

# **Immigration, Social Media and Narrative: An LLM-led Analysis**

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# Immigration, Social Media and Narrative: An LLM-led Analysis

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## Foreword by Hannah O'Rourke - co-Founder of Campaign Lab

As we reflect on the current political landscape, this research becomes increasingly significant. The debates surrounding immigration, particularly in the context of the 2023 hotel riots and the rising vote share for the Reform Party, indicate the growing importance of understanding how immigration is discussed, framed, and perceived. This report highlights the discord between emotional and moral language in these debates, illuminating the complexities that lie ahead for political discourse. As these tensions flare up in communities, it becomes critical to recognise the necessity for political strategies that work.

This paper is not just an academic exercise, but a resource to equip the grassroots— the people working daily to bridge divides in their communities. We face the challenge of tackling immigration narratives on multiple levels. While the media may demand a more forthright response, we were particularly interested in examining what is happening on the ground in local Facebook groups. Who is pushing back, and why? How is this discussion playing out in local communities up and down the country? By leveraging AI and innovative analytical techniques, we now have the tools to understand these dynamics more deeply and effectively. These findings suggest that progressives must adapt by engaging not only with the facts but also with the emotional undercurrents that drive opposition to immigration.

Looking forward, the challenge of this research is how we, as a progressive ecosystem, can use these insights to empower people at the local level, giving them the confidence and knowledge to more deeply engage in these conversations, build bridges, and shift the narrative within their own communities.

We thank Unbound Philanthropy for their generous funding, which made this critical work possible.

## Executive Summary

Immigration is known to be the biggest topic of interest among Reform voters. We used a Large Language Model to classify 8,734 posts on local Facebook groups associated with the hotel riots of 2023 to study how these people talk about immigration. We found that there is a high level of animosity between the two groups of people who are negative and positive about immigration. Interestingly, the most dominant theme about immigration itself was about government management of immigration rather than about immigrants. The government is disproportionately housing asylum seekers in hotels based in poorer areas like those we are studying here. The LLM also found a discordance between the arguments used by those who are negative and positive about immigration. Those who are negative about immigration tend to use emotional language, whereas those who are positive tend to use moral language. We speculate that this discordance may be a driver of animosity between the two groups. We recommend that progressives should work on ways to engage with the emotional side of the debate. Our method for analysing large quantities of social media data has great potential for understanding differing perspectives of social strata.

## Introduction and Main Findings

As of the 16th August, immigration was the number one issue for Britons, with 34% of the public naming immigration as the most important issue for the country. For Conservative voters, this figure is 62%<sup>1</sup>. These figures have risen in the aftermath of recent far-right led riots<sup>2</sup> that broke out in response to the fabricated claim that the murder of three young girls in Southport was carried out by a Muslim asylum seeker named Ali Al-Shakati.<sup>3</sup>

Social media allows for the extraordinarily fast dissemination of such claims; Ali Al-Shakati does not exist, but this did not prevent posts attributing responsibility to him accruing more than 4000 shares, 90,000 engagements and 400,000 views. On the day of the stabbing alone, there were 2,632 posts containing the made up moniker on social media according to the Independent.<sup>4</sup> The role played by social media in the recent far-right riots demonstrates how powerful it can be in the formation and propagation of narratives.

The formation and propagation of narratives by bad actors on social media is closely linked to far-right groups and their populist instigators. While the influence of these actors should not be ignored, it is important to acknowledge that their opinions are not necessarily reflective of those more-moderate people to whom immigration is an issue. These people are much larger in number and understanding their issues and opinions is of critical value to understanding how to form a nuanced response to populist rhetoric.

In light of the power of social media, we wanted to investigate the language, frames and narratives present in online discourse in immigration. What are people saying about immigration? How are they saying it? Local community groups are organic repositories of public sentiment that give us access to the unmediated thoughts of the public. This protects against the distorting influence of

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2024-08/ipsos-issues-index-august-2024-charts2.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup><https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/southport-riots-uk-false-identity-misinformation-suspect-b2594042.html>

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

phenomena such as the Hawthorne effect, where the behaviour of participants in a study is altered because they know they are being observed.

To do this, we analyse 8,734 comments made by 1,715 different authors, and which were gathered from three community Facebook groups during 2023. We focus on Facebook groups for communities involved in the earliest wave of hotel protests in that year: Skegness, Llanelli and Dover. We use an innovative AI methodology leveraging the Large Language Model Claude Opus to generate classifications of the comments across multiple dimensions and provide summaries of the language used.

In bringing multiple typologies to bear on our comment set, we hope to draw out a higher resolution picture of immigration discourse. Classification by argument subject is important since it provides information as to *why* the commenters hold the positions that they do. Sorting by attitudinal disposition towards migrants allows us to see if there were any differences between the two ‘camps’ in terms of discourse around immigration, whilst categorising by argument type and moral perspective gives us more insight into exactly what those differences might be.

Our main findings were as follows:

- **Our work suggests the widespread perception of a fierce antagonism between the two sides of this debate is accurate:** ad-hominem attacks constituted 17% of the comment sample and Claude picks out terms like ‘fascist’, ‘lefties’, ‘gammon’, ‘snowflake’ and ‘racist’ as characteristic of that kind of comment
- It is clear that whilst attitudes towards migrants in the comment set were significantly more negative than positive, **much of the hostility towards immigration present was in fact targeted at the government**, and constituted by concern around public service provision and procedural fairness
  - This is relevant for those thinking about the kinds of messaging which might shift the dial on immigration; prejudice towards migrants themselves can only account for part of the wider concern regarding immigration in our sample
  - Overall, only 2.6% of the comments in our sample expressed concern about immigration threatening British identity or replacing natives. However, as a proviso, this may be due to Facebook’s site moderation

- **Constructive communication between the two sides is hamstrung by misaligned planes of engagement;** more than 70% of those comments which exhibit a negative attitude towards migrants are classified by Claude as belonging to the category of Emotional Argument, whereas for those comments exhibiting a positive attitude the most prevalent argument type is Moral Argument
  - That the LLM did not classify *any* of the comments exhibiting negative attitudes towards migrants as moral arguments suggests that rather than investigating how the moral perspectives of the left and right differ on this issue, we ought to move beyond Haidt's theory of Moral Foundations<sup>5</sup> which focuses on moral arguments, and recognise that the right, for the most part, are not inhabiting a moral perspective at all
  - That anti-immigrant discourse is couched in emotional language is consistent with research which has found significant links between negative emotional states and attraction to right-wing populism<sup>6</sup>
  - This juxtaposition might go some way to explaining the antagonism: if the two different camps are thinking in fundamentally different terms, then it seems possible that this could contribute to the scope for misinterpretation
    - "I am angry immigration is happening" is very different to and neutral about the claim "I think immigration is morally wrong" - but a speaker thinking primarily in moral terms might equate the two and respond on that basis
    - Likewise, "I think immigration is morally right" is very different to and neutral about the claim "One should not be angry about immigration" but a speaker thinking primarily in emotional terms might equate the two and respond on that basis
  - Our findings lead us to consider that progressives may be making a tactical error in reaching for moral arguments when responding to positions rooted and articulated in emotional arguments. This has strong intuitive appeal - it would not be surprising if those in negative emotional states respond poorly to what are

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<sup>5</sup> Haidt, J. (2013). *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*. Penguin

<sup>6</sup> Ward, G., Schwartz, H. A., Giorgi, S., Menges, J. I., & Matz, S. C. (2024). The role of negative affect in shaping populist support: Converging field evidence from across the globe. *American Psychologist*

perceived as moral lectures, and research suggests active listening might be a more fruitful route to the building of positive relationships<sup>7</sup>

- We find evidence that people respond emotionally to moral arguments, suggesting they may be counter productive
- Further investigation into how moral arguments are received by those thinking about an issue in primarily emotional terms would therefore be a promising avenue of future research
- **Notably, we did not find much evidence of a few authors doing most of the posting** (known as author concentration) on any particular narrative or messaging style, with the exception of those arguments seeking to engage in factual correction
  - **This suggests that concern was organic** and relatively even distributed rather than concentrated among a small number of organised, active and partisan commenters
- **Using an LLM to analyse large datasets is a method with great potential** - though not free of human intervention, Claude saved countless man hours in both constructing the typologies used and classifying the comment set accordingly
  - Claude also successfully generated succinct summaries of the various categories, giving us insight into the frames and themes deployed in discourse in immigration

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<sup>7</sup> Kluger, A. N., Lehmann, M., Aguinis, H., Itzchakov, G., Gordoni, G., Zyberaj, J., & Bakaç, C. (2024). A Meta-analytic Systematic Review and Theory of the Effects of Perceived Listening on Work Outcomes. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 39, 295-344

## Using a Large Language Model (LLM) to Create the Typology

To investigate these questions we use an LLM (Claude Opus), to develop a classification schema for the comments by argument subject and type. These typologies are then simplified by manually removing duplicates and minimising crossover between categories. Comments are then grouped by Claude according to their attitudinal disposition toward migrants, and by the moral perspective (using Haidt's typology) they inhabit. By using Claude with minimal prompting, our aim is to eliminate our own biases as much as possible in the construction of the categories so as to avoid the threat of baking the conclusion into the structure of the study. We also independently review 200 of Claude's classifications to make sure that we have a high level of confidence about its accuracy. This produced typologies across four different dimensions:

### **Subject of Argument**

- Community Impact of Migration
- Migrant Character Concerns
- Migrant Management Issues
- Positive Contributions of Migrants
- Compassion and Shared Humanity Towards Migrants
- Flawed Argument
- Ad-Hominem Attacks

### **Attitude Towards Migrants**

- Positive
- Negative

### **Moral Perspective (Haidt)**

- Care/Harm
- Fairness/Cheating
- Loyalty/Betrayal
- Authority/Subversion
- Sanctity/Degradation
- Liberty/Oppression

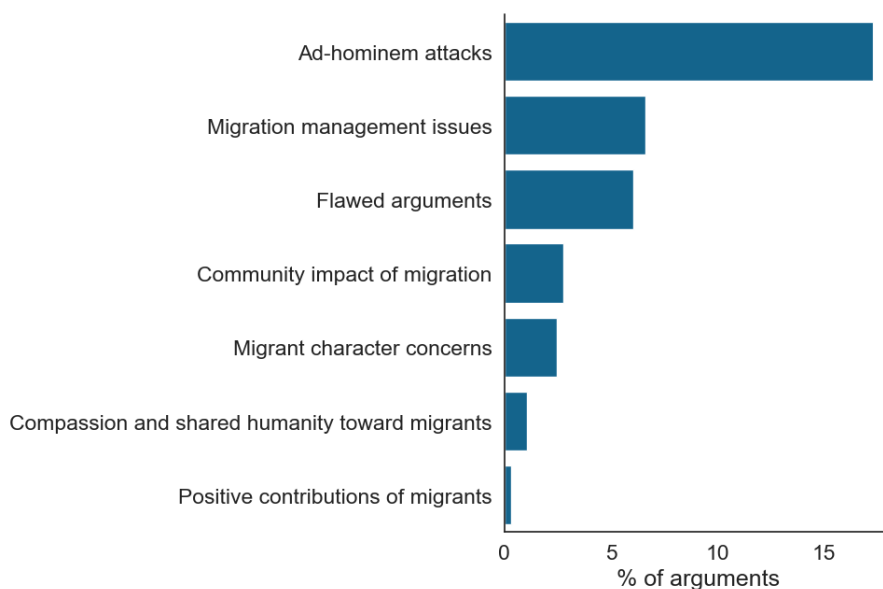
### **Type of Argument**

- Moral
- Pragmatic
- Emotional
- Logical

## What do People Talk About and How do They Talk About It?

All argument classification was done by Claude. Of the total set of 8,734 comments, around one third of them were left unclassified by Claude, mainly due to not being about immigration. The distribution of the remaining comments by argument type is displayed below:

### Subject of Argument



### Discussion:

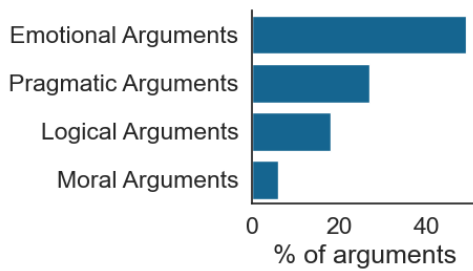
- The government's handling of immigration, rather than migrants themselves, was the biggest target of criticism: Migration Management Concern was the largest subject category of comment, in this case for mishandling the situation (16% of total comments) and not prioritising citizens (8%)
  - This suggests the distinction between hostility to immigration and hostility towards migrants themselves is worth remembering - the former attitude might be sensitive to improvements in provision of public services for citizens in a way the latter is not
- Illustrating the contentious nature of the topic, after removing factual correction from the broader category, more than 70% of the of the remaining Flawed Argument comments consisted of ad-hominem attacks on other posters
  - If it were a standalone category, this would make ad-hominem attacks the second largest subject category with 962 comments

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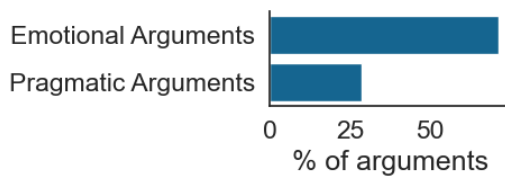
- The LLM did identify a subsection of comments expressing concerns that migrants threatened British identity or were replacing natives, but these amounted to just 2.6% of the overall comment sample
- Overall, there were many more comments exhibiting negative attitudes towards migrants (53%) than positive ones (12%)
  - These numbers do not add up to 100% since not all comments exhibited an attitude towards migrants

## Type of Argument

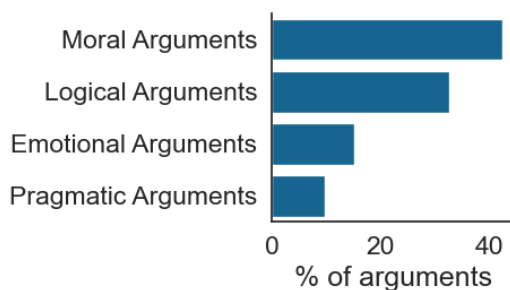
Rather than looking at the subjects of the arguments, we also look at the ways the arguments were expressed, which we dub the Type of Argument. The below shows the distribution of different argument types within the full set of comments:



We can then use this lens after filtering by attitude towards migrants, looking first at the subset of comments which displayed a *negative attitude* towards migrants:



And then at those which exhibited a *positive attitude* toward migrants:



## Discussion

- Over 70% of arguments displaying a negative attitude towards migrants were Emotional Arguments whilst none were moral arguments
  - We speculate that empathy and active listening may be a more useful approach for progressives in light of research that shows these techniques can promote higher relationship quality in some settings<sup>8</sup>.
- Those comments exhibiting positive attitudes towards migrants were most likely to deploy moral argumentation

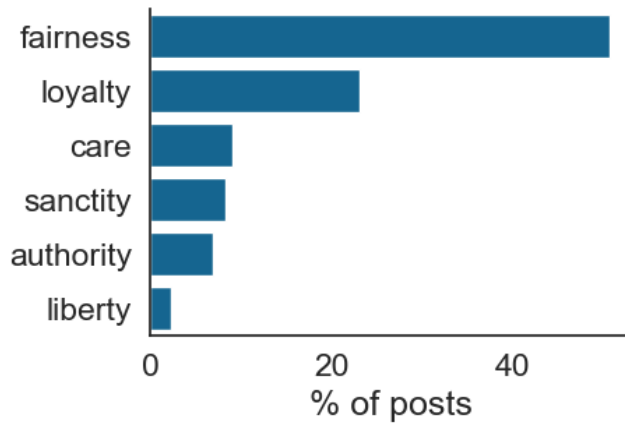
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<sup>8</sup>Kluger, A. N., Lehmann, M., Aguinis, H., Itzhakov, G., Gordoni, G., Zyberaj, J., & Bakaç, C. (2024). A Meta-analytic Systematic Review and Theory of the Effects of Perceived Listening on Work Outcomes. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 39, 295-344

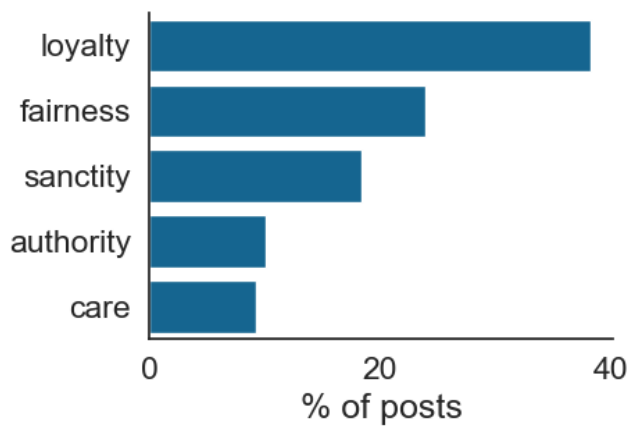
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## Moral Perspective

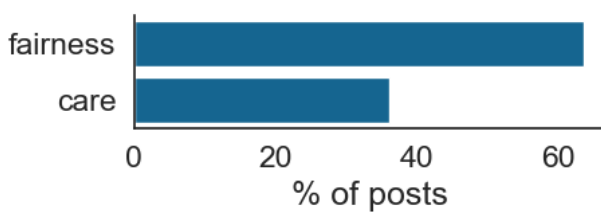
Distribution by Moral Perspective over the complete dataset was as follows:



Those exhibiting *negative attitudes* towards migrants have the following distribution:



Those exhibiting *positive attitudes* are distributed like so:



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## Discussion

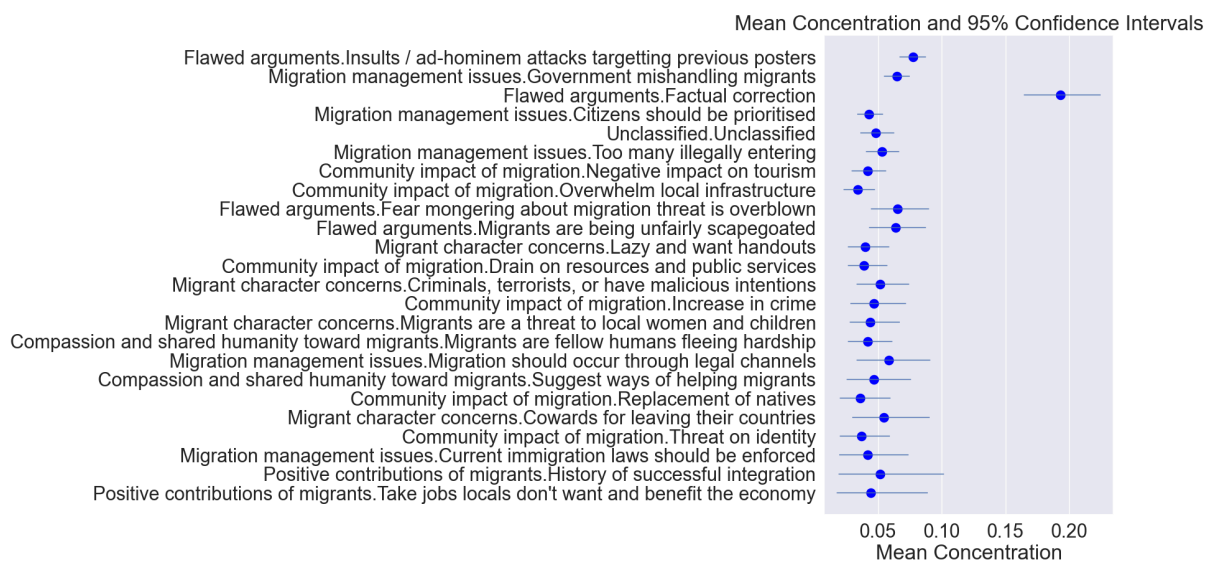
- These results are consistent with Haidt's observation that the left, who support migration, mainly occupy the moral perspectives of "care" and "fairness" whereas the right inhabit a broader spectrum of moral perspectives
- Among comments that displayed negative attitudes towards migrants, the most common moral perspective was "loyalty" which is about being loyal to other members of one's group
  - In this context migrants might constitute and be perceived as an outgroup or 'other'

## Are Most Comments by Only a Few Authors?

We look at how concentrated the comments are among the authors by using a mathematical metric.<sup>9</sup> At a high level of concentration, a few authors make most of the comments and most authors make very few comments. At low levels of concentration, all authors make relatively similar numbers of comments.

Looking at the author concentration levels of the different arguments by subject, we found that

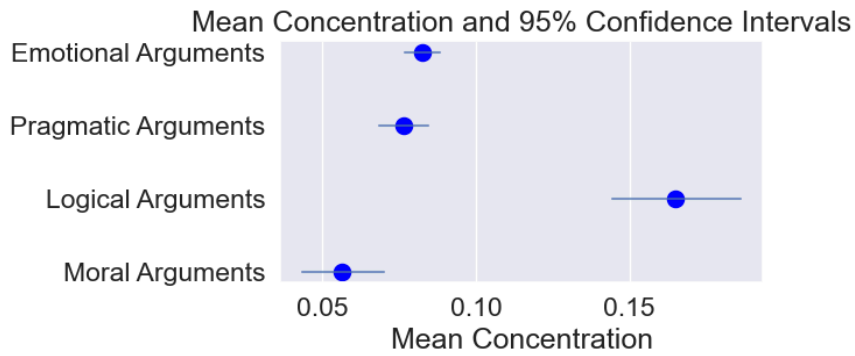
- Concentration is relatively low for all argument subjects. This suggests that the content is relatively organic and not being led by a few individuals.
- One thing we note is that the argument subject ‘Flawed Arguments.Factual Correction’ had a slightly higher concentration, suggesting a small number of commenters were responsible for a disproportionate amount of the factual corrections. This was reflected by the analysis on argument types which found logical arguments being of relatively higher concentration.
- Other analysis on author concentrations around moral foundations did not find anything of note.



<sup>9</sup> We use the same measure of author concentration that is used in *Nikolov D, Lalmas M, Flammini A, et al. (2019) Quantifying biases in online information exposure. Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology 70(3): 218–229.*

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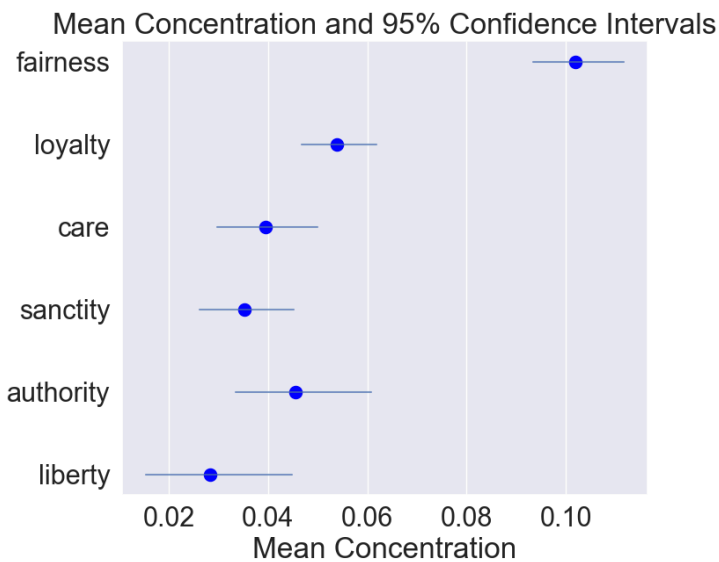
Concentration by Argument Type is as follows:



Discussion:

- Here again, concentration is relatively low suggesting a broad range of commenters rather than a few hyper engaged voices, with the exception of 'Logical Argument', a category partially comprised of factual correction

And by Moral Perspective:



## How do People Respond to One-another?

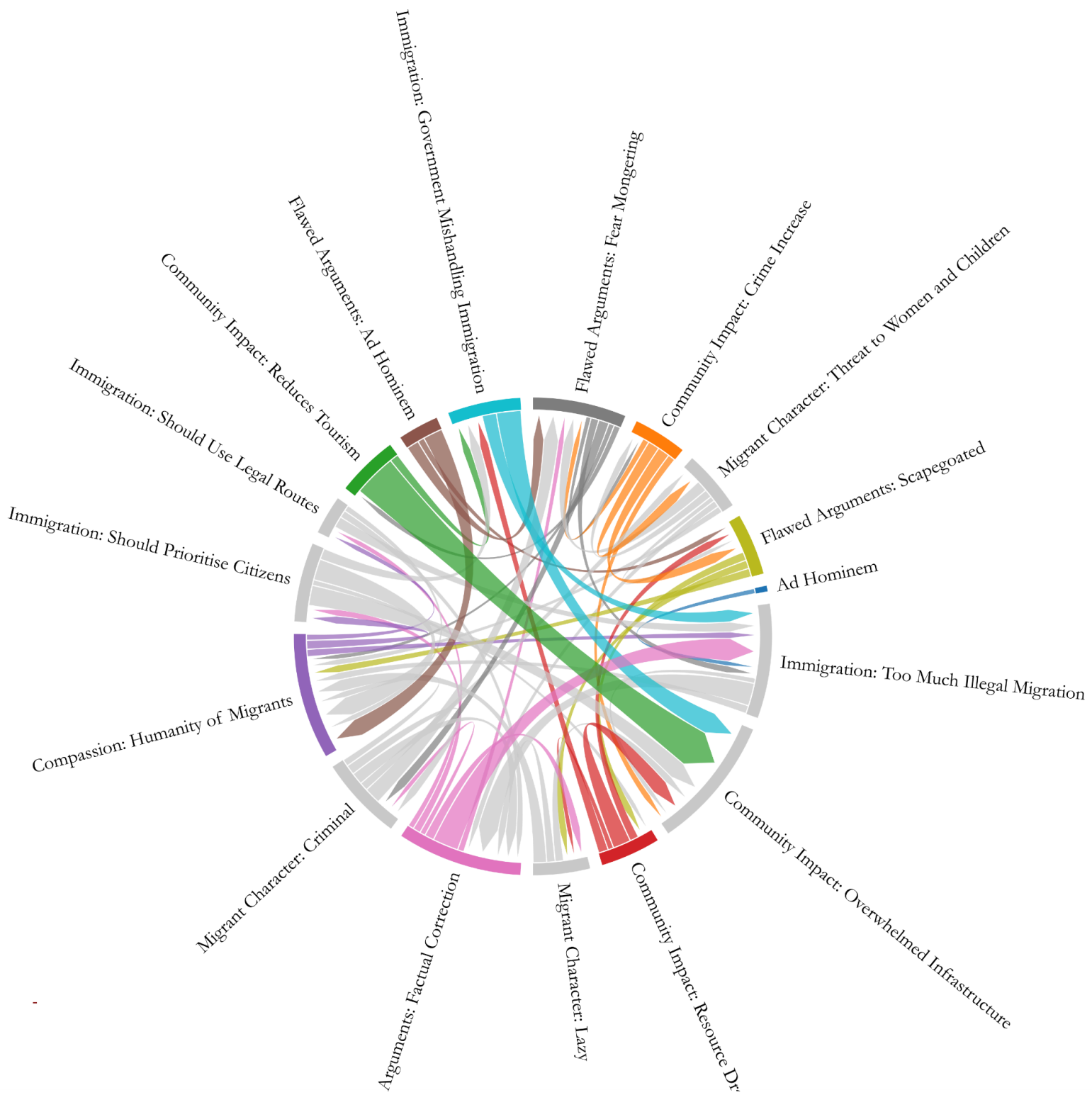
We were interested in examining the relationships between different argument categories. For each category, we analysed which other categories it responded to, looking for cases where a category responded to another category at a much higher frequency than one would expect by random chance. The extent to which this was the case was quantified using a statistical measure known as the  $Z$  score. Those categories that responded to others significantly more than expected are shown in the chart below with the thickness of the lines determined by the  $Z$  score ( $Z > 2.0$  shown).

### Subject of Argument

Discussion:

- To help give a sense of the scale, the weakest association in this diagram is the arrow from “Flawed Arguments: Fear Mongering” to “Community Impact: Crime Increase” which has a  $Z$  score of 2, whilst the strongest association is the arrow from “Community Impact: Reduces Tourism” to “Community Impact: Overwhelmed Infrastructure” which has a  $Z$  Score of 16.8
- Most arguments tended to respond to other arguments of the same subject with high  $Z$  scores (excluded from chart)
- Nonetheless, when we look at non-same subject posts, there were still some clear associations uncovered:
  - The category “Community impact: Reduces tourism” responded disproportionately to “Community impact: Overwhelms infrastructure”
    - Given all of the facebook groups we studied existed in areas where hotels has been used to house asylum seekers, its possible that there is significant overlap between these categories as hotels are both pieces of community infrastructure and important elements of the tourism industry
  - “Flawed arguments: Factual corrections” responded disproportionately to “Immigration: Too much Illegal Migration”
    - This suggests that levels of illegal migration may be an important misconception among those with negative attitudes toward migration.
  - “Flawed Arguments: Ad Hominem” responded disproportionately to “Compassion: Humanity of Migrants”
    - This is consistent with a group holding a perception that those arguing for compassionate treatment of migrants are virtue signalling

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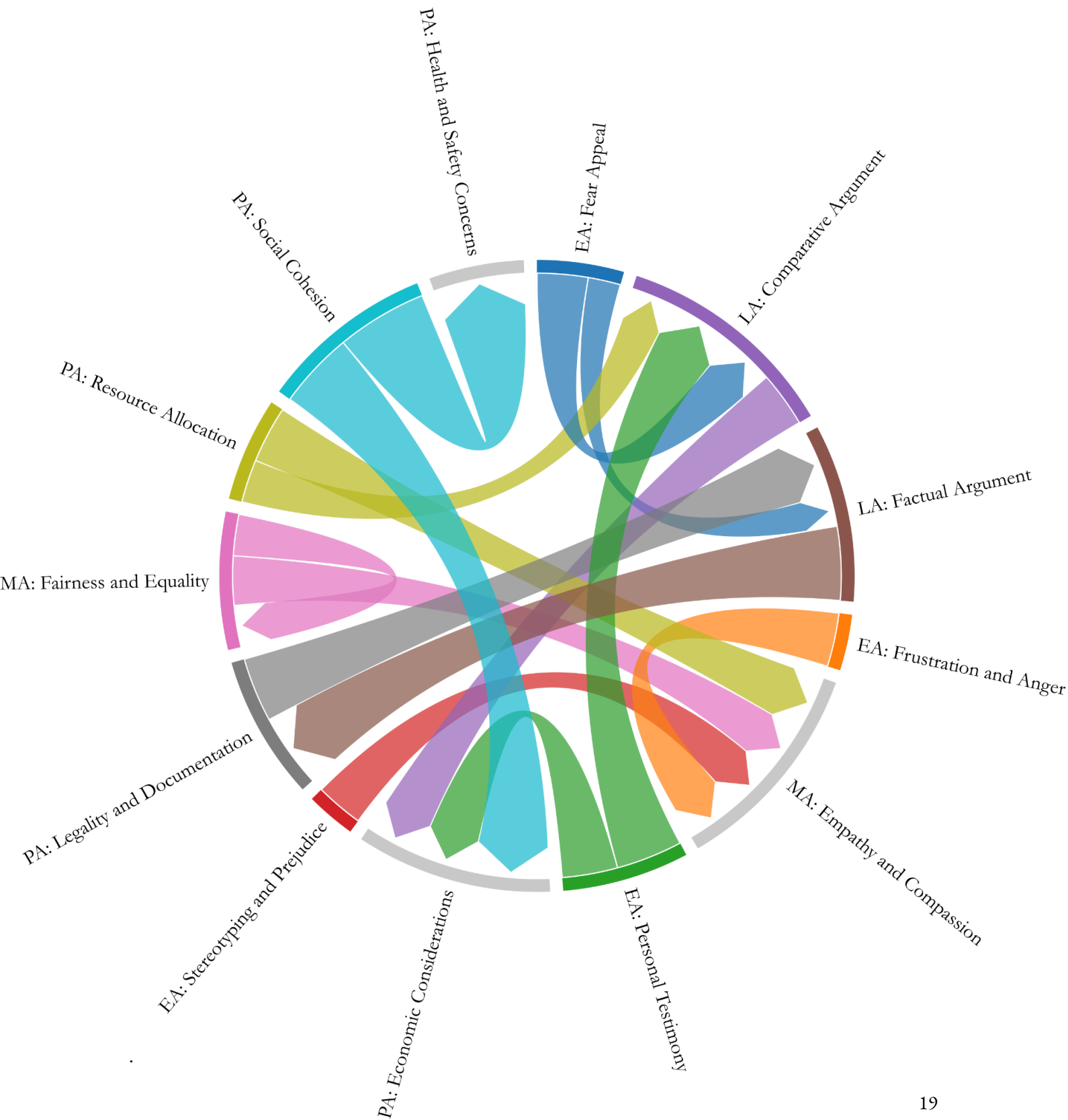
- “Immigration: Government Mishandling Immigration” responded disproportionately to

“Community Impact: Overwhelmed Community Infrastructure” and “Immigration: Too Much Illegal Immigration”

- This might be an example of the argument commonly made by those that community infrastructure and public services being overwhelmed is the product of government’s failure to manage migration properly

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Type of Argument



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### Discussion:

- To help give a sense of the scale, the weakest association in this diagram is the arrow from EA: Fear Appeal to LA: Factual Argument which has a Z score of 2.1, whilst the strongest association is the arrow from PA: Social Cohesion to PA: Health and Safety Concerns which has a Z Score of 5.9
- Most arguments tended to respond to other arguments of the same subject with high Z scores (excluded from chart)
- “Emotional Argument: Frustration and Anger” responded disproportionately to “Moral Arguments: Empathy and Compassion”
  - This is consistent with those in an emotional states finding moral arguments provocative
- “Pragmatic Arguments: Social Cohesion” responded disproportionately to comments making Pragmatic Arguments concerning Economic Considerations and Health and Safety Concerns
- “Logical Arguments: Factual Argument” responded disproportionately to “Pragmatic Arguments: Legality and Documentation”

## Language Use by Subject of Argument

For each of the subject of argument subcategories we have used Claude to generate two summaries of the comments: meaning and language use. We then used Claude to consolidate these summaries into a short overview followed by key themes and a brief description of the language used.

### **Migration Management Issues - 1,839 comments**

Overview: This category covers concerns about government handling of migrants, prioritisation of citizens, legal entry issues, and enforcement of immigration laws.

Themes:

- Frustration with government's management of migrant housing
- Concerns about strain on local services and communities
- Perceptions of unfairness in resource allocation
- Debate over legal vs. illegal immigration
- Calls for stricter border control and law enforcement

Language Patterns: Terms like "illegals," "invaders," references to systemic issues, expressions of anger and distrust towards both migrants and the government.

### **Flawed Arguments - 1,008 comments**

Overview: This category includes factual corrections, debates over migration and asylum seekers in the UK, and discussions about migrants being unfairly scapegoated. It covers a wide range of perspectives, from fear-mongering to calls for compassion and understanding.

Themes:

- Attempts to correct misinformation and myths about migration
- Debates over the legality and ethics of the asylum process
- Concerns about the impact of migration on local communities and resources
- Arguments that migrants are being unfairly blamed for systemic issues
- Discussion of the complex factors driving migration and challenges faced by asylum seekers
- Criticisms of government policies and handling of migration issues

Language Patterns: Wide range of language from measured and factual to derogatory and inflammatory. Terms like "illegals," "chancers," "invaders" used by some, while others use more neutral terms like "asylum seekers" and "refugees." Emotionally charged language such as "afraid," "shocked," and "fed up" expressing

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concerns. Accusations of racism, fascism, and naivety on both sides. References to systemic issues like "hostile environments" and "lack of government funding." Use of vivid metaphors and regional identity markers.

### **Ad Hominem Attacks - 962 comments**

Overview: This category primarily consists of insults and ad hominem attacks between posters, with a heated debate about asylum seekers and immigration serving as the backdrop.

Themes:

- Widespread use of personal attacks and derogatory language
- Accusations of prejudice, ignorance, and lack of intelligence
- Polarised debate over asylum seekers and immigration
- Expression of fears about cultural differences and system overload
- Counterarguments labelling concerns as racist or bigoted

Language Patterns: Extensive use of derogatory terms such as "village idiots," "fascists," "lefties," "tories," "racists," "snowflakes," "gammon." Language is highly inflammatory and polarising, with references to personal characteristics (education, employment status, appearance), cultural and religious allusions, and mentions of historical events like Nazi Germany. Emotional and divisive language dominates the discourse.

### **Community Impact of Migration - 919 comments**

Overview: This category encompasses perceived effects on local infrastructure, housing, crime rates, cultural identity, and tourism.

Themes:

- Fears about safety, particularly for women and children
- Concerns about cultural and demographic changes
- Perceived strain on public services and local infrastructure
- Worries about negative impacts on tourism
- Fears of becoming a minority in one's own country

Language Patterns: References to "flooding" or "invading," expressions of fear and anger, concerns about cultural differences and values.

### **Migrant Character Concerns - 545 comments**

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Overview: This category includes perceptions and stereotypes about migrants' behaviour, intentions, and impact on society.

Themes:

- Accusations of migrants being lazy or seeking handouts
- Concerns about migrants being criminals or terrorists
- Fears about threats to local women and children
- Perceptions of migrants as cowards for leaving their countries

Language Patterns: Derogatory terms like "scroungers," "parasites," "cowards." Stereotyping language and generalisations about migrants' behaviour and motivations.

### **Compassion and Shared Humanity Toward Migrants - 237 comments**

Overview: This category includes comments expressing empathy, support, and understanding for migrants.

Themes:

- Recognition of migrants as fellow humans fleeing hardship
- Suggestions for ways to help migrants
- Acknowledgment of moral obligations to provide asylum
- Understanding of migration as a normal human phenomenon

Language Patterns: Empathetic and supportive language, references to human rights and moral duties, personal anecdotes of migration experiences.

### **Positive Contributions of Migrants - 56 comments**

Overview: This category highlights the beneficial impacts of migration on society and the economy.

Themes:

- Historical examples of successful integration
- Economic benefits and filling of labour shortages
- Cultural enrichment through diversity
- Contributions to various sectors like healthcare, sports, and business

Language Patterns: Positive and celebratory language, references to specific success stories, emphasis on economic and cultural benefits.

## How are Argument Subjects and Types Associated?

The associations between Arguments by Subject and Argument Types are displayed below. In order to make the table more readable, we have denoted the strength of the association (again, we use a statistical measure called the  $Z$  score) using heatmaps with a standardised score system ranging from 1 (for the weakest evidence of an association) through to 5 (for the strongest evidence of an association):

### Discussion:

- In what is consistent with the findings throughout this report, those seeking to defend migration overwhelmingly cast the debate in moral terms
  - This is also the only time Moral Argument is used - in the vast majority of comments, Moral Argument does not feature
- A quick glance at the heatmap is also unambiguous about where most of the action is; nearly every single category had at least a weak association with Emotional Argument
- This map also reinforces earlier findings that a significant tranche of the concern is Pragmatic, with the two strongest associations with this argument type being concerned about the management of migration overall rather than migrants themselves or the impact they might have on the community

### Full Arguments by Subject vs Argument Type Association Heatmap

	Emotional	Pragmatic	Logical	Moral
Flawed arguments.Insults / ad-hominem attacks targetting previous posters	5			
Migration management issues.Government mishandling migrants	2	1		
Flawed arguments.Factual correction			5	
Migration management issues.Citizens should be prioritised	3	2		
Migration management issues.Too many illegally entering	1	3		
Community impact of migration.Negative impact on tourism	1	3		
Community impact of migration.Overwhelm local infrastructure	2	2		
Flawed arguments.Fear mongering about migration threat is overblown	1		2	
Flawed arguments.Migrants are being unfairly scapegoated			1	2
Migrant character concerns.Lazy and want handouts	3			
Community impact of migration.Drain on resources and public services	2	2		
Migrant character concerns.Criminals terrorists or have malicious intentions	4			
Community impact of migration.Increase in crime	4			
Migrant character concerns.Migrants are a threat to local women and children	3	1		
Compassion and shared humanity toward migrants.Migrants are fellow humans fleeing hardship				5
Migration management issues.Migration should occur through legal channels		5		
Compassion and shared humanity toward migrants.Suggest ways of helping migrants				5
Community impact of migration.Replacement of natives	3			
Migrant character concerns.Cowards for leaving their countries	4			
Community impact of migration.Threat on identity	4			
Migration management issues.Current immigration laws should be enforced	2	5		
Positive contributions of migrants.History of successful integration			2	
Positive contributions of migrants.Take jobs locals don't want and benefit the economy		2		

## Concluding Remarks and Recommendations for Progressives

Immigration is clearly a highly charged and much discussed topic on social media. Our comment set is exclusively sourced from community groups for places which had experienced some of the earliest hotel protests, and so is not representative of the broader discourse - it does, however, go some way to illuminating the nature of that discourse in places where we might reasonably expect the issue to be the most salient and contentious. That discourse is antagonistic, exhibits a mostly negative attitude towards immigration in the abstract and migrants themselves, features criticism aimed at a multiplicity of targets, appears to be driven by organic discussion and reveals the fundamentally different approaches taken to the issue by progressives and those who are more sceptical of immigration.

Based on the findings of this report, we make the following recommendations for progressives seeking to shift the dial on the issue of immigration and build pro-migrant sentiment in the UK.

### **Get on the same page: Align cognitive frameworks to bridge understanding**

The discourse in our sample was characterised by a clash between abstract moral reasoning and more visceral emotional concern. We suggest the presence of divergent cognitive frameworks hinders the process of building constructive dialogue that is capable of changing minds, and that progressives should seek to engage with those they seek to convince in the same frame that those who are concerned about immigration use to conceptualise the problem.

### **Don't tar with the same brush: Not all anti-immigrant sentiment shares a single motivation**

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In our sample it is the government's handling of immigration, rather than migrants themselves, that is the most common target of criticism. We believe there is an opportunity here: concerns rooted in the capacity of public services and procedural fairness are plausibly sensitive to progressive arguments advocating for bolstering public service provision and clearly laid out safe legal routes in a way that other elements of anti-immigration sentiment are not.

### **Don't add fuel to the fire: Conduct further research into the countering and mitigating emotional arguments**

Those who were sceptical of immigration and those advocating for it had fundamentally different loci of concern in the comment set we studied, and we suspect that this difference is a serious barrier to constructive dialogue between the opposing sides. Currently, this suspicion is predicated upon a combination of anecdotal data and intuition; further research is required to test the hypothesis properly and evaluate its robustness.

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