents (26%) selected a score of 0 to 4, reflecting their assessment of immigration's overall impact as negative. 13% of respondents are indecisive and chose a score of 5, whilst 14% say they do not know.

Perceptions of the impact of immigration on local areas are somewhat less positive. Whilst, a plurality (37%) still report that migration has had a positive impact on their local area, this is 10 percentage points lower than at national level. The proportion selecting a score below 5 is also somewhat lower than at national level (by 3 percentage points) – 23% report a negative impact for their local area. There is also a 3-percentage point difference in numbers choosing to score a neutral, or indecisive, 5 at local (16%) and national (13%) levels. A larger difference is in the numbers who say they do not know how to assess the impact of immigration in their local area. Here we see a difference of 10 percentage points, and nearly 1 in 4 respondents (24%) select this response at local level.

Figure 16: Perceived impacts of immigration on Scotland and local area, Wave 3 (2025)

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



Assessments of the overall impacts of immigration on Scotland and at the local level differ between socio-demographic groups:

Gender. Men are more likely than women to report a negative impact of immigration on Scotland (30%; 21%) and local area (26%; 21%). In contrast, women are more likely than men to say they don't know the impact of immigration on either Scotland (19%; 10%) or their local area (29%; 17%).

Age. The youngest generation – those aged between 16 and 34 years olds – are more likely than those aged 45 and over to report a positive impact of immigration on Scotland (57%; 42%) and their local area (45%; 32%).

Social Grade. Those in ABC1 social grades are more likely than those in C2DE to say immigration has had a positive impact on Scotland (54%; 39%) and their local area (40%; 32%). In contrast, those in C2DE are more likely than those in ABC1 to say immigration has had a negative impact on Scotland (31%; 22%) and on their local area (28%; 20%).

Neighbourhood Deprivation. Those in more deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 1 -4) are more likely than those in SIMD 5 to be negative about the impact of immigration on their local area (26%; 13%) and on Scotland (27%; 19%).

Social Contact. Individuals that have some social contact with immigrants are more likely than those with no social contact with immigrants to say that immigration has a positive impact on Scotland (65%; 35%) and their local area (52%; 26%), whereas those with no social contact with immigrants are more likely to say that immigration has had a negative impact on these areas.

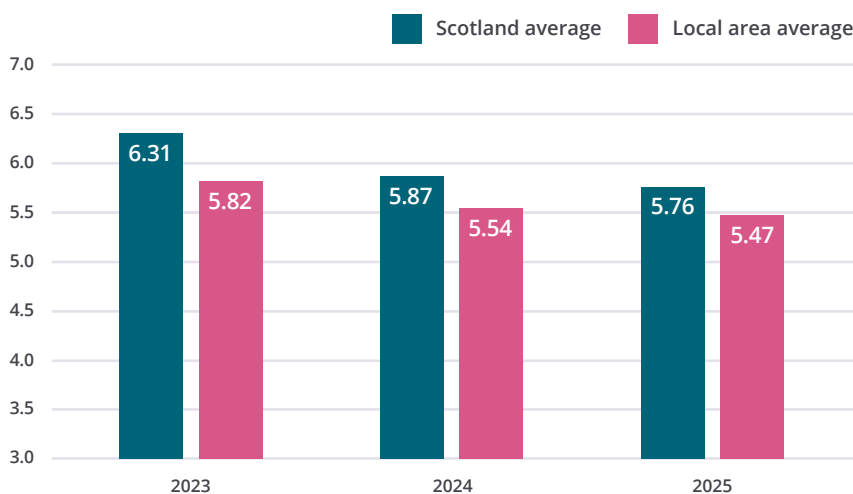
2024 General Election Vote. Those that voted Reform UK (Scotland: 73%; Local area: 63%) and Conservative (Scotland: 50%; Local area: 39%) are more likely to report that immigration has had a negative impact on Scotland and their local area than those that voted for other major political parties. Those that voted Labour at the most recent election are also more likely than those that voted SNP to report a negative impact on Scotland (23%; 15%) and their local area (23%; 13%). Correspondingly, those that voted for the Greens or SNP are more likely to say migration has had a positive impact on Scotland (67% and 63% respectively) and their local area (56% and 50% respectively) than those that voted Labour, Conservative or Reform.

3.1.2 Changes over time to perceptions of immigration impacts at Scottish and local level

Comparing the data collected across the three Waves of the survey, we find a slow but steady shift towards more negative perceptions of the overall impact of immigration at both national and local levels. Although the largest groups continue to view impacts as positive (6-10) for both Scotland and their local area, the proportion taking this view has fallen, while the proportion taking a negative (0-4) or indecisive (5) view has increased. The result is a steady decline in the average (mean) scores at both national and local levels, although both remain slightly above the neutral mid-point (5).

Figure 17: Changes in perceived impacts on Scotland and local areas (average mean scores), Waves 1-3 (2023-25)

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



3.2 Perceptions of economic, demographic, social and cultural impacts of immigration

The Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey also asks participants whether they agree or disagree with a range of statements about specific impacts of immigration at national and local level. These questions allow us to analyse the perceived impacts of immigration in relation to economic, demographic, social and cultural issues. The survey asks about specific impacts through testing agreement or disagreement with five positively framed statements and five negatively framed ones. The order in which the statements are posed is randomised.

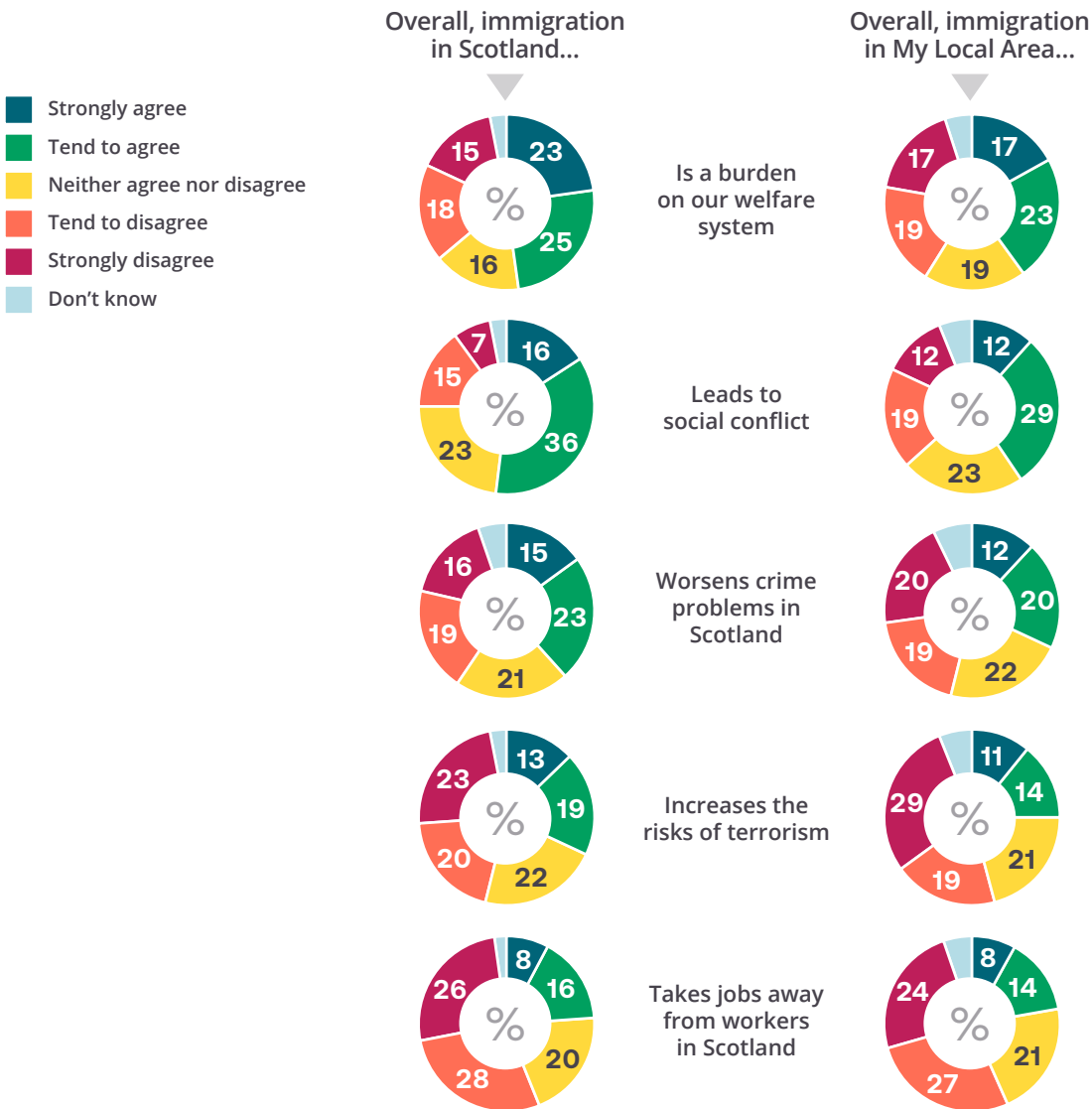
Figure 18: Levels of agreement and disagreement with positive impacts of immigration at national and local level, Wave 3 (2025)



In terms of their views on the impacts of immigration on Scotland, respondents in the most recent wave (2025) tend to agree more than disagree with positive statements. Over half agree that immigration ‘helps to fill jobs for which it’s hard to find workers in Scotland’ (67%) and that immigration ‘enriches Scottish cultural life’ (54%). A plurality also agrees that immigration ‘brings new people to areas of Scotland which need them’ (49%); ‘has a positive impact on the Scottish economy’ (46%) and ‘brings new ideas and/or boosts innovation’ (44%).

In relation to views of immigration’s impact on local areas, agreement with positive statements is less pronounced. The only positive statement with which a majority of respondents agree is that immigration ‘helps to fill jobs for which it’s hard to find local workers’ (55%). For all other positive statements less than half of respondents agree, but there remains more agreement than disagreement.

Figure 19: Levels of agreement and disagreement with negative impacts of immigration at national and local level, Wave 3 (2025)



With regard to negative statements on specific impacts of immigration at both national and local levels we find a more mixed picture. At Scotland level the negative statements where there is most disagreement are that immigration ‘takes jobs away from workers’ (53%) and ‘increases the risk of terrorism’ (43%). On both of these issues, respondents are more likely to disagree than agree. All other negative statements attract more agreement than disagreement. The strongest agreement is with the negative statement that immigration “worsens social conflict”. Here a majority (52%) agree. Nearly half (48%) also agree that immigration is a burden on Scotland’s welfare system, and nearly 2 in 5 (38%) agree that immigration ‘worsens crime problems’.

In relation to local areas, there is more disagreement with negative statements. Around half of respondents disagree that immigration ‘takes jobs away from local workers’ (51%) or ‘increases the risk of terrorism’ (48%). Nearly 2 in 5 (39%) disagree that immigration ‘worsens local crime problems’ (39%). There are only two negative statements which attract more agreement than disagreement at local level. These are that immigration ‘is a burden on local resources’ (40%; 36%) and ‘leads to social conflict’ (41%; 31%).

Most differences by socio-demographic group are evident across both national and local levels:

Gender. In general, men are more likely than women to agree with most of the negative statements and disagree with most of the positive statements regarding the impacts of immigration at both national and local levels. However, when considering if immigration has a positive impact on the economy, men are more likely than women to agree at the national level (50%; 43%), and more likely to disagree at the local level (30%; 23%).

Age. The youngest generation (those 16-34) is more likely than many older age groups to agree with positive impacts of immigration and disagree with negative impacts of immigration on national and local levels.

Social Grade. Those in higher social grades (ABC1) are more likely than those in lower social grades (C2DE) to agree with positive statements about the impacts of immigration and disagree with negative ones. Those in lower social grades (C2DE) are more likely than those in higher social grades (ABC1) to disagree with positive statements about impacts of immigration on the national and local levels and agree with negative statements.

Social contact. Those with any degree of social contact with immigrants are more likely to agree with positive impacts of immigration and disagree with negative impacts, while those with no social contact do the opposite.

Neighbourhood Deprivation. Across some indicators, those in less deprived neighbourhoods are more likely to agree with positive impacts of immigration and disagree with negative impacts of immigration at national and local levels, while those in more deprived neighbourhoods express the opposite opinions.

2024 General Election Vote. Looking across impacts, those that voted Reform UK are most likely to agree with almost all negative statements and disagree with all positive statements about impacts of immigration at the national and local levels. Conservative voters exhibit the same patterns, albeit to a lesser extent than Reform UK voters. Those who voted SNP and Green are more likely to be positive about immigration impacts, agreeing with positive statements and disagreeing with negative statements, than those that voted Reform UK, Conservative or Labour.

Location. Agreement/disagreement with some impacts of immigration varies by urban/rural residence. Those who reside in urban areas are more likely than those residing in rural areas to agree that immigration enriches cultural life or has a positive impact on the economy in both Scotland and the area that they live, while rural residents are more likely to disagree with this statement. Two other differences in agreement by urban/rural status are evident at the national level only; rural residents are more likely than urban residents to agree immigration 'worsens crime problems in Scotland' (45%; 35%), while urban residents are more likely to disagree that immigration to Scotland 'increases the risks of terrorism' (45%; 37%).

3.2.1 Changes over time to perceptions of economic, demographic, social and cultural impacts

To track changing perceptions of immigration over time we calculated net agreement for each impact statement at each wave of the survey. Net agreement is calculated by subtracting disagreement from agreement. Positive net agreement means more people agree than disagree with a statement. Conversely negative net agreement means that more people disagree than agree.

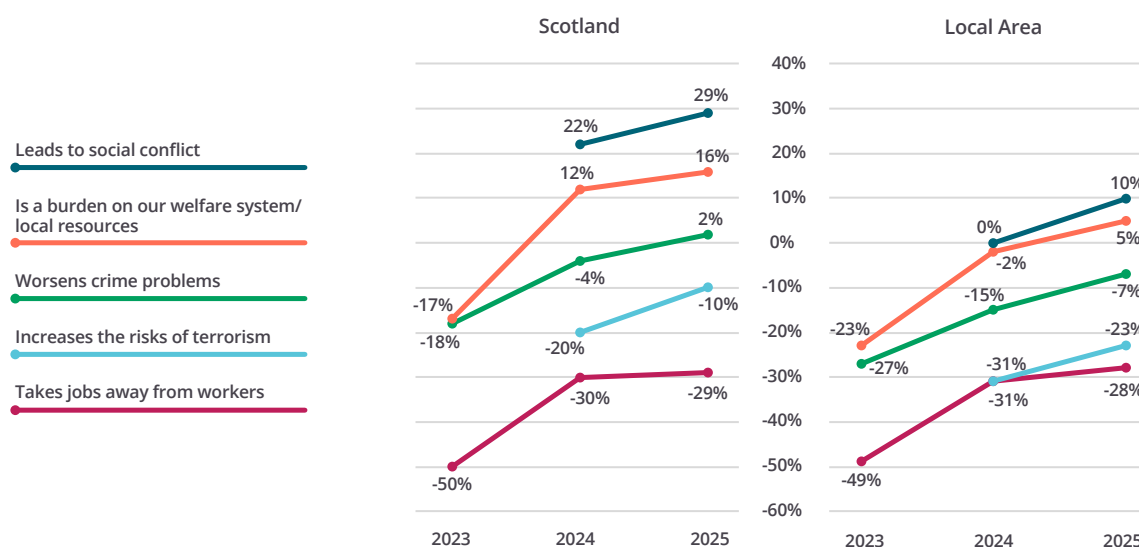
When we examine net agreement for positive statements on the impacts of immigration we find that there is a declining trend for almost all statements across the three waves. This is true of levels of agreement at both Scotland and local area level, although net agreement remains higher for statements at a national level than at a local level. A notable feature of in the trends across both positive and negative impact statements is that, where we have data for all three waves, the greater change occurs between 2023-4.

Figure 20: Changes to net agreement with positive impact statements at Scotland and local area level, Waves 1-3 (2023-25)



In contrast, net agreement has increased for negative impacts of immigration over time, albeit from a much lower (negative) starting point and remaining considerably lower than net agreement with positive statements on most issues. Here again it is evident that across the 3 waves agreement with negative statements is more pronounced at Scotland level than in relation to local areas, reaffirming the finding on assessments of overall impacts, that at local area there is more convergence towards neutral or uncertain opinions.

Figure 21: Changes to net agreement with negative impact statements at Scotland and local area level, Waves 1-3 (2023-25)



Two negative impact statements were first introduced in 2024 meaning we can only compare wave 2 and wave 3 for these. Its striking, but perhaps not surprising, that the perception that immigration leads to social conflict is the negative impact statement with the highest level of agreement in 2024 and 2025. The data gathered in 2024 precedes the 2 summers of unrest and violence sparked by immigration concerns.

It is also striking that responses regarding labour market competition also stand out across all three waves and at both national and local levels. There is consistently highest agreement with a view of immigration as filling gaps in the labour market and consistently lowest agreement with statements testing the perception that immigration displaces native workers. These findings signal that job competition is not the current focus of public concerns regarding immigration. This tallies with the high levels of support for overseas recruitment (see section 2.1).

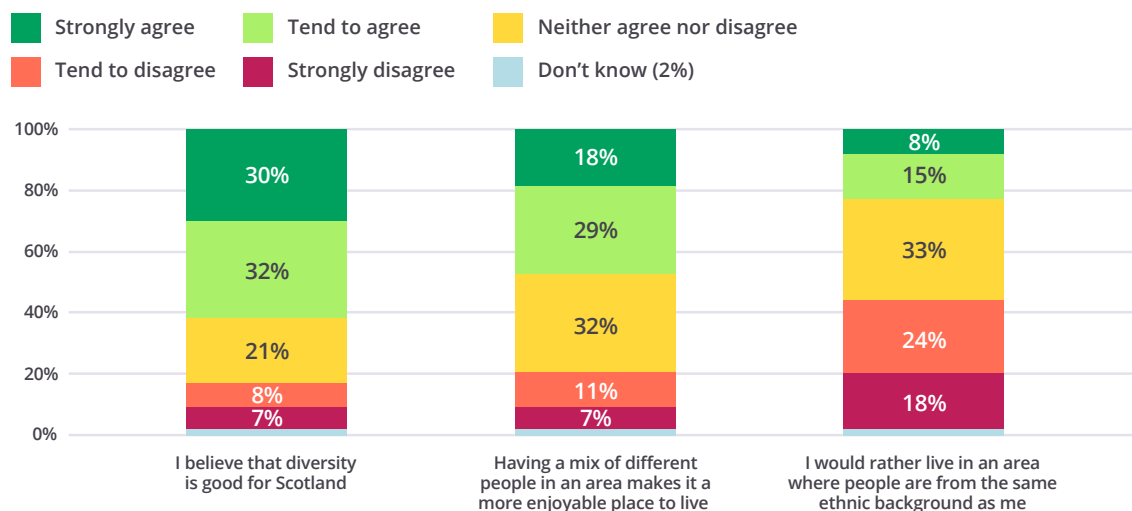
4. Attitudes towards diversity

Historically Scotland has been a country with low levels of immigration and characterised by net emigration. Consequently, the resident population in Scotland during the 20th Century had low ethnic and national diversity. Since the turn of the century this trend seems to be changing. In 2000, 3% of the population in Scotland was born outside the UK. By the time of the most recent census in 2022 this figure had more than tripled to 10% of the population. However, the increase in the non-UK born population in Scotland is not evenly distributed, with the majority of the migrant population living in urban areas and primarily in Scotland's larger cities.

In this section we explore the Scottish publics' perceptions of diversity. The Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey asks respondents whether they believe that diversity is 'good for Scotland', whether they think that a mix of people makes an area 'a more enjoyable place to live' and conversely whether or not they would prefer to live in an ethnically homogenous area. This set of questions allows us to explore views on diversity in the abstract and through more concrete situations as well as in relation to diversity statements framed positively and negatively.

Figure 22: Attitudes to diversity, Wave 3 (2025)

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



Overall, Scottish residents have positive attitudes to diversity, as evidenced by a majority who agree (either 'strongly' or 'tend to') that 'diversity is good for Scotland' (62%) and that 'having a mix of different people in an area makes it a more enjoyable place to live' (47%). In contrast, only a small percentage of respondents disagree (either 'strongly' or 'tend to') with each of these statements (15% and 18%, respectively). When asked to respond to a statement that frames diversity more negatively, just 23% agree that they would rather 'live in an area where people are from the same ethnic background as me', while 42% disagree. The proportion undecided on the two more concretely framed statements is close to identical (33%, 32%). The proportion undecided on the more abstract statement 'diversity is good for Scotland' is also sizeable but lower at 21%.

There are significant differences between socio-demographic subgroups of the population regarding views on diversity:

Gender. Overall, men tend to have less favourable attitudes to diversity than women. Men are more likely than women to agree that they would prefer to live in an ethnically homogenous area (29%; 17%). Women are also more likely than men to disagree with this proposition (47%; 38%). Women are more likely than men to agree that 'diversity is good for Scotland' (65%; 58%) and that having a mix of different people makes an area more enjoyable to live in (52%; 43%), whilst men are more likely than women to disagree with each of these statements (22%; 9%) and (24%; 13%) respectively.

Age. Those aged 16-54 are more likely than those aged 55 and over to agree that diversity is good for Scotland (69%; 51%) and that having a mix of different people makes an area more enjoyable to live in (55%; 37%). They are also more likely to disagree that they would prefer to live in an ethnically homogenous area (47%; 36%).

Social Grade. Those in higher social grades (ABC1) hold more positive diversity attitudes than those in lower grades (C2DE). Those in social grades ABC1 are more likely than those in social grades C2DE to agree that diversity is good for Scotland (69%; 53%) and that having a mix of people makes an area more enjoyable to live in (53%; 41%). Those in social grades ABC1 are also more likely than those in social grades C2DE to disagree when asked if they would prefer to live in a more ethnically homogenous area (47%; 36%). The opposite holds true for those in lower social grades, who are more likely than those in higher social grades to disagree with positive diversity statements and agree with the negative diversity statement.

Social Contact. Those who report that they have social contact with immigrants are more likely than those who do not to agree that diversity is good for Scotland (74%; 52%) and that having a mix of people makes an area more enjoyable to live in (64%; 36%). They are also more likely to disagree with the statement 'I would rather live in an area where people are from the same ethnic background as me' (53%; 34%).

Location. Rural residents tend to have less strongly positive attitudes to diversity than those who reside in urban areas. Rural residents are more likely than those in urban areas to disagree that having a mix of different people makes an area more enjoyable to live in (23%; 17%). They are also more likely than urban residents to agree that they would rather live in a more ethnically homogenous area (29%; 21%).

Neighbourhood deprivation. Those in the least deprived neighbourhoods are more likely than those in more deprived neighbourhoods to agree with positive statements about diversity and disagree with the negative statements. People living in SIMD5 neighbourhoods are more likely than those living in SIMD1-4 neighbourhoods to agree that diversity is good for Scotland (73%; 59%)

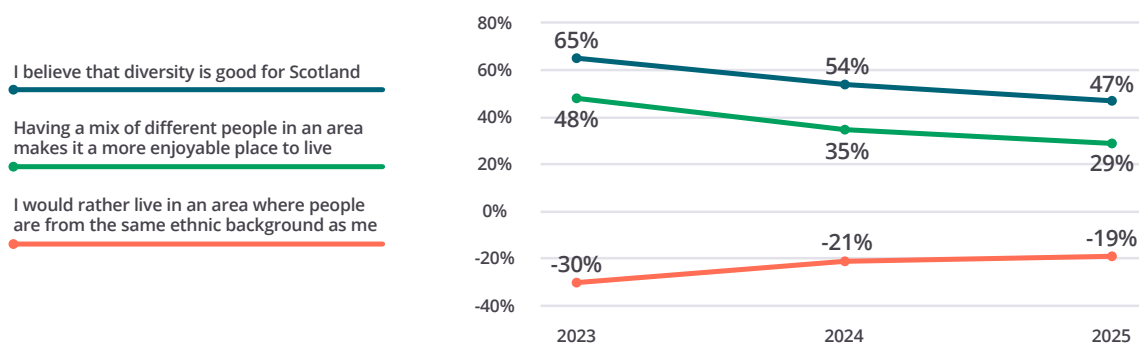
2024 General Election Vote. Reform UK voters are more likely than those voting for any other party to disagree that diversity is good for Scotland (66%) or that having a mix of different people makes an area more enjoyable to live in (66%), they are also more likely than all other voters to agree that they would prefer to live in an ethnically homogenous area (68%). Green (89%) and SNP voters (75%) are more likely than those who voted for Labour, The Conservative Party or Reform UK to agree that diversity is good for Scotland.

4.1 Changes over time to attitudes to diversity

An examination of responses to the three questions measuring attitudes to diversity across the three waves of the survey shows that there has been a notable decline in net agreement (agreement minus disagreement) for positive diversity statements and an increase in net agreement for the negative diversity statement.

Figure 23: Changes over time to net agreement with diversity statements, Waves 1-3 (2023-2025)

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



Net agreement that diversity is good for Scotland decreased from 65% in Wave 1 (2023) to 54% in Wave 2 (2024) and further still to 47% in Wave 3 (2025). Net agreement with the proposition that having a mix of different people makes a place more enjoyable to live in also decreased substantially from 48% in Wave 1 (2023) to 35% in Wave 2 (2024) and to 29% in Wave 3 (2025). In contrast, net agreement with the statement 'I would rather live in a place where people are from the same ethnic background as me' increased from -30% in Wave 1 (2023) to -21% in Wave 2 (2024) and again to -19% in Wave 3 (2025).

5. Experiences of immigration

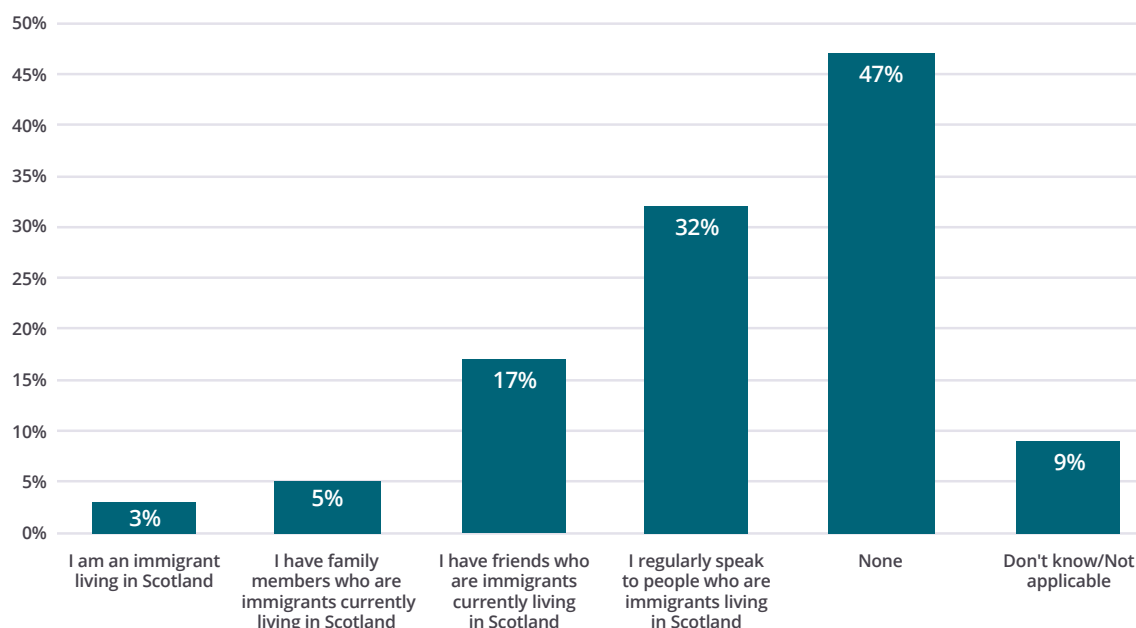
Understanding the Scottish public's experiences of immigration and the extent of their day-to-day interaction with people who have immigrated to Scotland is helpful to understanding the contexts in which their views on immigration and its impacts are formed. The Migration Policy Scotland Attitudes to Immigration Survey includes a question asking respondents about their levels of social contact with immigrants. This part of the survey includes a reminder for respondents that immigrants are people born outside of the UK who have come to Scotland to work, study, join family, or because they need protection. Respondents are able to select as many experiences of immigration as are applicable.

In Wave 3 (2025) of the survey, nearly half of respondents (47%) report that they have no social contact with immigrants, whilst only (44%) respondents selected at least one experience of immigration from a list of options including being an immigrant themselves, having friends or family that are immigrants in Scotland, or regularly speaking to immigrants living in Scotland. 1 in 3 respondents (32%) indicate that they regularly speak to people who are immigrants living in Scotland. About 1 in 6 (17%) indicate that they have friends who are immigrants currently living in Scotland and 1 in 20 (5%) have family members who are immigrants in Scotland.

This pattern of social contact with immigrants has remained stable across all 3 years of the survey, varying by a just few percentage points in each Wave.

Figure 24: Levels of social contact with immigrants, Wave 3 (2025)

Which of the following statements applies best to you?



The results indicate that there are significant differences in social contact with immigrants between socio-demographic subgroups of the population

Age. Social contact appears to be greater amongst younger age groups. Those aged 65 and over are less likely than those aged 16-64 to regularly speak to immigrants (18%; 36%), to have friends who are immigrants (5%; 21%) or to be an immigrant themselves (1%; 4%). Those aged between 16 and 34 years old are more likely than those aged 35 and over to report that they have friends who are immigrants (32%; 12%) and that they speak regularly to immigrants (45%; 26%). Conversely, those aged 35 and over are more likely than those aged 16-34 to say they have no social contact with immigrants (53%; 33%).

Social Grade. Those in higher social grades (ABC1) are more likely than those in social grades C2DE to have a friend (20%; 14%) or family member (6%; 4%) who is an immigrant living in Scotland or to speak regularly to immigrants (34%; 29%).

Neighbourhood Deprivation. Those living in the least deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 5) are more likely than those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 1) to have friends who are immigrants in Scotland (23%; 15%).

2024 General Election vote. Those that voted Reform UK (69%) or Conservative (61%) are more likely than those that voted for Labour (49%), SNP (42%) or Liberal Democrats (38%) to have no social contact with immigrants. Those that voted Liberal Democrats (33%) are more likely than Conservative (8%), Reform UK (8%), Labour (16%) and SNP (19%) voters to have friends who are immigrants.

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Appendix A – Topline findings (2023-2025)

Question 1: 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? (2023-25)

	Increased a lot %	Increased a little %	Net: Increased %	Remain the same as it is %	Reduced a little %	Reduced a lot %	Net: Reduced %
Feb 25 (2,191)	9	18	28	27	18	27	45
Feb 24 (2,297)	10	21	31	26	17	25	42
Jan 23 (1,162)	12	26	39	34	12	16	28

Question 2: Please remember to think about immigrants as people born outside the UK who have moved to Scotland to work, study, join family, or because they need protection. In your opinion, what percentage of the total Scotland population are immigrants? You can answer any number between 0 and 100. (2024-25) 29

	0-2 %	3-5 %	6-10 %	11-20 %	21-50 %	51+ %
Feb 25 (2,147)	3	15	29	27	23	3
Feb 24 (2,256)	6	13	28	26	25	2
Jan 23 (1,147)	6	17	21	22	29	6

29 (2023) In your opinion, what percentage of the total Scotland population are immigrants? You can answer any number between 0 and 100.

Question 3: On a scale of 0 to 10, has migration had a positive or negative impact on...? (2023-25)

		Scotland %	Your local area %
Feb 25 (2,182)	Negative: 0-4	26	23
	Neutral: 5	13	16
	Positive: 6-10	47	37
	DK	14	24
	Mean	5.75	5.47
Feb 24 (2,295)	Negative: 0-4	26	23
	Neutral: 5	12	17
	Positive: 6-10	50	38
	DK	12	22
	Mean	5.87	5.54
Jan 23 (1,157)	Negative: 0-4	18	20
	Neutral: 5	23	32
	Positive: 6-10	59	48
	Mean	6.31	5.82

Question 4: There are different views regarding the impact of immigration in Scotland. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Overall immigration (2024-25)/immigrants (2023)

		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Net: Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Net: Disagree	Don't know
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Has a positive impact on the Scottish economy	Feb 25 (2,188)	16	30	46	23	15	11	26	4
	Feb 24 (2,296)	17	31	47	21	16	11	26	5
	Jan 23 (1,158)	21	35	56	23	11	7	18	3
Is a burden on our welfare system	Feb 25 (2,187)	23	25	48	16	18	15	32	3
	Feb 24 (2,298)	20	26	46	17	19	14	34	3
	Jan 23 (1,161)	11	19	30	19	24	23	47	4
Takes jobs away from workers in Scotland	Feb 25 (2,185)	8	16	25	20	28	26	53	2
	Feb 24 (2,298)	9	15	24	20	32	23	54	1
	Jan 23 (1,157)	5	10	14	20	31	34	65	1
Helps to fill jobs for which it's hard to find workers in Scotland	Feb 25 (2,188)	26	41	68	15	10	6	16	2
	Feb 24 (2,303)	27	42	69	14	10	5	15	2
	Jan 23 (1,158)	30	45	76	13	5	4	10	2
Brings new ideas and/or boosts innovation in Scotland	Feb 25 (2,186)	15	29	44	26	15	11	26	4
	Feb 24 (2,298)	16	32	48	27	13	9	22	3
	Jan 23 (1,162)	16	36	52	26	11	7	18	3
Enriches Scottish cultural life (art, music, food etc.)	Feb 25 (2,189)	22	32	54	20	12	11	23	3
	Feb 24 (2,303)	23	32	55	21	12	9	22	2
	Jan 23 (1,158)	25	34	60	20	11	6	17	3
Worsens crime problems in Scotland	Feb 25 (2,186)	15	23	38	21	19	16	35	5
	Feb 24 (2,302)	12	20	32	27	22	14	36	5
	Jan 23 (1,159)	7	16	23	30	22	19	41	6

		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Net: Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Net: Disagree	Don't know
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brings new people to areas of Scotland which need them	Feb 25 (2,188)	17	32	48	21	17	10	26	4
	Feb 24 (2,298)	17	34	51	21	16	10	26	3
	Jan 23 (1,159)	20	39	58	21	11	6	17	4
Leads to social conflict	Feb 25 (2,188)	16	36	51	23	15	7	22	3
	Feb 24 (2,299)	12	34	46	27	17	7	24	3
Increases the risk of terrorism	Feb 25 (2,191)	13	19	32	22	20	23	43	3
	Feb 24 (2,299)	12	16	28	21	23	25	48	3

Question 5: Now please think about immigration to the area where you live. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Overall immigration (2024-25) ³⁰

		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Net: Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Net: Disagree	Don't know
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Has a positive impact on the local economy	Feb 25 (2,180)	15	27	41	26	17	10	27	7
	Feb 24 (2,295)	15	27	41	26	15	10	25	8
	Jan 23 (1,158)	16	38	54	24	11	6	18	5
Is a burden on local resources	Feb 25 (2,179)	17	23	40	19	19	17	35	5
	Feb 24 (2,300)	16	20	36	20	21	18	39	5
	Jan 23 (1,156)	7	18	25	22	26	22	48	4
Takes jobs away from local workers	Feb 25 (2,175)	8	14	23	21	27	24	51	5
	Feb 24 (2,294)	9	13	22	19	29	24	54	5
	Jan 23 (1,154)	4	10	14	20	32	31	63	3

³⁰ (2023) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements. Overall immigrants in my local area...

		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Net: Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Net: Disagree	Don't know
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Helps to fill jobs for which it's hard to find local workers	Feb 25 (2,183)	18	37	55	20	12	7	19	6
	Feb 24 (2,302)	21	36	56	18	12	8	20	5
	Jan 23 (1,156)	24	43	66	18	8	4	12	4
Brings new ideas and/or boosts innovation in the local area	Feb 25 (2,183)	13	26	39	26	16	12	28	7
	Feb 24 (2,299)	14	26	39	28	15	11	25	8
	Jan 23 (1,155)	13	32	45	30	13	7	20	5
Enriches local cultural life (art, music, food etc.)	Feb 25 (2,178)	20	27	47	22	14	11	25	6
	Feb 24 (2,297)	18	30	48	24	15	8	23	5
	Jan 23 (1,152)	21	35	55	24	11	7	18	3
Worsens local crime problems	Feb 25 (2,181)	12	20	32	22	19	20	39	7
	Feb 24 (2,299)	11	16	27	24	24	19	43	6
	Jan 23 (1,158)	6	13	19	28	23	23	46	7
Brings new people to an area that needs them	Feb 25 (2,182)	12	29	41	24	17	12	29	6
	Feb 24 (2,296)	14	29	43	25	16	12	27	6
	Jan 23 (1,157)	15	34	48	24	16	6	22	5
Leads to social conflict	Feb 25 (2,179)	12	29	40	23	19	12	31	6
	Feb 24 (2,297)	11	24	35	24	21	13	35	6
Increases the risks of terrorism	Feb 25 (2,181)	11	14	25	21	19	29	48	6
	Feb 24 (2,300)	10	12	22	20	21	32	53	6

Question 6: Please tell us if you think each of the following types of immigration should be increased, kept the same, or reduced (2024-25)

		Increased a lot %	Increased a little %	Net: Increased %	Remain the same %	Reduced a little %	Reduced a lot %	Net: Reduced %	DK %
People who come to work in Scotland on a skilled worker visa	Feb 25 (2,183)	24	31	55	27	6	4	10	8
	Feb 24 (2,297)	28	31	59	26	6	3	9	6
People who come to work in Scotland on a health and social care visa	Feb 25 (2,181)	20	23	43	27	9	10	19	11
	Feb 24 (2,295)	23	25	48	25	9	9	18	10
People who come to Scotland to do seasonal or temporary work	Feb 25 (2,182)	16	26	41	31	10	9	19	8
	Feb 24 (2,293)	19	29	48	29	10	8	17	6
People who come to Scotland to study	Feb 25 (2,182)	14	20	34	39	14	7	21	6
	Feb 24 (2,291)	14	23	37	39	11	8	20	5
People who come to Scotland accompanying immediate family members who have a work visa	Feb 25 (2,182)	8	15	23	33	15	18	33	11
	Feb 24 (2,297)	9	19	28	34	13	16	29	9
People who come to Scotland accompanying immediate family members who have a study visa	Feb 25 (2,180)	6	11	17	28	17	27	44	11
	Feb 24 (2,298)	6	13	19	29	17	25	42	9
People who come to Scotland on specified humanitarian visas (e.g. from Ukraine)	Feb 25 (2,179)	15	22	37	36	9	11	20	7
	Feb 24 (2,298)	19	26	45	31	9	9	18	6
People who come to Scotland seeking asylum	Feb 25 (2,177)	14	16	30	24	15	25	40	7
	Feb 24 (2,296)	15	18	33	25	14	22	36	6
People who come to Scotland to join immediate family members who are British citizens	Feb 25 (2,178)	9	16	25	39	12	14	26	10
	Feb 24 (2,297)	11	19	30	37	13	13	25	8
People who come to Scotland to join extended family members who are British citizens	Feb 25 (2,181)	7	13	20	34	17	19	35	11
	Feb 24 (2,298)	8	15	24	34	15	20	34	8

Question 7: Please now think about migration to Scotland for work. Which of the following two statements comes closest to your preference? (2023-25)

	Jan 23 (1,158) %	Feb 24 (2,302) %	Feb 25 (2,187) %
Migrants should be allowed to come to Scotland for a short period of time only to work, then be required to return home	16	25	25
Migrants should be allowed to come to Scotland for a longer period of time to have the chance to settle and integrate	66	53	48
Neither	10	14	15
Don't know	8	9	12

Question 8: Currently international students are eligible to apply for a 2-year post-study visa which allows them to work in any job. Do you support or oppose this policy? (2024-25)

	Feb 24 (2,301) %	Feb 25 (2,187) %
Strongly support	24	24
Tend to support	36	35
Net: Support	60	59
Neither support nor oppose	19	19
Tend to oppose	12	12
Strongly oppose	6	7
Net: Oppose	18	19
DK	3	3

Question 9: How long should immigrants, excluding asylum seekers and refugees, work and pay tax in the UK before they are eligible for benefits and social housing? (2024-25)

	Feb 24 (2,301) %	Feb 25 (2,186) %
12 months or less	15	13
1-2 years	23	21
3-5 years	24	24
6-10 years	7	7
Longer than 10 years	4	5
Only UK citizens should be eligible for benefits and social housing	20	24
DK	7	6

Question 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements (2024-25)

		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Net: Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Net: Disagree	DK
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Employers should be able to recruit workers from abroad to fill vacancies	Feb 25 (2,141)	19	37	56	19	15	7	22	2
	Feb 24 (2,241)	22	39	61	17	14	6	20	2
Sectors with critical shortages (e.g. health and social care) should be able to recruit workers from abroad to fill vacancies	Feb 25 (2,137)	38	38	77	10	8	4	12	2
	Feb 24 (2,248)	44	35	79	9	7	4	11	2
Sectors requiring temporary and seasonal workers (e.g. farming) should be able to recruit from abroad to fill vacancies	Feb 25 (2,136)	33	41	73	13	7	4	11	2
	Feb 24 (2,245)	37	41	78	9	8	3	11	2
Employers should not be able to recruit workers from abroad, even if they can't find British staff	Feb 25 (2,147)	4	10	14	14	35	35	70	2
	Feb 24 (2,247)	4	9	14	12	36	35	71	3
Employers that recruit workers from abroad should be obliged to pay into a training fund that is used to develop skills in UK workers	Feb 25 (2,114)	23	40	62	21	7	4	11	6
	Feb 24 (2,198)	24	34	58	20	10	5	15	7
Wage regulations should be enforced better, so that workers from abroad do not undercut British workers	Feb 25 (2,110)	38	39	77	13	4	2	6	4
	Feb 24 (2,195)	42	36	78	11	4	3	7	4

Question 11: Some countries have introduced programmes where people can become ‘welcomers’, meeting newly arrived migrants socially and helping them to settle and integrate. How strongly would you support or oppose the Scottish Government creating a welcoming programme linking British people with newly arrived migrants to help them settle and integrate in Scotland? (2024-25)

	Feb 24 (2,301) %	Feb 25 (2,186) %
Strongly support	21	19
Tend to support	34	32
Net: Support	55	50
Neither support nor oppose	23	25
Tend to oppose	7	9
Strongly oppose	11	11
Net: Oppose	18	20
DK	4	5

Question 12: And how likely, if at all, would you personally be to take part in a welcoming programme? (2024-25)

Base: Support/Neither support nor oppose at Q11	Feb 24 (1,777) %	Feb 25 (1,598) %
Very likely	6	5
Fairly likely	24	23
Net: Likely	30	28
Not very likely	34	37
Not at all likely	27	25
Net: Not likely	61	62
DK	9	10

Question 13: Please remember that for this survey we are defining immigrants as people born outside the UK who have come to Scotland to work, study, join family, or because they need protection.

Which of the following statements applies best to you? (2024-25)³¹

	Jan 23 (1,162) %	Feb 24 (2,305) %	Feb 25 (2,194) %
I am an immigrant living in Scotland	3	2	3
I have friends who are immigrants currently living in Scotland	20	17	17
I have family members who are immigrants currently living in Scotland	5	4	5
I regularly speak to people who are immigrants living in Scotland	32	30	32
None of the above	46	51	47
Don't know / Not Applicable	7	8	9

Question 14: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following? (2023-25)

		Strongly agree %	Tend to agree %	Net: Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Tend to disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Net: Disagree %	Don't know %
Having a mix of different people in an area makes it a more enjoyable place to live	Feb 25 (2,188)	18	29	48	32	11	7	18	2
	Feb 24 (2,290)	20	32	52	29	11	6	17	2
	Jan 23 (1,159)	26	35	60	25	9	4	12	2
I would rather live in an area where people are from the same ethnic background as me	Feb 25 (2,179)	8	15	23	33	24	18	42	2
	Feb 24 (2,289)	8	14	22	33	25	19	44	1
	Jan 23 (1,159)	6	12	18	33	24	24	48	1
I believe that diversity is good for Scotland	Feb 25 (2,183)	30	32	62	21	8	7	15	2
	Feb 24 (2,294)	30	35	65	22	6	5	11	2
	Jan 23 (1,159)	39	35	74	17	5	3	8	1

31 (2023) Which of the following statements applies best to you?

Question 15: At the 2024 UK General Election, which party did you vote for? (2025)

	Feb 24 (2,301) %	Feb 25 (2,191) %
Conservative	12	6
Labour	14	27
Liberal Democrats	4	6
Green Party	2	4
The Brexit Party	1	-
Reform UK	-	5
The Scottish National Party	44	29
A different party (Please specify)	1	1
Don't remember	6	2
Didn't vote	9	10
Prefer not to say	7	8

Technical details:

2025

- The survey was designed by Migration Policy Scotland and Diffley Partnership
- Invitations were issued online using the ScotPulse panel
- Results are based on a survey of 2,194 respondents
- Fieldwork was conducted between 4th – 10th February 2025
- Results are weighted to the Scottish population by age and gender

2024

- The survey was designed by Migration Policy Scotland and Diffley Partnership
- Invitations were issued online using the ScotPulse panel
- Results are based on a survey of 2,305 respondents
- Fieldwork was conducted between 1st – 5th February 2024
- Results are weighted to the Scottish population by age and gender

2023

- The survey was designed by Migration Policy Scotland and Diffley Partnership
- Invitations were issued online using the ScotPulse panel
- Results are based on a survey of 1,162 respondents
- Fieldwork was conducted between 17th – 19th January 2023
- Results are weighted to the Scottish population by age and gender

Attitudes to Immigration
in Scotland: Changing,
complex, contradictory

**MIGRATION
POLICY
SCOTLAND**