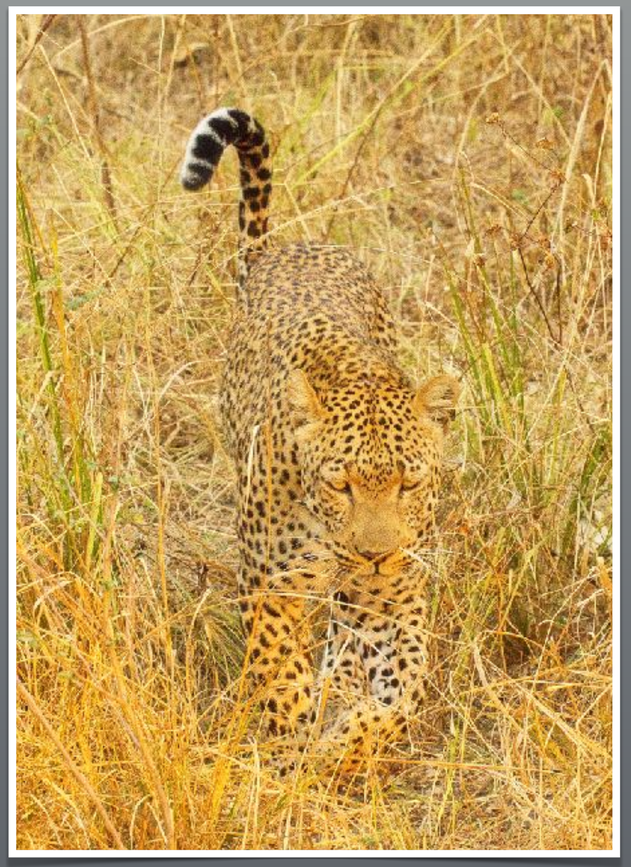
Migration is much more than small boat crossings





Tim Ewbank

Autumn 2026

Migration in the news

25 October:About 400 anti-migrant protesters marched through Gosport, Hampshire opposing plans to reopen the Haslar immigration removal centre next year

When Andy Burnham suggested that a closer relationship with Europe would be beneficial, it soon became a debate solely about Free Movement

Fighting in Ethiopia has forced 36-50,000 refugees to flee to Kenya, mostly women & children

Wk4 How countries manage migration

	Historic	Contemporary (Post WWII)
Global	✓	
Regional/ international	✓	✓
National	✓	✓
Local		

Emigration

US

Australia

EU

UK prior to Brexit

3 case studies

Management of emigration

Capacity building: creating a sense of national belonging abroad
Holding cultural events eg diaspora conferences (India, Armenia, Jamaica).
Institution-building,setting up diaspora ministries,

Extending rights: what the state gives emigrants.
Political rights, ranging from dual nationality up to postal or embassy voting
Civil and social rights, such as worker protection in labour-export states

Extracting obligations: what the state asks of emigrants.
Payments: taxing expatriates, levies, and diaspora bonds
Mexico's 3x1 scheme, where government matches each peso migrants send home with three more.

Knowledge transfer, brings expatriate experts home for short assignments.

Lobbying, emigrants are encouraged to speak for the home country where they live.

Source: Gamlen 2008



Evolution of Legislation & Regulation

1880s first act controlling migration; exclusion of Chinese immigrants

1890s introduced federal inspection, exclusion, and deportation apparatus

1917 -1920s introduced quotas by nationality & literacy test (favored Europeans)

1965 Immigration and Nationality Act: moved from quotas to per-country limits; focussed on family unification and employment categories

1980 adopted modern refugee and asylum law

1986 - 1995 greater emphasis on control and enforcement

2001 - USA Patriot Act & Homeland Security Act (DHS)

Immigration became function of DHS

ICE created 2003 under DHS; takes over immigration-enforcement, detention, removal, and customs-investigation



Successive presidents grappled with control of their southern border

President Trump's 2024 election pledges



carry out the largest deportation operation in American history

Complete the US–Mexico border wall, *Seal the border*

Strengthen ICE

Use Alien Enemies Act against gangs, cartels & drug traffickers



Delivery on Trump’s election pledges

Border wall construction continuing apace

Substantially fewer attempted crossings in 2025 & 2026

443,000 removals in 2024-25 (356K Jan-July2026)

66,000 held in ICE detention centers (average stay 52 days)

Temporary Protection Status (TPS) withdrawn from 1.3m Haitians & Syrians

“Undocumented” residents continue to be be picked-up by ICE agents

Level of ICE activity increasing with transport police co-operation; aiming for 1000/day

Administration is delivering against key pledges, but probably not to extent claimed



Where do the removals (*aka* deportees) go?

35 countries have agreed to receive deportees, who are not their nationals

28 of these have received deportees by August 2026

Mostly Caribbean, Central & South America; some in Africa & a few in eastern Europe

Most deemed to be “safe third countries”

By September 2025, 25,000 deportees, of whom 20,000 were to Mexico

Increasing through 2026



Wider impact of immigration crackdown

Cruelty of detention & deportations deeply unpopular, except with MAGA

Net migration fell to around 500,000 in 2025; could reach only 200,000 in 2026

Cost of work H1-B visas now $100+K/application

Several sectors now short of labour, agriculture, health & care, transport construction, hospitality

No visible increase in US born workers taking up jobs.

Overall economic impact hard to isolate. Brookings Institute estimate 0.1-0.3% GDP in 2025-26

Spending on enforcement approx £30 billion + lower tax receipts from fewer workers

Need for wholesale immigration reform recognised



Historic Migration to Australia

Period	Approx.arrivals	Main origins	Defining feature
1800 - 1850	330,000	Convicts from UK & Ireland + free settlers	Dispossession of Aborginals
1851- 1900	900,000	British & Irish , Chinese miners & Europeans Indentured Pacific Islanders	Gold rush migrants Assisted migration, favoring Europeans
1901- 1914	390,000	British, Irish & Scottish	First legislation controlling immigration on racial grounds
1914 - 1950s	1.7-2million	British & European refugees	Start of mass post war immigration
1950s - 1970	2.9 million	European + Asian refugees	Policy moved from being based on race to skills
1980-1990s	1.7 - 2 million	Truly international, Asians larger numbers than Europeans	Based on skills, family reunions, refugees

Immigration accounted for 59% population growth 1945 - 2000

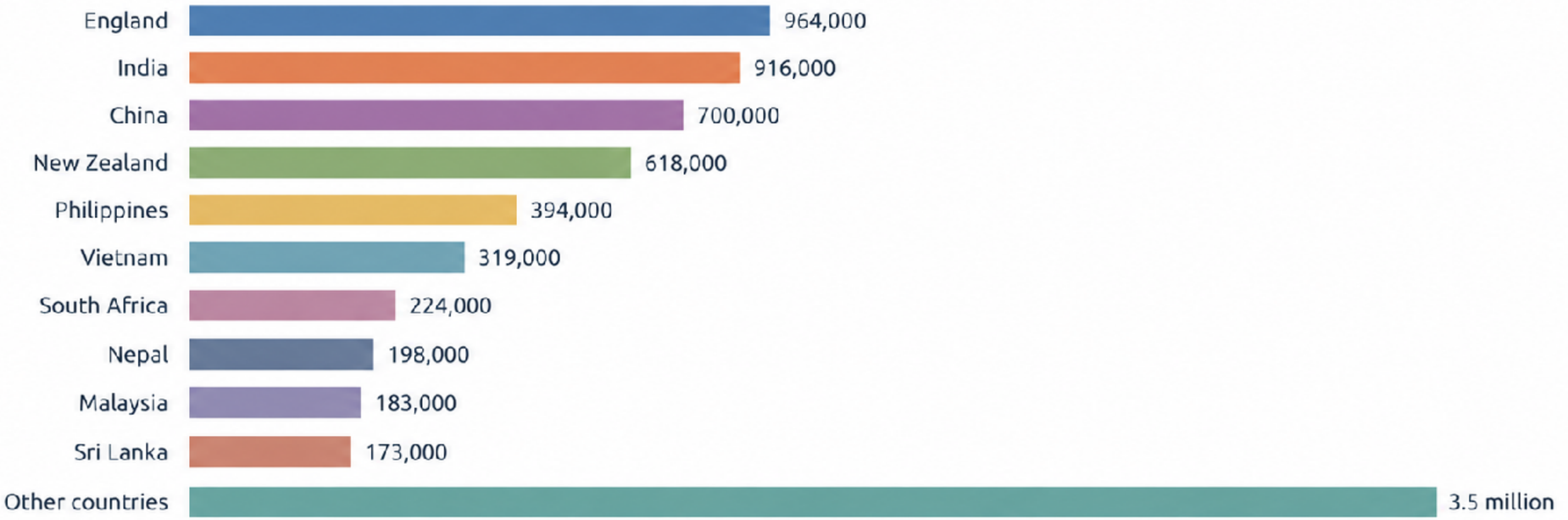


AUSTRALIAN MIGRATION

8.6 million people living in Australia in 2024 were born in another country

31.5% of Australia's population was born overseas

Largest countries of birth, 30 June 2024



Data source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia's population by country of birth (June 2024)

Country of birth; figures rounded

More immigrants of Asian origin than European



Summary of Migration Legislation

1850s–1900 exclusion of specific groups, particularly Chinese migrants and ex-convicts.

1901–1958: Commonwealth law imposed a racially exclusionary national system
- centred on the dictation test
- defined deportation powers.

1958–1975: racially based White Australia policy was dismantled
- Abolition of the dictation test & ending racial discrimination in law

1989–2000: the emphasis shifted to a highly codified visa system, merits review,
- refugee processing
- mandatory detention of unlawful non-citizens
- strengthened border enforcement.

Plethora of migration legislation since 1950s



Current immigration policies

Process depends on how a refugee arrives.

Intercepted unauthorised sea journey are generally turned back, returned, or transferred for offshore processing (Naru)

Migrants with a valid visa may claim protection later, onshore

22,000 waiting initial refugee-status decision May 2026

Refugees claiming protection mainly from China, India, Fiji, Indonesia



Points based immigration assessments

not used for asylum cases.

Refugee claims decided on whether Australia owes the individual protection

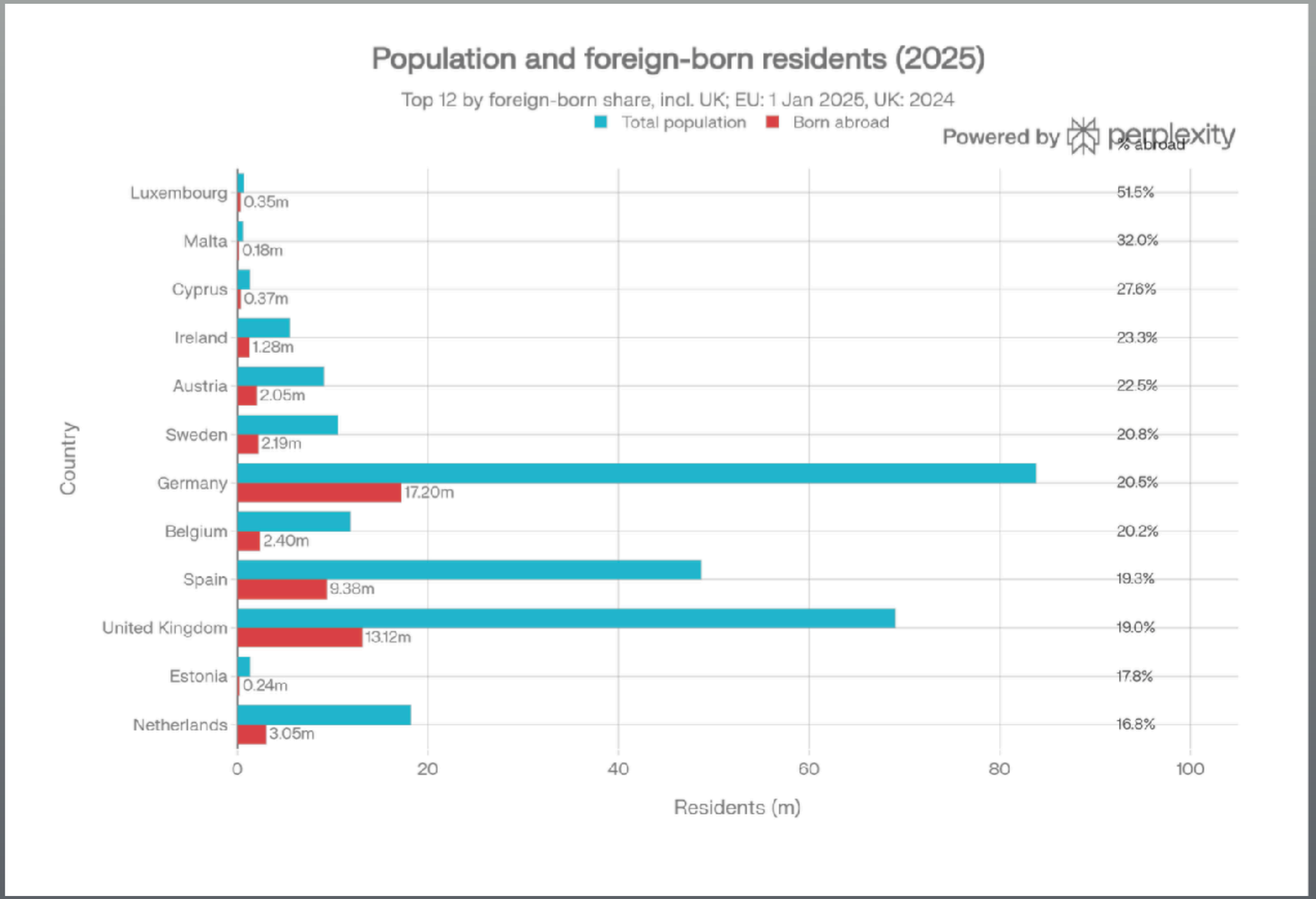
Points test for selected skilled-migration visas,

Assessments decided on combination of points for:

- verified occupation, strong English
- relevant work experience, qualifications
- nomination (meets state/territory requirements)







EU percentage born elsewhere14.3%



EU asylum seekers yearend 2024

Country	Asylum seekers — absolute number	Asylum seekers — % of population
Germany	254,580	0.30%
Spain	263,965	0.54%
Italy	207,278	0.35%
France	88,554	0.13%
United Kingdom	124,783	0.18%
Belgium	53,138	0.45%
Netherlands	46,840	0.26%
Ireland	31,711	0.58%
Austria	28,883	0.31%
Greece	28,244	0.27%
Cyprus	27,553	2.03%
Poland	10,992	0.03%

Germany hosts more than twice as many asylum applicants as UK,
in both absolute and relative terms



The Current EU Immigration Policies

1992 Treaty of European Union (Maastricht)

Many pieces of legislation to manage elements of immigration consistently across Europe.

Fundamental problem is the uneven distribution of arrivals and destinations of choice

Most entrants arrive at border countries eg Spain, Italy, Greece

2024 Pact on Migration & Asylum (PoMA)

Applicable since June 2026

Consolidates 10 legislative measures

screening, asylum and border procedures,
Eurodac, responsibility allocation, solidarity,
crisis response, reception and qualification standards.

Too early to assess PoMA's impact



UK Migration legislation prior to 1947

Early legal purpose was to identify & license “aliens”

1905 Aliens Act defined “undesirable immigrant”

1914 defined a British subject, inc.dominions

1948 British Nationality Act
Created "Citizenship of the UK and Colonies”
Enabled Windrush generation



UK Migration legislation prior to 1948

1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act

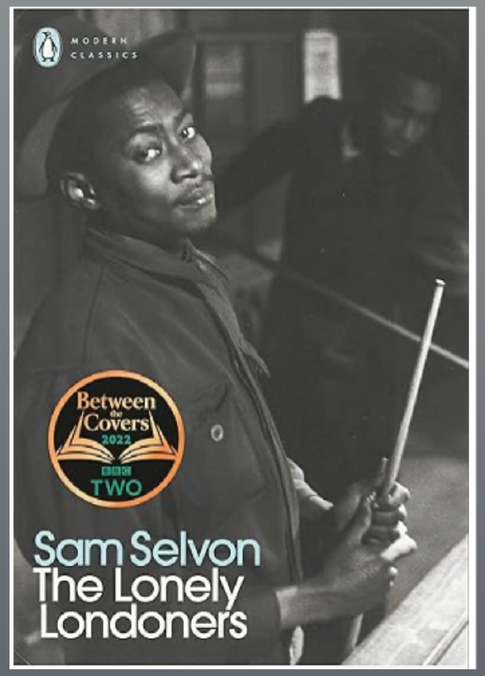
1971 Immigration Act
Introduced right of abode & leave to remain

1981 British Nationality Act
Replaced CUKC with categories of citizenship

2004 EU Enlargement Act

2014 &16 Immigration Act
Basis of “hostile environment”

Case Study: Windrush Generation



Refers to migrants who came to Britain from Caribbean between 1948 and 1973

Legally British subjects or citizens with a right to enter and remain

Empire Windrush arrived in June 1948 with 1,027 passengers

Approx 500,000 migrants over 25yrs

Many had skills needed for post-war reconstruction

Experienced widespread racial discrimination:

- housing (N*o blacks, No dogs, No Irish*)
- employment, unequal pay, skills not recognised
- social prejudice and violence

What jobs did Windrush migrants take?



NHS & Care - nurses, hospital staff & ancillary workers

Transport - bus, railway and London Transport workers

Industry & construction - manufacturing, building and labouring

Public services - Postal, local-authority and other essential-services

Prejudice resulting in their skills & experience not being recognised.

So were deskilled into taking lower grade jobs at lower wages

Case Study: Windrush Scandal

People who had a legal right to live in Britain did not have documentary proof

Immigration Act 1971

confirmed indefinite leave to remain for Commonwealth citizens already living in the UK,

but Home Office failed to issue formal confirmation

2012 *Hostile Environment* policy (renamed *Compliant Environment*!)

Employers, landlords, the NHS, banks and the DVLA required to check immigration status

Policy was to identify those without right to remain, but caught undocumented residents too

People were wrongly denied jobs, housing, healthcare, benefits, bank accounts & driving licences

2018 Home Office acknowledged the problem. Apologised.

Resulting Taskforce issued documents to 11,500 people confirming their status.

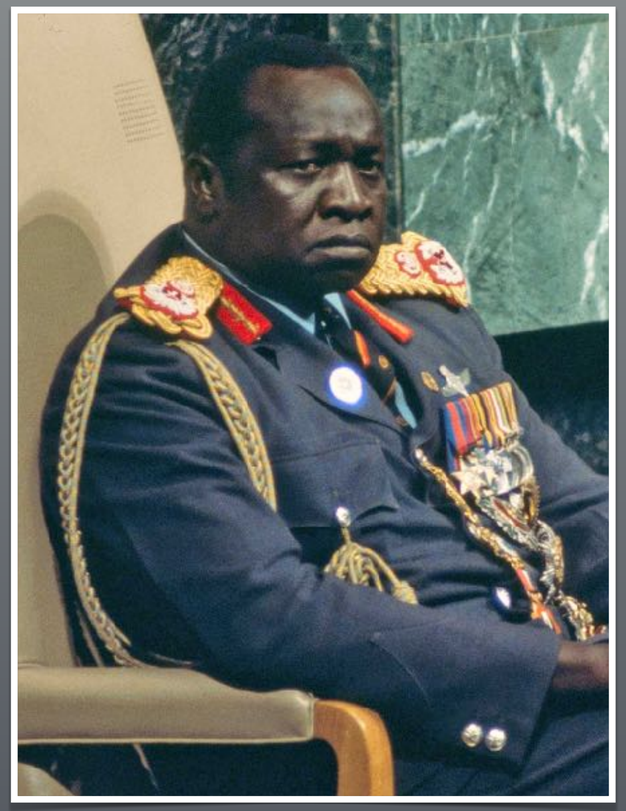
Financial compensation for losses incurred.



Case study: Ugandan Asians

August 1972, Idi Amin, ordered the expulsion of 50,000 Asians, within 90 days.

Many Asian families had lived in Uganda for generations; important contribution of Ugandan ecoonmy as business owners, entrepreneurs, professionals.



Many were UK citizens holding British passports

27 - 29,000 Asians came to Britain.

Government created the Uganda Resettlement Board,

with temporary reception centres.

Arrivals often had little money, having lost homes and businesses,

Faced insecure housing, racism, and initial hostility eg Leicester

In time, rebuilt businesses.

Regarded as longterm economic & social positive

Britain had to confront colonial responsibilities that evolving immigration laws tried to limit.



Case study: Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)

Background

Rhodesia was colonised in 1890s

Mainly British and Afrikaans colonists

Peak European population 277,000 in 1974-5 (4-5% total population)

Triggering event

Granting of independence in 1980 after long liberation struggle

Handover was relatively orderly and bloodless



Case study: Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)

Migration

European population diminished from 1974-5 to 1990

Continuous emigration totalling 160 -170,000 by 1985 (60% white population)

No headlong exodus like Algeria or Portuguese colonies

Emigrants went mainly to South Africa (40-60%) or English speaking countries

Consequences

Relatively small numbers of immigrants over several years, so limited impact on receiving countries

Many had nationality and family connections to destination countries

No opportunities for African soldiers in Rhodesian army to emigrate

Large scale blood letting between two main tribes/political parties after independence

What do we learn from these cases studies?

State shave been trying to managemigration for over 150yrs:

Governments have always been selective, admitting some groups while excluding, deterring or penalising others.

Race, nationality and colonial history plays a big part, from US quotas and Chinese exclusion to White Australia and Britain's treatment of Commonwealth citizens.

Migrants were often essential to reconstruction and labour markets, but were still met with discrimination, insecurity or political hostility.

Tension between economic need for migration, but politicsal desire to limit it

Management of migration - Conclusions

Tougher enforcement may reduce or redirect migration, but it does not remove the forces that drive it.

The US, Australia and EU cases all show that control measures usually bring trade-offs: labour shortages, legal complexity and humanitarian controversy.

The Windrush and Ugandan Asian cases show that the real test of migration policy is not only who gets in, but how migrants' rights and status are recognised.

Pre-Brexit Britain also shows that migration policy cannot be separated from colonial history and unequal treatment within citizenship and settlement rules.

Migration policy works should aim to manage mobility, rather than try to eliminate it

Addition sources

BBC two part programme *“Escaping Idi Amin“*
Pt 1 broadcast on 27th October. Pt 2 on 3rd November
Both episodes are available on iPlayer

Recent BBC Verify article on UK migration numbers:
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c70989jrdweo

Next week



Contemporary migration to UK

Current issues:

- Impact of Brexit
- Costs of asylum seeker management
- Border control agreement with France
- Link between migrants & crime