**Assignment Brief**

*Migration*

In the UK, few subjects generate as much sharp response as immigration. It regularly features in daily news reports and in the run-up to elections it is an issue which has the potential to make or break politicians. Over the last twenty years, it has gone from being a relatively low level public issue to being, with crime and security, one of the issues on which voters want to see governments take more action. The UK is not, however, exceptional. Immigration is a major public concern in many other European countries, as well as further afield, such as in the USA.

As reports of the plight of refugees fleeing the war in Syria so amply illustrate, sometimes people leave their countries because they feel they are being driven out by the prospect of threats to themselves and their families. This is what social scientists call a ‘push’ factor. In other contexts, some politicians, and some sections of the media, make repeated reference to people coming to the UK because migrants are, they claim, attracted by the prospect of better welfare benefits as well as higher wages. These are often referred as forms of ‘pull factors’ – things which are capable of attracting migrants to come to particular countries.

Immigration would represent a timely focus of a research project. You might wish to investigate the factors which are seen to lie behind the movement of large numbers of people worldwide (the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors). A different approach might be to study what factors have led to immigration becoming such a controversial public issue? How are public attitudes influenced by media reporting? What impact have government policies had on public attitudes to immigration in the UK?

**Contacts**

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