

Busted

6 myths about
Eastern European
migrants



Great Britain is one of the most diverse countries, with people from all over the world bringing innovation, prosperity and vibrancy to our society. However, every year thousands of people suffer prejudice because of misconceptions regarding their identity, beliefs or economic status. Our myth busting guides aim to challenge common misconceptions and negative stereotypes towards minority communities, in order to create awareness and promote better understanding.

Hate crimes and incidents have surged nationally following the result of the EU referendum in 2016. If left unchallenged, these crimes can tear communities apart, leaving scars that may take years to heal. This resource aims to counter the common assumptions made about Eastern European migrants, whose resilience, hard work and humanity get overlooked in today's turbulent media and politics.

1. EU migrants are stealing UK citizens' jobs

According to the Office for National Statistics, employment rates amongst the migrant population are very high. For example, of the 290,000 people who immigrated for work from January to September 2015, almost **60 per cent** had already secured a job before arriving.

Jonathan Portes, the Director of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, believes that immigration does not have a negative impact on jobs and wages: *“More immigrant workers do increase the supply of labour. But, because immigrants earn money, spend money, set up businesses and so on, they also increase the demand for labour. And it’s true that, if an immigrant takes a job, then a British worker can’t take that job – but it doesn’t mean he or she won’t find another one that may have been created, directly or indirectly, as a result of immigration.”*

2. Eastern Europeans are putting too much pressure on the NHS

According to the Department of Health, the cost for treating visitors and non-permanent residents to the UK who come from the European Economic Area is around **£340m** a year. Although a significant figure, in reality this is a relatively small proportion of the NHS total annual expenditure, which for England alone was **£120.5bn** in 2016/17. We also need to consider that immigrants are taxpayers as well as patients, and therefore have a direct impact on how much money is available for the NHS to spend.

3. People from Eastern Europe can't speak English

The 2011 census showed of over **7.5 million** non-UK born residents, only **138,000** don't speak English - that's under **2%**. The census also estimated that **1.7 million** can speak English very well, a further **1.6 million** can speak fluently and **726,000** can get by in conversations. Furthermore, **54%** of people in the EU can speak **at least two languages**, with 38% able to speak English. The UK is one of the few countries where citizens are least likely to be able to speak any foreign language, together with Hungary, Italy, Portugal and Ireland.

4. Britain has the highest levels of migration in the EU

According to the United Nations, **Germany is home to 12 million migrants**, followed by the **UK with 8.5 million** and **France with 7.7 million**.

Research shows that migration from the EU to UK has significantly fallen since the EU referendum in 2016, from **284,000** the year before the vote to **230,000** since.

5. The majority of migrants from Eastern Europe rely on the UK benefit system

80% of the UK's 1.4m eastern European residents **are in full time or part time employment**. A 2016 study showed that EU migrants are far more likely to have a job than non-EU citizens. To add to this, migrants make substantial contributions to the UK economy, with sectors like food and hospitality relying heavily on EU workers.

6. Eastern European migrants bring more crime

This is far from true. According to a 2008 report from the Association of Chief Police Officers, offending rates among Eastern European immigrants were in line with the rate of offending in the general population. In 2013, the London School of Economics (LSE) published a report which found that crime in neighbourhoods that have experienced mass immigration from Eastern Europe over the past 10 years has significantly fallen.

According to Brian Bell, a research fellow at LSE: *“The view that foreigners commit more crime is not true. The truth is that immigrants are just like natives: if they have a good job and a good income they don’t commit crime.”*



Communities Inc is a Nottingham based social enterprise working with issues relating to community cohesion. We are passionate about building stronger communities by tackling inequalities faced by the most disadvantaged groups.

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