

II. Key Findings of WMR 2011

Factors Influencing Public Opinion

- Numbers matter: influence perceptions and often overestimated.



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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%

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

Source: Transatlantic Trends, 2010: 6

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Factors Influencing Public Opinion

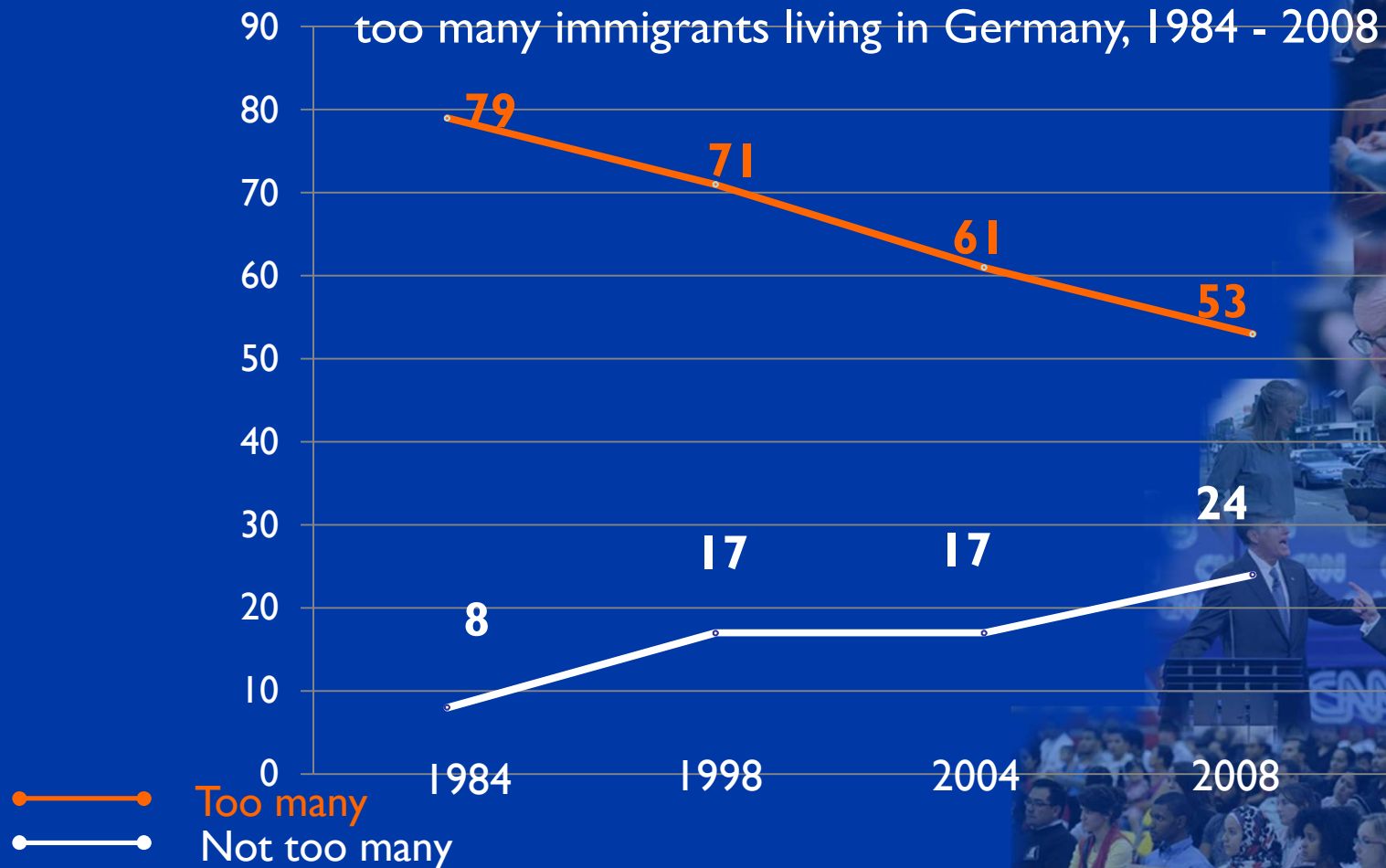
- Numbers matter: influence perceptions and often overestimated.
- Perception of who is a migrant;
- Perception of immigration status of the new arrivals;
- Perceptions influenced by economic and labour market conditions, and level of unemployment;
- Age, socio-economic background, ethnicity, educational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



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What Do People Think About Migration in Countries of Destination?

Percentage of surveyed persons who think there are too many immigrants living in Germany, 1984 - 2008



Source: Institut für Demoskopie Allensbch, cited in Abah, 2009

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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.



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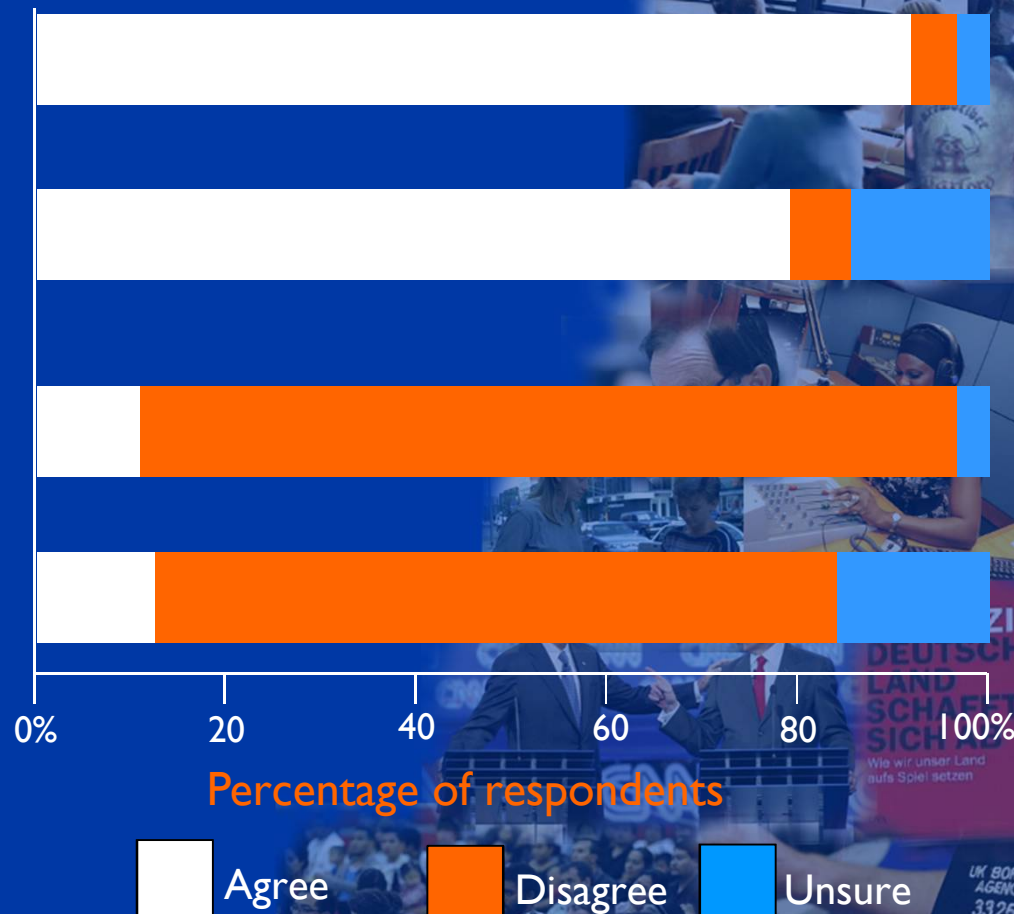
What Do People Think About Migration in Countries of Origin?

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 Fulilove and Flutter, Lowy Institute 2004: 39.

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The Strong Link Between Media Coverage and Perceptions

Impact of media coverage of immigration on public concern, 2000 - 2006

- 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 disconnect between data producers and data users.



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

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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.

