

IMMIGRATION IN THE UK

1. facts and figures

1.1.	definition of immigration (dictionary)	1
1.2.	the situation in Britain since 1945	2/3
1.3.	post-war immigration into Britain	4
1.4.	preferred areas of settlement	5

2. immigrants

2.1.	motives for immigration	6
2.2.	characteristics of British immigrants	7
2.3.	commonwealth immigration act	8
2.4.	Britain's coloured population and their problems	9/10
2.5.	Race Relations Committees	11

IMMIGRATION IN THE UK

1. facts and figures

1.1. definition of immigration (dictionary)

A politically charged subject in Britain since the 1960s. In the years immediately after World War II, when the country had need of cheap labour, immigration from within the Commonwealth was made easy. The new arrivals came from the West Indies and then from the Indian subcontinent. But alarm in some quarters at their numbers led to a "Commonwealth Immigration Act" in 1962.

In 1968 the "Commonwealth Immigrants Act" further restricted the number of Asians arriving from Kenya.

The present law derives from the Immigrants Acts of 1971 and 1988.

The combined effect of these has been to limit permanent entry to British citizens, citizens of the republic of Ireland and certain Commonwealth citizens; meanwhile EC regulations allow residence to citizens of other EC countries. Any outside these categories who are allowed to settle either have skills in short supply in Britain or have been granted political asylum. (1)

(1) cf. Encyclopedia Britannica , Chicago 1982

1.2. the situation in Britain since 1945

Immediately after World War II, Britain underwent enormous social change. The country was bankrupt after the war. The wartime prime minister, Churchill was voted out and a new Labour government nationalised many industries, electricity, gas, water, health. Britain took a long time to recover from the cost of war.

After a last abortive fling at being world power-the Anglo-French invasion of the Suez Canal in 1956- Britain began to dismantle her Empire. It was this change that caused Dean Acheson, former US Secretary of state to remark " Britain has lost an Empire, but has not yet found a role..."

Perhaps it was this loss of a world position that caused further changes within Britain. The Swinging Sixties brought mini skirt and the Beatles. If Dean Acheson was worried about Britain's role, the British were not worrying, they were too busy enjoying themselves.

Despite the difficulties on the labour front, the general economic outlook in 1971 was favourable: the pound was strong at about \$2.60 and floating it that summer seemed no threat.

There was a surplus on the visible trade, reserves were high, and in early 1972 the inflation rate stood at an easily countable 6 per cent.

The budget introduced in the spring was expansionist, designed to stimulate the growth the country needed to cover its mounting social costs. (1)

(1) cf. <http://www.great-britain.co.uk/history/post45.htm>

As a world power Britain's status has fallen greatly, and its so far scarcely assimilated role in the common Market suggests that the country has yet to find a new sense of its place. The Commonwealth, which once seemed impressive, has also proved less substantial than many had hoped. To be sure, the roll of new nations from former British colonies testifies to the success of British decolonization: Ghana in 1957, Nigeria in 1960, Uganda in 1962 and Kenya in 1963. (1)

Britain's property in the fifties and in the sixties served as a magnet to the poor and ambitious in the colonies and former colonies in Asia, Africa and the West Indies: it was said that a quarter of the world's population was eligible to come to live in Britain, because residents of the Empire they were British subjects and because Britain, unlike almost all other countries, had imposed no limitation on immigrants.

In the census of 1951 residents in Britain from Commonwealth countries, other than the old dominions(Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa), numbered something

- over 200,000, about 0.4 per cent of the population;
- in 1971 there were well over a million, about 2.1 per cent of the population. (2)

(1) cf. <http://www.great-britain.co.uk/history/post45.htm>

(2) "Brave New Worlds"

1.3. post-war immigration into Britain

Before World War II Britain had experienced comparatively small immigration waves. The black population of the 18th and 19th century was easily assimilated as the Irish immigrants and the Jewish and Eastern European refugees in the first half of the 20th century were. It was only after World War II that mass immigration of coloured people from the former colonies started, a reflection of Britain's imperial past. (1)

The great wave of immigration from the Caribbean and south Asia took place between 1950 and 1965. These immigrants, especially those from south Asia, brought with them different languages, different religions and everyday habits that were sometimes radically different from traditional British ones. (2)

The following ethnic groups can be distinguished among the two million immigrants:

- Black immigrants from the West Indies, mainly from Jamaica. They are the descendants of former Negro slaves that were transported to the Caribbean Sea and the American colonies.
- Indians from their native country and from Kenya. After Kenya's independence the Indian and Pakistani minority of about 200,000 people began to suffer persecution by African nationalists, and decided to emigrate to Britain, as they were British citizens.
- Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.

- Minor immigration groups are from Africa, the Mediterranean(Cyprus, Malta, Gibraltar) and Hong Kong. (1)

(1) cf. <http://ukdb.web.aol.com/hutchinson>
(2) cf. James O'Driscoll, "Britain", Oxford University Press, 1996 (p.45)

1.4. preferred areas of settlement

The immigrants clustered in larger cities and particularly in the industrial towns of the Midlands - Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Leicester, Nottingham.

Pakistanis settled predominantly in

- Yorkshire/Humberside
- The North of the country

They found work in the shipbuilding, vehicles and textile industries.

Indians preferred

- the foundries of the Midlands

They worked for public transports in the bigger cities or engaged themselves in the distributive trades.

The West Indians are to be found especially in

- the South East
- Greater London and
- Midlands.

They originally worked in the public service industries (British Rail, the Underground, buses, hospital and midwifery services).

All immigrant groups are nowadays highly concentrated in and around London, but are rarely to be found in the rich "Home Countries" , e.g. in Essex, Kent and Surrey. (1)

(1) cf. <http://ukdb.web.aol.com/hutchinson>

2. Immigrants

(1).2. motives for immigration

- Some were employed by British Labour Exchange officials because of a labour shortage in the basic industries (textiles, coal, shipbuilding), public transport and the services. Employers began to recruit the labour force from overseas commonwealth countries for menial, badly-paid jobs.
- Some came because they were attracted by a higher standard of living in the host country, and search of a better job or any job at all. As citizens from Commonwealth countries they are, moreover, entitled to all the advantages of the British welfare system.
- Some, like the West Indians, thought of themselves as British with Britain as their home country: they had been brought up by white teachers from Britain and did not have any language problems.
- Some came because of racial discrimination and persecution in their own countries like the Indians and Pakistanis from Kenya.
- A substantial number of coloureds, for example Indians, had served during World War II in the British army and, after the end of the war, settled in Britain. (1)

(1) cf. <http://library.thinkquest.org/17120/data>

(1).3. characteristics of British immigrants

- Compared to the German "guestworkers" who have chiefly emigrated from Southern European countries, most British immigrants are of an entirely different race, and therefore their integration poses a racial problem, i.e. they have to face substantial racial discrimination.
- The immigrants are not a homogeneous, cohesive group, but differ in
 - religion (Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians of different denominations)
 - language (e.g. Hindi, West Indian English)
 - cultural background
 - education
 - social habits.

The fact that they are of different origin explains why they are disunited and do not take any actions on common ground. On the contrary, there are sometimes street fights among the different immigrants groups.

- Three fifths of the new arrivals (Indians and Pakistanis) had language problems, which cut them off from social contacts with the rest of the community. Nowadays the problem has been alleviated somewhat, but many immigrants families still speak their own language at home. (1)

(1) cf. <http://library.thinkquest.org/17120/data>

2.3. Commonwealth Immigration Act

Successive acts to regulate the entry into the UK of British subjects from the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Immigration Act, passed by the Conservative government in 1962, ruled that Commonwealth immigrants entering Britain must have employment or be able to offer required skills and education, or qualify under a quota that the government might alter as it chose. (1)

The inflow, which had leaped to extraordinarily high levels in 1961, in anticipation of the act, was sharply cut back, though the numbers remained relatively high because of the immigration of dependants. (2)

In 1968, many Asians fleeing from Kenya claimed British citizenship and the Labour government extended the controls of the 1962 Act by the 1968 Commonwealth Act. The 1971 Act introduced by the Conservative government set up a single system of entry and ended the quota of employment vouchers. There were concessions for 'patrials', who were defined as those who held British citizenship by birth or who had parents or grandparents born in the UK, or who had lived in the UK for five years. (1)

In 1965 and 1968, Race Relation Acts were carried to prohibit discrimination in public places, in housing and in employment, and Race Relations Board was set up. But the tensions continue.

One can, perhaps, understand public hostility when strange, alien people were intruded into a situation of economic uncertainty. (2)

-
- (1) cf. <http://ukdb.web.aol.com/hutchinson/encyclopedia/39/M0029539.htm>
 (2) cf. "Brave New Worlds"

2.4. Britain's coloured population and their problems

The situation of Britain's coloured population has changed since the 1950s, when large-scale immigration first started. Yet not every group of immigrants were equally successful in coping with the new living conditions. Whilst Indians and Pakistanis adapted rather well to their new surroundings, it seems that the black immigrants have formed a new British lower or under class. However, Britain's coloured population still have some common problems to face.

They are

- More likely to be unemployed
- Worse housed
(Housing represents a problem among the immigrants because of their low income they are forced to live in council houses or flats under unhygienically conditions.)
- Often discriminated against.

<i>Age:</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Pakistani/Bangladeshi</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>All ethnic groups</i>
16-19	62.0%	41.7%	25.1%	35.4%	47.0%	60.1%
20-29	82.1%	75.2%	72.5%	52.8%	60.0%	81.0%
30-39	84.5%	75.2%	77.6%	52.1%	68.7%	83.5%
40-49	86.7%	87.3%	86.3%	50.2%	84.3%	86.4%
50-59/64	69.0%	70.3%	61.3%	41.1%	75.5%	68.7%

Population of working age economic activity rates:
 By age and ethnic groups, Spring 1993

Because of their language problems it is difficult for them to find social contact.

(1) cf. <http://ukdb.web.aol.com/hutchinson/encyclopedia/39/M0029539.htm>

The immigrants brought with them everyday habits and attitudes that were sometimes radically different from traditional British ones. As they usually married among themselves, these habits and customs have, to some extent, been preserved. For some young people, brought up in Britain, this mixed cultural background can create problems.

As well as this 'given' identity, non-white people in Britain often take pride in their cultural roots. This pride seems to be increasing as their cultural practices, their everyday habits and attitudes, gradually become less distinctive. Pride can increase as a defensive reaction to racial discrimination. There's quite a lot of this in Britain. There are tens of thousands racially motivated attacks on people every year, including one or two murders. All in all, however, overt racism is not as common as it is in many other parts of Europe. (1)

(1) cf. James O'Driscoll, "Britain", Oxford University Press, 1996(p.45)

2.5. Race Relation Committees

A response by the government was the attempt to stop racial discrimination and to promote good relations between immigrants and native British. It founded various institutions, the most significant being "The Commission for Racial Equality" 1967 which could carry out formal investigations not only in individual cases, but into whole areas of public life and whole organisations. The Commission supports the work of over 90 racial equality councils. It helps to pay their salaries and gives grants to ethnic minority self help groups. The Government's attempt to combat racism was also reflected in the "Race Relations Act" of 1976 which made racial discrimination unlawful in matters of housing, education and employment.

Despite the legislation of the 70s and 80s against unfair treatment of Britain's ethnic minorities, many feel their lives have not become easier. Therefore many blacks demand more effective anti-discrimination legislation. Others believe that the lack of progress is not only caused by the absence of commitment by successive British government and big business, but also by the poor leadership of the blacks and the lack of a civil rights movement like that in America in the 1960s.

A particularly hostile anti-immigrant policy is pursued by the right-wing National Front. It campaigns for the expulsion of coloured immigrants from Britain because it fears a great racial change in the British population, a loss of the traditional way of live and a complete take-over by the coloured minority because of the high birth rate. However, up to the 90s this party is supported by only a small proportion of the population. It advocates the exclusion of all immigrants from welfare, housing and education facilities, as well as their treatment as aliens.

The immigrants are blamed for the enormous expenditures of the Welfare net and the lack of jobs for the British population.

The Future of Racial Minorities in Britain

It is unlikely that a complete assimilation of non-English elements and an absorption of such different cultures into British culture will take place. The American ideal of the "melting pot" is not likely to apply to the British situation with its substantial racial problems. (1)

(1) cf. <http://ukdb.web.aol.com/hutchinson/encyclopedia/39/M0029539.htm>

Bibliography:

(I) Literature

1. James O'Driscoll, "Britain", Oxford University Press, 1996
2. "Encyclopedia Britannica", Chicago, 1982
3. "Brave New Worlds" (university of Saarbrücken)
4. Isolde Friebel/Heinrich Händel, "Großbritannien, Band 2:Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft", C.H.Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, München 1982
5. Kastendiek/Rohe/Volle, Länderbericht, Campus Verlag Frankfurt, Bonn 1998

(II) Internet

<http://ukdb.web.aol.com/hutchinson/encyclopedia/39/M0029539.htm>
<http://library.thinkquest.org/17120/data/empires>

Vocabulary

1.2.	abortive	erfolglos, fehlgeschlagen
	fling	Wurf, Versuch
	scarcely	kaum
	to assimilate	angleichen, anpassen
	eligible	geeignet, annehmbar
1.3.	descendants	Nachkommen

1.4.	to cluster	sich versammeln
2.2.	cohesive	zusammenhaltend
	to alleviate	mildern, lindern
2.3.	quota	Quote, Soll
	to alter	ändern, sich verändern
	to leap	springen, sich stürzen auf
	vouchers	Gutscheine

Immigration in the UK

Anne Meyer

March 2000