

New research on immigration

Polling of UK citizens has shown that immigration is one of the top three issues facing the country. All the major political parties agree on a tightening of the immigration process, and media coverage of immigration is largely negative. But what does recent research say?

Research from the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex has explored a range of issues relating to the costs and benefits of immigration, from the experiences of new and second generation immigrants to wellbeing in diverse areas and the prevalence of poverty amongst newcomers. Collectively, this body of research offers new insights which can be used to inform policy on and influence debate over one of the country's most complex and controversial issues.

KEY POINTS

1. White British people living in a diverse area have, on average, lower life satisfaction than those where diversity is low.
www.izajom.com/content/3/1/13
2. Migrants who intend to stay are more integrated and have higher wellbeing than those who plan to stay temporarily.
www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/publications/working-papers/iser/2014-18.pdf
3. Negative attitudes to immigration are, surprisingly, less common in regions with high levels of native British unemployment.
www.migration.oxfordjournals.org/content/1/3/311
4. Migrants work in the UK for other reasons than money, such as to travel, to learn English, or to progress in their careers.
www.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2010.00677.x/abstract;jsessionid=5C8D64065EB4E3BFC65C65B7F82891E4.f01t04

How are immigrants getting on?

Understanding the experiences of newcomers is an often over-looked but important area to consider. New ISER research has explored many aspects of the lives of immigrants and how they adjust to their new surroundings.

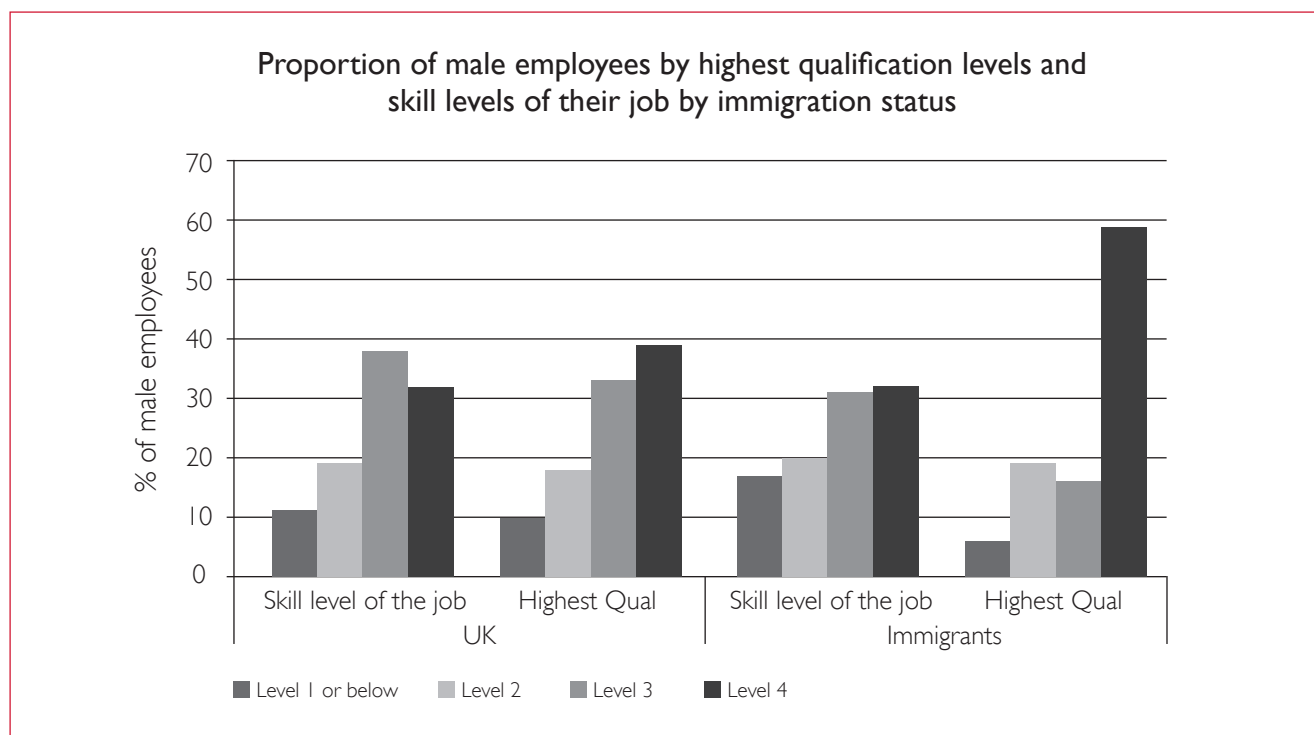
Research by Renee Luthra, Lucinda Platt, and Justyna Salamonska looks at the experience of Polish immigrants who arrived in the last 18 months. Using unique data from over 3,500 immigrants, this research takes a closer look at how personal attributions,

motivations and intentions prior to a move shape how an immigrant fares in their destination country. The researchers' analysis shows that the outcomes of immigration depend significantly on the type of immigrant. For example, a temporary worker will tend to have lower levels of life satisfaction and be less socially integrated compared to permanent workers, who tend to invest much more into the country. Although less likely to work in general, students and family migrants are more likely to have higher-status jobs than economic migrants.

In a similar vein, a paper by Violetta Parutis explores the experiences of Lithuanian and Polish migrants in London, and determines that their experiences depend on their future goals. In particular, she finds that migrants proceed along three employment stages, beginning with finding 'any job' when they arrive, then moving to a 'better job' but while still searching for a 'dream job'. If an immigrant intends to stay only for a short time, they focus on 'any job' to earn money to return home. Immigrants who stay longer proceed into

a 'better job', learning the language and familiarising themselves with British social networks.

Using the UK Household Longitudinal Study, Szilvia Altorjai has found strong evidence for over-qualification amongst immigrants, particularly from new-comers since 2004. Her work finds that, between 1973 and 2010, immigrants were 11 percent more likely to be over-qualified for a job than UK born workers, and this risk of being over-qualified rose further in years when there was a skills-based immigration policy in place.



What about the British natives?

Different areas of the UK have differing experiences of immigration, with some areas seeing a rapid increase in their population of foreign-born, and others seeing little change. Research from ISER and the University of Essex has also focused on the changes in natives' opinions about immigration, and their wellbeing, in the face of sometimes rapid population change.

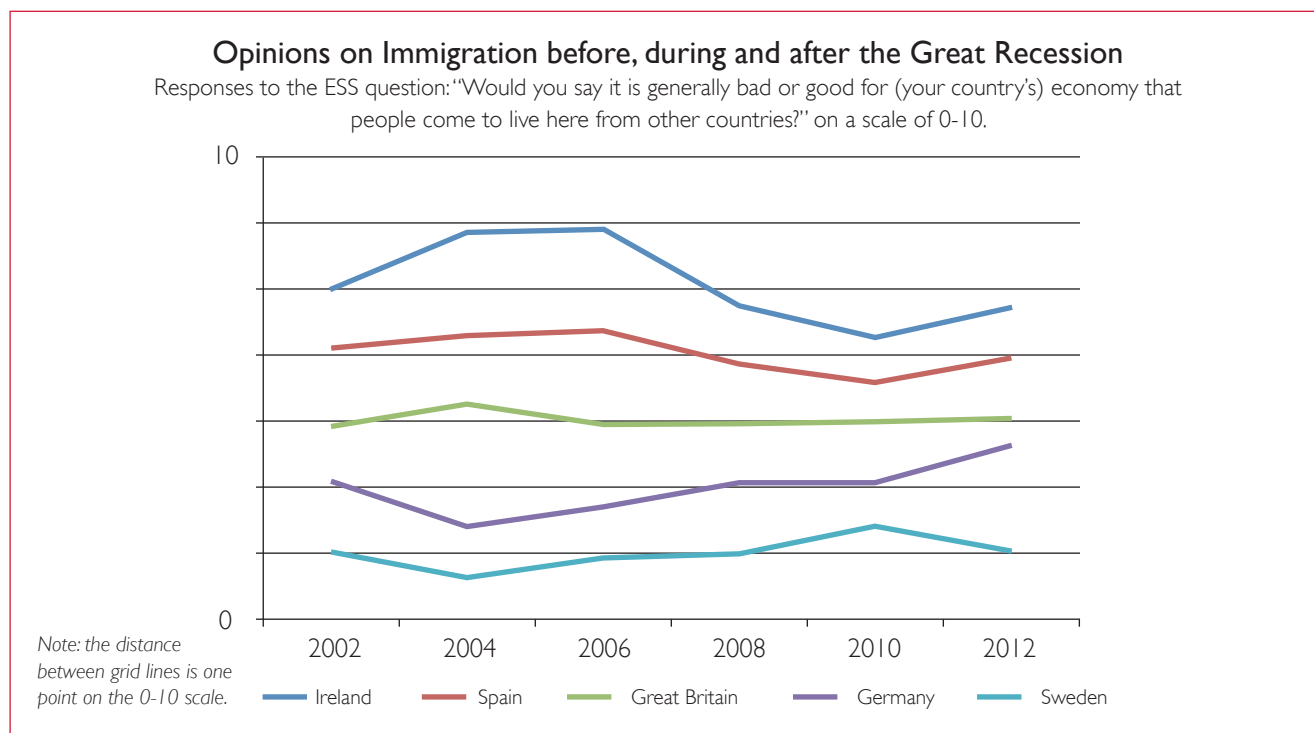
Simonetta Longhi has found that white British people living in diverse areas are less happy than those living with people of their own background. Using the UK Household Longitudinal Study, she explored the effect of religious, ethnic and country of birth diversity. Although religious diversity was not found to have an affect on wellbeing, diversity in both ethnicity and country of birth

did. It is possible that these effects are related to lack of knowledge about the costs and benefits of diversity and slow adaptation to higher diversity as these effects seem to diminish for those who have lived at their current address for a longer time.

Yvonne Markaki and Simonetta Longhi have looked deeper into what factors may be behind these beliefs, and why people from different regions have different opinions on immigration. They find that high unemployment amongst the immigrant community and a high percentage of non-EU immigration can drive negative perceptions of immigrants, whereas – perhaps surprisingly – high unemployment in the native community leads to more positive attitudes towards immigration.

This is particularly important given the findings of Professor Timothy Hatton, from the University of Essex presented at a recent ISER event. His research focuses on the effect of the recession on public opinion towards immigrants across different European countries. He finds that there has been very little deterioration

in opinions towards immigration except in countries where the recession has been most severe. The main drivers of negative opinions are the percentage of immigrants in a community, and the levels of spending on social welfare.



Summary

The research at the Institute for Social and Economic Research and the University of Essex has shed light on often ignored aspects of immigration. Research into the experiences of new immigrants emphasises the importance of a more nuanced approach to understanding the backgrounds and intentions of newcomers, as their activities and needs will be different. Equally, it is necessary to have robust evidence on what impact immigration is having on the lives of natives, as well as what is driving beliefs towards immigrants.

Over the next few years, ISER researchers will examine additional dimensions of the experiences of immigrants in the UK, including their short and long term health outcomes as well as their experiences of discrimination and how the integration of migrants and ethnic minorities varies across regions. This new work will provide new evidence on the impact of immigration on health behaviours, mental health, and their relationship with harassment, and how the characteristics of native populations affects integration of newcomers.