

Britain's demographic profile is changing at a bewildering rate

The UK has the biggest loss of tertiary-educated citizens among developed countries

By Anthony Scholefield

Britain's demographic profile is rapidly changing. So much so that on present projections 40 per cent of the population in 70 years time will not be descendants of those who were living in the UK in 1997. This is clear from the figures for migration for 2005 released by the Office of National Statistics.

The change, which is far greater than that occurring in the United States, is likely to have profound and wide-reaching economic, social and political implications. These will need to be much more widely understood if there is to be an informed debate on immigration from the EU and upon immigration-related issues generally.

The measurement of demographic change is based on changes occurring in the population within the previous year taking into account both the

numbers of those leaving a country as well as those coming in. Debate in this country has focussed almost exclusively on immigration with the result that the change taking place in the composition of the British population has been significantly underestimated. The fact is that the British people are changing far more rapidly than is realised.

Since 1997 the demographic change has amounted to 4.5 per cent, with long-resident British citizens being replaced by non-British, resulting in a net increase in total population of about two per cent (see

Table 1). The net figures show that, in nine years, 619,000 British citizens left the UK and 2,014,000 non-British arrived. The rate of change accelerated

in 2004 and 2005 so that in 70 years nearly 40 per cent of the British population would not be descendants of the 1997 British citizens if present trends of 2004/5 continue. (This excludes trends in mortality and

both a country of immigration and emigration. Immigration as a percentage of the existing population has surpassed the USA immigration percentage since 2002. Emigration has always been a massively higher percentage of the UK's population than the USA. For the USA to reach the same emigration rates as the UK, 600,000 US native-born Americans would have had to have left the US in 2004 compared to the actual 48,000.

One striking difference between the two countries is to be found in the number of emigrants with tertiary education. As a World Bank report by Frederic Docquier of the University of Lille has shown Britain has by far the biggest loss of those with a tertiary education among developed countries, and the USA by far the lowest.

In 2000 the number of tertiary-educated British and American citizens living outside their native countries was as follows:

UK: 1,542,011
USA: 428,078.

The difference is all the more striking given that the US population is five times that of Great Britain.

Although the United States has a history as a nation of immigrants the figures show that Britain is going through a process of democratic

transformation which is far more rapid. The substantial replacement of the British people in a couple of generations is now a real possibility.

Table 1: UK Demographic Change (all 000's)

Net Flow	All [a]	British citizens [b]	Non-British [c]	Demographic Change [b+ c]	% Population
1997	+47	-60	+107	+167	0.27
1998	+139	-23	+162	+185	0.30
1999	+163	-23	+186	+209	0.35
2000	+163	-57	+220	+277	0.46
2001	+172	-53	+225	+278	0.46
2002	+153	-91	+244	+335	0.55
2003	+151	-85	+236	+321	0.53
2004	+222	-120	+342	+462	0.77
2005	+185	-107	+292	+397	0.66

Table 2: USA Demographic Change (from US Census)

Net Flow	All [a]	USA native born [b]	Non-USA born [c]	Demographic Change [b+ c]	% Population
2001	1,339,827	-48,000	+1,387,827	+1,435,827	0.50
2002	1,449,334	-48,000	+1,497,334	+1,545,334	0.52
2003	1,286,118	-48,000	+1,334,118	+1,382,118	0.47
2004	1,221,013	-48,000	+1,269,013	+1,317,013	0.44
2005	1,049,526	-48,000	+1,097,526	+1,145,526	0.39

fertility.)

A comparison with demographic change in the US is instructive (See Table 2). Unlike the USA, the UK is