

Migration of the Indian Diaspora to the UK:

Shaping Economic Resilience,
Cultural Dynamism,
and Global Influence



Aston India Centre, Aston
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White Paper

Migration of the Indian Diaspora to the UK: Shaping Economic Resilience, Cultural Dynamism, and Global Influence

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Foreword



Migration sits at the heart of some of the most consequential debates of our time. In an era shaped by geopolitical volatility, shifting alliances, conflict-driven displacement, and intense domestic discussion about borders, trade, skills, and cohesion, it is easy for public discourse to become polarised – and for long-term evidence to be crowded out by short-term noise. That is precisely why this white paper is so timely. It offers a careful, historically grounded, and forward-looking contribution to a debate that needs more light and less heat.

I am pleased that colleagues in our Aston India Centre have taken the initiative to produce a meaningful analysis of migration to the United Kingdom since the 1940s – and to do so through the lens of outcomes: economic resilience, cultural dynamism, and the UK’s global influence. This is a subject where context matters. The paper helps us see migration not as a single event, but as a series of historical waves that have repeatedly strengthened Britain’s capacity to rebuild, adapt, and prosper.

The four-wave framework is particularly instructive. The first wave, beginning in the 1940s, is viewed through the imperatives of post-war reconstruction. The second wave, from the 1970s, reflects Commonwealth connections alongside political upheavals and the reordering of societies. The third wave, emerging through the 1990s, aligns with globalisation and European integration. And the fourth wave, from 2019 onwards, sits at the intersection of Brexit, labour shortages, and a changing geopolitical landscape. Taken together, these waves offer a clear historical perspective: at pivotal moments in modern UK history, migration has repeatedly underpinned national renewal and driven far-reaching economic transformation.

Crucially, the white paper does not rely on generalities. It brings evidence to bear through sector-specific examples – spanning the NHS, technology, social care, and professional services and showing how migrants have helped meet demand, strengthen service delivery, and lift productivity while enriching the UK’s civic and cultural fabric. It is this grounding in real-world sectors that gives the paper its credibility and usefulness for policymakers, employers, and public leaders.

The later focus on migration from India is especially relevant to the fourth wave. India’s diaspora contribution to the UK is not only substantial; it is also deeply connected to capability in high-demand professions, entrepreneurship, and globally networked innovation. The Paper’s modelling of three participation scenarios (50%, 70% and 90%) usefully illustrates how labour-market engagement shapes national outcomes – skills shortages, employment levels, earnings, productivity, and the breadth of the tax base. In doing so, it underscores a

central point: well-designed migration settings are not a peripheral policy concern; they are integral to the UK’s economic strategy and the long-term sustainability of its public services.

The white paper’s recommendations are pragmatic and action oriented. I particularly welcome:

1. a proposed UK-India skills and credential fast-track between regulators,
2. a stronger “study-to-skilled-worker” conversion model outside London and the Southeast, building university-employer-NHS consortia that match final-year students to shortage roles where the need is greatest, and

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3. as the UK and India deepen trade and services ties, diaspora-enabled connections can be used to reduce frictions in mobility and professional services.

For UK higher education institutions, the implications are clear. Universities are not simply providers of education; they are anchors of regional skills ecosystems and convenors of partnerships across industry, government, and society. This is a lived reality for us at Aston University in Birmingham and the West Midlands. Our mission is grounded in place-based impact – linking talent to opportunity, and research to real-world outcomes.

Publicly available examples illustrate what such partnership pathways can look like in practice. Aston's clinical and workforce partnerships with NHS organisations underpin placements and career pipelines in nursing and medicine, aligning education with service need. Aston also joined Birmingham Health Partners, a university-NHS alliance aimed at strengthening health innovation and outcomes across the region – another model of how institutions can work together to address complex workforce and service challenges.

Equally, our UK-India engagement provides tangible, contemporary examples of the kinds of bridges this white paper calls for. Aston has formed strategic partnerships with several universities in India, including initiatives that connect learning pathways across borders and support international progression and employability. In the health domain, Aston's memorandum of understanding with Max Healthcare signals how joint platforms for research, training and exchange can strengthen capability on both sides – exactly the kind of collaborative infrastructure that can accelerate skills recognition, mobility, and innovation.

These examples also reflect my own professional experience. Over more than two decades as a leader in the global higher education sector, I have worked closely with partners in India to co-create career pathways, establish joint schools and centres, and build collaborative platforms for education, research and innovation with industry, government, and academic institutions. The most enduring lesson from that experience is simple: when pathways are co-created with partners rather than designed for them, mobility becomes a shared advantage. It builds skills, boosts productivity, and forges the human connections that make international partnerships resilient, even in times of uncertainty.

This white paper is a valuable contribution in that spirit. It combines historical insight with sectoral evidence and practical recommendations – offering decision-makers a structured way to think about migration not as a problem to manage, but as a national capability to shape responsibly.

I congratulate the authors on producing a thoughtful and policy-relevant publication of real significance, and I commend it to policymakers, employers, educators and community leaders across the UK and India.



Professor Aleks Subic
Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive
Aston University, Birmingham

Foreword



Historically, Britain has maintained deep and enduring ties with the Commonwealth, shaped by shared political, economic, and social connections forged during the imperial period. In the aftermath of the Second World War, these links facilitated significant flows of people from across the Commonwealth to Britain, helping to rebuild the economy, expand public services, and address acute labour shortages. Over subsequent decades, overseas workers have remained central to Britain’s social and economic development, strengthening the labour market, supporting productivity, and sustaining sectors vital to national wellbeing. Today, non-UK nationals constitute a substantial proportion of the workforce across key public services, most notably within the NHS, where Indian nationals represent the largest overseas cohort. In this context, the presence of workers from India has become a particularly influential factor in Britain’s capacity to meet workforce demands, support post-pandemic recovery, and remain competitive in high-value industries.

This white paper examines migration through a historical and analytical lens, tracing four distinct waves of post-war migration to Britain. Particular attention is given to the current “fourth wave,” characterised by the interaction of migration policy, labour market needs, and shifting global dynamics. The analysis highlights how migrant labour, when aligned with national priorities, can deliver widespread benefits, especially in sectors such as health and social care, technology, engineering, and professional services.

Drawing on official datasets and sector-level insights, the paper provides an evidence-based assessment of the contribution of Indian migrants to the British labour market. It situates current migration patterns within a longer historical framework, explores the role of Indian nationals across regions and industries, and evaluates how migration policy choices influence workforce stability, innovation, and public finances. The findings demonstrate the scale and significance of Indian migrant participation, not only in London and the West Midlands but across regional economies throughout Britain.

The white paper does not argue for more migration or less, but is intended for a wide audience, including policymakers, NHS and social care leaders, employers, regional authorities, and those involved in education and skills development. For health and care leaders, it offers insights into how ethical and effective migration pathways can help stabilise staffing levels. For businesses and regional stakeholders, it illustrates how international talent can support growth, entrepreneurship, and higher-value employment. For researchers and practitioners, it presents a vigorous analytical approach that can inform future work on migration, skills, and labour market outcomes.

Navendu Mishra MP (Stockport constituency).

Navendu Mishra MP
(Stockport constituency)

Foreword

It is with great pride and a deep sense of purpose that introduce this white paper, bringing together rigorous research, historical insight, and real-world experience to illuminate one of the most consequential migration stories of modern Britain. From the post Second World War years, when Britain looked outward to rebuild its economy, infrastructure, and public services, to the present day, the Indian community has been a steadfast partner in shaping the nation's social and economic fabric. Across decades, this migration story reflects a consistent pattern of mutual engagement and adaptability.

Each wave of migration marks a critical point in this developing relationship, the early workers, arriving in the aftermath of the war, powered essential industries such as textiles, manufacturing, and transport, often under challenging conditions, laying the foundation for post-war reconstruction. Subsequent waves brought professionals who strengthened the NHS, academia, and public institutions, ensuring that Britain could meet the demands of a modern welfare state. More recently, entrepreneurs and innovators have played a transformative role, establishing businesses, driving technological advancements, and positioning Britain as a global hub of commerce, creativity, and investment.

Today, Indian nationals represent the largest non-UK nationality within the National Health Service, sustaining care delivery across regions facing acute workforce pressures and demographic challenges. Beyond healthcare, Indian talent is deeply embedded in technology, engineering, financial services, and higher education sectors fundamental to national productivity, innovation, and long-term competitiveness. Importantly, this contribution is increasingly visible across the West Midlands, the North of England, Scotland, and Wales, supporting regional economies and driving local innovation clusters. Indian-led enterprises, research initiatives, and professional networks are generating employment, boosting skills development, and fostering knowledge exchange in communities across the nation.

What distinguishes the present moment is the emergence of a fourth wave of migration, shaped by Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, and wider geopolitical realignments. This wave is more skills-intensive, globally competitive, and strategically significant than those that preceded it. It is characterised by highly educated professionals in technology, life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and other growth sectors, reflecting both the aspirations of India's rising talent pool and the United Kingdom's evolving economic and demographic needs. This wave presents an opportunity for Britain to harness innovation, strengthen global trade ties, and secure long-term prosperity.

This white paper is particularly valuable in moving the debate beyond the simplistic framing of migration as a "burden or a boon." Instead, it focuses on measurable outcomes: staffing capacity in health and social care, entrepreneurship and start-up formation, productivity gains in technology and engineering, and contributions to public finances. By providing empirical evidence and real-world examples, the report enables policymakers to design interventions that are pragmatic, ethical, and effective.

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By situating today's policy choices within a clear historical framework of four migration waves, the authors remind us that Britain has prospered most when migration policy has been aligned with skills recognition, regional demand, and long-term national interest. History demonstrates that inclusive, forward-looking approaches to migration have yielded significant economic dividends, strengthened social cohesion, and enhanced Britain's standing on the world stage.

From fintech and artificial intelligence to life sciences and advanced manufacturing, Indian expertise and entrepreneurial energy are helping to drive innovation, investment, and global connectivity. This partnership is not accidental; it is the product of decades of trust, shared democratic values, strong educational links, and mutual aspiration between the UK and India. Collaborative research initiatives, cross-border investment, and educational exchange programs are all symbolic of a relationship that continues to evolve in depth and scale.

What makes this White Paper especially timely is its ability to connect history with the present, showing how the legacy of Indian migration continues to shape the UK's economic resilience, cultural dynamism, and international influence. The recommendations presented focusing on skills recognition, mobility pathways, ethical recruitment, and regional growth provide a constructive roadmap for turning talent flows into sustainable national capacity. They are designed not merely to manage migration, but to leverage it as a strategic advantage in a competitive global landscape.

The partnership between Britain and its Indian community is one that, if nurtured with foresight, collaboration, and shared commitment, will continue to enrich both nations for generations to come.

**The Rt. Hon Sir Oliver
Dowden MP & Dr Koolesh Shah**

Foreword



Migration has long been integral to the UK's economic and social fabric. Over successive generations, it has strengthened the labour market, supported growth, and helped address persistent skills shortages across essential services. Today, nearly one in five NHS workers is a non-UK national, with Indian nationals representing the largest overseas cohort. Beyond healthcare, migration has expanded the UK's skills base in high-value sectors, from technology and engineering to professional services, boosting productivity and supporting recovery in the years following the pandemic.

Against this backdrop, Indian migration stands out as a particularly meaningful force. It plays a vital role in helping employers respond to skills gaps and supporting long-term economic resilience. Understanding how this contribution has evolved, and how it can be better supported in the future is essential for policymakers, employers, and public service leaders alike.

This white paper examines the contribution of migrants through the lens of four post-war waves of UK migration, with a particular focus on the current "fourth wave", where policy choices, labour market demand, and global geopolitics intersect in increasingly complex ways. It demonstrates how migration can be more closely aligned with national priorities to deliver shared benefits, most notably across health and social care, technology, engineering, and beyond.

Drawing on official data and sector-level insights, the analysis is firmly evidence-led. It quantifies Indian migrant participation in the UK labour market and sets out:

- A framework for understanding the UK's four migration waves, when they occurred, what defined them, and why they matter today.
- A focused examination of Indian migration within the fourth wave, including the roles migrants play in a multitude of sectors including the digital and professional services, as well as regional economies beyond London and the West Midlands.

The intended audience for this white paper is deliberately broad. It aims to inform policymakers, health and social care leaders, employers across technology and professional services, regional and local authorities, and the researchers and educators shaping future talent pipelines. For industry and regional leaders, it sets out how talent flows can be translated into start-ups, resilient supply chains, and higher-value jobs across the UK.

At Remitly, we see the human and economic impact of migration first-hand every day. Research from the London School of Economics shows that British Indians are the wealthiest ethnic group in the UK by median net worth, reflecting both strong economic participation at home and enduring ties abroad. This is evident in the scale of remittances sent by Indian communities via Remitly, who continue to support families and invest in communities overseas while making a significant contribution to the UK economy. This White Paper makes a timely and valuable contribution to the debate, grounding future choices in evidence, history, and the lived experiences of those who move to build better lives and, in doing so, help to build a stronger UK economy.

**Pankaj Sharma, Chief Business
Officer at Remitly**

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Highlights

- Indian migrants play a key role in the UK as migrants. More than a demographic shift, migration has become a structural driver of the UK's economic recovery, cultural enrichment, and social resilience in the twenty-first century.
- Migration to the UK from India has grown since 2019 and especially evident after post-Brexit where migration tilted towards skilled work and study-to-work routes. The migration pattern remained resilient through and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Indian migrants support the capacity of the National Health Service (NHS) to deliver care as well as boost growth in tech/engineering sectors of the UK. Indian nationals were the largest non-UK nationality in the NHS staff. From 2004 to 2021 the average share of Indians (excluding London and the Midlands) in the NHS is 11%.
- The migrant population, earlier concentrated in London, shows a changing pattern with a sizeable and growing presence of Indians in the West Midlands and North England.
- The findings shift the debate from “burden or boon” to measurable outcomes and suggest a smarter, skills- and needs-based approach to immigration that turns India-linked talent into deployable capacity in health, care, engineering and tech.
- UK-India credential fast track, regional Study to Skilled Worker pathways, recruitment with progression in adult social care, and UK-India FTA mobility will ensure gains are spread across the country if mobility is tracked by a quarterly outcomes-based dashboard.

Executive summary

Migration has been a cornerstone of the UK's evolution in the past decades and played a formidable role in shaping the country's economic, cultural, and social landscape. The current debates on UK migration have redefined migration pathways, commonly framed in terms of the ongoing fourth wave, and has been shaped by Brexit, labour shortages and wider global realignments. Unsurprisingly, it has attracted sustained attention from academics, policymakers, and practitioners.

This white paper aims to analyse the four waves of migration to the UK through a structured lens (i.e., when, what, and why) with a primary focus on the current and fourth wave (2019 - ongoing) and the important role of Indian migrants in shaping the UK's post-Brexit recovery. It presents insights into how Indian migrants have strengthened national performance, particularly in healthcare, technology, and innovation, and assesses their broader impact on the UK's economic resilience and cultural dynamism.

The white paper is intended to inform policymakers, industry leaders, and academic stakeholders seeking evidence-based insights into how migration can be leveraged for sustainable growth. The recommendations are designed to inform policy formulation, workforce planning, and bilateral engagement strategies, and support decision-makers translate migration trends into practical frameworks for boosting productivity, regional development, and the UK-India partnership.

Migration to the UK

MIGRATION

“ The UK has been home to migrants who have contributed to the economy, society, and institutions ”

(Dustmann & Frattini, 2014)

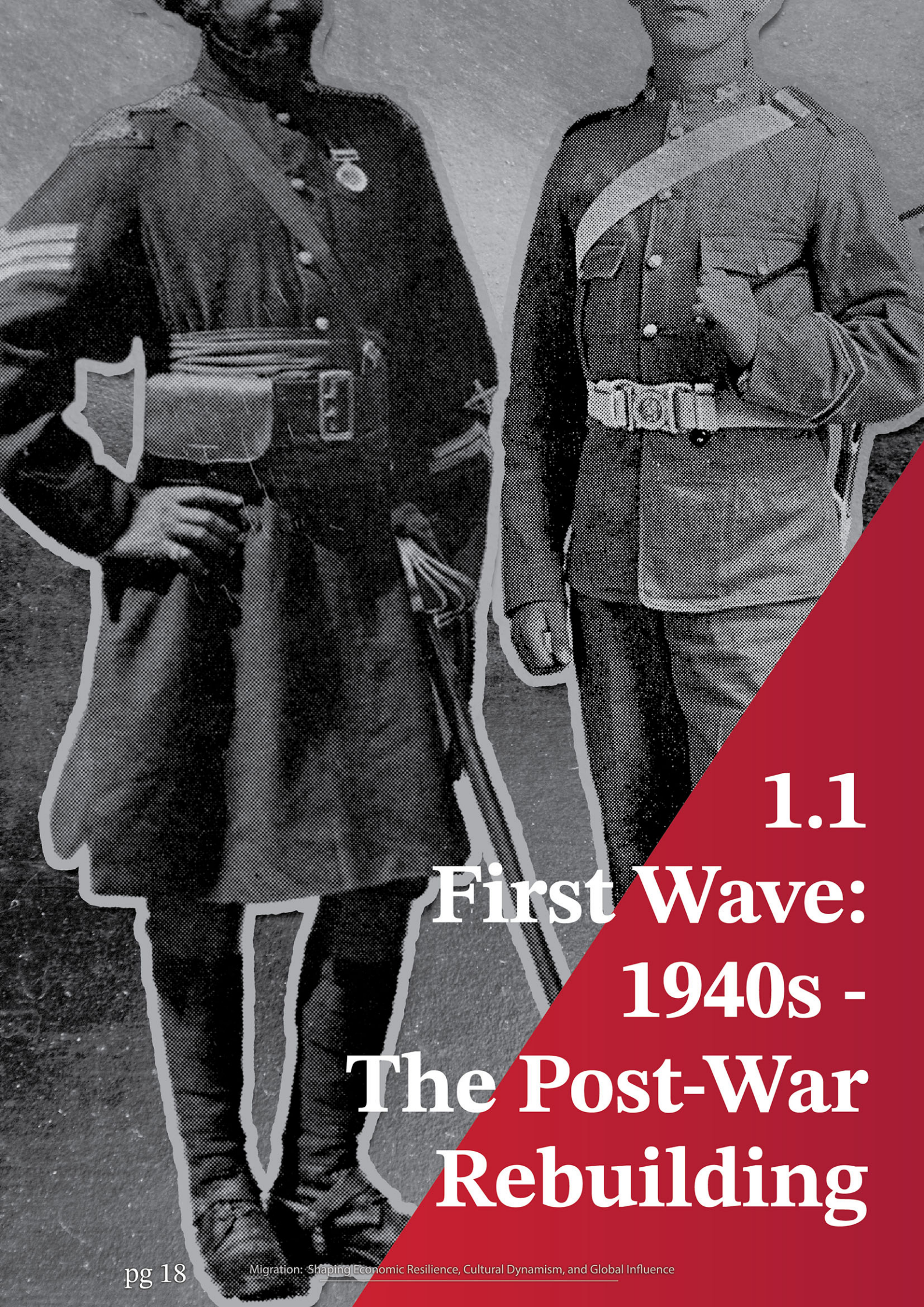
In the UK, public opinion on immigration is mixed and highly sensitive. Compared with EU countries, the UK is welcoming of migrants and the preference hinges more on migrant type than origin (Migration Observatory, 2025). As of 2020 there were 9.2 million foreign-born UK residents, accounting for 14 percent of the overall UK population.

The five largest foreign-born populations were from India (approximately 847,000), Poland (746,000), Pakistan (519,000), Romania (370,000), and the Republic of Ireland (364,000) (Office for National Statistics, 2021). Recent estimates by the UK Home Office (2025) suggest 948,000 people migrated into the UK and 513,000 people emigrated, which led to a net migration of 431,000.¹ However, over the years migration has evolved from being more than labour and skills - it has brought cultural dynamism, innovation, and diversified the UK's cultural and social landscape (Nathan & Lee, 2013).

The white paper adopts a four-wave framework to explain how shifting policy regimes and economic shocks changed who migrated, through which channels, and with what sectoral impacts. Together, the four waves of migration in the UK mark junctures driven by specific social, economic, and political forces, with each wave reshaping visa routes, skills mix, and settlement patterns in ways that set the conditions for the next wave of migration.

Before we discuss the four waves of post-war migration, it is worth noting that the focus is on who is being counted, over what periods, and why India's contribution is central to understanding how migration has rebuilt capacity in UK health, care, technology, and enterprise.

Migration to the UK started with the first wave of migration in the 1940s, where post-second world war rebuilding created demand that drew people to fill critical roles; followed by the second wave in the 1970s, marked by a Commonwealth-driven influx that expanded the workforce and enterprise base. In particular, the first and second waves seeded capacity in public services and enterprise. This was followed by the third wave in the 1990s, that coincided with universities and R&D becoming magnets for international talent and was associated with a globalization-fuelled movement that deepened integration into the global markets. Most recently, the fourth wave (2019 - ongoing) has been shaped by Brexit, labour shortages, and broader global shifts that are redefining migration pathways which highlights tighter migration frictions tend to depress wages and employment and reduce aggregate welfare in calibrated models (Sargent, 2023).



1.1 First Wave: 1940s - The Post-War Rebuilding

“The Health Service would have collapsed if it had not been for the enormous influx from junior doctors from such countries as India.”

– Lord Cohen of Birkenhead,
House of Lords, 1961

””

The UK emerged from the Second World War exhausted but determined to rebuild (Larkham & Adams, 2023). Large areas of the main cities had been destroyed by aerial bombing and a programme of rebuilding began which needed workers (Gorsky, 2008).

The UK had a severe labour shortage after World War II, especially in the transport network and the National Health Service (created in 1948), and the gap was too wide to close with the domestic workforce. The British government invited people from the Commonwealth to come and work, recruiting conductors and drivers for London

Transport, porters and nurses for hospitals, and workers for factories and foundries.

For many, life in Britain was not an abstraction given many had previously been stationed in the UK as members of the armed forces during the World Wars and had memories that shaped civilians’ decision to return.

At the same time, the forces pushing people to move were just as powerful. One of the main drivers of migration to the UK were wage and income differentials between the origin and the destination countries (Hatton, 2005). The economy of the

Caribbean islands, was in crisis with high levels of unemployment, making opportunities very attractive for the migrants. Further, growing violence and political upheavals generated the pull of South Asian and Mediterranean countries to work in the UK. In particular, the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 and the civil war in

Cyprus led many to escape and seek a better life in the UK. For Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Cypriot, and Caribbean migrants alike, the UK promised wages, safety, and a future (Hatton & Price, 2005). That promise was made more accessible by the UK’s immigration policy.

Until the early 1970s there was no visa requirement for most Commonwealth citizens to move to the UK, which lowered the practical barriers to migration and allowed labour to flow quickly to where it was needed most (Nasar, 2020). On the ground, these choices reshaped the British life. South Asian clinicians filled wards and surgeries; transport networks ran with new; foundries and mills restarted their furnaces (Simpson et al., 2010; Jackson, 1992). The result was not only recovery but reinvention of a country that was stitched back together by workers who answered Britain’s call, and this laid the foundations for a rich tapestry of institutional, economic, and cultural forces for a diverse UK.



1.2

Second Wave: 1970s - Commonwealth Connections and Political Upheaval

By the 1970s, Britain was faced with slower growth, higher unemployment, and tighter public budgets. Yet migration continued shaped by a structured policy framework and practical local responses (Tomlinson, 2023; Rolfe et al., 2019). In 1971, the Immigration Act reset the system. Under this Act, the citizens of the UK and its colonies no longer had an automatic right to remain, and Commonwealth citizenship no longer conferred special entry. This marked a shift toward managed migration, while still preserving lawful routes for work, study, family reunion, and humanitarian admissions. That balance was tested immediately. In 1972, after the mass expulsion of Asians from Uganda, the UK organised a coordinated reception effort for those holding British passports. National and local government, community groups, faith organisations, and volunteers worked together to house families, place children in schools, and connect adults with jobs. Despite pockets of public anxiety, the resettlement demonstrated the country's capacity to act quickly and decently in a crisis, and many Ugandan Asians soon established businesses, revitalised high streets, and contributed to trade and professional services (Taylor, 2018) especially in cities such as Leicester.

Migration from South Asia also continued through family reunion and the extension of existing community networks (Kofman, 2004). Newcomers joined relatives in Leicester, Birmingham, London, and other regional centres, adding to the growth of neighbourhood enterprises in retail, textiles, and small manufacturing (Basu, 1998). Caribbean migration persisted as well, though at a slower pace under the new rules. The pattern was welcoming, and the doors remained open through regulated channels, while public bodies worked to manage pressure on housing, schools, and local services.

Persecution and instability in other countries also shaped migration flows. Some Sri Lankan Tamils sought safety through study, family ties, or protection pathways; while entry requirements were tighter than in earlier decades, the UK still provided avenues for those meeting legal criteria, and emerging Tamil communities contributed to professional sectors, education, and civic life.

Across the decade, national institutions and local partnerships matured. Clearer entry rules sat alongside practical integration measures, from language support and skills recognition to community-led initiatives, helping arrivals move into work and business formation (Banks, 2017). The result was a more structured approach that balanced compassion with control, turning mobility into long-term contributions for towns and cities across the UK.



1.3

Third Wave: 1990s - A New Era of Globalization and European

The 1990s ushered a period of profound transformation for Britain, shaped that was by the forces of globalization, technological advancement, and European integration. Migration in the 1990s reflected an increasingly interconnected world, where people, ideas, and cultures flowed across borders with ease (Martin, 1999). The collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, and the expansion of the EU all played pivotal roles in reshaping migration patterns. As Britain's economy modernized and diversified, it attracted migrants from across the world, each bringing fresh perspectives to the UK (Champion, 1999).

One of the most notable shifts in the 1990s was the rise of EU migration (Fox et al., 2012). While the full effects of the 2004 enlargement were felt in the 2000s, the 1990s laid the groundwork for the flow of workers, particularly from Central and Eastern Europe and the Indian Sub-Continent, who were drawn by Britain's growing services and tech industries (Champion, 1999). According to the report on International Migration and the UK (2001) submitted to the Home Office, Asia (beyond Europe) emerged as a principal region of origin. Numbers from this region fluctuated between 20 and 25 percent of the total migrant population, peaking in 1993 but maintaining a steady share overall (See Figure 1). The Report found that the number of migrants from Asian nationalities rose significantly from around 359,000 in 1984 to 569,000 by 2000. The Indian Sub-continent population increased from 241,000 to 346,000 over 1984 and 2000 and accounted for the majority of this increase. This growth reflected broader trends of migration from former British colonies, as people sought better opportunities in Britain's thriving economy. The report also highlighted that the majority (59%) of migrants from the Indian Sub-Continent worked in essential sectors such as transport, manufacturing, and hospitality (see Figure 2). These industries relied heavily on migrant labour, as workers filled vital roles in both the public and private sectors, supporting Britain's post-industrial economy.

Another notable feature of the later years in the third wave was the transformation of critical industries, especially IT. As businesses rapidly digitised, demand for skilled IT professionals surged; employment in the sector rose by 39% between 1995 and 2000, reaching about 1.5 million.

Figure 1: Migrants by regions

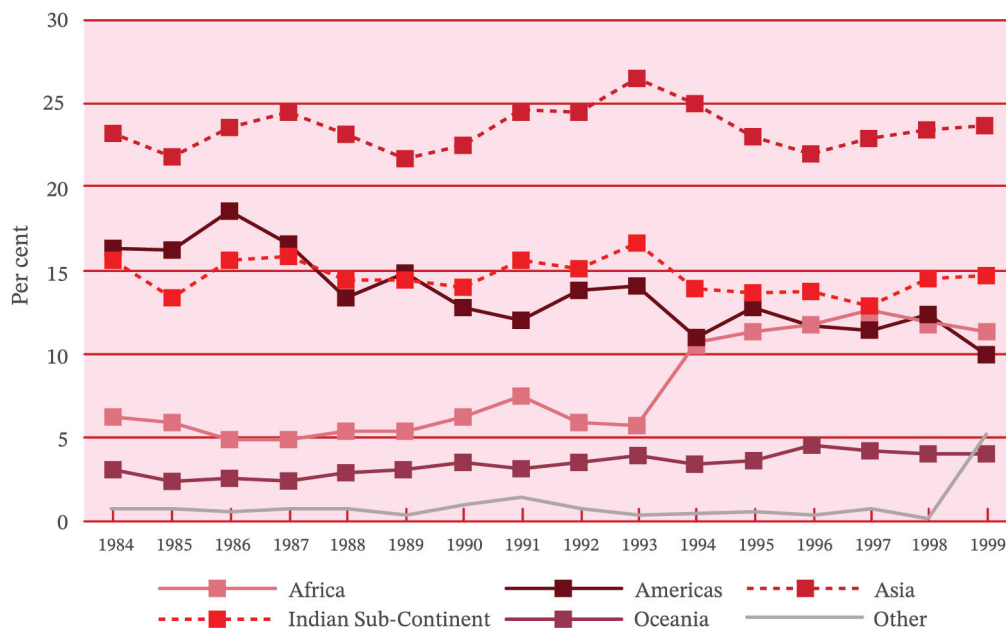


Figure 2: Table of migrants' employment patterns by sectors

	GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D	GROUP E	OTHER	ALL
All nationalities	4.9	22.2	19.7	14.1	38.8	0.3	100.0
UK/GB	5.0	22.5	19.6	14.0	38.7	0.3	100.0
Foreign nationals of which	2.5	16.2	21.0	16.4	42.6	1.3	100.0
Non-EU Countries	1.7	16.3	22.1	17.1	41.2	1.7	100.0
EU Countries	3.8	15.9	19.2	15.5	44.7	-	100.0
EU Countries excl. Irish Republic	-	14.6	25.2	17.9	38.2	-	100.0
Irish Republic	-	17.5	12.1	12.6	52.4	-	100.0
France & Germany	-	13.6	22.2	17.3	42.0	-	100.0
Northern EU	-	-	-	25.0	37.5	-	100.0
Southern EU	-	15.6	33.0	14.7	34.9	-	100.0
Other Europe	-	-	17.5	17.5	49.2	-	100.0
Africa	-	12.1	22.9	19.3	42.1	-	100.0
Middle East	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Indian Sub-Continet	-	25.5	29.1	8.5	34.0	-	100.0
Southeast Asia	-	-	-	-	58.1	-	100.0
Other Asia	-	-	45.8	-	22.9	-	100.0
North America	-	-	-	27.8	40.5	-	100.0
Caribbean/West Indies	-	-	-	-	61.3	-	100.0
Other Americas	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Australia & New Zealand	-	19.0	12.7	26.6	36.7	-	100.0

<p>Source: Labour Force Survey</p> <p>Industry divisions are based on Standard Industrial Classification (S/C 1980)</p> <p>Group A: 0 Agriculture, forestry and fishing 1 Energy and water supply industry 2 Extraction of minerals and ores, other than fuels Manufacture of metals, mineral products and chemicals</p> <p>Group B: 3 Metal goods, engineering and vehicle industries 4 Other manufacturing industries 5 Construction</p>	<p>Group C: 6 Distribution, hotels and catering, repairs</p> <p>Group D: 8 Banking, finance and insurance, business services and leasing</p> <p>Group E: 7 Transport and communications 9 other services</p> <p>Notes: Northern EU: Austria, Benelux, Denmark, Finland and Sweden Southern EU: Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain Less than 10,000. Row totals include relevant estimates for these cells.</p>
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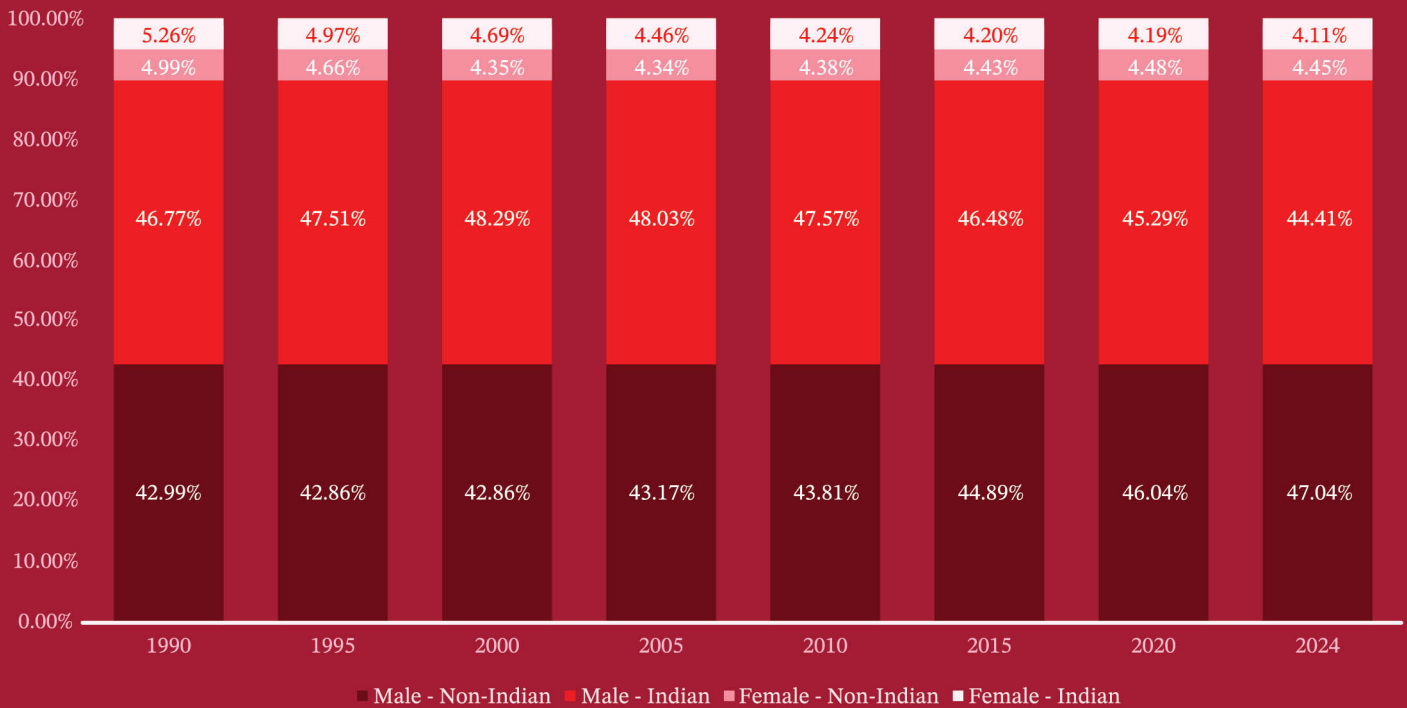
Source: International Migration Report (2001)

The domestic workforce could not keep pace, creating acute skills shortages. The 1999 Employers' Skills Survey reported that nearly half of IT employers had vacancies, and about a quarter struggled to fill roles due to a lack of specialised talent (roughly twice the national average). To bridge this gap, the UK turned to global talent, drawing highly skilled migrants from other countries such as India known for strong expertise in IT and engineering (Koser & Salt, 1997).

Source: International Migration Report (2001)

The UK took a distinctive approach by opening its labour market immediately to workers from the 2004 EU accession states. The politics of that decision, and the prominence of Polish migration in particular, have been extensively debated (Silva-Vargas, 2011). Less recognised, however, is that over the same period arrivals from India were of a similar order of magnitude, largely because they were framed less by free-movement politics than by skills and study pathways. Across the 1990s, the migration profile remained male-dominant (see Figure 3). Male Indian migrants increased from 46.77% (1990) to 48.29% (2000), while male non-Indian migrants remained broadly stable, edging up from about 42.99% to 42.66%. Female shares were comparatively small - female Indians declined from around 5.26% to 4.69%, and female non-Indian from about 4.99% to 4.35% over the same period. This pattern aligns with the third wave's sectoral pull (transport, manufacturing, hospitality, and emergent tech fields) that, at the time, recruited predominantly male workers.

Figure 3: Gender profile of migrants in the UK (from 1990 to 2024)



Source: UN (2024)



1.4

**Fourth Wave:
Brexit,
Labour Shortages,
and Geopolitics
(2019 – ongoing)**

The fourth wave of migration to the UK was shaped by confluence of political, economic, and social forces that reconfigured the global landscape (Portes, 2022; Ford, 2024). More than a demographic shift, the migration has become a structural driver of the UK's economic recovery, cultural enrichment, and social resilience in the twenty-first century (Nathan & Lee, 2013). In particular, the fourth wave has been defined by three interlocking dynamics examined in turn:

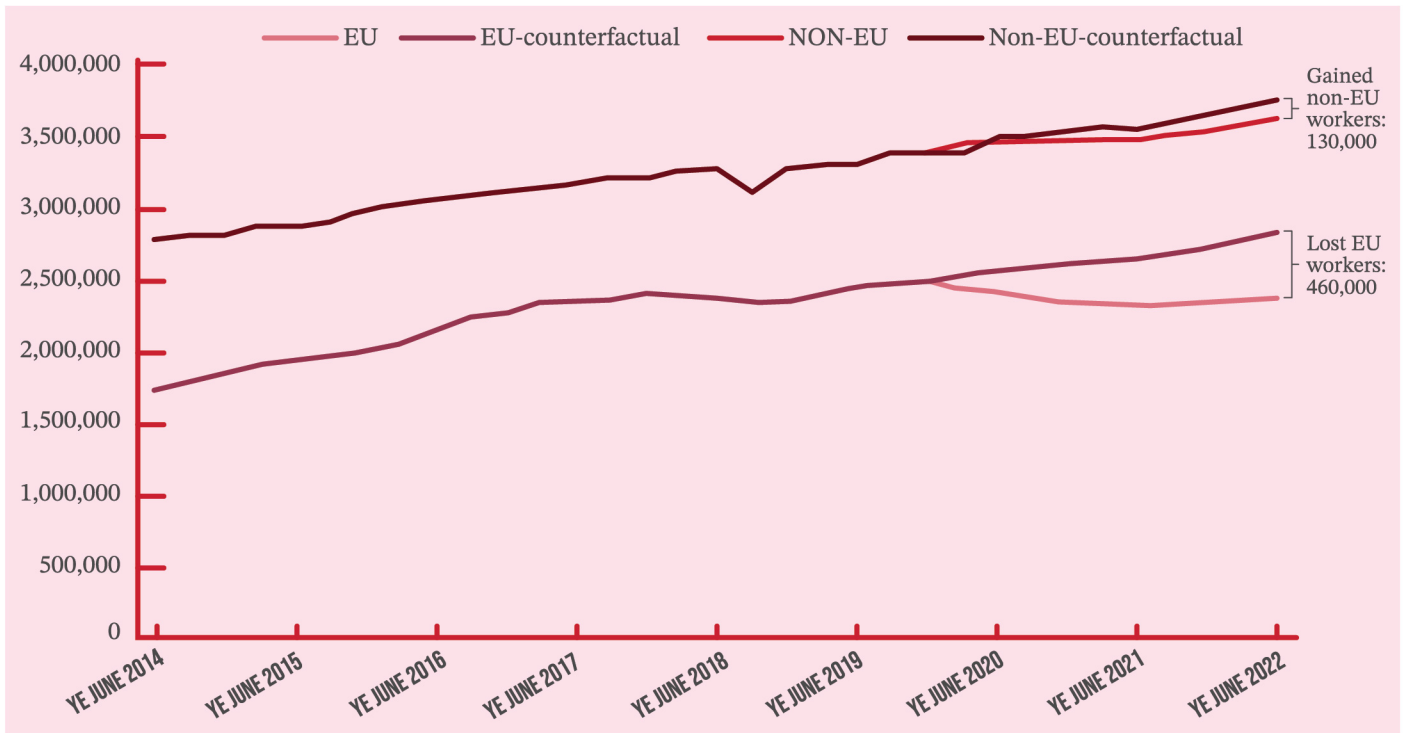
- a. Brexit, which reset migration governance and market access.
- b. Labour shortages, which exposed capacity gaps and accelerated demand.
- c. Geopolitics, which continues to reshape partnerships, supply chains, and talent flows.

1.4.1 Brexit

Before Brexit, migrants from the EU countries made up a significant portion of the UK's workforce, particularly in industries like agriculture, healthcare, construction, and hospitality (Migration Observatory, 2023). According to the Office for National Statistics, by 2019 around 3.7 million EU nationals lived in the UK, many of whom were employed in key sectors (such as administrative and support services, hospitality, retail, manufacturing, and health and care). However, post-Brexit immigration policies, implemented in 2021, ended the free movement of workers from the EU, creating significant labour shortages (Office for National Statistics, 2021).

Data from the Centre of European Reform (CER) shows that there was a significant shortfall of around 460,000 EU-origin workers, partly but not wholly compensated for by an increase of about 130,000 non-EU workers. The net loss of workers, around 330,000, is 1 per cent of the labour force (see Figure 4) (Springford & Portes, 2023). The most hit industries being transportation, storage, retail & wholesale which accounted for very large shortfalls of EU-origin workers, approximately 231,000 (Springford & Portes, 2023).

Figure 4. Number of incoming workers by their origin

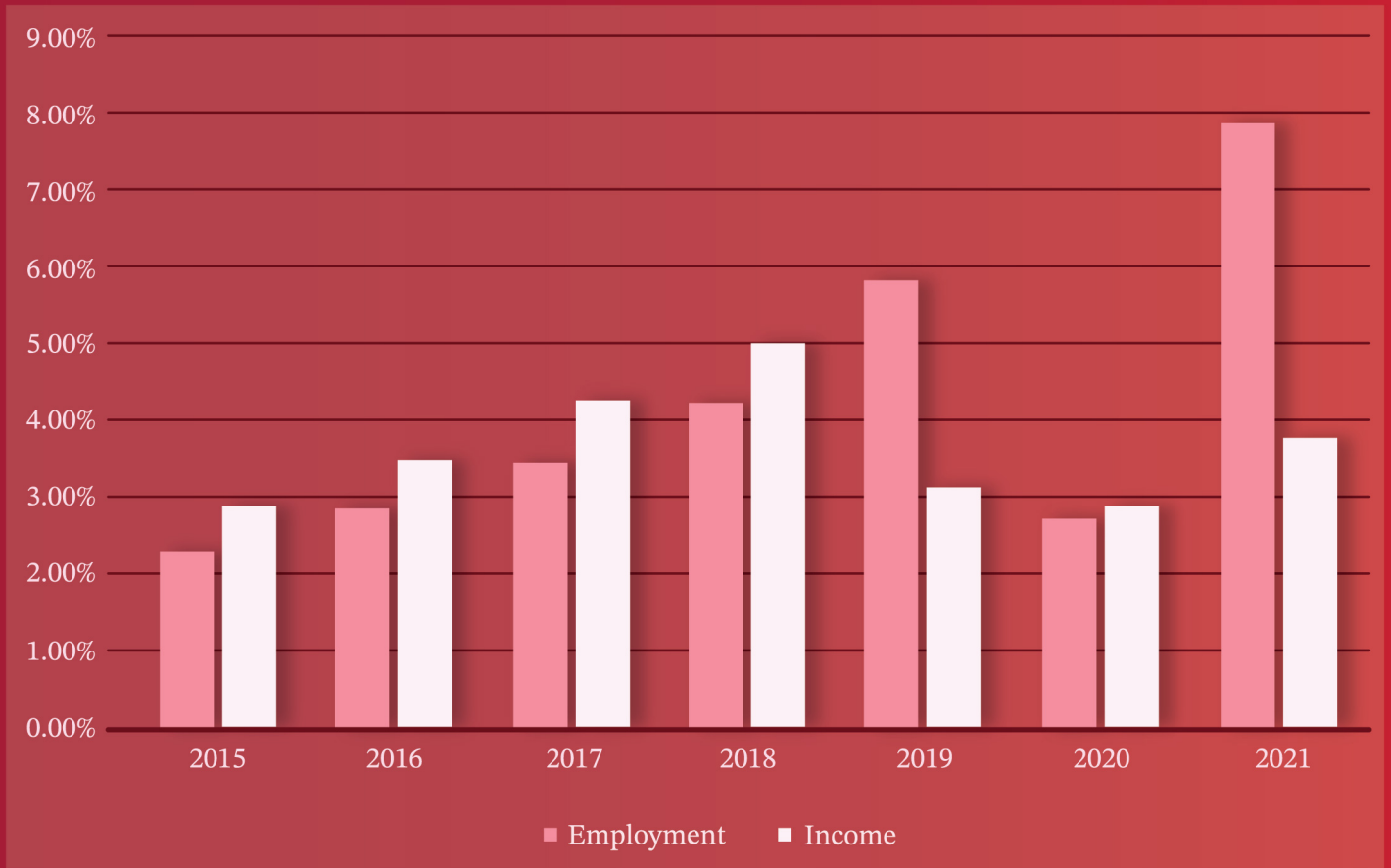


Source: Center for European Reform

Brexit marked a seismic shift in the UK’s migration policy, fundamentally altering its relationship with Europe and opening new pathways for migration from the Commonwealth and beyond (Portes, 2022). After Brexit there was an increase in net migration driven by an increase in non-EU citizens coming to the UK. This followed from policy liberalisation, which for example includes post-study work route and new humanitarian visa routes for people from Ukraine and Hong Kong, as well as care and senior care workers being eligible for work visas.

The analysis shows that, after Brexit, both employment and median monthly wage of Indians payrolled in the UK continued to rise and peaked in 2018 - an early signal of Brexit resilience (see Figure 5). In 2019 the pattern shifted, hiring accelerated while pay growth roughly halved as firms filled vacancies but contained costs amid pre-exit uncertainty. The twin shocks of Brexit and COVID weighed on jobs and incomes. By 2021, employment grew by about 8% while wages rose just over 3%, suggesting that post-Brexit labour shortages boosted employment more than wages.

Figure 5. Employment and income growth rate



Source: ONS (2024)

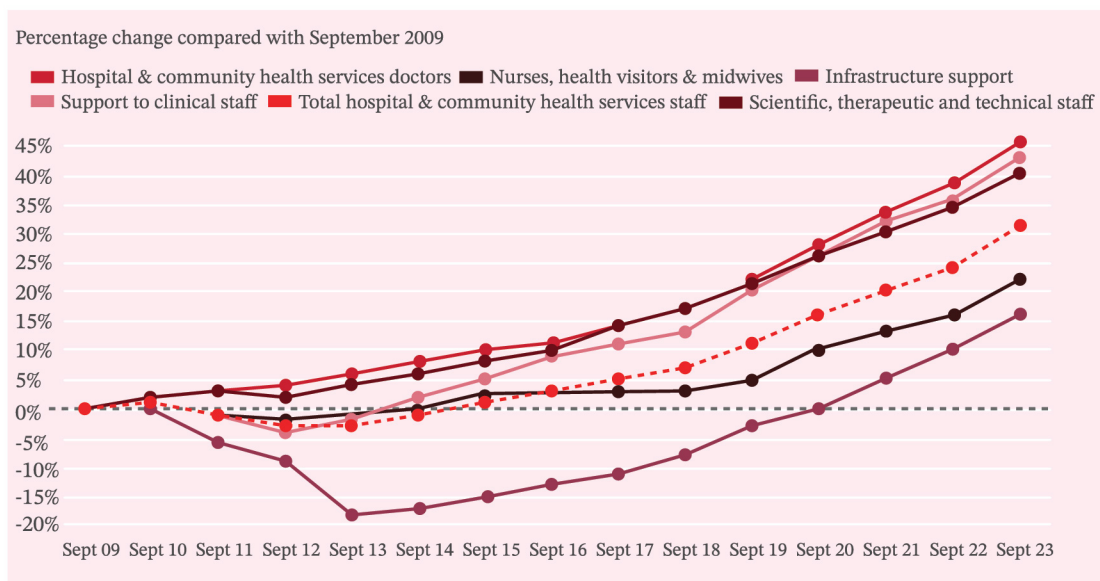
With the UK's labour market facing a long-term challenge, the government turned increasingly to former Commonwealth nations, including India, to fill the void (Portes, 2024). Brexit, therefore, has not just redefined migration policies but also created an imperative to establish stronger migration pathways from countries with historical ties to the UK, notably India.

1.4.2 Labour Shortages & COVID-19

The pandemic served as both a crisis and a revelation for the UK, revealing its critical dependence on migrant labour, particularly in healthcare and essential services.

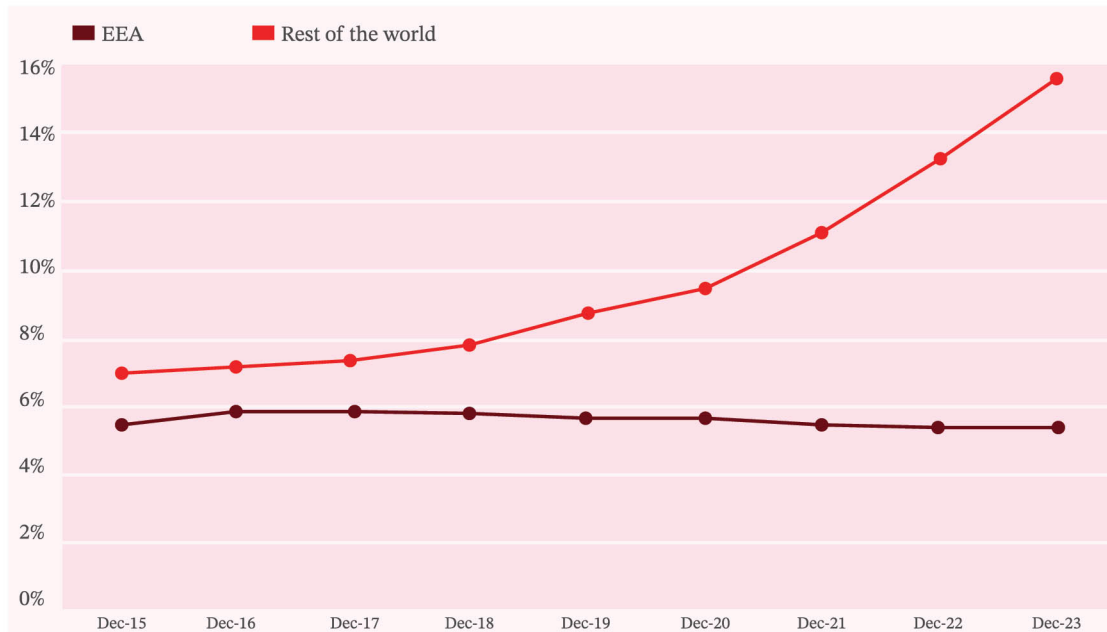
According to the Confederation of British Industry CBI/Pearson (2018), 74% of UK businesses reported difficulty filling vacancies, with 57% specifically citing a lack of skilled workers. Industries ranging from healthcare to construction have seen a dramatic rise in vacancies as migration flows slowed post-Brexit. Healthcare has been one of the most affected sectors. As of 2022, the NHS faced a shortage of over 110,000 workers (Deakin, 2022), with 40% of nursing staff and 25% of medical practitioners being foreign-born (Baker, 2023). The King's Fund report (2023) revealed that the NHS health-care workers, especially the ones from non-EEA, increased during and post-pandemic (see Figures 6 and 7) suggesting that migrant workers were on the frontlines, providing essential care in hospitals, delivering food, and ensuring that vital services continued to function. Nearly 30% of the workers in essential services, including healthcare, were born outside the UK, with a large proportion coming from India and other Commonwealth nations.

Figure 6: Percentage change of migrants' industry



Source: King's Fund Report (2023)

Figure 7: Percentage change of migrants' origin



Source: King's Fund Report (2023)

1.4.3 Geopolitics and Shifting Global Alliances

Geopolitics has moved from the margins of migration discourse to its centre during the fourth wave (Benson et al., 2024; Portes, 2022). Armed conflict, great-power rivalry, sanctions, and energy/security shocks started not only redirecting routes but also raising overall inflows, via humanitarian and family pathways as well as skills-led visas (Afonso et al., 2024). At the same time, shifting alliances (e.g., deeper Euro-Atlantic coordination) and new bilateral arrangements, are reconfiguring who comes, through which channels, and for which sectors. An example is the UK-India Double Convention Treaty, that once ratified, would provide for a three-year waiver on social security contributions for Indian workers. Further, while there are no changes to immigration policy under the UK-India free trade agreement (FTA) signed in October 2025, the deal will facilitate easier movement for skilled workers including contractual service suppliers, business visitors, investors, intra-company transferees, family members of transferees with work authorisation and independent professions (e.g. musicians, yoga instructors, chefs, among others) after ratification (likely in 2026) (Khorana, 2025).

Overall, the UK's response to workers' shortages has been to re-engineer channels such as targeted protection schemes, priority routes for resilience sectors (health, care, digital/security, critical infrastructure), and tighter risk-based compliance. Firms have adapted with multi-jurisdiction staffing, shorter assignments, and more intra-company transfers when permanent moves are constrained. As a result, numbers have risen and the composition has changed and arrivals are more concentrated in protected and skills-oriented pathways, aligned with evolving strategic partnerships (Portes, 2024; Benson et al., 2024).

The policy task now is to balance security and control with openness and competitiveness, so these geopolitically driven flows continue to support recovery, resilience, and long-run capacity.

2. Fourth Wave and Indian Migrants

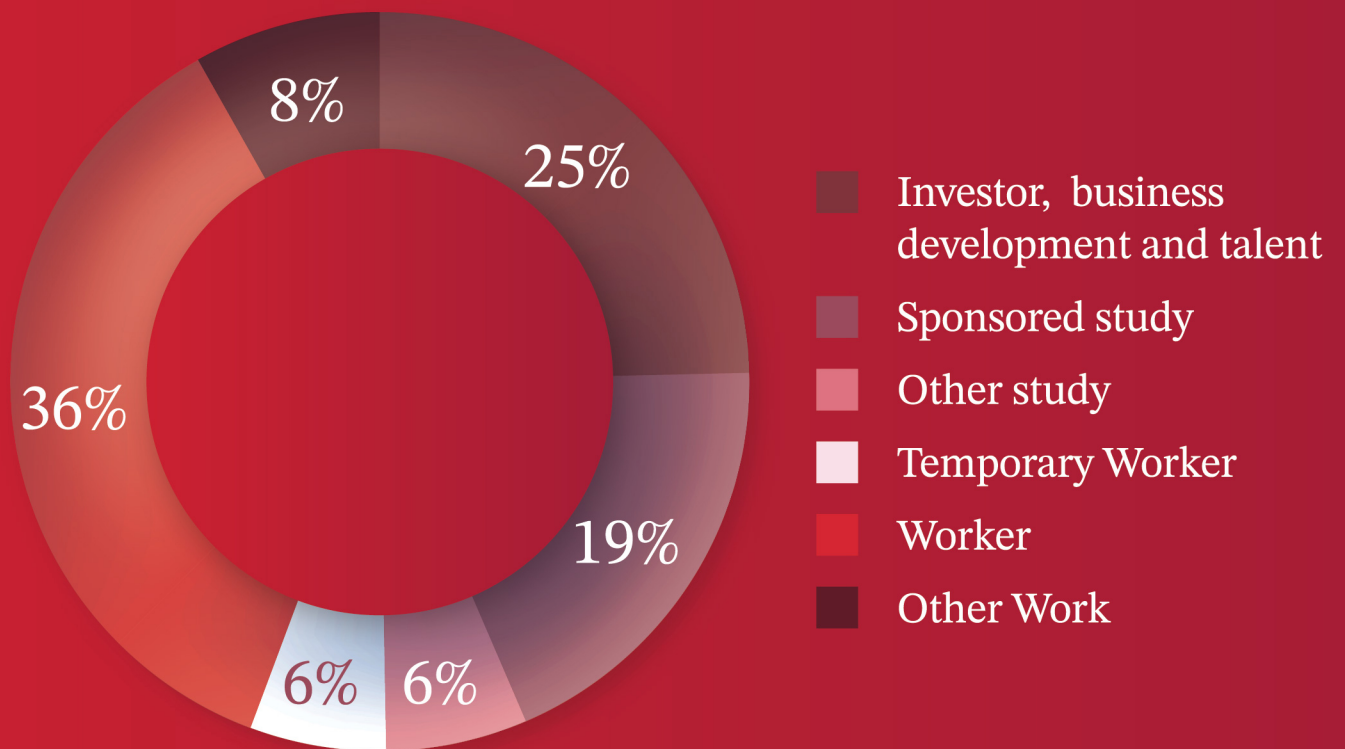
The migration from India is the defining feature of the UK's fourth wave of immigration, shaped by post-Brexit policy shifts, labour shortages, and wider geopolitical realignments. India has rapidly become one of Britain's most important sources of skilled labour, managerial talent, and entrepreneurial dynamism. Powered by a young, highly educated workforce with deep strengths in STEM, healthcare, finance, and digital services, Indian migrants anchor critical nodes of the UK economy, from the NHS trusts and regional tech clusters to high-growth start-ups and multinational headquarters (Robinson & Carey, 2000; Portes, 2024). Their contributions extend beyond wages and headcount to productivity gains, innovation spillovers, and the creation of new market linkages with one of the world's fastest-growing economies (Nathan & Lee, 2013). This is corroborated by Campo et al. (2018) that the overall impact of immigration on productivity is positive, substantial and significant, as measured at a geographical level. In fact, India's corridor combines advantages that are rare in other flows (e.g., scale, skill intensity, and dense business networks) so the same number of arrivals are more likely to produce higher productivity and economic/societal effects.

One illustrative case is COVID-19 where even through lockdowns, Indian applications continued, and successfully clustered in sponsored study, investor/talent, and temporary worker routes (see Figure 8). In fact, over a third (36%) of all successful applications were "Worker" visas. Relative to sectors experiencing output contraction by 36%, the worker shares signals structural demand, with employers backfilling persistent shortages despite the shock. Investor, business development and talent pathways accounted for 25% of all visas issued, demonstrating that founder and capital mobility was unusually resilient compared with short-term labour routes. Education visas were 19% of total visa approved in the category of "Sponsored Study" visas, and 6% in "Other Study", which, taken with the Worker share, indicates a study-to-work pipeline rather than a temporary buffer.



“Temporary Worker” routes comprised only 6% and “Other Work” 8%, consistent with closures in hospitality/events underscores those Indian flows tilted toward higher-wage, higher-skilled routes when low-skills demand collapsed. The comparative point is that, during crisis conditions, the UK-India corridor preserved its skill mix better than routes reliant on short-term, low-wage demand.

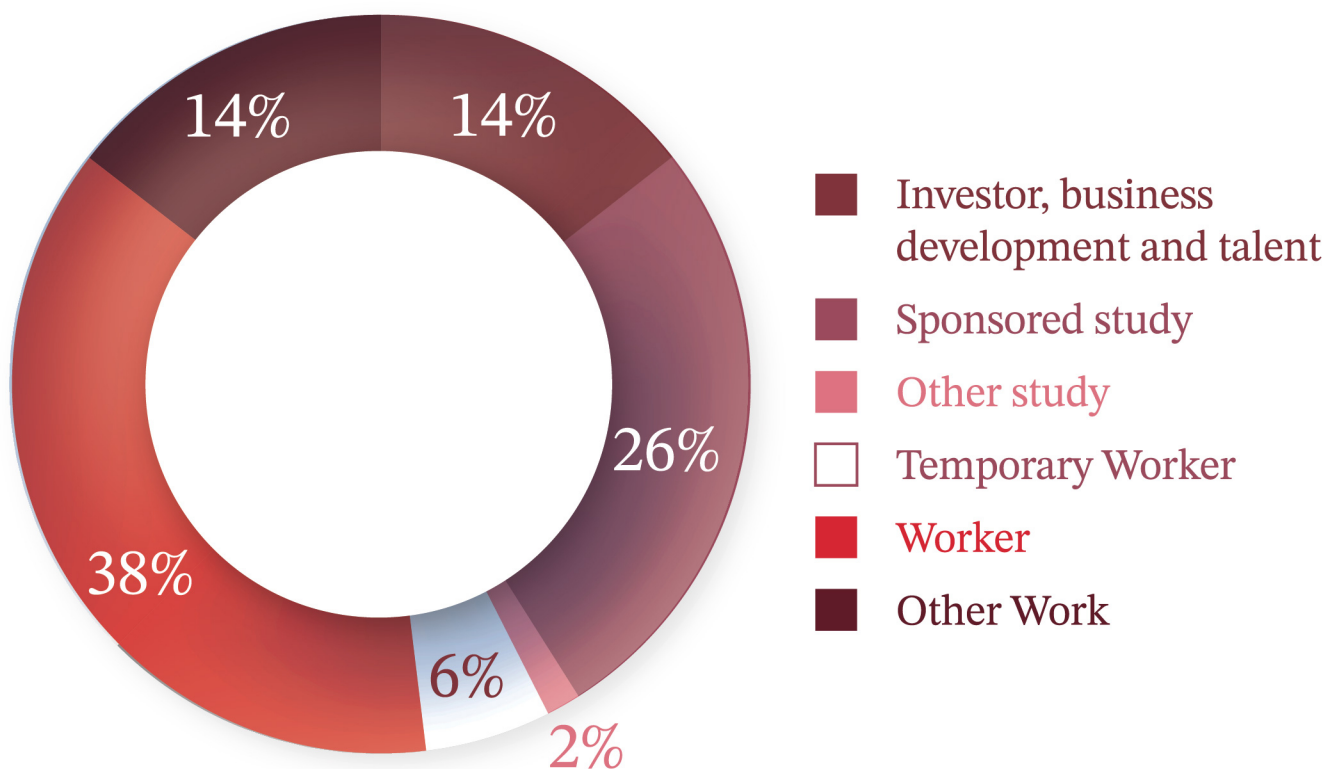
Figure 8. Percentage of successful visa applications by Indians during Covid-19



Source: ONS (2024)

The pattern has held after the Covid pandemic (see Figure 9). During 2021-2024, Worker visas lead at 38%, affirming strong UK demand for skilled Indian labour. Sponsored Study increased to 26%, while Investor/Global Talent declined to 14%; Other work schemes were 14%, Temporary Worker at 6%, and short-course study at 2%. Compared with the pandemic composition, post-pandemic India flows shift from “capital-led + niche talent” toward “skills-led + education-fed,” with Worker + Sponsored Study (64%) now the dominant pipeline. This mix compares favourably with routes where temporary categories rebound faster than skilled sponsorship; here, the rebound concentrates in human capital that is easier to embed in productivity-critical roles. The binding constraint is no longer applicant volume but conversion speed, how quickly that 26% Sponsored Study segment becomes part of the 38% Worker base through recognition and placement.

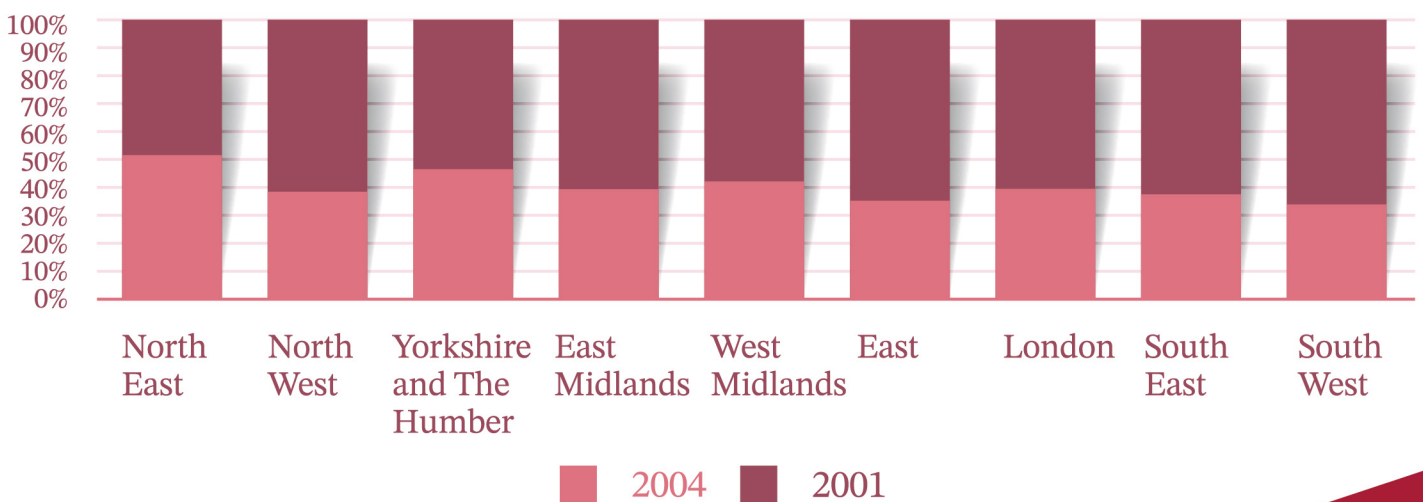
Figure 9. Percentage of successful visa applications by Indian migrants' post Covid-19 (2021-2024)



Source: ONS (2024)

Translating these trends shows that the distribution of Indian migrants has broadened beyond the traditional hubs. Growth is particularly striking in the North-West, Yorkshire & the Humber, and the East Midlands, where in 2021 Indians accounts for over half of the regional total, implying more than a doubling in relative terms since 2004 (see Figure 10). The established centres, such as London and the West Midlands, registered further gains, while destinations like the North-East and South-West also expanded. Relative to historic settlement patterns concentrated in London/West Midlands, the new dispersion aligns more closely with vacancy maps in health and engineering outside the South-East, which increases the probability that marginal arrivals lift regional productivity rather than simply add to agglomerations already at capacity. The acceleration in the East Midlands and Southern regions suggests that targeted sponsorship and relocation support could turn Indian dispersion into durable clusters, especially where anchor employers (NHS trusts, universities, tech parks) can absorb the 2021-heavy cohorts of Indian migrants.

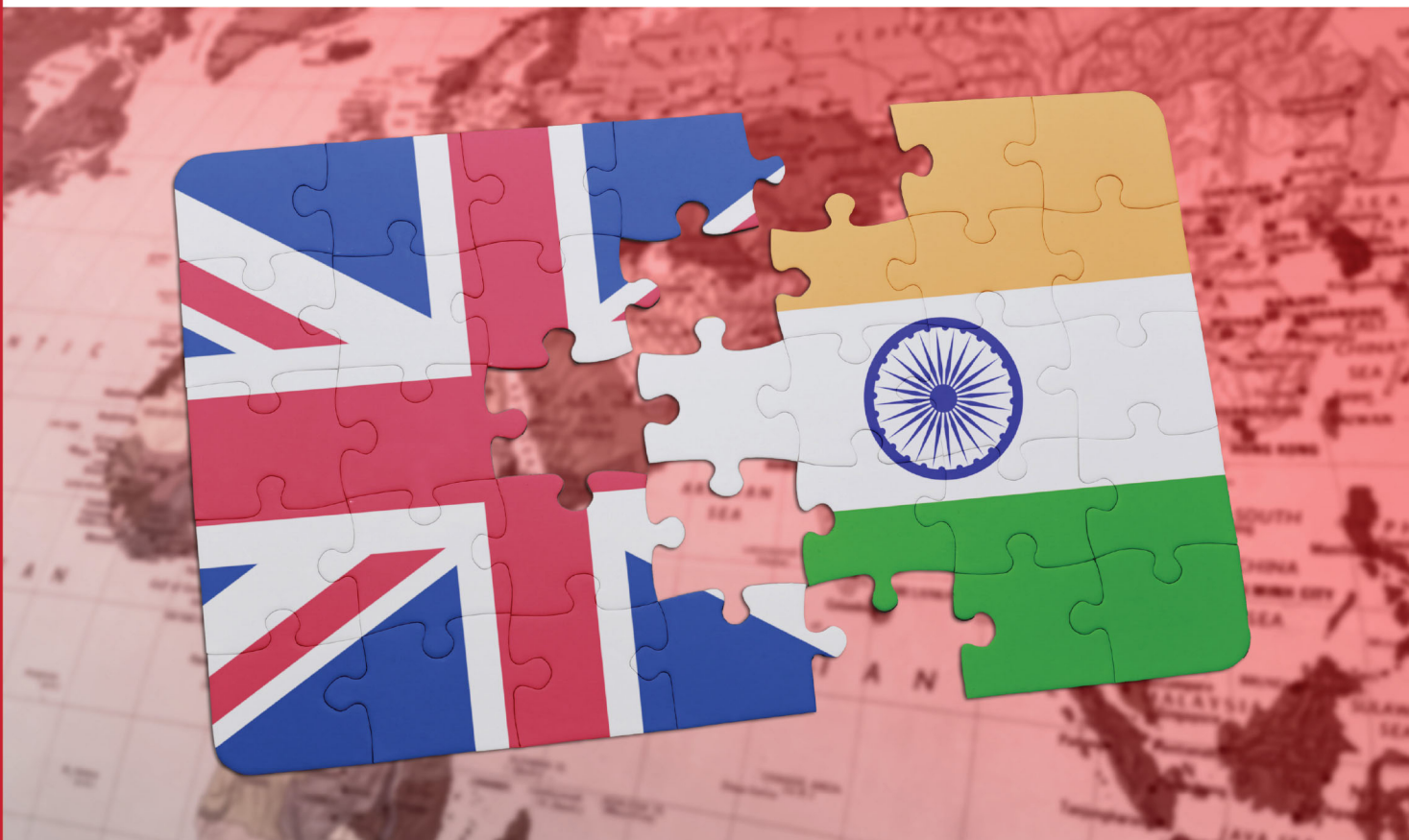
Figure 10. Percentage of successful visa applications by Indians during Covid-19



Source: ONS (2024)

In sum, India sits at the centre of the UK's fourth wave of immigration - the flows have proved resilient through COVID-19, pivoted toward higher-skill and study-to-work routes under the post-Brexit regime, and have since stabilised at scale.

The visa mix led by worker (36% during COVID; 38% post-pandemic) and sponsored study (19% during COVID; 26% post-pandemic) with selectively strong investor/talent segments (25% during COVID; 14% post-pandemic), signals persistent employer demand and the deepening of human-capital links between the two economies. Spatially, settlement has widened beyond legacy hubs, with the sharpest relative gains across the North-West, Yorkshire & the Humber, and the East Midlands, alongside continued growth in London and the West Midlands.



Indian migrants are now embedded in the UK as an engine of growth and innovation (Migration Observatory, 2025). In 2022, nearly 54,000 international workers entered the UK tech sector, with a large share from India,

Indian nationals are the single largest cohort on skilled routes, with outsized presence in IT and healthcare (Home Office, 2025). As of June 2023, 60,533 NHS staff in England are of Indian nationality, the largest foreign-national group, while the 2023 arrivals underline the scale of this pipeline: roughly 250,000 Indians came to the UK, including 127,000 for work, many into digital and health roles (Baker, 2023). In the wider labour market, Indian workers have driven net job creation: between 2019 and 2024, jobs held by Indian nationals rose by 488,000, compared with 257,000 additional roles filled by British citizens (Eastern Eye, 2024). Additionally, between 2014 and 2021, the Indian-born population in the UK rose from roughly 0.79 million to about 0.90 million. Over the same period, employment among Indian nationals increased from 301,000 to over 450,000, and median pay grew by nearly 30% (ONS, 2022).

2.1 Modelling scenarios: Impact on Employment, Growth and Public Services

The White Paper models three scenarios of Indian migrant participation to present the consequences of migration on employment, growth and public services. The model fixes the population base and varies only one lever, the labour-market participation rate of Indian-born UK residents, so the consequences for employment, earnings and public-service capacity are easy to trace.

The scenario describes the percentage of migrants who are active in the labour market, at 70%. The resident stock is 896,000 Indian-born UK residents (latest rounded estimate) and vary the labour-market participation rate only.

“Participation” follows the standard definition (employed and unemployed as a share of the resident population), and for headline counts we approximate employment as participation × population, assuming unemployment near the UK average and within rounding error.

Scenario 1

Current pattern (~70% participation): around 630,000 Indians in work, with a total wage bill of about £17 billion, supporting post-Brexit priority roles from doctors and nurses to engineers, data scientists, and founders.

Scenario 2

Lower participation (50%): employment falls to ~448,000 out of an estimated 896,000 residents, reopening staffing gaps across the NHS, STEM research, and fast-growing tech firms.

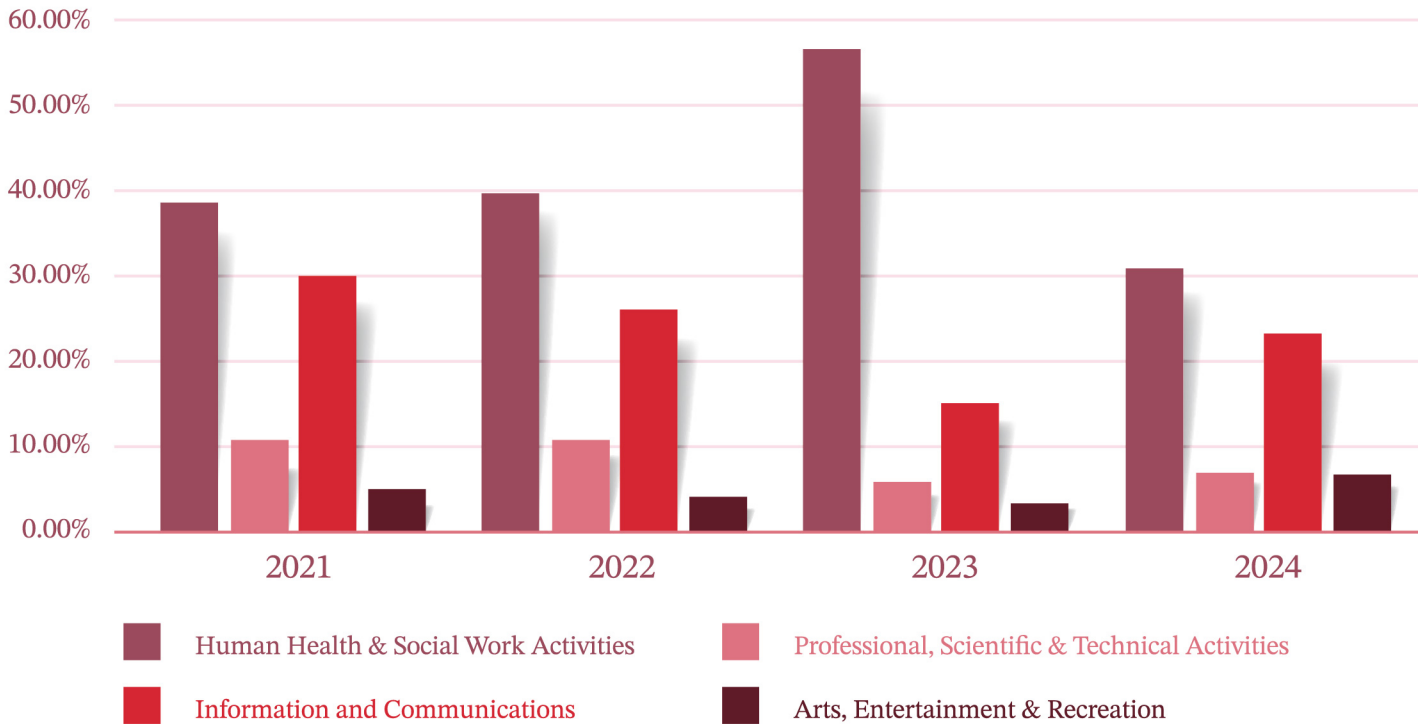
Scenario 3

Higher participation (90%): with faster recognition of overseas qualifications, smoother visa pathways, and targeted upskilling, employment exceeds 800,000, lifting annual earnings to £22 billion+, easing shortages, boosting productivity, and broadening the tax base.

For the Indian diaspora, the implications are direct: lower participation constrains upward mobility and collective influence; higher participation strengthens the community's role at the heart of Britain's growth strategy.

At the sectoral level, Indian contribution is most visible where the UK's needs are greatest. Grant rates are consistently highest in Human Health & Social Work, peaking above half of all approvals in 2023 before easing in 2024, evidence of Indians' central role in stabilising NHS capacity and social care delivery (see Figure 11). Information & Communications forms the second pillar: strong through 2021-22, softer in 2023, then rebounding in 2024 as tech hiring resumed, reflecting sustained demand for engineers, data specialists, and cybersecurity talent. Professional, Scientific & Technical roles hold a steady share, supporting R&D and high-value business services, while Arts, Entertainment & Recreation remains small but edges up in 2024.

Figure 11. Visa grant rates for Indian workers in top industries, 2021-2024



Source: UK-GOV, Home Office (2024)

Note: This is the percentage of Indians in the health sector which is calculated with regards to the total number of Indians with successful visas in that particular year.

The key contributions of Indian migrants during 2021-2024 are primarily in two main sectors:

Human health and social work:

Indian-born doctors and nurses are integral to the NHS, with Indian nationals representing the largest non-UK national group in the medical workforce (Thacker et al., 2022). Indian healthcare professionals fill critical gaps in both clinical and non-clinical roles, helping to sustain the UK's healthcare infrastructure as the population ages. According to the NHS data, Indian migrants account for around 16% of all NHS medical professionals, helping to mitigate the challenges posed by an aging population and the increasing demand for healthcare services (Baker, 2023). This workforce is vital not just for the patient care but also in ensuring that the NHS remains one of the most comprehensive and effective public health systems in the world. However, an issue shaping the current debate is the bottleneck in specialty training posts, which has contributed to industrial action and, at times, scapegoating of international medical graduates (including many from India), even as the Government's 10-year plan signals an ambition to reduce the NHS's dependence on overseas recruitment to under 10% by 2035 and to prioritise UK graduates for training places.



Information and communication:

The tech industry alone contributed £184 billion to the UK economy in 2022, and the government's Digital Strategy relies heavily on foreign talent. Migrants from India have been crucial to this growth, making up 13% of the tech workforce. The shortage of workers in high-tech and engineering fields, coupled with a growing demand for services in the digital economy, further underscores the role of Indian migration in sustaining the UK's economic vitality. Overall, Indian nationals contributed the most in Income Tax and NICs of any non-UK nationals at £5.3 billion in 2020 which accounted for more than 20% of all contributions from non- EEA nationals (HM Revenue & Customs, 2022).

It is worth mentioning that migration can put pressure on housing especially in areas where supply is constrained. The Migration Observatory finds higher overcrowding among households with at least one foreign-born adult and reports that in 2023/24 non-UK citizens headed 22% of households assessed as homeless or at risk of homelessness, indicating that demand pressures can show up most acutely at the lower end of the market (Fernández-Reino et al., 2024). Further, many migrants initially rely on the private rented sector, where access, affordability and quality constraints exist, but this may not always be the case especially when the migrants are in well paid jobs (Stephens et al., 2024). In adult social care, the National Audit Office (2025) expressed concern regarding excessive hours and reluctance to report abuse for fear of jeopardising immigration status. Thus, the findings suggest skills-led migration can deliver capacity gains, but only if complemented with housing planning and enforceable safeguards in the care labour market.

2.2 The Impact on Social and Cultural Landscape

Beyond the economic contributions, Indian migration has reshaped the UK's social and cultural landscape (Scott, 2017). Indian communities have broadened Britain's cultural repertoire, culinary traditions, music, film, literature, and festivals such as Diwali and Navratri now sit comfortably in the national calendar, making every day public life more inclusive and cosmopolitan (Wise, 2019).

This diffusion of culture has also deepened the UK's soft power: the visibility of Indian arts and traditions strengthens people-to-people ties with India and the wider diaspora, complementing formal diplomacy.

Equally important is the evolution of a confident dual identity (Maxwell, 2009). British Indians are seen to preserve language, faith, and family traditions while embracing liberal, civic values, producing a generation of global citizens who move fluently between cultures. That hybridity shows up in schools, universities, and professional networks through mentoring, community organisations, and philanthropy that expand opportunity and social mobility. Civic participation has grown alongside cultural influence.

British Indians increasingly serve in public life, from local councils to national institutions, contribute to voluntary and charitable sectors, and foster inter-community dialogue. These activities strengthen social cohesion, build trust across neighbourhoods, and model resilience and adaptability in a diverse society.



3. Concluding Remarks & Recommendations

The findings translate evidence into a practical plan to turn India-linked migration and follows directly from the fourth-wave analysis. The aim is to balance opportunity with system pressures to ensure speedy deployment where shortages are acute, improve retention and progression (especially in adult social care), and ensure gains are reaped across the country.

Indian migrants are integral to the UK's economic dynamism and civic life. Building on this evidence, there is a case for shifting from aspiration-led rhetoric to strategic implementation of immigration policy to align routes with employer demand. The White Paper does not argue for more migration or less; it argues for smarter migration that provides clear standards, predictable routes, qualification recognition with a strong focus on integration so that mobility becomes a long-term advantage rather than a short-term fix. The aim is to move the debate beyond "burden or boon" and the focus is on what migration delivers in terms of jobs, services, and value created. The findings resonate that skills- and needs-based migration matches people with the roles that the country needs, while upholding standards.

First, it is important to link Indian migrant talent into deployable capacity without lowering standards. We recommend a UK-India skills and credential fast-track between UK regulators (GMC, NMC, HCPC, GPhC, Engineering Council) and their Indian counterparts that digitises primary-source verification and runs joint assessment clinics with employers. The analysis shows, given Indian nationals are already the largest non-UK cohort in healthcare and engineering/ICT clusters conditional offers should directly fast-track skills-led inflows to support post-Brexit capacity.

Second, given the current visa-mix and dispersion there is a case for converting Study to Skilled Worker visa outside London and the South-East. Building university-employer-NHS trust consortia that match final-year students (STEM, health, data/AI) to shortage roles, and aligning the Study to Skilled Worker visa will convert the pipeline into employment where it is most needed. Finally tracking conversion will support regional rebalancing programme and push outcomes toward the high-participation scenario.

Thirdly, the UK-India Free Trade Agreement as a practical bridge from diaspora-enabled ties to reduced frictions in services and mobility. Operationalising this will support professional mobility channels tied to recognised qualifications and streamlining short-term secondments (including the social-security relief you describe). Prioritising Human Health & Social Work, Information & Communications, and Professional/Scientific/Technical activities is important as is targeting regions where Indian settlement is rising. A quarterly outcomes dashboard that presents migration routes by nationality and regions will keep public confidence high that the migration is linked to sectors that need support to keep UK economy growing.

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Appendix

Addendum April 2026

Indian Nationals Continue to Lead UK Visa Extension Figures

The central thesis of this White Paper that Indian migration constitutes a structural driver of the UK's economic resilience, workforce capacity, and public service delivery is substantively reinforced by the most recent official migration statistics released by the Home Office (February 2026). These figures, which relate to the year ending December 2025, confirm and extend the fourth-wave trends identified in the preceding analysis and carry direct implications for the policy recommendations set out in Section 3.

Visa Extensions

Indian nationals continue to dominate the UK's visa extension figures across multiple routes and categories, reflecting the depth and durability of this migration corridor.

In the health and care worker category alone, 104,555 extensions were issued to Indian nationals in the year ending December 2025, ahead of Nigeria (88,461) and Zimbabwe (28,914). For skilled worker extensions, Indian nationals led with 90,031, followed by Pakistani nationals (16,098) and Nigerians (12,485). Indian nationals similarly topped the Graduate Route extension figures at 90,153, ahead of Nigeria (42,220) and Pakistan (30,464).

These figures are consistent with the modelling presented in Section 2.1, which projected that under higher participation conditions, facilitated by smoother visa pathways and faster qualification recognition, employment among Indian-born UK residents could exceed 800,000, generating annual earnings above £22 billion and materially easing sectoral shortages. The latest data suggest that current policy settings are sustaining these flows.

Study Visas

After a recent downward trend, sponsored study visas granted to foreign students increased by 3% in the past year. Indians were granted 95,231 study visas in the year ending December 2025, making them the most common nationality receiving such visas and accounting for 23% of the total. The persistence of study visa demand, coupled with the high volumes of subsequent Graduate Route and Skilled Worker extensions, empirically validates the study-to-work pathway that this White Paper identifies as central to regional workforce development.

Healthcare Workforce Risk

The new data also carry a cautionary dimension that merits direct attention. The UK's Work Rights Centre (WRC) has publicly cautioned that a significant decline in migrant care workers, nurses, therapists, scientists, and education professionals arriving to work in the country raises serious questions about the costs of the government's narrow focus on reducing migration. With an estimated 25,000 nursing vacancies currently unfilled, any material contraction in Indian-origin health and care worker flows would expose the NHS to the very staffing vulnerabilities that this White Paper has quantified.

This echoes the analysis in Section 2.1, where the lower participation scenario projects a fall to approximately 448,000 Indians in employment, reopening staffing gaps across the NHS, STEM research, and fast-growing technology firms. The present data indicate that the UK remains far from this scenario, but the structural dependency is clear: policies that restrict access to skilled Indian health professionals would impose measurable costs on patient care and public service capacity.

Additionally, the Home Office data reveal that Indian nationals ranked seventh among nationalities claiming asylum in the past year. This figure, while modest relative to Indian work and study flows, underlines the diversity of migration motivations and the importance of maintaining robust, rights-based processing mechanisms alongside skills-led routes, a point consistent with the ethical recruitment principles advanced in Section 3.

- **The fourth-wave pipeline is structurally intact.** Indian nationals continue to self-select into skilled, sponsored, and study routes at scale, providing the UK with a resilient and high-quality talent supply. The priority task remains conversion speed translating the study and temporary worker cohorts into long-term, productivity-critical employment through the credential fast-track and regional consortium mechanisms recommended in this White Paper.
- **Healthcare dependency demands proactive management.** The concentration of Indian nationals in health and care worker extensions (over 100,000 in a single year) confirms that the NHS's operational resilience is substantially contingent on this corridor. The 10-year plan's ambition to reduce overseas recruitment to under 10% by 2035 must be grounded in an honest assessment of domestic training capacity and the timelines required to build it, lest a rapid restriction of skilled Indian health worker access compromise care delivery in the interim.
- **The Graduate Route requires careful stewardship.** Although overall Graduate Route extension grants fell by 6 per cent as family dependant restrictions took effect, Indian nationals still topped this category with 90,153 extensions. This figure represents a significant post-study labour market contribution. University-employer-NHS trust consortia, as proposed in Section 3, would provide the structured placement mechanisms needed to direct this cohort toward shortage roles in regions where demand is most acute.

The Indian diaspora remains the defining feature of the UK's fourth migration wave, and the data confirm that the debate must move, as this paper has argued throughout, beyond the simplistic framing of migration as a burden or a boon. The evidence points unambiguously toward a smarter, skills- and needs-based approach: one that turns India-linked talent into deployable capacity, upholds ethical standards of recruitment and employment, and delivers measurable gains in health, technology, and regional economic development across the United Kingdom.

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