

The issue of migration dominated the debate during the run-up to the referendum in June, with the free movement of European Union nationals into Britain being one of the major pillars of support for the Leave vote. Since then, and as it becomes clearer that it is unlikely to be possible to be both a member of the European Single Market in control of EU immigration, migration has continued to be headline news - with some commentators arguing that the population of Britain will rise by '12 Birminghams' unless a 'Hard Brexit' is pursued (Sun, 29th December 2016). What the newspapers have largely failed to recognise is that EU migrants make up only a proportion of total net migration to the UK. Moreover, few have focussed on the characteristics of these migrants and the contribution they make to the economy and society. This paper discusses recent trends in migration to the UK. It then investigates the characteristics of EU born individuals living in the UK, highlighting that many have UK born partners and children. The paper concludes by reflecting on the policy implications for such bi-national families and future trends in migration under a 'hard' or 'soft Brexit'.

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