

Scottish Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Immigration and Scotland](#), HC 488

Tuesday 30 January 2018

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 30 January 2018.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Pete Wishart (Chair); Deidre Brock; David Duguid; Hugh Gaffney; Christine Jardine; John Lamont; Paul Masterton; Danielle Rowley; Tommy Sheppard; Ross Thomson.

Questions 322-383

Witnesses

[I:](#) Madeleine Sumption, Director, Migration Observatory, Dr Benedict Greening, Senior Researcher, Migration Watch, and Chris Murray, Research Fellow, IPPR Scotland.



Examination of witnesses

Madeleine Sumption, Dr Benedict Greening and Chris Murray.

Q322 Chair: Thank you very much for attending this morning to help us out with the Immigration and Scotland inquiry. We have had several sessions thus far and we are very much looking forward to your evidence today. Just for the record, please say who you are, who you represent and anything by way of a short statement. We will start with you, Ms Sumption.

Madeleine Sumption: My name is Madeleine Sumption. I am the Director of the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford. Towards the end of last year we published a report looking at whether the regions and nations of the UK should have their own immigration policies. I look forward to discussing some of that. It is very topical to what we have been working on recently.

Chris Murray: Thank you very much for having me. I am Chris Murray. I am a Research Fellow at IPPR Scotland. I have been working on migration at IPPR UK for the past couple of years. We do a lot of work thinking about how the UK could be more strategic in using the immigration system for wider goals. Included in that, we have looked at how regional migration or devolved migration policy could work.

Dr Greening: I am Ben Greening. I am a researcher with Migration Watch UK. As you know, we submitted some written evidence to the Committee in October last year and I am very grateful for the opportunity to expand on the evidence before you today.

Q323 Chair: Thank you. By way of an opening question, unlike the other nations of the UK, the importance of inward migration to population growth has been a significant feature of our particular and peculiar debate about immigration in Scotland. To what extent should inward migration be seen as a means of addressing concerns about population growth and an ageing population? Ms Sumption.

Madeleine Sumption: There are arguments on either side of this. Obviously, this is one of the main things that are different about Scotland compared with the rest of the UK. Scotland is not completely unique. There are other areas of the UK that are experiencing population decline, or would be experiencing population decline if it was not for migration. The population argument is a big issue for Scotland. Population decline can be economically damageing for a number of different reasons. For example, if you have a city or a town that had a particular level of population, it can be much more difficult to sustain the amenities when the population declines, whether that is private sector amenities, like shops and other facilities, or whether it is public services. Population decline, especially if it happens quickly, is economically problematic.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

I think the question that you have to ask is: where is migration a solution to that and where is it not? One of the big questions is why there is population decline. For example, is it due to low fertility; is it due to people leaving; is it due to high levels of unemployment? If one of the drivers of population decline is the fact the local economy is not creating jobs, trying to solve the problem by sending more migrants there might not work, because you may end up simply generating higher levels of unemployment and poor integration among the migrants themselves. I don't think there is a clear answer to this. Migration can be part of the solution, but you have to be careful about some of the potential negative impacts as well.

Chris Murray: I would agree with almost everything Madeleine has just said. As you know from your previous sessions, Scotland's population is not growing as fast as that of the rest of the UK and 100% of its population growth is anticipated to be through migration. The difference is not between Scotland and the rest of the UK, but between different parts of Scotland, and other parts of the UK. Some parts of Scotland are facing much more acute declines in population: rural areas and coastal areas. When you look at population churn, there are some areas of Scotland, around the west coast and outside Glasgow in some rural council areas, where we see very, very low areas of population churn. That is indicative of some of the economic questions that Madeleine Sumption alluded to.

Q324 **Chair:** Surely, that is not unique to Scotland as a nation?

Chris Murray: No, not at all. It is very similar in parts of—

Q325 **Chair:** We are trying to see, specifically with Scotland, if there is any difference that we have in Scotland from the rest of the UK.

Chris Murray: The big difference is that, on an aggregate level, the population is growing less quickly than it is in England overall. I would say that it is important to think that there are as many commonalities between, say, Inverclyde and Northumbria as there are between Edinburgh and Inverclyde and there are some quite interesting questions there.

I would also expand on Madeleine's point just to say that population growth is not an isolated issue that can be seen discretely. It ties into a much broader set of public policy questions. It is perfectly possible for countries to have declining or ageing populations and still do quite well economically and socially. One thinks of Japan, first of all, although I am not an expert on Japan. They have had an ageing population and have dealt with it, not through immigration but through big investments in technology and a very different package of care for older people.

Those kinds of questions need to be considered if Scotland is going to deal with it. How does it stay an attractive country to retain talent? How does it deal with an ageing population if it does not bring in migrants to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

care for them? What does that mean for spending requirements in terms of the care sector? Those kinds of questions come up very quickly, so population growth, in and of itself, is only one part of trying to understand that.

Q326 Chair: You have probably seen our report from last year, when we did Scotland's demography and population. Quite a few conclusions were drawn from that and a lot of that contradicted what you said, Mr Murray. I would be interested in your view about all this, because what we were hearing is that there was an economic cost with the demographic gap that we have and that Scotland not keeping up with the rest of the United Kingdom would have a significant impact on our economy. Are you saying that is not the case at all?

Chris Murray: No, absolutely, I don't dissent from that view. What I would say is that those matters can be managed in several ways, one of which is attracting migrants, and one of which could be increasing the birth rate. There are other public policy options. I would just say that, at this stage in Scotland's trajectory, it is important to see all the options. Some countries have chosen not to address those through immigration, because they decided that for their countries that is not a desirable option.

Dr Greening: Yes, I agree with many points made by Ms Sumption and Mr Murray there. I would start by saying Scotland's population has remained above 5 million for 50 years and it reached a record level of 5.4 million in 2016, as you know. There was a decline between 1975 and 2002, but it has been growing since 2002. The National Records of Scotland produced some projections last autumn, I think, and Scotland's population was projected to continue growing by 5% between 2016 and 2041. That was a total rise of about 300,000.

It is worth noting that that rise is higher than the projected population growth over the same period in 17 different EU member states, ahead of Germany, ahead of Finland, ahead of Spain and ahead of the EU average of 4%. That said, the NRS produced some variant assumptions on which it looked at whether the population would grow, even if EU migration was reduced. It found that, even if EU net migration were reduced to half the current level, the population would still rise by 4%.

I would also pick up on Mr Murray's point about the 100% of the population growth being from migration. Of course it is worth noting that the majority of that is from international net migration, but a large component—above 40%—would be the result of a positive net migration from other parts of the UK. We would note that in 2015-16 net migration to Scotland was about 23,000 in total. Extrapolated over 10 years, that is the equivalent of the population of Aberdeen, Scotland's third-largest city. At the current level, you are having a new Aberdeen every 10 years.

Q327 Chair: Would it be fair to characterise Migration Watch's approach to this issue as anti-immigration?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Dr Greening: No, not at all.

Q328 **Chair:** How would you describe your views on immigration in general? I have a few comments here, which I would be interested in your response to, just certain things that Migration Watch has said in the past. How would you characterise your approach to the general issue of immigration?

Dr Greening: I prepared something on this, because I expected this might come up. We are a migration think tank. We monitor developments in the field. We conduct research and make policy suggestions, and we certainly believe in immigration as a dynamic part of an open economy and society. The truth is most migrants come here for a very good reason: to try to better their lives and make a positive contribution to our communities. My husband is a migrant from China, so I certainly believe that.

The issue for us is the scale of immigration, which is too high. We believe that immigration should be sharply reduced on the UK level and we have been saying that for 17 years, since Migration Watch was set up.

Q329 **Chair:** As well as offering research, you obviously offer opinion and commentary. I am looking at something from your Chair, Sir Andrew Green, where he says, "Arrival in such numbers poses a serious problem of integration". He goes on to say, "In parts of our major cities, there is no indigenous British community with which to integrate". What exactly do you mean by "British community" and what requires integration?

Dr Greening: I cannot speak for Lord Green, but I would say that I agree on the integration question: the greater the number of our new arrivals, the harder it is to become fully integrated.

Q330 **Chair:** What is a British community? Is there a Scottish community? We have obviously been looking at Scotland.

Dr Greening: I think Lord Green may have been referring to those already here, whether they are migrants or not. I would point out that Trevor Phillips noted back in 2005—quite a while ago—that integration was not going well in the UK. The term he used was, "Sleepwalking into segregation". I don't know if you agree with that but others, such as David Goodhart, have noted that, "Too many people coming in too quickly to a country could make it difficult to retain a sense of cohesion and stability", so there is kind of a social contract part of that argument too.

Q331 **Chair:** I am not going to bombard you with any more from Andrew, but just one last comment, and it is one that intrigued me greatly. He said, "There is no use in the immigration lobby"—whatever that may be—"assuring us that we have plenty of greenfields that could be built over". What is the immigration lobby?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Dr Greening: There are a number of organisations that—in league with certain commentators in the media, a number of people in politics—seem to make a career of arguing for mass immigration, and we make a career of arguing that it should be reduced, which is fine, but—

Q332 **Chair:** Was the Blair Government part of the immigration lobby?

Dr Greening: I would say it did become so towards the end of 2007. The Blair Government had some quite dramatic effects on immigration in this country. There were three notable effects: asylum claims went up very sharply to about 80,000 a year at one point. There was a massive abuse of the student route from 2009 onwards—I think this was Gordon Brown’s innovation when he brought in the points-based system. The other notable event was the opening up to Eastern Europe in 2004, when we declined to impose transitional controls. That led to a large inflow from Eastern Europe, and that may have helped lead to the Brexit vote in 2016.

Chair: I am intrigued that democratically-elected Governments can somehow be part of the immigration lobby, but thank you for that.

Q333 **Tommy Sheppard:** Just while we are on this, I am intrigued to understand where you are coming from. I am guessing you take the view that the more immigration there is, the bigger the problem it is to deal with. Reading your website, I was particularly intrigued about a paper on housing pressure, where you castigate people who are on the other side of the argument for “downplaying the problem”—as you put it—because they fail to take into account household information from 8.4 million migrants who are already in Britain over the last few decades. At what point would your organisation regard someone immigrating into the country as becoming part of the resident host population rather than an incomer, to be regarded as a different category?

Dr Greening: We have said, in fact, that housing is a prime example of the potential negative impacts of uncontrolled immigration that are not captured by economic analysis. This is something that affects people’s everyday lives and it is a big issue that needs to be dealt with. Over 90% of additional households created between 2005 and 2014 were the result of non-UK born household reference person households. Those are ONS figures. To argue that immigration is only a minor part of the housing question is not correct, and we think it should be considered and debated more than it is.

Q334 **Tommy Sheppard:** I am not arguing it is not a problem. I just think the solution is to build more houses.

Dr Greening: We agree. We have said that many more houses need to be built but, until we gain control over the large contribution to demand that immigration creates, we believe the housing crisis will probably go on for the indefinite future.

Q335 **Paul Masterton:** Coming back to the original question about inward



HOUSE OF COMMONS

migration up to Scotland—I think I asked this at one of the earlier sessions—when there is inward migration from the rest of the UK up to Scotland, is there any decent data on who is coming up? There is certainly a lot of anecdotal evidence that Scotland is particularly popular for people who are already economically inactive or shortly to become economically inactive, so that a lot of the inward migration to Scotland isn't people who are going to be working fulltime or contributing to population. Do you have any more around that from any of the research that you have done?

Chris Murray: Do you mean within the UK?

Paul Masterton: Yes, so people moving into Scotland from Wales, England and Northern Ireland.

Chris Murray: I could not speak to that, to be honest. I have not seen anything.

Madeleine Sumption: There may be some analysis. I would need to follow up, though.

Chris Murray: Can I come back to you maybe?

Paul Masterton: Of course.

Q336 **Chair:** Migration has traditionally been used to fill skills gaps within the labour market. How do you think inward migration has gone in Scotland to make sure that we can fill these skills gaps? I am thinking of things like the hotel industry, which we have heard from, hospitality, things like seasonal workers.

Madeleine Sumption: Sorry, can you repeat the question? You are saying what is the role of immigration in filling those skill gaps?

Chair: In filling particular skill shortages. It has always been used as one of the main arguments for migration. How important is inward migration to meeting skill and labour requirements in Scotland?

Madeleine Sumption: From a research perspective, this is a surprisingly difficult question. You would think that there ought to be a straightforward answer and unfortunately there isn't. The reason that it is difficult is that it is very hard to know, in absolute terms, what the skill needs of Scotland or any other part of the UK are.

There are various reasons for that. We have a fair amount of data on different parts of the UK, but the indicators that we have don't necessarily enable us to say, "Therefore, X hundred thousand people are needed to do this range of jobs". This isn't necessarily a problem with the statistics themselves, but we don't have the conceptual framework to say, "An unemployment rate of this level, plus a number of vacancies at this level leads to a demand for a certain number of people". It is just not something that economists can give you.



While employers certainly say that migrants are very important in filling certain jobs that they find hard to recruit, it is remarkably difficult to say conclusively whether it would be a disaster if those people did not come in, or whether in fact it might be beneficial if those people did not come in because you might get more British people doing the jobs on higher wages and so on.

Q337 Chair: Can I read to you a note we have from the Migration Advisory Committee? It noted that Scotland has a higher proportion of EU workers in construction and hospitality and said, "The different regions of the UK might have different demands for different types of migrant labour". Does Scotland have any different skill needs compared to other parts of the United Kingdom? Mr Murray.

Chris Murray: The caveats that Madeleine Sumption has added are completely correct. This is a hugely contested issue among migration observers. To answer your question specifically, I could not point to sectors that are very specifically different in Scotland, but I do think that the shape of the Scottish economy, compared with the rest of the UK, leads us in a direction. For example, the tourism sector, the hospitality sector proportionately is bigger in Scotland, so that means that any funnel points on migration flows would be disproportionately felt. It would also be felt in the agricultural and tourism sectors in the rest of the UK. It is just that it is a bigger proportion of the Scottish economy.

In public services, the NHS is a good example. The Scottish NHS has slightly different recruitment issues compared with the English NHS. Just on Madeleine Sumption's point about how it is quite difficult to tell the longer-term impacts of that, you have to think about the migration system, when you are thinking about skilled labour migration and the skills system, as two sides of the same coin, as a sort of macro level analysis. If you have a gap, you can either train someone who is native in those skills or recruit someone in to fill those skills. You can be quite agnostic about which you prefer. Some organisations may have a predilection for one of those but, from a public policy perspective, you have a choice of either of those.

The question is whether the policy framework the employers and organisations operate in incentivises one or the other. You could say, for example, it is much cheaper and quicker to teach a doctor English than it is to teach an English person to be a doctor. The NHS makes those kinds of calculations all the time. Some sectors like construction—this is very true in London and Scotland—have become very dependent on EU migration. That then leads to your question about: if you are going to build houses, how are you going to train people to build those houses? It feeds through into a whole set of economic issues.

Madeleine Sumption: If I can add to that. The question is: is Scotland different from the rest of the UK? If you look at some of the aggregate indicators, things like unemployment rates, the median salaries or the share of jobs that require graduate qualifications, Scotland is remarkably



HOUSE OF COMMONS

similar to the UK average in many of those respects. The big thing that I would say is different about Scotland is the population growth situation.

Dr Greening: Can I add to that?

Chair: Yes, please.

Dr Greening: Thanks. I would associate myself with the remarks of Ms Sumption and Mr Murray about the gaps in evidence. One gap in evidence derives from the fact that the LFS, the Labour Force Survey, does not cover short-term residents or those living in communal establishments. Another issue with the LFS is breaking that data down by industry sector. Country of origin makes you run into the problems of very small sample sizes and wide confidence intervals. What we do know from the LFS is that Scotland's dependence on migrant labour appears to be less than for the UK as a whole: 10% of the Scottish workforce is made up of non-UK born and 17% of the UK workforce. The dependence on migrant labour is less as well, 6% versus 7% respectively.

Clearly, there are varying needs by broad industry sector. In no broad industry sector does the proportion of EU-born workers exceed 10%. The claim is often made that Scotland's economy and population require large unskilled, uncontrolled inflows of migrant labour from abroad, which free movement has allowed, but those claims are unsupported by evidence. Our view is that a large-scale inflow into lower-skilled and low-paid work—such as we have at the moment—may, at the extreme end, encourage exploitation of workers by some employers and also encourage the perpetuation of a failure by businesses to invest in and upskill workers.

Chair: We are going to come to that, if that is okay with you, Dr Greening.

Dr Greening: Sure.

Q338 **David Duguid:** We have been talking a lot this morning about inward migration and the importance or the risks of that, whichever way you look at it. When we talk about the skills shortages in Scotland, one of the things that keeps coming to mind is the effect of emigration, so people leaving Scotland. Does any of your research or information have anything to say about that, in terms of why young people are leaving Scotland so that we need labour from elsewhere?

Dr Greening: I have seen a figure that the peak age of outward migration from Scotland is 23, 24 years old, whereas I think the MP from the SNP noted—possibly in another Committee hearing—that the peak age of inward migration is about 19 years old, so it seems like people are coming in for their first job or going to university.

Chair: That was probably me.

Dr Greening: But, once they have finished university, a lot of young people are perhaps leaving Scotland.



Chair: Yes. Those were some of the trends that we discovered in our last report. There seemed to be a spike of inward migration from the EU and the rest of the UK to Scotland at about 19 and then we lost some at 23. That was one of the conclusions we came to about the post-study work scheme. There is solid and reliable evidence on that; we got that from the Registers of Scotland. Can we just park that one there?

Q339 **Deidre Brock:** As I understand it, the immigrant numbers in recent years have been less than half of the immigrant numbers from the age cohort—higher numbers of people leaving Scotland for elsewhere in the UK stats at around age 22. That would seem to suggest that about half of those folk who are going to study in Scotland are staying, so that suggests we are doing quite well in that regard anyway.

Dr Greening: That is great.

Chair: We will move on.

Q340 **Tommy Sheppard:** Dr Greening, you were going into this anyway. I would like to explore the argument that is often put about in this debate that migration tends to reduce employment opportunities for the resident population, for the non-migrant population, and/or reduce wage levels in certain sectors. Could each of you tell me whether you think that is true and, if so, what evidence there is to back that case up?

Madeleine Sumption: There have been a number of studies looking at impacts on wages and employment. The Migration Observatory has a briefing on our website that summarises the results of all of those studies. The general picture is that, on average, the impact of immigration tends to be relatively small. There isn't a huge amount of evidence that immigration has reduced the employment rates of people born in the UK. The impact on wages: the evidence here is more limited but it seems that, on average, the impact may be slightly positive but the distribution is not even.

Chair: Slightly positive?

Madeleine Sumption: On average, but people who are already earning high wages are more likely to benefit and people who are already earning low wages are at greater risk of seeing some decline in their wages. However, the general conclusion from across these studies is that immigration is not the major factor that determines how well UK-born people are doing in the labour market. The one group where there does seem to be consistent evidence of more negative impacts is previous cohorts of migrants, whose skill profile is more similar to new people coming in.

When people think about how to interpret this evidence—that the impacts are relatively small—different people see that in different ways; people who are already inclined more favourably towards migration will say, "Don't worry, it is fine. The impacts are small"; people who are inclined negatively towards migration will say, "Listen, the impacts are small, so



HOUSE OF COMMONS

you don't need this level of immigration. It is fine without it". How you interpret the evidence is a matter of perspective.

Chris Murray: Yes, I agree with that entirely. We have looked at this an awful lot, and a few studies suggest that at the lower end—the low skilled, low pay end—of the economy you can find a squeeze on wages but in the aggregate, and in some of the parts of the economy, there is an increase.

As I am sure you are all aware, there is a very strong analysis—a “lump of labour fallacy”—where there is a set number of jobs in the economy and adding migrants in fills those. The evidence does not back that up. Nonetheless, we do a lot of focus groups all around the country and, despite the fact that experts say that that is the case, we are perfectly aware that that does not cut the mustard. There is a very pervasive view in focus groups, which we have done throughout the country, that migrants put downward pressure on wages.

Views have sort of moved. We did some focus groups before the Brexit vote, after the Brexit vote and more recently, and the argument you hear has slightly shifted its terrain. Whereas before it was purely wages, “Migrants are pushing down wages”, it has now shifted into the impact of migration on the economy: for example, the spread of zero-hour contracts and moving to models of agency recruitment that lead to more insecure work. Some people in our focus groups see migration as part of that trend, which I think is quite interesting and is worth reflecting on.

Again, we have looked into this and have not been able to find evidence to substantiate it. My response to your question therefore is: we cannot find the evidence to strongly support it, but it is such a pervasive view that we need to keep trying.

Dr Greening: I would add to the comments made by my colleagues that, when it comes to wages, the research on the impact of migration in the labour market tends to focus on the UK as a whole, but the Migration Advisory Committee has noted that, in the majority of such studies, migrants were found to increase wages at the top of the UK wage distribution and reduce wages at the bottom of the wage distribution.

There have been a number of studies. I would add that, if focus groups are saying this, it could be because there is strong evidence to suggest that it is true, at least to a small degree. A study cited by the Scottish Government in a report in October 2016 by Riaghaltas found that—this is a study that focuses on Scotland—a 10% influx of labour in the East Highlands of Scotland decreased wages of both the unskilled and skilled by between 9% and 12%. Then there was another study released in December 2015 by the Bank of England, which found that increased migration can have a small negative effect on the wages of those in the semi-unskilled sector, where many migrants are employed in Scotland.



I would add that the IPPR has had a good record of noting this in Committees before. Phoebe Griffith, who gave evidence in 2017, said there is evidence of specific sectors where British workers have suffered, for example, the self-employed construction sector. It is quite difficult to regulate but, nevertheless, there is evidence that terms of pay have suffered. There is also evidence that there are sectors of the labour market that have been quite skewed towards a form of EU migration that is quite exploitative, so I think there is evidence there. The degree of the effect of course is always going to be debated by various academics, but I would urge all of us commenting on it not to dismiss it too lightly because, for someone on a low income, a very small effect could have a big impact.

Q341 Tommy Sheppard: If it seems to be the case that the effect on job opportunities and wages differs according to the sector and the skill level and level of remuneration anyway, does that suggest that there may be an argument for having a more sophisticated immigration policy that would distinguish between those sectors and wage levels, in deciding how many people we might want to welcome in?

Madeleine Sumption: I would say that overall, while it is difficult to estimate the total impact of immigration, the research evidence is reasonably compelling in finding that high-skilled immigration is much more likely to have beneficial effects than low-skilled immigration. Of course there are questions about exactly where the cut-off is between high skilled and low skilled, but that basic fact is not really contested.

The natural policy consequence of this is—all else being equal and to the extent that one has control over one's immigration system, control over what the policies are—there is economic evidence in favour of a policy system that is skewed towards the high skilled. It gets a little bit more complicated when you try to look at particular sectors. That is because there are a lot of different industries in the UK. They are smaller. Therefore the data tend to be less accurate, so it is more difficult to identify exactly where migration is needed. For example, if you are looking within low-skilled jobs and saying, "Do we need people in hospitality, versus fruit-picking, versus low-skilled construction jobs?" that exercise is analytically a lot more difficult.

It is also something where a lot of the concerns that you want to take into account are not necessarily technocratic or statistical ones. They are essentially political questions. If you take one of the low-skilled jobs that often comes up in discussion, such as entry-level social care positions, there are various ways that you could deal with migration policy in that area. You might say, "It is very difficult to staff some of these jobs, therefore, we are going to support this industry and try to boost the workforce with more migration". Or you could say, "We have not been spending a lot in this industry. We are willing to spend a lot more and we understand that that will have a cost and we are going to use taxpayer money to pay for it". That is not the kind of thing that you can give to the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Migration Advisory Committee or that you can have experts work out for you. That is fundamentally a political question. The politics of how you balance all the Government's different policy priorities will be particularly difficult when you are looking at low and middle-skilled jobs.

Chris Murray: By way of addition, on the point of whether there is a case for a more sophisticated immigration system, I think there is that case. However, in a sense, the cat is slightly out of the bag on that one—or the horse has bolted is the metaphor—because we currently have a 300 million free movement labour market that UK businesses can draw from. It seems that we are going to be leaving free movement, so that will require an architecture of rules. The question is not whether we should be more sophisticated or whether the tools that we have are quite blunt. It is a really exciting opportunity for UK immigration and for different parts of the UK to think more strategically about how we are going to do that.

The story of immigration in the UK has historically been we have not been very strategic about it; we have not been very long-termist about it. We have responded to either operational crises or crises in public opinion or external events that have led to big shifts in migration flows. We have never thought in a strategic long-term way. What do we really want the immigration system to do? Can it help us resolve some of the bigger issues we have, like regional inequalities, social cohesion, productivity challenges and those kinds of things?

I would also just make one other point, just picking up on a point Benedict Greening made about exploitative labour models. There are two sides to this question of how employers recruit. By far the majority of employers, who recruit through migration models and use the systems that we have, do so perfectly acceptably. There is definitely evidence of labour market exploitation and of exploitation of migrants. It will not come as a surprise to anyone that those are in sectors that are very low skilled, very low paid and quite geographically isolated. You know them.

One of the things that we have not done in Britain—because we had such an open labour market, not just through free movement but because the structure of our labour market is just very open and liberalised compared with other European countries—is put in place the kind of robust structures to tackle those kinds of exploitative practices, whether they fall on the legal or the illegal side of that. This is an opportunity for us to think about that as well, because that has a big impact on people's experience of migration in their communities.

Dr Greening: I would associate myself with that, definitely, and say that immigration is one of those issues that touches on so many areas of policy, doesn't it? It is kind of an existential area. I would also echo the idea that Brexit can and should be seen as an opportunity to deal with some of these issues that we are discussing today. We have proposed some new policies that we think the UK should adopt going forward,



HOUSE OF COMMONS

which we think would help. We reckon that that system after Brexit should be based on two principles, the first of which should be minimising disruption for business and preserving our historical links with Europe. We are not leaving Europe. We are leaving the EU, but we are not leaving Europe.

One of the principles is preserving those links, but then the other key principle should be the reduction—a sharp reduction—of immigration, especially into lower-skilled work, for three reasons: we think that would encourage training by employers; we think it is necessary to ease pressure on public services; we also think it is important to listen to what the majority of not just the British public but the Scottish public are saying, that net migration levels need to be reduced significantly.

We suggested different components of this system. The majority of EU workers in Scotland and in the UK are in lower-skilled work at the moment. That is where we think the reduction could be. At the same time, we would like to preserve free movement or unhindered movement, as much as possible, for students, tourists, business visitors and the self-sufficient. We think that reducing the large inflow into lower-skilled work, by extending the current work permit system, which applies to non-EU at the moment, would reduce net migration overall by about 100,000 a year on recent record levels.

Q342 **Chair:** This is the UK you are talking about here?

Dr Greening: Yes, that is the UK. At the same time, we think that there could be a number of palliative schemes to help businesses adjust to the new situation. For instance, we have said that maybe the Youth Mobility Scheme could be extended—which currently applies to a number of countries, including Australia and South Korea—to allow young people to come in for about two years at a time. We think that could be extended to the EU. There might be a case for a mid-skill temporary work permit, which has a financial incentive to encourage businesses to invest in training.

Q343 **Chair:** How does all that help when we have a shrinking workforce with an ageing population? How do all of these things that you have suggested start to address that particular issue?

Dr Greening: We think that it is essential to bring down net migration, but—

Chair: Yes, I know you think that.

Dr Greening: —so do the majority of the Scottish public.

Q344 **Chair:** Obviously, that is a very strong view of your organisation. What I am interested in is how we resolve some of the critical and structural issues within our Scottish economy. What you suggest is a whole number of things, which possibly go beyond what you want to try to achieve when we leave the European Union, but how does all this help our



economy?

Dr Greening: The economy is not necessarily helped by large inflows of migrant labour into lower-skilled and lower-paid work.

Q345 **Chair:** There is mixed evidence on that. That is your view. We are grateful for your view, but what we are trying to get here is the evidence.

Dr Greening: I was about to come to some evidence that would, for instance, pertain to productivity growth. There was a great report by IPPR Scotland about skills in Scotland and how skills need could be met. Productivity growth is an issue for Scotland in particular, but also for the UK as a whole. We would say that the key to economic prosperity is not bringing in large numbers of overseas workers, but higher productivity.

The truth is that, over the last decade, UK productivity has barely grown, despite the number of migrant workers increasing by more than 2 million and the migrant share of the UK workforce nearly doubling. There are a range of organisations—for instance, the Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board—which say that restricting migration, especially into lower-paid work, could help with that, help encourage businesses to invest more in skills and machinery.

Q346 **Chair:** How? Tell me how it helps.

Dr Greening: Because it encourages employers to make jobs more attractive to UK workers.

Q347 **Chair:** We have almost full employment in Scotland just now, particularly in my constituency, and I am looking around at some of my colleagues here. How does it do that?

Dr Greening: The point is not so much full employment but, as I said, increasing productivity and helping discourage the exploitation of workers, not just UK workers, but also EU workers.

Q348 **Deidre Brock:** Can I just ask: how do you separate that out? You are blaming migration for that but what about decades of sluggish investment in R&D, for example? Surely that lies behind a great deal of the lack of productivity in the UK economy.

Dr Greening: We would agree with that, yes.

Deidre Brock: Okay. How do you separate out migration from that particular example?

Dr Greening: There is a range of different issues, which all link with each other. For instance, the skills have been cut, I think, by the Scottish Government in recent years. We think cutting immigration to lower-skilled work would help encourage employers and the Government to work together more to train up workers, upskill and invest in people who are already here. That could include migrants as well as the UK born.

Q349 **Tommy Sheppard:** I want to ask Dr Greening this question. I represent



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Edinburgh East, which is east and central Edinburgh. I have about 7,000 EU citizens in my constituency, the vast majority of them working in either the hospitality sector or the care sector. What would be an acceptable figure to you? Presumably, 7,000 are too many because you want further controls. By what figure would you like to see that reduced?

Dr Greening: I would say that we are not encouraging people to leave Scotland; there is no evidence that that is happening. There is still a net inflow. In 2016 there was a net inflow from the EU of 11,000 into Scotland.

Tommy Sheppard: Your entire raison d'être is to argue for stricter controls on immigration in order to reduce the numbers, so I am asking you: the 7,000 EU nationals living in my constituency is presumably too many for you. What would be an acceptable figure?

Dr Greening: No, we are not saying we want to see a lower current level of EU-born in the population. That is not happening anyway. Even zero net migration would allow for all those already here to be replaced. We are not even arguing for zero net migration. All we are arguing for is a reduction in the current level of net migration, which is too high.

Tommy Sheppard: You do not think there are too many here at the moment?

Dr Greening: No.

Q350 **Danielle Rowley:** Thank you. Referring to the low-wage jobs, Migration Watch has argued that, instead of relying on high inflows of cheap labour from abroad in order to fill vacancies, Scotland's employers should do more to mobilise the local pool of unused or underutilised labour by raising pay and improving working conditions. Who should that responsibility fall to? You said before that a reduction in migration would encourage employers to pay better wages and have better working rights. Do you think it should be on employers or do you think that policymakers have a responsibility to encourage UK or Scottish citizens into jobs?

Dr Greening: We think it is both. There is a partnership to be fostered, encouraged and strengthened between businesses and Government to upskill and deliver those vocational skills that have been lacking. There are some quite interesting figures on training, for instance, in the UK, which I was going to share with the Committee. The Chartered Institute for Personnel Development notes that UK employers invest half as much as Germany and a quarter as much as France and, as I said, Skills Development Scotland has seen cuts in recent years. That is the responsibility of the UK Government, the Scottish Government and employers across the board. It is the responsibility of everyone really.

Q351 **Danielle Rowley:** Do you think there has to be a reduction in migration in order to attract UK citizens into these jobs, or is this something that could be done anyway? Mr Murray mentioned earlier the fallacy of there



HOUSE OF COMMONS

being a set number of jobs and that migrants take a portion of them. What could be done to encourage people to take jobs without a cut in migration?

Dr Greening: A lot is already being done by businesses. There was some evidence given by the Confederation of British Industry to the Migration Advisory Committee last year that showed that UK businesses are already raising wages. They do not particularly like raising wages. They do have some worries about raising wages, but it is happening. We think that is probably a good thing.

Chris Murray: Raising wages is definitely a good thing. On that point, we have to be wary of the argument that just cutting immigration will lead directly or causally to improved pay and conditions. There is a whole set of issues that complicates that equation. First, we have a huge productivity challenge in the UK and in parts of Scotland. We have some industries that are world leading but then a long tail of low-productivity jobs. Improving the pay and conditions of those jobs, and also changing how that works, is much more instrumental than just cutting off the migrant labour and expecting conditions to improve.

Also, if you look slightly further ahead beyond the immediate skills gap in the economy, the world of work is changing significantly. A lot of jobs are at risk of automation or replacement. That is spreading. It is not just manual labour but also quite skilled jobs are at risk of that. That will have a huge impact on how our economy works. Therefore, expecting a lack of migrants to improve the pay and conditions of those jobs, when they are at risk of automation, does not stack up in the longer-term analysis.

When you look at the skills challenge that the Scottish economy faces, I think I am correct in saying that 80% of the workforce who will be working in 2050 in Scotland have already left the education system. Our opportunity to upskill those people for the changing world of work, for bringing more productivity into the economy, is really complex. There is a huge role for public policy there. What we would argue at IPPR is that there are many levers that the Government has to address; one is skills, one is investment and one is absolutely migration policy.

To come to your point specifically, yes, there is absolutely a role for employers. I would strongly advocate for employers playing an active role in the impact of the migration practices and policies that they pursue in their own firms on local communities. One of the issues we found around the public fraying of trust in immigration is that there has been a business model, where you can open a sandwich processing plant or something in a factory—Sports Direct is a good example of nefarious practices here—and migrant workers come in. They are contributing to the UK economy. On the aggregate data, they are absolutely good for our economy but, in the local community where they work, that is being hoovered up in profits and redistributed elsewhere. However, if you are a local person living there what you have seen is a load of people arriving and no economic benefits or change.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

There is definitely a role for the Government to be more activist, when asking employers who do use migrant labour to share the proceeds and benefits that brings. That is a much more effective way of channelling the effects of migration and bringing on board public consent than just shutting off the tap of migrant labour, which ultimately might lead to those businesses closing, and they do also employ UK and Scottish people.

Q352 **John Lamont:** We have heard concerns that there is not sufficiently robust data in respect of migration to Scotland and what Scotland's future migration needs might be. Do you agree with that?

Madeleine Sumption: There is always a challenge with data. The smaller the area you are trying to look at the more difficult it is to use survey data. The Labour Force Survey, for example, is one of the main sources we use for analysis across the UK and it has a limited sample size. Increasing the sample size of those surveys is quite expensive. The Office for National Statistics is well aware of these problems. It has a programme of work under way to try to explore other data sources. In the future—this isn't something we can hope for in the next year or so—there is a lot of potential to use administrative data to overcome some of the problems with sample size. If you are using administrative records, you can then drill down to much smaller areas and you can get a lot of detail on particular kinds of jobs. There are some limitations with that data as well. However, if administrative data, from sources like HMRC, can be put into a format that can be used for migration analysis, then that could make a big difference to the ability to analyse at a Scotland level or in particular areas within Scotland.

Even if we lived in a world with perfect data, there would still be some conceptual problems with trying to work out exactly what Scotland's labour needs are. There are some things that would be easy. For example, you could do a more detailed shortage analysis of different occupations in different regions, but those exercises would still have all the limitations that I mentioned earlier. You cannot just use data to determine what policy should be. You also need to think about what your political priorities are, what the costs and benefits are that you are willing to accept, how does immigration fit with other things you are trying to do, whether it is industrial strategy, healthcare, your workforce strategy and so forth. Improvements in data could help a lot but they are not going to give you the full answer.

Chris Murray: I agree entirely with that. You would not find a think tank in the world that would not say, "Yes, we want more data". That is definitely true.

Some countries have better data sources than we do, but that is because they ask migrants to register with local police stations and stuff like that—as they do in Germany—which does help. There are limits of whether we want to collect that kind of data.



There are also two further points I would add. One is that it is not just the data we can and do have. It is how we use it and treat it. We have done a lot of work looking at the international students' data. The statistics seem to say that huge numbers of international students were regularly staying in the UK afterwards because we could not kick them out. If you look into it, they were not showing up on other data sets. We had misinterpreted data quite badly and I would argue that led to some quite big distortions in Government policy towards international students.

The final point, which ties into Madeleine Sumption's point about political choices—and I know politicians will be very aware of this—is that, when you do focus groups, data does not carry the weight that you want it to. Although we do need more robust data, even if we had the most perfect data in the world, it would only take us a tiny bit of the way to try to deal with the real systemic issues of people's problems with the immigration system, which go far beyond data analysis-type questions.

Dr Greening: I would agree with a lot of that. It is great to hear that the ONS is doing a lot of work to link up data sources across Government. Some recent legislative changes will help with that: the Digital Economy Bill that was passed last year.

The point that Madeleine made about HMRC is interesting as well. We would like to see HMRC used more—and the ONS has indicated that it will do this—to match up tax records. For instance, tax records include regional and industry data with nationality. HMRC could be asked to carry out work to establish who is working in what sector, where and what they are being paid for work. For instance, we have suggested that HMRC's real-time information system for PAYE income tax could be used to provide a more up-to-date, near-complete picture of how many EU nationals are working for employers, and in which particular industry sectors, from month to month. We all have an interest in ensuring that policy is made on the basis of accurate evidence.

I would make a further point that it is possible that the paradigm shift that Brexit represents might be an opportunity for another commission for the MAC—it is already conducting one on EU migration generally—to look more broadly at the extent to which the UK does need workers from abroad, and to make some wider recommendations about whom it would be advisable to admit and, if appropriate, from where in the world.

Chris Murray: Picking up on one point, there is an interesting question about how you can use different data sources to pick information up but it does lead to some political questions. For example, we could glean a better picture of migration in the UK by asking schools to collect data on migrant pupils. However, there are big issues around that because schools might feel uncomfortable accidentally reporting children to immigration authorities. Some countries—the US in particular—have found real political problems from not having that debate before they do it, because there is a political dimension to some of this data collection.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q353 **John Lamont:** Returning to Madeleine's point at the start about the inadequacy of the data that is available for Scotland only, and thinking it through for those who argue for Scotland to have a separate immigration system, which is based on Scotland's supposedly different needs in respect of migrant labour. If we don't have accurate data that is more of a political choice rather than a choice based on any reliable evidence that we can use to argue for that.

Madeleine Sumption: To argue for a separate system?

John Lamont: Yes.

Madeleine Sumption: This was the topic of the report we produced late last year. The conclusion we came to was that the question of whether or not there should be a separate system is in some ways more a matter of principle than a question of the economic impacts of having a different system. There are economic costs and benefits of regional differentiation that we can go into in more detail. However, regardless of the data, you have it is difficult at any level of geography to say exactly how many migrants are needed. It would be difficult to say that for Scotland if you had your own system, and it would be difficult to say that for different areas of the UK if it was all run from Westminster. Does that mean it should not be done? There are also potentially political impacts and people have different perspectives on those.

In some ways it comes down to this question of where people feel that power ought to lie. There was a survey conducted by my colleagues at the Migration Observatory, shortly before the independence referendum, that suggested a majority of Scottish people wanted Scotland to have control over immigration policy, even though they did not necessarily think it would lead to the immigration policies that they wanted. Many of them felt that Scottish Government control over immigration policy would lead to higher levels of migration. They did not want higher levels of migration but still wanted Scotland to have control of that policy area, as a matter of principle. Therefore, the different political, economic and constitutional arguments will all point in different ways.

John Lamont: That is helpful. I agree. It is a political point of principle that some of us agree with and some of us don't agree with. There is no robust data that supports the discussion we have just had. It confirms that the data on a regional basis is not robust enough to provide additional evidence to support that.

Madeleine Sumption: That is correct.

Q354 **David Duguid:** Following on from Mr Lamont's identification of the concerns, it seems like you all agree on the importance of obtaining robust data, not just in terms of quantity but in terms of quality; what it is actually telling you. Speaking as a recovering management consultant myself, I know you cannot just go into a business, look at the balance sheet and get the answers. You need to talk to people, talk to the business leaders and talk to people who work for the business.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

You guys are doing an excellent job, from the outside looking in, or from the Government looking from the top down. Is there more of an opportunity for a more bottom-up approach, for businesses and industry sectors, to help be more proactive in providing that data in a more meaningful way, so that it tells the story rather than just providing numbers?

Chris Murray: Yes, definitely. As I said in response to previous questions, there is definitely scope for more activism from employers. One of the flaws that bedevil our immigration system is that we have a whole range of different kinds of employers doing different things. You have some employers who are working really, really well, reinvesting the benefits, thinking very strategically and balancing that with the skills of the local population, and you have some who, frankly, are not.

One of the proposals we put forward is for an employer-trusted sponsor scheme, where the Government could say, "We have looked at how you operate. We have more confidence in you than the average employer. We think you should get a sped-up system". It is true that the immigration systems are something of a burden on business, whether they are a bearable burden or not is a different debate. We think they should be able to incentivise good behaviour of employers and, on the other hand, be tougher on those that are not. That would definitely extend to providing accurate data as well as just migration compliance.

Madeleine Sumption: There is a mechanism through which employers can provide data, which is when the Migration Advisory Committee has consultations when it gets a commission from the Government. A lot of employers do respond to these. There is often data that they hold—for example, their own payroll records or information about specific occupations that are done by migrants and the characteristics of those occupations—that you cannot get from the national level data sources because they are not sufficiently disaggregated. Often there are the calls for evidence that get very good responses. On some occasions, you will see particular sectors where employers don't come back to the MAC and don't provide a lot of evidence. I would certainly encourage employers to provide evidence when those opportunities arise, because it is extremely helpful.

Q355 **David Duguid:** In those cases you are dependent on the businesses or employers that choose to respond, rather than any structured system that almost puts an obligation on employers?

Madeleine Sumption: I should also say that I am not representing the MAC here in this context. However, the way it works is there is a call for evidence and employers provide evidence but then the MAC also does outreach.

Q356 **Chair:** We are going to try to make a bit more speedy progress because we still have a number of questions to ask you, so don't all feel obliged to answer any questions that are put to you. It is just if you have something



HOUSE OF COMMONS

particularly significant to contribute. Colleagues, it would help us, if you have a supplementary, if you tried to make it one question so we can get to the people who have put their names forward.

Deidre Brock: I want to ask about current immigration requirements, the ones for non-EU nationals. Those are largely restricted to highly-paid skilled workers. In your view, how well do you think the system for non-EU nationals is working currently? Does it meet the aim of providing a route for skilled workers to the UK?

Madeleine Sumption: The Migration Observatory does not make recommendations about what policy should be, so I would be reluctant to characterise the system as good or bad, working or not working. In general, if you look at the UK system for skilled non-EU citizens, it is not fundamentally dissimilar to many other systems around countries that do not have free movement, if you compare it to the United States, Norway or a number of different countries that are using work permit systems.

One thing that is slightly odd in the UK system—which I am sure will be the subject of debate in the coming months—is the Tier 2 prioritisation mechanism. It was not in the headlines until very recently because there was a cap on the number of people who could be issued visas but, apart from one time in 2015, it was never met. Because there is a cap, when the applications come in they are prioritised and one of the most important factors is salary. For most types of jobs, in the January allocation, the salary limit went up from £30,000 to £50,000. That means there is a category of occupations earning between £30,000 to £50,000 that had been eligible for Tier 2 visas and suddenly are not.

This raises some interesting questions about what the goals are with the immigration system. The purpose of the cap was to have control of the numbers of people coming in. However, if you control the number of people coming in you lose control of other criteria. For example, 30% of doctors now earn less than the amount that would be required for the £50,000 threshold, and over 75% of architects. One of the issues with the cap is that it creates a lot of unpredictability in the system. Instead of having criteria and saying, “These doctors are always eligible” you have a system where you say, “These doctors are sometimes eligible depending on what the system is”. It is not surprising that there has been a lot of discussion about what should happen and whether that is the best mechanism.

Q357 **Deidre Brock:** That is really interesting. The ESRC Centre for Population Change found that employers reported UK immigration policy was “disproportionately focused on the needs and interests of London and South East England”. There have been comments about the fact that wages are higher in those areas and that disadvantages Scotland as well. Can you comment on that particular point?

Madeleine Sumption: I think this is referring to the fact that the salary threshold that people have to meet is uniform across the country, despite



the fact that earnings are different. This affects different regions. Essentially, the main areas that have salaries that are very different from the rest of the UK are London and, to some extent, the South East. The other regions don't have a huge amount of variation. Scotland is relatively close to the UK average, so Scotland would probably not be hugely affected by a change in the salary thresholds. I can send you some data on this if that would be helpful.

Deidre Brock: Please, yes.

Madeleine Sumption: We have it in one of our reports. Essentially, London and the South East have much higher salaries. It would be relatively easy from a statistical point of view to say the salaries thresholds would vary. The argument that has been used against that is the concern that it would encourage employers to arbitrage, to essentially hire people in one place and then maybe have them work in another or there could be some compliance difficulties. Generally speaking, of the kinds of differentiation in the immigration system that you might have, changing the salary thresholds is one of the easier ones.

Dr Greening: I would add that the MAC has also commented on this, noting that it would be against region-specific thresholds. I think it was on the basis that it would create unnecessary complexity, especially for employees who work in more than one location. It has also recommended against regional variation of the spousal visa threshold, on the basis that it could encourage sponsors to move temporarily to low-cost areas in order to meet the requirements. Then again, as Madeleine says, there are arguments for it. There may be concessions or some solutions, going forward, that would meet Scotland's needs better as we have this huge paradigm shift leaving the EU.

Q358 **Deidre Brock:** That is interesting. I have seen comments from Migration Watch that suggests that, technically, the idea of a differentiated approach is not impossible. That was quite clear from your paper.

Mr Murray, you mentioned that the IPPR stated that the net migration target pursued by the Home Office has forced the Government to crudely drive down overall numbers, often in contradiction to the objectives of other Departments. I wonder why you think that is.

Chris Murray: The net migration target has proven itself to be not particularly fit for purpose. It encourages false trade-offs in migration policy. We count migrants that have very different impacts on our economy and in their communities as all the same. They are generically migrants. That has led to amalgams that are unfortunate and also to misguided policy. It would be much more strategic to balance out the different thresholds and think about it; you have skilled migration, you have unskilled migration and you have spousal visas.

It seems strange to me that we would not take a skilled worker because someone had married a foreigner, but that is essentially the logic behind the net migration target. It also has bigger implications as we go forward



HOUSE OF COMMONS

for our refugee commitment, any deals we want to make through trade deals, visa requirements and those things. Does that answer your question?

Q359 Deidre Brock: Yes, that is good. However, do you think that immigration policy could better reflect wider Governmental needs? It seems some Departments are suffering as a result of the current immigration policy.

Chris Murray: Absolutely. Some Departments and devolved Administrations are being sort of held by the Home Office's policy.

Deidre Brock: Indeed.

Chris Murray: We have had a very input-led attitude to migration in the UK, so it is just numbers coming in and that is the key metric we use to judge our policy by. We would advocate a more strategic and longer-term vision of the role that migration plays in the economy, and thinking about how migration policy could be viewed more sophisticatedly to address that. I have already alluded to the productivity challenges, the big regional disparities we have in the UK, innovation and the changing nature of work. Immigration could be a real tool for the Government to think more strategically about that.

There is another suggestion that, in this drive to be output-led, we are almost shooting ourselves in the foot in terms of social cohesion. We have put in place some very strict rules on migration inflows, which ultimately make it harder for migrants to integrate in the longer term. Family unity is very difficult. We all know that families integrate much more strongly than individuals. That is very well documented. It may not be called that anymore, but currently we have a killing-off period where, if someone came in and had a work transfer, they then had to leave. That disincentivises staying in the community. If people don't have a guarantee of staying longer term they are much less likely to integrate. We don't think strategically enough about integration proofing immigration policy.

Deidre Brock: Interesting, thank you very much.

Q360 John Lamont: I want to pick up on what Chris Murray was saying. My understanding is that the IPPR takes the view that immigration policy should be devolved to Scotland but visas, border control and immigration enforcement should be retained at a UK level. Is that correct?

Chris Murray: Devolved or with regional variations set in the same terms, yes.

Q361 John Lamont: How do you see that working in practice, particularly for somebody who represents a borders constituency that has employees working on both sides of the border and people with family on both sides of the border? How do you see that working in practice and particularly the costs associated with that?

Chris Murray: There are two points. First of all, it is exactly what we are



HOUSE OF COMMONS

talking about regionalising. Obviously, enforcement, borders and visa issuance have to be led at a nation state level because you need complete coherence and harmony on those ones. There is an argument to say you could completely devolve all immigration policy to different regions of the UK. To make a comparison, we are seeing as part of the Brexit debate that when you don't have strong harmony among systems, it leads to a need for borders.

If we were talking about small changes in border policy, it is quite feasible to do so. The example would be: if somebody gets a job to work only in Scotland, the conditions of their visa would be that they had to be working only in Scotland. An analogy would be if somebody gets a visa to go to a Scottish university they have to attend that university. They cannot be at university elsewhere in the country, so we do have that already. If somebody had a job that required them to move, they would obviously need a UK-wide visa. If they were found to be in breach of that, they would be breaking immigration rules and be eligible for removal.

The parallel I would make with that is in the Schengen zone. That is not entirely different. They do share common entry, borders and security, but individual member states have different non-EU immigration policies.

Q362 John Lamont: Potentially, that is a big issue for employers who employ people in the borders—Dumfries and Galloway, Carlisle, Cumberland and Northumberland—that currently employ overwhelmingly UK nationals who will now, potentially, if they are living on either side of the border, have more paperwork and more bureaucracy to deal with if that was the system we adopted.

Chris Murray: As I said earlier, essentially that horse has bolted if we are leaving free movement. We are going to be putting in place a system where, if we move away from free movement, there will be visa controls of some kind.

John Lamont: With other EU countries, but not cross-border within the United Kingdom.

Chair: Supplementaries were supposed to be one supplementary. I let Mr Lamont continue with his line of questioning, but if colleagues could help me out and just stick to one.

Q363 Deidre Brock: I want to ask about the border visa controls that you are talking about. As I understand it, Canada has completely devolved immigration to Quebec, hasn't it?

Chris Murray: There are Canada-wide visas. If somebody had a job that required them to work in Quebec and Saskatchewan, they would have to get one of those visas.

Q364 Deidre Brock: I am sorry, Chair, but a business could apply for a UK-wide visa, for example, for those jobs that require people to travel between places?



Chris Murray: The argument I would make is that, if you wanted to completely break up the UK immigration system and only have it as regional systems, that would lead to very significant questions around people crossing the internal borders of the UK. I will make a comparison: if I was a Tier 2 visa applicant working in Aberdeen, my Tier 2 visa is specifically for my job. Of course, it would be possible for me to commute from other parts of the country, but I am tied to that specific job and if I need to change it, I need to change my visa.

We are moving to a big change in UK migration policy, as a result of Brexit and other changes. We could now introduce regional flexibility and allow parts of the UK, which may want to go further, to add supplementary visas to the UK-wide ones for their regions in response to their specific needs. There is a question of whether or not we want to do that.

Q365 **Christine Jardine:** The IPPR has said that nations and regions have minimal influence over immigration policy decisions. You have been touching on that. We have heard in the past that we could have a greater role in Scotland. What options are there, rather than simply saying, "We will give immigration to the Scottish Parliament"?

Chris Murray: First, you could have a system—completely run by the Home Office in Marsham Street—that still incorporated a regional variation to it. It does not have to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament. There is that option. There is also a range of different things that could be done. We have talked already about salary thresholds, not including parts of the country and migration caps or targets, those kinds of things.

Q366 **Christine Jardine:** What you were saying earlier was that one of the things that would have to be maintained is cohesion. Would it be easier to maintain the cohesion over a UK-wide strategy for migration, if it remained a reserved power in Westminster but allowed some regional variation controlled by the Home Office?

Chris Murray: I definitely think it would be very hard not to have quite strong and strict levels of cohesion across the UK. The question is whether it needs to be completely rigid or whether there is scope for some variation in specific sectors. The proposals that we made would only be for skilled labour migration or post-study work, for example. If you wanted wholesale changes, that would create difficulties if there was strong divergence. That is what we are seeing with the Brexit debate now. If the UK wants to diverge from EU migration rules, there are implications that follow from that.

Q367 **Christine Jardine:** In the same way as the argument over freedom of movement and a single market led to us probably leaving the EU and the whole Brexit debate, is there a danger that, if you in any way interfere with freedom of movement in the UK, you begin to break down the cohesion of the unitary market and trading internationally, and the UK itself?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chris Murray: That is a very important point that does merit consideration. The two points I would make is, first, the parallel with free movement in the EU is not strictly true, because we are not talking about free movement of people in the UK. We are talking about the free movement of specific migrants. The argument that we all know that is made by the EU is that the four freedoms are indivisible so if you want to have free movement of goods and services and capital, you have to have free movement of people.

We are not suggesting that a regional migration system should lead to no free movement of people because, clearly, those four freedoms in the UK internal market are completely the same too. It is not about the UK population being stopped. It is about small numbers of migrants moving within that. For example, if there was a French person living in Wales, they would not have complete free movement to go and work without applying for a new visa in Scotland. It is a very small number. Again, the parallel also exists in Schengen countries.

Q368 **Christine Jardine:** There has also been—I think specifically in Australia—concern about leakage of migrants from one area to another. As Mr Duguid said, basically what you do is you end up having to create a border in order to control it. When the oil industry spoke to us, they were concerned about anything that might limit the freedom of, say, that small number of foreign workers from France or wherever, who work in Aberdeen but need the flexibility to be able to go and work in headquarters in London or wherever. A purely devolved immigration system might be an additional barrier to their effective business.

Chris Murray: That is absolutely correct and entirely true. To clarify, that is not strictly what the IPPR proposal is. UK-wide visas would continue to apply.

Christine Jardine: Yes, I was just checking that. Thank you.

Dr Greening: I wonder if I could come in on that. Obviously, there is an element of regionalisation in the UK system at the moment. There is the Scottish shortage occupation list on which there are certain jobs, including obstetricians, paediatricians and clinical radiologists. A number of ideas have been put forward—for instance, by Professor Christina Boswell in evidence to this Committee, no less—about how that could be taken forward. Our view of a devolved system is that, especially at this moment when the burden on the Home Office is so great with having to register 3 million people already, you probably would not want to deconstruct the entire immigration system and then recompose it. One proposal I saw from the IPPR was that it would require the creation of 13 new immigration authorities across the country, around committees of MPs, local representatives and local authorities. We think that would cause more disruption than our proposal.

On the theme of listening to business, I thought I would add some quotes from business people. For instance, a food and drink manager in Scotland



HOUSE OF COMMONS

told the CBI that, "A devolved migration system with different entry requirements would be a nightmare to navigate for firms operating on both sides of the border. If the visa is tied to the job in a specific location, what happens if they need to be relocated within the business to elsewhere in the UK?" Kirsty Ramsay, from the life sciences industry, told this Committee that, "From our experiences we do not think that regional variation in terms of immigration policy would be helpful. We would look for a consistent policy throughout the whole of the UK". Then Alex Thompson, I think from the oil and gas industry, said, "If there were to be a separate immigration policy for Scotland, you could not move a member of staff quite as easily from Aberdeen to London if they were only entitled to work in Aberdeen".

Chair: The Committee knows what has been told to it, but thank you for quoting back. To clarify from me: we have already had a divergent immigration policy between Scotland and the rest of the UK called Fresh Talent, and it worked for a number of years. We also have regional variations because we have a different MAC list for Scotland. There is nothing unusual or something that has not been done when it comes to this range of issues.

Madeleine Sumption: The basic situation here is that regional variation is perfectly feasible. You don't have to have a border. If we are talking about work authorisation, the border is not where work authorisation is enforced. People come in on tourist visas, for example, and if they work they would be doing so illegally. The same would be the case for people who were only authorised to work in one part of the UK and moved to another one. How this would work in practice, essentially, is that the Home Office would have to then devise some rules that say what counts as a job that is only in Scotland and what counts as a job that is somewhere else in the UK. It is not always going to be completely straightforward. You may have the example of a manager who is working in one office but spends maybe a day a week in London doing policy meetings, or maybe meeting with people in other affiliates of the company. Would that count? At some point the Home Office would have to say, "This is the line at this point. You need to apply for a new visa".

It is not that it cannot be done from an operational perspective. The issue is the administrative cost and the hassle of it. Employers do not like this system. There was some qualitative evidence last year from various groups, including CIPD, which found employers are not favourable towards it. CIPD also has some forthcoming survey data next month that shows a regional system is not the favoured option for the vast majority of employers, including in Scotland. The reason for that essentially is the compliance costs.

The system relies on employers keeping track of where people are, making sure they are complying and then being visited or audited. They would then have to say, "Can we make sure that manager who goes down to London is not spending more than that amount of days? What



happens to these different people?" The number of things that the employers have to keep track of multiplies. One of the common complaints that employers have about the immigration system is the complexity and the governance cost, essentially, of keeping track of all of their people and making sure everyone is compliant so, from an economic perspective, that complexity is one of the big drawbacks of differentiation.

Chris Murray: Can I add something?

Chair: No, you cannot, because we are getting close to the end of the session and we have a number of questions that we still want to take.

Paul Masterton: This will be a very quick one. As part of the industrial strategy, the UK Government is looking at a series of sectoral strategies. There has been some evidence that, rather than looking at regional variations to immigration policy, it may be better to look at that on a sectoral basis, so to have different requirements for different sectors, particularly where there may be shortages of seasonal workers, for example, fruit pickers. Do you think that is something that merits exploration?

Madeleine Sumption: If you want to consider what the demands of employers are and what the contributions of different kinds of migrants are to different parts of the labour market, looking at occupations or sectors makes much more sense than looking at regions. That is because regions have a huge amount of variety within them, whereas particular occupations are much more homogeneous. Analysing the economic impacts from that—particularly at the occupational level, although there is obviously a big overlap between sector and occupation—does make more sense.

Chris Murray: It is an argument in reverse. Where the line between a sector is and is not becomes quite difficult. If you want to think strategically about how the UK economy is working and the long-term challenges that we face, we have very strong regional imbalances that we should want to correct and we should look at the policies available too. I don't know if the disparities between sectors strategically are what immigration policy could be used for. We would be missing out on an opportunity to think quite reflectively and innovatively about how immigration policy could be used.

One of the proposals we have is not for a sector-specific visa but for things like a global talent visa, for people who have skills in STEM subjects or have shown a track record in innovation. Those kinds of things might be more useful for boosting our productivity. Then, of course, there is the question of the threshold you would use for a specific sector. If it is qualification based, that might be quite difficult for migration from around the world and those kinds of questions.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Dr Greening: We suggested that after Brexit there might be a case for re-invigorating the seasonal agricultural worker scheme, which was in place from the late 1940s to 2013. If possible, we would like a scheme that is temporary and tapered. We have put forward the New Zealand scheme as a good model for how it could look. It is a model of international best practice cited by the World Bank, which tackles some of the issues that have been raised today of undercutting and possible overstaying.

We would be against the proposal that has been put forward by a number of organisations to disaggregate the net migration target into sectoral targets because the net migration target has public support, including in Scotland. It has also led to increased transparency, public accountability and some good co-ordination across Government. Of course, it also reflects the desire of the majority of Scots for net migration to be reduced.

Q369 **Hugh Gaffney:** I am looking at challenges arising from Brexit. The UK and EU have already agreed the rights EU citizens currently resident in the UK will have post-Brexit—the five-year deal, basically. The precise process for achieving this has not yet been set out. The Migration Observatory has stated that the current application process for EU citizens seeking permanent residence has been much criticised for its complexity and strict requirements. How can this be made easier, given the large numbers of people who are likely to apply in the light of Brexit? You are criticising it, so how do you think it is going to change?

Madeleine Sumption: Is your question about the permanent residents' process for EU citizens currently here?

Hugh Gaffney: This question is about the five-year deal. If you are currently here, you get five years. If you come in just now, you will get your five years temporary and then we will judge it. You are saying it is very hard to apply. Given the numbers we may get after Brexit, how do you improve on it? It has been criticised by yourselves, so how do you think we can improve it?

Madeleine Sumption: There are a number of things that the Government have already said they will do—although they have not done them yet—that will make the system simpler. There are some requirements, for example, that have been the cause of rejections of a number of EU citizens, particularly the private comprehensive sickness insurance. There is a requirement for workers to show that they are doing genuine and effective work, which means that some people who are working part time or on very low incomes would not qualify. The Government have said they will drop those. They are going to introduce a new system where there is less of a burden on documentation because they will be pulling from records the Government already holds, like HMRC and tax filings, for example. That ought to alleviate some of the burden, at least for people with very straightforward cases.



The big question going forward is: what happens to the people who find it more difficult? Essentially, you have three categories of people who might struggle in the system. There are people who are not eligible, for whatever reason, and those should be relatively small in number. The big question is: are the Government going to require people who are not working to show they have sufficient resources under EU law? There is some complexity about people on very low incomes; they struggle.

The second category of people is those who are eligible but cannot necessarily provide the documentation. This would be, for example, people working in the cash economy who don't have very good proof of address, maybe they were living with friends. They may have some evidence that they were in the UK but it is not the kind of evidence that the Government currently accepts in the permanent residents' process. Therefore, if the Government's goal was to maximise the number of people who successfully get through that process, if they are eligible, loosening up the evidence requirements and accepting more informal forms of evidence would help them achieve that.

The third category of people that might not get through is people who don't apply, for whatever reason. You may have people who don't realise that they need to apply, particularly maybe someone who has been here for 40 years and is retired. They may think this is about newer people, for example. There will be people with various personal barriers—health problems, destitution or any number of reasons—that mean people either cannot or don't apply. There the questions would be around how well the system is publicised, how much help people get going through it, and particularly what happens to people who, when it gets to the deadline, have not applied yet. There is some vague wording saying that, if there is a good reason for them not having applied, a proportionate approach will be taken. Depending on how many people don't apply could affect how generous the system is to those people later.

Q370 Ross Thomson: My question is also about a differentiated system. Given that there is no physical border between Scotland and England, is a call for immigration to be devolved a sensible one? We heard about Canada. However, we have seen what has happened in Australia where migrants who are supposed to work in one region permeate through that region into the rest of the country.

Chris Murray: Obviously, when you begin to introduce complexity into an immigration system, you do create opportunities for non-compliance or exploitation. That is a risk. You have to make an assessment of that risk and then put in place mitigating factors.

When we leave free movement and set up a new immigration system, there will be a number of immigration and non-compliance risks that have to be taken into account. My argument is that in the UK we have been led purely by the input of numbers and risks of non-compliance, and we have not thought strategically about what immigration actually does once people are here living in our country. Not just that, but whether we



can instrumentalise those people to address some of our underlying challenges.

When you move from a system of free movement, you can put restrictions on people, for example, saying, “You have to live here. You have to work in this sector. You have to earn this amount of money. You have to have good behaviour. You have to learn to speak English”. We can add all these restrictions once we move from free movement. Whatever your views on whether we would stay with free movement, that represents something of an opportunity to address these underlying problems.

Given the scale of the regional disparities across parts of the UK, and the differences in public attitudes to immigration levels that may be expected, we must be careful that we don’t go for the lowest common denominator. There are parts of the UK that have seen very significant changes in immigration—big increases that are very socially dislocative—and clearly public concerns must be addressed. It seems to be sensible to try to address the concerns of those communities and the concerns of other parts of the country that may be facing skills gaps, population decline or may want to instrumentalise immigration for other departmental or devolved Administration objectives. Our contention is that, with the changes that are coming up in the immigration system, it is possible to allow for small amounts of variation on a regional basis that could take us in that direction.

Dr Greening: If I could add, some of those areas that have experienced large inflows are actually in Scotland. The Resolution Foundation came out with a report—I think in 2016—that found that of the 10 local authorities across the UK, which had received the biggest change in migrant population, four of them were in Scotland. Some of those issues, especially the concentrated pressure on public services in places like Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen, will be big issues for Scots themselves.

I thought I would quote the former Immigration Minister of New Zealand who noted of his own country’s regional system, “You cannot guarantee people stay in the regions to which they are first assigned. They gravitate back to the cities”. Also, an interesting perspective was given by Professor Boswell when she appeared before this Committee. In her report with Dr Kyambi from Edinburgh University she notes, “The Australian or Canadian systems involve complex and resource intensive selection and recruitment processes, but very little in the way of subsequent control or enforcement. Given public concerns about immigration, such a model would not be easily sellable in Scotland or the UK”. That echoes our concerns about the system.

Q371 **Chair:** Could I ask you, when we are on this very issue, because it always intrigues me, what would be the incentive for somebody who comes to Scotland through the regional immigration system who is there



HOUSE OF COMMONS

legally, has terms and conditions and who has a job which sponsors him, for them to leave that and to go into the black economy where any sort of detection would mean immediate expulsion? Why would anybody do that? What would be the motive for attempting to do that?

Chris Murray: It could be that someone is coming in illicitly under a visa. They may have family in another part of the country and those kinds of concerns. There is always a thing in immigration where you ask what the risk profile is of this immigration group. If all immigration was completely devolved, and it was all compartmentalised to regions, the risk would be much higher for certain categories of migrant. For very high-skilled post-study work the risk profile changes.

Also, what they did in Canada was to introduce an element of conditionality. They don't have any enforcement once you are in Canada because of the nature of that country. Say I had a two-year visa to work in Quebec, "I have been in Quebec for two years and here is proof of it", you then qualify to get another visa and then your citizenship pathway opens up.

Chair: Thank you for that.

Q372 **Ross Thomson:** Following on from that—especially your answer there, Mr Greening—do you agree that a devolved and different immigration system between Scotland and the rest of the UK would not only increase burdens and costs for businesses, but that there is an increased risk of exploitation and how real do you think that risk is?

Dr Greening: That is an element of it that, admittedly, I have not considered. I would like to ponder that more and possibly get back to you, if that is all right.

Ross Thomson: Sure. Is there anybody else on the panel who would maybe want to pick up on that?

Chris Murray: As I say, any change in rules does increase the risk of exploitation. It is the profile of the migrant that is dependent on that, the incentives that they have not to break it and the enforcement mechanisms for catching them when they do.

Q373 **Ross Thomson:** The final question, as we are pushed for time, is that recent polling—the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey that came out only a matter of weeks ago—showed that 63% of Scots want to keep the same rules on immigration as the rest of the UK. Do the panel agree this opinion should be respected?

Chris Murray: Yes, of course, we should respect public opinion. However, the reason we are suggesting introducing a variability and small visa streams is because people's views on immigration are one thing but the impact immigration has on the economy is quite significant, and that has a much stronger impact on people's experience of it. Whether or not people in Scotland are frustrated by visa disparities with other parts of the UK, the Government should be thinking about what



public policy we have to address those concerns. Our argument would be immigration is not a discrete policy that does not affect any of these things. It is a central part of Government economic and industrial strategy and it should be considered as such.

Dr Greening: On further reflection, I would like to add that I think a regional system would undermine public confidence in immigration control and, also, possibly lead to more enforcement problems and clandestine immigration. Our main concern is that there is every risk of immigration running completely out of control as you have a whole lot of new, different authorities, which have had very little experience in immigration previously, starting to make demands and suggest that there is a whole number of reasons why there should be this number of work permits. At the moment, there is a very central, cohesive system. It is not perfect—far from perfect—but the MAC has worked quite well as a neutral body that sits at the centre of policy commentology and arbitrates between different special interest demands.

Q374 **Deidre Brock:** Dr Hepburn told us that virtually all advanced-level democracies and multilevel states, which have various nations and regions within them, have developed immigration systems that take into account those sub-state needs and interests in terms of migration. Are you telling us that the UK and the country of Scotland are uniquely incapable of being able to adjust in that way?

Madeleine Sumption: I would not say that Scotland was incapable of having the system. It is perfectly feasible. I think the operational enforcement concerns are massively overplayed. I don't think there is a big enforcement problem. It affects the politics very much because people feel that it would be difficult to enforce and, therefore, it may be an unpopular policy. Absolutely, I think it is feasible.

The main countries that do this, Australia and Canada, are countries that have sophisticated political institutions that manage those as policies at the subnational level. Obviously, Scotland would also be in a situation to do that. It is in a much better position to do that than, say, the regions of England where in any cases there is no—

Q375 **Deidre Brock:** I was going to say that is the difference with Northumbria, which I think you mentioned, Mr Murray, didn't you? Because we have a Government in Scotland, obviously.

Chris Murray: Yes. We have advocated for north-east visas as well. In trying to think about how immigration is playing in society as it is just now, one of the points I would make is that, over the past 25 years, Governments have increasingly said to their populations, "We are sorry, there isn't very much control of migration that we can bring". That was clearly a driver of the EU Brexit vote, where people were told, "We cannot enforce immigration policy".



HOUSE OF COMMONS

As a think tank, we are trying to deal with those issues and respond to that and ask how you can build into an immigration system greater levels of public consent, so that politicians can be held accountable for the impacts that immigration has, so that the impacts of immigration are thought about by politicians, because it would be my contention that they have not been properly thought about in the UK.

There are a whole range of factors to do that. One argument could be to cut migration. One argument could be regionalised migration. I think we have to have a much more sophisticated analysis that looks at all the impacts of migration: the impact on productivity, the impact on integration, the impact on firms and the regional components. It is not that there is any uniqueness about Scotland. If anything, it is the opposite. Scotland has fallen into all the same traps as all the other countries.

Q376 Deidre Brock: There was some mention of the increased complexity that might arise from this. Isn't there also the possibility that we could bring in a level of an easier application process? I am thinking particularly of the extra costs that are now involved with bringing Tier 2 folk to the UK and, certainly, the legal hoops that businesses have told us of. The FSB Scotland has told us, for example, that a lot of their SMEs, which they largely represent, are not using one of the Tiers. Is it Tier 3 or Tier 2? I cannot remember. These are the sorts of things that are stopping them from bringing folk over, skilled workers and so on. Surely, the possibility is there also that, if it was regional, we could have something more flexible, something that businesses might find easier to use.

Dr Greening: Our view is that a separate system would be less effective because it would lead to a massive increase in the bureaucracy and burdens on businesses. It was interesting to hear the evidence given by Mr Johnstone from the life sciences industry, who said that his biggest concern was not navigating the bureaucracy of Tier 2 in bringing in workers. It was more about dealing with stamp duty.

Q377 Deidre Brock: Yes, that is one witness, but I can tell you a number of other witnesses have talked about the complexities and the hoops that businesses have to go through.

Madeleine Sumption: I think it would also depend on which bits of the process are being devolved.

Deidre Brock: Of course, yes.

Madeleine Sumption: You could have a relatively plausible situation where the Scottish Government would have criteria and someone would be nominated, but then they would still have to go through exactly the same application process with the Home Office, which would be responsible for processing the visas. In which case, you would not necessarily have an aligned process. Obviously, there would be questions about what happens to things like the immigration skills charge and the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

NHS surcharge, but that would be a question for negotiation about which things the Scottish Government controlled or did not control.

Deidre Brock: We have subnational flexibilities in Canada, Australia, Finland, Spain, and Iceland as well. It is something that is not unique in being discussed by Scotland.

Q378 **David Duguid:** Canada and Australia get mentioned a lot as examples of this regional differentiation. Do you have any thoughts at all—if you could answer this one quickly because I want to get on to my main question—on the difference in land mass? I think Canada is something like 40 times the land mass of the UK. If you are in Quebec, it is very unlikely that you are going to travel to even Ontario, which is the next province along, compared with in Scotland.

My main question is: there are differing opinions but it does seem—and I think, Mr Murray, you said this yourself—that clearly a differentiated immigration system will lead to increased complexity and potential risk of exploitation. Putting that debate aside, what further work would you say is required to define, once and for all, that the case for this approach is valid or not?

Madeleine Sumption: On the question about land mass, obviously Canada and Australia are much bigger and it is going to be much harder for people to be commuting across borders. Some of those localised enforcement problems—where you have a specific border and there is someone working on the other side—are not really issues there in the way that they might be here. You can still hop on a cheap flight from Quebec to Ontario. If you are talking about people moving after a couple of months, for example, I think those issues are not so different. People do move around both countries a fair amount.

Q379 **David Duguid:** That is probably a good enough answer for that part of the question but, again, the other part of the question: what work needs to be done to settle once and for all whether it is a good idea or not?

Chris Murray: As we have said several times, there is a political discussion that has to happen. We can provide evidence and ideas, but there is a political scoping out of what people would want to see in different parts. What would be most interesting is if you looked to some specific sectors that we in Scotland want to support. For example, you could think of the video game sectors in Dundee or something where you think, “No, hang on, we have a real, specific need here. Let’s do a study and explore what visa system could work well for this area”. We have done some work, looking at the north-east specifically, trying to work out exactly what specific issues there are.

One parallel you could make, which shows the future of this kind of thinking, is in America they have the Welcoming Cities initiative, which does not mean a change in immigration rules. It just means that the Government of a city decides. Dayton, Ohio, or Detroit says, “We share huge parallels with Glasgow”, for example. “We want to overcome



deindustrialisation through attracting entrepreneurial migrants, so we are going to put in place a whole set of policies that would encourage them to come here, that will facilitate their setting up businesses, that will get them tax reductions”, and so on. We could look at those kinds of issues as well and see how they would fit in. Again, the main question will be: what immigration system will we decide to have after Brexit and then what scope comes in after that?

Madeleine Sumption: If I could give an unsatisfying answer to your question, which is: I think there is no amount of analysis that can tell you, once and for all, whether this is a good idea or not, because it is fundamentally a political decision that involves weighing up pros and cons. You have things like the economic costs of a more complex immigration system. You have potential political benefits that some people have pointed to of having a feeling of more local accountability and control over migration. Those are fundamentally different categories that you cannot technocratically analyse, weigh up and say, “This is a good idea” or not. I think different people will come to different political judgments about it.

Q380 Christine Jardine: I have one very, very quick question to clarify once and for all. To me, we seem to be conflating two different things sometimes in these questions: the difference between regional variations allowed for within a UK-wide immigration policy, and the devolution of immigration policy to the Scottish Parliament. One would not be quite simple but one would be easier to maintain an overall UK-wide strategy, and the other would not. Regional variation is perfectly possible without breaking up the Home Office UK immigration system—however we decide to proceed—if we have to proceed after Brexit.

Chris Murray: Absolutely. There is a whole scale of options running right down to borders.

Chair: Can I just close this with one question, which is my prerogative as the Chair? It is this. It is about the Scottish response to immigration. We know about all the opinion polls, and opinion polls have consistently, I think over the years, shown not much of a variation between Scotland’s views on immigration and the rest of the United Kingdom. Yet still there is a sense that Scotland is much more open to immigration. I put this to you: we are exposed to the same type of debate in Scotland, controlling numbers, and it is a big feature of the discourse that we have in our politics. Nigel Farage is as ever present a feature in Scotland as he is in the rest of the United Kingdom, so we are informed by that debate. What I sense is that, when we see where the Scots rank immigration and the issues that most concern them, it falls down quite a bit from the rest of the United Kingdom. We are not in the position where politically we make that choice about immigration. UKIP has done disastrously in Scotland; one elected Member out of I think about 300 or 400. Is there a sense to you that Scotland is different? I know the opinion polls say one thing but what do you think? We are going to come to Mr Murray first. I know you



are desperate to get in, Dr Greening, so we will definitely hear from you.

Chris Murray: As a migration analyst, there are three points I would make in response to that question. The first is that, over the past 15 years, the experience of migration by Scottish communities has been quite different. Obviously, we know there has been immigration in Scotland previously: Irish immigration in the 1950s, the Pakistani community. There has been some; there have been people arriving.

When you look at some of the changes that have happened, particularly in communities in England, I don't think that our nations are as affected. There are some areas of London or Birmingham that are super diverse, on a scale that is just not seen anywhere in Scotland. There is a much more heterogeneous diversity of immigration across England and there are some communities that have seen really swift trends, upward ticks in migration from the EU. That has happened in Scotland—it is not completely different, but the scale and the impact has been different, the trajectories of different places.

Secondly, there is the point where there are fewer migrants in Scotland, so they make less of an impact on people's consciousness, although there is a huge debate in areas that still don't have many migrants. There is a very interesting analysis that I saw—which I am not entirely sure I subscribe to—that said that areas of highest concern about migration are not those with no migrants or lots of migrants, it is areas on the periphery of high migration areas, because they perceive that change coming in their direction and they feel unable to say anything about it. Obviously, that would rarely apply anywhere in Scotland, so that might be part of the reason. Then the final point is that the political class in Scotland does not rate the issue as highly. I don't just mean politicians.

Q381 **Chair:** In fact, more than that, you have a Scottish Government that is pro-immigration, which is obviously the exact opposite of the UK Government.

Chris Murray: Yes, indeed, but I don't just mean political class as in politicians, I mean intelligentsia. This kind of—

Chair: That excludes us then.

Chris Murray: The public debate in Scotland is not focused on it, so if anybody wanted to get really angry about migration they would struggle to find an outlet for those views.

Q382 **Chair:** Very briefly, Dr Greening, and I want to come to Ms Sumption on this question, too. I know you are desperate to get in here, Dr Greening.

Dr Greening: I would agree with your comment about the salience. It is probably different in Scotland from in England. That might be because Scotland's population density is about 69 people per square kilometre, whereas the UK as a whole is 266. In England it is 420. Three-quarters of Brits feel that the UK is crowded, and it might be that people in Scotland



HOUSE OF COMMONS

just sensibly think that Scotland is not as crowded so, therefore, they might rate immigration on a different salience.

I would also quote John Curtis, who recently conducted a poll. Mr Thomson noted that public opinion north of the border is not particularly liberal on immigration, and there is a whole bunch of polls to suggest that is true. The people of Scotland favour tighter immigration rules.

Q383 **Chair:** Yes, I think there is no doubt about that and we accept that, so you do not have to read your polls out.

Dr Greening: I would also hope that—and I expect that they would be—the views of the people of Scotland are given due weight by this Committee.

Madeleine Sumption: I am not going to claim to have my finger on the pulse of Scottish public opinion. I am sure you know much more about that than I do.

Chair: Okay. Thank you all. It was a very fascinating session. I know we have detained you longer than anticipated, but that just shows the interest in some of the responses that you gave. Thank you for that. If there is anything else that you feel that you can usefully contribute to this inquiry, please submit any further written evidence. Thank you for your contributions today.