

## Indians among favoured migrants in UK: survey

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Indian migrants have a more positive image in the UK as compared to other South Asian communities, according to a recent opinion poll.

In comparison, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were in the negative territory.

The YouGov poll, conducted last month among 1,668 British citizens, asked a series of questions about the kind of contribution immigrants from various parts of the world make to British life.

Immigrants from India received a strong figure of +25 on the question about making a positive contribution to British life.

In comparison, other South Asian counterparts were in negative territory.

Pakistanis scored a negative figure of -4 and Bangladeshis -3.

Net figures are calculated by taking away the figure for "negative contribution" from the figure for "positive contribution".

The figures come against the backdrop of a growing debate around the atmosphere for migrants in the UK.

A recent Windrush scandal, largely affecting Caribbean migrants who came to the UK before 1973, has thrown up the prospect of many Indians being caught up in similar issues of citizenship rights.

In a House of Commons debate earlier this week, the Opposition Labour party had warned that the scandal engulfs immigrants from many Commonwealth countries, including "those who came from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh".

"This is an issue that has resonated around the Commonwealth. At a time when we are trying to build our relationship with the Commonwealth post-Brexit for trade and other reasons, it is extremely damaging what has been revealed about the way Commonwealth citizens have been treated," said Labour MP Diane Abbott, the UK's shadow home secretary.

The scandal relates to thousands of Commonwealth citizens who came to Britain many decades ago when there was little need for formal paperwork and are now legally resident in Britain but may not have all the documents to prove it.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Indian professionals gathered outside Parliament earlier this week to protest against what they claim are unjust refusals of their right to live and work in the country.

Many have now taken to the courts to challenge the UK Home Office's use of a discretionary "good character" clause to deny them indefinite leave to remain (ILR) over legally permitted tax corrections.

"Given the Windrush scandal involving innocent migrants being denied their citizenship rights and the new Home Secretary (Sajid Javid) assuring the public that the Home Office will be fair in its immigration decisions,

these cases take on an added significance," said Aditi Bhardwaj, one of the convenors of the Highly Skilled Migrants group.

Besides, there have been cases involving hundreds of doctors from India being denied visas after being recruited by the state-funded National Health Service (NHS) to fill staff shortages in the country's health service.

Ministers have reportedly been pressuring British Prime Minister Theresa May to ease the limited quota of such visas to allow doctors from outside the European Union (EU) to come to the rescue of the NHS.

"NHS organisations have been unable to obtain the required permits for months for essential medical colleagues, and we have called on the government to urgently address this serious problem," said Danny Mortimer, chief executive of NHS Employers which works with NHS Trusts on recruiting staff.

He said the "prolonged inability" to recruit talented professionals from outside the EU has hit the NHS and its patients hard.

Another category of Indian migrants hit by the UK Home Office rules include thousands of Indian students who were forced to abandon their courses in UK colleges and return to India as a result of a scam unearthed in an English language test programme called Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) in 2014.

According to unconfirmed estimates, many were wrongly accused of cheating by the US-based Education Testing Service (ETS) in an investigation carried out for the Home Office.

"In February 2014, investigations into the abuse of English language testing revealed systemic cheating, which was indicative of large scale organised fraud.

"The government took immediate robust action on this... and so far 21 people have received criminal convictions for their role in this deception," a Home Office spokesperson said.

The YouGov survey concluded that overall public opinion in the UK towards immigration remains negative.

Around 63 per cent of people believe that immigration into Britain in the last 10 years has been too high and around 32 per cent thinking it has been mostly bad for Britain.

Immigration remains one of the most emotive issues in the country's political landscape, with the vote in favour of Brexit in the 2016 EU referendum largely attributed to a belief that it would help shut down the country's borders to uncontrolled migrants.