

British Social Attitudes 2013: Attitudes to immigration

British Social Attitudes 2013

NatCen Social Research's British Social Attitudes survey has been conducted annually since 1983. Since then around 90,000 people have taken part in the survey. The 2013 survey consisted of 3,244 interviews with a representative, random sample of adults in Britain.

This document explores three questions from British Social Attitudes 2013.

1. Attitudes to immigration

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

More than three-quarters of the public (77%) want to see a reduction in immigration into Britain and public views of the level of immigration are significantly more negative than in 2011. However, this year's reading is at a similar level to 2008 and we can see that the public's attitude to immigration into Britain has remained broadly consistent over the past decade.

Only a very small minority (4%) say that immigration should be increased and this has remained consistently low since we first asked the question 18 years ago.

Table 1 Views on level of immigration

	1995	2003	2008	2011	2013
Immigration to Britain should...	%	%	%	%	%
... be increased a lot	1	2	2	1	2
... be increased a little	3	4	2	2	2
... remain the same as it is	27	16	17	18	17
... be reduced a little	24	23	23	24	21
... be reduced a lot	39	49	55	51	56
Don't know	6	7	1	1	1
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1058</i>	<i>873</i>	<i>2236</i>	<i>3311</i>	<i>3243</i>

Table 2 Views on level of immigration, by demographics

		Immigration to Britain should ...			
		... be increased	... remain the same	... be reduced	<i>Unweighted bases</i>
Sex					
Men	%	5	17	77	1452
Women	%	4	18	77	1792
Age					
18-24	%	3	25	71	237
25-34	%	6	25	67	457
35-44	%	4	19	75	554
45-54	%	4	17	77	541
55-64	%	4	13	81	533
65-97	%	3	9	87	917
Education					
Degree	%	8	32	57	694
Higher educ/a-level	%	2	17	80	824
O level/GCSE/CSE	%	3	11	85	715
No qual	%	5	9	85	690
Household income (quartiles)					
Q1 (lowest income quartile)	%	4	14	81	783
Q2	%	3	17	78	626
Q3	%	4	14	81	567
Q4 (highest income quartile)	%	5	24	70	627
Occupational class					
Managerial & professional occups	%	5	23	70	1165
Intermediate occupations	%	3	14	82	479
Employers in small org; own account workers	%	3	13	83	287
Lower supervisory & technical occupations	%	1	11	88	277
Semi-routine & routine occupations	%	5	15	79	903
Migrant heritage					
Respondent and parents born in GB	%	3	14	82	2643
1st/2nd gen migrant	%	8	31	60	596
Party Identification					
Conservative	%	3	10	86	818
Labour	%	5	23	71	1052
Liberal Democrat	%	5	30	62	194

Other*	%	3	13	83	328
None	%	4	17	77	581
Country					
England	%	4	17	78	2799
Scotland	%	2	25	69	272
Wales	%	4	10	86	173
Total	%	4	17	77	3244

*Those identifying with a party other than main 3 - including Plaid Cymru, SSP, Ukip, Green Party etc

2. Impact on the economy

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is extremely bad and 10 is extremely good, would you say it is generally bad or good for Britain's economy that migrants come to Britain from other countries?

Asked whether they think immigration is good or bad for Britain's economy (by selecting a number between 0 and 10 when 0 is "extremely bad" and 10 is "extremely good") close to half (47%) indicate that they believe immigration is bad for the economy.

Interestingly, although there is very low support for increased immigration, close to a third (31%) do see immigration as being good for the economy. In addition, the number of people who selected an answer indicating that immigration is bad for the economy has fallen by five percentage points since 2011.

Table 3 Views on the impact of immigration on Britain's economy, 2011 and 2013

	2011	2013
Economic impact	%	%
Bad (1-4)	52	47
Neither good nor bad (5)	18	20
Good (6-10)	29	31
Don't know	1	1
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>3311</i>	<i>3244</i>

Comparing whether people believe that immigration is good for the economy with their view on the level of immigration, we can see that more than half of people (54%) who see immigration as good for the economy also want to see immigration reduced. Thus, even people who may ordinarily be in favour of immigration seem to be concerned about current levels.

Table 4 Views on the impact of migration on the economy

	Economic impact			
	Bad (1-4)	Neither good nor bad (5)	Good (6-10)	All
	%	%	%	%
Immigration to Britain should..				
... be increased	3	3	7	4
... remain the same	3	21	37	17
... be reduced a little	12	28	31	21
... be reduced a lot	82	46	23	56
Don't know	*	2	2	1
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>1591</i>	<i>685</i>	<i>924</i>	<i>3243</i>

Table 5 Views on the impact of migration on the economy

		Economic impact			
		Bad (0-4)	Neither good nor bad (5)	Good (6-10)	<i>Unweighted bases</i>
Sex					
Men	%	46	18	35	<i>1452</i>
Women	%	48	23	27	<i>1792</i>
Age					
18-24	%	40	19	38	<i>237</i>
25-34	%	41	20	37	<i>457</i>
35-44	%	43	18	39	<i>554</i>
45-54	%	51	21	27	<i>541</i>
55-64	%	52	17	30	<i>533</i>
65-97	%	52	26	20	<i>917</i>
Education					
Degree	%	22	16	60	<i>694</i>
Higher educ/a-level	%	46	22	31	<i>824</i>
O level/GCSE/CSE	%	61	21	17	<i>715</i>
No qual	%	61	21	17	<i>690</i>
Household income (quartiles)					
Q1 (lowest income quartile)	%	53	22	23	<i>783</i>
Q2	%	52	23	24	<i>626</i>
Q3	%	49	19	31	<i>567</i>
Q4 (highest income quartile)	%	35	16	48	<i>627</i>
Occupational class					
Managerial & professional occupa	%	34	20	45	<i>1165</i>
Intermediate occupations	%	52	21	26	<i>479</i>
Employers in small org; own account workers	%	51	20	27	<i>287</i>
Lower supervisory & technical occupations	%	59	24	16	<i>277</i>
Semi-routine & routine	%	55	21	22	<i>903</i>

occupations					
Migrant heritage					
Respondent and parents born in GB	%	53	19	27	2643
1st/2nd gen migrant	%	26	25	48	596
Party Id					
Conservative	%	49	20	30	818
Labour	%	40	22	36	1052
Liberal Democrat	%	29	19	52	194
Other*	%	60	17	22	328
None	%	55	19	24	581
Country					
England	%	46	20	32	2799
Scotland	%	44	22	33	272
Wales	%	65	18	16	173
Total					
	%	47	20	31	3244

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3. Cultural impact

And on a scale of 0 to 10, would you say that Britain's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by migrants coming to live here from other countries?

The percentage of people who feel that Britain's cultural life is undermined by migrants coming to live here (45%) is roughly the same as the percentage of people who believe migrants are bad for the economy (47%).

Britain's culture is...	2011	2013
	%	%
...undermined (1-4)	47	45
... neither (5)	17	19
... enriched (6-10)	34	34
Don't know	1	1
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>3311</i>	<i>3244</i>

As with the views of the economy, the majority of people (55%) who see Britain's cultural life as being enriched by migrants coming to live here from other countries still want to see a reduction in immigration.

Table 7 Views on the impact of migration on culture

	Cultural impact			All
	Culture is undermined (1-4)	Neither undermined nor enriched (5)	Culture is enriched (6-10)	
Immigration to Britain should..	%	%	%	%
... be increased	2	3	7	4
... remain the same	4	17	35	17
... be reduced a little	13	26	31	21
... be reduced a lot	81	53	25	56
Don't Know	*	*	3	1
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	1515	639	1039	3244

Table 8 Views on the impact of migration on culture, by demographics

		Cultural impact			<i>Unweighted bases</i>
		Culture is undermined (1-4)	Neither undermined nor enriched (5)	Culture is enriched (6-10)	
Sex					
Men	%	45	18	36	1452
Women	%	45	20	33	1792
Age					
18-24	%	39	22	37	237
25-34	%	36	17	45	457
35-44	%	40	18	42	554
45-54	%	50	16	33	541
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Lower supervisory & technical occupations	%	59	17	22	277
Semi-routine & routine	%	54	20	23	903

occupations					
Migrant heritage					
Respondent and parents born in GB	%	51	18	30	2643
1st/2nd gen migrant	%	24	22	52	596
Party Id					
Conservative	%	52	20	28	818
Labour	%	40	17	41	1052
Liberal Democrat	%	20	17	63	194
Other*	%	58	13	28	328
None	%	48	23	26	581
Country					
England	%	44	19	35	2799
Scotland	%	40	17	42	272
Wales	%	68	15	16	173
Total	%	45	19	34	3244

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