**The Pros and Cons of Immigration**

Immigration, and its pros and cons, have been discussed greatly in the media thanks to the upcoming EU referendum (more on this another month!) Your point of view will depend greatly on your political ideology, the social science you are choosing to study (economic and political arguments differ greatly on immigration) and what you have read thus far.

Here are some of the points to think about and read more on.

**Unemployment & Wages** – Migrants tend to be of working age and many come without their families. Theoretically, an increase in immigration would increase supply of workers which in turn would drive down wages. IThis increase in workers would stimulate demand in the economy, creating more job opportunities. In reality, there has only been a slight depression on wages for the lower paid (those earning just above minimum wage) and more competition for low skilled jobs. It is difficult to calculate how much demand is affected as single migrants tend to send money back home to their families which takes money out of the UK economy. Data shows that between 1997 and 2011, around 75% of jobs created were filled by non UK born workers. This does not mean that they ‘took’ them from UK workers – there are a number of factors to consider such as whether UK workers had the right skill set to fill the roles.

**Public Services** – Impacts vary by area and the type of public service and again, these are difficult to quantify. If an immigrant has a child with a British citizen, should the costs associated with that child be attributed to a British citizen or to the cost of immigration? Studies show that immigrants tend to use health and social care less than British citizens, but they use education services more.

**Welfare** – Immigrants who arrived in the UK after 1999 were 45% less likely to receive state benefits or tax credits than UK natives from 2000-2011 according to a UCL report. The report also found that 32% of EEA immigrants and a whopping 43% of non-EEA immigrants had University degrees. Comparatively, only 21% of the British adult population have degrees showing immigrants tend to be skilled and good for the UK economy.

**Fiscal Impact** – Studies also suggest that immigrants from the EEA contribute more than they take making them a fiscal positive for the UK economy. Over the last two decades, immigrants from outside the EEA tend to cost more than they contribute due to the number of children they have. However, these children will grow up and work which will reduce the dependency ratio and boost the UK economy. Overall, studies suggest that immigrants over their lifetimes tend to be net contributers to the UK economy.International students also contribute to the UK economy through fees – roughkly £2.5billion each year. This in turn subsidises education for British citizens. As immigrants settle and get older, their use of public services rise as they receive pensions and use the NHS more.

**Social Issues** – Many in the UK feel that for a small island, we are already overcrowded. There is already a housing shortage which is driving house prices and rents up and an increase in immigration only exacerbates that issue. The UK has the space to build but needs a sensible and sustainable policy with regard to housing and other services such as schools, roads and GP practices. A concern that has been growing is that of integration. Immigrants are large contributers to our economy but there is always the risk that if social changes are not managed propery, our diverse country will start to become segmented.

This is a complex issue so make sure you read around the topic and consider some of the following:

* What type of migrants come to the UK? How strict are UK rules on visas?
* How easily do immigrants assimilate into the UK?
* What is the current economic climate of the UK?
* What is the profile of immigrants? How do they compare to gaps in the UK market?
* Are the Government’s policies preparing for the extra demand on public services?

Source: Oxbridge Applications <http://www.oxbridgeapplications.com/blog/the-pros-and-cons-of-immigration/>

Accessed December 16, 2018