

Migration Advisory Committee  
— **enquiry into** —

# Freedom of Movement

Submission by

the **3** million



November 2017

# Migration Advisory Committee Enquiry into Freedom of Movement

Submission by the3million

November 2017



© **the3million** All rights reserved November 2017

Cover design: Sonia Grosgneuf

**the3million** ([www.the3million.org.uk](http://www.the3million.org.uk)) is the largest grassroots organisation created by EU citizens living in the UK in the aftermath of the June 2016 referendum. It campaigns to preserve and guarantee their existing rights in a post Brexit context, provides a support network to the estimated three million EU citizens living in the UK and its online Forum currently has a membership of over 35,000 members. The organisation regularly publishes policy documents as part of its lobbying and campaigning work in the UK and in the EU.

## Table of contents

About this report	3
Analysis of the MAC enquiry survey	3
Methodology	3
Demographics	3
Reasons for coming to the UK	5
Which Immigration system post Brexit	8
Main benefits of Freedom of Movement in your personal life	13
1. “Being able to live and work where I want”	13
2. Building a new, different, or better life	17
3. Experiencing new or other cultures in new countries	19
4. Families and People	23
5. Freedom of Movement and Work	24
6. Ease of /Freedom to travel	27
7. Identifying as EU citizens	28
8. Studying anywhere	29
9. Peace and security	30
10. Ability to enjoy the same protection throughout the EU	31
11. “Everything”	31
12. Other associated benefits of Freedom of Movement identified by respondents	32
Short discussion	34
Recommendations for future research	36

## Notes:

- Abbreviations:
  - PR: Permanent Residence
  - FoM: Freedom of Movement
- Figures in brackets after each citation refer to the participant’s research identification number.

## About this report

This report was produced on behalf of **the3million** by Anne-Laure Donskoy, independent researcher, co-founder of **the3million** with support from Dr Christopher Kent, Senior Lecturer and Director of Research Training, School of Experimental Psychology, University of Bristol.

It represents **the3million**'s submission to the Migration Advisory Committee's enquiry on migration and freedom of movement.

## Analysis of MAC enquiry survey

### Methodology

A survey was conducted between 21 and 24 October using Google Forms. A link to the survey was shared to members of the3million's Forum and general pages on Facebook, to readers of the3million's newsletter on Mail Chimp, and on Twitter.

The quantitative data was analysed using Microsoft Excel and the qualitative data was coded using MAXQDA (software for qualitative and quantitative research methods).

### Figures

- Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12 refer to statistics applied to the whole sample;
- Figures 5, 6, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 refer to statistics applied to free text "other". They do not represent the whole sample but only those participants who commented.

## Demographics

A total of 1,341 respondents were included in the analysis.

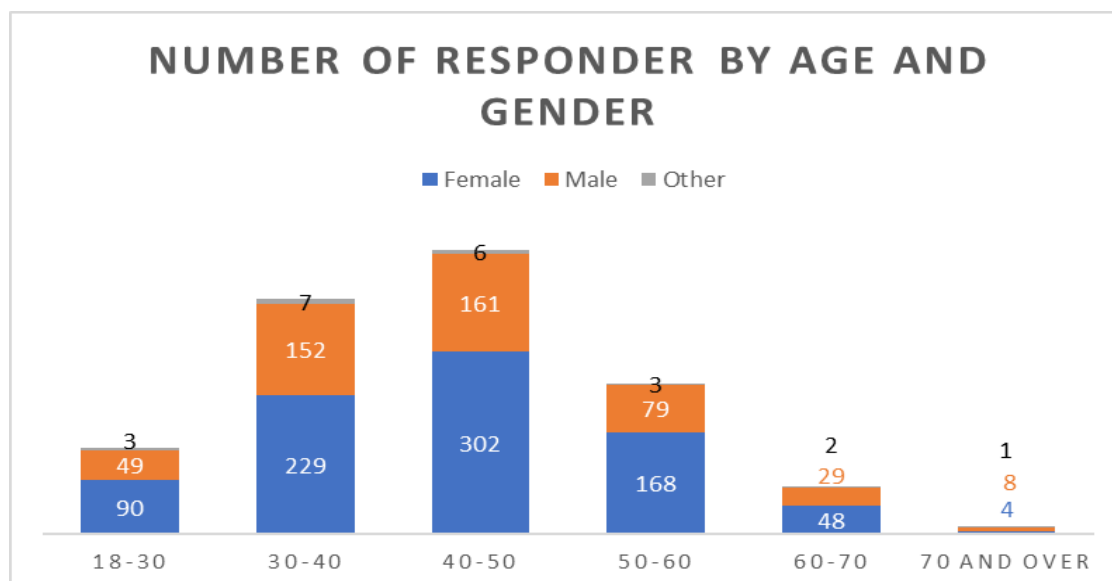


Figure 1.

69% were either married or in long-term relationships, and for 50% of responders with children had all of their children born in the UK. Respondents came from 27 different nationalities (see Figure 2) with 12% having dual-nationality.

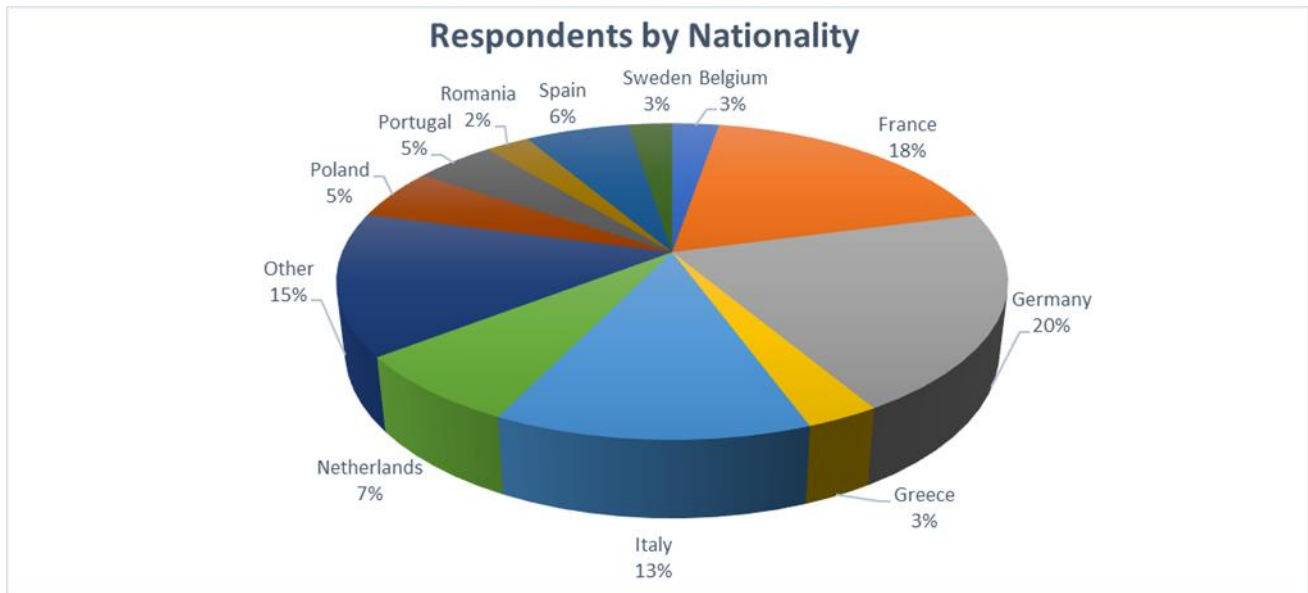


Figure 2.

### Skills profile

The vast majority (86%) were working (21% were self-employed), with most in highly-skilled (63%) or skilled (28%) employment.

### Year of arrival in the UK

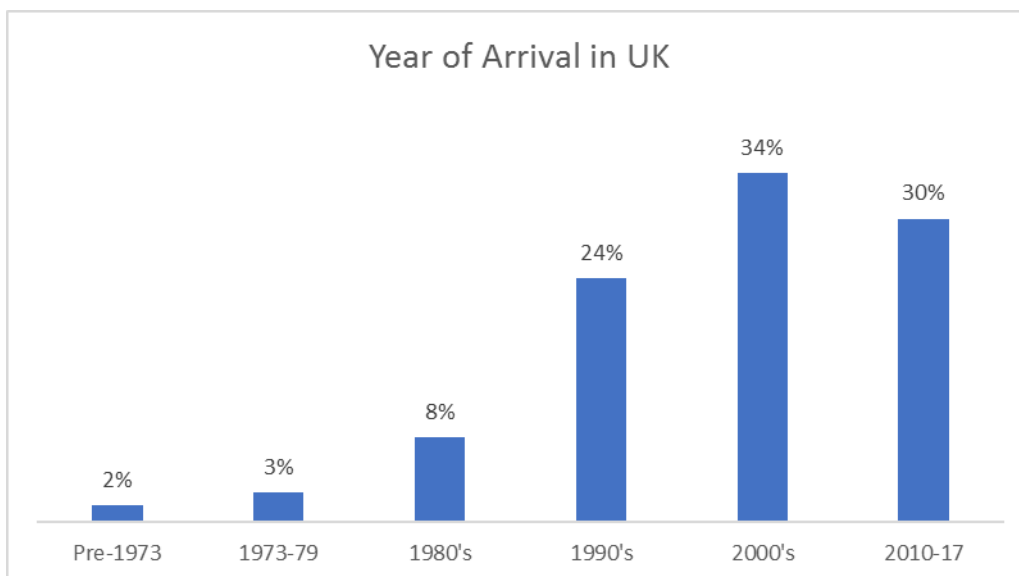


Figure 3.

Figure 3 shows which year respondents arrived in the UK. Just over a quarter of respondents (27%) had lived in other EU countries.

## Reasons for coming to the UK

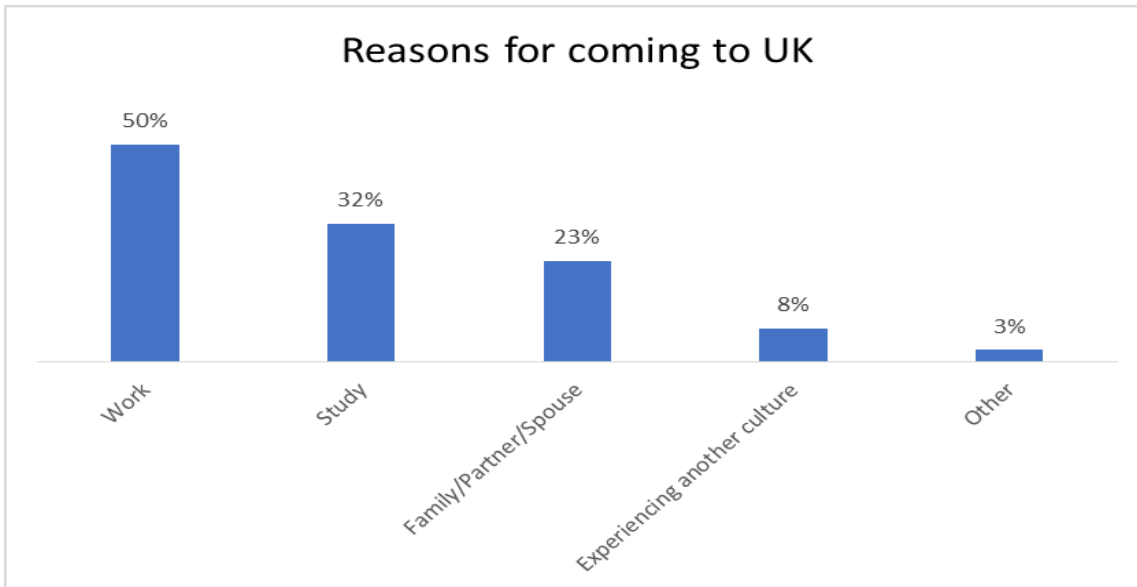


Figure 4. *Note.* Responders could select more than one option.

Comments by respondents who chose to qualify their answer show that people often came to the UK for more than one reason, with almost half stating ‘family’ and ‘work’. Family often referred to following a spouse or a partner but many respondents had been in the UK since childhood, having followed their parents who had come to the UK, usually for work, thus painting a more complex picture. For instance when an EU citizen moved to the UK, there was sometimes a partner or spouse, a family moving too, children growing to be future workers etc.

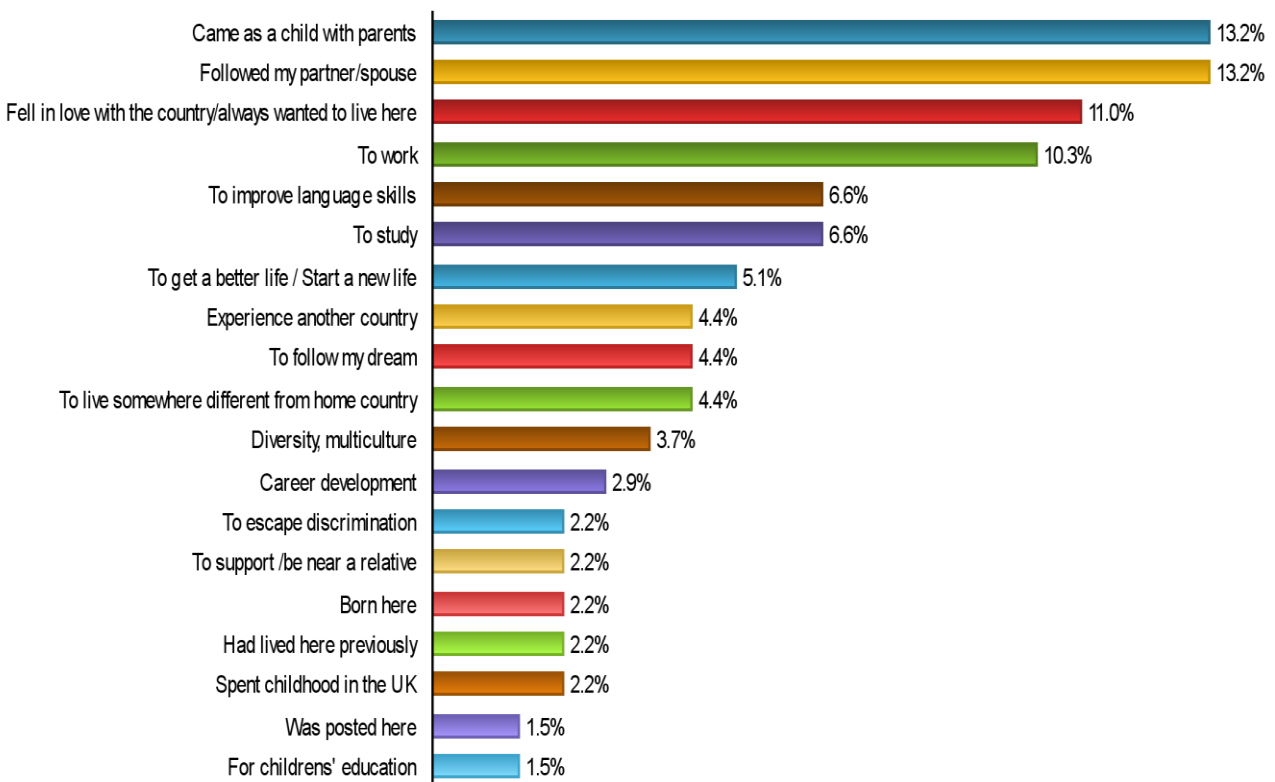


Figure 5. Original reason for moving to the UK

## Occupation

Only about ten per cent of participants chose to say more about their occupation on arrival in the UK, and now. Therefore the following graphs are provided purely for information and illustration. They do, however, reflect their original reasons for coming to the UK as well as the UK government's own statistics on migration.

### Original occupation

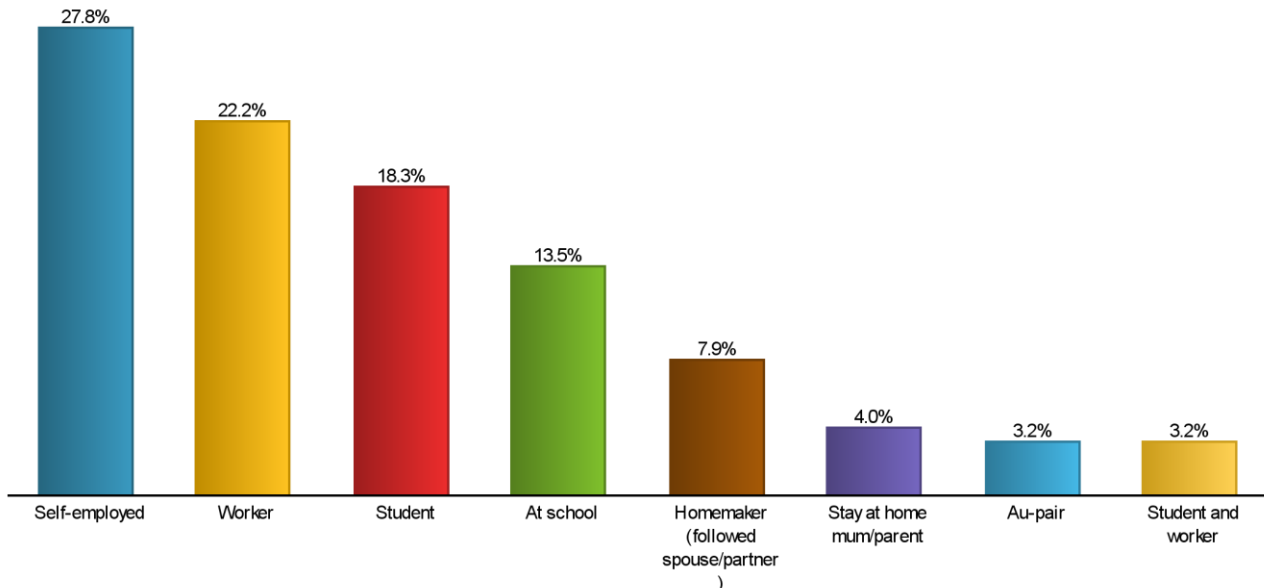


Figure 6. Occupation on arrival

32% of respondents were offered a job before coming to the UK, 24% came as students and stayed on, and 33% looked for a job after arriving. For their first job, 36% were highly skilled (compared with 63% in their current job), 30% skilled, 18% semi-skilled, and 17% unskilled (compared to 2% in their current job).

#### Self-employed

These respondents mostly described themselves as people who had created businesses or had brought their own business with them, or as freelancers who could work anywhere in the world but chose to settle in the UK

#### Workers

Many among these respondents either had got a job offer prior to coming to the UK or found a job soon after arrival. Some had been posted by their EU company or had been offered an internship prior to arrival.

#### Students

This was the third largest reason for coming to the UK.

#### At school

Many had come as children and school was their first 'occupation'

## Home-makers and stay-at-home parents

These were women who had followed their partners or spouses.

### Occupation now

Most of the respondents who chose to disclose the nature of their current occupation were in some form of work, self-employed for the main part (as freelancers or running their own business). Of those who worked, some had two occupations, for instance retired from their former main employment as well as doing some part-time or self-employed work.

Overall, there was a trend to for responders to become more skilled over time. 38% of responders thought that they would have the same job opportunities in other EU countries.

### Permanent Residence (PR) and Citizenship

21% had applied for PR, and 7% were in the process of applying. Of those who had applied for PR, most had applied since 2016 (see Figure 7).

5% had applied to be British citizens and 8 % were in the process of applying. Of those who had applied for citizenship, most (68%) had applied since 2016.

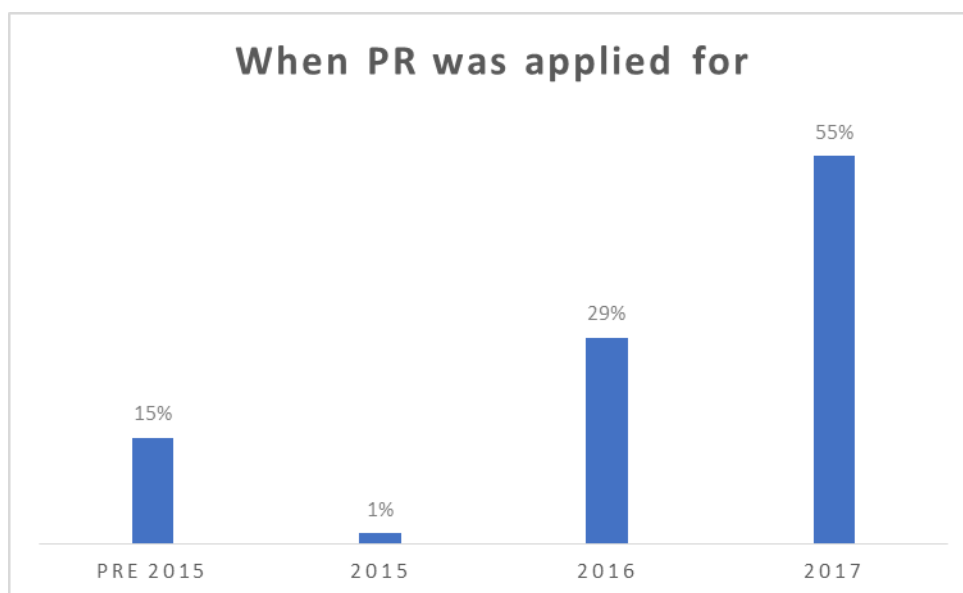


Figure 7.



## Which immigration system post Brexit?

Participants were asked which immigration system they would like to see post Brexit. The vast majority (94%) wanted the same system (freedom of movement) as now and only two percent were in favour of a visa system.

### Freedom of Movement (FoM)

When asked to qualify their answer (Figure 8), respondents painted a more nuanced picture.

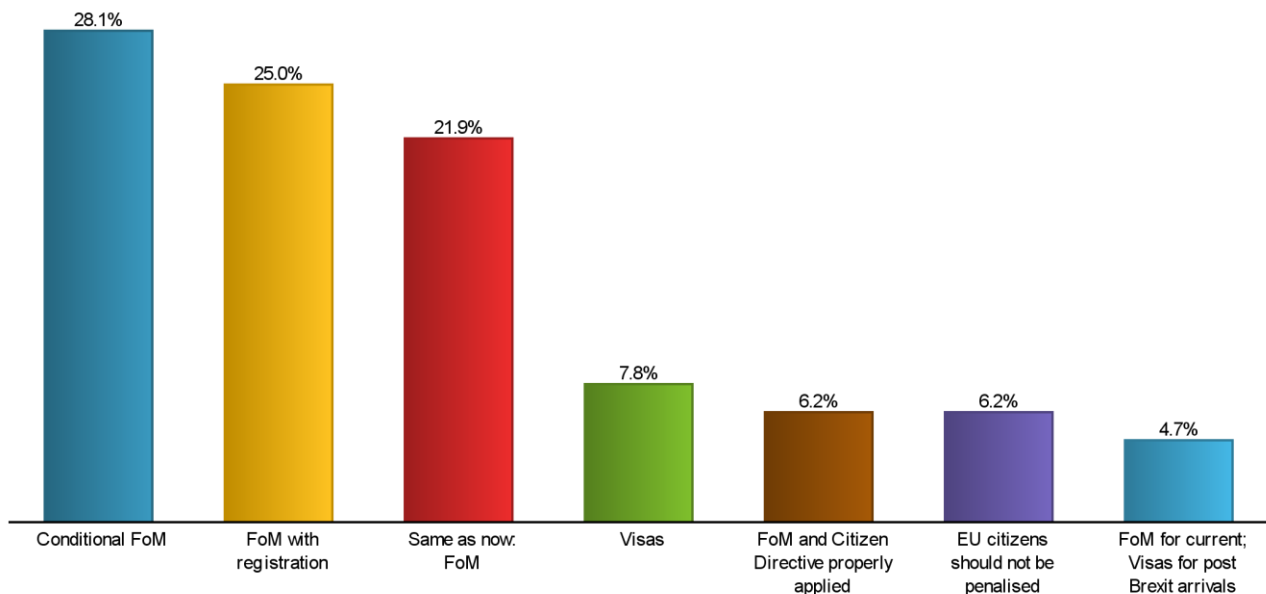


Figure 8. Which immigration system post Brexit?

Whilst the overall majority was clearly in favour of retaining freedom of movement (FoM) for those currently resident in the UK, many were more conservative with regard to EU citizens arriving post Brexit. ;

Some basic requirements should apply e.g. fluency in English, no benefits for the first 3 years (52)

Freedom of travel, visa to work (24)

It could be freedom of movement for everybody with work permits for those who want to work or be self-employed (41)

Perhaps one where you can stay for a while and are continued to stay if you have found a job or other means to support yourself. From what I understand, that is actually part of the current FoM system anyway (27)

Still have Freedom of movement, but maybe check in with EU and other country nationals in their first year or two. To see if they have found a job to support themselves. If not, understand the reasons why not. But we should not get rid of Freedom of movement, as how people can get a job if they cannot get to the interview? (55)

## What sort of immigration should be implemented?

### FoM with registration

Registration was mentioned a few times for new arrivals. No one mentioned registration for those already living in the UK. Respondents described registration as a necessary process and they made a number of suggestions on where and when this should take place. They were also keen on a simple or simplified process (compared to the current system) and a number of participants stressed that this should always have been implemented;

Registration with local authority and embassy upon arrival, but for the rest, Freedom of Movement rules (50)

... maybe implementing a registration at arrival, as it should always have been (15)

Why not work with embassies where we have to register anyway? (Belgians do) no visa though. that said I don't think free movement is an immigration system, it just enables migration (64)

Any system as long as it allows me to use UK services without having to provide extra paper work (to prove residency, payments to the system and such) every time -Ideally a valid NI number should be enough-. After 30 years of tax paying, I feel I should be allowed that much (7)

Based on FoM rules, with registration at council (or elsewhere official) upon arrival . . . In practice, this sort of requirement and some sort of ID card for everyone in the UK would be a good idea (10)

A more simplified system, where EU citizens can register their presence in UK with Local Authorities and not having to fill 85 pages document and wait for 6 before receiving an answer from the Home Office (3)

### Visas

Participants' attitude towards visas depended on a number of variables: age, year of arrival and skill level.

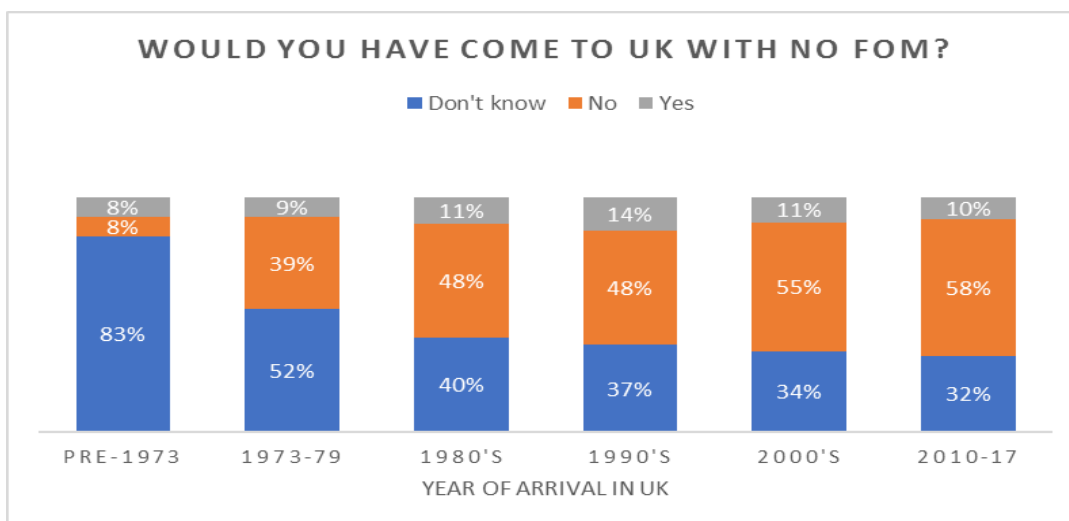


Figure 9. Percentage by year of arrival

Only 12% of responders said they would have come to the UK without FOM. Taking into account different variables, it was possible to observe a progression in attitudes towards FoM with time, specifically at two key points: pre and post 1973 (year of entry of the UK into the EU) and the 2000s which saw a large increase in the number of EU citizens coming to the UK as well as the implementation of the Citizens' Directive in 2004 which provided the current legal framework to freedom of movement.

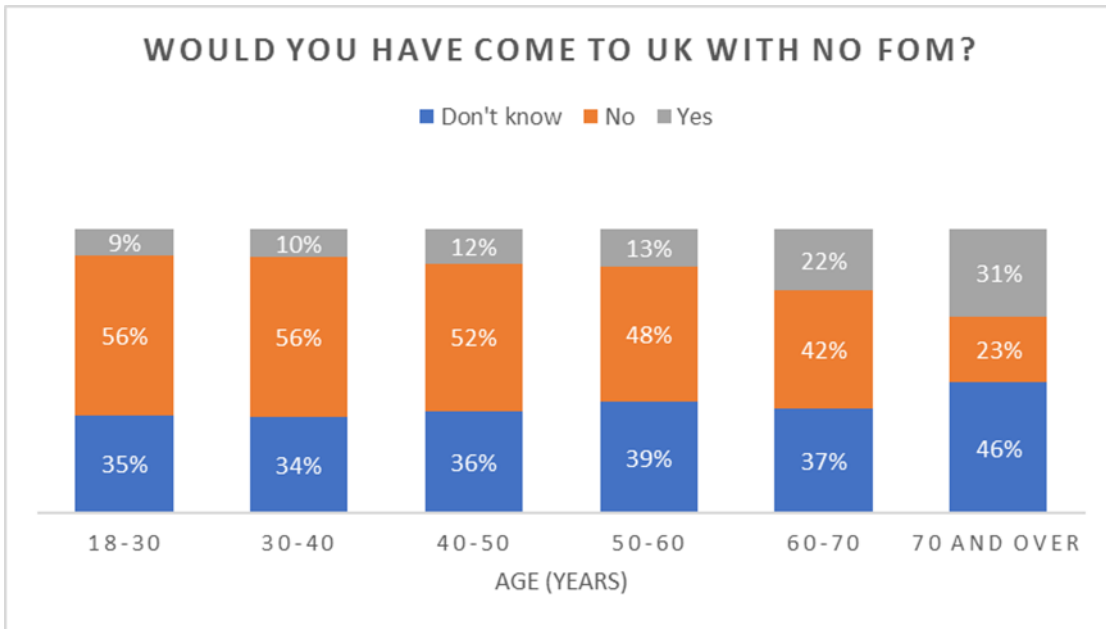


Figure 10. Percentage by Age

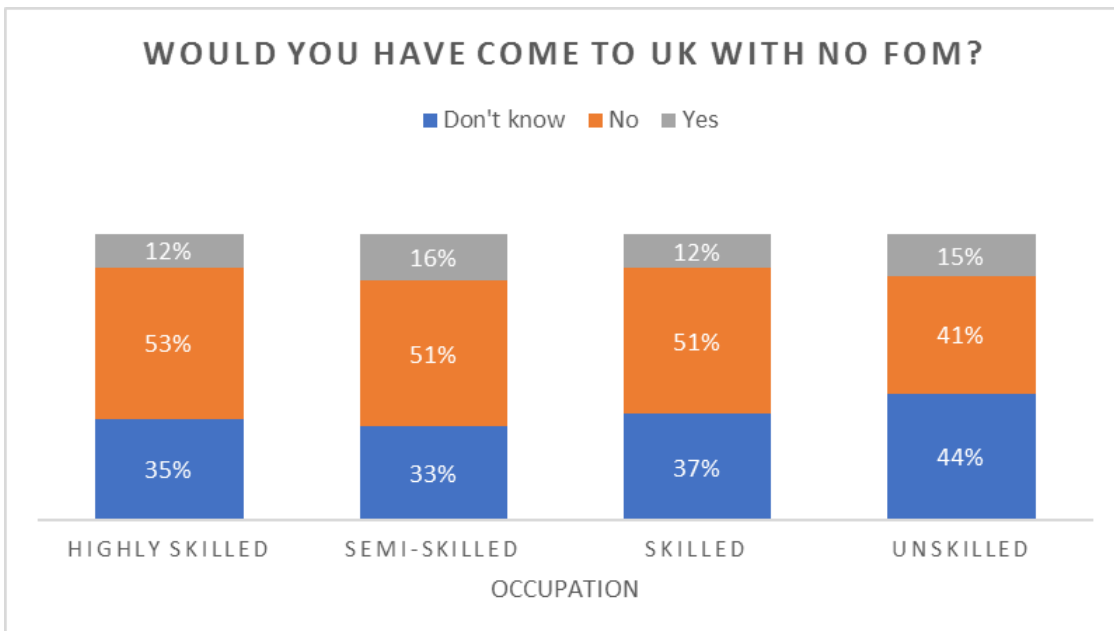


Figure 11. Percentage by occupation (skill level)

The above charts (Figures 9-11) show a fairly consistent support for FoM across the age range, unsurprisingly revealing more support from the younger participants. The percentage of higher skilled participants, who would presumably be favoured by a visa system, was also higher, showing support for FoM.

Taking 1973 as the historical turning point, the percentage of active support for FoM firmly increased from then on, and the percentage of those who would still have come to the UK even without FoM remained fairly stable around 12%.

For the very small minority of those who favoured visas (2%), a points-based system was the preferred option.

### **Freedom of movement as now**

A number of respondents were keen to stress the importance of being able to retain FoM. Their reasons varied;

#### **Occupational and professional reasons;**

As a Freelancer, I have to be flexible in taking a job that comes up the next day. And since I'm not employed by a company as such there is no possibility to get sponsored for a Visa. Without FOM I wouldn't know how to live my life here in the UK without having to change the way I work drastically or even have to change careers (413)

Being able to move to the UK for work in tech startups, which usually can't afford visa sponsorship (843)

Without FoM I would probably not have come to the UK as it was initially for a year only, without any long-term plans. I was offered a job as I was finishing my doctorate and my employer would probably not have done so if a visa had been required (128)

It allows me to develop my career and be an active part of the community without worrying about the process of securing a visa (609)

Absolutely essential for my services to be provided. I have created jobs in the UK (572)

I do think it's fair enough to then warn someone if they have been here for a certain amount of time and not got themselves a job - I don't think it has to be as black and white/extreme as either letting everyone in or only brain surgeons in. Every job is valuable, whether you are a cleaner or an engineer so it's highly degrading to talk about skilled-non skilled (29)

#### **Personal reasons;**

I am finishing my degree in March 2019, and my partner and I will have to make a call about where we want to live then. He does not have British citizenship, and so long as we have no way of knowing whether he's allowed to stay or work in the country, our future remains uncertain (32)

I feel that EU citizens already here should still have their freedom of movement, the same as British citizens in the EU should retain their rights to move between countries (34)

I prefer free movement but the UK is not going to accept this anymore in a political situation where immigration was a key point in the Brexit campaign. They made people believe that free movement is the cause of people poverty rather than government policies (35)

An equal number of comments to those in favour of some sort of conditions attached to EU citizens arriving post Brexit wanted FoM to remain as now;

FoM for those who have been in the UK since before Brexit, though ideally FoM should be retained for everyone (14)

For whoever was here before Brexit definitely FoM, for later arrivals I guess they'd have to decide although I still think that FoM would be the most beneficial to the UK as well (15)

FoM would be ideal, because we know it works (well, the government seems to disagree), but for Europeans, it is easiest (32)

Those that have been here for over 5 years should be able to keep their FoM rights and those who arrived 2-3 years ago should be allowed to build up the 5 years and keep their FoM rights also. The same should apply for family members/significant others of such EU citizens, whether they arrive before or after Brexit (60)

The current system but rigorously applying the EU FoM 3 month rule (56)

### **EU citizens should not be penalised**

Some also felt strongly that EU citizens currently living in the UK should not be penalised by the UK's decision to leave the EU;

I think that once the UK is out of the EU and loses the benefits of being in the EU (free circulation of goods, capital and service) it should also not be bound to freedom of movement for EU citizens who wish to move to the UK. However, I think it is unfair to apply the same treatment to EU citizens who have come to the UK in the past, who established lives in the UK based on the belief that freedom of movement would continue. These long time residents should not be treated as illegal immigrants once the UK exits the EU (37)

The UK has the right to set a different immigration policy for EU citizens who come to the UK after it has left the EU. But should not be able to change rights for EU citizens currently resident in the UK or who have spent 5 years previously. We have all made life decisions based on the laws in place when we moved here, which cannot be undone, which is why it is wrong to change rights retrospectively (57)

## Most important benefits of FoM in your personal life?

Participants were asked to identify and reflect on which had been the most important benefits to freedom of movement in their personal lives;

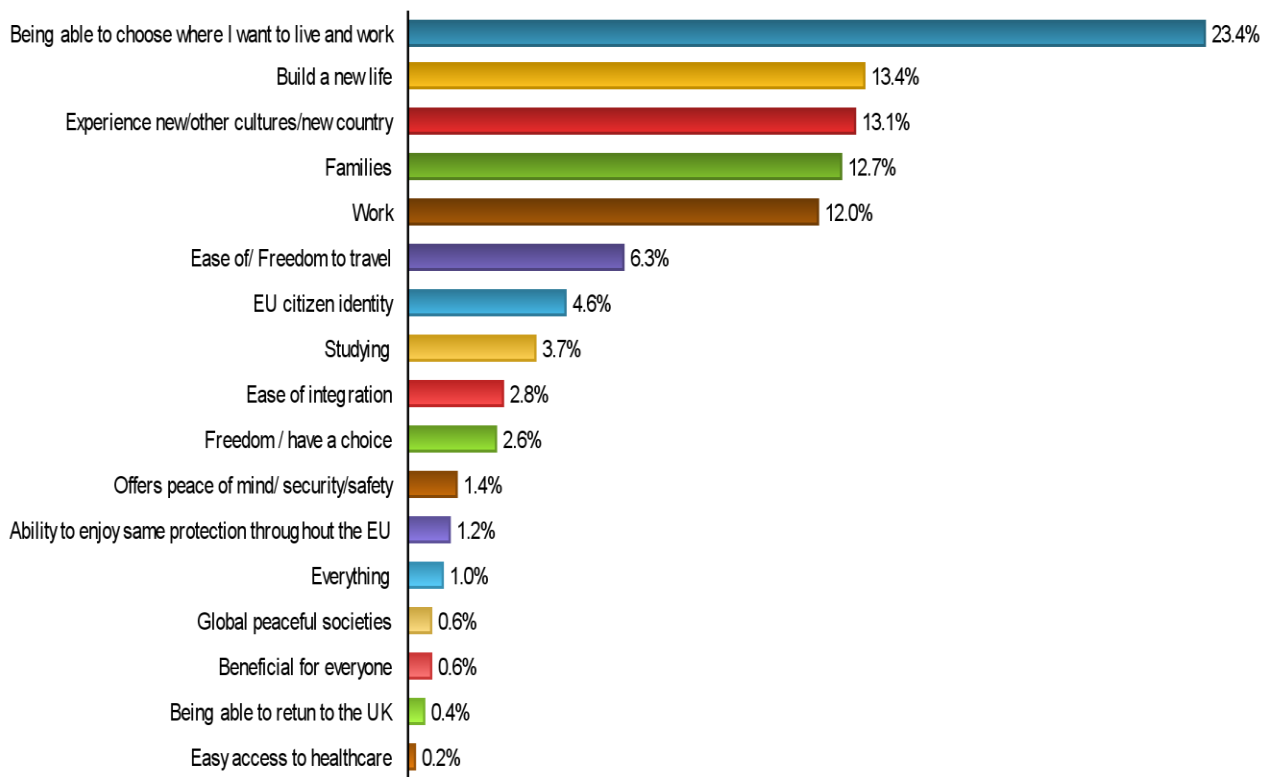


Figure 12. Most important benefits of FoM

A number of themes were identified by participants. What follows is a very brief overview of these the main ones:

### 1. “Being able to live and work where I want”

I was able to choose any country within the EU and build my life and working professionally, while bringing up the kids (616)

I was an Erasmus student, I studied and worked in different countries, married someone from a different EU country than mine (non UK), met and mixed with several different nationalities, could work and study as most suitable to my life, as if I'd stayed in my birth country. Huge. I would never have moved here under a VISA system. I never felt an immigrant. Or a migrant. Or an emigrant. It's moving. I have friends and work contacts in different places. I move. My family moves (167)

The ability to be mobile under FoM increased the life choices of participants;

Very a strong impact, my husband works in France during the week while the children and I are in the UK so he commuted every week. My kids were raised here in UK education system. We feel French, British and Europeans. I want the same freedom of life for my children (239)

Being able to move freely for study, love and work and life as a citizen in other EU countries without coming under any immigration system! My life has evolved the way it has based on it basically. It's a fundamental right that we cherish as a family (171)

It has made easy to move to another country within the EU and enjoy similar working and residency rights like if I had moved to another city in Spain. It makes easy to plan your life knowing that your future is not pending of a visa renewal system all the time like in USA (273)

I didn't have to second guess my status and i had the freedom to travel without forms or paperwork, it allowed for immediate decisions when headhunted for a job in the UK rather than saying 'sorry can i get back to you in a month, i have to fill in forms and wait' (279)

Better career opportunity, easier to travel, holidays, visiting family, degree recognition, no hassle buying house, no worries about health cover, children education, retirement pension (377)

The ability to move to the UK to study and then make the decision to stay and work and build a life (390)

The ability to build my career and raise my family throughout Europe- without barriers and knowing that my qualifications and pension contributions are seamlessly portable (anytime, anywhere) (343)

#### Being able to live and work wherever was about:

Flexibility linked to mobility and ability to plan without hurdles, specifically with regards to career choices or requirements

Flexibility to decide where to study, work and live (90)

Flexibility to work in many countries under a safe legal framework (270)

Flexibility it allows you to move back and forth seamlessly, work few years in one country then move to another with no problems due also to pensions regulations and health care protections portability (374)

Mobility, flexibility, can you be at this meeting, where do we do xmas this year, can you take this 2 month-mission abroad? (625)

... having the flexibility to move here without the visa application (788)

Flexibility to consider a pan-European career (914)

#### Making the UK their home: often this was combined with a feeling of being accepted;

Making another country my home and my children's only home land (346)

Enabled me to build a life in my adopted host country (351)

Feeling at home in a foreigner country (691)

To feel at home wherever I've lived in Europe (870)

I have made Scotland my home (1076)

It has allowed me to make a home and a life in a country where i felt welcome, safe and where i could give back. I love the pre-referendum Uk (173)

Feeling accepted, feeling settled and wanting to contribute to the community or society they have settled in, often went hand in hand;

Freedom, personal development, contribution to society (260)

I have been able to contribute to society in many ways working in both public and private sectors (252)

To follow my then partner and contribute to British society, tax and social security (559)

I do contribute to British society through my job and I want to continue to do so in the future. I think this country will miss out in opportunities if it closes up its doors to people from all backgrounds in the future (682)

Being able to live, work, and contribute to society while still being able to easily move between my parents' home and my home in the UK, without having to worry about visas or whether I'd be thrown out of the country and hence lose my job and my livelihood (1154)

Feeling accepted and integration into UK Society;

Respondents were asked, on a scale 1-10, to describe how integrated they felt. The vast majority of respondents felt at least somewhat integrated, with 41% saying they were fully integrated.

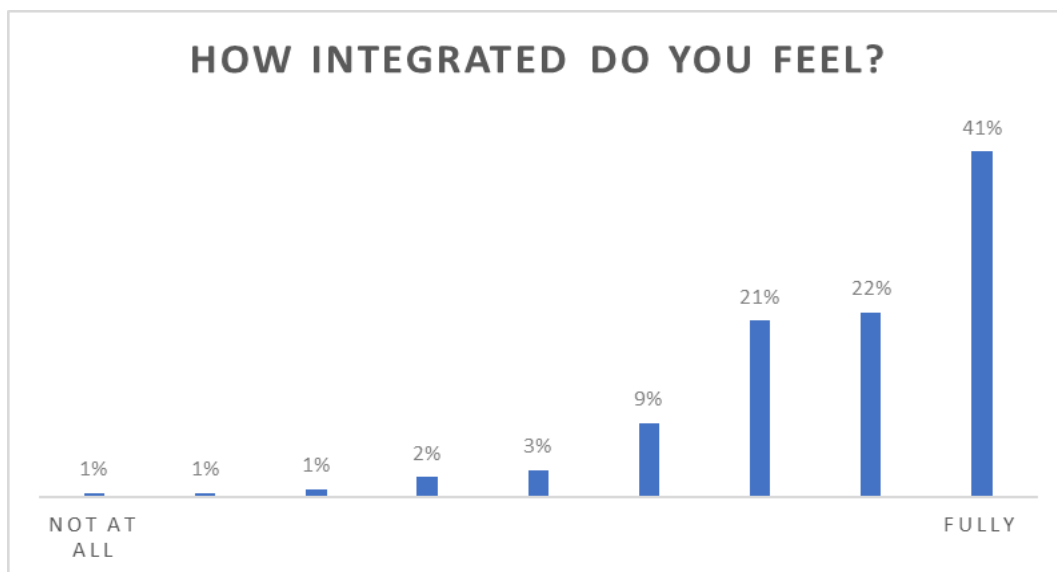


Figure 13.

For many, feeling accepted not only meant being treated as equals to the people of the country they had settled in, or could move to, it was also about being able to access the same services or the same opportunities, without discrimination, which helped to feel integrated in society;

Moving to other countries and still treated as a national of the host country (459)

The certainty that I could live here on equal terms to anyone else. (Until Brexit removed that) (14)



The right to settle down in the UK and live as a Brit, getting the same opportunities as the British-born (87)

The feeling of being a full citizen even if foreign. With a visa system, you are only a temporary guest and knowing the political landscape, even with a visa the situation might get harsher and harsher (415)

Equality and opportunity to work within the same rights (465)

Same rights as British . . . Made me feel at home not like a foreigner (680)

Ability to integrate well into UK society without feeling like a second class citizen (792)

Participants talked about feeling integrated in different ways. For some this was about feeling accepted, especially if you could access the same services and opportunities as the national citizens, being able to settle and contribute to the country you have made your home

The certainty that I could live here on equal terms to anyone else. (Until Brexit removed that) (14)

Felt not discriminated against (31)

Being treated the same as citizen of the country (389)

In particular, the sentiment that the absence of visas thanks to FoM, removed barriers to integration;

Being able to further my career without discrimination (414)

The feeling of being a full citizen even if foreign. With a visa system, you are only a temporary guest and knowing the political landscape, even with a visa the situation might get harsher and harsher (415)

Equality and opportunity to work within the same rights (465)

It gives EU citizens the same dignity and opportunities as natives (1095)

FoM is less discriminatory than visa system. When you have to apply for a visa as an unskilled person you might not feel as welcome in a country. And coming from a less privileged background why shouldn't you be able to travel and better yourself? (1135)

Feeling integrated and the future;

Respondents were asked if they had thought of leaving the UK as a result of the referendum vote to leave the EU. 87% had thought about leaving the UK but only 12% had made firm plans to leave. At the same time, 92% thought that the Home Office's 'hostile environment' policy towards foreigners will have a negative impact on people's decision to move to the UK;

When I was coming back from Paris (from a short break) to the UK, I have experienced the most unpleasant situation. In the hall, just waiting to board the plane (on our way back to the UK), there was a custom officer asking for the travel documents. Me and my partners were

asked to show 2 different proof of IDs (apart from passport) and we were asked where we live, what is the purpose of visit and what is our profession. The same has happened at the board control in the UK. Having lived in England for more than 7 years, first time I feel like this is not my home anymore and I am not welcomed. Not to mention that when we were leaving to Paris, in Paris at the board control no one seemed to have any issues with us. But answering the question, the most important benefit of FoM is the fact that I have always considered myself an EU citizen, I have already started to feel that England is not part of EU anymore (101)

## 2. Building a new, different, or better life

This was the second largest benefit of FoM identified by participants, encompassing a variety of themes.

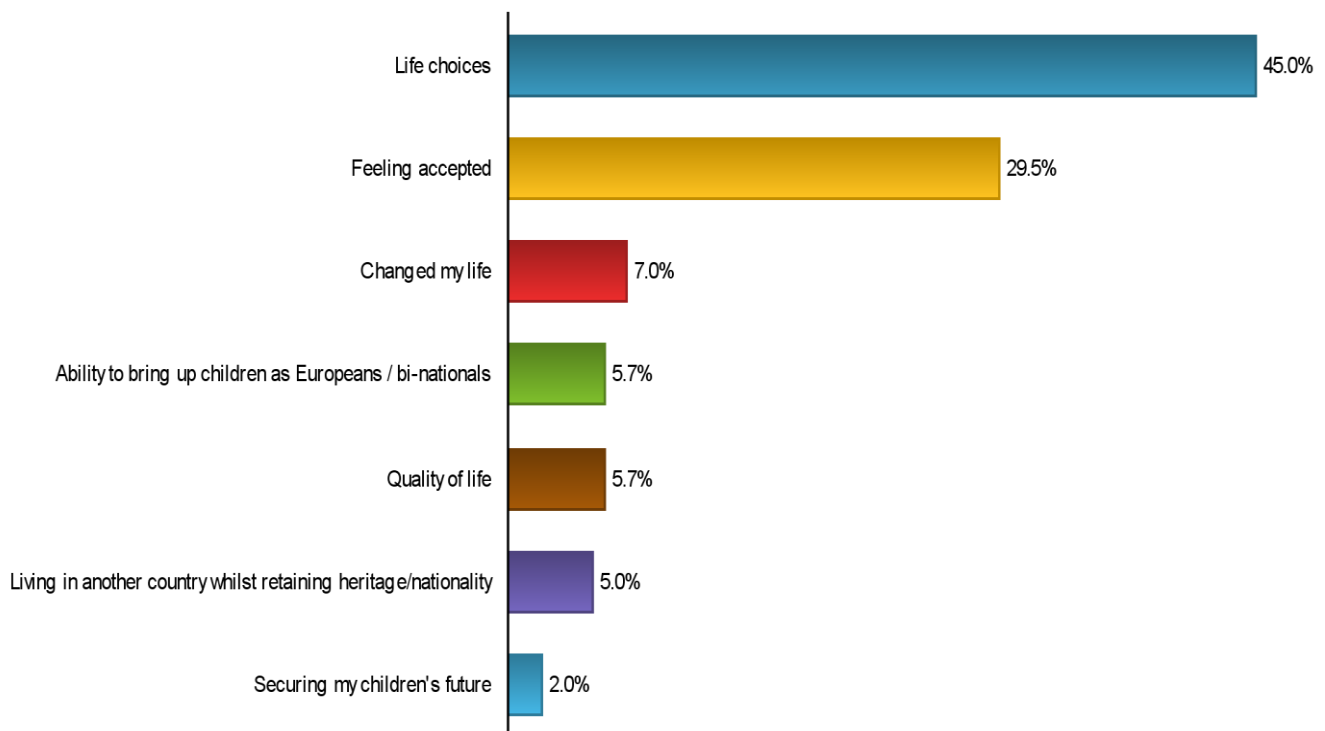


Figure 14. Building a new -different -better life

### Life choices

Respondents who commented stated that FoM brought life choices that may not have been possible or may not have happened otherwise. It allowed them to:

#### Build a new or better life;

I have built the life I wanted regardless of where I was living

Freedom to choose a future (567)

I have followed professional and personal opportunities across 5 countries. I feel I'm a global citizen. I speak 5 languages. It is immensely enriching to have had these opportunities and I think it a tragedy that Brexit has killed this for UK young people (855)

Being free to choose where to lead my life (826)

It has allowed me to live my life as I wished (760)

### Follow their dream;

Fulfilling a dream without filling in forms (1105)

Possibility to pursue my aims without being hindered by bureaucracy (723)

It out the choices for life and work firmly into our own hands, rather than dependent upon bureaucracy and/or arbitrary rules (1142)

### Plan their life knowing that they could move freely between countries or not being hindered by bureaucracy;

Being able to plan my life knowing I have the right to return to the U.K. and enjoy the same rights if I ever left. This is a very real prospect for me as my elderly parents live in Australia where I grew up and I plan to move back to be closer to them. But still hope to come back to the U.K. again in future as I own a home here and most of my pension is here (16)

Flexibility to work without being tied down by employers, and ability to plan my private life with commitments to education, property and social long term relationships. Not the case if a limited visa (483)

Being free to choose where to lead my life (826)

Be able to study, start and pursue a career, and settle as a family, without any more hassle than British citizens (230)

Without FoM, with the pressure of deciding in advance my plans for the next 2 / 3/ x many years, it would have been like an arranged marriage (1249)

### FoM changed people's life;

Comments highlighted the opportunities that FoM opened up for participants and which changed the course of their life or touched on many life domains;

Being able to carve out my own life and career a very very very long way away from my family & their unrelenting scrutiny (1114)

FoM is clearly one of the best things that happened in my life providing an opportunity to travel freely, experience different cultures, working in multicultural environment and contributing with my work and life for the benefit of much broader society that the one of my country of origin (894)

Without FoM I would have never moved to the UK, I would not have met my husband, who is British and would essentially have had a completely different life (1031)

Moving to another country helped me recover from depression and dramatically improved the quality of my life (424)

### The ability and the value of being able to raise children as EU citizens or as bi-nationals;

That we could bring up our children as true Europeans not deciding on which nationality/citizenship to take on (112)

My kids were raised here in UK education system. We feel French, British and Europeans. I want the same freedom of life for my children (329)

Creating a European family (352)

Our adult children are Europeans (Danish Passports) and travel to work in different EU countries but based in the UK (1282)

As a child of a French mother and a German father, brought up in Germany, and having studied in the Republic of Ireland, France, Germany and the UK, as well as worked in these in the countries, all with seamless transition and no need for work permits or visas etc., I very much value the opportunity that freedom of movement within the EU brings, and will continue to do my utmost to try and maintain this for my daughter's generation who I would like to be able to benefit from FoM as much as I did (976)

### Quality of life;

Having a better quality of life, better education and better prospect for my children (744)

I've been able to leave a violent relationship, live decent life and provide for my children with the help of the UK's benefit system. All that have helped me to remain physically and mentally well and able to be there for my children (5)

FoM allowed me to live a normal life without being afraid of gay-bashing. Before moving from Latvia I was attacked and suffered heavy beating just for being gay. Move to the UK allowed me to live a normal life (334)

### 3. Experiencing new or other cultures in new countries

This topic came a close third as a benefit of FoM identified by participants. Experiencing new and other cultures covered several aspects.

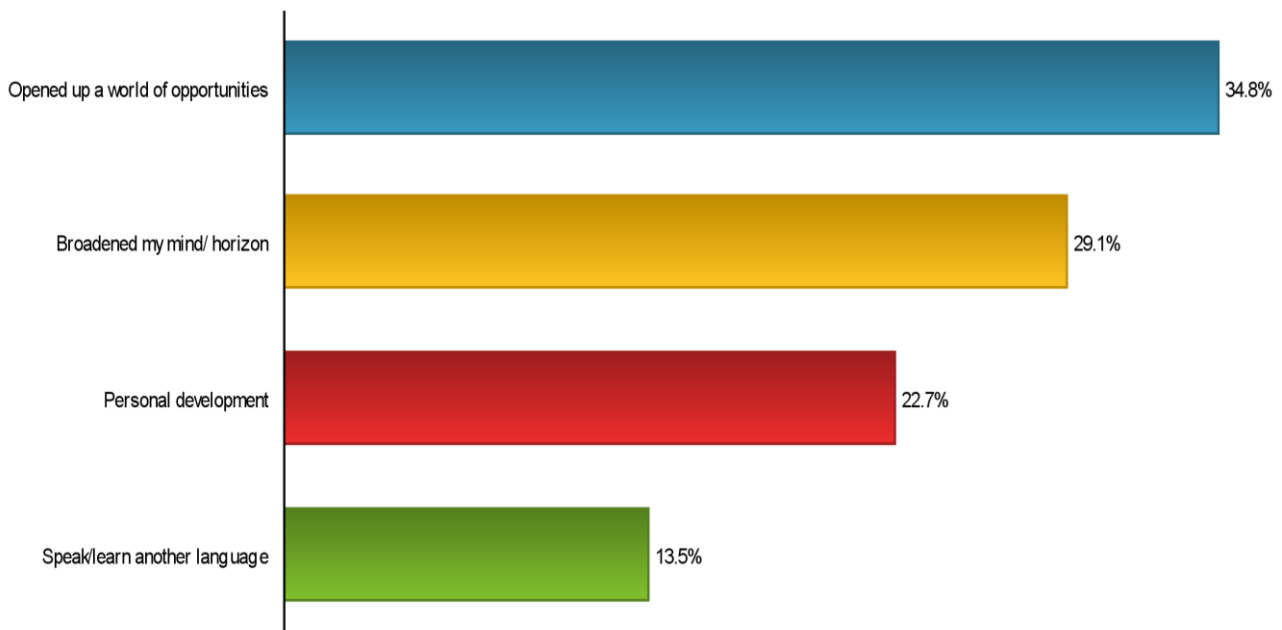


Figure 15. Experiencing new, other, cultures or countries

T

### The possibility of trying a new culture, unhindered by hard borders;

I was able to see the world without borders. Freedom is great! (652)

To meet people from many different countries, to work in international companies with people from many different backgrounds, to live in several different countries without too much fuss, to meet my now husband (678)

Move and visit different places and experience the culture without a visa hassle as well experience globalisation first hand (1336)

The limitless potential to experience different cultures and mentalities, the sense of personal enrichment that only this kind of experience can afford. Coming to Britain and going to Germany proved crucial turning points in many ways - personally, educationally, professionally (1222)

Expanding my knowledge and experience of different cultures, expanding my horizon, meeting a greater range of people, self-confidence (163)

Being able to experience life in different European countries and living alongside fellow Europeans from all walks of life has shaped who I am as a person. Moving to another country helped me recover from depression and dramatically improved the quality of my life. Freedom of movement has been fundamental to this (407)

Knowing I made a choice to live here but that I could move where ever I wanted; a feeling of freedom based on the choice I made and the fact that I live in a different culture, society; being able to establish and develop my own personal culture mix of friends from various countries, living in the UK with its cultures and my inherited German culture. This cultural mix is what for makes FOM (644)

Living in 4 different EU countries being 30 years old give you some background and knowledge otherwise is impossible to have, on top of the personal experience (649)

### Living in a different country whilst retaining national heritage;

The ability to feel connected to my country of origin even if I live abroad, and a feeling of belonging, if not in the UK, at the very least in Europe. I used to live in the US and depended on visas, and I would not want to be subjected to that kind of stress again (113)

Being able to integrate without losing my nationality (353)

I can exist easily between two countries: Poland where is my family and UK where I'm working and living with my partner (563)

It has allowed our family to travel back and forth and maintain cultural links to my country of birth and most importantly links to family. The possibility to choose career and country not weighed down by Visa concerns (63)

Being able to move to and fro from UK to France with my family several times and to let my child experience both cultures fully (743)

My children are trilingual, they feel European know they can freely access the benefits of being able to live and work anywhere in Europe. Our families and friends are all over Europe and with FoM it's easy to stay in touch, visit each other and assist each other when

difficulties arise. It's wonderful to feel that we are part of a wider community and benefit of diversity still maintaining our own national identity (1068)

It's part of my European identity. It's made it possible for me to build a family in a foreign country without giving up the strong ties to my home country (1321)

"Travel broadens the mind";

FoM opened up a world of opportunities: it changed the course of their personal and professional lives;

My life would have been completely different. I now have family in both France and the UK, have lived and worked in three different countries, have had a longer career break when my children were little than I would have been able to in my country of birth, have a job whose does not have an equivalent in my country of birth, have taken some different hobbies, the list is endless (66)

Access to European-wide scholarships and opportunities (506)

In my 20s I enjoyed travelling and casual work in several EU countries, which widens horizons and improves language skills (539)

Ability to seek opportunities in member states without the burden of admin/ immigration bureaucracy (620)

Having the chance to experience life and work in a different country is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I could not have had access otherwise. Visa applications fees and work restrictions from employers (682)

learned more about other cultures, became more open to different opinions and personalities, met amazing and inspiring people I wouldn't have otherwise be able to meet and was able to study on a higher level - acquire a deeper knowledge of my chosen field (764)

Freedom of Movement was very beneficial to me as it gave me a lot of opportunities, in terms of jobs, studies and personal development. It gives people easy access to volunteering abroad, studying or start a new life in anew country. It is in my opinion a great and mind-opening tool for personal development, and does not appear to have significant drawbacks (immigration in in no way prejudicial or harmful to the economy of a country, quite the contrary in fact). "Travel broadens the mind", as the old saying goes (1021)

FoM broadened respondents' horizons;

Broadening my horizon after growing up in East Germany with extremely restricted opportunities to travel. learning about a different culture and becoming more open, tolerant and welcoming myself as a result. The ability to feel like I belong to two countries, my native country and my adopted country, the UK, and the ability of travelling freely between the two (1238)

It broadened my outlook, I enjoyed a more culturally diverse life (516)

Feeling part of an open continent. Being able to deepen my knowledge (357)

I have worked on projects in 22 EU countries, have travelled freely and extensively, for me this is how I see a global outlook on life. for me travel and exposure to new cultures has been enriching and has shaped how I do things. It has made me more open-minded and realise there is always more than one perspective in culture (481)

#### Personal development;

Personal development was also important to respondents and many stated that FoM had supported their personal growth as much as their professional outlook; FoM had made their world richer;

Tremendously enriching personally and professionally (300)

Focusing on my educational and professional development rather than being a subject to a complex bureaucracy (318)

It helped me to grow up, knowing other cultures and people. It opens people minds and makes me feel free and stronger (321)

It's allowed me to achieve my goals both professionally and personally. Without freedom of movement, the UK would be a much poorer place in all senses and I would not be who I am today (322)

FoM gave me opportunities to grow personally, culturally and professionally (1284)

#### FoM allowed respondents to learn or improve a language;

Being able to learn a new language or improve language skills often led to other things: a job, experiencing new cultures, meeting new people and partners...

I feel free to live, study and work in all European countries. I speak fluently seven European languages. I have studied in Germany and lived there for one year. I have moved to the UK and my son is in primary school here. English is his first language (399)

learning languages and cultures in a peaceful world (412)

Ability to have experiences I wouldn't otherwise have had; learning the language to a fully fluent level; finding new study and career opportunities that led me to my current path (431)

Gathering lots of experiences, learning new languages, getting immersed in new cultures, career opportunities, friends, the list is endless (876)

I've been able to learn English and get a good job (1311)

#### 4. Families and People

This was the third main theme identified by respondents.

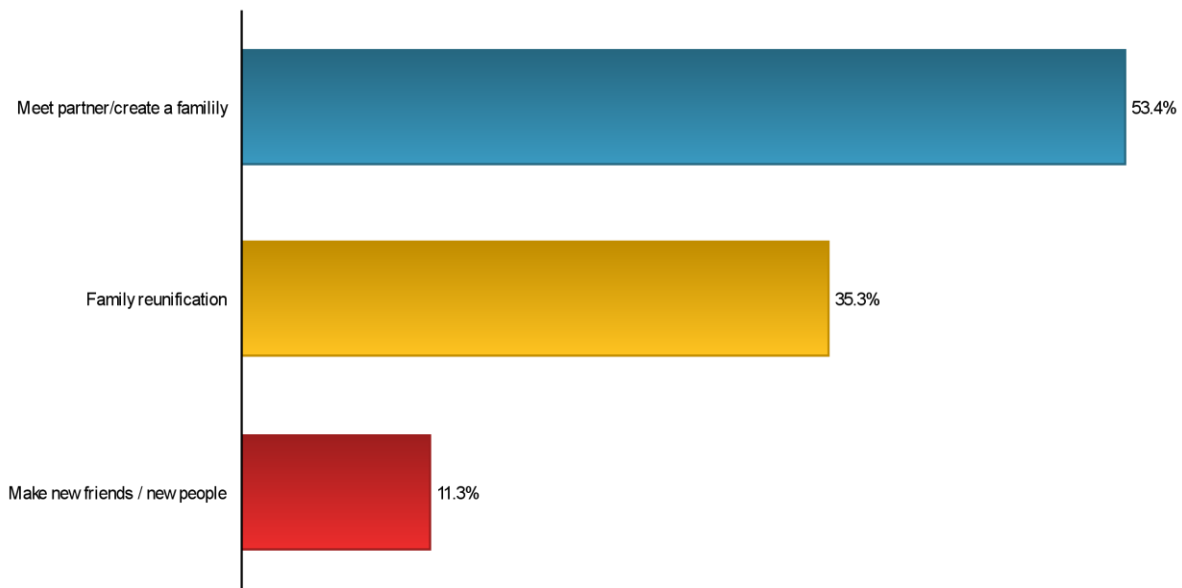


Figure 16. Families and People

As individuals travelled they met new friends, relationships blossomed, people got together and many created families. Family units were often mixed: UK-non UK (EU); UK-non EU; EU-non EU and were formed as EU citizens travelled and settled in one country. Some families had moved around the EU a fair amount whereas others had not;

I never planned to stay in this country, just wanted to improve my level of English until i met the man who is now my husband and father of my children (168)

It enabled me to work and, as a consequence, to continue my relationship, which led to marriage to a UK citizen and a family (267)

I met my wife and we have a beautiful family together (274)

Meeting my partner in another EU country (653)

Meeting my partner and building a life here with him (233)

Being able to easily get work and to be able to be with the woman I love (509)

Build up a stable binational relationship (846)

Building a European family in London (1051)

FoM allowed families and couples to stay together, making sure no one is left behind. It also allows citizens to feel fully integrated;

Without FoM I would not have been able to move to the U.K. and marry my husband. We met when we were both at uni in Scotland. I then had to move back to the US but my Italian citizenship allowed me to move back and live and work in the U.K. Without FoM my husband would have moved to join me in the US which would have taken years to process and would have kept us apart until finalized (678)



Furthermore without FoM I would not have been able to have my now wife with me as she's an Indian national whom I met whilst working here, without FoM we would have been forced to live apart as I don't earn above the threshold needed and she would not have been able to apply for the EEA family permit (916)

Ability to build an international career and take my family with me (290)

Finish my education, start career, buy house and start family with my husband in his home country without worry (271)

It allows for full integrations. My non-EU spouse can live with me without issues, my daughter was born in the UK and knowing that there's no end date to the very clear rights of FoM makes it easier to commit to and embrace UK's values with a long term view (626)

#### FoM allowed families to be together at difficult times;

Having the option of mum staying with me for little spells at a time when she needs looking after (668)

The most important one is the safety cushion that FoM gives when (God Forbid!) one of my family member is sick. They could join me when going through a difficult time! (858)

Freedom to travel back and forth to help support my elderly parents (1016)

### 5. FoM and Work

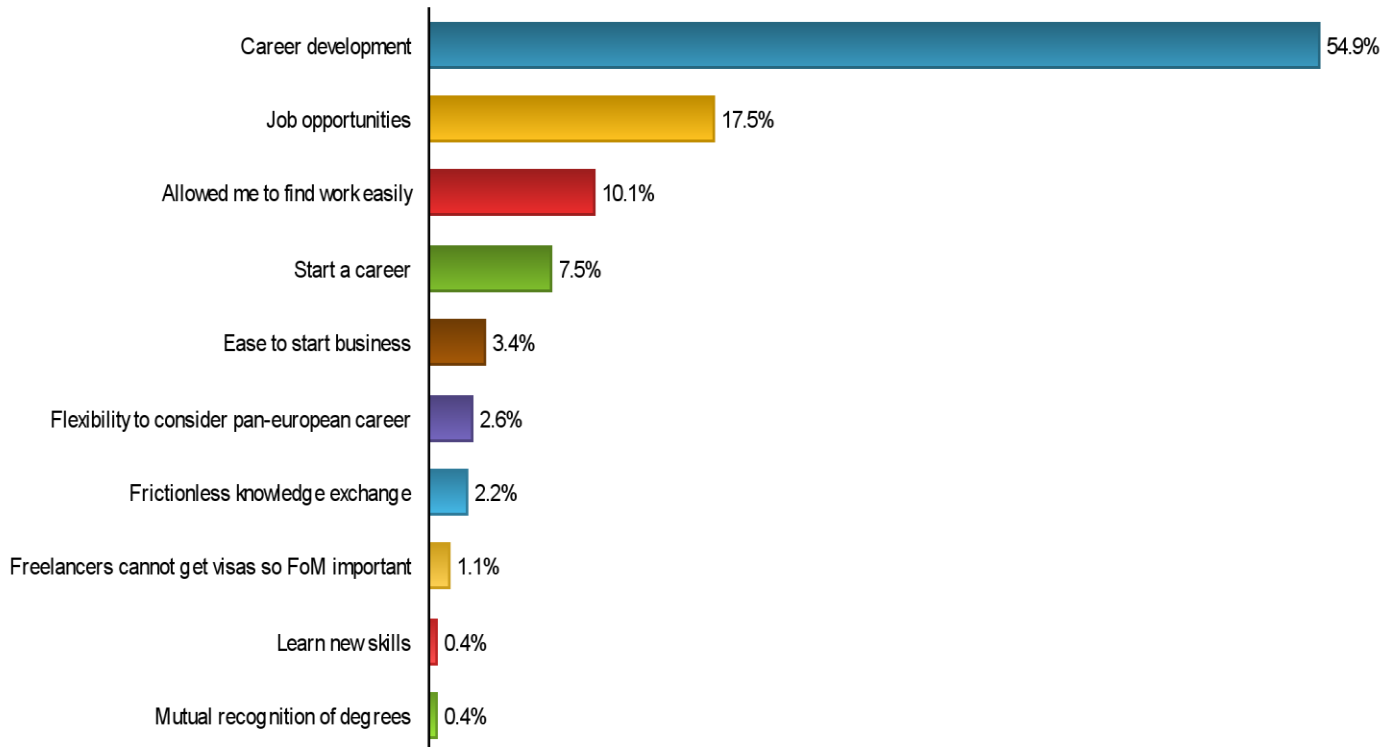


Figure 17. FoM and Work

Work was the fourth main benefit of FoM discussed by respondents. Specifically, respondents have stressed how FoM has helped with job opportunities, the ease of starting careers or businesses;

Work opportunity everywhere in the EEA (873)

A bigger job market, both geographically and in terms of fields roughly related to what I studied (890)

Broader professional experience based on working in a variety of different environments which would not have been possible if I stayed in my country of origin (923)

I have never consciously thought about where I would like to work - I have been a scientist for most of my career and have accepted the jobs in those countries that favoured my career (1162)

#### Career development was considered by respondents as a direct benefit of FoM;

The job I found before moving to the UK was a 6 months internship which I would have not been eligible to without FoM (46)

Portugal's economy crashed in 2012. FOM allowed me to find a job in the UK and continue my career... so it changed my life (76)

I work in the arts, and my entire career depends on FOM; without it, my working life would not be nearly as rich, both financially and experience-wise (95)

I became a British writer, published by HarperCollins, I lived in cosmopolitan London, I experienced many different work environments (115)

The degree of collaboration and exchange of skill and knowledge that is required in academia and the field that I work in would not be possible without FoM (769)

To build a life, when I arrived I started at the bottom, working as a cleaner in a pub. I wanted an adventure. I am now married, I volunteered with the youth offending services, started a band, have had several jobs from recruitment consultant to logistic manager, got degree in Social Policy and Criminology. I now work fulltime in a school for children with behavioural and mental health problems (214)

Without FoM, I would have had to leave the country/would not have been able to work. I would not have been able to develop the career I have now (225)

Allowed me to pursue a career in the UK in the film industry despite initial job insecurities and the need to do unskilled work and internships before getting a full time job in my chosen profession. I would never have been able to pursue this otherwise (294)

Focusing on my educational and professional development rather than being a subject to a complex bureaucracy (318)

FoM has allowed me to travel from one EU member state to another without having to worry about papers. It has also allowed me to build my professional career in a way that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. The ability to collaborate easily with people from other countries is at the soul of the 21st century (325)

As a musician the quality of music making in London, being able to work with colleagues from all over the world. As teacher frequent Erasmus exchanges, enabling my students to experience other countries. Being able to tour widely and easily in Europe (375)

Being able to build a career and personal life in the UK knowing that I could leave for other opportunities but always be able to come back (378)

FoM was also considered essential for a variety of very different some sectors through knowledge transfer and being able to experience different work environments;

Frictionless travelling within Europe. Improved career development (1180)

The easy access to Research in EU countries (439)

As a researcher it is incredibly important to have the ability to spend time in research centres around the EU without VISA limitations. It improves the quality of my work as it allows for effective knowledge transfer and networking (752)

Knowledge of and open-mindedness towards other cultures; as a scientist it is easy to take part in international research projects (809)

Freedom and exchanges of scientific knowledge, understanding and diversities (830)

The degree of collaboration and exchange of skill and knowledge that is required in academia and the field that I work in would not be possible without FoM (769)

I am able to work as a touring musician/sound engineer without needing to apply for a visa for every country I visit. This is essentially what the live music industry in Europe is based on (845)

I do a contracted work in film/TV industry an can currently travel and work in any European country without any problem (87)

A thriving creative industries sector with flexibility and responsiveness and lacking too much bureaucracy. Spontaneity in travel, without too much unpleasant bureaucracy. Time to create value instead of filling in forms. Sigh (1293)

The ability to do my job as an architect (1013)

I am a researcher so being able to very easily travel and work in other countries has vastly enriched my work (1091)

(Freedom of) Mobility, as granted under FoM, was considered key;

Was able to search for and apply for job without hindrance before deciding to move. I would not have moved if I didn't believe I had a good chance of finding and maintaining a job (152)

Free access to job market, free access to training British citizens and sharing my experience (234)

After getting a degree in France I looked for a job for two years in vain. Came to London and one week later I found a job (250)

I didn't have to second guess my status and i had the freedom to travel without forms or paperwork, it allowed for immediate decisions when headhunted for a job in the UK rather than saying 'sorry can i get back to you in a month, i have to fill in forms and wait' it meant that we did not feel like immigrants, just like EU citizens moving from one state to another. Much like moving from London to Glasgow, it didn't feel like a big deal (279)

Ability to study abroad and to then find a job without pressure (312)

Enabled me to easily find job in UK and short work contracts in EU when bad job market in UK (993)

## **6. Ease of /Freedom to travel**

Participants reported that FoM had been particularly valuable and helpful in terms of being able to move from one country to the next, sometimes on a regular basis, for business, study, leisure or family reasons without difficulties. It had also been a way of keeping strong familial ties and keeping their cultural heritage for themselves or their children;

I can live in the UK with my British husband and run my own business here and travel freely and without difficulties. I grew up in East Germany and could not move freely for the first 21 years of my life, I value FoM deeply (159)

Being able to travel without restrictions (360)

Freedom of travel at a short notice (553)

Travelling freedom for both leisure and work (556)

Travelling+ working without restrictions (522)

Professional travel & networking (875)

Leave and return without any problems so I can visit my family when ever I want to. Also for them to come to visit me when ever they want to. And no visa hassle or questions in immigration (191)

The ability to move back and forth to see my family and live here (308)

i can travel freely in europe, living here my family is in poland and they can visit me any time (1014)

In recent years, FoM rules have allowed me to make frequent visits and some extended visits to my country of origin to deal with the problems of aging relatives, without losing my right to return (1080)

## 7. Identifying as EU citizens

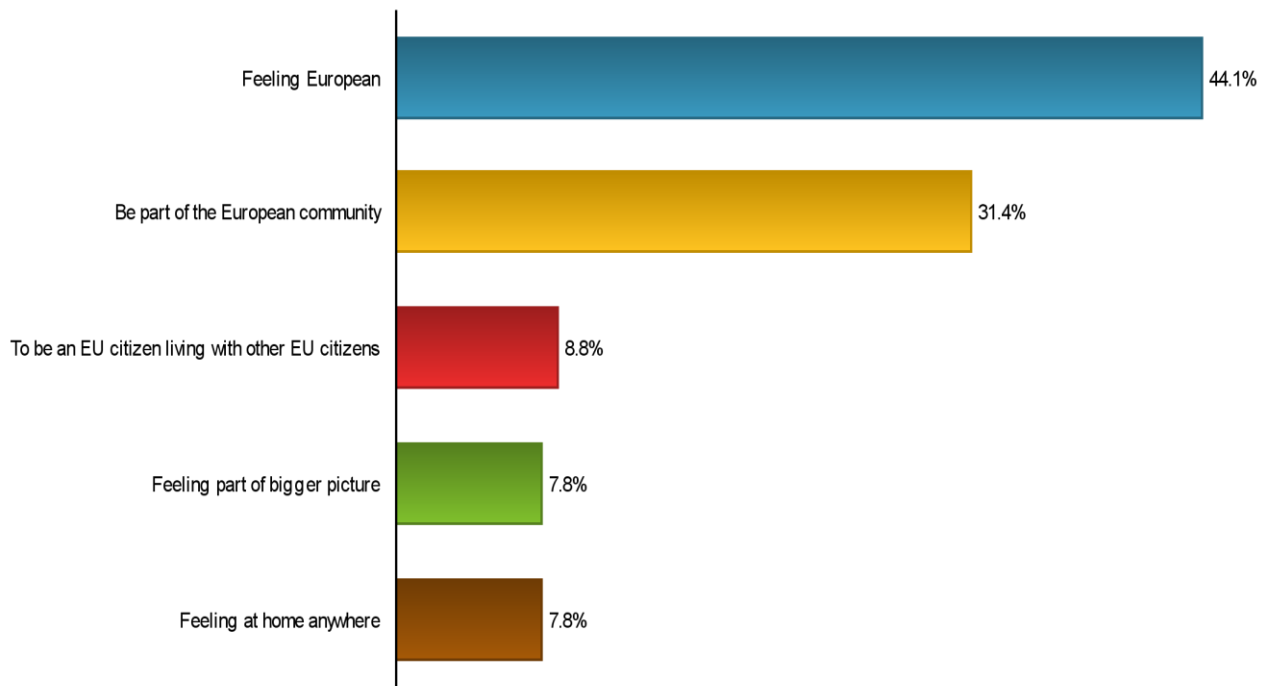


Figure 18. Identifying as EU citizens

Feeling European, feeling part of a larger space than just one country, was an important topic for many participants.

Feeling part of a bigger picture feeling European (227)

We feel French, British and Europeans. I want the same freedom of life for my children (239)

Feeling part of an open continent (357)

As a Swedish citizen, I see Europe as my home (376)

Having been born within the Benelux region, I have never known any other way of life and just can't imagine continued living in an isolated European country that has visa (383)

Still feeling part of the great European family (422)

To feel like a European living and working in Europe, rather than just one specific country (54)

The notion that we live in Europe, that we are all European. The greater focus on a shared humanity and humanistic ideals (574)

To overcome the limits of national identity (827)

I have grown up feeling European and like the whole of Europe is my home (959)

With families, often came children and, as previously indicated, about half of respondents' children were born in the UK. Many respondents mentioned the desire to raise their children as Europeans, in a multi-cultural or multi-lingual family, aware of their cultural heritage;

Meeting my partner and starting a bilingual, bi-cultural family; our daughter identifying as European and embracing both her cultures of origin (511)

My family and my 2 lovely Greek/English children (236)

My three daughters wouldn't exist without FoM. Being a citizen of Europe means I can travel from one country to another the same way a Brit can move from one county to another (314)

I have met my partner, had a fulfilling work life. We have been able to travel and see Europe without cumbersome visas. We have settled in a interesting and varied community which would not have been possible in our home countries (we are a three-culture family) (387)

Meeting my British husband and having German/British children (544)

Feeling part of the country and part of Europe, without losing my identity. Being able to travel freely and cheaply to see family (1032)

My children are trilingual, they feel European know they can freely access the benefits of being able to live and work anywhere in Europe (1068)

## **8. Studying anywhere**

Participants stated that FoM had helped them to study anywhere, therefore allowing them to come into contact with a variety of cultures and experiences. Some had also benefitted from taking part in the Erasmus programme which had often radically changed the course of their lives. Others had benefitted from being able to access European scholarships;

Gave me the opportunity to study abroad, experience a new culture, learn new languages, make friends (30)

I studied what I wanted, I work on what I want and I met amazing people with different cultures (458)

Allowed me to study and allowed me to pursue a career and give back to UK as my country of residence now. Also allowed me to experience different cultures (536)

Being able to study in any European country, this allowed me to identify and work the respective academic experts in their field without having to worry about visa regulations, tax issues, i.e. it was possible to make quick decision. I've learned a lot about different (work) cultures and still benefit from this today (99)

Without FoM I would not have been able to pursue a degree in the UK as the costs of study would have been too high, furthermore it would have put severe restrictions in place for me whilst looking for a job in the UK after my studies (916)

I was an Erasmus student, I studied and worked in different countries (167)

As teacher frequent Erasmus exchanges, enabling my students to experience other countries (375)

It allowed me to stay with my then boyfriend (British) whom I met while studying at a British university as part of the Erasmus programme and then rejoin him after my degree and continue with our relationship (957)

I studied in Czech Republic. I took part in Erasmus exchange student programme. I did work on another Erasmus scholarship in the Republic of Ireland in a national radio station(!) (858)

It pretty much changed everything for me: I studied in Italy thanks to Erasmus, learned new skills in the UK (I first came to do a Leonardo placement) in complement to what I had learned in Belgium and it helped me develop a career (1335)

Access to European-wide scholarships and opportunities (506)

## **9. Peace of mind and security**

Some participants felt that FoM offered peace of mind because they felt welcome and treated as equals to British citizens. This meant they felt safe enough to want to settle, to make a life for themselves and or their families, to make plans for the future in the country of their choice, and to contribute to its life. Therefore, not having to worry about having to leave the country was a clear priority for those respondents;

It has allowed me to make a home and a life in a country where i felt welcome, safe and where i could give back. I love the the pre-referendum Uk. But the number 1 benefit has to be security

Peace of mind and ability to settle and integrate fully No having to worry about moving to a different country. Instant feel at home chance. Feeling welcome.

Security in knowing that I could make a life here and not risk being told to leave. Ability to choose where to live, where to work...

The ability to make long term plans when deciding to move, especially regarding my family

Feeling of equality to UK nationals, and associated benefits of happiness and inclusion in the society. Identical benefits for NHS and local elections. Immeasurable peace of mind, certainty and calm, which has now disappeared (847)

Peace of mind, not feeling like a beggar (934)

## 10. Ability to enjoy the same protection throughout the EU

Being able to enjoy the same social protections across the EU, whether it was reciprocal health care or pension arrangements was an essential component of living in Europe which offered certainty and peace of mind;

I have a chronic health condition. Because of FoM, I could migrate regardless of it (125)

The fact that I can travel around Europe and live in any country I like, enjoying the same benefits and protection (124)

Flexibility it allows you to move back and forth seamlessly, work few years in one country then move to another with no problems due also to pensions regulations and health care protections portability (374)

Also important are related regulations such as pension transferability and mutual recognition of contribution periods within EU etc. (176)

Rapid 'turnover' of jobs possible if required without losing social safety net (577)

No worries about pension when working for a small number of years on any EU country (123)

Being able to live and work in another EU country to where I was born with exactly the same rights (323)

The right to work and transferable workers rights such as pension contributions and health care insurance (1123)

## 11. "Everything"

For some participants, FoM meant "everything". It had been the driver of the main events of their lives, from finding a partner, creating a business, finding jobs, studying, creating a family. They were clear that without FoM this would not or might not have happened. FoM had opened up a world of opportunities and experiences. A number of participants made the following 'simple' comment "everything";

Everything: building a career, a family, a life. Feeling welcome and home anywhere in Europe. Having the choice to live wherever I wanted in Europe, for me and my children. Brexit is a disaster (315)

It pretty much changed everything for me: I studied in Italy thanks to Erasmus, learned new skills in the UK (I first came to do a Leonardo placement) in complement to what I had learned in Belgium and it helped me develop a career. I met many friends in here and met my partner. Without freedom of movement I would be a different person. Less intellectually rich, with less skills, and not having met these people who are part of my life now. I would know less about different cultures, I would therefore probably be less tolerant, and less interested in others and open to other points of view (even aware of them). I wouldn't have developed my ability to learn new skills and languages without much support, I would then probably be less confident. I think freedom of movement made me a better person, and a more interesting one personally and professionally (1335)



To be clear: my entire being, my entire personal history (368)

My whole adult life in some respects is an illustration of FoM. I owe my family to FoM, my education, my career (392)

EVERYTHING in my personal life has been influenced by FoM - I would not have easily studied in the UK, I'd have been hesitant to stay and work as long as I did, I would have never started my self-employment. My husband would have never left the UK as easily as he did, and his parents would not have come to our wedding. FoM has been the foundation of my life. I never questioned its existence (629)

I'm married to a UK citizen and we have lived in another EU country. I have also been involved in several EU professional exchange programs (Erasmus etc). None of this would have been possible or at least easy to do without FoM. I could say that my life and my family for the last 5 years has been largely enabled by FoM (811)

To be able to have frequent contact with family in France and Germany, freedom to travel and work within EU without concerns. Opportunity to experience other cultures and exchange. Learn another language fluently. Able to contribute to society by being open minded and having experienced life in various countries (641)

I can't imagine life without it (750)

A number of participants expressed regret and sorry about the future demise of freedom of movement in the UK post Brexit;

I have thoroughly enjoyed the freedom and opportunities offered to me by FoM and feel desperately sad for future generations of young people (both EU citizens like myself and British citizens like my two daughters) will not enjoy the same freedom to live, study and work in different European countries and experience different cultures (537)

to be able to move freely; to bring up my child in a bi-national / bi-lingual household and teach him about the advantages of FoM that open up the world to him - or at least that 'opened up' the world to him until June 2016 seemed to ring in a change to that. Abolishing FoM will be a disaster for generations to come (727)

## 12. Other associated benefits of FoM identified by respondents

Being able to return to the UK, FoM seen as something that was beneficial to individuals as well as to countries and something that sustained peace in a global, better and safer world to live in;

Freedom. Option to go to other country for research for few months or 1-2 years and come back to my house in UK. It is for free. And cannot be change by government (guaranteed by EU) (166)

To be able to come back easily to the UK to be re-united with my (English) husband (boyfriend at the time) after a 2-year stay in the US (313)

Being able to build a career and personal life in the UK knowing that I could leave for other opportunities but always be able to come back (378)

I think the FoM is good for everyone in the EU, for business, for work, holidays (122)



## Short discussion

The fast response rate in the survey during the very short time (four days) that it was open, suggests that freedom of movement is a topic of great interest to many.

### Which immigration system post Brexit?

When asked about which immigration system they felt should be implemented post Brexit, the majority of the participants supported FoM in its current form. However many made a difference between EU residents currently living in the UK and those who would arrive post Brexit. With regard to the latter, many demonstrated a conservative attitude, stating that immigration rules should be restricted in some form or other. They reported that FoM could be conditional, for instance getting a job within a reasonable amount of time after arrival, or the person should be able to demonstrate that they can support themselves although Comprehensive Sickness Insurance and Primary Earnings Thresholds were discounted. Some mentioned that there should be freedom of movement to travel coupled with work permits or visas to work, and the Swiss model was also cited as a possible example of migration regulation.

Comments stating that FoM should remain in its current form but should be conditional in the future showed a degree of lack of knowledge about the nature and legal framework of FoM and the very specific rules attached to the EU Citizens' Directive 2004/38<sup>1</sup> under which it operates. Those contradict their perception that FoM is a free for all concept with no restrictions. However the UK has not implemented these rules in a systematic manner, creating confusion and lack of knowledge.

Many participants favoured a registration system, usually based on FoM, but stressed that could be done through a simple local process using minimal documentation.

When asked about visas, there was a clear difference between those who had only experienced FoM in their life time and those who had not, as well as between 'skilled' and 'unskilled' citizens. There was a difference in attitude between those who had arrived before the UK joined the EU in 1973 and before the full implementation of FoM in 2004 under the Citizens' Directive, and with those who arrived subsequently. It was also interesting to note that the higher skilled respondents (who could probably obtain visas relatively easily should there be a visa scheme in the future) were still in favour of FoM over visas. This was later confirmed in the comments on the main benefits of FoM.

### Most important benefits of FoM: highlights

When asked about the most important benefits of FoM, some very strong themes emerged during the analysis of the comments with the overarching concepts of 'freedom' and 'flexibility' coming through strongest. They were associated with the freedom to live, work, set up a family, build new relationships, create businesses, experiencing new cultures and countries as they wished and

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://eumovement.wordpress.com/directive-200438ec/>

when they wished, without having to endure restrictive (visas) or complicated bureaucratic processes (the flexibility).

For people working in research and academia, but not exclusively, frictionless travel and working conditions were considered crucial to develop careers, to be able to take up job opportunities as they arose quickly and simply, something which they felt would be hindered through a visa system, and to enable knowledge transfer. This also meant that they were able to make life changing decisions in a fairly easy manner.

FoM also allowed participants to experience new cultures and new countries as well as keep strong ties with their country of origin (being able to visit relatives and friends, encouraging children to learn and experience the family's cultural heritage), while feeling integrated in the UK or wherever else they chose to live in the EU. Living in the EU and feeling European was also a strong theme. There was a sense feeling belonging ("feeling integrated" and being able to contribute) to the country where these EU citizens had settled in as well as to the wider space that Europe is.

While 'work' is often cited as the main reason why people moved to the UK, the data in this survey shows a more complex picture of individuals and families moving to the UK or elsewhere in the EU and making new lives, touching on many domains as mentioned above. For instance, when the media, or governments, talk about FoM they often refer to adults, often ignoring young people and children. In the survey, many participants had moved to the UK with their parents when young or very young, or were born here. Many had known no other country or had no memory of their first years in their country of birth.

The hostile environment<sup>2</sup> that has accelerated since 2016, and the result of referendum of June 2016, weighed heavily on the minds of many participants. EU citizens whose situation made them more vulnerable to immigration scrutiny (persons with disabilities, carers, persons on low or irregular income) expressed great concern about their future in the UK as FoM allowed them access to social protections they could lose without it. Would they be allowed or able to stay in the UK? Many expressed regret, deep sorrow and worry about the future. This echoed the findings of the3million's research on the experiences of applying for documentation certifying residence<sup>3</sup>.

### **Limitations to the survey**

Due to the very short timeframe allowed (out of the control of the3million), the number of responses to the survey was probably lower than it could have been, evidenced by the very positive and fast response rate during the time it was open. This means that it was not possible to consider more probing statistics. The lack of time also prevented more in-depth analysis of the large and very rich qualitative data set.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.freemovement.org.uk/hostile-environment-affect/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.the3million.org.uk/research>

**Recommendations for future research:**

- Investigating the issues of persons “at risk” of falling foul of harsher immigration rules in the future, including persons with disabilities, carers, persons on low or irregular income, communities and groups of persons who do not engage in such surveys;
- The survey showed that with ‘work’ as a reason for coming to the UK, there were partners and spouses who followed the primary worker; there were also children who had followed their parents or who were born in the UK: these two groups could benefit from a qualitative investigation as they seem to be rarely mentioned in the literature, children in particular.