

Migration: skills and the job market

Fact Sheet

Lesson 1: Migration - economic gain or economic drain?

Today, the subject of migration features in the media on a near daily basis and students should be aware of the varying issues that surround migration in the UK. When asked to list these, they will probably suggest the following:

- Increased pressure on housing
- Working for lower wages
- Lack of integration
- Increased pressure on schools
- Increased pressure on NHS
- Entry of illegal migrants
- Lack of control regarding numbers
- Taking 'British' jobs
- Lack of language ability

Once students have listed their ideas they should be encouraged to extend them for example, taking 'British' jobs – migrant workers will often work for less so employers would rather employ them as it will reduce their costs and therefore increase their profits. By placing the ideas into different categories, students should quickly identify that economic factors often underpin both reasons for and issues surrounding migration. This identification will then lead into the main activity.

Roughly 3% of the UK's population, a figure in line with global statistics, is made up of migrants. The question the students have to debate is "Is this an economic gain or an economic drain for the UK?" Reasons such as creating a mobile workforce which encourages economic growth, diversity and dynamism, filling labour gaps and extra tax revenue all support the idea that migration leads to an economic gain. However, increased pressure on housing, social services, working for lower wages and the fact that at present, the House of Lords on economic affairs cannot find any hard evidence to support gain claims, gives weight to the other side of the argument; economic drain. As the media clips will show, there is still no conclusion to this question which students should be made aware of after their debate. It is important that they see both sides of the argument in order to develop their own ideas and opinions.

See the **Challenge overview sheet** which contains more details on this debate through the use of the media clips.