

## **UK public strongly backs freedom to live and work in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand**

New polling commissioned by the Royal Commonwealth Society supports a recent UK-based YouGov survey that highlights overwhelming support across Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the UK for reciprocal rights to live and work freely in each other's nations. Headline figures show 70% of Australians, 75% of Canadians, 82% of New Zealanders, and 58% of Britons polled support free mobility.

**This follows on from an idea by the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson MP, who called for [a free labour mobility zone between the UK and Australia](#).** Previously, the Mayor said 'as we reconsider Britain's place in the world, I want us to reconsider how we engage with Commonwealth people'.

Commenting on the findings Lord Howell of Guildford, President of the Royal Commonwealth Society, said:

"We need to welcome our friends with open arms when they visit us, and in doing so, work to ensure as much free mobility as is workable. Between Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom this flow and interchange of talented people is especially vital. This polling is invaluable as it shows the views and wishes of these fellow Commonwealth friends in strong support of closer ties. Governments must find ways build them and to remove the obstacles that stand in their way."

Young adults (18-35) are most supportive notably in New Zealand and Australia with 90% and 80% respectively; while 77% of Canadians aged 30-39 are most supportive. Overall opposition to the idea is slim with only 1 in 10 not in favour from Australia and New Zealand, 15% in Canada, and one in five in the UK (19%). An additional YouGov question also found that more Brits favoured free mobility with these nations over those in the EU – with the latter's support at 46% and 35% against.

In recent times there has been significant drop in Commonwealth nationals working in the UK due to a tightening of non-EU migration causing considerable frustration particularly for Australians and New Zealanders. Forthcoming changes to the UK visa regime will make this experience even harder such as Tier 2 salary thresholds and the £200 annual NHS surcharge amongst others.

The polling builds on a recent briefing from Australian High Commission in the UK which described the visa changes as 'potentially causing structural damage to relations between our countries.' Last month also saw the New Zealand Prime Minister, John Key, state that the UK's health surcharge on Kiwis was 'pretty cheap' and 'chipping away of New Zealanders' rights in the UK'.

The report's author, Tim Hewish, Director of Policy and Research at the RCS said:

"The polling results are clear. Its strength is that it doesn't just ask Britons. There is immense support from Australians, Canadians, and New Zealanders. Collectively we possess a unique bond which needs protecting. We share a language, a legal system, and a Queen. This is shown most visibly on all our passports with the Queen or her representative '*allowing the bearer to pass freely without let or hindrance*'. Free labour mobility zones offer a contemporary way to demonstrate the deep ties between our peoples and I urge governments to discuss practical ways achieving this.

Furthermore, the policy proposal can be helpful to Commonwealth diasporas and ethnic minority communities who have family ties or business connections across the four nations. More broadly it also can help businesses looking for a foothold in a specific region be that the Asia-Pacific through Australia and New Zealand, Canada in North America, or the UK in Europe.

Last year, a petition proposed freer movement between the four nations. It now stands at over 100,000 signatories.

### Notes to the Editor

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This report is one of a series that investigates the specific barriers to strengthening the engagement and sharing of talents in the contemporary Commonwealth. It addresses ways in which citizens of the four countries might live and work more freely within one another. It is intended that this could apply to other Commonwealth countries with comparable economic characteristics over time.

Polling was conducted at two different stages. Independently, YouGov surveyed 1687 Britons between 11-12 November 2015. This survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). Then the Royal Commonwealth Society commissioned additional polling to be conducted by pollsters in specific countries. OmniPoll in Australia questioned 1,247 Australians between 28 January and 2 February. Nanos Research in Canada asked 1000 Canadians between 30 January and 1 February. And Curia Market Research in New Zealand surveyed 1000 New Zealanders between 18 and 27 January. The question asked was broadly similar. Differences were made in the case of Australia and New Zealand because both already have a form of free labour mobility through the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement.

The Canadian question example: *Currently British citizens have the right to live and work in other European Union (EU) countries and EU citizens have the right to come and live and work in Britain. Would you support or oppose Canadian citizens having similar freedom of movement rules with Britain, New Zealand and Australia if adopted Canadians citizens would be able to live and work in Britain, New Zealand, and Australia and their citizens would have the right to come and live and work in Canada.*

**Additional UK data:** [YouGov commissioned polling](#) shows that British males are more supportive with 62% compare to 55% of females; however, 27% of British females selected 'not sure'. British adults aged 25-39 are the most favourable at 63% for and 14% against. Lib Dem voters signalled the most support with 66% followed by the Tory voters with 58% and Labour and UKIP on 57%. Interestingly, UKIP supporters are the least supportive with 27% opposition. The highest support geographically are those polled in London and Scotland with 63%. The least support signalled is from the North of England - 56%.

The idea started in August 2013 when Boris Johnson visited Australia and called for a bilateral mobility zone between the two nations. In November 2014 the think tank, Commonwealth Exchange, now part of the RCS, released a report – [How to Solve a Problem like a Visa](#) which looked into the Mayor's policy proposal and made recommendations. This prompted a group to create a Change.org petition in March 2015 which has over [100,000 signatures](#).

UN International Migration figures 2015 - Number of citizens:

<b>Britons</b>	in Aus – 1.29m	in NZ – 265,000	in Can – 607,000
<b>Australians</b>	in UK – 135,786	in NZ – 65,000	in Can – 27,500
<b>Canadians</b>	in UK – 86,415	in Aus – 54,034	in NZ – 9,950
<b>New Zealanders</b>	in UK – 67,276	in Aus – 617,000	in Can – 12,919

[The Royal Commonwealth Society](#) was founded in 1868 and is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world.