



What is Migration Policy *for*?

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To discuss

- Do we know what UK migration policy is intended to achieve?
- Does it matter?
- Could it help to have that debate?
- How would the public respond?



What could the aims be?



Canadian Immigration and Refugee Protection Act 2001

3. (1) The objectives of this Act with respect to immigration are
- (a) to permit Canada to pursue the maximum social, cultural and economic benefits of immigration;
 - (b) to enrich and strengthen the social and cultural fabric of Canadian society, while respecting the federal, bilingual and multicultural character of Canada;
 - (c) to support the development of a strong and prosperous Canadian economy, in which the benefits of immigration are shared across all regions of Canada;
 - (d) to see that families are reunited in Canada;
 - (e) to promote the successful integration of permanent residents into Canada, while recognizing that integration involves mutual obligations for new immigrants and Canadian society;
 - (g) to facilitate the entry of visitors, students and temporary workers for purposes such as trade, commerce, tourism, international understanding and cultural, educational and scientific activities;
 - (h) to protect the health and safety of Canadians and to maintain the security of Canadian society;
 - (i) to promote international justice and security by fostering respect for human rights and by denying access to Canadian territory to persons who are criminals or security risks; and
 - (j) to work in cooperation with the provinces to secure better recognition of the foreign credentials

Aims of UK migration policy have lacked this clarity

Ministers clearer what they intend to *do* than why, or where fits with governments' wider economic, social and international objectives?

Coalition policy



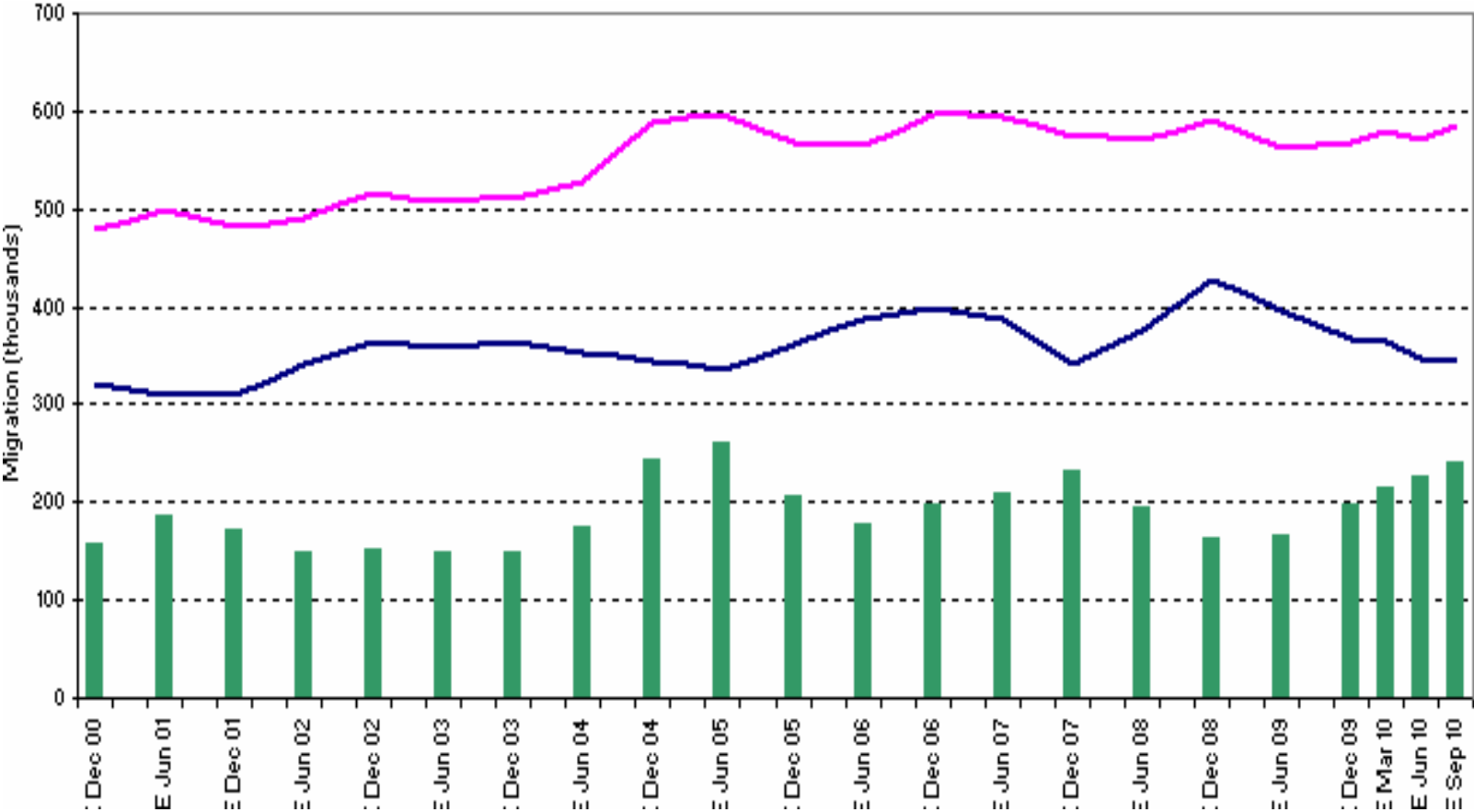
- Headline policy – cut net migration
What for? Speeches suggest aim is to:
- Build public confidence in immigration system
- Ensure cohesion
- Protect public services – schools, housing, health
- Reduce burden on tax payer
- & Limit population growth?

All governments have found cutting numbers difficult to achieve

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ONS Total long-term international migration estimates, UK, 2000–2010



Why? Three reasons

1. Legacy they inherit
2. Practical/cost constraints
3. Competing objectives



Historical legacy



- New governments do not start with clean slate
- Inherit migration patterns, legislation, institutions, public expectations, administrative capacity

Eg

- Labour 1997: backlog 52,000 asylum cases, compounded by computer system failure
- Coalition 2010: free movement 'A8' EU nationals

Practical / Cost constraints

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- >100m people enter borders each year, >12m non EU
- 100% checks in/out -not practical nor cost effective
- 10 min rise time passport clearance: £400m pa
- Staff cost of inspecting employer compliance
- Service providers reluctant check immigration status
- 618,000 irregular migrants (2007):<70,000 removed pa
- Cost enforced removal: £7,900 - £17,000 for single adult

Constraints suggest need to be realistic what deliver

Also - Competing aims

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1. Economic
2. International
3. Human rights
4. Social



Aims, relative priorities
and trade offs rarely
explicit

1. Economic imperatives



- Compete ‘brightest & best’
- Students: £3.48bn pa (HE) & 8% university revenue
- Tourism:
 - 30m tourists pa; £16bn to economy
 - 3rd largest export earner
 - 2011 Plan for Growth: +4m visitors, generating £2bn & 50,000 jobs
 - How? Make it easier to get a visa



2. International relations



- International agreements & need for cooperation can require reciprocity
- EU freedom of movement part of the EU deal
- GATT: limits control intra-company transfers
- Commonwealth relations/reciprocity eg India: concern re impact of 'cap' in 2010 during trade talks

3. Human rights compliance



- UN Refugee Convention – consider all claims
- European Convention on Human Rights:
 - not return individual to face torture
 - not use destitution to encourage migrants to leave
 - Limits restrictions can impose on marriage migration

4. Social objectives



- End detention of children – protect welfare
- Access some NHS treatment regardless of immigration status – protect public health
- Family migration – reflects commitment to family life as well as human rights compliance
- Social aims – cohesion – also cited as grounds for tighter controls

Does it matter that aims not explicit?



- Focus single over-riding goal – cut numbers – without debate competing priorities
- Public see failure deliver – not know why
- Aim may be implicit – eg limit population growth - without rational tested
- Policy to achieve one aim may undermine another, eg integration, or conflict with wider government goals
- Arguable some aims should have greater prominence – eg reuniting families
- No debate - no means build consensus

Alternative approach?



- Government led, evidenced based, consultation
- Options on table: limit population growth, meet demand labour, sustain universities, expand (restrict) tourism, reunite/divide families.....?
- Engage public & stakeholders: polls suggest greater flexibility than headline opposition
- Could debate build greater understanding & consensus on aims – as basis for more reasoned debate on policy levers to achieve it?
- Would Opposition engage constructively?

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