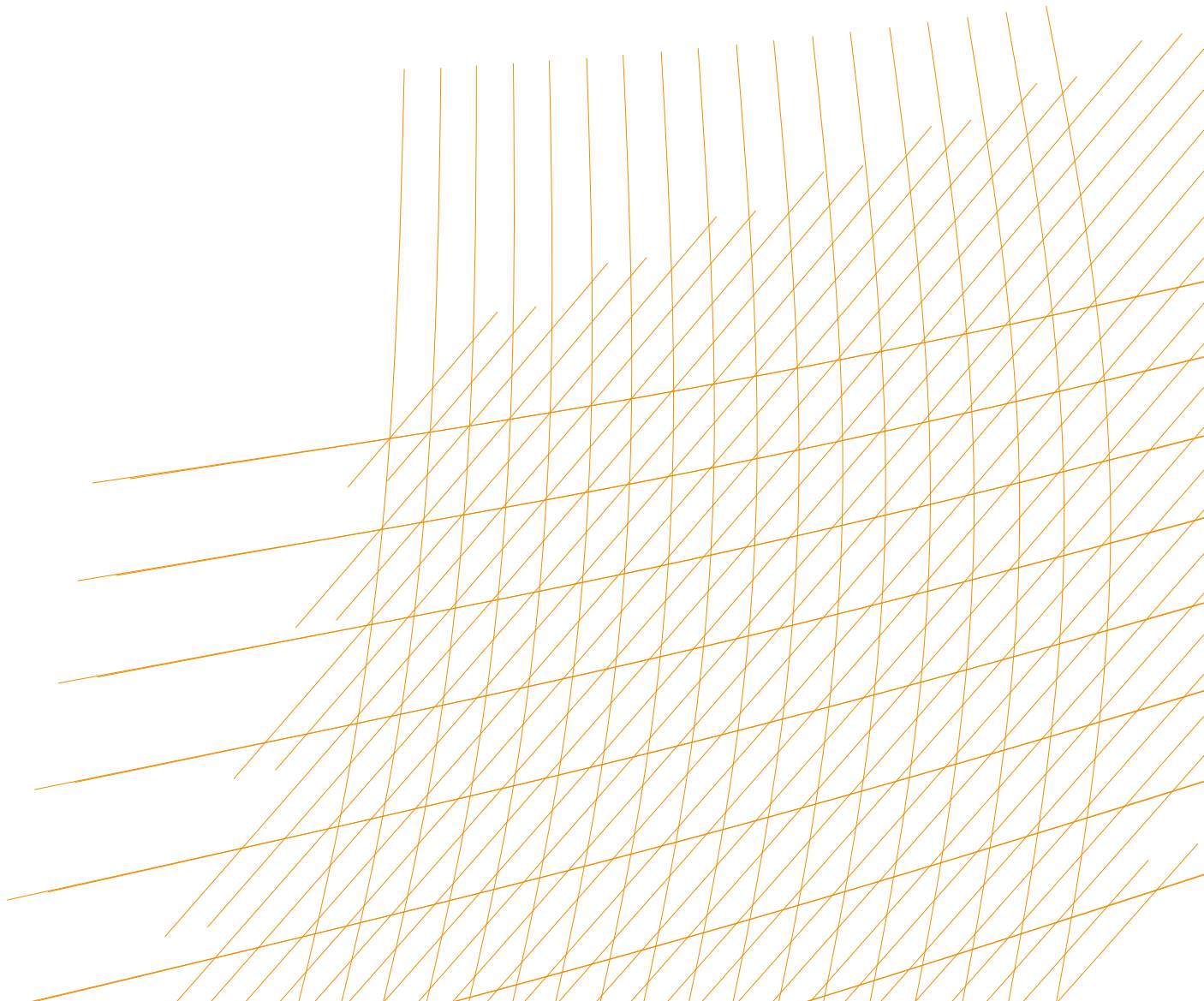


Migrant Voters in the 2015 General Election

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1. Introduction

The 2015 general election looks to be the closest and least predictable in living memory, and immigration is a key issue at the heart of the contest. With concerns about the economy slowly receding as the financial crisis fades into memory, immigration has returned to the top of the political agenda, named by more voters as their most pressing political concern than any other issue¹. Widespread anxiety about immigration has also been a key driver behind the surge in support for UKIP, though it is far from the only issue this new party is mobilizing around². Much attention has been paid to the voters most anxious about immigration, and what can be done to assuage their concerns. Yet amidst this fierce debate about whether, and how, to restrict immigration, an important electoral voice has been largely overlooked: that of migrants themselves.

In this briefing, we argue that the migrant electorate is a crucial constituency in the 2015 election, and will only grow in importance in future elections. Currently, migrant voters are almost as numerous as current UKIP supporters - around one voter in every ten eligible to vote in 2015 will be a migrant voter, and many more will be the children of migrants. In coming years, this share will steadily rise as the migrants who have settled in the UK over the past decade gain British citizenship and integrate into political life.

The risk facing the parties today is that their current fierce rhetoric over immigration, often focused on winning over UKIP-leaning voters anxious about immigration, will have a lasting impact on the political orientations of the new migrant electorate. First impressions matter, and the ones being offered to migrant voters by today's governing parties are not overly welcoming. As this briefing will show, the electoral cost of alienating migrants could be significant: the migrant electorate is now large and highly concentrated. This makes migrant voters a pivotal constituency in a wide range of seats, including some key outer London and Midlands marginal seats at the heart of the 2015 election battle.

The political benefits of engaging with migrant voters could be felt far into the future. Political alienation has become a serious problem in Britain, with groups as disparate as ageing "left behind" working class voters and disaffected young graduates losing faith in the political system and trust in Britain's political institutions. Britain's migrant communities represent a rare exception to that rule - they are in general more positive about British politics, and more trusting of British politicians and parties, than the native-born British³. Yet the experience of hostility, or at best indifference, from the political class is likely to erode that trust, and may in turn slow the political and social integration of migrant communities made to feel unwelcome and unwanted. Just as there are political risks inherent in failing to articulate and respond to voters alarmed by migration, there are also risks in marginalising those who have made a commitment to Britain as their new home.

As immigration to the UK looks set to continue, modern democratic politics would do best to reflect the new realities of modern Britain.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **We estimate that just under 4 million foreign-born voters across England and Wales will be eligible to vote in the May 2015 general election.**
 - The large, established Commonwealth migrant communities (in particular from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and South Africa), along with the Irish Republic, will have the highest numbers of potential voters in May 2015.
 - European Union nationals, despite their large and growing presence in the UK, will be heavily under-represented in May 2015, as a large majority have not yet acquired British citizenship.
- **Migrant voters could have an influence in parliamentary constituencies across England and Wales.**
 - 2015 may be the first election at which MPs are returned by constituencies where a majority of the eligible electorate was born abroad - we project two seats (East Ham and Brent North) could have majority migrant electorates in 2015.
 - The migrant electorate is heavily concentrated in London – 19 of the 20 seats with the largest migrant voter shares are in Greater London.
 - Migrants could constitute over a third of the electorate in around 25 seats across England and Wales in 2015, and at least a quarter of the electorate in over 50 seats.
 - The migrant electorate could have decisive power in a range of key marginal seats across England and Wales: in at least 70 seats the migrant share of the electorate in 2015 is twice as large as the current majority share of the incumbent party
- **Migrant voters do not form a voting bloc, but there are trends in the way they vote.**
 - Historical voting patterns suggest that migrant voters are likely to prefer parties that they view as positive about race equality and immigration issues.
 - Data from the Ethnic Minority British Election Study suggests that migrant voters are more liberal on immigration issues and more concerned about discrimination.
 - Research on earlier migrant communities suggest that perceptions about the parties' attitudes towards migrants and minorities, and the discrimination they face in British society, can have a lasting impact on migrant political loyalties.

2. This briefing

This briefing intends to provide the latest analysis of migrant voters in England and Wales, and to consider their potential impact in the general election 2015.*

The first purpose of this briefing is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the likely size of the migrant electorate in England and Wales in 2015, using data from the 2001 and 2011 Censuses to project estimates of the overall migrant population in each parliamentary constituency. We then make use of information about the naturalisation rates of different migrant groups derived from Office for National Statistics analysis of Census data to estimate the likely migrant electorate in each seat.

From this information, we provide three key pieces of analysis. Firstly, we illustrate the diversity of the British migrant community by splitting out the overall migrant population by country of origin. We estimate that populations of 100,000 migrants or more originating from 23 different countries now live in Britain. The current electoral impact of these communities varies enormously. While some recent migrant communities have naturalised at very high rates, or possess voting rights through Commonwealth citizenship, others remain largely disenfranchised at present (although are unlikely to be so indefinitely).

Secondly, we examine the key constituencies inside and outside of London where we project the migrant vote will be most concentrated. The migrant vote is largest by far in London - 19 of the top twenty seats with largest migrant voter shares, and over 40 of the top fifty seats, are in the capital.

These include a number of crucial marginals where the migrant vote could be decisive. However, there are also many seats outside London with large and often fast growing migrant communities - indeed most large cities in England and Wales now have at least one constituency with a significant migrant electorate - illustrating the growing prominence of migrants in urban political competition. In the more rural and suburban areas of England and Wales, though, migrant voters tend to be less significant.

Thirdly, we examine the seats where the migrant vote could have the most political influence. We identify these seats by looking at the ratio between the size of the migrant community and the size of the current MP's majority. Many of the largest concentrations of migrant voters are found in very safe seats, particularly in inner London, where even a large migrant electorate has little capacity to shift the outcome. Smaller migrant communities in marginal seats, however, can be pivotal. We identify the top twenty seats inside and outside London where the migrant vote is most pivotal - these include a number of crucial marginals which are must-wins for both Labour and the Conservatives in the coming election, as well as seats where the Liberal Democrats are fighting hard for survival.

Finally, the briefing draws upon the latest research into migrant and BAME voter patterns and preferences to consider whether migrants have a distinct set of concerns which could help decide their votes, and to consider whether negative rhetoric and policy on immigration could have longer term political consequences.

**We use the description of 'migrant voters' to describe foreign-born UK residents according to categorisation used within the 2001/2011 Censuses. Although the majority of people included within this group will have entered the UK as non-British citizens, this figure will also include a small number of British citizens born abroad.*

3. Migrant voters and UK general elections

**This is the central estimate between a range of 1,326,000 - 1,482,000. The range is the product of two different estimation methods where citizenship acquisition data is not available – (1) acquisition at overall average rate (46%) and (2) acquisition at Commonwealth average rate (68%).*

In the UK, all British citizens, Commonwealth citizens and citizens of the Irish Republic who are registered to vote and aged 18 or over on polling day are eligible to cast a vote in a general election, provided they are not legally excluded from doing so.

The large majority of voters in the May 2015 general election will be UK-born British citizens. However, the population of 'migrant voters' – or foreign-born UK residents with voting rights – is large, growing, and concentrated in particular sets of constituencies. In addition, many other voters will be the children or grandchildren of migrants, and may therefore share to some extent the concerns and priorities of migrant voters. There are two main categories of 'migrant voters' who may be able to vote in May 2015 and in future UK general elections:

- **NATURALISED BRITISH CITIZENS**

All foreign-born UK residents over the age of 18 who have acquired British citizenship (or 'naturalised') will have the right to vote in the May 2015 general election. According to Office for National Statistics estimates based on the 2011 Census, around 46% of foreign-born British residents hold a British passport, and hence have such voting rights. Currently, migrants can apply for British citizenship after a period of five years in the UK with an eligible temporary immigration status, followed by a one-year period of permanent residence (or 'indefinite leave to remain'). There is significant variation in the rates of naturalisation across different migrant communities.

Analysis of data from the 2001 and 2011 Censuses suggests that up to 2.8 million British citizens born abroad will be eligible to vote in the next general election. This will include approximately

1.4 million naturalized Commonwealth and Irish citizens*.

- **COMMONWEALTH AND IRISH CITIZENS**

All adult Commonwealth and Irish citizens who are currently residing in the UK will be able to vote in the May 2015 general election. Commonwealth citizens who reside in Britain have held such voting rights for nearly seventy years. These rights were first granted in the British Nationality Act 1948 and have been retained through all subsequent rounds of reform to British citizenship rules. As noted above, although Commonwealth citizens have voting rights, the majority of migrants from these countries, including large majorities of those from South Asian and African migrant communities, hold British citizenship. Rates of citizenship acquisition by Commonwealth migrants are consistently very high, suggesting that Commonwealth citizens' possession of voting rights is no impediment to migrant integration, and may indeed encourage it.

Our analysis of 2001 and 2011 Census data suggests that around 920,000 Commonwealth citizens, and 270,000 citizens of the Irish Republic, could be eligible to cast a vote in the next general election.

Unless they are naturalized as British citizens or also hold another, eligible nationality, European Union nationals residing in the UK will not be eligible to vote in the May 2015 general election. These rules are more limited than those relating to European and local elections which permit European Union nationals to vote provided they are registered to do so.

4. Migrant voters in May 2015

Overall, our central estimate suggest that 3,980,000 migrants in England and Wales will potentially be eligible to vote in the May 2015 general election. This does not include residents of Scotland and Northern Ireland, meaning that the number of migrant voters across the UK in the next election could be higher than this figure.

This figure is based on the estimate, using 2001 and 2011 Census data, that there will be a total of 5.1 million potentially eligible British residents born abroad, including those who will be younger than 18, on 7th May 2015 in England and Wales. We then adjust this estimate for age, using the working assumption that the share of 2015 eligible migrants who are children is the same as the proportion of under-18s in the general population - about 22%. We do not include the UK-born children of migrants, who are not classified as migrants in the official statistics and are therefore not analysed as part of the migrant voter population in this briefing. However, many of these second generation migrant voters will concentrate in the same constituencies, and share many of the same concerns, as their migrant parents.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The changing size and composition of the migrant population across England and Wales over the past fifteen years has had important consequences for the migrant voter base, and analysis allows us to understand which communities make up this group.

Table A (page 7) draws upon 2001 and 2011 Census data to show a rapid increase in the overall migrant population since 2001. We identify 23 migrant communities across England and Wales whose projected numbers in 2015 are expected to exceed 100,000 people. The Office for National Statistics has published analysis

of naturalisation rates among foreign-born residents in the 2011 census. This shows that 46% of foreign-born British residents had naturalised at the time of the Census, but that naturalization rates vary substantially between different migrant communities with an average rate of 68% for Commonwealth nationals. We use this data to adjust migrant population estimates and exclude those ineligible to participate in general elections⁴. We also exclude those not old enough to vote, using the simplifying, and conservative, assumption that the under-18 share of each migrant community will be the same as the overall population share under 18 (22%).

The data presented in Table A presents the major migrant communities in England and Wales, in order of the size of the eligible electorate from each country. It shows that whilst potential migrant voters in the UK originate from a wide range of countries across the world, those born in the Commonwealth are most significantly represented. Migrants from the EU, by contrast, are likely to provide far fewer voters than their raw size might suggest.

Some migrant communities have experienced very rapid growth in England and Wales since 2001. The population born in Poland has risen from 58,000 in 2001 to a projected 788,000 in 2015. The total population born in the four nations of the Indian sub-continent (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) has risen by over 800,000 to a projected 1.7 million people over this period. Communities from a number of other countries have also grown rapidly, with China, Nigeria, Lithuania, Romania and Zimbabwe among those showing the largest increases. By contrast, the number of Irish-born residents in England and Wales is projected to have fallen by 92,000 between 2001 and 2015.

TABLE A: SIGNIFICANT MIGRANT POPULATIONS IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Country of origin	Migrant population 2001	Migrant population 2011	Migrant population 2015 (projected)	Change in migrant population 2001-15	Share of migrant population with British citizenship (2011 est)	Share of migrant population with voting rights (2011 est)	Number of potential migrant voters***
1. India*	456,000	694,000	789,000	333,000	55%	100%	615,000
2. Pakistan*	308,000	482,000	552,000	244,000	69%	100%	431,000
3. Irish Republic*	473,000	407,000	381,000	-92,000	9%	100%	297,000
4. Bangladesh*	153,000	212,000	235,000	82,000	72%	100%	183,000
5. Nigeria*	87,000	191,000	233,000	146,000	41%	100%	182,000
6. South Africa*	131,000	191,000	215,000	84,000	46%**	100%	168,000
7. Jamaica*	146,000	160,000	166,000	20,000	73%	100%	130,000
8. Sri Lanka*	67,000	127,000	157,000	96,000	46%**	100%	118,000
9. Germany	244,000	274,000	286,000	42,000	54%	54%	120,000
10. Kenya*	127,000	137,000	142,000	15,000	87%	100%	111,000
11. Australia*	99,000	116,000	123,000	24,000	46%**	100%	96,000
12. Hong Kong*	88,000	102,000	108,000	20,000	83%	100%	84,000
13. Somalia	43,000	101,000	125,000	82,000	72%	72%	69,000
14. Zimbabwe	47,000	118,000	147,000	100,000	50%	50%	57,000
15. Turkey	53,000	91,000	106,000	53,000	67%	67%	55,000
16. United States	144,000	177,000	190,000	46,000	32%	32%	48,000
17. China	48,000	152,000	194,000	146,000	30%	30%	45,000
18. Poland	58,000	597,000	788,000	730,000	5%	5%	30,000
19. France	89,000	130,000	146,000	57,000	17%	17%	20,000
20. Italy	102,000	135,000	147,000	45,000	14%	14%	16,000
21. Romania	7,000	80,000	109,000	102,000	9%	9%	8,000
22. Portugal	36,000	88,000	109,000	73,000	6%	6%	5,000
23. Lithuania	10,000	97,000	132,000	122,000	2%	2%	2,000
Total	3,016,000	4,841,000	5,574,000	+2,558,000	46%	66%	2,890,000

* Country is in Commonwealth plus Irish Republic

**Estimate based on overall citizenship acquisition rates as separate data not available

*** Excludes projected under 18 population (based on national Census share of 22% under 18)

All nationalities with projected populations of over 100,000 in 2015, for which comparable 2001 and 2011 Census data was available, are listed. The figures refer to the overall projected eligible population, including those not on the electoral register, as it was not possible to make registration adjustments using the data available to us. Therefore these figures should be treated as a high end estimate of the possible migrant electorate.

COMMONWEALTH-ORIGIN MIGRANT VOTERS

UK residents born in Commonwealth countries comprise the largest numbers of potential migrant voters in England and Wales. Five of the top six countries from which migrant voters in UK general elections originate are all Commonwealth members: India (615,000 potential voters), Pakistan (431,000), Bangladesh (183,000), Nigeria (182,000), and South Africa (168,000), while the sixth is the Irish Republic (297,000), whose citizens enjoy similar rights to those of Commonwealth members. In addition, significant numbers of migrant voters originate from other Commonwealth countries including Kenya, Sri Lanka, Jamaica, Australia and Hong Kong.

A number of factors have contributed to the high representation of Commonwealth countries within the migrant voter base in 2015. Commonwealth citizens have the right to vote in British elections from the moment they take residence in Britain, but also have very high naturalization rates. This means that the large majority of Commonwealth migrants participating in British elections will do so as naturalised British citizens. The historical links between Britain and the Commonwealth, and patterns of migration to Britain tracing back decades, mean that most of Britain's largest and most well-established migrant communities hail from Commonwealth countries. The steady increase in population size among key Commonwealth communities in the UK has therefore been accompanied by a rise in their potential influence within UK general elections.

NON-COMMONWEALTH, NON-EU MIGRANT VOTERS

Reflecting the diversity of the UK's migration patterns over the past fifteen years, a small number of non-Commonwealth countries are also relatively well-represented within the potential migrant voter base. The potential electoral influence of these communities is influenced by their rates of naturalisation.

Nationals of countries such as Somalia

and Turkey have some of the highest naturalization rates in the UK, resulting in an estimated 69,000 and 55,000 migrant voters respectively from these communities. Settled migrants from these countries seem strongly motivated to acquire the full rights and protections of British citizenship, and as a result possess a strong electoral voice relative to their size. Conversely, although absolute numbers of nationals from China and the USA are relatively high, migrants from these countries seem less motivated to naturalize as British citizens, resulting in a weaker electoral presence for migrants from these countries.

EUROPEAN UNION MIGRANT VOTERS

Table A shows that some of the largest migrant communities in England and Wales have very limited electoral power. This is particularly the case for migrants settling here from elsewhere in the European Union. Many EU citizens do not seem to regard acquiring British citizenship as a priority, even when they have been settled in Britain for a number of years. This may be because they already have an expansive range of rights thanks to their home countries' EU membership.

The large majority of migrants from European Union countries, such as those from Poland, Lithuania and Romania, will be unable to vote in the 2015 general election, despite their sizeable populations*. European Union migrants are not granted immediate rights to vote in British general elections upon arrival in the UK, and their very low naturalization rates mean that relatively few have, as yet, acquired the means to participate in general election as British citizens. This may change if a referendum on EU membership becomes a serious issue on the political agenda, calling into question the EU citizenship rights such migrants have relied upon up until now.

These very large variations in naturalisation result in large disparities in the potential electoral power of Britain's migrant communities. There are projected to be almost as many Polish-born residents in England and Wales in 2015 as Indian-born residents.

**The German migrant community are a significant exception, as 54% have British citizenship. However, this reflects the fact that a large portion of the German born community in Britain are in fact the children of British citizens who were resident in Germany, usually serving with the armed forces.*

However, only one in twenty Polish-born residents (5% of the total population) are projected to be eligible to vote in the next general election, whereas 100% of all Indian-born residents can participate in elections. 1.5 million migrant residents in Britain hail from six large EU countries with

low naturalisation rates (Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Portugal, Italy and France). Their low rates of citizenship acquisition, however, mean that these 1.1 million adult migrant residents currently contribute just over 80,000 potential voters.

5. Where are migrant voters concentrated?

Analysis of local authority data from the 2001 and 2011 Census allows us to identify the parliamentary constituencies across England and Wales in which migrant voters could have a particularly significant influence in the May 2015 general election. Tables B and C on pages 10 and 12 indicate the twenty parliamentary constituencies within London and outside London, respectively, with the highest projected concentrations of potential voters born outside Britain*.

**All constituency level estimates are not age adjusted in the same way as the overall estimates, because such adjustments were not possible using the data we have available to us.*

The impact of migrant voters is likely to be highest in London constituencies, reflecting the capital's magnetic attraction to migrants from all over the world. London dominates the list of seats with the largest migrant electorates: nineteen of the top twenty seats, and forty one of the top fifty, are in the capital. The top twenty London seats are detailed in Table B. In all of these seats, and another five more, migrants could make up over a third of all eligible voters in May 2015. In nine of London's constituencies, over 40% of potential voters in 2015 will have been born abroad while in the top two - East Ham and Brent North - a majority of the eligible voters in May 2015 could be foreign-born. 2015 may be the first election at which MPs are returned by constituencies where more than half the eligible voters came to Britain from another country.

The political contexts in the seats where London's migrant voters concentrate vary widely. Fourteen of the top twenty seats are Labour held, with four Conservative seats

and a sole Lib Dem seat (Brent Central, where incumbent Sarah Teather is standing down). Some of the Labour seats, such as Stephen Timms' East Ham and David Lammy's Tottenham, are very safe Labour constituencies. However, eleven of the twenty seats are at least somewhat competitive, with the current MP holding a majority of 16% or less. These include ultra-marginal constituencies such as Hampstead and Kilburn, where new Labour candidate Tulip Siddiq - a second generation migrant of Bangladeshi origin - will defend a majority of less than 50 votes.

While some Labour held seats with large migrant populations are closely fought marginals, most are relatively safe. This reflects the tendency towards Labour loyalty often found among London's more established migrant communities. 34 Labour MPs represent London seats where migrants are more than 20% of the electorate, and only 11 have majorities of less than 15%. Even most of these seats are safer than they appear, as the second place party is the Liberal Democrats, who have been struggling in local fights with Labour since forming a Coalition government with the Conservatives.

Politicians from the Coalition parties representing migrant-heavy seats in the capital are much more likely to have a fight on their hands in 2015. Data analysis of all parliamentary seats (as shown in Table B) suggests that 15 Conservatives and three Liberal Democrats represent London seats

where migrants will make up 20% or more of the electorate, and eleven of these MPs currently have majorities of 15% or less. Anti-immigration rhetoric and policy from the Conservative leadership could cause serious

problems for MPs such as Bob Blackman, Angie Bray, and Mary Macleod, who are particularly reliant on migrant votes to hold their seats.

TABLE B: 20 CONSTITUENCIES IN LONDON WITH THE HIGHEST PROJECTED SHARE OF MIGRANT VOTERS

Parliamentary constituency	Projected share of migrant voters in electorate (including under 18s)	Incumbent MP	Winning party (2010)	Percent Majority (2010)
1. East Ham	51.0	Stephen Timms	Lab	55.2
2. Brent North	50.0	Barry Gardiner	Lab	15.4
3. West Ham	47.1	Lyn Brown	Lab	48
4. Brent Central	44.6	Sarah Teather	Lib Dem	3
5. Ealing Southall	43.4	Virendra Sharma	Lab	21.7
6. Harrow East	43.3	Bob Blackman	Con	7.1
7. Harrow West	43.0	Gareth Thomas	Lab	6.8
8. Ilford South	41.6	Michael Gapes	Lab	22
9. Westminster North	40.5	Karen Buck	Lab	5.4
10. Cities of London and Westminster	38.9	Mark Field	Con	30
11. Poplar and Limehouse	38.1	Jim Fitzpatrick	Lab	12.9
12. Walthamstow	37.8	Stella Creasy	Lab	23.1
13. Leyton and Wanstead	37.8	John Cryer	Lab	16
14. Feltham and Heston	37.6	Seema Malhotra*	Lab	9.6
15. Ealing Central and Acton	37.3	Angie Bray	Con	7.9
16. Ealing North	37.3	Stephen Pound	Lab	19.5
17. Tottenham	37.3	David Lammy	Lab	41.6
18. Brentford and Isleworth	36.9	Mary Macleod	Con	3.6
19. Hayes and Harlington	36.2	John McDonnell	Lab	25.4
20. Hampstead and Kilburn	36.1	Glenda Jackson	Lab	0.1

* Elected in 2011

Table C shows the twenty constituencies outside London with the highest shares of migrant voters. The only seat here which would make the overall top 20 is Keith Vaz's Leicester East. Vaz - the first Asian-origin Member of Parliament in the post-war era - represents the largest migrant electorate outside London, with nearly four in ten of the eligible electorate born abroad. Large migrant electorates are found in a range of other seats based in Britain's largest and most diverse cities, with particularly high constituency concentrations in Leicester (East, South); Birmingham (Ladywood, Hall Green, Perry Bar, Hodge Hill); Manchester (Gorton, Central), Coventry (South, North East), Oxford (East), Nottingham (East) and Bradford (West, East). There are also very large migrant communities in a number of the satellite towns ringing London, such as Slough, Luton (South), and Reading (East).

Labour dominates the seats outside London where migrant voters concentrate - 17 of the

top 20 seats in Table C are held by Labour, and eleven of these are held with majorities of 15% or more. The Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Respect hold one each of the remaining three. However, while the very largest migrant communities tend to be in safer Labour seats, there are quite a number of competitive marginals with large migrant communities, represented by all the parties. In Luton South, Birmingham Hall Green and Oxford East, migrant voters will be crucial for Labour MPs defending majorities under 10%.

Although Conservative seats are rare amongst the most migrant dense non-London seats, there is a second tier of seats with large migrant communities and many of these are Conservative held, including critical marginals such as Wolverhampton South West, Bedford and Watford. In Bradford East, the fate of incumbent Liberal Democrat MP David Ward may well hinge on the 20% of voters born abroad - Ward currently has a majority of less than 1%.

TABLE C: 20 CONSTITUENCIES OUTSIDE LONDON WITH THE HIGHEST PROJECTED SHARE OF MIGRANT VOTERS

Parliamentary constituency	Projected share of migrant voters in electorate (including under 18s)	Incumbent MP	Winning Party (2010)	Percent Majority (2010)
1. Leicester East	39.3	Keith Vaz	Lab	29.4
2. Birmingham, Ladywood	34.3	Shabana Mahmood	Lab	28.2
3. Slough	33.2	Fiona McTaggart	Lab	11.5
4. Leicester South	29.7	Jon Ashworth*	Lab	18.7
5. Luton South	29.6	Gavin Shuker	Lab	5.5
6. Bradford West	29.1	George Galloway**	Respect	30.9
7. Manchester, Gorton	27.2	Gerald Kaufman	Lab	17.5
8. Birmingham, Hall Green	26.4	Roger Godsiff	Lab	7.8
9. Manchester Central	25.0	Lucy Powell**	Lab	26.1
10. Birmingham, Perry Barr	24.6	Khalid Mahmood	Lab	28.3
11. Birmingham, Hodge Hill	23.7	Liam Byrne	Lab	24.3
12. Luton North	23.6	Kelvin Hopkins	Lab	17.5
13. Warley	20.0	John Spellar	Lab	28.9
14. Bradford East	20.0	David Ward	Lib Dem	0.9
15. Coventry North East	19.9	Bob Ainsworth	Lab	27.2
16. Leicester West	19.5	Liz Kendall	Lab	11.2
17. Reading East	19.2	Rob Wilson	Con	15.2
18. Oxford East	19.0	Andrew Smith	Lab	8.9
19. Nottingham East	19.0	Chris Leslie	Lab	21.1
20. Coventry South	18.3	Jim Cunningham	Lab	8.4

* Elected in 2011

** Elected in 2012

6. Where will migrant votes be most influential?

A number of marginal parliamentary constituencies could be affected by migrant voters. In at least 70 parliamentary constituencies, the 2015 migrant share of the electorate will be more than twice the incumbent's current majority (as a share of their overall vote). These seats, where MPs with small and insecure majorities represent large migrant communities, are the ones where migrant voters have the most potential to exert electoral influence in 2015.

In Table D (page 14), we show the top 20 constituencies where migrant voter influence could be highest. The table shows the seats with the highest "migrant vote power" - where the electorate born abroad is much larger than the majority of the current MP. We exclude "ultra-marginal" seats where the current MP's majority is less than 3%, as in such seats practically any small group could help to determine the outcome.

This analysis shows that the majority of seats in which migrant voting behaviour has the most chance of tipping the political balance in May 2015 are currently held by Labour. There are 12 Labour marginals among the list of seats where the potential for migrant influence is greatest. In seats such as Sadiq Khan's Tooting, Gisela Stuart's Birmingham Edgbaston and Karen Buck's Westminster North, even a small swing of migrants away from Labour, or a shift in the overall balance of power due to the inflow of new migrants, could impact on the outcome. There are also many seats held by the Coalition parties where migrant influence is particularly high: six marginals currently held by the Conservatives are in the top 20 and two are held by the Liberal Democrats. In seats including Zac Goldsmith's Richmond Park, Gavin Barwell's Croydon Central and John Leech's Manchester Withington, a migrant swing away from the incumbent, or a growth in migrant communities already opposed to the Coalition parties, could affect the outcome in 2015.

7. Migrant voting patterns and intentions

There is growing speculation about the voting patterns and intentions of migrant voters in the UK. Available research points to a complex picture within which migrant voters could prove influential in the next UK general election and into the future. Migrants are unlikely, however, to form a bloc vote in May 2015.

ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANT VOTERS

In many ways, migrant voters are model members of the electorate. Analysis by the Runnymede Trust and the Ethnic Minority British Election Study research team in 2010 suggests that the majority of migrants come to the UK with a positive outlook on democracy, trust in the political process and recognition of the importance of electoral participation⁵. Once

they are registered to vote, migrants tend to have relatively high levels of engagement with national political processes.

Despite this, it is likely that registration for the 2015 general election will be slightly lower among some migrant voter groups who are in theory eligible to do so, than for the UK electorate as a whole. This is indicated by data looking at Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups and Commonwealth voters, which suggests that registration rates among these groups for the 2010 general election were slightly lower than the national average. Registration rates tend to vary across eligible groups, with some communities much less likely to register to vote than others.

The Runnymede and Ethnic Minority British

TABLE D: 20 CONSTITUENCIES WITH THE HIGHEST POTENTIAL MIGRANT VOTE POWER

Parliamentary constituency	Projected share of migrant voters in electorate (including under 18s)	Incumbent MP	Winning Party (2010)	Percent Majority (2010)	Migrant vote power
1. Brent Central	44.6	Sarah Teather	Lib Dem	3	14.9
2. Brentford and Isleworth	36.9	Mary Macleod	Con	3.6	10.3
3. Westminster North	40.5	Karen Buck	Lab	5.4	7.5
4. Harrow West	43.0	Gareth Thomas	Lab	6.8	6.3
5. Harrow East	43.3	Bob Blackman	Con	7.1	6.1
6. Sutton and Cheam	17.8	Paul Burstow	Lib Dem	3.3	5.4
7. Luton South	29.6	Gavin Shuker	Lab	5.5	5.4
8. Birmingham, Edgbaston	15.8	Gisela Stuart	Lab	3	5.3
9. Tooting	26.1	Sadiq Khan	Lab	5	5.2
10. Enfield North	18.6	Nick de Bois	Con	3.8	4.9
11. Ealing Central and Acton	37.3	Angie Bray	Con	7.9	4.7
12. Streatham	29.6	Chuka Umuna	Lab	7	4.2
13. Eltham	16.5	Clive Efford	Lab	4	4.1
14. Feltham and Heston	37.6	Seema Malhotra*	Lab	9.6	3.9
15. Nottingham South	16.9	Lillian Greenwood	Lab	4.4	3.8
16. Croydon Central	21.3	Gavin Barwell	Con	6	3.6
17. Birmingham, Hall Green	26.4	Roger Godsiff	Lab	7.8	3.4
18. Brent North	50.0	Barry Gardiner	Lab	15.4	3.2
19. Richmond Park	21.9	Zac Goldsmith	Con	6.9	3.2
20. Manchester Withington	12.9	John Leech	Lib Dem	4.1	3.2

* Elected in 2011

Election Study team found that Black Africans were least likely to be registered to vote, and those of Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani background most likely to be registered. They found that lower registration rates among some migrant groups tended to be due to external barriers rather than any lesser commitment towards political engagement. More recent arrivals, those without British citizenship and those with lower English language skills were less likely to be politically active⁶. It is also likely that some migrants

wrongly believed that they were ineligible to vote in 2010 and so failed to register on this basis.

The introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) for the May 2015 general election could have a further effect on the voter registration levels among some migrant voters. Previously, one person in every household could register all residents at that address. IER now requires each person to register to vote individually rather than

by household, in the process providing key identifying data (including date of birth and National Insurance Number). The introduction of IER could present additional barriers to some BAME and migrant voter groups ahead of the next general election, including language barriers, lack of trust in the new system (e.g. regarding data privacy), and low awareness of eligibility.

However, although detailed research has been carried out into BAME groups in the UK, further evidence is needed regarding voter registration patterns among migrants who are from predominantly white and/or English-speaking countries. It is possible that these migrants may have higher levels of registration and electoral turnout than their BAME counterparts.

POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF MIGRANT VOTERS

The migrant electorate is clearly a large and growing factor in British politics, but are unlikely to form a bloc vote in 2015. This is because there is extraordinary diversity in the profile of migrant voters, which come from a wide range of countries, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds.

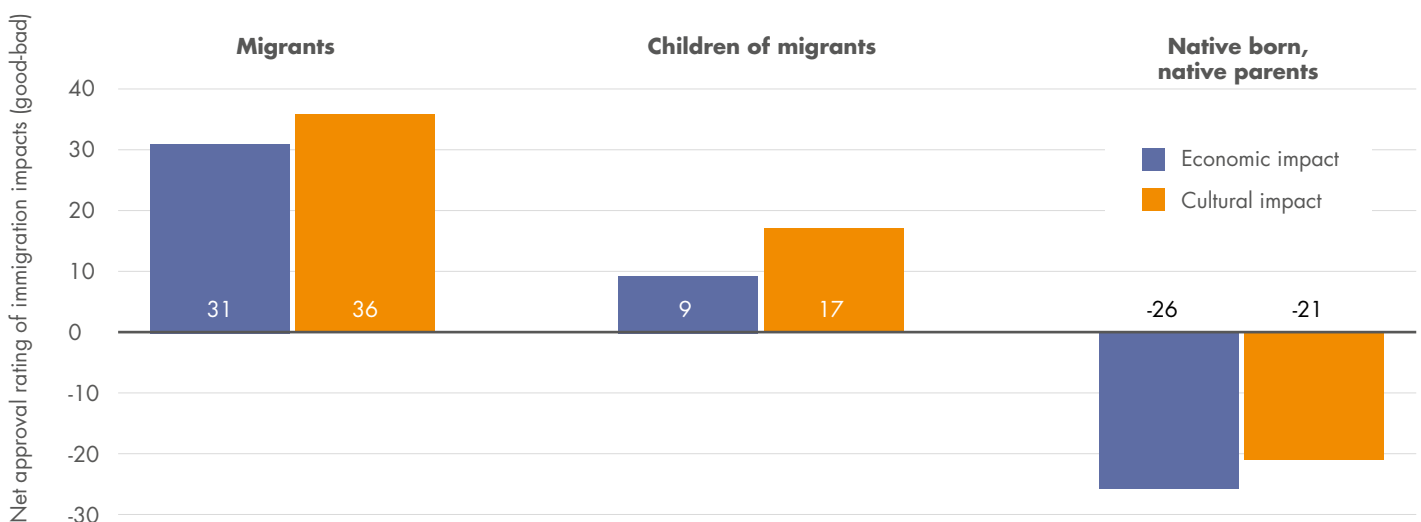
Nonetheless, migrant voters do share a

common and distinct agenda on certain issues. Evidence from a range of sources suggest that migrant voters hold particular political attitudes, prioritising different issues, and often voting in different ways from native-born British voters.

As Chart E below, which draws upon British Social Attitudes (BSA) data, shows, migrant electorate has a highly distinct perspective on immigration, reflecting their own experience and interests. Positive views of the economic and cultural impact of migration heavily outweigh negative ones amongst foreign-born British residents - the net attitude about economic effects is +31, for culture it is +36. Positive views of migration persist, though at lower levels, among the children of migrants. This stands in stark contrast to the majority of the electorate – native-born with no migrant heritage - who regard the economic and cultural impact as negative by large margins.

Hostile political rhetoric and proposals on migration policy are thus likely to polarise migrants and the native-born. In particular, the restrictive appeals that are currently popular may attract native-born, native heritage voters, but are likely to alienate both first and second generation migrants.

CHART E: VIEWS ON THE ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION: MIGRANTS, CHILDREN OF MIGRANTS AND NATIVES



Source: British Social Attitudes 2013

Historically, a majority of BAME voters - most of whom are first or second generation migrants - have voted for the Labour party. In 2010, 68% of BAME voters supported Labour, whilst the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats received 16% and 14% of the BAME vote respectively. However, the recent trend among this group is a move away from Labour, with 2010 support for Labour lower than that in 2005. Recent analysis from the University of Manchester suggested a further sharp decline in BAME attachment to the Labour party ahead of the 2015 general election⁷. There is no evidence that BAME support is shifting decisively in the direction of a different political party. Rather, many BAME voters are now as unsure about which way to vote as the rest of the electorate.

There is considerable political interest in the factors that may sway the BAME vote. Evidence from the Ethnic Minority British Election Study⁸ suggests that while BAME voters share concerns about the economy in general, their economic priorities are more focused on unemployment than the majority group, reflecting their more insecure and marginal labour market position. The same may well be true of migrants more generally.

BAME voters are also much more likely to perceive discrimination in British society and to want action from the state to redress this⁹. There is evidence these priorities have contributed to the traditionally strong support among this group for the Labour Party. Migrant minority groups forming stronger social bonds with their own ethnic group, possibly in part in reaction to hostile views from the majority, and have traditionally formed an attachment to the Labour party in turn as the party which best represents and responds to these group interests.

Much less is known about the voting preferences of other migrant voter groups in the UK, including those from predominantly white and/or English-speaking countries. It is likely that these migrants hold divergent views on some issues from the general population. For example, analysis suggests that white,

first generation migrants are considerably more positive about the economic and cultural impacts of immigration to the UK, for example, than is the general population¹⁰.

A further complication in determining the impact of migrant voters on political outcomes related to the general election is the emergence, as indicated by the data in this briefing, of large migrant populations without voting rights in the UK. This may create a shift in the politics of immigration from earlier eras. In the first postwar wave of mass migration to Britain - from the 1950s to the early 1980s - the majority of migrants came from within the Commonwealth. Their presence required politicians to consider both the demands made by voters opposed to migration, and the views of migrant voters themselves.

A different political dynamic is likely to operate in reaction to the settlement of large migrant communities without political rights, in particular the European Union accession migrants who have arrived since 2004. These migrants have excited a strongly negative reaction from parts of the native-born electorate, but very few of them are eligible to vote in general elections. This means that politicians under pressure to respond to demands for restriction do not face any countervailing electoral pressure to represent the interests of the migrants themselves.

This could all change in the future. An increase in the number of EU nationals who naturalise as British citizens, for example, could result in their voices having a greater prominence within future general election campaigns. Some of the more radical actions proposed to restrict migration, such as curtailment of welfare or mobility rights, or exit from the EU, could stimulate this by encouraging migrants to seek British citizenship to protect their interests. Even without such a stimulus, the share of migrants from all backgrounds who naturalise tends to rise steadily over time as they put down roots, and in coming years the British-born children of second wave EU nationals could also have a significant electoral presence.

8. Conclusion

Foreign-born residents of the UK could have an immediate impact in the May 2015 general election. Not only could migrant voters comprise a significant number of overall potential voters on 7th May 2015, but they could turn out in substantial numbers within some key marginal constituencies.

The extent to which migrants actually impact on the national political scene will depend on a number of factors, including voter registration rates. It could also be affected by political rhetoric on issues known to be important to at least a proportion of the migrant voter base, including race equality and immigration. Politicians who are keenly attuned to the concerns of voters worried by migration have often been rather less sensitive to the concerns of the migrants whose rights and security are threatened by reforms promising restrictions to freedom of movement, family reunion and access to welfare assistance.

The lesson of past migration waves is that such neglect carries grave political risks - the first wave of migrants who arrived in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s have never forgotten the hostility stoked in particular by Enoch Powell and his allies in the Conservative allies, nor the passage by the Labour party of the first anti-discrimination legislation¹¹. The fierce arguments of the period forged an image of the parties in these voters' minds, with Labour then seen as the party which protects migrant and minority interests in contrast to the Conservatives. This image has survived to the present, and even been passed to second and third generation ethnic minority voters with no memory of the period when it was formed. The risk for politicians today is that focusing primarily on the anxieties of those native voters with very negative views about immigration could alienate this new migrant electorate. Persistent hostility or indifference from sections of the political

class could encourage the second wave of migrants to form a settled image of such parties as inherently opposed to their interests, just as the first did.

Just as damaging could be the calls from some quarters that some migrant voters from Commonwealth countries should be stripped of the right to vote on the eve of the next general election. Measured debate about the UK electoral system is to be welcomed. It is important we adopt a balanced and evidence based approach to this issue. There are very high naturalization rates among migrant voters from Commonwealth countries. These communities are, by and large, positively engaged with the political system and have high levels of trust in it. The risk of taking aggressive action against them is that a group of migrants that are positively integrating into society are unnecessarily alienated. Instead of supporting calls to disenfranchise some migrant voters, politicians should engage with them and encourage them to exercise their voting rights in May 2015.

Among the pressures of the fast-approaching election, it will no doubt be difficult for political parties to turn their eyes to the horizon. However, voters have long memories, and the choices made in the heated debates over migration today will reverberate in decades to come. Politicians would be best served by seeking to reach out to this significant portion of the electorate ahead of May 2015 and to encourage their active political participation as integrated and welcome members of British society.

Appendix 1: Methodology

This briefing uses a new methodology which primarily draws upon 2001 and 2011 Census data to produce projected estimates for migrant populations across the constituencies of England and Wales. It uses this data, in addition to further datasets on citizenship acquisition across migrant communities, to calculate the overall number of potential migrant voters in England and Wales, as well as constituency-level data on migrant populations and potential voter power in May 2015 and beyond.

We first draw upon data in the 2001 and 2011 Censuses to develop estimates of the projected migrant population in each local authority of the country. We start with local authorities because their boundaries are much more stable than those of Westminster constituencies, facilitating calculation of population growth between 2001 and 2011. We calculate the growth rates in the migrant population from 2001 to 2011 for each country of origin for which separate data is available for both, and for regional categories where individual country of origin data is unavailable. We then project the growth rates forward to estimate the probable migrant population from each origin country or region in each local authority in 2015.

Combining these estimates also allows us to calculate the overall projected numbers of migrants resident in England and Wales in 2015, which we estimated to be 8.6 million migrants. We then adjust this overall population to take account of voting eligibility, separating out Commonwealth and Irish citizens, and using ONS analysis of naturalisation rates among other migrant groups. We assume that citizenship acquisition rates have not changed between 2011 and 2015. This reduces the migrant population to 5.1 million potential voters.

A further adjustment has been made in order

to allow for the significant number of foreign-born under-18s resident in the UK. In order to adjust for age, we use the working assumption that the share of 2015 eligible migrants who are children is the same as the proportion of under-18s in the general population - about 22%. The migrant population tends to be younger than the native-born British population, as people are much more likely to move in their youth and young adulthood. This effect is somewhat offset, however, by the smaller proportion of migrant children - people are more likely to migrate when they are childless, and the children they have after settling in a new country are not classified as migrants. We were unable to identify more detailed age distribution data for different migrant groups, and therefore apply this simplifying assumption in lieu of more detailed analysis. Doing so brings our overall estimate of potential migrant voters in England and Wales to 3,978,000 - or just under 4 million migrants.

We then transform our local authority level estimates to generate Westminster constituency estimates of migrant populations. To do this we apply the projected growth in the migrant population in a local authority across the seats in the authority weighted according to the 2011 migrant population in the seats. In other words, we assume that the new migrants coming in to seats will settle in a similar pattern to the 2011 migrant population, with more going to areas with larger existing migrant communities, and less to seats where there were few migrants to start with. This simplifying assumption fits with the research on migration dynamics, but it is an assumption only and one which may produce errors where migrant settlement dynamics are changing rapidly. Where constituency and local authority boundaries do not match, we aggregate together several local authorities until we have a precise match of boundaries and then perform the same procedure.

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