# Labour adopts tougher migration policies amid rising net migration and Tory pressure



## Labour Faces Accusations of Mimicking Tory Migration Policies Amid Rising Pressures

Labour has come under fire for allegedly adopting key elements of Conservative migration policy as the UK government prepares to unveil its imminent immigration White Paper. This proposed legislation is expected to introduce stringent requirements for migrants seeking work visas, including increasing the English language proficiency requirement from GCSE to A-level. Critics point out that this move, rather than representing a bold new direction, echoes the discredited policies of the previous administration, reflecting Labour's desperation in the face of growing public discontent.

In addition to elevating language requirements, the anticipated White Paper aims to extend the qualifying period for indefinite leave to remain (ILR) from five years to a staggering ten years. Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp has criticized the Labour government for lacking original ideas on migration, accusing it of resorting to Conservative policies in a bid to placate an increasingly frustrated electorate. He noted, “This Labour Government is so bereft of ideas on migration that it has resorted to trying to rip off parts of Conservative migration policy.”

The backdrop to these developments is marked by soaring net migration figures, exceeding 900,000 by mid-2023. Both Labour and Conservative parties are urgently reassessing their immigration strategies amid intense scrutiny from the populace and rising pressures from the newly triumphant political party now capturing the disillusioned votes. This party has emerged as a vocal critic of established migration policies, tapping into widespread frustrations surrounding immigration and national governance.

Under the leadership of Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, the government is gearing up to implement comprehensive reforms in immigration management, including the controversial changes to ILR. Other proposals aim to restrict the access international students have to post-graduation jobs and link the ability of employers to sponsor visas to their investment in training British workers. While framed as a necessary tightening of immigration controls, such measures could further complicate the landscape for migrants already caught in limbo, prolonging their vulnerable statuses without addressing the core issues surrounding net migration.

Labour’s legislative ambition also extends to introducing a Deportation Bill aimed at expediting processes for the automatic deportation of illegal migrants and limiting certain legal protections in immigration cases. The Prime Minister's office has attempted to divert blame for high immigration levels onto past administrations, but critics argue that this tactic fails to address their own role in perpetuating these challenges.

Labour's approach seems to be shifting; Sir Keir Starmer has pledged to reduce levels of work-related immigration by advocating for visa regulations that prioritise training British workers. His proposed reforms will penalise employers who flout labour laws by restricting their ability to recruit foreign talent. However, this poses a significant risk of stifling economic growth and undermining critical services reliant on skilled foreign workers, particularly in healthcare and IT sectors.

As the UK’s migration policies come under increasing scrutiny, Labour is scrambling to align itself with voter concerns while contending with a complex political landscape. With both major parties locking horns over immigration, the influence of an assertive right-leaning counterpart demands a recalibration of their messaging. The pressing electorate concerns over uncontrolled immigration amplify the urgency for a coherent, effective opposition that champions the interests of ordinary citizens, pushing both Labour and the Conservatives to rethink their strategies in order to fend off rising populism.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14693885/Labour-accused-ripping-Tory-proposals-migration.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/afa1aee7-1f21-4c3a-b32e-54fcb5b1ede7> - The UK government is planning to tighten rules around permanent residency for migrants by extending the required qualifying period from five to potentially ten years for some applicants. This initiative, part of a forthcoming Home Office immigration white paper, is intended to address high net migration figures that surged to over 900,000 in mid-2023. The reforms follow recent political pressure stemming from the rise of the right-wing Reform UK party, which has challenged both Labour and Conservatives in local elections. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper is leading efforts to reform immigration by introducing tougher residency and language requirements. Additional measures will target international students’ job access post-graduation, curb misuse of care visas, and link employers’ visa access to their training investment in UK workers. The conservative opposition has proposed similar steps, including a legal cap on immigration and Human Rights Act exemptions. Critics argue that stricter settlement conditions might prolong migrants’ insecure status without significantly lowering net migration. The upcoming white paper aims to overhaul what the government calls a “broken” immigration system.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-may-restrict-students-countries-most-likely-claim-asylum-2025-05-06/> - The UK government is considering restricting student visa applications from countries whose nationals are deemed most likely to seek asylum, as part of a broader effort to reduce net migration, which stood at 728,000 in the year to June. This potential policy shift follows voter backlash against the Labour Party, led by Prime Minister Keir Starmer, during recent local elections, with frustration focused on issues such as illegal immigration. A forthcoming Immigration White Paper will outline the government's comprehensive strategy to manage migration. Last year, of the 108,000 asylum seekers in the UK, 16,000 had entered on student visas. While the government does not specify nationalities for these cases, students from Pakistan, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka are reportedly more likely to claim asylum after arriving on various types of visas. Some Labour MPs, particularly from former strongholds known as the 'Red Wall,' are pressing for a tougher stance on migration to regain voter confidence.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/81e8be1d-67f8-40d8-a586-01eb582fcf81> - The recent local elections in England signal a significant shift in the political landscape, with Nigel Farage’s Reform UK emerging as a potent force. The party’s unexpected victories, including Labour's loss in a traditionally safe seat in Runcorn and Helsby, highlight its growing influence. This rise reflects public disillusionment, particularly over issues like immigration and national dysfunction. Farage’s insurgent momentum and populist messaging resonate with voters, challenging the established parties. Though Reform faces scrutiny over candidate vetting and Farage’s controversial connections, the dynamics of the electoral system could still favor them in a multi-party contest. The article argues that Labour must address immigration seriously, noting persistent public frustration over illegal migration and perceived judicial leniency toward foreign criminals. While past government efforts failed to tighten immigration controls, other European countries like Denmark and France have taken stricter, more effective measures. The UK is urged to adopt similar strategies, including reforming the interpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights and implementing digital ID cards. Ultimately, mainstream parties must recalibrate their positions in line with public sentiment or risk ceding ground to populist challengers like Reform UK.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/a26fc82f-958e-4d6c-a6f5-b4231b1b7acd> - In response to significant electoral losses to Reform UK, the Conservative Party has proposed a new 'deportation bill' as part of a rightward shift on immigration policy. The draft legislation includes automatic deportation for individuals entering the UK via illegal routes, revoking indefinite leave to remain for migrants who claim benefits or fall below income thresholds, and doubling the residency requirement for permanent status from five to ten years. It also suggests a legal cap on annual migration and exemptions from the Human Rights Act for immigration matters. Additional measures include deporting foreign criminals, mandating scientific age testing for asylum seekers, and removing their rights to data protection. Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp described the proposal as a 'bold, pragmatic and deliverable' strategy to regain control of borders. This push comes amid public dissatisfaction linked to past Conservative governance and electoral backlash, as the party faces mounting pressure from both traditional allies and right-wing opponents. Meanwhile, the Labour government is advancing its own immigration reforms, and Reform UK is advocating strict immigration freezes and local resistance to housing asylum seekers, reflecting a fiercely competitive political landscape on immigration matters.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/392f1411-6cee-468e-802a-72a5652f9650> - Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer has pledged to cut work-related immigration to the UK, ensuring visa rules are linked to training more British workers. Starmer aims to ban employers violating employment laws from hiring overseas workers and connect immigration policy with skills training to address industry demands. Labour supports the current Conservative measures reducing immigration, such as restricting family accompaniment for students and increasing salaries for skilled work visas, which have led to a decrease in immigration. Labour's shadow home secretary, Yvette Cooper, seeks to leverage visa use to boost UK workers' training, particularly in health, social care, IT, construction, and engineering sectors. Business groups express concerns that such policies could hurt the economy and deter foreign investment. They argue that fixing the skills system is crucial before reducing immigration. Critics highlight that increased immigration has been driven by public sectors like higher education and the NHS, suggesting more funding is needed to address these areas effectively.
7. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/european-union/article/2023/09/19/keir-starmer-leader-of-british-labour-party-outlines-european-policy_6137723_156.html> - Keir Starmer, leader of the UK's Labour Party, has begun outlining his European policy as the campaign for the next British general election heats up. In a series of high-profile international engagements, Starmer has focused on contentious issues like Brexit renegotiation and migration. He criticized the existing post-Brexit trade deal, calling for a major renegotiation, though he ruled out rejoining the EU single market. Starmer also proposed scrapping the Conservative law on asylum seekers arriving in small boats and suggested a readmission plan with the EU. While Conservative MPs claim this would lead to an influx of migrants, Starmer disputed it. Despite apparent differences, the Labour and Conservative stances on Brexit and migration are not vastly different. Starmer's visits to international leaders, including meetings with Emmanuel Macron and Justin Trudeau, signal Labour's commitment to repairing EU relations damaged during Boris Johnson's and Liz Truss's tenures.