

Organised immigration crime: a post-conviction study

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- This report outlines the findings of an interview programme conducted in 2006 with 45 prisoners convicted of people smuggling/trafficking offences in 2005. The research was commissioned to provide a fuller understanding of the market dynamics of facilitated illegal entry into the UK.
- The picture presented by the perpetrators was of a market that conferred healthy profits with a low risk of detection. The UK is perceived as an attractive destination for a number of reasons and illicit entry across UK borders is perceived to be relatively easy. However, many interviewees expressed genuine surprise at the severity of the sentences that they had received for involvement in people smuggling or trafficking offences.
- Recent policy initiatives – notably the UK Action Plan on Human Trafficking (2007), the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND)¹ Enforcement Strategy (2007) – and the creation of UKBA – have begun to address a number of the issues raised in this report. The Serious and Organised Crime Agency prioritises action against organised immigration crime second only to Class A drugs, but the response to organised immigration crime over the longer term will continue to require regular monitoring and adjustment.
- The findings suggest that the management options available to policy makers and enforcement agencies are complicated by the fact that many ‘pull factors’ which create demand for illegal entry into the UK also deliver general economic and social benefits (for example our healthcare and benefit systems). Additional complications arise from the tacit acceptance (and indeed encouragement) of illegal immigration within some existing Minority Ethnic communities.
- A continued focus on law enforcement activity and providing secure borders is crucial, along with actions to strengthen fraud prevention and detection in the UK’s health and social security systems.
- Raising awareness of the negative impact of illegal immigration on local communities, and fostering greater condemnation of it within communities that have hitherto supported it, is another important challenge to address.
- Advertising the harsh penalties for perpetrators is also critical to reducing this area of criminal activity, as is increasing awareness that successful detection of these crimes is a priority for the government and UK law enforcement.

¹ Since this study was conducted the IND became the Border and Immigration Agency (BIA), and subsequently the UK Border Agency (UKBA).

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Keywords

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Immigration
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