

# ARE THERE INTERGENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN VIEWS ON IMMIGRATION?

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**Immigration** is a cause for concern in the UK however there are **intergenerational divisions** in opinion (Ford and Lymeropolou, 2018) **Little research** has solely focused on this generational divide. This project therefore, explores the issue by examining opinions of five **pairs** of participants aged **20-23** and their **grandparents**.

*‘48% of 18-29 year olds believe immigration is good for the economy, compared with 29% of over 70’s’ (Ford and Lymeropolou, 2018, p.127 )*

## 2. WHY DO PEOPLE HAVE THE VIEWS THEY DO?

Political socialisation is the political upbringing that shapes people’s views on key topics (Kononvo and Saleem, 2011 p;303). Ideology, or how people view the political world, can determine what views we have on topics such as immigration, and this is normally determined by this political socialisation. Agents of political socialisation can include family, media and school and differ in importance between generations.

## 3. METHODS

In order to explore intergenerational differences within the same family paired interviews allowed me to examine the participants easily together and spark debates between them.

## 4. INTERVIEW

Intergenerational differences with respect to immigration can be seen in the interview participants. In three out of five interviews the **older** participant has a **more negative view**. One reason which can be seen is the *‘life-cycle effect’* where as someone gets older their views shift **to the right** (Hague and Harrop, 2016).

This can be seen as a reason for the participant from **interview E** aged 76, who stated that they have voted Conservative recently but had voted Labour in the past.

In **interview D**, where differences were not so prevalent, they can still be seen as the older generation was more negative about the cultural aspects and the younger more negative about the impact on public services.

**Interview B**, where the participants had rather similar views on immigration, the pair have a close relationship which may have resulted in them sharing similar views.

Pair	Age	Gender	Ideology/voting preference	Negative/ Positive towards immigration
A	20 and 82	Both Female	Both Left	Younger more positive
B	21 and 68	Female and Male	Centre Left and Centre	Both have negative and positive views
C	20 and 74	Both Female	Both Left	Younger overall more positive
D	23 and 77	Both Female	Right and Centre Left	Both positive but changes who is more positive on each topic
E	21 and 76	Both Male	Left and Right	Younger more positive

Table showing the overall data from the interviews

## IMMIGRATION AND BREXIT

At least one person in each pair said that immigration was a key topic in the **Brexit**. Both generations said that the leave campaign focused on immigration. Goodwin and Milazzo (2017, p452) came to the same conclusion believing that immigration was central to why people voted leave.

What was interesting to ask is which generation was more likely to vote leave, 4 out of 5 of the pairs stated that they thought the **older generation was more likely to vote on immigration**.

## 5. CONCLUSION

These differences in generations could be a result of multiple factors, from ideologies to political socialization. The most compelling argument as for why the older generation might have a more negative view towards immigration is Hague and Harrop’s (2016, p207) concept of the **life-cycle effect**. This meaning that the older generation when they were younger may have been even more liberal than that of their younger counterparts however, as they have got older they have shifted to the right of the spectrum. As a result, they have a more negative view on immigration.

It can be observed that intergenerational differences exist but in the sense that these opinions shift as a function of age.