



How Public Perceptions of Migrants are Shaped - What we know

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Factors influencing public opinion about immigration (IOM World Migration Report 2011)

1. Numbers of migrants
2. Migrants' contribution to the economy
3. Characteristics of receiving populations
4. The time factor



1. The Numbers

- Public concern about immigration usually grows as numbers increase (but significant variations between countries).
- People in destination countries often overestimate numbers of migrants.
- Definition of who is a 'migrant' is often vague.
- Attitudes vary according to type of migrants.

- Attitudes towards migration are not always in line with attitudes towards migrants settling.

Figure 1: Public concern about immigration, 1974–2009

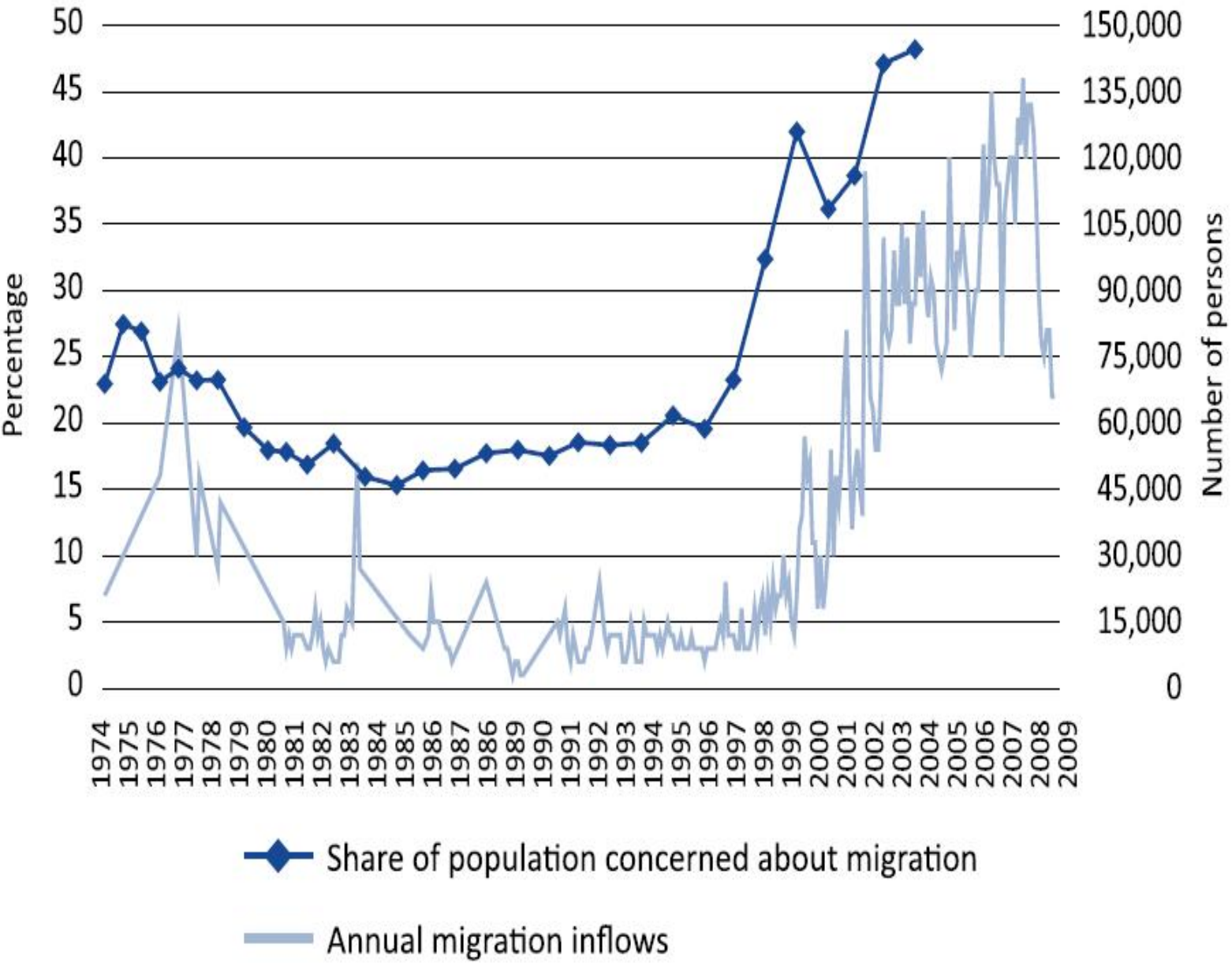
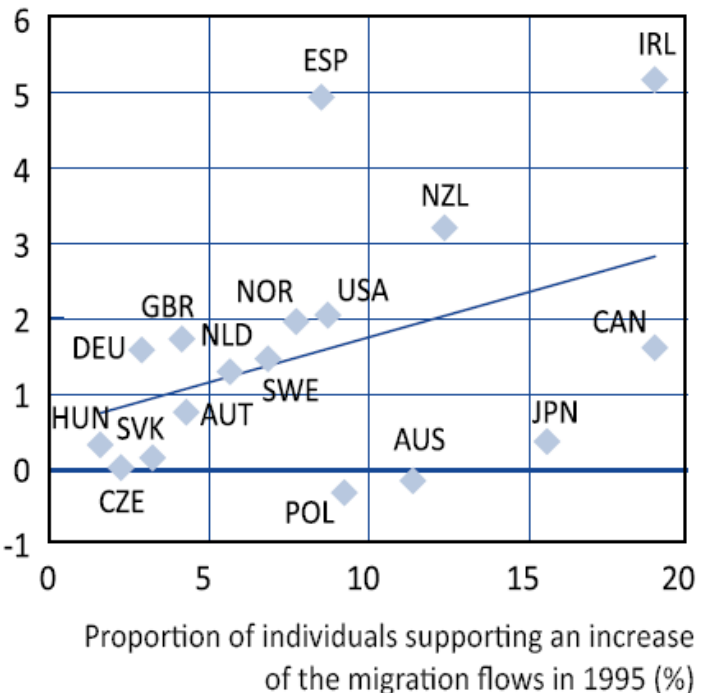
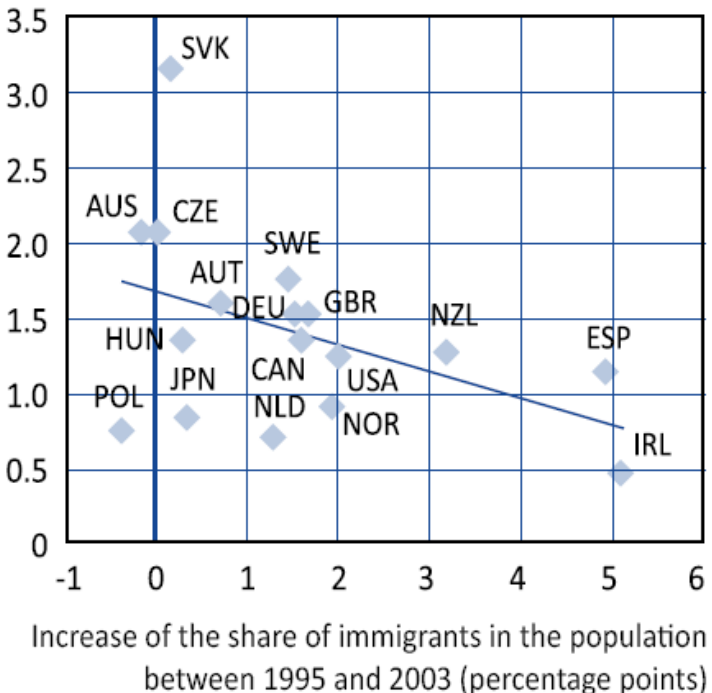


Figure 2: Support for increased immigration in relation to the rising proportion of immigrants in the populations of certain OECD countries (%), 1995–2003

Increase of the share of immigrants in the population between 1995 and 2003 (percentage points)



Change in the proportion of individuals wishing to increase the migration flows between 1995 and 2003 (ratio)



Note: Percentages do not take account of non-responses. Weighted data.
 Source: OCDE, 2010: 120 (http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2011-en).

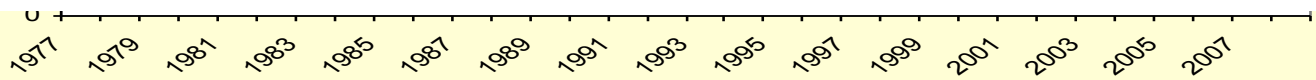


Table 1: Perceived and actual percentage of the population made up of migrants, in four countries, 2010

Country	Perceived	Actual
Italy	25	7
Spain	21	14
United States of America	39	14
Canada	39	20

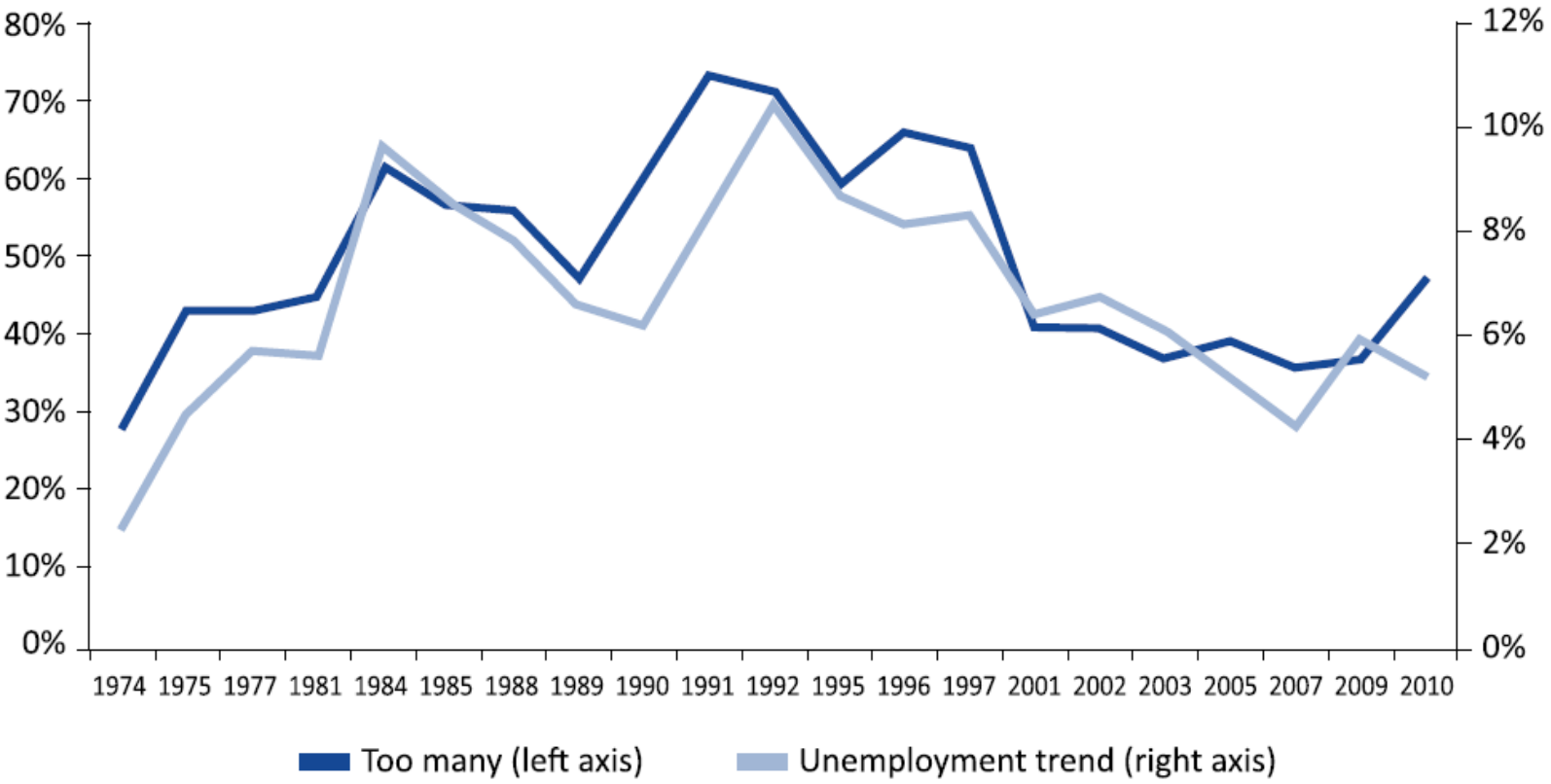
Source: Transatlantic Trends, 2010: 6.



2. Migrants' Contribution to the Economy:

- Attitudes towards migrants strongly influenced by availability of jobs.
 - Countries with high GDP and low income inequality tend to be strict on immigration, but accept migrants once they are in.
 - Countries with temporary workers' programmes tend to value immigration for economic reasons, but consider it a social and cultural threat.
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- Nevertheless, huge variations, even between similar countries.

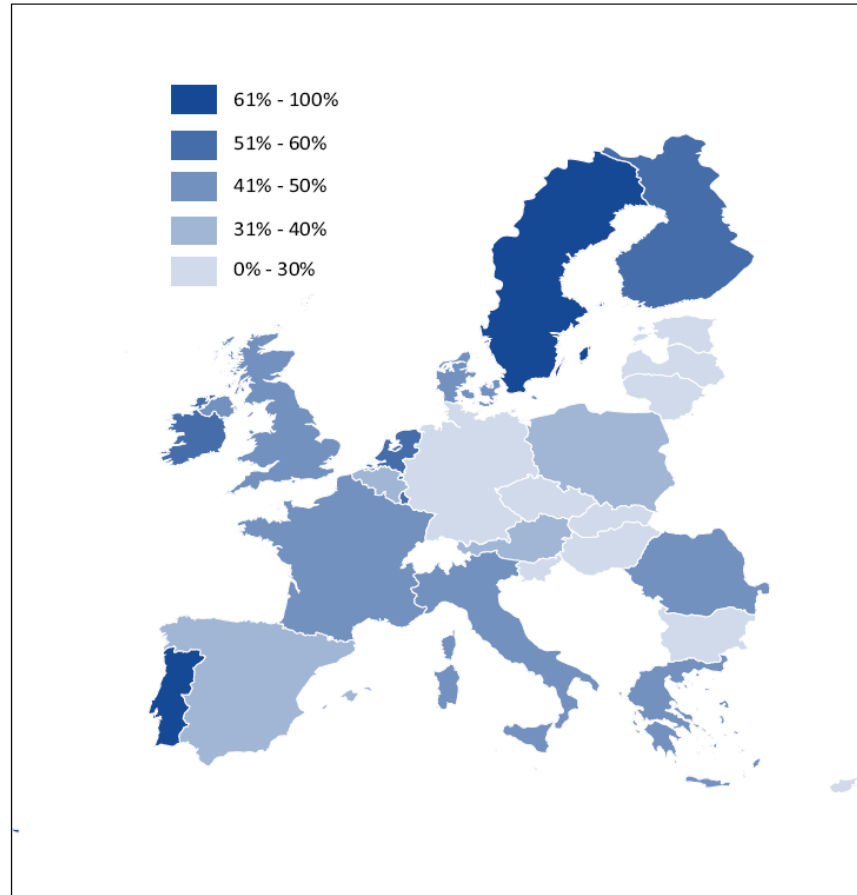
Figure 3: Correlation between level of unemployment and those believing immigration levels to be too high (%), in Australia, 1974–2010



Source: Markus, 2011.

Figure 4: Proportion of respondents in European Union countries agreeing that immigrants contribute a lot to the country, 2006

Country	%
Sweden	79
Portugal	66
Ireland	56
Luxembourg	56
Finland	54
The Netherlands	53
United Kingdom	47
Denmark	45
France	44
Greece	43
Italy	41
European Union (25)	40
Belgium	40
Spain	40
Austria	37
Poland	33
Germany	30
Cyprus	30
Slovenia	28
Malta	21
Lithuania	20
Hungary	19
Czech Republic	17
Estonia	16
Latvia	16
Slovakia	12
Romania	43
Bulgaria	23



Source: Adapted from the European Commission, 2006.



3. Characteristics of Receiving Populations :

- Generally: the younger and the more highly educated tend to have more positive attitudes towards migration and immigrants.
- Possible explanations: personal experience, less direct competition, better informed, more rational attitudes.

Table 2: Percentage who agreed that the United Kingdom had too many immigrants, 1999 and 2008

Age	1999	2008	% Change
15-29	44	67	+23
30-49	51	67	+16
50-64	64	71	+7
65+	69	78	+9
Social Class	1999	2008	% Change
Upper middle class	48	63	+15
Skilled working class (C1)	47	70	+23
Skilled working class (C2)	60	75	+15
Unskilled working class and those dependent on state pensions	65	74	+9

Source: Ipsos MORI, June 1997–June 2008, cited in Page, 2009.

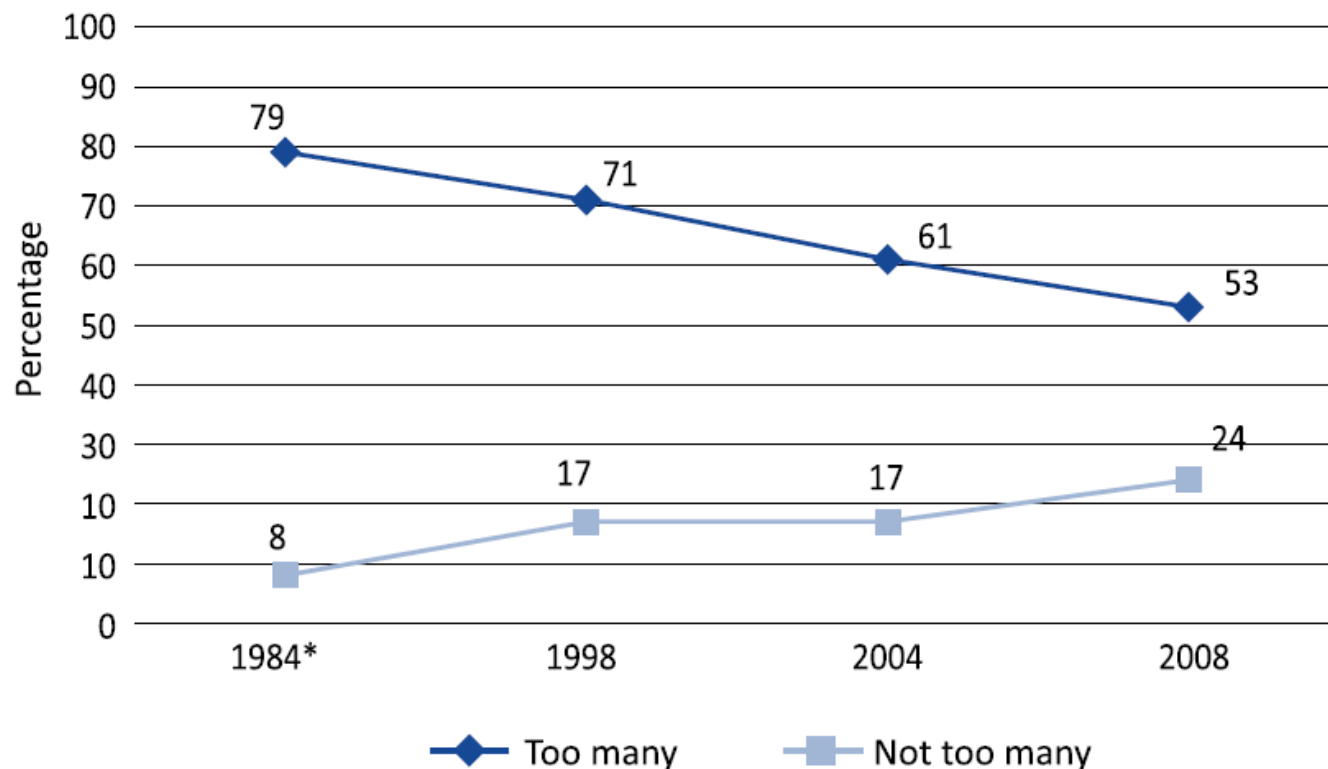
Note: Skilled working class (C1) refers to those engaged in supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional work. Skilled working class (C2), as per the classification of social grades in the United Kingdom, includes households wherein the main breadwinner does skilled manual work that requires an apprenticeship or training, such as plumbing or car mechanics.



4. The time factor:

- Generally increasing acceptance of migration as migrants' length of residence goes up.
- However, immigration is a significant driver of social unease and anxiety in our societies today, though not the only one. It is likely to remain one for the foreseeable future.

Figure 5: Percentage of surveyed persons who think there are too many immigrants living in Germany, 1984–2008



Source: Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, cited in Abah, 2009.

Note: Data refer to August 1984, June 1998, December 2004 and March 2008.

*Data for 1984 are for West Germany only.

Table 3: Attitudes to immigration intake (% of respondents), selected countries, 2003

Number of immigrants coming to country				
	Increase	Remain the same	Increase & remain the same	Decrease
Canada	29	39	68	32
Australia	23	38	61	39
Spain	10	39	49	52
Denmark	10	39	49	51
United States of America	11	32	44	56
Portugal	3	41	44	56
New Zealand	16	28	43	57
Sweden	12	30	42	58
Ireland	9	32	41	59
Austria	7	32	39	61
France	8	26	34	66
Hungary	2	29	31	69
Germany – West	5	24	30	70
Netherlands	4	26	30	70
Norway	7	22	29	71
United Kingdom	6	16	22	78
Russian Federation	4	13	18	83

Source: ISSP Research Group, 2003, cited in Markus, 2011: 7.

Note: The Australian survey was completed by 2,183 respondents, from 27 August to 24 December 2003. The question employed a five-point response frame: Do you think the number of immigrants to [COUNTRY] nowadays should be increased a lot; increased a little; remain the same; reduced a little; reduced a lot? Subtotals may vary by +/-1%, due to rounding (ZA, 2005, cited in Markus, 2011).

Table 4: Public opinion about immigration levels in Australia (%), selected year

Year	Too high	About right / too low
1996	62	32
1997	64	28
2001	41	54
2002	41	54
2003	37	57
2005	39	56
2007	36	53
2009	37	55
2010	47	46

Source: Markus, 2011: 8.



Five Principal Drivers of Anxiety in Contemporary Society and Migration

(The '5 Frames of Demetri Papademetriou', MPI)

1. Culture and Loss of Identity
2. Rapid Pace of Social Change
3. Economics and Inequality
4. Politics: Low Confidence in Government and Loss of Sovereignty
5. Security and Social Unrest