



## WHAT DO YORKSHIRE FOLK THINK ABOUT MIGRATION?

As we celebrate Yorkshire Day on 1 August, it's a pertinent time for us to take stock of the relationships between residents of Yorkshire and Humber and the newcomers from around the globe who have joined us in our spectacular corner of the UK. And to ask: what do Yorkshire folk think about migration and integration in 2020?

Migration Yorkshire commissioned a representative survey of the population in Yorkshire and Humber, asking people about a range of issues related to migration and integration in their communities.

Pip Tyler, our policy and research manager, here shares her top four messages from the opinion poll findings.

### 1 Yorkshire residents don't readily waver in their views on migration

We asked people whether immigration is now a more pressing or less pressing issue for them since the UK left the EU, and whether the outbreak of COVID-19 has meant they value migrants in the local community more highly than before. On both questions, over half of the population told us that their view hadn't really changed (55% said this for Q2 and 55% for Q8). This suggests to us that attempts to influence public opinion about migration need to avoid 'quick fixes' but be committed to a long-term approach that meets people where they are at the moment.

### 2 The positive effects that migration can bring aren't always translated from the national to the local level

Half of Yorkshire residents (49%) recognise the positive impact of migration for Britain (see Q1) while three in ten (30%) feel there has been a net negative effect. This is very much in line with the national view (compare to an identical question asked in another [longitudinal survey](#) last year where 47% of the UK population answered positively and 29% negatively). When asked about the *local* picture, the number of people in Yorkshire identifying a net positive impact drops to just one in three people (34%) and the negative response also falls a little (to 27%) (see Q3).

This local result wasn't what I'd been expecting and made me pause. Consider one possible explanation: perhaps the well-evidenced net economic gains from migration at the national level, not just from migrant-specific charges like the health surcharge or visa fees but also from income tax, just aren't felt at the neighbourhood level because they get subsumed into the national pot rather than being fed into local services? Certainly the local economic context is a critical factor in how localities respond to migration, particularly in places that have struggled to overcome industrial decline combined with the impacts of austerity, as we know from our complementary [qualitative research published last week](#).

### **3 There's much potential to increase social connections within communities**

Four in ten people (40%) 'sometimes' speak with migrants and socialise with them (see Q5) but only one in ten people (11%) 'often' do so. Almost half either 'rarely or never' interact with migrants (27%) or aren't aware of migrants living locally (22%). It's encouraging that people recognise there are potentially positive effects of migration, but socio-cultural contributions could be much stronger if local residents found ways to interact and build relationships with one another. This poll result really chimes with the qualitative research findings of the Communities up Close project, which recognise the loss of community spaces in recent years and the value of promoting social contact at the local level to facilitate integration. This is particularly important in certain types of 'tight-knit' neighbourhoods where there can be higher expectations of newcomers to actively participate in the community. The research report explores how this might be addressed in sustainable ways rather than simply putting on token events. This could be through councils and businesses financially supporting local groups to run regular activities determined through local consultation, for example.

### **4 People want to live in successfully socially integrated communities**

Exactly half of Yorkshire residents feel it's partly their responsibility to welcome new migrant neighbours (while 39% don't - see Q7). One of the strongest messages from the poll is that Yorkshire people want to see fairness in the way that refugees are offered sanctuary across the UK (see Q9); 56% agreed that Yorkshire and the Humber should host its fair share of the UK's refugees i.e. in proportion to its total population) and a further 7% want the region to welcome more refugees than this. A quarter (25%) think we should host fewer refugees than this suggested approach.

We have a good base on which to build more integrated, inclusive communities: four in ten Yorkshire people (41%) tend to think migrants already are well integrated in the local community, slightly more than those who think migrants are not well integrated (38%) (see Q4). Further, most people perceive their neighbourhoods to be welcoming – with more than one in two people in Yorkshire (54%) saying their community is welcoming to new migrants, and just one in four think it is not welcoming (25%) (see Q6).

### **So what conclusions can we draw? The importance of community connections that benefit everyone**

The survey findings today provide a significant insight into the state of public opinion about migration and integration in Yorkshire and Humber right now. They complement the rest of the work that's going on in our Communities up Close project, which has explored in richer detail not only the experiences of local change for Yorkshire residents, but also those of our newer community members who are migrants themselves plus those professionals involved in smoothing the transition from newcomer to community resident.

Ironically, during the project we've been listening to Yorkshire communities talk about living with change during a dramatic period of transformation itself, from the post-referendum period through Brexit. This couldn't be more timely as we now prepare for the aftermath of Covid-19 and as councils plan how they can support communities to reconnect and grow stronger in future. Within the opinion poll, of course, there was divergence in how people responded to the questions. Likewise, each neighbourhood's unique combination of characteristics will influence how dealing with change in 2021 will

pan out from place to place, and now we are better prepared to anticipate those differences.

We mustn't overlook community connections in the face of a looming economic crisis. Local communities are critical to the success of integrating newcomers from overseas – but as we face economic upheaval, the capacity of communities to adapt to change and make time for new neighbours could be tested. We know from our qualitative research published last week with the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) that here in Yorkshire and Humber, views about migration are inextricably linked to other major changes like deindustrialisation and austerity.

But we also know that there's much to be hopeful and positive about. Looking at our local Yorkshire towns through a migrant's eyes is insightful and has given me a fresh, positive perspective on communities across Yorkshire.

As we face a changing future, it's critical for us share ideas about how to bring communities together. This could mean asking questions like: Are multicultural places always the optimal locations for migrants to live? And can town planners take into account variation in local expectations of newcomers to participate in community life? As we face what's around the corner, we mustn't forget that initiatives to support integration in the future must benefit everyone; locals and newcomers alike.

### **Background to the opinion poll**

ICM Unlimited interviewed a representative sample of 2,049 adults aged 18+ who live in Yorkshire and Humber via an online survey between 21 and 24 July 2020. The results have been weighted and are representative of all adults aged 18+ living in our region.

The opinion poll was conducted as part of the Communities up Close project, which aims to understand how different neighbourhoods in Yorkshire and Humber have experienced and responded to recent migration. This two-year project has been exploring the views and experiences of local residents, migrants and professionals around Yorkshire and Humber, regarding how their neighbourhoods have changed in recent years and in what ways migration is part of that story.

### **Find out more**

To download the poll results or a copy of the qualitative research findings report 'Neighbourhood change and migration in Yorkshire and Humber', or to learn more about the project as a whole, visit the [Communities up Close web page](https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/cuc) (www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/cuc).

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