



Presentation Outline

I. The rationale behind the choice of the overarching theme for WMR 2011: Communicating Effectively on Migration

2. Key Findings and Observations

- What are the determinants of perceptions?

- Can they be influenced?
- If so, how and to what extent?
- 3. The way forward



I. Rationale for Choice of Theme

• Era of the greatest human mobility in recorded history, and despite communications revolution, migration remains one of the most misunderstood issues of our time.

• Why? What can be done?

- Confused discourse about migration:
 - Stands in the way of effective policy making;
 - Engenders harmful stereotypes, discrimination and anti-migrant sentiments;
 - Results in controversy about its value and benefits.



Views are Diverse and Fluctuate

- There are public opinions rather than a public opinion about migration.
- Public opinions and perceptions about migration vary significantly between and within countries (as well as between sub-groups within a community) and over time.
- Migration rarely identified as the issue of primary concern even during recessions. Migration is nonetheless consistently identified in opinion polls as an issue of public interest or concern.



Factors Influencing Public Opinion

• Numbers matter: influence perceptions and often overestimated.





Perceptions of Scale of Migration

General public tends to over-estimate the real scale of migration

Country	Perceived	Actual
Italy	25%	7%
Spain	21%	14%
USA	39%	14%
Canada	39%	20% SARRAZIN DEUTSCH- LAND SCHAFET

Perceived and actual percentage of the population made up of migrants, in four transatlantic countries, 2010

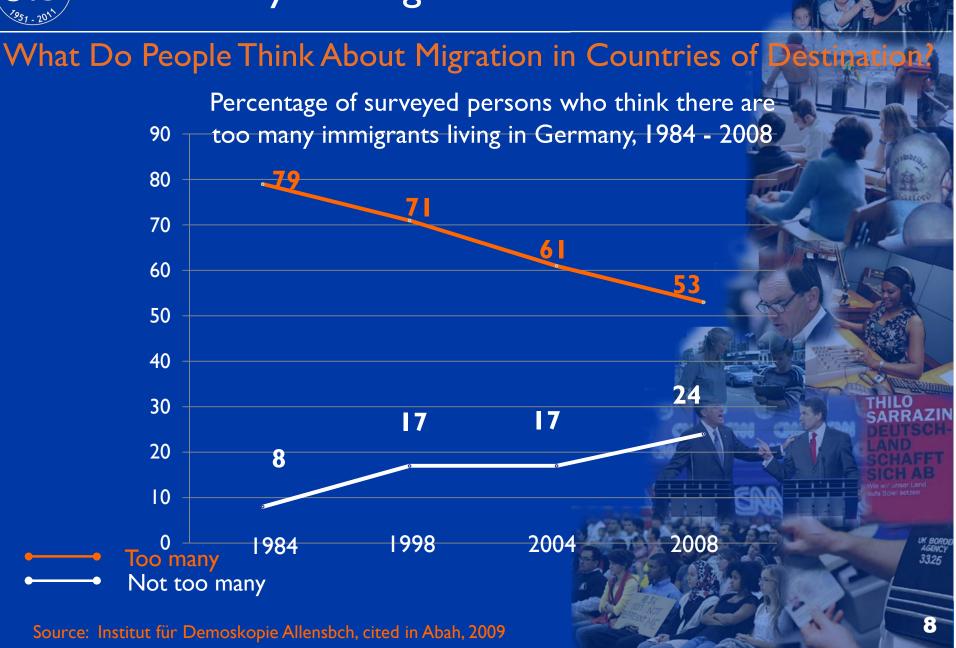
Source: Transatlantic Trends, 2010: 6



Factors Influencing Public Opinion

- Numbers matter: influence perceptions and often overestimated.
- Perception of who is a migrant;
- Perception of immigration status of the new arrivals;
- Perceptions influenced by economic and labour market conditions, and level of unemployment;
- Age, socio-economic background, ethnicity, educational attainment strongly influence responses to migration related surveys;
 - Perceptions evolve over time.







What Do People Think About Migration in Countries of Origin

• Emigration considered to be "a big issue" in many countries of origin; but

 Mixed views about the value of migration: opinion varies between migrants as "national heroes" or "deserters";

• Ambivalence about return migration.



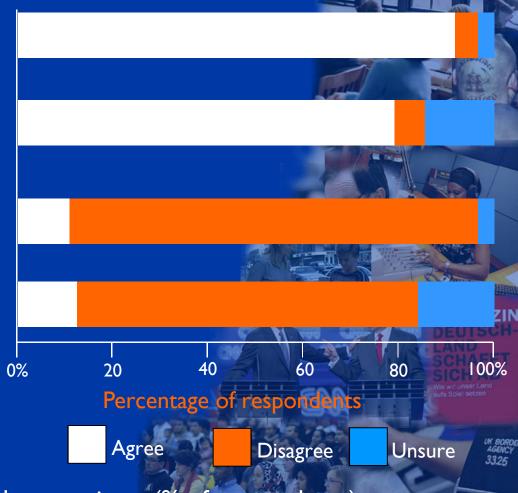
What Do People Think About Migration in Countries of Origin

They are adventurous people prepared to try their luck and have a go overseas

They are doing well for themselves away from home

They have let us down by leaving Australia

They too often delight in running Australia down from offshore



Australian attitudes towards expatriates (% of respondents)

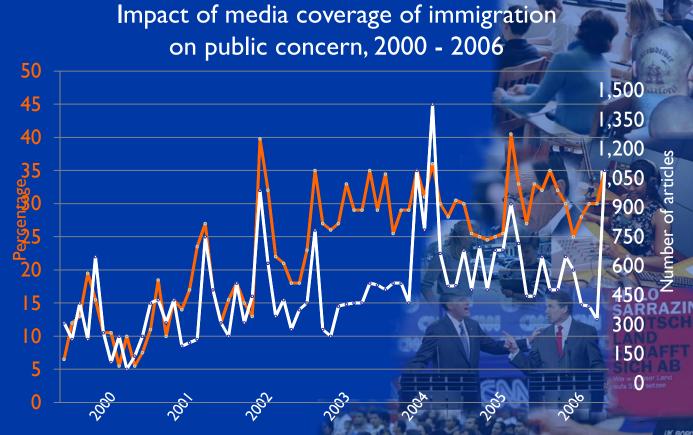
Source: Adapted from Fulillove and Flutter, Lowy Institute 2004: 39.



The Strong Link Between Media Coverage and Perception

 The media have a primary role in the shaping and framing of the debate in both countries of origin and destination;

 Evidence base is available but there is a disconect between data producers and data users.



Concern about race, immigration, immigrants
Number of articles with major mention of
"immigration or "illegal immigrants"

Source: Ipsos MORI 2000-2006, cited in Page, 2009.



Summary

- Conventional interpretations of migration do not reflect the reality of contemporary population mobility;
- Distorted communication about migration can trigger a vicious circle that leads to misinformation being perpetuated through government policy;
- Inaccurate presentation of migrants gives rise to stereotypes and negative portrayals leading to sense of marginalization;
- Accurately informing the wider public about migration may be the single most important policy tool for Governments;
- Perceptions, attitudes and opinions about migration are fungible and do shift over time.



3. The Way Forward

· Building an open, balanced and comprehensive migration discourse;

De-politicizing the debate and directly addressing issues of concern;

Working with the media to support balanced media reporting;

Acknowledging migrants as active communication agents.