



Lies, damned lies and migration statistics:

Evidence and the politics of
mobility

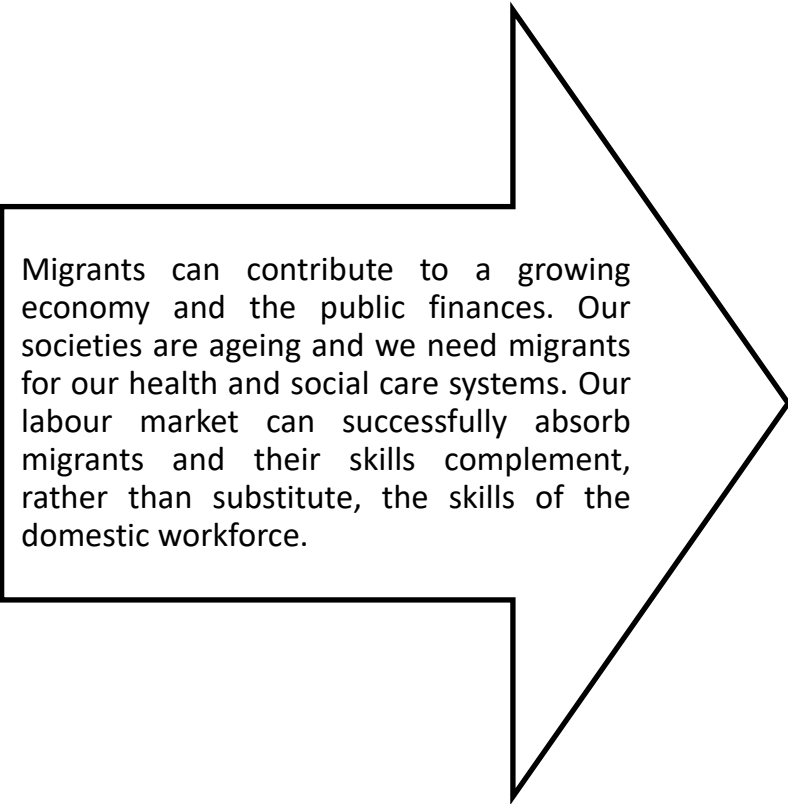
Marley Morris

The Progressive Policy
Think Tank

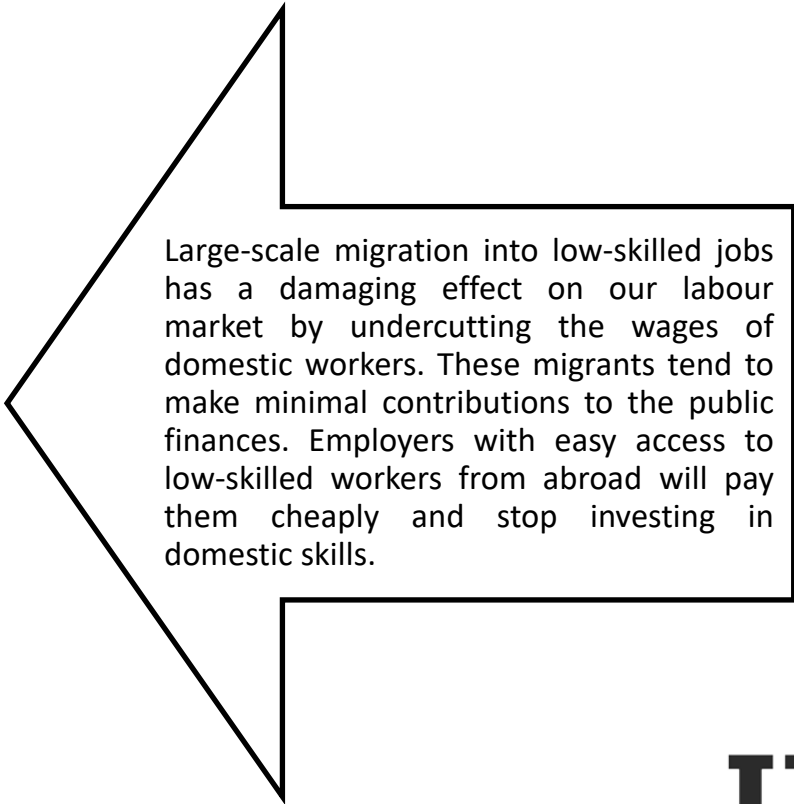
Marley Morris leads on IPPR's work on Brexit. His research focuses on migration and trade policy, including the alternative options for Brexit, the role of EU and non-EU citizens in the UK labour market, and government policy on immigration and international students.

Morris is the author of numerous reports, articles and policy briefings on Brexit and migration, and regularly provides expert analysis for the national and international press.

Two tales of labour market integration

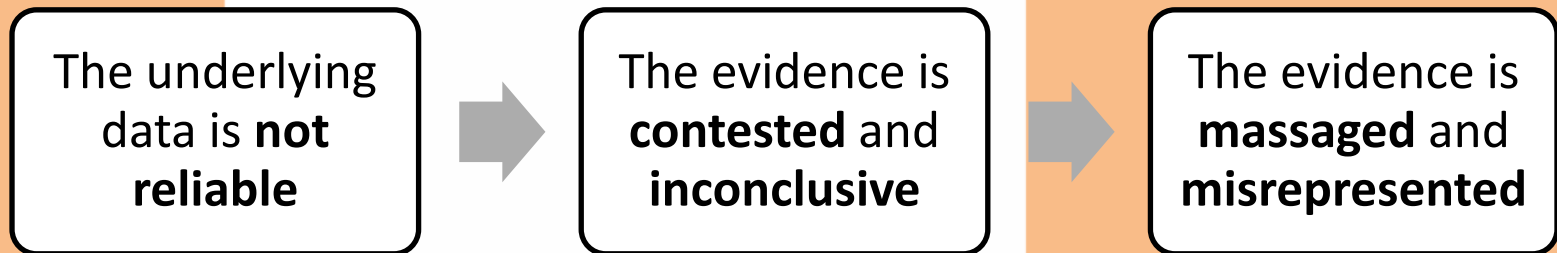


Migrants can contribute to a growing economy and the public finances. Our societies are ageing and we need migrants for our health and social care systems. Our labour market can successfully absorb migrants and their skills complement, rather than substitute, the skills of the domestic workforce.



Large-scale migration into low-skilled jobs has a damaging effect on our labour market by undercutting the wages of domestic workers. These migrants tend to make minimal contributions to the public finances. Employers with easy access to low-skilled workers from abroad will pay them cheaply and stop investing in domestic skills.

You can't handle the truth!



Unreliable data

Often we are dealing with **small samples** and **high non-response rates**

It is hard to get reliable data on **short-term movements**

Representative data on **irregular migration** is even harder to come by

Contested evidence

Look at this – 80 per cent of working age EU migrants are employed! They're contributing to our economy

Nonsense! Half of those are in low-skilled work. EU migrants tend to be on in-work benefits – they're not contributing!

Hang on, economists have found that EU migrants make an overall net positive contribution to the public finances!

Pah! That contribution is tiny – less than 1 per cent of GDP! If we put in proper controls we won't need to take in low-skilled workers who contribute little

Massaging the facts

“It was a Bank of England study which showed that for every 10 per cent increase in immigration there was 2 per cent reduction in wages.”

← Actually study refers to 10 percentage point increase and 2 per cent figure refers to only those migrants working in semi/unskilled services

→ This figure is based on net changes in employment and cannot be used to estimate number of ‘new jobs’

Immigrants take 75% of all jobs created over last 15 years

EU migrants without a job make up city the size of Bristol

← This includes ‘inactive’ as well as unemployed migrants – i.e., retired, disabled people, etc.

Fake(ish) news!

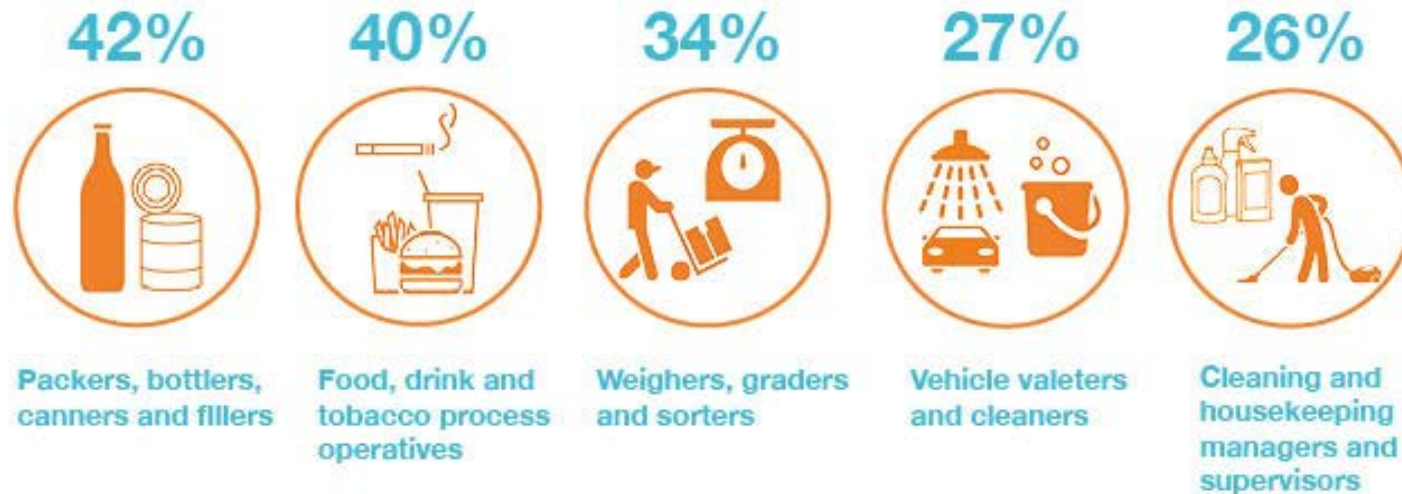
- We have a 'fake(ish) news' problem.
- So declaring 'look at the facts!' will never work.
- But the answer to fakeish news is not more fakeish news!



(1) Clarity

Example: 'Who will pack, bottle, can and fill?'

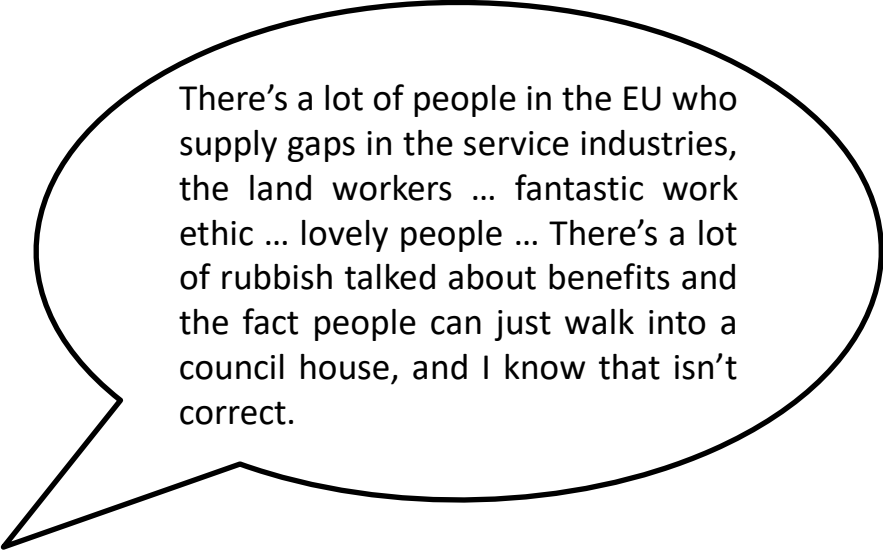
KEY OCCUPATIONS WITH HIGHEST SHARE OF EU MIGRANT WORKERS



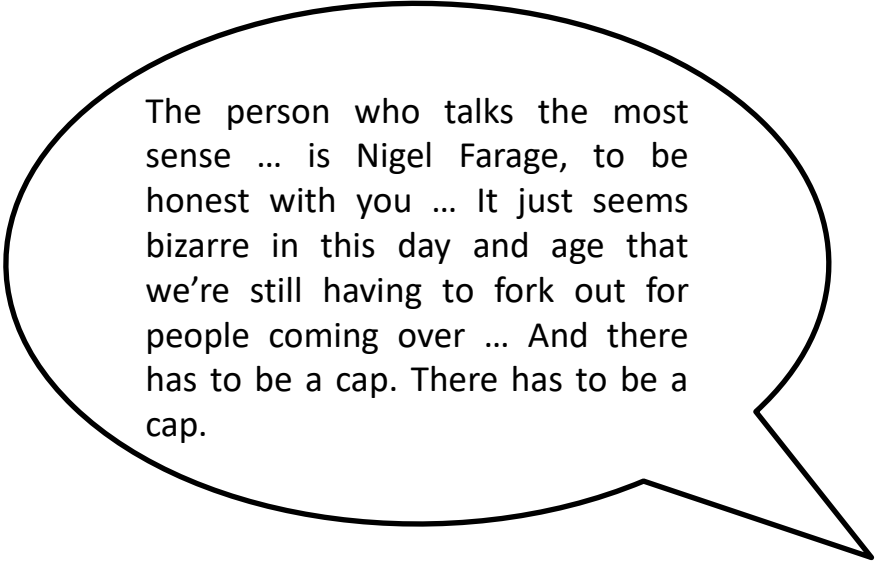
Source: IPPR analysis of Labour Force Survey (ONS)

(2) Consensus

Example: 'Two sides of the same coin'



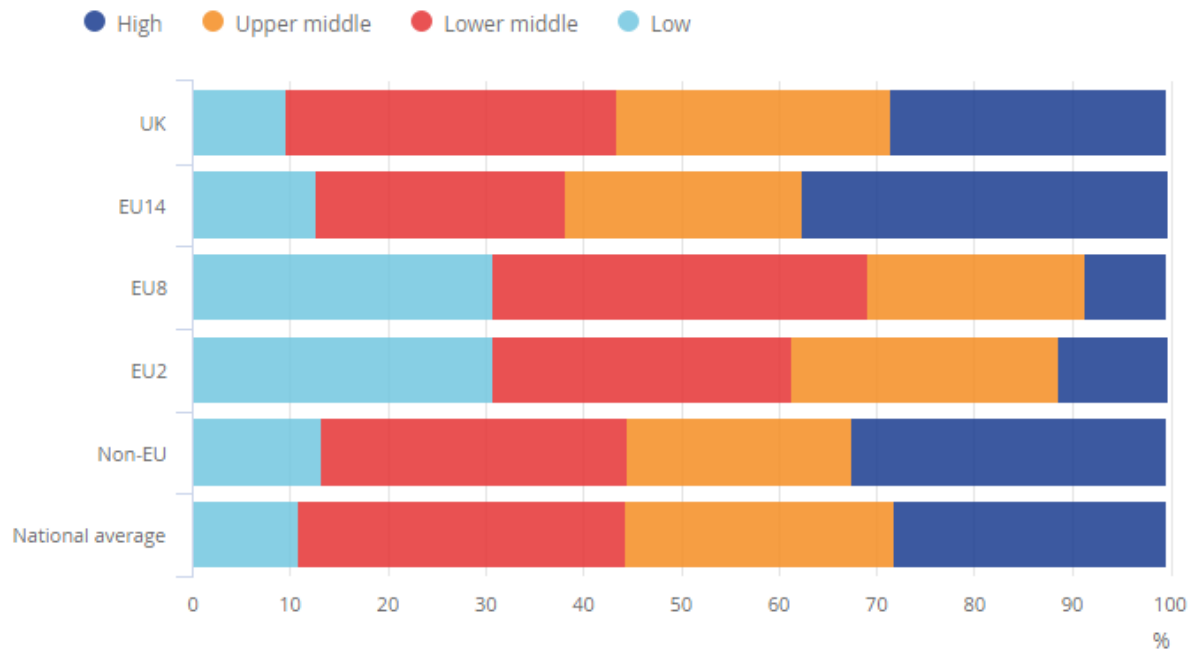
There's a lot of people in the EU who supply gaps in the service industries, the land workers ... fantastic work ethic ... lovely people ... There's a lot of rubbish talked about benefits and the fact people can just walk into a council house, and I know that isn't correct.



The person who talks the most sense ... is Nigel Farage, to be honest with you ... It just seems bizarre in this day and age that we're still having to fork out for people coming over ... And there has to be a cap. There has to be a cap.

(3) Common sense

Example: 'Not so low-skilled after all'



Source: Annual Population Survey, Office for National Statistics