

Why people immigrated to britain in the 20th century



In this essay I will analyse the value of sources A-E to decide whether or not they provide enough evidence to explain why people immigrated to Britain. Source A is an extract from May Laws passed by the British Government in 1882.. From these laws we can gather that the Russian Government wanted Jews to leave Russia, the Jewish community was being used as a scapegoat for the problems at home like the assassination of the Tsar, coupled with the economic problems sweeping Russia. Laws such as " Jews cannot own or farm land" show institutionalised racism.

Although the source does not mention any pull factors, we can infer that Russian Jews came to Britain for several reasons, including freedom of speech and worship. The already existing community of Anglo-Jews also appealed to the Russian Jews as they had been living there trouble-free for generations. In addition, Britain offered better jobs. Britain could also be used as a 'stepping stone' for Jews wanting to travel to America. Source B is a drawing of a Pogrom in Kiev, 1881. The biggest problem with this source is that we do not know its origins.

Hence, the drawing may have been made to look more dramatic than it actually was - or vice versa. Whatever the case, the most intriguing thing is that several soldiers are standing by, watching events unfold. This again shows institutionalised racism. Did the artist witness the pogrom first hand? As the motive for this drawing is unknown, we cannot rely on this source too heavily. For example if a Jew drew this picture then it could have been made to look worse than it actually was, whereas if a Russian drew this picture then it could have been toned down. This source is full of push factors but contains few pull factors.

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We can infer that the pull factors are closely linked to source A. Jews would want to feel safe in public areas. Britain could offer this as there was no racism in Britain at that time. The push factors would almost certainly have included fear. This source clearly shows why Jews left Russia but it does not say why many Jews chose Britain. Source C is a photograph of three Polish airmen, although it is not clear when the photo was taken. The fact that Poland was invaded by Germany in 1939 would undoubtedly have contributed to the thousands of Polish immigrants who flooded Britain around 1945.

Many Poles also came to Britain in order to continue the fight against the Nazis. As the information states, Polish fighters were accountable for one out of every ten enemy planes shot down. When Poland became Communist in 1945 many Poles decided to reside in Britain permanently. Yet again this source is showered with push factors, but no pull factors. Source D is an account of a West Indian who boarded the Windrush in 1948 to immigrate to Britain. Unlike the other sources, this one has no catastrophic events.

In fact the man tells us that he had quite a 'reasonable' job and that 'things were looking up for him' and that the reasons for his move were to 'get away from the control of his parents' and the fact that 'the island was too small'. These reasons are push factors, albeit minor ones but they pushed him in search of a more exciting life. Britain could offer this. This source omits vital information, like the 1951 hurricane that would almost certainly have driven thousands from their homes, and also the 1948 nationality act which gave nearly one quarter of the world's population the right to live in Britain, spurring many to emigrate here.

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At that time the USA was restricting immigration, so many people may have come here as second choice. The labour shortage in Britain was helped by the advertising campaign abroad. This is not mentioned. This man describes Britain as the 'Mother Country', suggesting he has an affection for Britain. This is a dubious source in terms of reliability, as the man seemed to have trivial reasons for coming to Britain; important pull factors like better job prospects and standard of living did not feature in his account, as he already had a decent job and prospects in his home country.

This source has minor, and very personal, push factors that would not have featured in the average West Indians' lives. Source E is a picture of Ugandan Asians arriving at Heathrow in September, 1972. Idi Amin (the Ugandan President) ordered forty thousand Ugandan Asians out of Uganda. This is an example of ethnic cleansing and Africanisation that was taking place all over Africa. Photographic sources have limited use and this is reflected throughout source E.

It is the least useful source as it can be interpreted in many ways. The people in the photograph could have left Uganda of their own accord, or they could have been forced to leave under the 1972 act. There is very little information about this source and as a result we cannot analyse in depth. To summarise, I do not believe there is enough evidence to explain why people came to Britain in particular during the twentieth century. All sources have many push factors, but lack or have very few pull factors.