

# THE ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM?



Analysis from the House of Commons in 2012 on the Benefits System, the European Union and Immigration



UNIVERSITY OF  
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## Group Research Project Report

In association with the Hansard Society

### ***The Elephants in the Room?***

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Southampton**



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# 1. Executive Summary

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- Political apathy and disengagement has become a current theme in much of twenty-first century politics, this has created a belief that politicians are out of touch with what the public want or are interested in. The findings from this report however present a stark message that in fact the British government may be behaving in a way that will actually please the general public and it just might be the case that they are not made aware of this.
- Almost four and a half thousand occurrences of issues relating to the benefits system, the European Union and immigration came up in the House of Commons; three subjects that the British citizenry believe are not discussed enough or cared about by the government in this day and age. This evidence suggests that parliament is discussing these issues far more than the general public are giving them credit for.
- Immigration was far less spoken about than the benefits system or the European Union. Perhaps this supports the populist assertion, as people clearly feel immigration is a subject that ought to be discussed more frequently in parliament, but it seems to be the case that it does not receive the right amount of attention.
- Party politics is the main characteristic of British representative democracy and the data highlighted that they all differed in terms of their contributions. In terms of European Union topics, the Conservatives had a 67% input and the Labour Party 20%. With immigration issues the Conservatives also had the largest share at 48% however Labour were much closer at 40%. The benefits system on the other hand showed a difference as Labour came out on top with 52% of the interest whereas Conservatives only had a 35% share of the incidences.
- Concentrating on the three main parties: Labour focused 54% of their efforts on the benefits system and then 23% equally on the European Union and immigration suggesting they know what their spotlight is on. A similar arrangement was noticed with the Conservatives who had 55.5% of their incidents being EU-related, then only 20% and 24.5% for immigration and the benefits system respectively. Finally the input from the Liberal Democrats was disappointing regardless if they are part of the coalition, as a mere 330 counts were found from themselves throughout the whole of 2012. However the structure of their contributions differed as immigration was a mere 14% whilst the benefits system had 40% of their attention and the EU 46%.

- The Prime Minister had 2.6% of the total contributions, of which 56% were EU related issues and 39% were on topics concerning the benefits system. Shockingly though was the low statistic that he made in terms of immigration, only six times did David Cameron have an input and worse still, out of the entire immigration data-set, neither the Deputy Prime Minister nor the Chancellor of the Exchequer became involved yet they contributed in discussions on the other two subjects. This begs the question does the Deputy PM and Chancellor of the Exchequer not feel the need to input on matters regarding immigration, and further still does immigration not affect the economy?
- Backbenchers were the type of MPs seen making the most contributions at 56.2% of the time (although this type of MP holds the majority of seats in the chamber so this is understandable). But, only 6.5% of occurrences came from secretaries of state and 13.2% from front-bench opposition members and these are the politicians commonly seen as ones that have the leverage to affect change and the power to authorise necessary developments. The low figures indicate more input from themselves may eradicate the negative views parliament are receiving.
- The Department for Work and Pensions had 30.5% of all data entries and this shows it is the main port of call for everything associated with the benefits system. The Home Office was the second largest mention at 19.6% and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office third with 10.1%; clearly the three most popular given our topics of interest. However, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office only contributed 20.8% to EU issues; the Home Office was responsible for 60.3% of immigration discussions, and lastly the Department for Work and Pensions held 80.4% of all things to do with the benefits system.
- Detailed graphs of which topics were most and least popular in parliament can be found in section four (Research Findings).

## 2. Rationale

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A key role of Members of Parliament is to raise the profile of timely issues on behalf of their constituents. They perform their duties by asking parliamentary questions, participating in debates or introducing legislation in the House of Commons.<sup>1</sup> It is a common populist assertion that the prominent topics - immigration, the European Union and the benefits system - are of high interest to the British public, but MPs are supposedly neglecting them.

This assertion sometimes transcends the public sphere. For example, on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2012 MP Laurence Robertson announced, following parliamentary debates: "I have to say that Parliament does not always get things right. On many issues, public opinion and the evidence are way ahead of where Parliament is. Examples include welfare reform, immigration and the European Union. Parliament has not caught up with what everyone else in the country is saying on those issues."<sup>2</sup> The fact that an MP is raising this issue adds weight to the aforementioned assertion that is generally associated solely with public opinion. Therefore, it is essential that research is conducted to establish the truth to what extent the assertion is true.

This is exactly what we have done; the aim of the research is to enhance our understanding about the work of elected representatives, and to prove or disprove the populist myth about these issues. We aim to provide the basis for informed debate about how these issues are perceived and dealt with by politicians.

The media is the primary information link between the population and the political sphere. It explains the government's goals and policies, helping to mobilize and reinforce any public support necessary for effective political action. However, the media frequently portray MPs as disconnected from public opinion. Meg Russell advocates that media outlets rarely miss an opportunity to imply that anything or anyone associated with politics is corrupt, hypocritical or simply inept.<sup>3</sup> The 'dumbing down' accusation is probably fair in terms of the way that news is produced for mass audiences, although it is the case that serious reporting and analysis is available to those who are prepared to look for it.<sup>4</sup> The thinness of mainstream media offerings do perhaps, therefore, encourage a rather naive understanding of politics and the workings of MPs; ultimately encouraging cynicism, given that politics can never deliver against the simplistic framework that is set up.<sup>5</sup>

If we are to believe this assertion, or at least accept that it reflects a genuinely held belief amongst the general public, then our political system could be heading down a potentially perilous path. YouGov found that 69% of people think that politicians "lie to forward their own agenda", and with fury over revelations like the MPs expenses scandal in 2008, there is certainly a dark cloud hanging over Westminster. This is a dark cloud that is only going to get worse if we accept the aforementioned assertion by the media. If this is the case, there is trouble ahead.

One just has to look at the comments on an online newspaper article - about the bedroom tax, the ethnic makeup of the local high street, or the rules around the size and shape that bananas are allowed to be - to see not just the huge range of opinions that people have, but the incredible amount of passion that they hold about these issues. Such passion, mixed with the existing, even increasing, levels of dissatisfaction with the current political system could prove to be a potent mix.

Where can people vent their passion about these issues in a meaningful way if they cannot turn to their representatives? It is therefore essential that citizens realise that the media cannot always be trusted. Disaffection and alienation sells; it's in the media's interest to convince people that their politicians are not listening to them, and that they are members of an elite that is disconnected from them in every way. But for the good of democracy we need to make sure that people understand these reasons and, more specifically, realise that the three topics are spoken about on a regular basis.

The reality is that these three topics are of high concern, ranking highly among the political interests of today's society. Outlined below are a few strong pieces of evidence showing why there is an overwhelming and growing interest concerning these prominent, timely topics. Such evidence really highlights the timely importance of the research that we have conducted.

The EU is a consistently hot topic for the public. The Eurozone is facing up to the inevitable consequences of the financial crisis and is moving towards fiscal and banking union. This is not a path that the British people will go down and therefore, as for other non-Euro members of the EU, a new and different relationship must be articulated; one that allows all current members, including those who have not adopted the euro, to remain full members of the EU without hindrance. The British public are evidently interested in this debate. In May 2012 a majority of almost two-to-one wanted Britain out of the EU - 51% voted to leave, whilst 28% wanted to stay.<sup>6</sup> The turnout rate of this poll was 65%, showing that the EU is a popular subject.

Immigration has repeatedly been considered as one of the biggest problems facing the UK. MORI's report examining British attitudes towards immigration argues that this is not just due to the rising levels of immigration into the country, but also due to media debate about immigration. MORI's findings concluded that, in many regions in the UK, the sign of increased immigration that people related to the most was actually from the heavy media coverage of asylum cases<sup>7</sup>; not from a perceptible increase in the numbers of immigrants in their area.

It is therefore clear that the media's strong emphasis on certain issues has fuelled concern, particularly in regions with low levels of immigration.<sup>8</sup> The media plays a key role in driving national concern about immigration - 76% of the population sees immigration as a big national problem. A poll made by the Migration Observatory showed that "about seven in ten members of the British public (69%) support reduced immigration. Among respondents who want immigration reduced overall, 54% said that they would like reductions either "only" (28%) or "mostly" (26%) among illegal immigrants, while just over a third (35%) supported reductions equally among legal and illegal immigrants"<sup>9</sup>. From this we can clearly see there is a key interest which furthers fuels the project's enthusiasm to either dispel or confirm the populist assertions made.

The welfare state in the UK exists to provide a 'safety net' for its citizens through the protection of their economic and social well-being. In August 2012 there were 5.7 million working age claimants of benefits<sup>10</sup>. This demonstrates how indispensable the welfare state is to the British public. Although interestingly, this statistic doesn't consider the other benefits that exist; how many British people have benefited from free health care, for example. However, there seems to be some sort of conspiracy behind public attitudes to welfare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The YouGov national poll for Prospect<sup>11</sup>, for instance, found that 74% of people now think that the UK spends too much on welfare and should cut benefits. Bearing these trends in mind, this research seeks partly to

determine whether or not politicians are discussing benefits enough in parliament and, more specifically, if welfare reform is debated enough, given that so many British people think that the UK spends too much on welfare.

In conclusion, while the trend in public opinion is towards a belief that parliamentarians are ignoring the sensitive issues mentioned, the detail is less clear. Conversations regarding politics often stem from reference points such as official political statements, which are often filtered through the mass media. Politics without a free media is impossible in a truly democratic society, but the reliability of the media to portray a truthful and accurate understanding of politics for its audiences is inconsistent.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, one cannot entirely trust media reports on the negligence of MPs as they may be over exaggerated. The interest in immigration, the European Union and the benefits system is clear, as seen above, and this highlights the necessity of our research project: to enhance the understanding about the work of elected representatives and counter the populist assertion which stems from media generalisations.

# 3. Methodology

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## Background

This piece of research was commissioned to the University of Southampton by the Hansard Society. The Hansard Society<sup>1</sup> is the UK's leading independent, non-partisan, political research and education charity whose aim is to strengthen parliamentary democracy and encourage greater public involvement in politics. At the heart of the organisation is the principle that civic society is most effective when its citizens are connected with the institutions and individuals who represent them in the democratic process; saying this, the Hansard Society inform decision makers and engage the public in politics using a variety of methods:

- providing a platform for debate on current issues around Parliament, constitutional affairs, participation and engagement;
- generating wide-reaching recommendations to improve parliamentary and legislative processes through timely and rigorous research
- pushing the boundaries of new technology and its abilities to engage the public with policy makers
- creating and promoting fresh and accessible resources to help teachers present the citizenship curriculum in an innovative and interesting way
- running training sessions for teachers and policy professionals to enable them to understand a range of political issues and processes effectively
- bringing students from across the globe to study the British political system and to gain experience through internships in a wide variety of political organisations

## Rationale and Brief

One of the Hansard Society's Senior Researchers gave the team an assignment brief and asked them:

*To what extent do politicians discuss the benefits system, the European Union and immigration? And when they talk about them, what aspects of these large subject areas are they focusing on?*

The purpose of this research is to enhance understanding about the work of elected representatives and investigate whether the populist assertion – that these three subject areas are important to the British people and politicians do not want to talk about them – is true or not. What was suggested before the research began was that it may prove that politicians are discussing these issues but not in the ways that people would like them to, and it will provide a basis for informed debate about how these issues are perceived and dealt with by politicians; subsequently leading to greater discussion on the topics.

Essentially the group have been asked to dispel a myth that MPs do not discuss these areas, and some argue the best way of finding this information out would be to interview politicians or hold focus groups with their attendance. Naturally this would be difficult and somewhat subjective, so the research group decided to look at what parliamentary discussions have taken place and turned to

Hansard who hold transcribed recordings of all parliamentary proceedings. The method therefore used was quantitative content analysis. Textual analysis as Halperin and Heath<sup>2</sup> state has long provided important sources of information and involves systematic analysis of textual information; as well as this because the method is unobtrusive, bias is greatly reduced and this is something highly valued in conducting research. Furthermore, this technique offers the researchers the opportunity to study a wider range of topics from a greater number of documents consequently leading to a more robust method with reputable results. One last point to note is that if another research party were looking to replicate, there would be no issue in terms of material because text does not change so if more explicit and detailed analysis was wanted it is easily achievable.

### Method Process

As mentioned earlier, the Hansard records are transcribed recordings of all the proceedings that take place in parliament and the research occurred by reading through their entire records for the calendar year of 2012. These can be accessed using the following link: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/hansard/commons/by-date/#session=62738&year=2013&month=1&day=7>

Once at the link, change the calendar year to 2012 and to the appropriate month then press 'go'; after this select any day then use the links below the calendar (debates and oral answers; Westminster Hall; written statements; written answers; petitions) and this is where the research group found their data to make their findings. The group used these very detailed and extensive records to collate a vast amount of information on the three subject areas and analysed every day which parliament was in session. To begin with, a coding guide was constructed in order to aid the recording and organisation of the data. Prior to looking at the Hansard Society records, the following categories for coding were decided and confirmed as ways to analyse the data and evaluate the occurrences from different angles:

- Source/contribution
- Party Initiating
- Type of MP making the contribution
- Department concerned

Then codes for the European Union, immigration, and the benefits system were added and a finished coding guide was confirmed (this can be found in Appendix V). There were several versions of the coding guide as the researchers liaised with Hansard Society's Senior Researcher to find out what his thoughts were. As well as this, the group had discussions on their individual thoughts on how to improve it as well as the method in general.

The research team then split into three sub-groups (for the European Union, immigration and benefits) and each sub-group's first task was to decide which aspects of these large subject areas to look at; this was difficult as the spectrum of possibility in terms of what may be discussed relating to these topics was so vast. Agreed was to analyse a few days of proceedings and examine what were the most popular topics and then to come together and discuss what was noticed and create the coding scheme for their specific subject area. This was essentially a trial run to see how the rest of the research would operate and to help with any potential issues further down the line. Then the

entire year was split up into equal parts and the researchers read through all the entries that were online and coded each time a contribution was made. This insured every parliamentary session was covered and so as to include as much detail of the goings on in the House of Commons as possible.

Once all the data was collected it was compiled into a single Microsoft Excel file and then transferred onto the statistical analysis programme SPSS. Using SPSS, the researchers conducted exploratory data analysis in the forms of cross-tabulation charts and frequency and percentage tables, these were constructed to facilitate analysis and understanding of the data collected in order to make sensible and rational conclusions from findings which substantial evidence was collected for. These were also carried out to see if any relationships were visible within the data – for example common occurrences or trends; this then led onto further analysis to try and highlight that at least some level of association was evident. Results, details and some tables have been included in Section 4 which is the findings section of this report to help describe what the research has discovered by illustrating in a graphical manner.

### Method Limitations

Whilst performing the study, the research team came across issues amid conducting the research which was something that was anticipated. At times there were breakdowns in communication as sometimes two members of the team were found performing the same task – something which is often seen in groups of eleven members. Another issue that was predicted prior to performing the research was that there would be differences in interpretation of when events occurred and what they were, thus data would be unfortunately missed or coded differently/incorrectly. This is purely down to individuals having different perceptions due to the subjective nature of the task and some researchers being more thorough than others. To add to this, consistencies were always going to vary in group projects of this nature. Although this method reduces traditional research bias like interviewer bias and demand characteristics/social desirability, it has its own weaknesses as described, which can be linked to that of research bias. One limitation that was not considered was the balance of group dynamics as some individuals battled for supremacy and leadership whereas others were happy to sit back and wait to be told what to do and not be pro-active whatsoever. Dr Meredith Belbin conducted a famous study which concluded that a team's balance was the key to its success<sup>3</sup> and that there are nine roles the team members can take within a task. At times this research project had difficulties; however overall it was very successful and can be argued that because of this, the members of the team must have loosely filled each of the different roles to ensure a triumphant project.

# 4. Research Findings

## Benefits System

In the year of 2012, there were 1623 counts in total where benefits in some nature were discussed in the House of Commons. From this total and by looking at Figure 1 we can deduce that the most mentions of benefits were from Backbench politicians (63%). It is expected that backbenchers would bring up more topics in the House of Commons than any other type of MP because of the sheer number of them, although 30% of input has been from Ministers, under-secretaries and opposition Front-benchers which is positive to see. This is likely due to the controversial nature of topics relating to benefits which requires senior figures to comment on them.

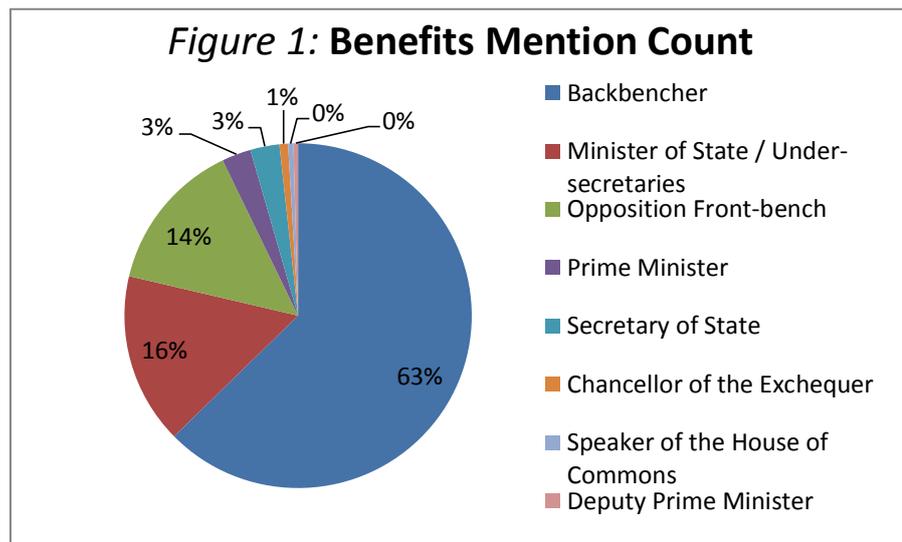
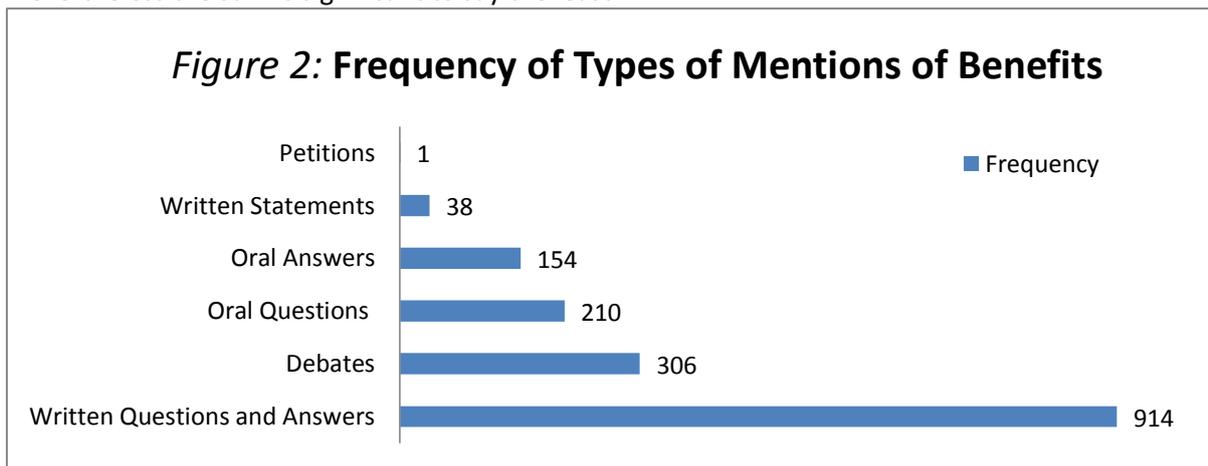
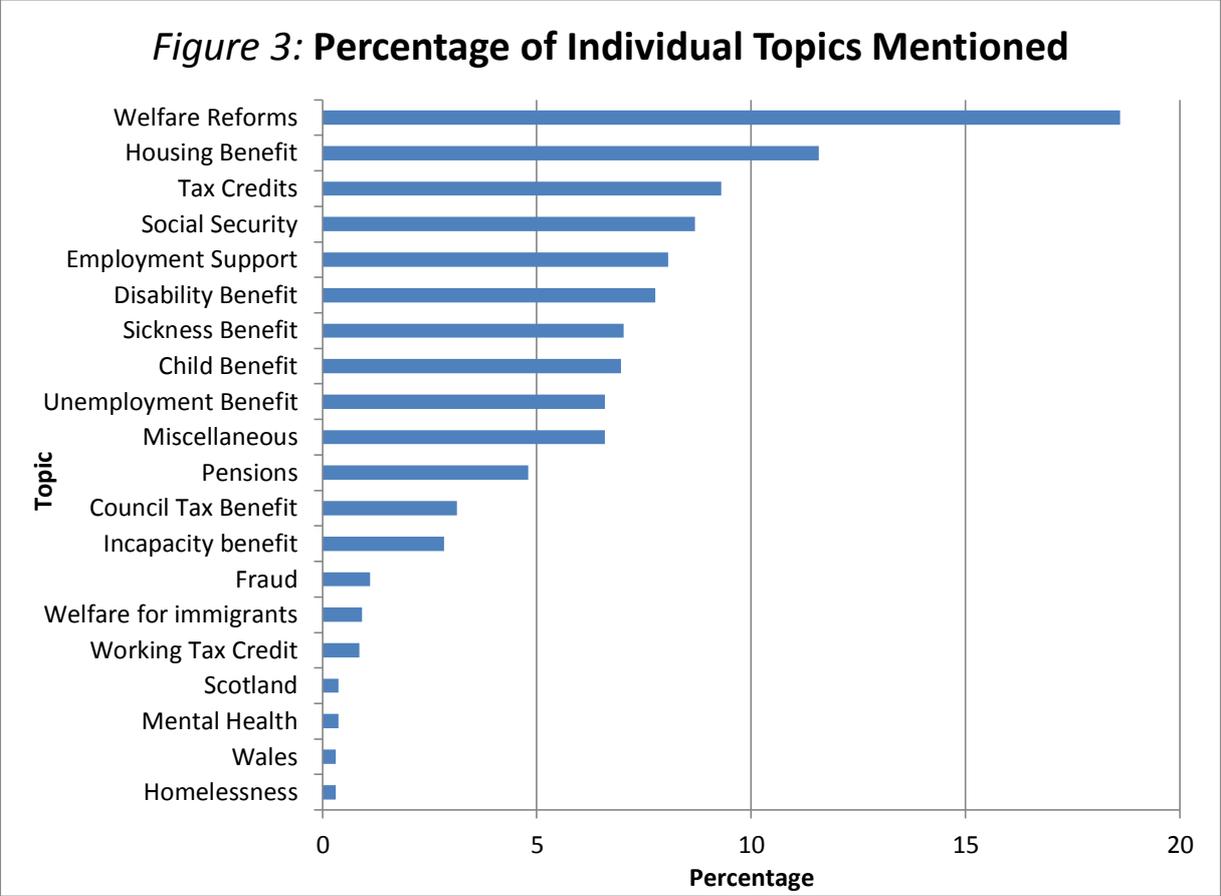


Figure 2 demonstrates that most mentions of benefits from MPs occurred in the form of Written Questions and Answers, this accounts for 56% of the occurrences where MPs discuss benefits. The next highest frequency here where benefits were discussed was in the form of oral debates at 306 which is just under a fifth (19%). The categories of Written Questions and Written Answers have been merged here due to the possibility of discrepancies during the coding process which would have led to Written Questions being coded as Written Answers due to the phrasing of them. Nevertheless the sum is significant to say the least.

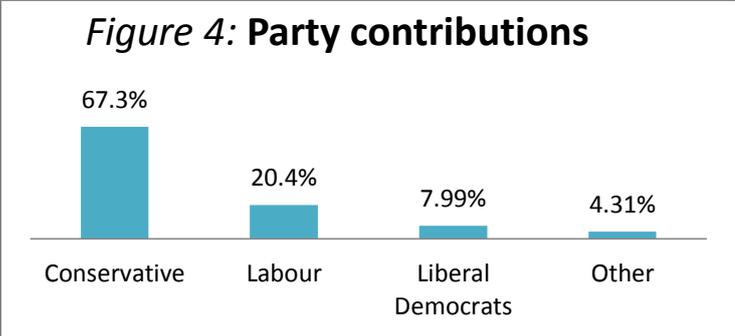


The benefits topic discussed most was welfare reform as Figure 3 indicates; accounting for almost nineteen percent of discussions on benefits throughout the year. This is an interesting deduction to make, as it reinforces that public demand influences the agenda of politicians in the House of Commons as welfare reform was of high media interest in 2012; and this consequently suggests that the findings may disprove the populist assertion given at the start. Moreover, this research has shown that 70% of the Prime Minister’s contribution to topics on benefits has also related to welfare reform; highlighting here that we see important politicians getting more involved in topics of public interest.

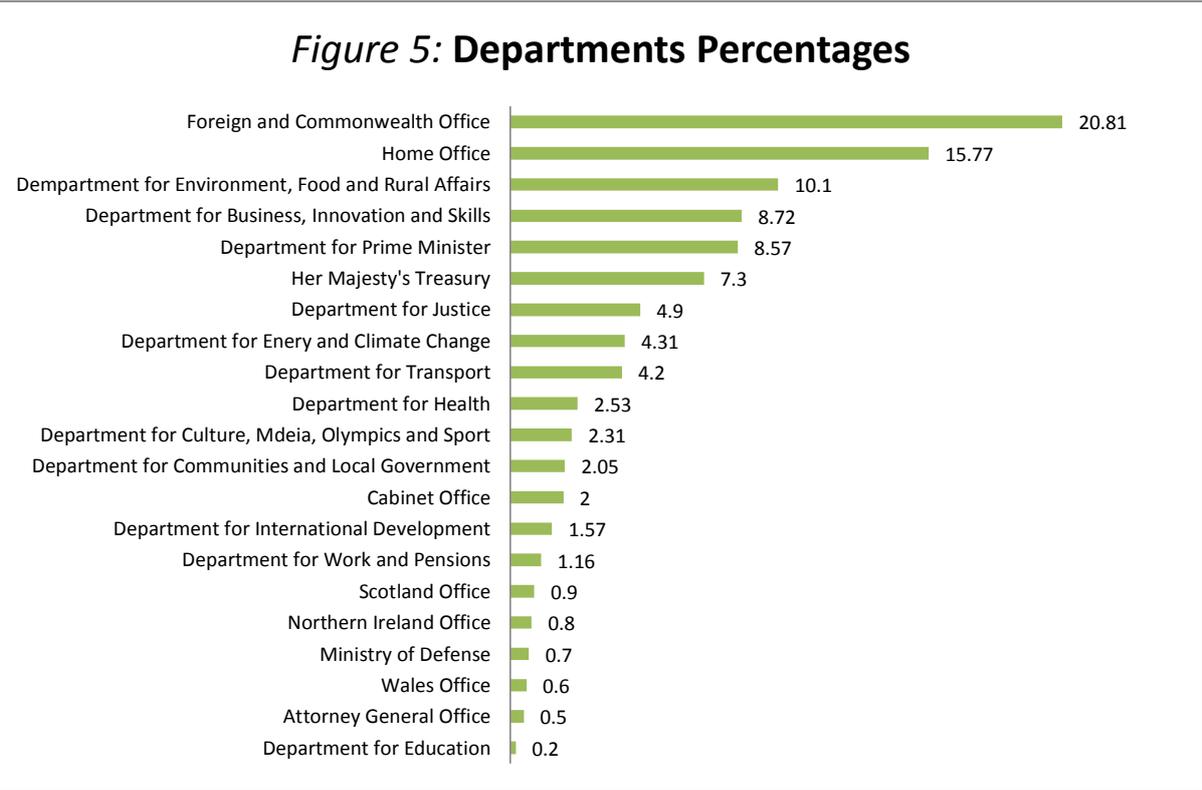


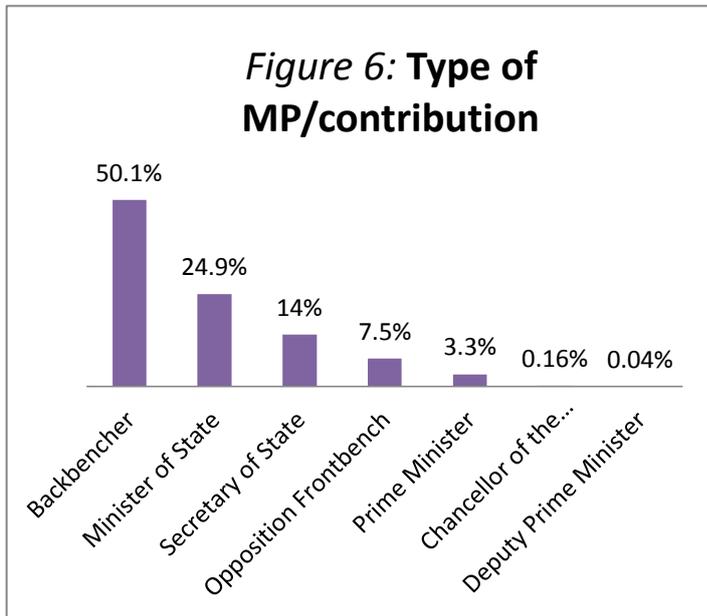
European Union

Contrary to the aforementioned populist assertion, research shows that Members of Parliament do in fact discuss issues pertaining to the European Union as 1903 data entries were recorded from 2012. The data provides evidence that a variety of departments and various types of MP engage in debates and enquiries regarding numerous topics relating to EU politics and regulations. An overwhelming majority appeared as out of all contributions that initiated discussion of EU topics, 67.3% came from the Conservative party as Figure 4 highlights; a figure more than three times the next largest contributing party (Labour held 20.4% of initiating contributions).



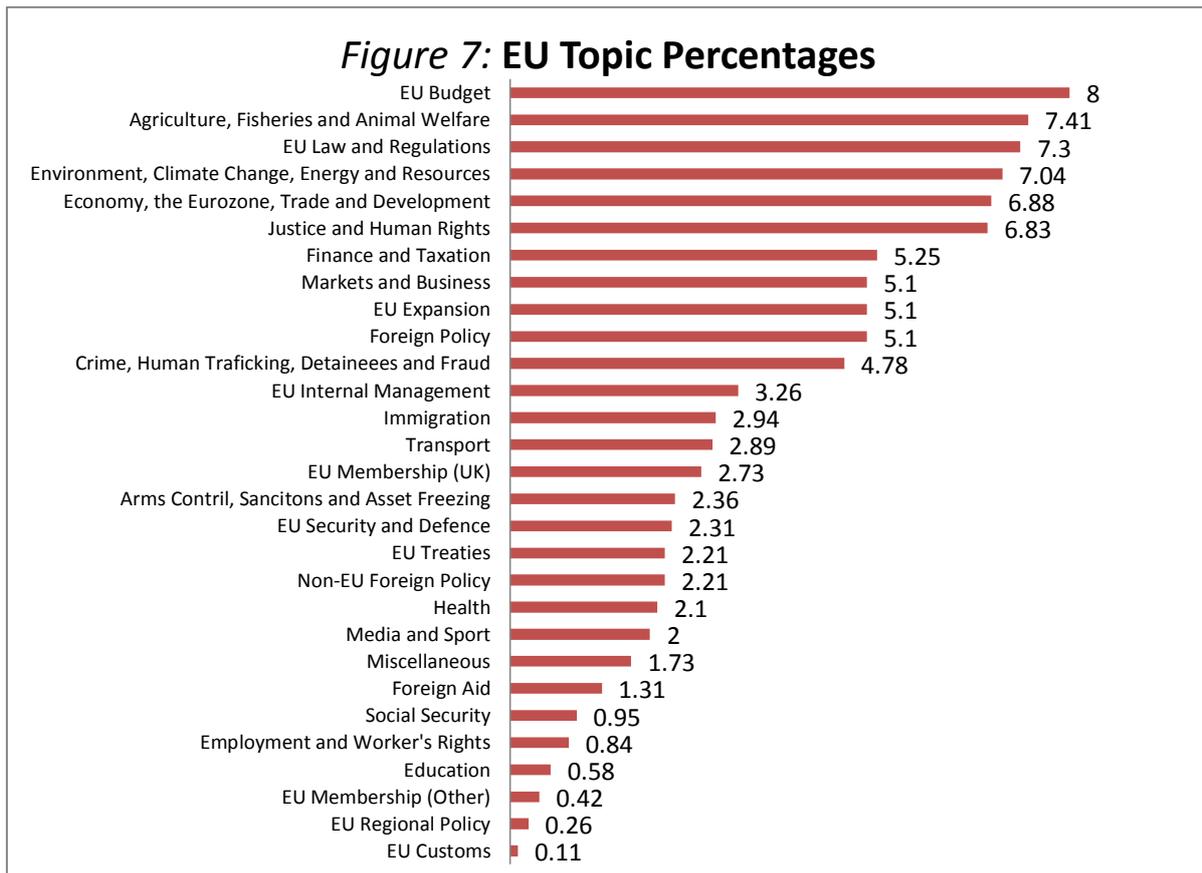
As expected when discussing topics related to the European Union, contributions came most frequently from the Foreign Office; Figure 5 shows the frequency of contributions from the rest of the departments. Something recognised is how little the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Offices contributed to EU related issues. This is because they have all been scaled back in the last decade due to devolution and therefore pay more attention to domestic issues than foreign affairs. Future research may turn specifically to these departments to find out their views on all things Europe, and what they regard as important topics to get involved in.





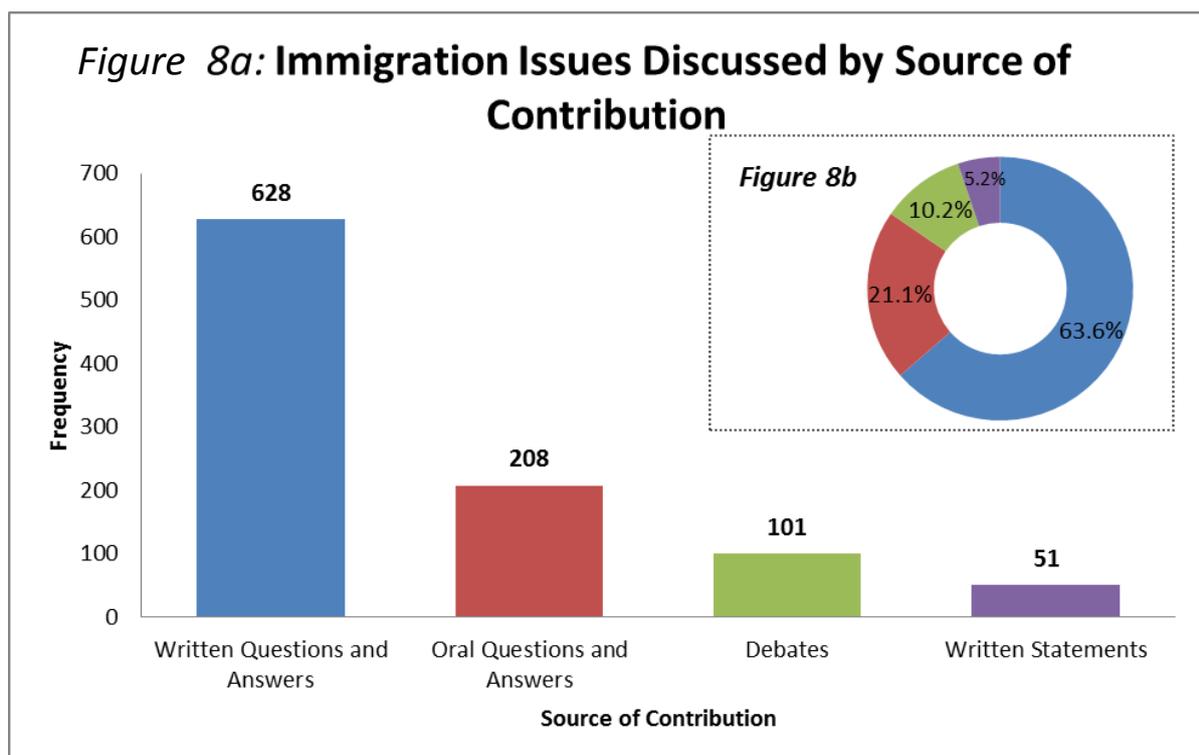
In relation to Figures 4 and 5 on party and department statistics, Figure 6 shows that half all contributions made on the European Union came from backbench politicians; this is over double the next highest type of contributing MP which is Ministers of State. This poses a question as to why the general public are feeling government are not talking about these types of issues; a solution to this question stems from the fact that they recognise the government as only the cabinet ministers and secretaries of state.

Interestingly, the frequency of mentions specifically relating to EU foreign policy was at 5.1%, which is relatively low when compared with other topics, particularly ones relating to agriculture, environment and economic and finance related topics as Figure 7 shows. This may imply why people believe that parliament are not discussing these issues. It was found to be the case however that the most frequent topics were often discussed in a foreign policy context, at least in terms of the UK's relationship and compliance with the EU. Therefore, although the data suggests that MPs preferred to discuss non-foreign policy related topics, the qualitative nature of what was discussed can actually be placed under the broad umbrella of foreign policy.

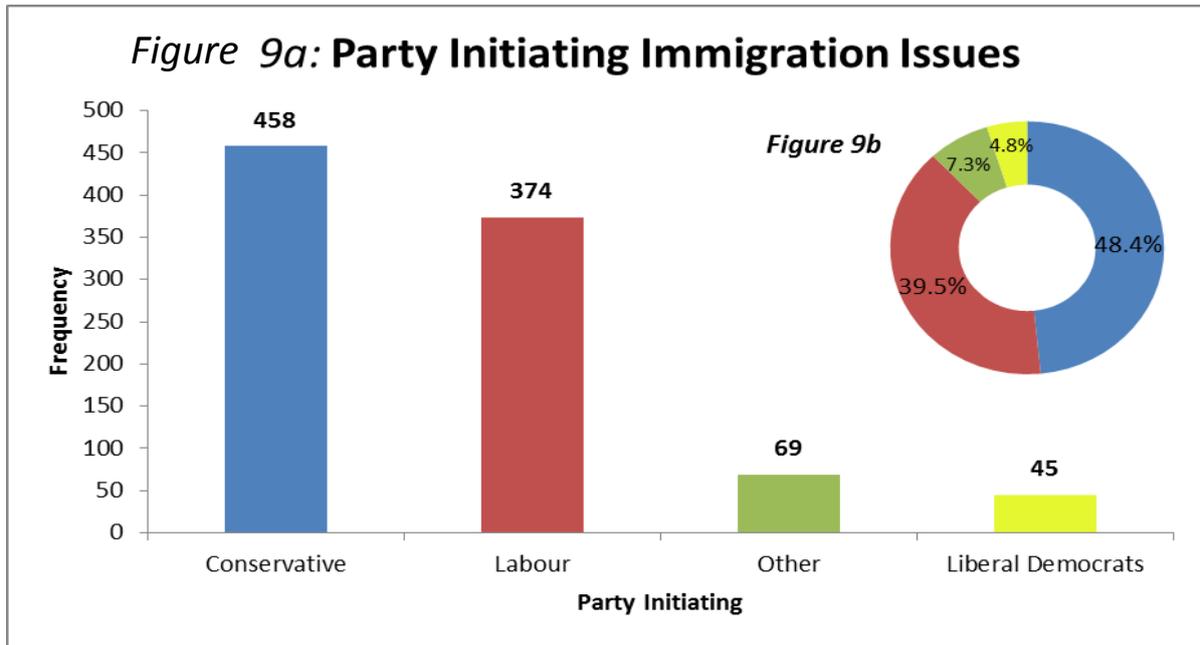


## Immigration

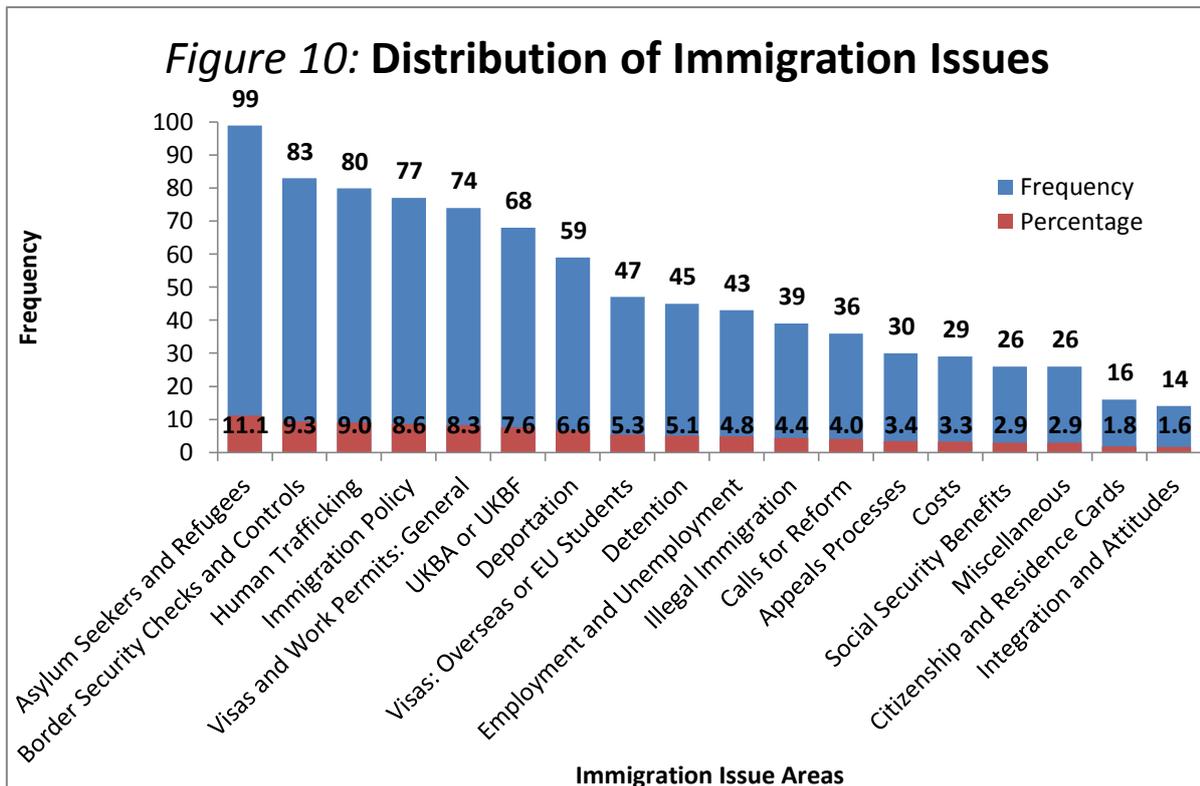
Figure 8a highlights the main source of contribution comes from Written Questions and Answers with 628 counts in total. As shown in Figure 8b this category had an overall percentage of 63.6%, followed by oral questions and answers with 21.1% and debates with 10.2%. This suggests that immigration issues are generally not discussed as openly in the House of Commons as may be expected or as much as the benefits system and European Union. However this does show that despite a disappointing result for debates, questions and answers in the chamber of the House of Commons, over 600 contributions, from Figure 8a, were made to written questions and answers which suggest that immigration issues are still being discussed just not as clearly and in the public eye.



As expected Conservative and Labour MPs initiated immigration issues the most, as shown in figure 9a, as they are the two biggest parties in the House of Commons. Conservative MPs brought up immigration issues the most constituting 458 total incidents which was 48.4% of the overall total which figure 9b shows, though this may simply be because there are more Conservative MPs in the House of Commons than any other party. This can be shown by the 2010 election results<sup>1</sup> that the Conservatives and Labour have an even ratio of seat share to MPs initiating immigration issues, the Conservatives had 47.1% of the seats to 48.4% raising immigration issues and Labour had 39.7% of the seats to 39.5% raising immigration issues. However, the Liberal Democrats had 8.8% of the seat share<sup>1</sup> but only raised immigration issues 4.8% of the total, which suggests that they are not initiating these issues as much as perhaps they should be.

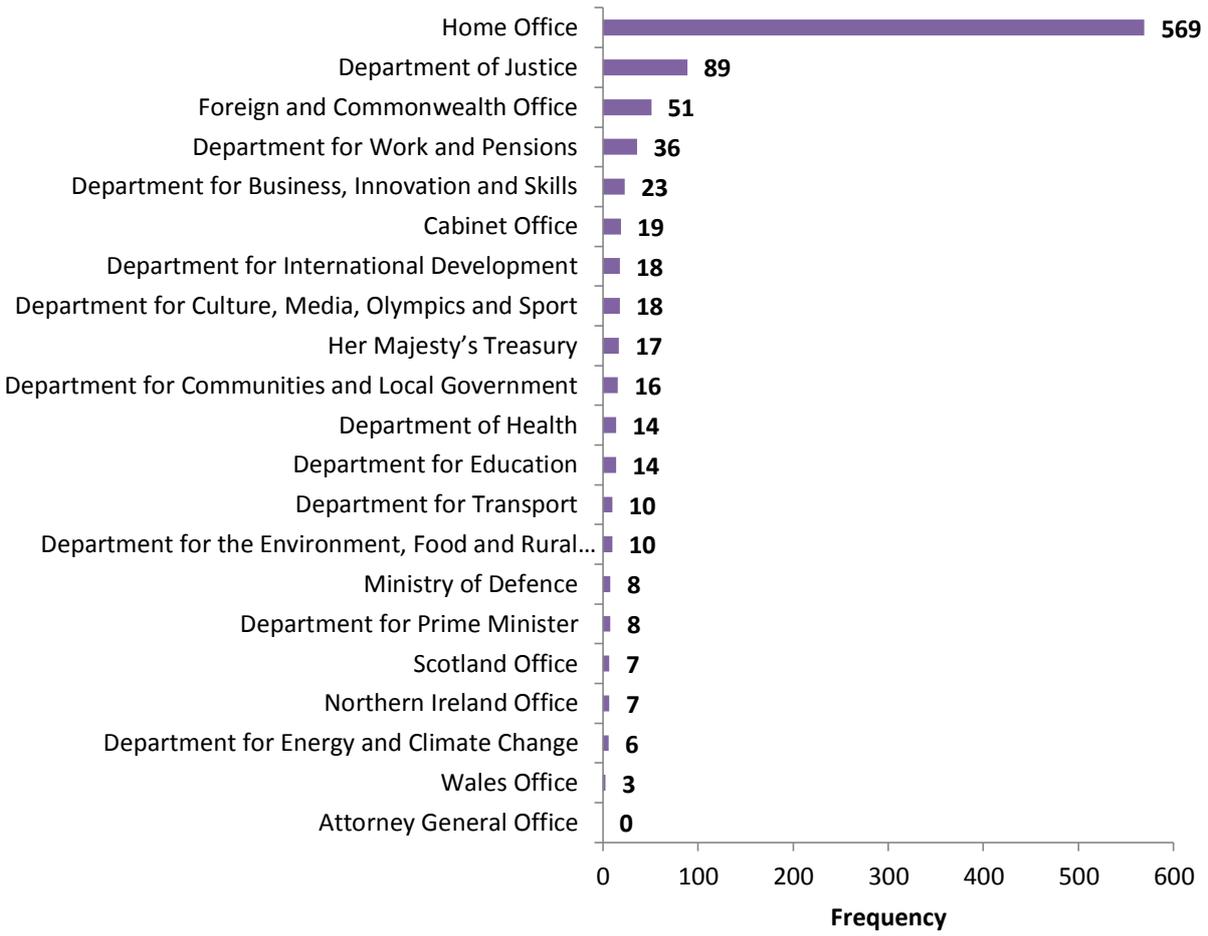


The immigration issues raised the most were asylum seekers and refugees, border security checks and controls and human trafficking and the least raised were intergration and attitudes, citizenship and residence cards and social security benefits, as shown in figure 10. Visas and work permits were also a popular topic and if the general and student catergoires were combined they would be 13.6% of the total and thus most common topic, they have been left separate as both have significant numbers behind them.

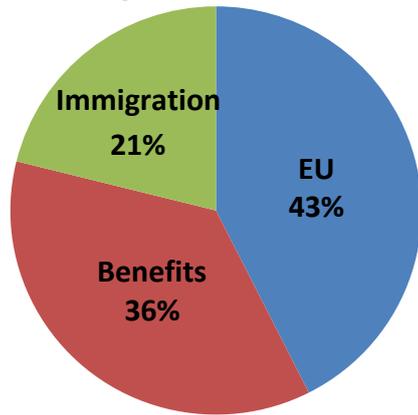


The Home Office is the government department that the issues of immigration were associated with the most as figure 11 shows; a total count of 569 times (60.3%). This was to be expected as the Home Office is the head department for immigration. However immigration issues were raised consistently regardless of the level across all other departments as the chart details, all except for the attorney general office, suggesting immigration is a multi-department issue. Nonetheless the severe difference between the most common and second most common is vast, as the Department of Justice occupies just 9.4% of incidences, suggesting that the Home Office is the primary port of call for almost all immigration issues.

**Figure 11: Immigration Issues Referred to Government Departments**



**Figure 12: Distribution of Topics Discussed**

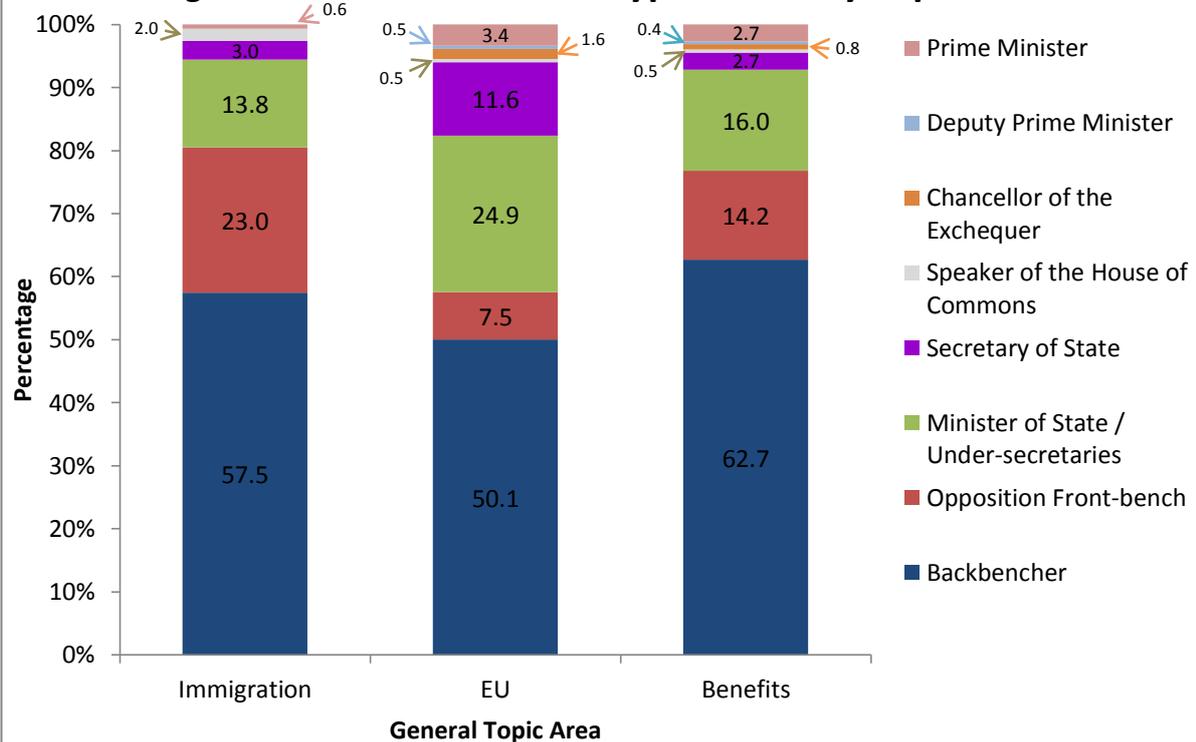


Immigration is generally the topic discussed the least out of the three as shown in figure 12. Out of 4474 incidents that the benefit system, the European Union, and immigration issues were raised, immigration was discussed a mere 946 times, which is approximately one fifth of the overall total amount of data collected in this research. This suggests MPs are more reluctant to talk about immigration issues than benefits or the EU.

The main type of MP contributing is unsurprisingly backbenchers, as they make

up most of the government. Unexpectedly immigration has the lowest percentage of Ministers of State initiating issues out of the three topics, it also has a low Secretary of State initiating frequency and the lowest Prime Ministerial involvement too. Using only the immigration data it may not be surprising that the populist assertion exists, yet ministers and secretaries of state are not initiating immigration issues as it is their own departments and it is their job to respond to discussions and debates. However once compared to the data of the benefits system and the European Union it is clearly not being initiated as much by Ministers and Secretaries of State as they could be and arguably should be. Also, noticeable in figure 13 is that opposition front bench politicians are raising immigration issues more than EU or benefits issues. This suggests the opposition have considered immigration as the important subject to discuss in parliament.

**Figure 13: Distribution of Type of MP by Topic Area**



# 5. Policy Recommendations

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## Benefits System

Keeping in mind the rationale for this part of the report, as the researchers look at the results regarding the benefits system, clear policy recommendations can be made. As stated, there was a need to tackle the perception that elected representatives do not talk about the issues that people care about. While this is not strictly true – there were 1623 mentions of the welfare system in 2012 – there is perhaps cause for concern in the fact that almost two thirds (63%) came from backbenchers. While it is important that these backbenchers represent the views of the people in their constituency, people understandably want the MPs with their hands at the levers of power (members of government), to be aware of the issues and therefore do something about them. Therefore the first recommendation has to be that members of the government spend more time actively talking about the benefits system and welfare issues than they currently do as this will get out into the media-laden world and proclaim a positive reflection of the actions within the House of Commons.

There is a strikingly clear majority of welfare issues (56%) being discussed through written documents. Again, bearing the aim of dispelling the myths about the parliamentary system's lack of consciousness with the public opinion and creating some confidence in the work of MPs, such data worryingly backs up the claim that politics happens all too much behind "closed doors" and not on the floor of the chamber. In defence of the politicians, it is the case that the public are able to download the records and read the discussions themselves, but of course only the very interested and politically engaged can be expected to do this – everyone else (the overwhelming majority) chooses to rely on the coverage from the newspapers, television and radio. Their coverage focuses on sound-bites, i.e. what is discussed in dramatic fashion in the commons and hence why the second policy recommendation is that issues concerning the benefits system need to be more frequently debated in parliament on a physically noticeable scale. Alternatively, at the very least the statements concerning these issues are made more regularly and more openly, because then the media will exercise their enthusiasm over them, feeding the public with what they want to hear, otherwise the pessimistic views will continue and the disengaged and disappointed will multiply in the years to come.

In the research that was recorded, welfare reform was the topic that was mentioned the most, taking an 18.6% share of all mentions within the benefits system and over double all the other topics that received contributions (except for the understandably popular and relevant housing benefits at 11.6%). The issue lies in the fact that the current government's welfare reform programme covers a wide range of issues; from a cap on the total benefits that any household can receive to a reduction in the amount of housing benefit that someone is entitled to if they have an empty bedroom – fondly known to the media and the public as the "bedroom tax". Not all of these topics are as relevant to some people as they are to others. As this issue gets more mentions than any other within the benefits system, for people to get a better idea of how much their representatives are talking about the issues that are important to them, this topic should be broken down. Once divided up, offer easy accessibility by creating an organised platform that enables people to influence which benefits topics

are being spoken about. So long as this is maintained, those seeking to know information and occurrences about the types of benefits meaningful to them will be able to do so stress-free and thus remove the angst that is felt towards an apparent disjointed parliament-society relationship.

Finally, a positive that can be drawn from the research on the benefits system is the fact that the Prime Minister is talking about the welfare system considerably. It is therefore reassuring that the Prime Minister is showing such an interest in issues that are of great public interest and importance. However, more openness and more activity in general is seriously required in order to create a nation that perceives a government as in tune and connected with its people's views and reservations.

### European Union

The research has provided conclusive evidence that issues relating to the European Union are being discussed in Parliament; a total of 431 debates (as well as many other questions and answers) for the year 2012 regarding numerous topics show that politicians are aware and willing to discuss the EU. The question remains then, why does there exist this populist assertion that MPs choose not to talk about the EU? The most likely reason for the existence of this misguided assertion is possibly derived from a lack of awareness that is raised for these debates. A broad recommendation would revolve around making these numerous debates more accessible to the general public in such a way that is also conducive to increasing levels of understanding, thus dispelling the myth that politicians are averse to discussing the EU – potentially having a debate database with key points being included is just one idea.

The data has shown that around 50% of EU-related contributions come from backbench MPs. To some extent, this could go some way in explaining why people may feel like many issues do not get discussed, as they are not seeing recognisable MPs partaking in the discussions. A suitable policy recommendation would therefore be to improve promotion and advertising of catalogues that are readily available to the public; offering them the opportunity to review who participates and what those individuals stand for. This means that more senior politicians (Secretaries of State and Ministers for example) may then feel inclined to be more active with contributions. In terms of accessibility, it was found to be the case that many debates came from Westminster Hall sessions; these are not so readily known to people, yet some of the most important and relevant debates occur here. Greater publicity would no doubt counteract any ambiguity regarding the issues raised and so a suggestion of why not publicly broadcast in some manner is definitely viable here. As evidenced by the research, the majority of contributions come from written questions and answers; so perhaps the multitude of issues raised by these should be made more readily available in a topic-specific framework and then subjected to further debate – at least then the public are informed what is talked about or to be discussed.

Understandably, the biggest contribution came from the Foreign Office. The research has however shown that there was such a diverse range of subjects discussed that other offices should perhaps contribute more, which may help highlight the fact that discussions on the EU involve the entire government. What would potentially follow this behaviour is that people may realise there is more to the EU than just the in/out debate and that the subject of the EU is in fact discussed in the context of many different issues. Additionally, the subject of EU membership is not discussed as much as expected; this could be the cause for why those hold the view that MPs do not discuss the EU –

seeing as it is such a prominent argument given the current political climate. A possible solution would therefore be to educate the public more about the range of issues focused upon rather than merely reporting mostly on points made by political actors regarding the nature of UK involvement and the possibility of leaving the EU. In this case, the media then become even more important.

The last recommendation is made in light of the coalition. Although the Liberal Democrats are part of the government its contributions to debates both from backbenchers and from its respective Ministers and Secretaries of State is very low. If Liberal Democrat participation could be increased, then possibly the public would let go of their ungrounded assumption that the EU is not discussed by MPs in power, as there would be greater evidence that all three major political parties are willing to contribute, rather than maintaining this appearance of monopolisation of discussion of key issues by the two (traditionally) biggest parties – Labour and the Conservatives.

### Immigration

Immigration issues are rarely discussed in the House of Commons. Although questions and answers are essential to frame the debate they should not actually replace it. The lack of conversation between parliamentarians is what fuels the public to believe that immigration is an issue that is being overlooked. The format of questions and answers often targets specific points about immigration but a true conversation between different parties is what the public seems to be expecting. Furthermore, the consensus often mentioned by the media is a direct consequence of the reticence observed to actually debate immigration as whole. Additional debates would be more likely to bring about and establish a clear directive to lead future policies; so the recommendation in this case may be to schedule debates ensuring discussion takes place.

Backbenchers bring up immigration issues more often than any other type of politician; and the opposition who stands for almost a quarter of that distribution are doing a good job in raising questions to the government, a result which likely stems from being critical towards the Conservatives. However the Prime Minister is surprisingly reluctant to raise debates on immigration compared to EU and benefits issues. In fact, only 6 of 946 immigration-related instances are from the Prime Minister, Deputy PM or Chancellor of the Exchequer. The research therefore suggests that more input and participation from the Prime Minister, will raise awareness of immigration and its respected issues, both to encourage more debates and questions. This is urged because it is likely that issues concerning immigration will then receive more media attention, which will consequently reshape the popular assertion that politicians do not discuss immigration issues. As immigration is a serious concern for the British economy in many respects, it is also interesting that the Chancellor of Exchequer does not, from what the researchers can deduce, raise any questions or indeed answers regarding immigration. So perhaps research into why this is the case is necessary or even analyse what comments the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made throughout his term in office to understand if immigration is less of a concern of his than others.

Similarly, the Liberal Democrats do not contribute as much as their seat share may suggest they should. This may be because of the coalition government dynamics, as the Liberal Democrats are perhaps reluctant to bring up issues that could bring tensions to their coalition partner. Nevertheless the lack of participation by the third largest political party echoes what was suggested in the European Union policy recommendations; for if more evidence was available showing lots of effort,

energy and discussion on topics related to this subject, it would be considered spoken about more and thus the populist assertion would all but disappear. Likewise the Home Office accounted for 60% of all immigration occurrences, this is understandable as this is a suggestion for other departments to become more involved which would certainly aid the quest of showing the general public that parliament are willing to discuss these subjects and are actively doing so. For instance if the departments for: business, innovation and skills; culture, media and sport; and communities and local government were to become more visibly active in immigration discussions, publicity would emerge and the populist feeling that would follow would be of optimism that something is happening and actions are at the least being considered.

The topics that were raised the most were: asylum seekers and refugees, and border security checks and controls. The research suggests that these topics dominated the discussion on immigration along with human trafficking and the immigration policy in general. Although these issues are important to the immigration dialogue, there have been other issues that are equally just as important that are not being brought up as much. The least discussed issue was integration and attitudes, arguably as big an issue for the British public and the government, and for this reason the research suggests that politicians should talk about it more to raise awareness of this problem and enact policies and change to this area.

## 6. References

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### Section 2:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/raising/>

<sup>2</sup> Laurence Robertson: Westminster hall (31/10/2012) Available at:  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> Russell, M. (2005) *Building New Labour: The Politics of Party organisation*. United Kingdom: Sinauer Associates. p30.

<sup>4</sup> Stoker, G. (2006) *Why Politics Matters*, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan. p128.

<sup>5</sup> Stoker, G. (2006) *Why Politics Matters*, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan. p129.

<sup>6</sup> <http://yougov.co.uk/news/2013/01/14/britain-europe-fear-factor/>

<sup>7</sup> Page, B. (2009) *British attitudes towards immigration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. p5.

<sup>8</sup> Page, B. (2009) *British attitudes towards immigration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. p6.

<sup>9</sup> <http://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Report%20-%20Public%20Opinion.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/stats\\_summary/stats\\_summary\\_may13.pdf](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/stats_summary/stats_summary_may13.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/blog/britain%e2%80%99s-quiet-revolution-bronwen-maddox-editorial-march-2012-issue/>

<sup>12</sup> Stoker, G. (2006) *Why Politics Matters*, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan. p127.

### Section 3:

<sup>1</sup> Hansard Society (2013) *About Us*. Available from: <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/> Date accessed: 06/05/2013.

<sup>2</sup> Halperin, S. and Heath, O. (2012) *Political Research Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Belbin, M. (2013) *Belbin's History and Research Findings*. Available from:  
<http://www.belbin.com/rte.asp?id=3> Date accessed: 06/05/2013.

### Section 4:

<sup>1</sup> BBC (2010) Election Results Online. Available from:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/election2010/results/> Date accessed: 07/05/2013.

## **7. Appendices:**

### **APPENDIX I**

**Organisation:** Hansard Society, [www.hansardsociety.org.uk](http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk)

The Hansard Society is the UK's leading independent, non-partisan, political research and education charity. We aim to strengthen parliamentary democracy and encourage greater public involvement in politics. At the heart of our work is the principle that civic society is most effective when its citizens are connected with the institutions and individuals who represent them in the democratic process.

**Contact:** Matt Korris, [matt@hansardsociety.org.uk](mailto:matt@hansardsociety.org.uk). I am willing to offer support for by email.

**Working title:** The Elephants in the Room?

**Background:** The benefits system, the European Union and immigration. It is a common populist assertion that these are some of the most important issues to the British people (polling evidence notwithstanding) but our politicians do not want to talk about them, there is some kind of conspiracy of silence around these topics, perhaps because all politicians broadly think the same about them.

**Question:** So to what extent do politicians discuss these issues? And when they talk about them, what aspects of these large subject areas are they focusing upon?

**Purpose:** To enhance understanding about the work of our elected representatives and to (probably) dispel the populist myth about these issues. It will not prove that politicians are discussing these issues in the ways that people would like them to, but it will provide the basis for informed debate about how these issues are perceived and dealt with by politicians.

**Usage:** Depends on the quality of the report and how interesting the results prove to be! Assuming the research has been completed successfully, it can potentially be showcased on our (soon to be launched) new website, the dataset made available for others to interrogate and the findings referred to when these issues arise in the media.

**Tasks:**

- Create a dataset in SPSS of all the times MPs have mentioned these issues in parliamentary

debates or questions during the calendar year 2012 by reading the *Hansard* records

- Create a codebook for collecting the data that sets codes for the date of each mention, the party of the MP making the contribution, the type of MP (minister, shadow minister/front bench spokesperson, backbencher), the type of contribution (debate, statement, oral question, written question), the department to which it was referred and the topic(s) being discussed. You should consider what else you might want to code for.
- Analyse the data to examine the levels of debate around these issues, and specifically what aspects/sub-sets of these subjects are most commonly discussed
- Produce a report with tables, charts, other visualisations and analysis of the research findings

**Interim deadlines:** I would like to see the proposed codebooks by Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March at the latest, but preferably before, as this is the most important aspect of the project to get right. I would like to see headline data and some proposed lines of analysis by Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April.

#### **Commentary:**

- Getting the codebook right and coding the data consistently is vital to the success of this research. Spend some time looking at *Hansard* on these topics and developing the codebook (particularly around the sub-issues) before you get into the coding proper. Base your coding around the sub-headings in *Hansard*, but do not be reliant on them, as they are not consistently applied. You will need to skim-read each entry to properly code it.
- Given there are 10 of you on the team, please split into three teams, one to tackle each of the main issues – this will ensure not only that you split the experience of doing the data collection, writing the codebooks and contributing to the report between you, but more importantly that there will be fewer people involved in coding each topic, as this will reduce inconsistencies in the way the coding is interpreted during data collection.
- A similar exercise has been carried out by interns at the Hansard Society on foreign affairs issues as an experiment for this model, so it is an achievable goal. A copy of the codebook for that research is attached, which will give you some idea of the level of detail and thinking that needs to go into it.

**Expansion options:** There is obvious room for expansion within the scope of this project, should you have the time, inclination or enthusiasm. For example:

- Include all contributions of the House of Lords as well as the House of Commons during 2012
- Include the full text of every question/debate contribution in the database and then analyse the use of language/key words used
- Increase the time period under consideration to more than just 2012
- Expand beyond *Hansard* text and examine the speeches of the party leaders and relevant spokespeople on these subjects via their websites and the media for additional analysis
- Tackle additional issue that also fit with the populist theory of being ignored by politicians (please consult with me on the topics should you wish to take this route)

**February 2013**

**SSEGM ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE APPLICATION FORM**

***Please note:***

- *You must not begin your study until ethical approval has been obtained.*
- *You must complete a risk assessment form prior to commencing your study.*
- *It is your responsibility to follow the University of Southampton's Ethics Policy and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.*
- *It is also your responsibility to provide full and accurate information in completing this form.*

- 1. Name(s):** Josh Ager; Stuart Alexander; Jenny Alexandra; Rebecca Bryan; Ruth Hounsham; Alex Hurry; Johanna Kainz; Carine Kjosvold; Pierre Paul; Lucinda Taylor; Rupert Welply.
- 2. Current Position** Second year undergraduate Social Science students at the University of Southampton.
- 3. Contact Details:**
- |                        |                                      |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Division/School</b> | School for Social and Human Sciences |
| <b>Email</b>           | sa17g11@soton.ac.uk                  |
- 4. Is your study being conducted as part of an education qualification?** Yes
- 5. If Yes, please give the name of your supervisor:** Matt Ryan
- 6. Title of your project:** The Elephants in the Room
- 7. What are the proposed start and end dates of your study?** Start: 05-02-13 & End: 16-05-13

**8. Describe the rationale, study aims and the relevant research questions of your study**

It is a common populist assertion that the benefits system, the European Union and immigration are some of the most important issues to the British people (polling evidence notwithstanding) but that our politicians do not want to talk about them – that there is some kind of conspiracy of silence around these topics, perhaps because all politicians think the same way about them. Because of this our study aims are to enhance understanding about the work of our elected representatives and to (probably) dispel the populist myth about these issues. It will not prove that politicians are discussing these issues in the ways people would like them to, but it will provide the basis for informed debate about how these issues are perceived and dealt with by politicians. Leading on from this, our research question is to what extent do politicians discuss these issues? And when they talk about them, what aspects of these large subject areas are they focusing upon?

**9. Describe the design of your study**

The design of this study is partially laid out in the answers to questions 8, 10 and 11. The research project stringently looks at data from the House of Commons during 2012 and within the three subject areas of the benefits system, the EU and immigration, sub-categories have been chosen so the occurrences of the individual topics can be measured and analysed. Then from the results of our data, conclusions can be made which will inform politicians of what actually was brought up and spoken about and how often. It will also show members of the public the truth about the politics of Britain in 2012.

**10. Who are the research participants?**

The research participants are therefore the Members of Parliament (MPs) that sat in the Chamber of the House of Commons throughout the calendar year of 2012.

**11. If you are going to analyse secondary data, from where are you obtaining it?**

We are obtaining data for our research project from The Parliament UK website; these are official documents for the goings on in the British Government. The link to access this site is:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/hansard/commons/by-date/#session=62738&year=2013&month=1&day=7>

**12. If you are collecting primary data, how will you identify and approach the participants to recruit them to your study? Please attach a copy of the information sheet if you are using one – or if you are not using one please explain why.**

N/A

- 13. Will participants be taking part in your study without their knowledge and consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people)? If yes, please explain why this is necessary.**

No because all MPs are aware that House of Commons activity is all recorded to a high level of detail and professionalism.

- 14. If you answered 'no' to question 13, how will you obtain the consent of participants? Please attach a copy of the consent form if you are using one – or if not please explain why.**

Consent from our participants is not required as stated in the answer to question 13, MPs are aware of the recordings taking place and are informed that the Hansard Society may do research on the data.

- 15. Is there any reason to believe participants may not be able to give full informed consent? If yes, what steps do you propose to take to safeguard their interests?**

No

- 16. If participants are under the responsibility or care of others (such as parents/carers, teachers or medical staff) what plans do you have to obtain permission to approach the participants to take part in the study?**

N/A

- 17. Describe what participation in your study will involve for study participants. Please attach copies of any questionnaires and/or interview schedules and/or observation topic list to be used**

No participation from our study participants will be taking place, as we are merely analysing documents from government activity in the House of Commons during 2012. Essentially MPs doing their jobs through 2012 was their participation.

- 18. How will you make it clear to participants that they may withdraw consent to participate at any point during the research without penalty?**

This does not apply to our research project as the research being conducted is secondary data analysis of parliamentary sessions. British Politics as an institution is very transparent and MPs are held accountable for all utterances they make and behaviours they perform.

- 19. Detail any possible distress, discomfort, inconvenience or other adverse effects the participants may experience, including after the study, and you will deal with this.**

No possible distress, discomfort, inconvenience or other adverse effects or negative emotions will be incurred to the participants from our group performing this research.

- 20. How will you maintain participant anonymity and confidentiality in collecting, analysing and writing up your data?**

Our codebook which has a detailed and well thought out coding scheme for our data management has been created and is available upon request. The use of this occurs during the collecting, analysing and writing up of our data and so is a pivotal part of our research project. This document ensures that participants will maintain complete anonymity and confidentiality throughout the entire process of this research.

- 21. How will you store your data securely during and after the study?**

All data will be secured safely on an external storage device safely kept in a locked draw with only one key. There are no paper documents necessary for this research to take place, however any that the group produce will be kept in a locked safe.

- 22. Describe any plans you have for feeding back the findings of the study to participants.**

The group plan for this research project to be extremely successful and completed to a high level of quality; and if deemed so by The Hansard Society, it will potentially be showcased on their soon to be launched new website. The dataset will also be made available for others to analyse and interrogate further and the findings will be referred to if and when these issues arise in the media. So the participants being MPs, they will have the opportunity to visit the website and thus see what findings we as a group have made.

- 23. What are the main ethical issues raised by your research and how do you intend to manage these?**

There are no ethical issues to manage or overcome in regards to our research.

- 24. Please outline any other information you feel may be relevant to this submission.**

N/A

## APPENDIX III

February 2013

### Ethics Review Checklist

Research Title:

*The Elephants in the Room?*

Principal Investigator:

*Research brief proposed by Matt Korris, Senior Researcher of the Hansard Society; research conducted by Stuart Alexander and ten further University of Southampton Social Science students*

Research Funder (if applicable):

*Not applicable*

	YES	NO
1. Will the study involve human participants?		<b>X</b>
2. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation of people)		<b>X</b>
3. Does the study involve participants who are unable to give informed consent? (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities)		<b>X</b>
4. Does the study involve participants who are commonly viewed as 'vulnerable'? (e.g. children, elderly, people with learning disabilities) <b>CRB check needed if YES</b>		<b>X</b>
5. Will the study require the co-operation of a third party for initial access to the groups or individuals? (e.g. students at school, residents of a nursing home)		<b>X</b>
6. Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use)?		<b>X</b>
7. Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety, cause harm or have negative consequences for the participants beyond the risks encountered in normal life?		<b>X</b>
8. Will deception of participants be necessary during the study?		<b>X</b>
9. Will blood or tissue samples be taken from participants? Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. foods, vitamins) to be administered to the participants, or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?		<b>X</b>
10. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing or physical testing?		<b>X</b>
11. Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?		<b>X</b>
12. Will financial or other inducements (other than reasonable expenses) be offered to participants?		<b>X</b>
13. Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS?		<b>X</b>
14. Is the right to freely withdraw from the study at any time made explicit?	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
15. Where secondary data is to be used, is the risk of disclosure of the identity of individuals minimal?	<b>X</b>	
16. If you are using secondary data, are you obtaining it from anywhere other than recognised data archives?		<b>X</b>

**N/A** has been inputted for question fourteen as the research is using textual data analysis hence why the right to withdraw does not apply.

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University of Southampton's Ethics Policy and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data. It is also your responsibility to provide full and accurate information in completing this form.

**February 2013**

**Risk Assessment Form**

Researcher's names:

***Stuart Alexander; Josh Ager; Jenny Alexandra; Rebecca Bryan; Ruth Hounsham; Alex Hurry; Johanna Kainz; Carine Kjosvold; Pierre Paul; Lucinda Taylor; Rupert Welply.***

**Part 1 – Dissertation/project activities**

What do you intend to do? (Please provide a brief description of your project and details of your proposed methods.)

***Discourse content analysis of the Hansard Society Records of the Parliamentary Sessions that occurred throughout the calendar year of 2012. Purely textual-based analysis will be taking place and no other form of research will happen.***

Will this involve collection of information from other people? (In the case of projects involving fieldwork, please provide a description of your proposed sample/case study site.)

***No collection of information from other people will occur during this research project.***

If relevant, what location/s is/are involved?

***Not applicable.***

Will you be working alone or with others?

***The eleven researchers listed in the 'researcher's name' box (at the top) will be the only individuals working on this research project.***

**Part 2 – Potential safety issues / risk assessment.**

Potential safety issues arising from proposed activity?

***No safety issues arise from the proposed activity.***

Person/s likely to be affected?

***No persons are likely to be affected by this study.***

Likelihood of risk? <i>The likelihood of risk is a nonentity.</i>	
<b>Part 3 – Precautions / risk reduction</b>	
Existing precautions: <i>No existing precautions exist.</i>	
Proposed risk reduction strategies if existing precautions are not adequate: <i>No proposed risk reduction strategies are required as there are no existing precautions.</i>	
<b>Part 4 – International Travel</b>	
<p>If you intend to travel overseas to carry out fieldwork then you must carry out a risk assessment for each trip you make and attach a copy of the International Travel form to this document</p> <p>Download the Risk Assessment for International Travel Form</p> <p>Guidelines on risk assessment for international travel at can be located at: <a href="http://www.southampton.ac.uk/socscinet/safety">www.southampton.ac.uk/socscinet/safety</a> (“risk assessment” section).</p> <p>Before undertaking international travel and overseas visits all students must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure a risk assessment has been undertaken for all journeys including to conferences and visits to other Universities and organisations. This is University policy and is not optional.</li> <li>• Consult the University Finance/Insurance website for information on travel and insurance. Ensure that you take a copy of the University travel insurance information with you and know what to do if you should need medical assistance.</li> <li>• Obtain from Occupational Health Service advice on any medical requirements for travel to areas to be visited.</li> <li>• Ensure next of kin are aware of itinerary, contact person and telephone number at the University.</li> <li>• Where possible arrange to be met by your host on arrival.</li> </ul> <p>If you are unsure if you are covered by the University insurance scheme for the trip you are undertaking and for the country/countries you intend visiting, then you should contact the University's Insurance Office at <a href="mailto:insure@soton.ac.uk">insure@soton.ac.uk</a> and check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website.</p>	
<b>Risk Assessment Form for</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>International Travel attached</b>	

## **APPENDIX V**

### **Coding Guide**

**Date** – code with exact date

#### **Source/Contribution**

Debates = 1

Oral Questions = 2

Oral Answers = 3

Written Statements = 4

Written Questions = 5

Written Answers = 6

Petitions = 7

#### **Party Initiating**

No affiliation = 0

Alliance = 1

Conservative = 2

Crossbench = 3

Democratic Union (DUP) = 4

Green = 5

Independent = 6

Labour = 7

Liberal Democrat = 8

Plaid Cymru = 9

Respect = 10

Scottish National Party (SNP) = 11

Sinn Fein = 12

Social Democratic & Labour Party = 13

**Type of MP making contribution**

Prime Minister = 1

Deputy Prime Minister = 2

Chancellor of the Exchequer = 3

Secretary of State (one for each department) = 4

Minister of State / Under-secretaries = 5

Backbencher = 6

Opposition front-bench = 7

Speaker of the House of Commons = 8

**Department Concerned**

Attorney General Office = 1

Cabinet Office = 2

Foreign and Commonwealth Office = 3

Home Office = 4

Her Majesty's Treasury = 5

Department for Prime Minister = 6

Department for Communities and Local Government = 7

Department for Culture, Media, Olympics and Sport = 8

Department for Energy and Climate Change = 9

Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs = 10

Department for Education = 11

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills = 12

Department for International Development = 13

Department of Health = 14

Department of Justice = 15

Department for Transport = 16

Department for Work and Pensions = 17

Ministry of Defence = 18

Northern Ireland Office = 19

Wales Office = 20

Scotland Office = 21

## **Topics and Sub-categories**

### EU = 100s:

- 100: Miscellaneous
- 101: Foreign policy
- 102: Non-EU Foreign Policy
- 103: Economy, the Eurozone, Trade and Development
- 104: Justice and Human Rights
- 105: Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Resources
- 106: EU Internal Management
- 107: EU Expansion
- 108: Finance and Taxation
- 109: Foreign Aid
- 110: Health
- 111: Markets and Business
- 112: EU Law and Regulation
- 113: EU Budget
- 114: Benefits and Welfare
- 115: Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Welfare
- 116: EU Treaties
- 117: EU Security and Defence
- 118: EU Membership (UK)
- 119: EU Membership (Other)
- 120: Crime, Human Trafficking, Detainees and Fraud
- 121: Transport
- 122: Arms Control, Sanctions and Asset Freezing
- 123: Immigration
- 124: Media, Sport and Technology
- 125: Education
- 126: Employment and Worker's Rights
- 127: Social Security
- 128: EU customs
- 129: EU project funding
- 130: EU regional policy

### Immigration = 200s:

- 200: Miscellaneous
- 201: Appeals Processes
- 202: Asylum Seekers and Refugees: General
- 203: Citizenship and Residence Cards
- 204: Deportation: General
- 205: Deportation: Offenders and Prisoner Transfers
- 206: Detention of Women and Children
- 207: Detainees
- 208: Human Trafficking
- 209: Illegal Immigration: Employment
- 210: Illegal Immigration: Over-stayers
- 211: Illegal Immigration: Prosecutions
- 212: Illegal Immigration: Routes (Airports, Borders, Ports)
- 213: Immigration General: Calls for reform
- 214: Immigration Policy: Current government/party
- 215: Immigration: Border Security Checks and Controls
- 216: Immigration: Employment and unemployment
- 217: Immigration: Costs
- 218: Immigration: Integration and attitudes
- 219: Immigration: Taxation
- 220: Migrant Workers: Skills
- 221: Migrant Workers: Social Security Benefits
- 222: UKBA/UKBF: General and performance
- 223: Visas and work permits: General
- 224: Visas: Overseas / EU Students

### Benefits System = 300s:

- 300: Miscellaneous
- 301: Child Benefit
- 302: Council Tax Benefit
- 303: Disability Benefit
- 304: Employment Support
- 305: Fraud
- 306: Homelessness
- 307: Housing Benefit
- 308: Incapacity benefit
- 309: Mental Health
- 310: Pensions
- 311: Scotland
- 312: Sickness Benefit
- 313: Social Security
- 314: Subsidies
- 315: Tax Credits
- 316: Unemployment Benefit
- 317: Wales
- 318: Welfare for immigrants
- 319: Welfare Reforms
- 320: Working Tax Credit

## **APPENDIX VI**

Example of EU coding (this is 41 pieces of data out of 1904 - which was this subject's total):

<b>Date</b>	<b>Source/Contribution</b>	<b>Party initiating</b>	<b>Type of MP</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Topic</b>
10/1/12	5	8	6	4	123
10/1/12	2	2	6	21	118
10/1/12	3	2	4	21	118
10/1/12	2	2	6	21	118
10/1/12	3	2	4	21	118
10/1/12	2	7	6	21	112
10/1/12	3	2	4	21	112
10/1/12	1	7	7	13	106
10/1/12	1	8	5	13	106
10/1/12	5	4	6	9	105
10/1/12	6	2	4	9	105
10/1/12	5	4	6	9	105
10/1/12	6	2	4	9	105
11/1/12	2	2	6	21	118
11/1/12	3	8	4	21	118
11/1/12	5	2	6	5	113
11/1/12	6	2	3	5	113
12/1/12	4	2	4	3	120
12/1/12	5	7	6	10	112
12/1/12	6	2	4	10	112
16/1/12	5	7	6	18	112
16/1/12	6	2	4	18	112
16/1/12	5	7	6	21	112
16/1/12	6	8	4	21	112
16/1/12	5	7	6	8	112
16/1/12	6	2	4	8	112
16/1/12	5	2	6	4	123
16/1/12	6	2	4	4	123
16/1/12	5	7	6	4	112
16/1/12	6	2	4	4	112
16/1/12	5	7	6	16	112
16/1/12	6	2	4	16	112
16/1/12	5	7	6	15	112
16/1/12	6	2	4	15	112
16/1/12	5	7	6	14	112
16/1/12	6	2	4	14	112
16/1/12	5	2	6	9	112
16/1/12	6	2	4	9	112
16/1/12	5	2	6	4	123
17/1/12	2	2	6	3	103
17/1/12	3	2	5	3	103

Example of Immigration coding (this is 41 pieces of data out of 946 - which was this subject's total):

Date	Source/Contribution	Party initiating	Type of MP	Department	Topic
10/1/12	1	7	7	13	200
10/1/12	5	2	6	4	207
10/1/12	5	2	6	4	210
10/1/12	5	4	6	4	212
10/1/12	5	2	6	4	207
10/1/12	5	7	6	4	204
10/1/12	5	7	7	4	212
10/1/12	5	7	7	4	214
10/1/12	5	7	6	4	222
10/1/12	5	7	6	4	214
10/1/12	5	7	6	4	215
10/1/12	5	7	6	4	202
10/1/12	5	7	6	4	202
10/1/12	5	2	6	4	202
10/1/12	5	7	7	4	205
10/1/12	5	7	7	4	205
10/1/12	5	7	6	4	208
10/1/12	5	7	6	4	208
10/1/12	5	2	6	4	208
10/1/12	5	7	6	4	208
10/1/12	5	2	6	4	208
10/1/12	6	2	5	4	222
10/1/12	5	8	6	4	223
10/1/12	5	2	6	15	208
10/1/12	5	7	7	15	200
11/1/12	1	2	1	2	214
11/1/12	1	2	5	3	218
11/1/12	1	7	6	3	202
11/1/12	1	7	6	4	214
12/1/12	2	8	6	4	223
12/1/12	5	2	6	4	206
12/1/12	5	2	6	4	215
12/1/12	5	9	6	4	222
12/1/12	5	2	6	4	214
12/1/12	5	2	5	4	222
12/1/12	5	2	6	4	223
16/1/12	2	2	6	11	208
16/1/12	2	2	6	11	208
16/1/12	4	2	5	3	223
16/1/12	5	2	6	4	203
16/1/12	5	7	7	4	204

Example of Benefits coding (this is 41 pieces of data out of 1624 - which was this subject's total):

Date	Source/Contribution	Party initiating	Type of MP	Department	Topic
10/1/12	1	9	6	17	307
10/1/12	1	7	6	17	307
11/1/12	1	7	6	17	315
11/1/12	1	2	5	17	319
11/1/12	1	7	6	17	308
11/1/12	3	2	6	17	319
11/1/12	1	2	1	6	319
11/1/12	3	7	6	17	307
11/1/12	1	8	4	21	319
11/1/12	1	7	7	21	319
11/1/12	5	2	6	17	307
11/1/12	5	8	5	17	307
11/1/12	5	2	6	17	307
11/1/12	5	8	5	17	307
11/1/12	5	2	6	17	307
11/1/12	5	8	5	17	307
11/1/12	5	7	7	17	315
11/1/12	5	2	5	17	315
11/1/12	5	7	6	17	315
12/1/12	1	7	6	17	319
12/1/12	1	2	5	17	319
12/1/12	1	7	7	17	319
12/1/12	1	0	8	17	319
12/1/12	1	7	6	17	319
12/1/12	1	7	6	17	315
12/1/12	1	7	4	17	315
12/1/12	1	0	8	17	319
12/1/12	5	2	5	17	319
12/1/12	5	7	7	17	303
12/1/12	5	2	5	17	303
12/1/12	5	2	5	17	307
12/1/12	5	8	5	17	303
16/1/12	1	7	7	17	305
16/1/12	1	7	6	17	301
16/1/12	1	8	5	17	301
16/1/12	5	7	7	19	319
16/1/12	5	7	6	21	307
16/1/12	5	2	5	21	307
17/1/12	5	2	6	17	310
17/1/12	5	7	7	7	302
17/1/12	5	2	5	17	318

The entire data set is readily available and can be acquired by request.