



Now it's the BBC that Blunder over Immigration Statistics

On the 10 o'clock news on 30 April, the BBC Home Affairs Editor[1] claimed that, in 2008, there was a net outflow of non UK workers of 8,000 so the real pressure on British jobs was from a net inflow of 46,000 EU workers which none of the parties had any plans to control. To do so Britain would have to leave the EU –a policy advocated only by UKIP and the BNP.

Unfortunately, Mark Easton fell into a common error. He was looking at the results of the International Passenger Service [2]. This is a voluntary survey of 2 per cent of those arriving and departing from Britain. They are asked if they intend to change their place of residence for more than a year. If so, they are classed as migrants. In 2008 there were about ½ million arrivals (including British citizens).

Migrants are then asked further questions, including their main reason for migrating. Those who have a job to go to or are seeking work are considered to be “workers”.

The snag is that large numbers from outside the EU come as students but when they go home they say, naturally enough, that they are seeking work. This gives the impression that they are part of an outflow of workers when, in fact, they came as students. The point is illustrated by the fact that, in 2008, 126,000 non EU people arrived for “formal study” but only 6,000 left saying that their purpose was formal study. The missing 120,000 are not all still here, many will have left seeking work –apparently as “workers”.

Migrationwatch has already challenged the Government's Migration Advisory Committee on this point. As a result, they included the following passage in their December 2009 report [3] on the Points Based System (para 3.26 on page 45):

“... a net outflow is recorded for work-related reasons in the year to December 2008. However, the figures for those departing for work purposes included those who arrive as students and are returning home to work. The International Passenger Survey (IPS) does not distinguish between the two categories”.

So what are the correct figures? Given that many arrive for one reason and leave for another, it is only worth looking at arrivals. In 2008 67,000 non EU foreign nationals arrived with a definite job or looking for work. Adding 50 per cent for dependents gives about 100,000. The same survey gave the total number of non British migrants arriving in that year as 456,000 so workers made up 22 per cent of the total or more than one in five –not one in eight as Mark Easton claimed.

There is a case for omitting students from the total since they will be returning home and will be replaced by others so that they do not continually add to the overall number of migrants. If the 166,000 students are taken out of the calculation the proportion becomes 34 per cent.

There is also a wider point. Net immigration is the central issue as it is that which is mainly responsible for driving our population up to 70 million in 20 years. Over the last ten years net immigration from the EU 15 has averaged only 20,000 a year compared to net foreign immigration in 2008 of 250,000. Immigration from Eastern Europe has been high but the net number last year declined to 20,000. In short, to imply that the main issue for immigration policy is the EU, is very misleading.

1 May, 2010

NOTES

1. The News clip is at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/8655599.stm
2. The ONS table is at:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/markeaston/migration_by_reason.xls
3. The Migration Advisory Committee report is at:
<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/workingwithus/mac/pbsanalysis-09/041209/mac-december-09?view=Binary>