

People born abroad born 'likely to speak English and feel British'

30 January 2013

A large proportion of the people in England and Wales who were born abroad speak English and feel British, according to new analysis of data from the 2011 Census .

Researchers at The University of Manchester say [commentators](#) should not use numbers of people born abroad to measure the needs of immigrants trying to integrate into the communities they choose to settle.

Better measures, argue the team at the University's Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE), are national identity, passports held, main language spoken and English language proficiency. All, which are now included in census for the first time, show:

- 13% of the population are foreign-born;
- 9% have a non-British national identity;
- 9% a foreign [passport](#);
- 8% a foreign main language;
- and only 2% do not speak English well.

Also according to the researchers, new information from the 2011 Census on immigration exaggerates recent rises because it excludes people who have left the UK.

In addition, the data shows that the majority (54%) of people born in [EU countries](#) outside the UK were from member states that joined the EU before 2004.

Dr Stephen Jivraj who led the research said: "In [policy debates](#), immigration is a proxy not only for being born outside the UK but also for other concepts such as not belonging, with family origins outside the UK and requiring services to help integrate.

"These concepts are measured by combinations of language, citizenship, national identity and

[ethnicity](#) better than by birthplace.

"If [policymakers](#) are concerned that too many UK residents do not speak English as their main language, are not able to speak English well, are not naturalised or do not hold a strong identity to Britain, then we should not attribute these statements to all people born abroad."

He added: "The 2011 Census asked people born abroad when they most recently arrived to live in the UK. However, the census cannot measure how many people have ever arrived during past years because it excludes those who have died, or who have emigrated, and only counts the most recent arrival. This means the census overestimates the increase in immigration during the 2000s.

"It is also important to dispel myths that most [immigrants](#) come to the UK to take advantage of public services. Of those born abroad, more than half arrived in the UK between the ages of 15 and 29. Therefore, most came during an economically productive stage of their life when they will be less dependent on state provisions of health and education."

Provided by University of Manchester

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