CHAPTER 1- COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY ABOUT MIGRATION

INTRODUCTION

Few areas of public policy are subject to greater misrepresentation in public and political discourse, yet more influenced by public opinion, than international migration. The understanding of contemporary migration has been considerably advanced by theoretical work based on neoclassical economics, new household economies, dual labour market theory, network theory, world systems theory, cumulative causation and more recent developments in transnationalism theory (Massey et al., 1993, 1998; Vertovec, 2001). There is also a growing body of empirical research relating to migration. Arguably, however, neither theory nor research has had as much impact on policy formulation as political discourse, media reports and public opinion on the nature, purpose and socio-economic impact of migration.

The background to the debates is a global migration landscape that is likely to increase in scale and complexity due to growing demographic disparities, new global and political dynamics, technological revolutions and social networks. In many parts of the world, this is already happening. Long-term demographic, social, environmental, political and economic trends have had – and will continue to have – a considerable impact on the scale and patterns of migratory movements.

These migratory flows often have profound impacts on the socio-economic and ethnic composition of societies, resulting in new policy challenges related to the successful integration of migrants into the host society, how they are perceived in their countries of origin and, more broadly, the way migration is experienced by the community at large. With nearly all countries exposed to migration in some way, societies are realizing that the choice they are facing is not whether to manage change, but how to manage it. Coming to terms with a changing and diverse society means addressing fundamental questions about the nature and fabric of a society, but equally very practical considerations regarding the design, organization and functioning of public institutions, policies and regulations in order to balance the economic and social opportunities and costs arising from migration.

In this context, the image of migrants in their home and host societies is of fundamental importance. While there is growing recognition by some that migrants can build cross-border social capital, that increasing cultural diversity can provide impetus for the stimulation of entrepreneurship, and that culturally diverse workforces are among the most profitable, the overall perception of migrants in many societies tends to be negative. There is often a fine

line between realistic and honest debate about challenges stemming from migration and politicized stereotyping and scapegoating. Part of the reason for such negative perceptions is that migratory flows are more visible and more diverse than ever before, generating questions that, if left unanswered, result in misinformation and misperception. It is clear that migrants in general, as well as persons of certain nationalities and persons belonging to certain ethnic groups, are frequently stigmatized in destination countries. Stigmatization is not limited to migrants abroad, however; it also exists in countries of origin, fuelled by the idea that migrants have abandoned their country or by the unrealistic hopes and expectations of the migrants' families and communities of origin.

Distorted communication about migration can trigger a vicious cycle that leads to misinformation being perpetuated through government policy, the mass media, the public at large and vice versa, which can, in turn, skew discourse at all levels. Policies and political discourse play a major role in shaping the image of migrants in host societies. One of the biggest challenges in this regard is what and how governments communicate about migrants and migration policy to the wider public. Informing and educating the public may be the single most important policy tool in all societies grappling with migration, since managing migration also involves managing how migrants are perceived in society.

The first part of this chapter analyses the findings related to the range of public perceptions and attitudes regarding migration globally and the extent to which they shape public opinion and, in turn, influence policy. It then considers the context in which these are shaped and the role of media in both influencing and communicating these opinions. Examples of good practice among governments, civil society and the media are also included here. Finally, there is a discussion of how key migration issues can be more effectively communicated, thereby generating better policymaking and more effective engagement with migrants themselves.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT MIGRATION

There are numerous studies of public opinion about migration and migrants, most of them focusing on destination countries. However, there is little systematic study of attitudes concerning emigration and emigrants in countries of origin, despite the increasing focus on the potential benefits that emigration can deliver to them (United Nations, 2006; World Bank, 2006; GCIM, 2005). This chapter covers both aspects, and the material examined ranges from small-scale qualitative studies to regional, national and international comparative surveys. However, the quality of research on public attitudes about migration is very uneven.

There is a heavy reliance on opinion polls or surveys in public attitudes research. It is important to recognize, however, that these methodologies have been criticised in terms of their technical application and the way in which their results are interpreted. Interpreting survey results as a reflection of public opinion can be problematic in several ways.[1] On the one hand, it assumes that individuals have the ability to form an opinion on any given subject and, therefore, the importance of non-responses within the survey sample is often ignored. On the other hand, aggregating individual survey responses as representative of public opinion, although not based on a set of commonly understood criteria, may be misleading by assuming consensus (OECD, 2010).

In some country contexts, public opinion research is not subject to the same level of scrutiny as other research areas – for example, an assessment of studies of immigration and public opinion in Australia found that, due to a lack of a research culture in this area, "Opinion polls become the plaything of the media; reporters are required to generate provocative headlines" (Markus, 2011). Furthermore, the same assessment found several examples of Australian opinion surveys where the questions asked were partial or leading respondents towards a particular response. They included examples of surveys that led respondents towards positive or negative answers depending on how questions were worded, where they were placed within a survey, and the survey sample, methodology and administration. As a result, what may be considered to be the majority opinion on a range of issues is often vague and even inconsistent, since "a survey respondent may typically support both assimilation and multiculturalism, favour cultural diversity and indicate concern over the division [that] it provides" (ibid.). It is equally telling in the same study that an analysis of the media found a consistent pattern of sensationalist reporting of these flawed survey findings.

Another factor influencing the vagueness of opinion poll findings is the lack of a common understanding of what is meant by 'migrants' or 'migration'. In all countries there are many different types of migrants, yet many surveys fail to define which groups of migrants are being assessed. Respondents may have different ideas about what the term 'migrant' means and they may also have different attitudes towards different categories of migrants. In many cases, the complexity of these attitudes is not captured in the surveys.

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[1] In addition to the challenges discussed in this section, it is worth mentioning that the majority of studies do not specify the composition of the sample used. Depending on the scope of the study, the sample might include migrants themselves as respondents, possibly skewing the results in one direction or another.

Surveys and opinion polls relating to migration can, therefore, be part of the problem if their methodologies are questionable. When analysed with due regard to contextual factors, opinion polls and surveys can provide valuable insights, as the following sections demonstrate. However, careful and critical scrutiny of the sources of opinion is a basic requirement for an informed and fair discussion of migration issues at local, national and international levels. Textbox 1 presents a list of the types of questions that analysts of opinion polls on migration could use when interpreting the results of such polls.

Textbox 1: Key questions to ask when analysing opinion polls on migration

- Is the methodology used robust and sound?
- Does the poll clearly define the terms migrant and/or migration?
- Is the survey representative of the total population?
- Do the questions lead respondents towards particular answers?
- How were non-responses dealt with in the survey?
- Do the questions capture the full complexity of attitudes or force respondent into dichotomies?
- Was the timing of the survey such that it could have been influenced by a single event?

Public opinion about immigration and the factors influencing it

It is too crude and simplistic to limit our understanding of public opinion to headline banners.
*(Kleemans and Klugman, 2009: 19)*

Popular views on migration as reflected by public opinion polls are often negative and there are claims that they have become even more so in recent years. What is certain, however, is that public opinion about migration varies between and within countries, and over time. There are patterns of difference between different subgroups of the population within countries, which can also reflect external intervening factors or issues. In this respect, it is often misleading to speak of a single public opinion when there is considerable variation in opinions and in their intensity. A more nuanced understanding of attitudes towards migration requires an appreciation of those variations and volatilities. This section explores some of the more consistent factors influencing public opinion and patterns of difference between groups in terms of migration attitudes.

Real/perceived/preferred immigration levels and migrant status

Actual increases in migration flows or, more accurately, the extent to which perceived migration levels are considered to exceed "acceptable levels" often have a negative impact on public opinion. Some also attribute general growing public anxiety and negativity about migration not only to migrant flow increases but to the pace at which they occur (Papademetriou and Heuser, 2009). Regardless of the level or pace of migration, opinion is further influenced by the formal immigration status of those who move – that is, whether they are regular or irregular migrants. Preferred levels of migration are thus not reducible to a simple question of numbers asked in isolation from questions related to the origin and status of the migrants.

Figure 1 shows how the percentage of the population in the United Kingdom voicing concern about immigration has risen in the last decade along with an increase in immigration levels. It has also been reported that in the United Kingdom people have considered migration levels to have been too high since the 1960s. This sentiment has remained fairly constant, although the actual levels of migration have fluctuated, indicating that what has changed in recent years is the salience of migration issues (Hurrell, 2010).

Figure 1: Public concern about immigration, 1974–2009
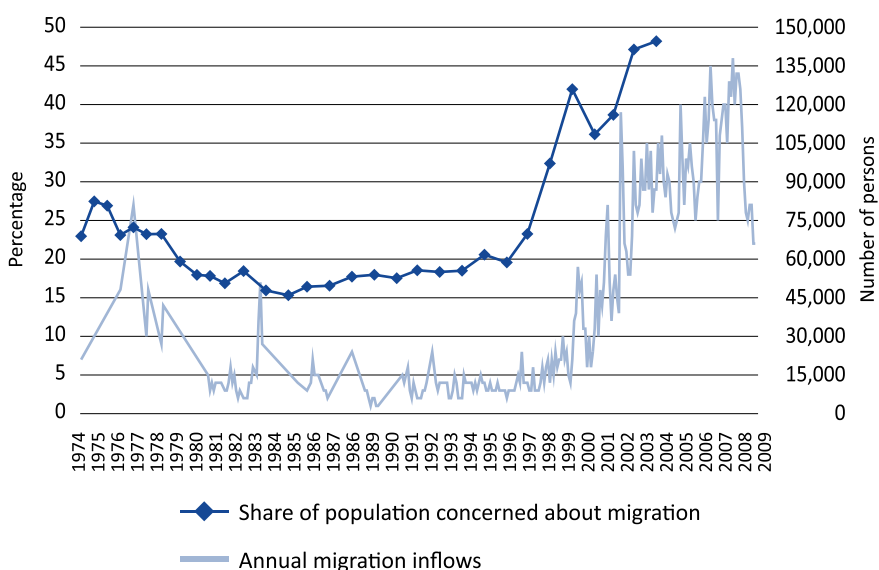
Source: Adapted from Ipsos MORI and the UK Office for National Statistics 1974-2009 (cited in Page, 2009).

From a cross-national perspective, a study by OECD (2010) comparing International Social Survey data between 1996 and 2003 found that there was a fall in public support for immigration in some OECD countries as migration flows increased (see figure 2).

Figure 2:   Support for increased immigration in relation to the rising proportion of immigrants in the populations of certain OECD countries (%), 1995–2003
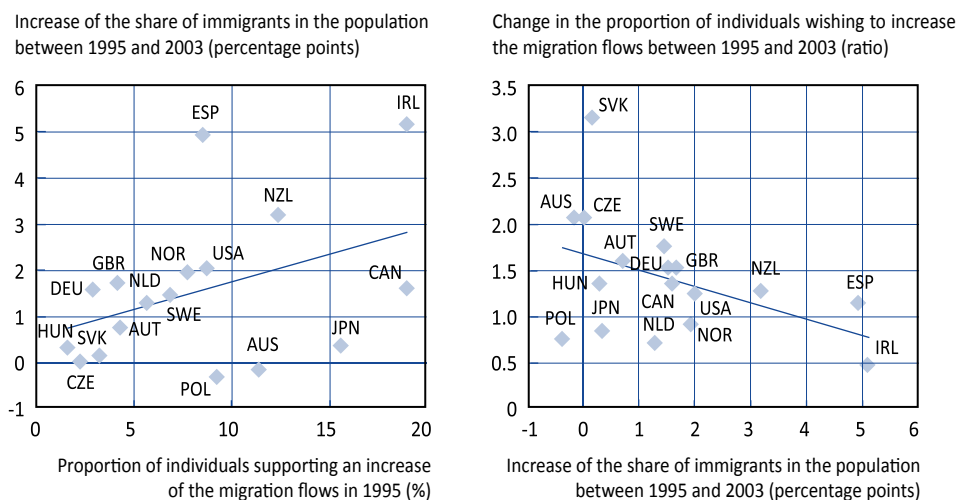
Note: Percentages do not take account of non-responses. Weighted data.
Source: OCDE, 2010: 120 (http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2011-en).

While these findings suggest a fairly clear relationship between numbers and negative attitudes, it is important to remember that people in destination countries often have false notions of the scale and nature of migration and the policies influencing them. A study of eight migrant-receiving countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America) found that, in all of them, respondents were inclined to overestimate significantly the size of the migrant population (Transatlantic Trends, 2010: 6), as indicated in table 1. To test whether knowledge of the facts would alter attitudes, some of the respondents were asked whether there were 'too many', 'a lot but not too many' or 'too few' migrants in their country, with accompanying information about the actual size of the migrant population, while the other respondents were not given the supporting data. The former group was found to be less likely to say there were too many migrants in the country. Inaccurate perceptions of the actual number of migrants are common in destination countries and this is significant, since as pointed out in a Policy Network seminar (Hurrell, 2010), the appropriate scale of immigration is the "basic fault line in the immigration debate".

Table 1: Perceived and actual percentage of the population made up of migrants, in four transatlantic countries, 2010

Country	Perceived	Actual
Italy	25	7
Spain	21	14
United States of America	39	14
Canada	39	20

Source: Transatlantic Trends, 2010: 6.

In the United States of America, there have been consistent indications that a majority of Americans favour a decrease in the level of migration or maintenance of the current level. The Gallup Polls, which feature some of the longest time series and are the most utilized, have been surveying immigration issues since the 1960s.[2] The polls generally show that a small majority (58% in 2001, 51% in 2006 and 50% in 2009) think that migration should be decreased. Interestingly, Gallup Polls show that, since 2001, immigration has been considered by the majority (58% in 2003, 67% in 2006 and 57% in 2010) to be a good thing for the country. In the 2006 and 2008 surveys, a strong majority of respondents (74% and 79%, respectively) also believed that illegal (irregular) immigrants[3] did not take jobs away from Americans, since they took low-paying jobs that Americans didn't want. Surveys by Gallup indicate a more positive public opinion on immigration and immigrants than do other surveys such as the Vision Critical/Angus Reid Public Opinion. In late 2010, this survey found that 57 per cent believed immigration had a negative effect in the United States of America, 39 per cent wanted to see the number of legal immigrants decrease, and 56 per cent said illegal immigrants were taking jobs away from American workers.

In 2006, the Pew Hispanic Center[4] reviewed a number of polls taken in early 2006 and concluded that the public appeared almost evenly divided on whether immigration overall was good for the country or not. However, Americans were split over preferred levels of legal

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[2] See http://www.gallup.com/poll/1660/ Immigration.aspx
[3] IOM's preferred terminology is regular/irregular migration. However, in order to accurately reflect the wording of the polls, the terms legal and illegal migration may also be used in this document.
[4] See, http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/18.pdf

(regular) immigration; roughly a third favoured keeping legal immigration at its present levels and a third favoured decreasing it. A smaller share favoured increasing legal immigration and most Americans saw illegal immigration as a serious problem.

There are few studies on attitudes to immigrants in developing or newly industrialized countries, but a 2006 national survey of 3,600 Southern African adult citizens carried out by the Southern African Migration Project found that the proportion of those wanting a total ban on immigration increased from 25 per cent in 1999 to 37 per cent in 2006, while 84 per cent felt that South Africa was allowing "too many" foreign nationals into the country (Crush, 2008). Similarly high percentages of respondents in countries such as Malaysia, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela agreed with the proposition that immigration should be further restricted and controled (Pew Research Center, 2007).

It is unclear whether attitudes towards migration become more or less positive as the proportion of migrants within the total population increases and/or they come to be seen as an integral part of the community. In a World Values Survey, 214,628 persons were interviewed in 86 countries and asked if they would object to living next door to a migrant. There are, unsurprisingly, several high-migration countries where the percentages of objections are low (for example, Australia, New Zealand, Spain and Switzerland). However, there are also several countries with significantly high levels of migration where the proportion of the population objecting to a migrant living next door is high, especially in the Middle East and parts of Asia. This may be related to the relative newness of migration in those countries, as well as the specific migration dynamics in those regions. Clearly, however, there is no consistent correlation between the acceptance of migrants and the share of migrants in the national population.

There are, nonetheless, clear indications of differences in opinion towards different types of immigrant flows. For example, according to the OECD, public opinion is generally more favorable towards refugees than other migrants. However, residents of countries accepting large numbers of refugees are more worried about the consequences of migration than other countries (OECD, 2010). Furthermore, there are some variations in attitude, depending on the immigrants' countries of origin.

Economics, jobs, inequality and perceived level of migrant contribution

Attitudes towards migration are strongly influenced by the availability of jobs, according to the World Values Survey referred to in the previous section (Kleemans and Klugman, 2009). In most of the 52 countries surveyed in 2005–2006, while most respondents endorsed restrictions on migration, many linked these restrictions to the availability of jobs. However, several countries of medium-to-high human development (as ranked by the Human Development Index)[5] favoured greater restrictions on migration, regardless of the job vacancy levels (ibid.).

Linkages between attitudes towards immigration and job availability are also evident in Australian time series data. Figure 3 shows that the proportion of Australians indicating that immigration levels are too high closely shadows the unemployment rate over the 1974–2010 period. A significant relationship was found between attitudes about migration and unemployment levels for 34 countries (Kleemans and Klugman, 2009). In Europe, evidence

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[5] See http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/hdi/

also suggests that, during periods of economic downturn, opinion turns against immigration (Kessler and Freeman, 2005).

Figure 3: Correlation between level of unemployment and those believing immigration levels to be too high (%), in Australia, 1974–2010
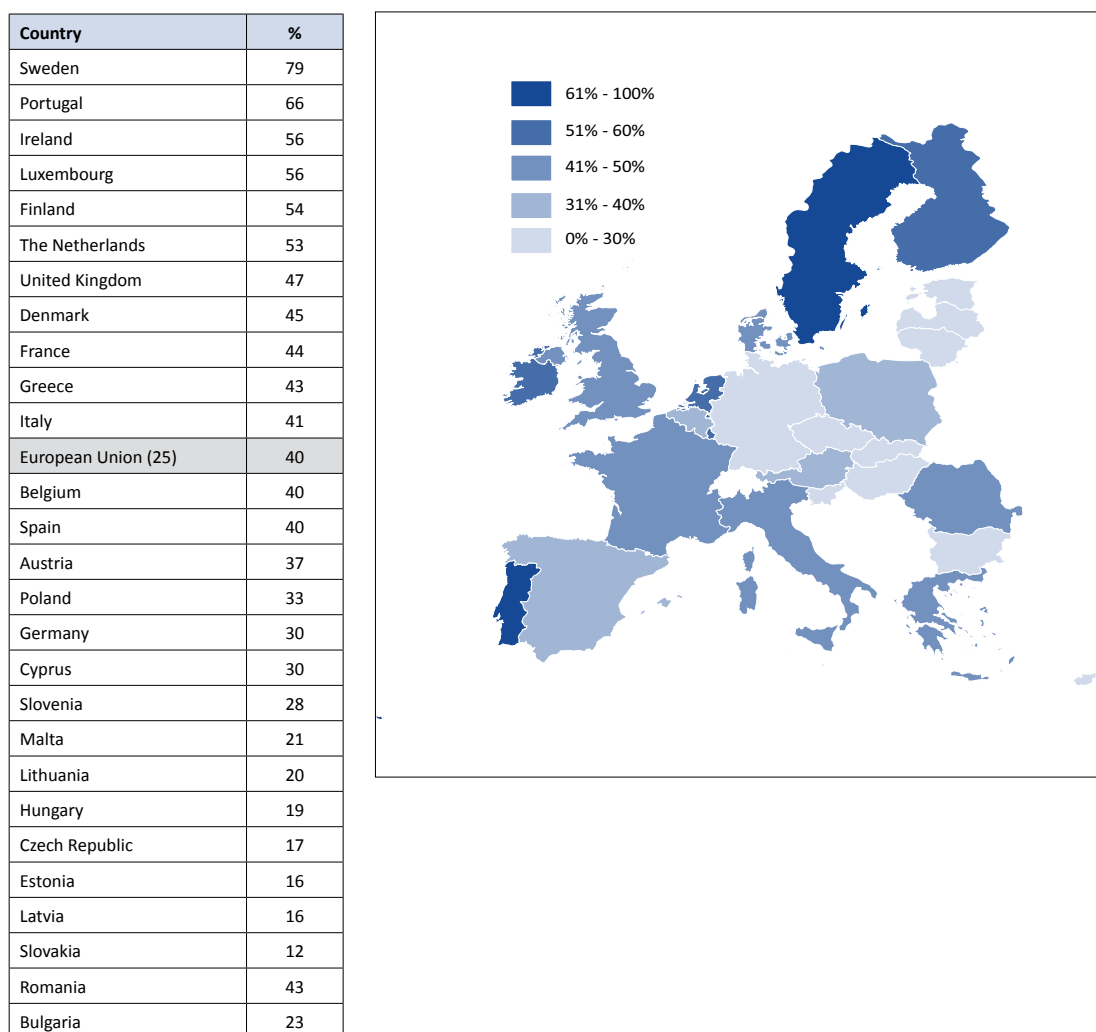

Too many (left axis)   Unemployment trend (right axis)
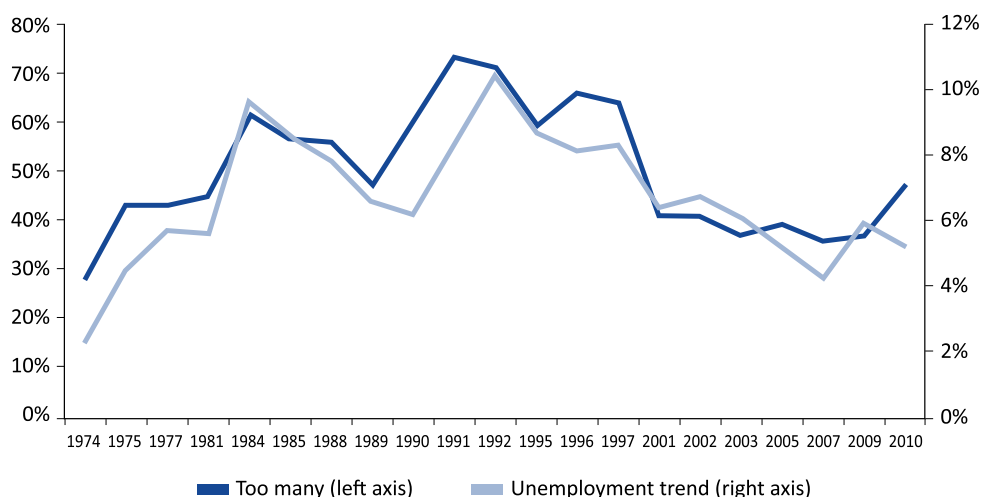
Source: Markus, 2011.

People in countries with greater inequality, as measured by the Gini Coefficient,[6] are more likely to think that locals should be given priority in the job market (Kleemans and Klugman, 2009). Nevertheless, countries with similar levels of inequality can have quite different attitudes towards discrimination. In addition, countries with a higher GDP are "more negative towards letting people in (immigration policy) but more positive once they are in: they believe in equal treatment on the labour market and are less likely to mind living next door to a migrant" (ibid.).

Furthermore, economic or employment concerns reflect not only job availability and inequality but also the perception that migrants take jobs away from nationals or place a strain on a country's resources. Thus, the linkage between migration and employment raises the broader matter of the nature and level of migrants' contributions to the host society. Again, there are wide differences across countries. The Eurobarometer Standard Survey of the European Commission (2006) sought to gauge public opinion across the countries of the European Union with regard to migrant contributions, among other issues. Respondents were asked whether they agreed/disagreed with the statement: immigrants contribute a lot to our country. Figure 4 presents the proportion of respondents agreeing with this statement. On average, across the European Union (EU) 40 per cent of the population agreed, but a small majority (52%) disagreed. However, as illustrated in figure 4, there is considerable variation across countries. Above-average levels of agreement were observed in Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden. On the other hand, there were very low levels of agreement in several Eastern European countries.

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6   For further explanation, see http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=4842 (accessed on 22 August 2011).

Figure 4: Proportion of respondents in European Union countries agreeing that immigrants contribute a lot to the country, 2006

Country	%
Sweden	79
Portugal	66
Ireland	56
Luxembourg	56
Finland	54
The Netherlands	53
United Kingdom	47
Denmark	45
France	44
Greece	43
Italy	41
European Union (25)	40
Belgium	40
Spain	40
Austria	37
Poland	33
Germany	30
Cyprus	30
Slovenia	28
Malta	21
Lithuania	20
Hungary	19
Czech Republic	17
Estonia	16
Latvia	16
Slovakia	12
Romania	43
Bulgaria	23

61% - 100%
51% - 60%
41% - 50%
31% - 40%
0% - 30%

Source: Adapted from the European Commission, 2006.

A survey of life in Qatar found that an overwhelming majority of Qatari nationals value the contribution of foreigners to the development of their country because of their hard work (89%) and their talents (89%) (SESRI, 2010). They also agree that foreigners – expatriates as well as labour migrants – make the country more receptive to new cultures. However, some 75 per cent believe that the number of foreign workers puts a strain on the country's health services (ibid.). An International Labour Organization (ILO) (2010) survey of how migrant workers were perceived in Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand found that the majority of respondents believed that migrant workers were needed to fill labour shortages. An average of 80 per cent in the Republic of Korea and Singapore believed that migrant workers made a net contribution to the economy (40% in Thailand and just under 40% in Malaysia). By contrast, a 2006 survey in South Africa concluded that migrants were largely considered a threat to the socio-economic well-being of the country, with 67 per cent indicating that migrants "use up resources" and 62 per cent claiming that they "take jobs" (Crush, 2008). As will be discussed further in subsequent sections, such perceptions are often rooted in wider socio-economic and cultural contexts and cannot be analysed in isolation.

Age, socio-economic background, ethnicity, geographic location and education level

Attitudes towards migration also vary significantly among subgroups within countries, on the basis of age, socio-economic status and level of education. The relationship between age and attitudes is significant. A typical snapshot of this is provided by the United Kingdom, where it is clear that the older population is the most negative about migration (see table 2). Between 1999 and 2008, however, the largest increase in those indicating that the United Kingdom had too many immigrants was among the younger adult age groups. The table also suggests there is a significant social class differential, with the skilled working class being the most negative.

Table 2: Percentage who agreed that the United Kingdom had too many immigrants, 1999 and 2008

Age	1999	2008	% Change
15-29	44	67	+23
30-49	51	67	+16
50-64	64	71	+7
65+	69	78	+9
Social Class	**1999**	**2008**	**% Change**
Upper middle class	48	63	+15
Skilled working class (C1)	47	70	+23
Skilled working class (C2)	60	75	+15
Unskilled working class and those dependent on state pensions	65	74	+9

Source: Ipsos MORI, June 1997–June 2008, cited in Page, 2009.
Note: Skilled working class (C1) refers to those engaged in supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional work. Skilled working class (C2), as per the classification of social grades in the United Kingdom, includes households wherein the main breadwinner does skilled manual work that requires an apprenticeship or training, such as plumbing or car mechanics.

In Australia and Germany similar trends are noted, though the change in opinion among younger age groups over time was not observed in the studies reviewed. In a survey carried out in Germany, the more favourable view of migrants was found to be among 16–24-year-olds. This could be due to reported higher levels of contact with migrants, including having migrant friends and acquaintances. Some 65 per cent of young people felt this way, as opposed to 32 per cent of those aged 60 or older (Abah, 2009). In Australia, negative views towards migrants are most likely to be held by persons who are over the age of 65; have no post-school qualifications, trade or diploma-level qualifications; describe their financial circumstances as "struggling to pay the bills" or "poor"; have a profession as a machinery operator, driver or labourer; indicate a religious affiliation, but attend religious services infrequently; and are widowed or divorced (Markus, 2010).

Skill level and geographic location were also significant influencing factors in the OECD's analysis of European Social Survey and International Social Survey data, which found that least skilled workers were most inclined to favour restrictive policies and those from rural areas were more likely to feel that migration had negative impacts (2010). In Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand, survey results suggest that those who know and interact with migrant workers, whether professionally or socially, are more favourable towards them (ILO, 2010).

Another common finding in attitude studies is that higher levels of education are associated with more positive attitudes towards migration (Rothon and Heath, 2003; McLaren and Johnson, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2003; European Commission, 2006). However, when education levels, GDP and the Human Development Index intersect, a more nuanced scenario emerges: views about migration are more positive among the highly educated population in rich countries, but less so in poor ones (Kleemans and Klugman, 2009). Furthermore, based on survey analysis by Kleemans and Klugman, it was found that all variables relating to income level and social class are positively associated with attitudes to migration, and that people living in larger cities are more positively disposed towards migration (2009).

In addition, polls and studies consistently show that those with migrant backgrounds are most likely to be in favour of migration (Pew Research Center, 2006; GCIM/IPPR, 2004). However, there is some variance between foreign-born migrants and second-generation migrants born in-country, as opinions of the latter may shift closer to that of the native population.

The importance of the time differential

Research has consistently shown that perceptions, attitudes and opinions about migration and migrants do shift over time. While some attitudes in some groups are deeply entrenched and intransigent, overall public opinion can and does change, which emphasizes the importance of providing balanced and sound information to the general public. This is also encouraging for those who seek to break down the misinformation, bias and intolerance that characterize some of the public discourse on migration.

Several studies demonstrate this tendency towards a change in attitude. Figure 5, for example, shows how the perception of immigration in Germany changed over the 1984–2008 period. Abah suggests that "While sentiments against migrants have been strong at times … a process of familiarization has taken place with a growing acceptance of immigrants among the general public" (2009: 31). A similar trend in the acceptance of migration over an extended period was seen in Australia and the United States of America, as the number of migrants increased (Suro, 2009; Betts, 2005).

Figure 5: Percentage of surveyed persons who think there are too many immigrants living in Germany, 1984–2008
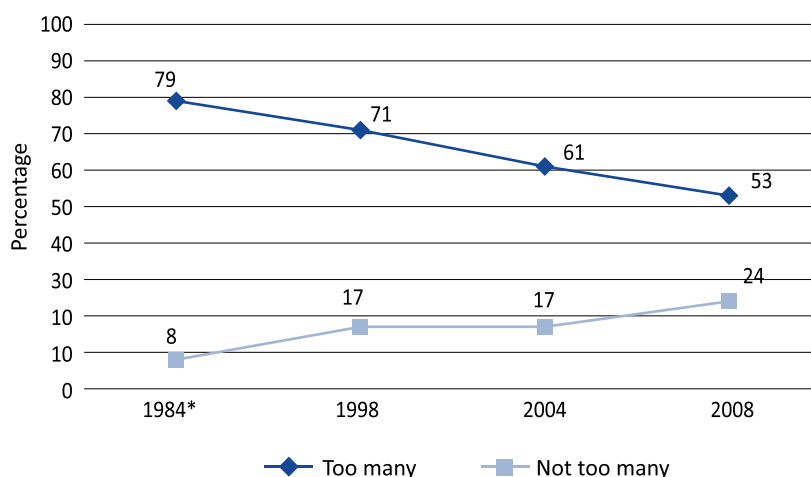
Source: Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, cited in Abah, 2009.
Note: Data refer to August 1984, June 1998, December 2004 and March 2008.
   *Data for 1984 are for West Germany only.

This pattern of increasing acceptance over time, however, is by no means consistent and can be influenced by various other intervening factors. In the United Kingdom, for example, public concerns about immigration reached unprecedented levels in the last decade, peaking in 2008. These concerns only diminished when they were superseded by economic concerns due to the global financial crisis (Page, 2009).

The volatility of opinion is further illustrated by the Australian case. As Markus (2011: 6) points out, Australia (along with Canada) ranks among the countries most receptive to immigration. Markus illustrates this with the data shown in table 3, drawn from the International Social Survey Program. This indicates that, in 2003, Australia was second only to Canada (68%), with 61 per cent of respondents indicating that they wanted the number of immigrants coming to the country to increase or stay the same. This compares with 44 per cent in the United States of America, 30 per cent in Germany, 22 per cent in the United Kingdom and 18 per cent in the Russian Federation. However, Markus (2011: 8) uses data from a number of polls (including those undertaken for the Scanlon Foundation) to show considerable volatility in the proportion of a population regarding immigration intake to be about right or too low. Table 4 shows that this rose from 28 per cent in 1997, to 57 per cent in 2003, and back to 46 per cent in 2010.

Table 3: Attitudes to immigration intake (% of respondents), selected countries, 2003

Number of immigrants coming to country				
	Increase	Remain the same	Increase & remain the same	Decrease
Canada	29	39	68	32
Australia	23	38	61	39
Spain	10	39	49	52
Denmark	10	39	49	51
United States of America	11	32	44	56
Portugal	3	41	44	56
New Zealand	16	28	43	57
Sweden	12	30	42	58
Ireland	9	32	41	59
Austria	7	32	39	61
France	8	26	34	66
Hungary	2	29	31	69
Germany – West	5	24	30	70
Netherlands	4	26	30	70
Norway	7	22	29	71
United Kingdom	6	16	22	78
Russian Federation	4	13	18	83

Source: ISSP Research Group, 2003, cited in Markus, 2011: 7.
Note: The Australian survey was completed by 2,183 respondents, from 27 August to 24 December 2003. The question employed a five-point response frame: Do you think the number of immigrants to [COUNTRY] nowadays should be increased a lot; increased a little; remain the same; reduced a little; reduced a lot? Subtotals may vary by +/-1%, due to rounding (ZA, 2005, cited in Markus, 2011).

Table 4: Public opinion about immigration levels in Australia (%), selected years

Year	Too high	About right / too low
1996	62	32
1997	64	28
2001	41	54
2002	41	54
2003	37	57
2005	39	56
2007	36	53
2009	37	55
2010	47	46

Source: Markus, 2011: 8.

PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT EMIGRATION AND RETURN MIGRATION

Most analyses of attitudes towards international migration and migrants have focused on the destination end of the process and, thus, upon immigration. However, migration also has profound impacts on sending countries and their populations. Emigration has become an issue of increasing significance, not only because of its increasing scale but also because of the increasing evidence of its impact on development in recent years (World Bank, 2006). Therefore, as with immigration, attitudes and perceptions about emigrants can play a role in shaping policy and/or vice versa. However, unlike with immigration, relatively little empirical research on public opinion about emigration has been undertaken. This is particularly the case in developing countries, which have become important sources of migrants to high-income economies as well as to other developing countries. Some qualitative and smaller-scale survey work is available, but with little coverage of return migration. This is changing, as return is increasingly recognized as a core component of the migration cycle.

The Pew Global Attitudes Survey conducted in 44 countries in 2002[7] found that emigration was considered by a significant percentage of the population to be a "very big" problem in a number of countries, especially in Latin America (Honduras (63%), Argentina (58%), Guatemala (53%) and Mexico (52%)). Concerns over emigration were also recorded in Bulgaria (58%) and South Africa (52%). However, the way emigrants and return migrants are perceived by the public or the State ranges from negative sentiments towards home-country abandonment, to the attribution of national hero status to those abroad. Furthermore, opinions seem to also be shaped by issues such as the length of the stay abroad, the impact on families or the community left behind, and the prevailing economic situation of the home country.

In Mexico, the Pew Research Center interviewed 1,000 adults in 2009 and found that, while a majority of Mexicans (62%) said that they would not move to the United States of America if they could, a sizeable minority (33%) would do so. Among those who would move, 55 per cent (representing 18% of the total sample) said they would be inclined to do so without authorization. About half of the respondents (48%) said that it was bad for Mexico to have so many of its citizens living in the United States of America and 42 per cent said it was good for Mexico. Some 81 per cent said it was a big problem that people left Mexico for jobs in other countries. Mixed views about emigration were also reported in a small-scale study of four local provinces in Viet Nam, although the majority view was positive. Quantitative and qualitative studies revealed that most people, as well as the local authorities at all levels, support labour migration. A majority of respondents think that migration is good not only for their family but also for the community. About 11 per cent of respondents do not support migration, with the highest rate of opposition (16%) registered among 36–45-year-olds. More women (13%) are opposed to migration than men (7%) (Yen et al., 2010).

Similarly mixed opinions about emigration exist in northern Ghana, influenced largely by the different types of migration, whether seasonal/temporary or longer-term/

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[7] See http://pewglobal.org/files/pdf/165.pdf

permanent. As part of a study of emigration in the region, interviews were carried out with 204 rural household heads who were asked to express their opinion about the consequences of seasonal, long-term and return migration. Their responses indicated a differentiated opinion, depending on the type of migration. For instance, almost all respondents were positive about the consequences of seasonal labour migration – particularly its impact on food security and as a way to access goods. However, in the case of long-term migration, the responses were more ambivalent. On the one hand, it was felt that long-term emigration reduced the pressure on farmland and that living standards could be improved for some. On the other hand, it was further felt that many migrants were unable to achieve their economic goals upon migrating or they lost their ties with their home community (van der Geest, 2010).

In Guatemala, public opinion about emigration reflects the economic circumstances of the country, with migration generally seen as a solution rather than a problem. According to the Guatemalan CID Gallup[8] polling agency, four out of five Guatemalans know someone who emigrated to the United States of America in search of work (cited in Gilbert and Bauder, 2005).

By contrast, a study conduced by Soruco et al. (2008) in the Cuenca region of Ecuador explores the determinants of negative prevailing views on emigration in this part of the country. The author identifies three distinct reasons why emigration is viewed unfavourably for the region (Cuenca), for the emigrants themselves, and especially for their families: a) emigrants are considered to be irrational, failing to use their remittances in productive and sustainable activities and therefore failing to contribute to the national economy; b) emigrants are viewed as irresponsible because they abandon their families; and c) emigrants' children are considered to do worse in school compared to non-emigrant children, as they are not integrated into society because they are expected to leave the country as their parents did (Soruco et al., 2008). In terms of socio-economic grouping, discriminatory perceptions are more likely among urban, high-income, well-educated, married, and older people (ibid.).

Studies carried out in Senegal seem to indicate a very different scenario. In Senegalese popular discourse, the emigrant is often regarded as a symbol of success, and popular culture portrays migrants as "gold mines" (Riccio, 2005, cited in Fall et al., 2010), as well as positive role models for youth. Regional variations do exist, however, and young people in Dakar, for example, are more interested in Western than other African destinations. However, socio-economic status also plays a role, with France as a destination among the educated elites. Those from rural areas tend to migrate to Spain and Italy, often after having migrated to Dakar first (Fall et al., 2010).

Positive views on emigration also exist in developed countries of origin, such as Australia. A poll of 1,000 Australians taken to gauge attitudes towards expatriates and the diaspora indicated that there is generally a positive attitude towards Australians moving overseas, as seen in Figure 6 (Fullilove and Flutter, 2004). Similarly, Australians are positive about the existence of a sizeable community of Australians offshore. It was found that younger people were generally more positive than older respondents.

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[8] Consultoría Interdisciplinaria en Desarrollo (CID) [Interdisciplinary Development Consultants].

Figure 6: Australian attitudes towards expatriates (% of respondents)
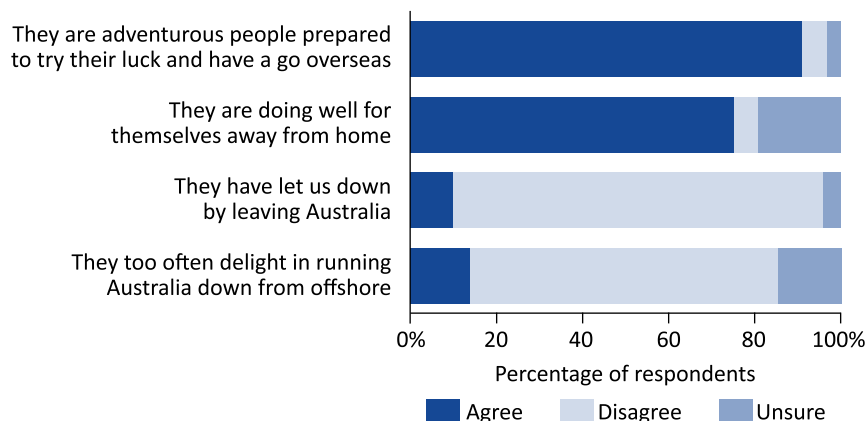
Source: Adapted from Fullilove and Flutter, Lowy Institute 2004: 39.

Return migration

Return migration is perhaps the aspect of the migration cycle that has received the least attention, possibly because most research resources are located in highly developed countries, while most returnees go back to developing countries. This is all the more regrettable because perceptions about the return process and attitudes towards return have a significant impact on the experience of the returning migrant and on his/her receiving community. A better understanding of the values – positive or negative – attached to returning migrants would be a first step towards devising effective policies and communication strategies on return.

As a general rule, returning migrants who are seen to have achieved financial success abroad are viewed favourably and can even acquire role-model status. On the other hand, those who return home due to an aborted attempt at gaining employment and residence abroad can be made to feel that they have let down family and friends. Perceptions are nuanced further, depending on whether the return was voluntary or involuntary.

The assessments are often mixed. In the case of Senegalese migrants, as mentioned previously, return to the country of origin is often seen as desirable, and the return of successful migrants displaying material gains has a positive impact on how emigration is perceived. On the other hand, returnees may face suspicion about how their money was earned abroad and how it is spent, in addition to being criticized for behaviours and attitudes that they may have developed while away – for instance, "behaving like Europeans" (Fall et al., 2010).

Ambivalence towards returnees can also result from the unfulfilled economic expectations of family and friends, in addition to concerns over their "Westernization". For example, in a survey of Afghan returnees, the prevalent responses centred on economic loss, failure of the migration experience and even suggestions that, by having been abroad, the migrants lost their religious beliefs (de Bree, 2008). Perhaps one of the most striking findings of that same survey was that many returning migrants found their return traumatic. The majority of them had been forcibly returned, which generated a sense of shame associated with failure, and 75 per cent of the survey respondents stated that the experience of migrating and returning had affected their life in a negative way (ibid.).

Similar findings were also reported in an IOM study in the South Caucusues, where returning migrants experienced stress or deteriorated health associated with the failure to improve the socio-economic conditions of their families. However, for 18 per cent, family relations actually improved, largely due to the happiness of being reunited with their families and satisfaction with their socio-economic progress. For the remainder, their temporary stay abroad and their return home did not change their relationship with family members in any way. Around two-thirds of the respondents reported receiving assistance from their family, especially in terms of making the returnees feel at ease (IOM, 2002).

With regard to returning victims of human trafficking, perceptions are similarly mixed due to a lack of understanding of human trafficking or the resulting sense of shame or stigma associated with victims among their families or in the wider community. In a study carried out in Viet Nam, many of the victims experienced suspicion, stigma and discrimination from their family, neighbours and community. Results of the study showed that the discrimination was stronger in rural areas than in urban areas. Some people expressed a "blame the victim" attitude, based on the misperception that the trafficked person's circumstances were the consequence of an indulgent lifestyle and greed. Additional negative perceptions were based on the assumption that, in the case of trafficked women, they may have worked as prostitutes (Yen et al., 2010).

PUBLIC OPINION: PUTTING SURVEY FINDINGS INTO CONTEXT

As indicated in previous sections, survey questions relating to migrants and migration need to be carefully worded and defined, as they strongly influence results. Furthermore, public opinion about migration can be volatile and sensitive to a whole range of externalities, including economic cycles, rates of unemployment, types of migration, or political and social concerns of the moment. What is certain, however, is that it has the potential to influence policy and policymakers. As subsequent sections highlight, the public opinion–policy–media feedback loop is strong. Nonetheless, it is never easy to make direct causal links between media coverage and policy trends. For this reason, it is important to consistently examine issues arising from opinion polls and to place them in the wider political, social and economic context in which they are formed, before addressing additional actors, such as the media.

The broader global picture

It is helpful to consider the broader global picture regarding migration, as was attempted with the 2002 Pew Global Attitudes Survey. Interestingly, this survey found that immigration and emigration were not seen as the principal national problem in any of the 44 countries surveyed. Nevertheless, a high percentage of people said that immigration was a "very big" problem in their country; for instance, 63 per cent in South Africa, 61 per cent in Lebanon, 59 per cent in Honduras and 55 per cent in Italy considered this to be the case. Emigration is also seen as a 'very big' problem in a number of countries as referred to earlier.

Although, in most people's minds, immigration does not rival other issues as a major national problem, immigrants and minority groups are generally seen as having a bad influence on the way things are going in most countries. According to the Pew Survey, only in Canada does a strong majority of the population (77%) have a positive view of immigrants. Among other major industrialized countries, there is greatest support for immigrants in the United States of America (49%). Nevertheless, a large minority (43%) believes immigrants are bad for the country. Immigrants are particularly unpopular across Europe. In every European country except Bulgaria, immigrants are seen as having a bad influence on the country. In Western Europe, strong negative sentiments towards immigrants were registered in Germany and Italy (60% and 67%, respectively). Negative sentiment is even higher in Eastern Europe, where strong majorities in the Czech Republic (79%) and Slovak Republic (69%) take a dim view of immigration, as do the majority of Russians (59%).

A later survey carried out by Pew in 2007[9] found that, with the exception of Japan, the Republic of Korea and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, majorities in the 47 countries surveyed said their countries should further restrict immigration – very much in line with earlier reported findings that most people would like to see migration levels decreased.[10] Yet a United Nations survey (see table 5), which expresses the views of governments rather than the community

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[9] See http://pewglobal.org/files/pdf/258.pdf
[10] The survey further revealed that 94 per cent of the population in Côte d'Ivoire and almost as many in South Africa, Indonesia and Malaysia (89%) agree to restricting immigration. The majority of Americans (75%) and Canadians (62%) also say that there should be more restrictions on people entering their countries than there are today. These concerns are shared by Latin American populations: about three quarters of Venezuelans (77%), Chileans (74%) and Bolivians (73%) agree that their countries should further restrict and control immigration, as do the majority of Brazilians (72%), Mexicans (71%) and Argentines (68%) and just over half of Peruvians (51%). Among European populations, Italians expressed the most concern about the levels of immigration to their country; 87 per cent agreed that their country should further restrict and control the entry of people. This sentiment was shared by approximately three quarters of the population in Spain (77%), the United Kingdom (75%), the Czech Republic (75%) and the Russian Federation (72%), and by 68 per cent in France, 66 per cent in Germany, 64 per cent in Slovakia and 63 per cent in Ukraine.

(as in the Pew surveys), shows that, between 1996 and 2009, there was a drop in the number of more developed countries who considered immigration to be too high, and an increase in the number who considered it to be too low. Increases in the number of countries who considered migration to be too high occurred only in less developed countries.

Table 5: Government views on the level of immigration, 1976, 1986, 1996 and 2009

A. By level of development							
Number of countries				Percentage			
Year	Too low	Satisfactory	Too high	Total	Too low	Satisfactory	Too high	Total
World								
1976	11	129	10	150	7	86	7	100
1986	6	125	33	164	4	76	20	100
1996	4	148	41	193	2	77	21	100
2009	9	152	34	195	5	78	17	100
More developed regions								
1976	1	27	6	34	3	79	18	100
1986	0	26	8	34	0	76	24	100
1996	1	31	16	48	2	65	33	100
2009	4	41	4	49	8	84	8	100
Less developed regions								
1976	10	102	4	116	9	88	3	100
1986	6	99	25	130	5	76	19	100
1996	3	117	25	145	2	81	17	100
2009	5	111	30	146	3	76	21	100
Least developed countries								
1976	2	39	1	42	5	93	2	100
1986	1	40	7	48	2	83	15	100
1996	0	41	8	49	0	84	16	100
2009	0	41	8	49	0	84	16	100

Source: United Nations, 2010.

What is revealing about such findings is that, although migration may not be considered the top national issue and there may be some variation in the findings, its saliency as an issue of concern is remarkably consistent. This should not be surprising, however, given the cross-cutting nature of migration. Attitudes about migration are rarely, if ever, developed in isolation from adjoining social and economic issues. They are strongly affected by perceived linkages to matters as varied as the condition of the labour market, the perceived pace of cultural change, and even environmental considerations. Yet it is repeatedly treated as an independent issue, which is why it is so important to carefully consider the responses to, and the context of, survey questions.

A closer look at public opinions and the migration narrative

In general, the attitude surveys can loosely be defined as gauging three dimensions: economic, security and socio-cultural. In most countries, the migration debate is framed in the same way. The extent to which one or the other or a combination of all three is taken into account depends significantly on the country's migration narrative and is partly a function of the policy responses provided. However, in recent years in many parts of the world, policy has fallen into a populism trap (Citrin and Sides, 2008), losing sight of what is at the core of the migration-related issues being debated. The politicization of migration issues has created a situation that inevitably leads to misperception, misinformation and unsuccessful policymaking. In this climate, it is all too easy to see migrants as being responsible, whether directly or indirectly, for issues of unemployment, security or social cohesion that are rooted in much broader and much more complex processes of change. It is interesting to note, for example, that the recent Transatlantic study (2010) report suggests that, despite some heightened negativity towards migrants during the ongoing economic crisis, which began in 2008, the priority issue for all countries involved in the study (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America) was not migration.

These deeper concerns relating to, inter alia, job insecurity, housing and education, important as they are, will not be dispelled by simply making migration policies more restrictive. There are several reasons why: when such actions are taken unilaterally, they may send the wrong message – that migration was, indeed, the cause of the perceived problem. Furthermore, such measures are often ineffective, since migration does not simply stop due to restrictions, nor do such policy measures address the situation of migrants already in-country or the public's concern about their presence. Although the adoption of a strongly restrictive approach may temporarily quell public calls for action, it is unlikely to put the broader issues to rest and they will undoubtedly resurface in the medium-to-long term (Hurrell, 2010). A more comprehensive approach to migration management, providing a balance of control measures and opportunities for movement, offers greater promise of success.

The dominant migration narrative and popular understanding of societies and States can remain anchored in particular historical interpretations that do not reflect the reality of contemporary population mobility. Such understanding may ignore or exclude different identities, cultures, languages, religions and national origins. "The promotion or retention of such concepts not only often ignores changing national realities, but risks fanning the flames of exclusionary and xenophobic responses to immigration" (ILO et al., 2001). In political and public discourse, the deliberate association of migration/migrants with criminality, illegality in terms of status, disease, unemployment and other social problems allows for migrants to become scapegoats, thereby marginalizing them, and increasing their vulnerability.

Integration is another important aspect of migration often at the heart of migration debates. Recent political discourse in Europe, Australia and elsewhere has re-ignited debate about the concept of multiculturalism. It is fully understandable that, in a world that is increasingly characterized by social diversity, questions should be raised about the policy model or models most likely to be effective. Concerns about cultural threats and cultural identity cannot be summarily dismissed. It is important, however, to ensure that the discussion be framed appropriately. As the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (2008) has pointed out, "Public debate on integration seems to have shifted from a more technical debate, in which different areas of disadvantage were examined and addressed, to a more general

debate on the cultures and values of different groups and, ultimately, on the inherent worth and mutual compatibility of such cultures and values" (Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe, 2008). What this means is that it is best to focus on the design of effective policies to address the situation, rather than placing the onus of integration solely on migrants, or focusing on lifestyles, religions, values or identities that are perceived to be superior (Spencer, 2011; Castles, 2008; Malik, 2011).

The impact of migration narratives on public opinion is not limited to countries of destination. In several countries of origin, public perceptions have undergone a positive shift, in recognition of the potential benefits of emigration and in light of national economic situations. Some of the most visible ways in which this has been done is through the creation of links with diaspora, through dedicated government ministries or policies, or via specific diaspora programmes. Nonetheless, it must be recognized that these positive perceptions are not unalloyed. They are not infrequently, mitigated by concerns, for instance, over the brain drain or the vulnerability of migrants to exploitation and abuse.

The Philippines offers one of the best-known illustrations of positive discourse towards emigration. The Government of the Philippines has taken a proactive stance in communicating the value of overseas Filipino workers – for example, by referring to them as the country's new heroes and organizing several national events commemorating their work (Asis, 2008). The Government of Senegal has also taken a proactive stance in migration management by creating its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese abroad. Several Arab governments have also recognized that emigration can help alleviate pressure on the domestic labour market. As early as the 1960s and 1970s, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia began actively facilitating the international mobility of their nationals (Fargues, 2006). However, such facilitation is generally of those in lower skilled categories (ibid.).

Understanding public opinion within a specific country context and migration narrative requires an understanding of what drives public opinion and how public policies are interpreted, since these two elements can sometimes be in opposition to each other, while claiming to respond to public demands. The following section takes this one step further, exploring how opinions, political discourse and the media interplay and the impact they have on what is communicated about migration, and how it is communicated.

POLITICS AND THE MEDIA:
ROLE, RESPONSIBILITY AND BALANCE

In addition to being strongly influenced by a population's characteristics and the national context, public opinion about migration/migrants is also shaped by a number of stakeholders, interest groups and societal actors – particularly employers' associations, labour unions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government, political parties and the media.

As migration has increasingly attracted media attention over the past decade, gaining saliency in political debates, it is important to consider the critical role the media play in both influencing and reflecting public opinion. Similarly, in terms of policy, the media have the ability to act as "both an agenda setter and driver on immigration issues, and a mirror reflecting debates going on in public and policy circles" (Papademetriou and Heuser, 2009: 23). Accurate and balanced reporting is therefore a key role and responsibility of the media in partnership with relevant actors, particularly policymakers.

Assessing the content of media coverage of migration:
A reflection and shaping of opinion

Though direct causal links between public opinion and media reporting are not always clear, it is arguable that the media do shape the attitudes of both policymakers and the wider public in several significant ways.

First of all, the media provide information about the phenomenon of migration – sometimes by drawing attention to statistics, trends and analysis, but more often through reportage on migration-related events that are deemed to be of interest – (this is the aspect of the media's role that tends to attract the greatest attention from researchers). Furthermore, the media 'frame' the discussion of a topic. By highlighting certain aspects of migration and not addressing others, by using particular language and certain kinds of rhetorical devices (such as analogies), journalists not only provide people with facts about migration, they also give them a sense of how that information should be interpreted (Chappell and Glennie, 2011). Referring to migration as a 'flood' of people, for example, suggests it may overwhelm. Since the media are selective about what dimension of migration they cover, the extent and nature of their coverage can powerfully shape public opinion. It follows that the media can play a major role in influencing the success or failure of migration policy interventions, by positively or negatively analysing and reflecting on such interventions (Papademetriou and Heuser, 2009).

As various forms of media are often the primary source of information about migrants and migration, particularly for those who have had little or no contact with migrants, the images portrayed can have a far-reaching effect. By deciding what issues to focus on, the media determine whether or not people even think about an issue, while increasing the relevance of some topics in the public mind and diminishing others. Issues that receive more regular coverage often become more salient for the public, helping to shape political and social priorities (Chappell and Glennie, 2011). This means that the extensive coverage of migration by the media, in many countries, makes it a more prominent issue than it might otherwise be in the publics' mind.

In some circumstances, the media have played a part in developing or exacerbating unsubstantiated ideas that migration threatens national sovereignty and national social cohesion, as well as in promoting uninformed stereotypes regarding migrants, while failing to report the positive dimensions. However, it is equally important to recognize that certain media representatives may be willing to report more positive stories but are limited by the inability or reluctance of those most directly involved in the issues (such as NGOs and migrant associations) to engage in dialogue. Textbox 2 shows how the Italian media have tried to educate the public about migration.

Textbox 2: Italian media sensitization campaign

Against a background of sustained negative migration coverage in Italy, IOM joined forces with the advertising agency, Publicis, to launch several projects aimed at sensitizing both the media and the general public to the realities of migration. The campaign provided a picture of migrants that often goes under reported – the migrant as a positive contributor to society. First launched in 2009 and again in 2011, the Typical Migrant in the News Campaign, published in numerous Italian newspapers, features a poster showing an African-born migrant doctor saving the life of an Italian man, but with a stereotypical and ironic negative headline suggesting that, once again, a migrant is the subject of front-page news. Its simple messaging is direct and represents, according to IOM, "the silent majority of immigrants who work hard and contribute to the development of the Italian social and economic system."

Source: http://www.italy.iom.int/

Studies of media coverage of migration have ranged from sophisticated quantitative content analyses of representative cross-sections of the print and electronic media, to more qualitative assessments.[11] These conclude that there seems to be a relationship between media coverage on migration and the extent of public concern about migration. A study of media coverage in the United Kingdom shows that peaks and troughs in the level of public concern about migration appear to coincide with the levels of newspaper coverage of it, as shown in figure 7 (Page, 2009).

A number of studies conclude that the media rarely give a balanced view of migration and its effects. Papademetriou and Heuser (2009: 24) argue that some of the characteristics of media coverage in both Europe and North America obstruct the path to migration policy reform, primarily by emphasizing illegality and the role the migrant plays in the process, thus diminishing the role that government or employers might play. The media also tend to report in dips and waves, over-focusing on a moment of crisis and allowing the loudest, most extreme views to be heard. Since such views are rarely counter-balanced by reporting that portrays migration as the social process that it is (with costs and benefits), it is only natural that public opinion becomes polarized.

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[11] For a comprehensive overview of content-analysis studies of immigration coverage, see the OECD 2010 SOPEMI report.

Figure 7: Impact of media coverage of immigration on public concern, 2000–2006
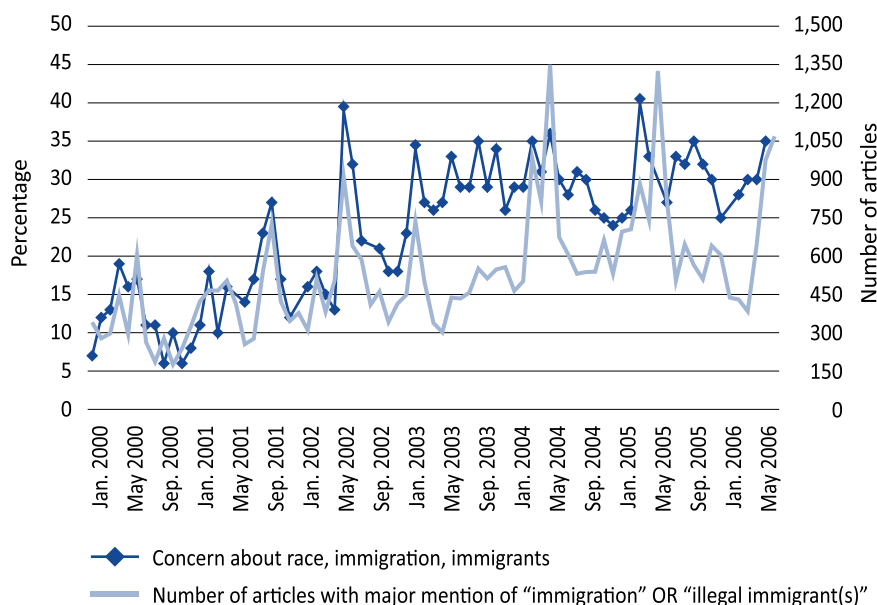
Source: Ipsos MORI 2000–2006, cited in Page, 2009.

Others have focused on the media's role in shaping public opinion and policy – for instance, by seeking to establish a relationship between migration, crime and urban violence, or by blurring the distinction between irregular migrants, regular migrants and even second-generation migrants. A study of media practice in the United States of America revealed that "Deeply ingrained practices in American journalism have produced a narrative that conditions the public to associate immigration with illegality, crisis, controversy and government failure" (Suro, 2009: 186). What is perhaps most striking is what Suro refers to as the "cumulative effect" of reporting, suggesting that, while individual articles or accounts about migration may be correct, the cumulative effect of over- or under-reporting on a particular angle ends up distorting the reality. Coverage of migrants and migrant groups, using blanket terms such as 'migrant', 'Africans', 'Asians', has a similar effect (Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity, 2009).

In summary, much migration-related media coverage, in countries of immigration and emigration, tends towards the following:

- Episodic coverage – surges of coverage due to a particular migration-related event, usually of a negative nature.
- A focus on illegality – often the case, even though any offending migrants might represent a minority of all migrants.
- Exaggeration of the facts – for example, in Australia, asylum-seekers in 2008 numbered 5,020, which was only 1.3 per cent of all asylum-seekers worldwide (UNHCR, 2011: 6) and only a tiny fraction of the net overseas migration gain in 2008–2009 of 315,686 (ABS, 2011: 11). Nonetheless, media coverage of immigration in Australia in 2008 was overwhelmingly focused on the arrival of asylum-seekers in boats on Australia's northern shores.

- Lack of context – in the United States of America, for example, it is claimed that media coverage of migrants rarely considers the central role of the American labour market in determining the size and characteristics of immigrant flows.

Two additional observations deserve mention. First, the nature of the media has changed dramatically over the last two decades, altering the nature of migration-related coverage. Growing commercialization of mass media has, in several instances, led media networks to adopt a more sensationalist approach to issues, including migration, which often serves to reinforce negative perceptions (OECD, 2010). A study in the United Kingdom (Threadgold, 2009) points to the complexity of media coverage of migration with regard to the relationship between media corporations and government and between journalists and political sources. "The policy focus is transmitted to news workers and the stories media organisations produce feed back into policy discourse. Understanding the professional and newsroom cultures in which journalists work – and the commercial rankings and marketing cultures that influence them – is a complicated proposition" (ibid: 226). Furthermore, others maintain that the proliferation of media and the development of new forms of media have fragmented the media landscape. In the United States of America, for example, Suro (2009) claims that impartial journalism is now only one way in which to report on a given issue, and that the changes in the media have resulted in a wider range of often more partisan voices.

Second, although the nature and mechanisms of media reporting may have changed, those doing the reporting have remained relatively constant. Media integration or the inclusion of reporters and journalists of different cultural, religious or ethnic backgrounds is still a challenge, especially in mainstream media outlets. Thus there is both structural and content-related discrimination in the media (Lüken-Klaßen and Heckmann, 2007). Consequently, viewpoints that may resonate more with migrant communities are often excluded from the mainstream media, although they may then find expression in parallel media streams such as ethnic or foreign-language newspapers and specialty programmes on television or radio. Although these forms of media might be seen to further isolate migrants, rather than fostering integration, they can respond directly to the concerns of a given community by reporting on issues often missed in the mainstream media (ibid.). Furthermore, ethnic media often 'translate' mainstream media – both culturally and linguistically – thus creating a heightened level of understanding. NGOs such as New American Media seek to address this issue by connecting ethnic and mainstream media through joint projects and professional development seminars for ethnic media journalists. Other initiatives, such as the EC-funded IOM project Migrants in the Spotlight (see textbox 3) also aim to work with both native and migrant journalists to promote enhanced awareness of migration issues.

Textbox 3: Migrants in the Spotlight

Migrants in the Spotlight, funded primarily by the European Commission, aims to contribute to improved understanding, awareness and reporting on migration issues, third-country nationals, integration and related topics among media and students of journalism, including immigrants themselves, in order to facilitate more effective and accurate reporting on migration issues in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia. Implemented by IOM, this initiative includes conducting a series of 12 trainings for media professionals (including members of the migrant media channels and journalism students) on how to accurately and effectively portray migration issues. An international conference, Promoting Migrant Integration through Media and Intercultural Dialogue, was also held in May 2011 and included the awarding of prizes to young people who entered a writing/documentary competition on migration-integration issues in their respective countries.

Source: http://www.mits-eu.org/index.php/en/home

Policy, media and the evidence base: a not-so-perfect union

Despite the growing body of evidence on the costs and benefits of migration, there appears to be some miscommunication or at the very least, a lack of communication between those producing the evidence and the public. However, since public opinion is not formulated in isolation from political discourse or media reporting, how policymakers and the media choose to use the evidence and interact with the public on migration issues is a crucial factor that must be addressed if migration-related issues are to be resolved in a balanced and rational way.

There are several examples of the dominant public perception regarding the impact of migration or migrants being contradicted by the body of research relating to that issue. One such contradiction relates to the commonly voiced view in destination countries that migrant workers will take jobs away from nationals, although this is not necessarily the case. Migrants are usually complementary to the labour market, filling gaps that might not otherwise be filled (IOM, 2008 and 2010). These could be skill gaps that the local training/education system has been unable to fill, or jobs that locals are unwilling to take. Indeed, exhaustive research on the impacts of immigration in traditional immigration countries has shown that the impact of migration on the local populations, in terms of jobs, is benign and that migration can even result in the creation of new jobs (Wooden et al., 1994).

A second misconception depicts migrants as being an 'economic cost' to the destination country whereas, in fact, they contribute economically in a number of ways. Rapid economic growth, fertility decline and ageing often means that fast-growing economies cannot always meet their own labour market needs. Shortages in the numbers or types of workers becomes a constraint on growth, which migrants can assist in overcoming. Migrants also contribute economically to the destination country, and the services they draw upon are largely offset by the taxes they pay. Indeed, their per capita net contribution to the economy is often greater than that of non-migrants, since the host nation has not had to bear the cost of educating or training the migrant. The host country may not have to bear the cost of old-age dependency either, if the migrant chooses to retire in the country of origin.

Figure 8 provides an example of the type of positive migration-related story that rarely makes the news, despite its striking nature. In this case, immigrants accounted for almost a third of GDP growth in the United States of America between 2000 and 2007.

Figure 8: **GDP growth contribution (%) based on worker ethnicity in the United States of America, 2000–2007**
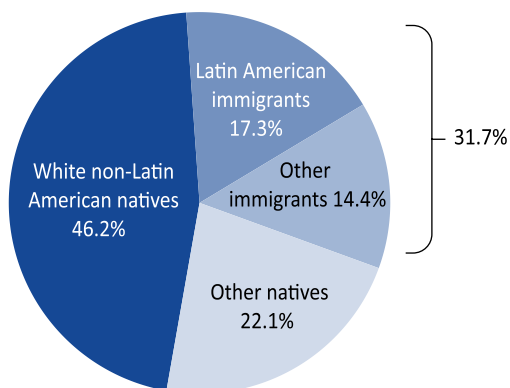
Source: SIMDE, based on US Bureau of Economic Analysis, Gross Domestic Product by Industry Accounts (1995–2007), and US Bureau of Census, Current Population Survey, March Supplement (1995–2007), cited in Puentes et al. (2010: 24).

Similarly, figure 9 shows the relationship between the value of the benefits migrants received from public social services and the amount of taxes paid in the United States of America. This clearly shows that natives get more for their taxes than do migrants.

Figure 9: **Ratio of benefits received from public social services to taxes paid in the United States of America, 2008**
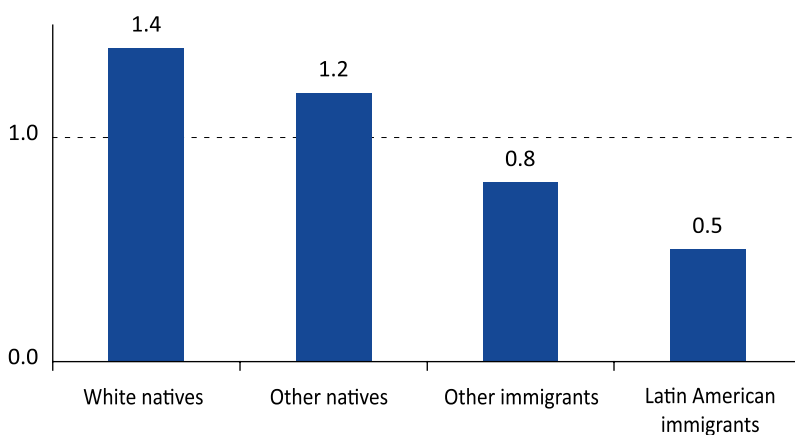
Source: Adapted from US Bureau of Census, Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2008, cited in Puentes et al. (2010: 25).

In origin countries, emphasis is often placed on the negative effects of emigration through the loss of human capital, leadership and skills. While such losses are no doubt of real concern to developing and, more particularly, least developed countries, there is increasing evidence that emigration can have a positive developmental impact on families and communities left behind. The most commonly cited positive impact of migration on development is that of financial remittances sent back home. Migrants' remittances in 2010 were estimated at USD 325 billion (World Bank, 2011), and these remittances are often higher than either overseas development assistance (ODA) and, in net terms, probably greater than net foreign direct investment (FDI).

Why, then, do policymakers and the media appear less than confident when it comes to the evidence base? There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the discourse on migration tends to focus much more on emotional and political issues rather than on facts, which can be quickly subsumed in the heat of debate. It is also the case that some of the evidence is not given much airing. According to Suro (2009), one of the most silent voices in the US media on the migration debate is that of employers. The opinions of employers – key stakeholders in migration matters – are severely underreported, despite a general consensus that the migration and integration experience begins primarily in the workplace (FRA, 2010; US DHS, 2008). Another example of selective communication involves the social, economic and political barriers faced by migrants, which are well researched yet poorly reported on.

Secondly, the main thrust of research in the social sciences has only recently begun to take account of migration as an issue of priority interest. Traditionally, migration has been addressed not as an independent research topic, but as a matter of subsidiary interest, in terms of its linkages to larger national objectives, such as industrialization or nation-building. As Castles (2008) succinctly puts it: "...mainstream social science was always behind the game" on migration. Today, a more accurate understanding of migration in its own right is emerging, but policymakers are still struggling to come to terms with it. There is a flip side to this, and it is the temptation to seek made-to-measure research that is aimed at supporting particular policy objectives (ibid., 2008).

Thirdly, policymakers face a real challenge in communicating to the community, via the media, migration-related facts and figures, as well as the policies that respond to them. This involves more than just the simple transmission of information. Table 6, adapted from Chappell and Glennie (2011), outlines a comprehensive approach to media communication in the field of migration.

Table 6: Top 10 tips for engaging with the media

1.	Hire communications people who know about the media, even if they don't know a lot about migration. Their knowledge of migration can be developed.
2.	Forget about producing promotional or publicity materials for the media. They are not interested in brochures. Whatever you produce for them should have a potential story in it.
3.	Policy briefs are fine for policymakers but they should not be expected to double as resources for the media. Policymakers and the media are usually interested in different angles.
4.	Material provided to the media should be a maximum of four pages long and preferably one page.
5.	Encourage media network-building throughout the organization. The more contacts the organization has with the media, the better.
6.	Maintain an up-to-date list of media contacts, with e-mail addresses and phone numbers.
7.	React quickly; the earliest voices in any debate are likely to be called upon later, if the debate continues.
8.	A good media person spends almost as much time researching potential targets (journalists or strategic partners) and building relationships with them, as they do producing media material.
9.	Think creatively about how to launch your research findings. Do press releases, for example, as well as organizing launches and dissemination events.
10.	Don't rely exclusively on the media; they should only be part of a wider communications strategy.

Source: Chappell and Glennie, 2011.

Fourthly, a migration policy evaluation culture is almost non-existent. Migration is one of the few areas of public policy not systematically evaluated (Arditis and Laczko, 2008), which perpetuates the gap between the evidence base and the drawing of firm conclusions about the policy approaches most likely to be effective. In these cicumstances, it becomes a challenge to communicate new policies to the public with conviction.

Other suggestions as to why migration coverage in the media does not reflect the best available research include: lack of knowledge of migration issues among journalists; reporting negative stories is often easier than reporting positive ones; migration is a complex phenomenon and it is easier and more effective (in terms of selling newspapers) to focus on the negative stories, especially in the tabloids; some reporters consciously present their own views rather than those of the wider public; the media may be selective about what they report to cater to the views of their actual or perceived audience; and the media view may reflect that of the owners of the media outlet or of the political elite who exert pressure on the outlet (Chappell and Glennie, 2011).

Given the above-mentioned factors, simply calling for more evidence is not enough, nor is it the only way to move towards more accurately communicating with the public. This is not to deny the importance of the evidence base. Rather it places the onus on those using it for policy or media reporting to do so more accurately and for the public to demand higher standards. Nor does it mean simply shifting in the other direction towards putting an uncritical, positive 'spin' on reporting of migration issues. What's required is a dialogue that considers in a critical but balanced way the interplay between political discourse, existing policies, evidence-based research and media coverage.

Where is the migrant? Media impact and engagement

Who am I, really? When I run the 800-metre race for the national youth team, I am Norwegian. But when the media run stories about Somalis, people come up to me and ask whether I am a drug dealer and mugger. Then, all of a sudden, I am Somali.

Mohamed Abdi, former member of the Olympic national youth team in athletics, quoted in an interview with Aftenposten (cited in Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity, 2009)

In most debates about public perceptions of migrants and the importance of balanced reporting and informed dialogue, there is often a critical element missing: the migrant. Far too often, in this type of analysis, the migrant takes on the role of the passive actor – one who is spoken of, who is at the centre of a heated debate, yet who remains almost peripheral to the analysis. Just as the public discourse on migration can be shaped and influenced by biased information and one-sided discourse, so too can the image of the migrant be affected. There are two angles of interest to policymakers at this juncture. The first is the public image attached to migrants – whether positive or negative – and how it is constructed. This point has been largely addressed already and, as mentioned earlier, if misperceptions are allowed to go unchecked, they can result in marginalization and stigma of migrants.

But what are the migrants' perceptions of themselves, and what factors might play a role in shaping them? Migration networks or social networks are the most commonly cited resources used by migrants for guidance during the migration decision-making process and upon arrival in the host country. They provide useful information about economic opportunities, or more specific matters such as employment, accommodation or social services. Other information sources, such as television, radio, newspapers and the Internet also play a role, and have an impact on migrants' perceptions and interactions in the host society.

The relationship between migrants and different forms of media can be viewed from several perspectives. Prior to migration, foreign media sources represent an important channel of information for potential migrants, often tending to "reinforce the idea of migration as a trip towards El Dorado" (Braga, 2007). Regardless of whether the information is correct or not, different migrants have different interpretations of what they see and hear, and their interpretations have an impact on how they imagine their future life (ibid.).

In the host country, the mass media also serve as a reference point for incoming migrants, providing sociocultural information and references about the society in which they now live. In many countries, the media is one of the principal means through which a sense of national unity and belonging among the population is created. However, by focusing principally on that sense of national identity, the media may – purposely or otherwise – exclude certain other groups, such as migrants. Studies conducted with migrants reveal that they are very much aware of the stereotyping and negative portrayals of them in the media. This can contribute to a sense of marginalization and a questioning of their sense of belonging. Several studies (Mainsah, 2009; Widyawati, 2005/2006) point to the frustrations that can arise when blanket terminology and stereotypical imagery are applied to all migrants as if they are made up of one homogenous category. They point out that an even greater sense of frustration arises from the disconnect between the typically negative media depictions and the more positive interactions that migrants actually experience in their everyday exchanges with local people.

Beyond the headlines:
Promoting understanding and combating perceptions on the ground

Confronted by the risks inherent in the politicization of migration issues, and the prevalence of negative attitudes towards migrants, governments and other stakeholders have reacted with a wide range of interventions, often through partnerships at the local, grass-roots level. While these initiatives do not appear in the headlines, a rapid analysis indicates that there is no dearth of positive responses. Such initiatives, often broadly grouped under the umbrella of integration programmes, include activities such as awareness-raising, information dissemination, direct assistance to migrants and promotion of intercultural understanding and anti-xenophobia efforts. The channels of communication used are as varied as educational institutions, social and cultural manifestations, and even sporting events. The creation of Harmony Day in Australia in 1999, managed by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), as an occasion for all Australians to celebrate cultural diversity is one such example.[12] At the European Union level, dedicated funds are allocated for integration initiatives as part of the European Commission Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals. In other instances, bodies dedicated to combating discrimination and xenophobia have been created. These include El Instituto Nacional contra la Discriminación, la Xenofobia y el Racismo (INADI) in Argentina[13] and the Observatorio Español del Racismo y la Xenofobia in Spain.[14] Governments in countries of origin have targeted returning migrants, seeking to maximize their contributions back home through the National Reintegration Center for Overseas Foreign Workers in the Philippines[15] or the Paisano programme in Mexico.[16] Ultimately, however, their capacity to shape perceptions and attitudes successfully may well depend on the persistence of these efforts and how they are communicated to the public at large.

One way of fostering more positive interactions and combating negative perceptions among the local people is to convey more accurate messages through alternative channels of communication. For example, Untold Stories: Learning with Digital Stories[17]– a joint IOM/ Cross Czech project – enables foreigners living in the Czech Republic to tell their stories through digital media. These stories are then made available on a public website that allows Czech society to become better acquainted with migrants in their country. Another approach, described in textbox 4, involves using radio 'soap operas' for a similar purpose.

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[12] See: http://www.harmony.gov.au/
[13] See: http://inadi.gob.ar/institucional/
[14] See: http://oberaxe.es/
[15] See: http://www.nrco.dole.gov.ph/About.aspx
[16] See: http://www.paisano.gob.mx/
[17] See: www.iom.hu; www.untoldstories.eu

> **Textbox 4: Education meets entertainment in South America's radio programming**
>
> In 2006, the radio drama Pueblo de Paso was launched with the aim of promoting public awareness, understanding, respect and integration of migrants. Fictional characters and events portrayed everyday interactions between migrants and host societies to provide an entertaining yet informative account of migration. The programme challenged myths and stereotypes of migrant populations, without preaching to audiences. This campaign was broadcast by 184 radio stations in Latin America. It altered the working agenda of NGOs in Nicaragua, inspired local workshops and forums in El Salvador, and helped civil society organizations in Panama garner more attention for migration-related issues. Although there are challenges to be overcome in reaching younger listeners, understanding the programme's effect on audiences and developing pedagogical tools to help share production experiences, this campaign effort is a successful example of cultivating a positive cross-national dialogue on migration.
>
> Source: http://www.cameco.org/files/mediaonthemove-salas.pdf
> Note: Pueblo de Paso was produced by the Centro de Comunicación Voces Nuestras (Our Voices Communication Centre), with the support of the Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (Church Development Services) (EED, Germany), the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands, and the Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica (Latin American Association of Educational Radio) (ALER)

Continued negative portrayals pose a significant risk for society and migrants alike. Migrants who regularly find themselves depicted as criminals or illegal may eventually internalize this belief and act upon society's low expectations (Lüken-Klaßen and Heckmann, 2007). The greatest risk category is often second-generation migrants who may continue to be treated as outsiders by the native population. By actively incorporating migrants into mainstream coverage and eliminating stereotypical labelling, these types of risks can be averted.

Migrants have not remained passive, however, and have sought a voice for themselves and their communities through ethnic media outlets. In recent years, navigating the identity space between home and host country has become increasingly fluid. The advent of social media and networking sites has facilitated interactions among migrants and host societies in both new and traditional ways. One of the new ways in which it does so is through its global reach and its potential to foster solidarity globally and across diverse national backgrounds. Social media sites have become a way for migrants (or 'digital diaspora') to discuss issues that concern them – issues that may not be easy to communicate about normally, such as racism, cultural taboos, identity, conflicts and what it means to be a migrant. What is particularly powerful is that such online initiatives are open to all – migrants and non-migrants alike – and they offer rich opportunities for the development of more inclusive and better informed conversations about migrants and migration. Textbox 5 presents one example of how a social media site created at the global level attempts to reach a wide audience of migrants and migration organizations.

Textbox 5: Using social media to promote cultural understanding

Social media, which can foster public interactive exchange and connect people, places and ideas, are increasingly being used as a way to spark change, share a common public space, and exchange innovative ideas. Migration issues are no exception. The creation of Integration: Building Inclusive Societies, by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and IOM, as a unique virtual platform, seeks to promote intercultural understanding, reduce intolerance and promote good migration-integration practices within a community of integration practitioners. The core component of the platform is a global database of good practices on integration, as well as a database of integration practitioners themselves. Updates on migration news globally, access to discussion forums and the latest research serve to create an online community promoting harmony and cohesion in migrant-hosting societies.

For further information, see: www.unaoc.org/communities/migrationintegration

CONCLUSION

The world is changing at an unprecedented speed, challenging societies to react with adaptability and creativity. Migration is one of the ways in which the exchange of talent, services, skills and a diversity of experience is achieved. Yet migration remains politically sensitive and often publicly misunderstood, in contradiction to the way our societies and economies are evolving. Recent events in Norway and elsewhere over the past two decades only serve to reinforce the need for the international community to urgently address the issue by promoting an informed, open and honest debate on matters of concern to all migrants – whether immigrants, emigrants or returnees – and to the societies of origin and destination with which the migrants interact.

This chapter has outlined the reasons for this, focusing primarily on how migration is communicated and why it is so susceptible to misinformation and bias. While there is a growing body of research-based evidence relating to the causes and impacts of migration on economies, societies and environments, the debate around it often fails to take such evidence into account. Key stakeholders in the debate – politicians, policymakers, employer organizations, civil society, the media and even migrant associations – often ignore the evidence or use it in a selective or even self-interested way. Research evidence, policy debate and media reporting combine to generate blurred perceptions where clear and accurate analysis is needed. The complexity of the migration issue and its human dimension are then lost within political arguments that are designed for electoral purposes and political gain.

As this chapter has highlighted, public perceptions and opinions about migrants are not formed in a vacuum. They are influenced by socio-economic and demographic factors such as age, level of education, type of employment, and political leaning. Furthermore, there are external factors such as periods of economic recession when unemployment levels are high, moments of political turmoil or conflict triggering sudden outflows of migrants, and uncertainties about national security in the wake of a terrorist attack, which can create doubts about the value of migration. But these concerns, even when strongly felt, are also time-sensitive, and they typically recede when conditions improve. One of the greatest challenges for those who wish to foster a rational debate is to prevent migration from becoming the convenient surrogate cause for other political, social and economic issues that create discomfort in societies faced with change in a globalizing world. It is fairly apparent that migration is often the catch-all issue that masks the fears and uncertainties beneath the public's concerns – be they unemployment, housing or social cohesion (in countries of destination) or loss/waste of human capital and economic dependency (in countries of origin).

A careful study of poll and survey results suggests that opinions in the community are, at the same time, more nuanced and more susceptible to change than we are often led to believe. There is acknowledgement, at a variety of levels, that mobility is a feature of contemporary society. There is also a certain level of understanding, recognition and even acceptance of the fact that migration brings added benefits to the economy and society, and that migrants complement, rather than compete with, natives in the labour market. In other words, there is enough available material to begin a thoughtful, balanced debate about migration – a debate that does not portray migration as having benefits without costs but establishes its rightful place and value in our interconnected societies.

It is important to stress that the way communication about migration is managed will affect not only the perceptions of home and host societies, but also the self-perception and behaviour of the migrant population. This chapter has argued against the treatment of migrants as passive onlookers in the debate about migration, rather than as essential actors in the process. Assignment of a passive role will leave them vulnerable to negative stereotyping and ultimately create an unnecessary divide between them and the host community. Migrants occupy complex living spaces, navigating between their countries of destination and countries of origin, as well as between the two corresponding societies. Their willingness and ability to integrate into their host society will be significantly shaped by their perception of their location – whether in its mainstream or at its edge – and of the value placed on their contribution to that society's socio-economic well-being.

The chapter has highlighted several good examples of how governments, civil society, international organizations and the media have worked towards promoting a balanced image of migrants and their contributions, locally or in the media, dispelling migration myths through information campaigns and giving migrants a voice in telling their experiences through new media. However, for these and other initiatives to have a consistent impact on public perceptions and attitudes, they need to be scaled up, adjusted to fit local contexts and, most importantly, be supported by strong political will as part of a long-term strategy. To this end, four broad orientations are worth exploring:

1) Building an open, balanced and comprehensive migration discourse

Here, the emphasis is on expanding the migration debate so that it does not simply revolve endlessly around the problems – real or imagined (both of which are generously aired) – but examines the broader picture. It is important that the new debate be proactive and not simply reactive to the dominant discourse. There are two questions that are commonly used as starting points for discussions on migration, not to mention migration policy formulation: 1) *How to deal with the migrant constituencies already in the country?* 2) *How to deal with those migrants who may be coming?* A constructive, better-informed debate will begin with a broader consideration of the place that migration might realistically occupy in demographic, social and economic planning. From this perspective, it may be possible to reframe the discourse so that it yields a more informed mainstream consensus, rather than a parochial view. A long-term strategy is likely to be required with key messages injected into the media upon the release of new sets of research, but also when they are of relevance to a topic under discussion.

The broadening of the discourse cannot take place only at the national level, but equally in multilateral fora such as regional consultative processes RCPs, IOM's International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) and the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD).

2) De-politicizing the debate and addressing the issues of concern

While migration is undoubtedly of political interest, it should not be addressed solely as a political issue. Many of the negative perceptions surrounding migration have their origins in partisan interpretations, rather than fact. In most migration debates, there is a need to openly discuss effects – both positive and negative – in an honest and balanced way. The discourse should also address the broad national interest, rather than focusing on the interests of particular segments of society. Much of the research on the effects of migration regarding the

positive impacts it can deliver relates to an entire society and economy. The force of these messages can be lost if the focus is placed upon impacts on particular subgroups in a given society or economy. On the other hand, discussion of local anxieties – for example, about what can be done to curb irregular migration, or local pressures on infrastructure caused by population growth – need not be ignored. The public should, instead, be informed about what has and has not worked, without placing the onus of a failed policy initiative on the migrant.

A lack of readily available information for the public, which directly addresses all of these issues, is perhaps the greatest cause of continuing misunderstanding. The dissemination of information that addresses the concerns at hand, and clearly explains the rights of citizens and non-citizens, helps eliminate misunderstandings and ensures that policies are perceived as impartial and respectful of everyone's rights.

3) Working together with the media to support balanced media reporting

The media have a significant influence over public discourse, influencing public opinion and thereby impinging on all stakeholders, especially policymakers and politicians. A fundamental question must therefore be asked: How can the media be engaged to present a more balanced picture of migration and its impacts? Balanced media reporting means avoiding single-issue headlines, over/under-representation of particular groups, and blanket labelling. It also implies recognition of the fact that migrants are not a homogenous group and that migration is often linked to many other public issues.

Governments play a crucial role in creating the social and political climate in which fair and accurate reporting can thrive and the evidence base is correctly used. Leadership is therefore important in delivering a more balanced picture about migration. This places significant responsibility on political opinion leaders but they should not be the only source of leadership on this issue. Other stakeholders, such as civil society, the private sector and the academic research community, also have an important role to play. The role of other elites and prominent people should also be considered. There have been many examples of such people taking up social justice-based causes and having an important impact on both the media and public opinion regarding such causes. The role of these opinion leaders may involve working more with the media than has been the case in the past. While this may be outside of the media's comfort zone, to some extent, it is the responsibility of these actors to meet the media halfway and ensure that media practitioners are better informed of the complexity of migration issues.

Providing guidance on how to report on migration is another key element. Building the capacity of reporters, journalists etc., either through trainings or informational materials, can help to create a core group of media specialists on the issue, who are able to more accurately report on the topic. The provision of easily accessible guidelines about how to talk about migration (such as those available at www.ethicaljournalisminitiative.org) provides a good starting point. Such guidance should ideally include the development of communication strategies, on the part of researchers, and creating partnerships within the media. The research community itself can play a key role in ensuring that its findings relate to the relevant policy and political context and that it actively engages in the debate, using the evidence and their expertise, without compromising their academic integrity.

Balanced media reporting also requires breaking down the barriers of diversity within the media. The removal of structural discrimination in mainstream media institutions to include a diverse group of people serves, in turn, to break down content discrimination by offering alternative points of view.

4) Acknowledging migrants as active communication agents

Clearly, one of the greatest challenges for all those wishing to promote accurate perceptions about migrants and migration is that of enabling the authentic voices of migrants to be heard. There is clear evidence that the more exposure non-migrants have to migrants, on a person-to-person basis, the less negative they are inclined to be towards them. However, migrants are too often viewed as passive agents in the migration debate, in both their countries of origin and their countries of destination.

One significant way of reducing the level of misperception and its impact on migrants, whether as a result of political discourse or media reporting, is to ensure that migrants become active participants in the public debate. This can be done in many ways – for instance, by creating more space for ethnic media alongside mainstream media, integrating diversity into mainstream media, or encouraging the use of new social media tools to allow migrants to engage with a wide audience (migrants and non-migrants) and to portray more accurate images of who they are and what they do.

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