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Irregular Migration in the United Kingdom since the turn of the millennium – development, economic background and discourses

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## **Database on Irregular Migration (<http://irregular-migration.hwwi.net>)**

This website aims at increasing transparency in the field of irregular migration. The database provides an inventory and a critical appraisal of data and estimates in the European Union. Quantitative information is accompanied by substantial background materials, both on issues of general concern and on the situation in individual countries.

The database was created in the context of "CLANDESTINO: Counting the uncountable – data and trends across Europe", a project funded by the European Commission, DG Research, Sixth Framework Programme (2007-2009) (<http://clandestino.eliamep.gr/>). The Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI) hosts the database and aims at expanding and updating it in the coming years.

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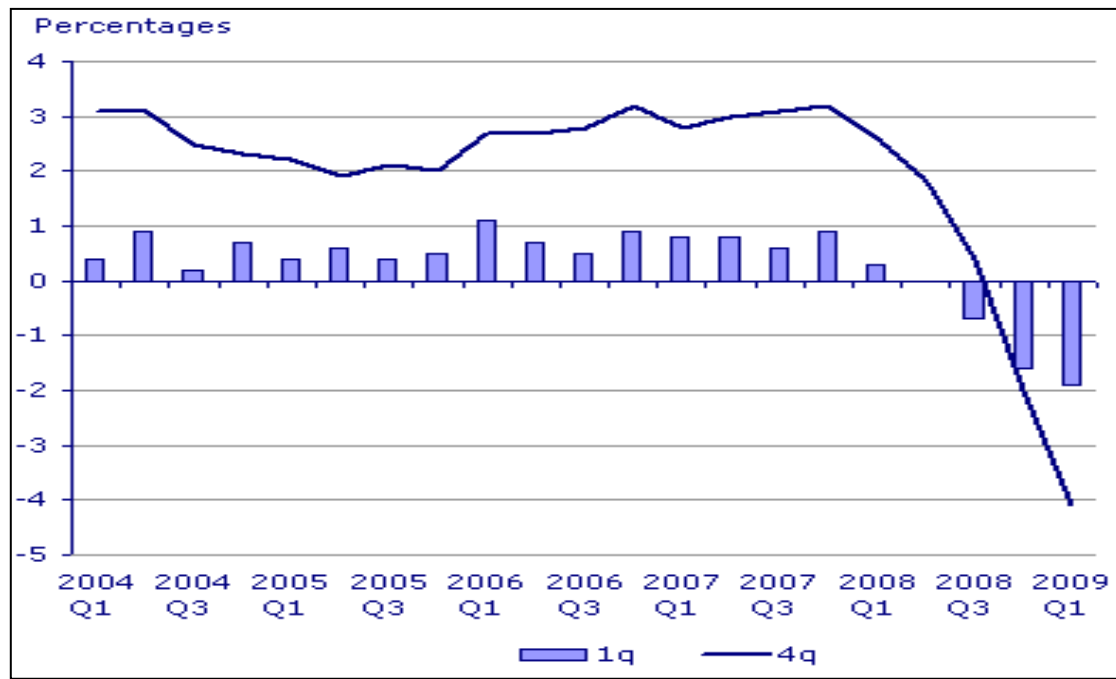
## 1 Introduction

The topic of irregular migration has attracted the attention of politicians and the media in the United Kingdom in recent decades. More than any other single incident, the death in 2000 of 58 Chinese migrants at the back of a lorry in Dover made irregular migration the most evocative sub-theme of the general migration debate in the country. Since that incident, irregular migration has featured regularly in political debates, mostly during general elections. Although academic interest in the topic has widened and deepened in recent decades, many aspects of it remain largely unexplored. One of these is the media representation of irregular migration. Whereas there have been scientific investigations of media representation of asylum seekers and migration generally, no study has focussed specifically on irregular migrants. This exploratory research seeks to fill this gap by comparing the representation of the issue in two national British newspapers. It also situates the specific discourse of irregular migration within the larger discourse of migration patterns in the United Kingdom. Most importantly, this working paper seeks to establish links between the dramatic changes in the economy in recent years and the patterns of irregular migrations to the UK.

The next section discusses recent economic developments and their impact on patterns of irregular migration. This is followed by a review of the general migration trends or patterns in the United Kingdom. The concluding section examines media and public discourse of irregular, focussing mostly on the Mail newspapers and the Guardian.

## 2 Economic background

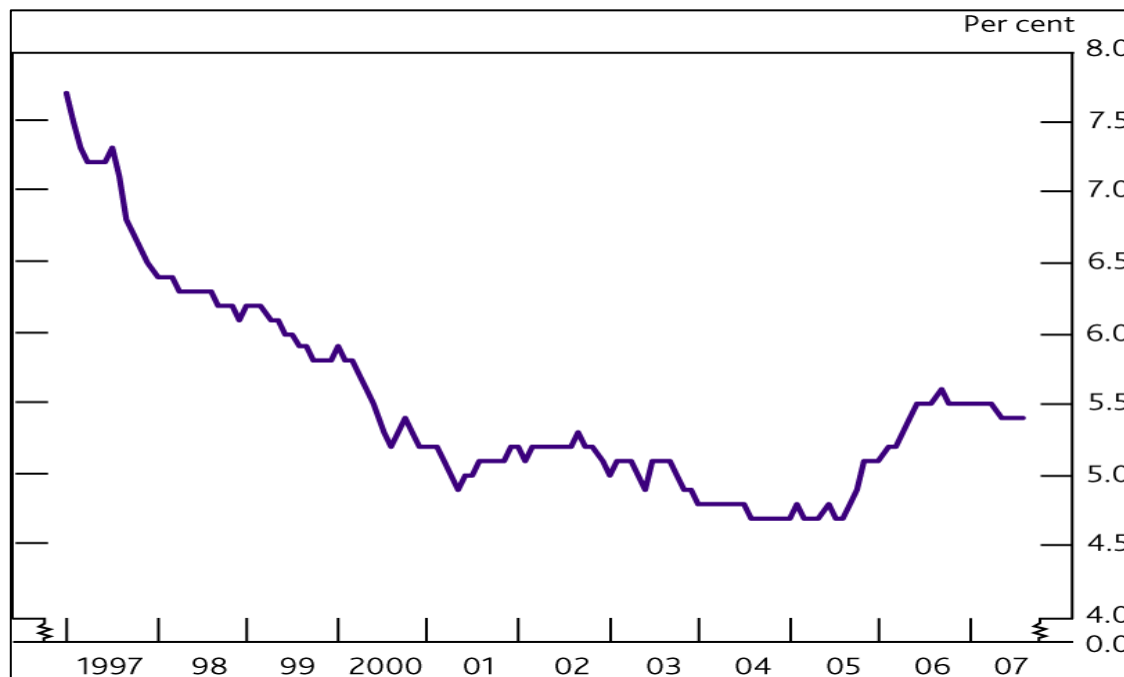
Figure 1 Growth rate of the Gross Domestic Product in the UK 2004 – 2009



Source: Bank of England.

At the beginning of this millennium the United Kingdom had a rosy economic outlook. The major indicators of economic performance, including the Gross Domestic Products (GDP), employment rate, property prices, share prices and GDP per capita were strong and healthy. But like many other countries, the United Kingdom has made a swift and dramatic decline from a period of sustained prosperity to one of austerity. After attaining a peak in early 2008, the GDP nose-dived (see figure 1) following worries about the financial market. The cumulative decline in GDP between early 2008 and the end of 2009 amounted to about six percent, compelling analysts to conclude that the current economic recession has been steeper than previous ones, including the devastating one of 1979-83. According to the Office for National Statistics, 270 000 persons were made redundant in the three months to February 2009. The redundancy rate was 10.6 per 1 000 employees, up 6.4 from a year earlier. The unemployment rate rose to 6.7 per cent during the same, from 5.2 per cent a year earlier. The number of those claiming unemployment benefits rose to 1 464 100 in March 2009 – twice as high as a year earlier.

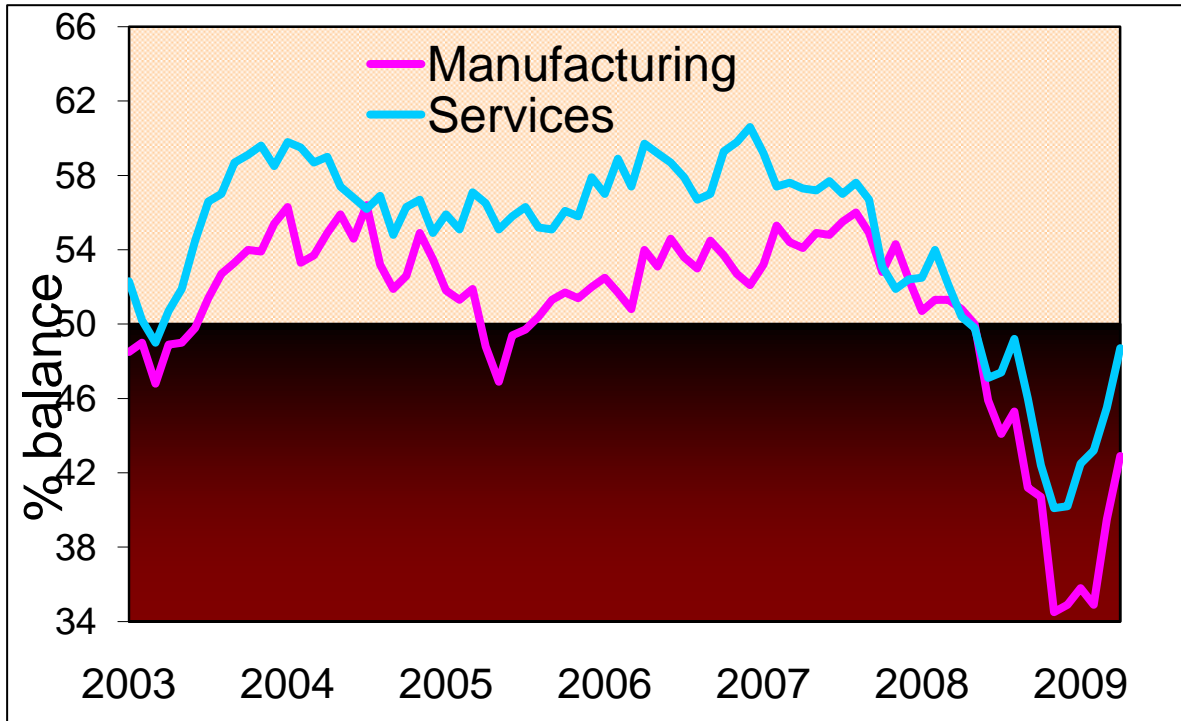
Figure 2 Unemployment rate 1997 – 2007



Source: Labour Force Survey.

If anyone was still unconvinced of the looming financial disaster the spectacular collapse of Lehman Brothers – one of London City’s foremost financial institutions – in September 2008 brought home the point most vividly. The bank’s collapse put the jobs of its 5 000 UK employees at risk and it marked the beginning of an affliction that shook or swept away UK’s economic giants such as Northern Rock, Royal Bank of Scotland, Woolworth, etc. The media images of disconcerted Lehman Brothers’ employees clutching cardboard boxes of their personal belongings as they left the company offices in Canary Wharf became the most vivid and haunting symbol of Britain’s economic meltdown. Job losses in Lehman Brothers and the City were quickly followed by a spate of staff retrenchments in many sectors as anxiety, declining exports, and inadequate access to loans for small businesses compelled many businesses to cut production. The unstable financial market meant that banks had less money to lend to homebuyers, resulting in dramatic reductions in property prices. Between September 1997 and September 2008 house prices fell by as much as 10 percent. The decline continued well into 2009. Other sectors of the economy that have experienced rapid decline are manufacturing and services, as illustrated in the diagram below.

Figure 3 UK Manufacturing and services, 2003 – 2009



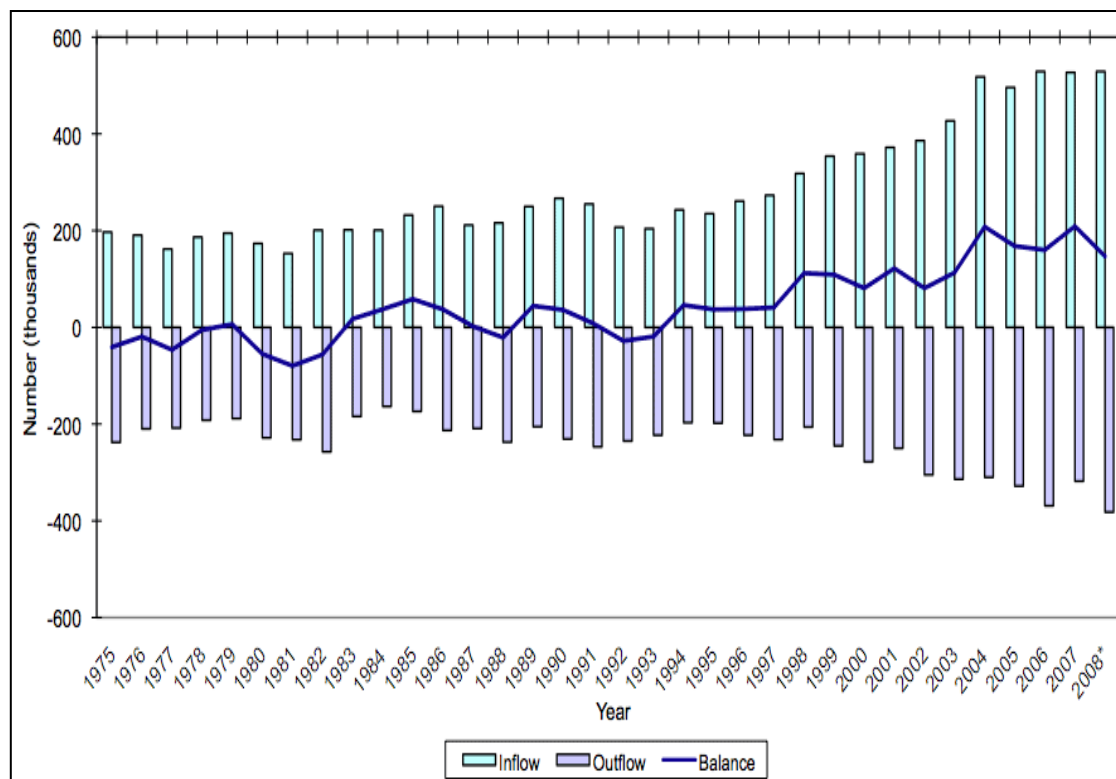
Source: Markit, HSBC.



### 3 Development of migration

Except for the massive in-flows of Irish migrants in the mid-1800s, migration patterns in the United Kingdom were dominated mostly by the emigration of British nationals to the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the other colonies until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe and Russia constituted the first notable 20th century mass migration to the UK. Post-second World War immigrants came mostly from colonies and ex-colonies in the West Indies, Hong Kong, the Indian subcontinent and Africa. Some of these migrants had been soldiers in the British Army or participants in its colonial and missionary projects. Many came to Britain to study but others anticipated a long or even permanent residency. Chain migration and migration for family re-unification purposes accounted for much of in-migration from the 1970s to 1990. Inflows outstripped outflows for the first time in the 1980s and the trends have been consistent since the 1990s. Figure 4 shows inflows into and outflows out of the UK. Numbers are derived from the International Passenger Survey which registers entries and departures at the border. It is a main source of information concerning immigration to the United Kingdom. Usually only persons who indicate they are staying for an extended period or permanently are included in the survey.

Figure 4 Total migration to and from the United Kingdom, 1975 to 2008



Source: International Passenger Survey, Office for National Statistics; [www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org).

A 'new' wave of immigration that combined inflows from 'traditional' countries-of-origin with non-traditional ones has been a main feature of migration to the United Kingdom from the 1990s till now. The new immigrants have included asylum seekers from the former communist countries of Eastern Europe and those from war-ravaged countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Intra-EU migrations have also impacted heavily on the movements of people to and from the United Kingdom. The most noticeable episode in this regard was the greater in-flows from the new accession countries from the beginning of 2004. There were a total of 577 000 immigrants in 1997, compared to a net emigration of about 237 000. In the 10 years from 1997, there was a total net inflow of about 1.8 million. The vast majority of these immigrants were workers, international students, relatives of established migrants and asylum seekers.

**Table 1 Britain's Growing Ethnic Diversity, Various Years**

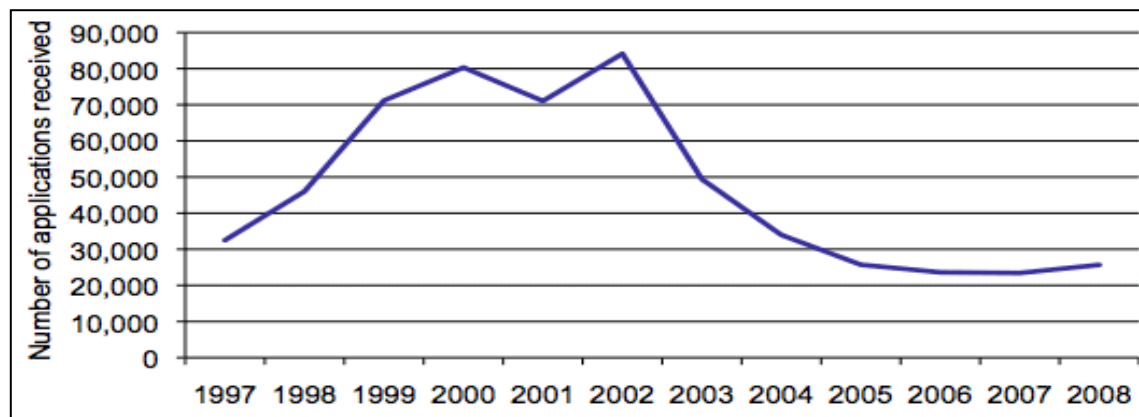
	1991	2001	2008	2008
	Percent total population	Percent total population	Percent total population	Percent population under age 16
White	94.1	91.3	89.9	80.9
Mixed	n.a.	1.3	1.1	2.8
Asian	3.3	4.4	4.9	7.2
Black	1.9	2.2	2.3	3.6
Chinese	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3
Other	0.6	0.4	1.4	1.7

Sources: 1991 and 2001 are decennial census data for England and Wales; 2008 data are for England, Wales, and Scotland from Platt (2009): Migration Policy Institute.

Policy changes have impacted heavily not only on the type and number of immigrants but also on the racial and ethnic mix of the population. As illustrated in the table above, the number of persons claiming White as their ethnic background in surveys has decreased steadily since the beginning of this century while those claiming Asian, Black and Mixed ethnicity have increased. The number of

asylum applicants has declined steadily since 2002 (see table below) due partly to stricter border controls.

Figure 5 Asylum Applications (Excluding Dependents) received in the United Kingdom, 1997 to 2008



Source: Migration Policy Institute.

Strict border control and restrictive immigration and citizenship policies have been main elements in the immigration management approach of the United Kingdom. As far back as 1905 it formulated the Aliens Act mainly in response to increased migrations of Jews from Eastern Europe and the Russian territories. The Act required special documentation of immigrants intending to stay for longer than one year although specific details about individual immigrants were not required. Some provisions of the Act were subsequently amended through the Aliens Registration Act 1914, the Aliens (Registration) Act 1919 and the Aliens Order 1920. The British Nationality Act was introduced in 1948 to cope with increased migrations from colonies and ex-colonies. A notable positive feature of that Act was that it made British citizenship accessible to migrants from the colonies and Commonwealth countries. The provision encouraged more migrations from those places at a time Britain sorely needed manpower to implement vital post-war reconstruction and development. A plethora of legislative changes have since been implemented as successive governments sought to calm mostly racially-motivated outcries against the increased presence of immigrants and ethnic minorities. These include the Immigration Act of 1971, Immigration (Carrier's Liability) Act of 1987, 1988 Immigration Act, Immigration and Asylum Act of 1999, Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act of 2002, 2006 Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act, and UK Borders Act of 2007. The Points Based System for recruiting foreign workers and students, which the government introduced in 2009, places emphasis on skilled workers and it requires institutions of learning to assist in monitoring students and reporting deviance. It also introduces newer and tighter requirements for family unification and for marriages/civil partnerships. The government also recently imposed visa restrictions on nationals of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland.

Detention and deportations, which have been features of successive immigration regimes, have attained renewed saliency in recent years. The government has placed increased emphasis on removal of refused asylum seekers and others whose entry or residence permits have been terminated. It is also establishing relationships and agreements with Third countries to facilitate removals while expanding detention facilities to accommodate those awaiting deportation, for example by acquiring a 426-bed detention complex for single males at Brook House, near Gatwick airport in 2009.

Accurate statistical and demographic profiles of irregular immigrants in the United Kingdom are difficult to estimate, and many estimates are more or less educated guesses. It is widely acknowledged that many irregular migrants are not recorded (Clarke et al. 2003). This is not surprising given the desire of the majority of them to remain unidentified and untraceable because of fear of prosecution or deportation. Jandl (2004: pp. 141-155) states that description of the nature and extent of irregular migration “has to rely on certain indirect methods, which in turn depend on the availability of alternative statistical indicators”. Estimates proffered by different sources often vary because Jandl’s ‘alternative statistical indicators’ are not uniform among nation-states and even within a national territory. Woodbridge (2005) estimates that there were between 310 000 and 750 000 irregular immigrants in the United Kingdom in 2001. This amounted to between 11 and 21% of total immigrant population. In 2007, Omnibus Research ([www.opinion.co.uk](http://www.opinion.co.uk)) put the estimates at between 300 000 and 500 000. These figures are lower than the 417 000 minimum and 863 000 maximum for 2008 proffered by Gordon et al (2009). Gordon suggests that failed asylum seekers, more than any other source, contributed substantially to increases in the number of irregular immigrants between 2001 and 2007. The other main source, albeit a less consequential one, is overstayers or immigrants who have remained in the country after their residence rights have expired or were terminated. The routes from irregular status to a regular one consist mainly in various provisions, usually restricted and limited, that the government has implemented periodically. Somerville (2009) estimates that between 60 000 to 100 000 irregular immigrants attained regular status in the decade from 1999 to 2009. According to him: “Those regularized have tended to be in the country for 13 years or more (seven if in a family), and have often made asylum claims that have not been resolved.”

Although politicians and government officials have been concerned about regular and irregular migration for centuries, as mentioned in the first part of this analysis, systematic and scientific study of the phenomenon in the UK is relatively new. This is perhaps due to the complexities involved in researching undocumented migration, including the difficulties of access to irregular migrants.

However, the void has rapidly been filled in recent times as increased number of national and transnational projects examines the theme. Among these projects are Clandestino (<http://clandestino.eliamep.gr/>), an interdisciplinary analysis of trends and statistics of irregular migration in Europe, and an analysis of young undocumented migrants conducted by the Refugees Studies Centre of City University London (Bloch et al. 2007). The report for the United Kingdom produced by Bastian Vollmer (2009), as part of the Clandestino project, is perhaps one of the most recent and up-to-date assessments.

Most studies of irregular migration in the UK (e.g. Anderson and Ruhs, 2007; Cholewinski 2005; Düvell and Jordan 2003; Gordon, et al 2009, Vollmer 2009) suggest that irregular migrants include those who have remained in the country after the expiration or termination of their legal residence rights and those who take up employment in defiance or ignorance of legal restrictions. Vollmer (2009) listed five main sources of data on irregular migration in the UK. These are the International Passenger Survey, Population Census, Annual Home Office's 'Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom', Annual Labour Force Survey, and Statistics from the Department of Social Security. He acknowledges the risks and limitations of these methods and suggests that they are generally not suited for producing definitive and comparable statistics. A survey of existing literature (see Vollmer 2009, Zetter et al. 2006 and Bloch et al. 2007) suggests that the inflow into and residence of both documented and undocumented migrants in the UK has been encouraged by the economic boom and low unemployment of the early to mid-2000s. As Vollmer (2009: 5) puts it: "Regular immigration was fostered by relatively low levels of unemployment and a continuing demand for workers in the UK".

## 4 Public Discourses

The key drivers of and references for public discourses of immigration are pronouncements by politicians, goal-driven academic research and opinion polls, and sudden events like the death of immigrants at the back of a lorry. Intense public engagement with the issue tends to be periodic and mostly when dramatic events (death or discovery of a large number of irregular immigrants at the back of a truck) happen or in the lead up to national elections. Much of these discourses in the UK have focussed disproportionately on issues relating to national security and identity, demonization of the 'outsider' and, most recently, concern about the labour market and the social welfare system (Düvell and Jordan 2003, Geddes 2003, Koser, 2005, Zetter et al. 2006). The positions of UK's three main parties on immigration do not differ very much, yet the immigration issue has become the rod with which they batter one another mostly during national elections.

For the purpose of this paper, media discourses focus on representation of irregular migration in the Mail newspapers (*Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday*) and the *Guardian*. Both are national newspapers with large readership. According to the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), the *Daily Mail* recorded daily circulation figures of 2 113 134 copies in December 2009 while the *Guardian* had 300 540. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/table/2010/jan/15/abcs-national-newspapers>). However, the newspapers sit at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum. Whereas the *Guardian*, founded in 1821, sees itself as a defender of liberalism, equality and freedom, the *Mail* is largely perceived as a nationalist and conservative medium. It is therefore not surprising that many news stories published by the *Mail* emphasised the 'threats' posed to national sovereignty by migrants, particularly undocumented ones. Generally media representation conflates facts with fictions, focuses mainly on the United Kingdom and contains tangential or poorly-substantiated links between irregular migration and crime, social disorder and terrorism. The media in the UK appear to have a fondness for the term 'illegal immigrants' rather than 'irregular immigrants or 'undocumented immigrants'. The reason for this might be because the term 'illegal' conveys the message more starkly than the other terms. However, it could also be that the media prefer 'illegal' because is a shorter word that fits more conveniently in a headline.

Methodically, this media analysis commenced with a search of *Lexis Nexus*, a comprehensive online repository of international, national and regional newspapers/media. The main search term was 'illegal immigrants', although additional searches were made and 'illegal' was substituted with 'irregular', 'undocumented' and 'bogus'. The searches, covering a period of ten years (January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2009) revealed the data in the table below:

Table 2 Articles by key words

	D/Mail on Sunday	The Guardian	Total
<b>Illegal immigrants</b> anywhere in the article	2 364	992	3 356
<b>Illegal immigrants</b> in headlines	67	26	93
<b>Irregular immigrants</b> anywhere in article	1	1	2
<b>Irregular immigrants</b> in headlines	0	0	0
<b>Undocumented immigrants</b> anywhere	5	4	9
<b>Undocumented immigrants</b> in headlines	0	0	0
<b>Bogus immigrants</b> anywhere	7	2	9
<b>Bogus immigrants</b> in headline	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 445</b>	<b>1 025</b>	<b>3 470</b>

The articles on ‘illegal immigrants’ in the two newspapers vary in length and focus, and they consist of news stories, features, personality profiles, news features, editorials, etc. The coverage in the *Mail* is overwhelmingly antagonistic or unfavourable and it seems the newspaper have set itself an anti-immigration crusading role. Its headlines are sensational while the stories are generally written in an accusatory tone – the illegal immigrants are blamed for being illegal and for a wide variety of crimes, the government is blamed for not doing enough to stop illegal immigration and immigration authorities are blamed for failing to stop illegal border crossings and for not deporting all irregulars. The *Guardian*, on the other hand, appears to produce neutral but critical reports, which are largely devoid of sensationalism.

The following paragraphs summarize the relevance of specific events and topics from cross-reading the full selection of articles on irregular migration, before a selection of articles is analysed in more detail.

Official and public discourses of irregular migration in the United Kingdom are almost exclusively about the illegal entry into and residence of non-EU and non-EEA immigrants in the country. The loudest or most dramatic mentions of illegal entries focus on illegal crossings and stowaways mostly through France. Media focus on this issue tends to be most intense during national elections and when there has been a major tragedy like the death of would-be immigrants in the back of a truck, as was the case in June 2000 when 58 Chinese nationals died in a lorry at the ferry port in Dover. Sometimes public discourses in the UK are motivated by events in other countries which are closely related to the UK, like the many dramatic attempts by the French government to close down ‘illegal’ immigrant camps in Sangatte close to the channel where migrants wait for an opportunity to enter

the United Kingdom. Closely related to illegal border crossings is the attempt by some immigrants to gain entry by means of fake or fraudulent documents. Stories connected to this originate mostly from air and sea ports and from asylum centres. The most reported variant of this are persons who make asylum claims based on false documents or those with fake student and visitor visas.

Another main form of irregular migration that is frequently highlighted in the United Kingdom relates to violation of approved visiting and residence permits. This involves immigrants who have wittingly or unwittingly failed to renew their visiting and residence permit. Unlike some other European countries, there are no routine 'stop and search' of immigrants or inspections of residence and visiting permits by the police in the UK. However, 'over-stayers' are sometimes apprehended accidentally or during planned raids of employment and residential places by police and immigration officers. The other form of irregular migration that has featured prominently in public discourses involves persons who have violated the terms and conditions of their entry or residence permit. They, for example, include foreign students who have abandoned studies in favour of fulltime work or some categories of immigrants who engage in paid employment in defiance of legal limitations.

Most recently attention has increasingly been directed at 'bogus' students and the institutions that facilitate their entry into and illegal residence in the country. In June 2009, Tony Millns of *English UK*, the umbrella organisation of language colleges, described the proliferation of bogus language colleges as 'a national scandal'. Testifying before the Members of Parliament, he said that there were about 2000 fake colleges and added: "It's almost unbelievable that anyone can hire two rooms above a chip shop and call themselves a college." (Millns, reported in *Daily Mirror*, 2009). In response to this and other criticisms that educational institutions have become a backdoor into the United Kingdom, the government implemented a new Points-Based-System in March 2009, which required that colleges must be formally approved by the Border Agency before they can recruit or sponsor students from outside the EU.

At the end of 2009, about 2000 institutions had either been refused permits to sponsor students or shut, according to a report in the *Daily Telegraph* (Daily Telegraph 2010). The new rules also require educational institutions to monitor the activities of foreign students and to report forms of delinquencies – like absenteeism - to the immigration authority. Officers of the UK Border Agency have routinely carried out unscheduled inspections of educational institutions and arrested both staff and students suspected of violating the rules. The inspections and arrests have sometimes been linked to religious extremism following suggestions that some terrorist suspects came into the country as students.



Links are also frequently made between irregular migration and unemployment, international criminal networks, human trafficking and prostitution. These links are explicit in the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum bill published by the Home Office in 2002. Apart from targeting illegal immigrants, the bill recommended tougher punishments for those who employ, harbour or traffic them. The other issues that have featured prominently in public discourses of irregular immigrants are tougher border controls and stories of marriages of convenience. The government commenced Operation Hornet in April 2002, which involved the use of new technology known as Borderguard to help detect people who try to get into the country using false identities (<http://www.workpermit.com/news/uk21.htm>). In 2008 a total of 31 880 non-asylum passengers were denied entry rights at the ports and they were subsequently repatriated. This figure represented a four percent increase on the 30 565 for 2007, according to official statistics (Home Office 2009:18). Between January and June 2009, 13 715 would-be immigrants were arrested in the back of lorries trying to get into Britain illegally from Calais. The number represented 76 percent increase on the 7 760 arrested during the same period in 2008, according to a report in the Daily Mail (2009).

In recent years the subject of amnesty for irregular immigrants have featured periodically in public discourses, motivated in large part by stories and experiences from Spain and the US. The most recent and heated debate was provoked in November 2008 when the Conservative Mayor of London, Mr Boris Johnson, expressed support for an amnesty in open defiance of his party's stance on the issue. A survey conducted in 2007 by Omnibus Research on behalf of *Strangers into Citizens* showed that a majority of British adults would accept asylum seekers and illegal immigrants as long as they work and pay taxes while 66% felt that those who want to work and pay taxes should be allowed to stay. There was widespread (67%) support for allowing those who have worked for four or more years and paid taxes to stay in the country. Two in three (67%) UK adults feel that it is wrong to still class an immigrant as 'illegal' if they have been in this country for four or more years and have worked and paid taxes. However, the results would probably be different if the survey were repeated at the beginning of 2010. It is most likely that the economic downturn and the associated threats of joblessness and falling living standards may have coloured the views of many.

For purposes of detailed qualitative analysis, 10 stories in the *Mail* were used - see appendix for a list of the 10 stories. The selected stories loosely represent the range of themes and sub-themes of the general media discourse of irregular migration. These themes are: statistics of illegal immigrants, illegal crossings, border control, human and financial costs of illegal immigration and illegal immigrants as economic saboteurs, disease carriers, drug smugglers, people traffickers, document

forgers and sexual assault perpetrators. The *Mail* also reports on issues of amnesty for illegal immigrants but its articles are overwhelmingly against the idea.

The newspaper makes direct and indirect connections between illegal immigrants and various forms of criminality. The most common variant of this are reports of court cases where ‘illegal’ immigrants are the defendants. The majority of such reports relate to sexual assault, robbery and physical attacks. The headlines of many of these reports contain the term ‘illegal immigrant’, but often the supposed illegality is neither mentioned nor explained in the body of the article. The ‘illegal’ status is often not relevant to the meaning or context of the story and the story would still have made complete sense without it. Other kinds of reports in the newspaper similarly portray ‘illegal’ immigrants as direct and formidable threats to the security of the British people. For instance, a report titled ‘Calais migrants ambush Briton’, published on 21 July 2009, states that “*Migrant gangs in Calais are targeting British holidaymakers in terrifying highway robberies.*”

The prominent voices in the *Mail’s* coverage are mostly those of its writers, immigration authorities, politicians, anti-immigrant groups, the judiciary, pollsters, immigrants and natives, especially those of border-town residents who are supposedly at the receiving end of the assault of illegal immigrants on the United Kingdom. Table 3 gives an overview of the geographical focus of the coverage in the *Mail*. In articulating the causes and impact of irregular immigration, the newspaper focuses mainly on the UK. Illegal immigrants target the UK because it is a soft touch and because of its generous social welfare payments. An example of this is contained in a report published on May 11, 2009: “*So intent are they to get to what they see as a land of easy asylum, council housing and generous benefits that they risk being crushed by the trucks’ wheels. Some carry crowbars or knives to try to prise open a chink in the lorries’ defences. This time the traffic speeds up again and none gets aboard. The migrants melt back into the woodland to await the next chance of an ambush... It’s just another week in the relentless assault on Britain’s borders.*”

**Table 3 Geographical focus of news coverage, based on selected stories for each year**

	<b>Verbal/ numerical indication of relevance</b>
<b>Irregular emigration to other countries</b>	Reference to illegal emigration of UK is largely absent in media discourses.
<b>Irregular migration into the own country</b>	Media discourses are saturated by mentions of irregular migration into the UK, mostly through the borders with France and air/sea ports
<b>Irregular migration unrelated to own citizens/country</b>	There are occasional mentions of illegal migration in the USA and some EU countries, mostly Spain and Italy, but often in the context of discussing the ‘problem’ as it affects the UK

The table below gives some indication of the themes and sub-themes that are dominant in media discourses of undocumented migration in the UK. The data demonstrate the relative dominance of

themes that emphasise the menace of undocumented migration and the near-absence of those themes that could contribute to a balanced and more meaningful portrayal. The sub-categories below are derived from the 10 selected stories published by the Daily Mail/Mail on Sunday – see annex 2. In analysing the stories, I allocated one point to every mention or reference to the selected categories. As the table shows, references to crime and criminality dominated, followed by the financial costs and health risks of undocumented migration.

**Table 4 Mentioning of Themes/sub-themes in 10 selected stories for each year**

Year	Illegal entry/border crossings	Crime: sex robbery, employment	Financial/health costs to Britain, HIV, other diseases	State policies; political asylum	Amnesty, work permit	Originating countries, push factors
2000	5	9	2	6		1
2001		1				
2002			14	4		1
2003		5		1		1
2004	1	2			1	
2005			2	2		
2006	2	3				
2007						
2008	1	1	2		2	
2009	2	12	2	4		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

Source: Own compilation

Apart from making unsubstantiated links between illegal immigrants and the spread of diseases such as AIDS and Hepatitis, the *Mail* is keen to emphasise the financial costs of providing health services: *“Immigrants are registering with a GP for free healthcare at a rate of more than one every minute, it was revealed last night. Analysis of NHS research shows that 605 000 people who arrived from overseas registered with a doctor in England and Wales last year - up by 50 per cent in only seven years. Campaigners say this places a significant ‘strain’ on services and could force patients to wait longer for appointments and treatment...there are fears a proportion of the remainder are illegal immigrants taking advantage of free NHS care.”* (22 December 2009). The other way the newspaper has sought to draw attention to the financial costs of immigration is by emphasising the cost of investment in border control measures and deportations. In a report titled ‘Britain paying illegal migrants in Calais £1 700 to return home’, published 28 July 2009, it states: *“Illegal immigrants queuing to enter Britain are being offered ‘bribes’ worth £1 700 to return home instead. The British and French Governments are funding the Global Calais Project which targets those staying in squalid makeshift camps near Calais. The immigrants - many of whom have paid people smugglers to help*

*them reach the UK - are told they will be put on a flight home and given help worth 2 000 euros if they agree to go voluntarily.”*

Not unexpectedly the *Mail* prioritises the voices of anti-immigration politicians and activists in its reports. For example, it has often given prominence to the views of Migration Watch, the right-leaning research group that has consistently argued for a cap on immigration and against amnesty. One such report was the reaction of Sir Andrew Green, Chairman of Immigration Watch, to media reports of population increase in Britain: “...immigration is driving our population to new heights. If nothing is done, we will have an extra 10million people within 25 years and nearly 70 per cent of them as a result of new immigration. The conspiracy of silence among the main political parties on this vitally important subject cannot be allowed to continue. They must face up to the huge impact that immigration will have on the future of our society and especially on England, which is the destination for more than 90 per cent of foreign migrants. (22 October 2009). The *Mail* has also similarly given prominence to the views of David Cameron, leader of the main opposition party, who has over the years become less disposed to in-migration: “The fact we have had uncontrolled immigration over the last decade, I think has been a mistake and has been damaging. That's why we would like to have a proper points system with limits attached to it so we can actually get immigration under control.(July 24, 2009).

## 5 Conclusion

This brief review of the substance and discourses of irregular immigration in the United Kingdom suggests that the issue first became prominent on the public domain from the early 1990s, a period that coincided with the last major economic recession. Whereas in the past the fingers pointed mainly at over-stayers, in recent times refused asylum seekers have been blamed for the increase in irregular immigrants. The available evidence suggests that the number of undocumented immigrants in the UK have increased steadily in the past 10 years. However, immigration authorities and the general public appeared to have been less vocal in its opposition during the economic prosperity of the mid-2000s. Most noticeably, government officials have been talking a lot tougher on immigration since the public sentiments were whipped following the anxiety and uncertainties caused by the economic downturn. For example, Home Office Minister Liam Byrne said in January 2008: “The rules are unambiguous: speak the language; obey the law; and make sure you're paying your taxes like the rest of us...It is a very British tough-minded fairness. There is a sense in the public mind that the sooner newcomers start on the type of journey we have in mind, the better.” The Conservatives-Liberal Democrats coalition, which came to power in May 2010, has already signalled a tougher stance on in-migration and irregular immigrants. The economic downturn and the desire to protect jobs from ‘foreigners’ also appear to be major motivation for the immigration policies and actions of the present government.

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## 7 Annex

### Annex 1: Ten Key stories by the Mail between 2000 and 2009

Date	Daily Mail
25-03-2000	Title: <i>SLAVE LABOUR: The Mail exposes the multimillion pound world of illegal immigrant workers run by English middlemen</i> Focus: migration of eastern Europeans for illegal employment and linked 'criminal' activities, like forgery, exploitation, DM's reporter posed as immigrant seeking work K/Ws: criminality, social nuisance, F/UF: clearly unfavourable
27-01-2007	Title: <i>Illegal immigrant jailed for attacks</i> Focus: Reports court judgement. Claim of 'illegality' is neither proven nor discussed anywhere in the report K/Ws: sexual assault, attack, intent to rape F/UF: Clearly unfavourable
8-08-2002	Title: <i>HIV-positive illegal immigrants are being allowed to stay in Britain and receive expensive drugs on the NHS for the rest of their lives. Don't blame them - blame the Human Rights Act</i> Focus: Immigrants, mostly from Africa, are the new sources of AIDS in Britain. So-called 'medical migrants' are targeting Britain as the best place to get free K/Ws: AIDS, HIV, cost of free treatment to taxpayers, Aids explosion F/UF: Clearly unfavourable Also see, ' <i>Hepatitis threat</i> ' of illegal immigrants (28-12-2002)
2-08-2003	Title: <i>The man who helped illegal immigrants fiddle their driving tests</i> Focus: An immigrant helped illegal Afghan immigrants cheat their way through driving tests. Bad immigrant drivers cause accidents. K/Ws: criminality, subterfuge F/UF: Clearly unfavourable
20-10-2004	Title: <i>Exposed, 250 bogus colleges in illegal immigrants racket</i> Focus: "So far, 1,050 suspect colleges throughout Britain have been investigated, with 250 exposed as outright fakes." Student visa scam is now a major back-door route into Britain K/Ws: criminality, illegal entry, back to Britain F/UF: Clearly Unfavourable
18-04-2005	Title: <i>Labour covered up figure of 500,000 illegal immigrants</i> Focus: Government's unwillingness or inability to compute number of illegal immigrants. It covered up the 500,000 estimates supplied by an 'expert'. K/Ws: deceit by governments, govt is not tough enough on immigrants F/UF: Unfavourable
28-02-2006	Title: <i>The illegal immigrant cocaine smugglers who raked in Pounds 3m a week to spend on gold, diamonds and designer clothes</i> Focus: immigrants involved in drug smuggling. Claim of their illegal status is largely unsubstantiated. Many members of the gang were not immigrants K/Ws: drugs, criminals, immigration rules violation etc F/UF: very unfavourable
60-04-2007	Title: <i>Illegal immigrant on sex charges to be deported</i> Focus: Immigrant from Ukraine charged with harassing two women. Again there is no

	<p>explanation of why he's illegal  K/Ws: crime, sex, assault  F/UF: very unfavourable</p>
24-11-2008	<p>Title: <i>An amnesty for illegal immigrants? What staggering stupidity</i>  Focus: attacks Mayor of London, Boris Johnson's proposal of amnesty for illegal immigrants  K/Ws: Illegal immigrants do not deserve kindness/hospitality from British people  F/UF: Unfavourable</p>
11-05-2009	<p>Title: <i>SWARMING AROUND A UK-BOUND TRUCK, ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS PREPARE TO STOW AWAY. CHALLENGE THEM AND THEY'LL RESPOND WITH KNIVES AND IRON BARS.</i>  Focus: Activities of would-be 'illegal immigrants at the French border town of Calais.  K/Ws: Aggressive and violent immigrants, illegal border crossing,  F/UF: Very Unfavourable</p>