

## **Curriculum subject: Mathematics**

### **Irregular Migration**

**(using information from *Irregular migration in the UK*, Institute for Public Policy Research, 2006)**

*Students should make themselves aware of how refugees have fled persecution and how many have contributed to life in their host countries. Mention that refugees have also contributed to mathematics - Einstein was a refugee. Students may want to research the following mathematicians: Jack Darbyshire, Imre Lakatos, Ludwig Wittgenstein.*

*The teacher can explain that as the school is celebrating refugee week and the contribution of refugees to the UK then we are to do an investigation into the economic contribution of 'irregular migrants' (amongst whom are people who have been refused asylum but have stayed on in the UK).*

*Start by reading the opening true case study (below) of Fardin. Feedback student's reactions. Then go through and explain introductory points about irregular migrants, before looking at the tabulated data and answering the questions.*

*Finish off by looking at and discussing the quote from Maeve Sherlock.*

### **Case study: Fardin**

Fardin left his family in Afghanistan five years ago. He fled political violence which put his life in danger. He arrived in the UK and applied for asylum, so he could be protected and not returned to his country.

After his application was refused he sought legal advice to appeal. He was given bad advice by an unscrupulous solicitor and he lost his appeal because the papers were filed incorrectly.

He went 'underground' and took up work cleaning in a London college. He was paid the minimum wage but worked in appalling conditions, suffering routine verbal abuse from his employer and regular fines and wage cuts for not meeting targets.

His patience finally ran out and, concerned about the treatment he and fellow workers received, he started protesting to the management.

A friend of Fardin's said, 'everyone was being exploited, whether they were legal or not.'

He continued, 'when he started to make a fuss he was told that if he didn't keep quiet he would be reported to immigration.'

Fardin has since disappeared.

## **Who are irregular migrants?**

Irregular migrants are people who are liable to be deported for issues related to immigration status.

## **Why do irregular migrants come to the UK?**

Irregular migrants come to and stay in the UK for a similar range of reasons to regular migrants, eg. finding work, fleeing persecution and civil war.

Irregular migrants are thought to work in sectors that pay low wages and have high unmet demand for workers.

The National Employer Skills Survey 2004 has shown that there are significant numbers of hard-to-fill vacancies in low paid occupational groupings such as personal services, sales and customer services and elementary occupations. A recent study on low paid employment in London showed that many migrants work as cleaners on the London Underground, in care work and in hospitality (Evans et al 2005).

Migrants, both regular and irregular, are more mobile than many people think, but immigration restrictions (especially border controls) can encourage permanence. This is, for example, because it is hard to leave a country where you have overstayed your visa as you would be found out and would never be able to return.

## **How do they enter the UK?**

There is very little publicly available data about how migrants enter the UK, but it is likely that more overstay their visa than enter clandestinely.

## **Where do they come from?**

Most irregular migrants will come from outside the European Union (EU) because EU nationals generally enjoy comprehensive entitlements to visit, live in and work in the UK.

## **Why be concerned about irregular migration?**

Irregular migration is seen as an important public issue in several ways:

- as exposing some vulnerable migrants to exploitation, in transit or when they get to the UK. The rights they have are often denied them (eg. If you are a trafficked sex worker<sup>1</sup> and here illegally then to report your abuse to the police could lead to you being punished further).
- as evidence that the immigration system is failing or being abused
- as a challenge to national sovereignty (that is, the UK may not have total control over who comes and goes from the country)
- as potentially compromising the security of the UK (especially in light of growing fears about international terrorism)

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<sup>1</sup> A woman who is taken from her own country and forced into prostitution in another

## Questions to answer

**Some general data: what conclusions can you draw?**

<b>Table 1: General data</b>	
Number of irregular migrants in UK	310,000 – 570,000
Cost of deporting irregular migrants	£4.7 billion
Net benefit to UK if they were 'regularised' <sup>2</sup>	£6 billion
% number of all migrants who leave UK within 5 years	50
% number of low-paid jobs filled by migrants in London	90
% number of regular migrants to UK population	8.7
% contribution by regular migrants to UK total tax revenue	10.2
Number of people claiming asylum in 2005	25,715
Likely tax revenue generated if asylum seeker applicants 2005 were allowed to work	£123m

Source: *Institute of Public Policy Research 2006*

### **QUESTION 1:**

**Discuss Table 1 with your partner and come up with 2 conclusions:**

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<sup>2</sup> Allowed to work legally

## Calculating the potential tax revenue of irregular migrants:

One way of calculating potential tax revenue would be to assume that irregular migrants have the same age characteristics and employment rate of recently-arrived immigrants.

<b>Table 2: Recently arrived immigrants</b>	
% number of working age	82
% employment rate	61.5

Source: *Labour Force Survey data for 2000-04*

### QUESTION 2:

#### Look at Table 2.

Assuming that the total numbers of irregular migrants in the UK are 430,000<sup>3</sup>, how many irregular migrants would be working, if we assume same age characteristics and employment rate of recently-arrived immigrants?

Answer .....

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<sup>3</sup> Similar to the Government's mid-point estimate for 2001

<b>Table 3: Likely earnings of irregular immigrants if allowed to work</b>	
Likely wage an hour (based on minimum hourly wage)	£5.05
Likely hours a week	40
Likely weeks per year	48
% of wages as tax contribution (income tax, National Insurance and employers' contribution)	23
Number of likely irregular migrants in work	See answer to Question 2.

Source: *Institute of Public Policy Research 2006*

**QUESTION 3:**

**Look at Table 3.**

What is the potential tax contribution (in millions of pounds) by irregular migrants if allowed to work?

Answer .....

**QUESTION 4:**

**Look at Table 3.**

If we assume that some of these workers earn more than the minimum wage and in fact earn the same as the median wage of recently-arrived immigrants of £308 per week, what then is the potential tax contribution (in millions of pounds) by irregular migrants if allowed to work?

Answer .....

*'But it's easy to forget when all the focus is on statistics and targets that what we're actually talking about are people who have fled from terrible persecution. The woman journalist raped for speaking out against her government is not a statistic. The political activist beaten and tortured is not a statistic.'*

Chief Executive of the Refugee Council, Maeve Sherlock