Too many babies born to migrants — minister

Numbers at highest level since records began

Richard Ford Home Correspondent

Immigration to Britain must be reduced because foreign-born mothers are having too many babies, a government minister warned yesterday.

Lord Bates, a Home Office minister, cited official figures showing that one in four children were born to mothers from outside the UK in 2013 — the highest ever and up from one in nine in 1990. The proportion of births to mothers born outside the country is at its highest level since records began 46 years ago.

Foreign-born mothers also have more children on average, according to the Office for National Statistics. The fertility rate for those born outside the UK was 2.99 children per woman two years ago, compared with 1.79 for those born in Britain.

Top countries of birth for immigrants, followed by Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Romania.

Lord Bates made his comments in the House of Lords after he was asked about the impact of immigration on Britain’s population.

The parliamentary undersecretary told peers: “In the year ending December 2013, an estimated 78 million people were born outside the UK [and living in Britain], while 4.9 million were non-UK citizens. For the calendar year of 2013, births in the UK to non-UK-born mothers accounted for 25 per cent of all live births. That is why we need to reduce immigration.”

He had been asked by Lord Green of Deddington, the chairman of Migration Watch UK, which campaigns for lower immigration, about the government’s latest assessment of the impact of immigration on the population, taking into account the children of immigrants already resident in Britain.

Lord Green said that almost 80 per cent of the increase in the UK’s population over the past decade was the result of immigration, including children born to immigrants already resident in this country.

Lord Bates disputed the figure, suggesting it was 53 per cent. “However, we are absolutely at one on needing a firm but fair immigration policy to protect the public services of this country and provide opportunities for those who want to come here to work,” he said.

“We want people who want to come here to study, to work, to invest and to visit. We want all those people to come. What we are doing is drawing a line to say that we must get much tougher with those who want to come here and abuse our openness.”

His comments come at the government grapples with its target of reducing numbers to below 100,000 a year.

Last month net migration soared to nearly 300,000, a 41 per cent increase on the previous year. Half of Britons believe that immigration is the issue that will swing voters between now and the election, according to a poll by YouGov in December.

ONS figures show that in 2013 more than 185,000 live births were to non-UK-born mothers and 53,000 to women from the Middle East and Asia, a further 60,000 to those born in Britain.

The Charity Commission struck a deal with the Exclusive Brethren, which has 17,000 followers in Britain and enjoyed charitable tax relief worth up to £13 million a year, after the group’s Australian leader called for “extreme pressure” to be put on William Shawcross, the head of the regulator.

British members of the sect, also known as the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church, work for Brethren businesses, shun outsiders socially and make yearly cash payments totalling an estimated £350,000 to Bruce Hales, a secretive accountant who travels by private jet and runs the group from a wealthy Sydney suburb.

Under its strict disciplinary practices, followers of the sect, which has been described by some as a cult, have been ostracised or thrown out for minor transgressions. Many claim they have been torn away from their families, in some cases for decades.

Leaked documents obtained by The Times lay bare the extraordinary lobbying campaign waged by the Brethren to win political support and overturn a decision in June 2012 to refuse charitable status to one of its gospel halls.

Mr Hales ordered elders to “go for the jugular, go for the underbelly” — referring to the Charity Commission — to halt an appeal case which would have allowed former members to testify. “That’s in hand,” a senior elder replied.

Charity Commission officials were followed to unrelated events by Brethren members, pressured by supportive ministers and MPs and had their offices deluged with more than 3,000 letters from adherents. One Brethren member was deluged with more than 3,000 letters from adherents. One Brethren member Continued on page 10, col 3
Leaving the army was really tough decision, says Harry

Valentine Low

Prince Harry said yesterday he was starting "a new chapter in his life" after taking the "really tough" decision to leave the army after ten years.

The prince, 30, is to spend four weeks seconded to the Australian army before leaving the Armed Forces in June, Kensington Palace said. I will continue to wear the uniform and mix with fellow servicemen and women for the rest of my life, helping where I can, I said.

"Inevitably most good things come to an end and I am at a crossroads in my military career. Luckily with conservation experts in Africa. He will focus his time learning how local communities in sub-Saharan Africa are working to protect the region's natural resources and wildlife," said Kensington Palace.

As work permits he will return to London to work with case officers at the recovery unit, helping servicemen and women with physical and mental care. He will also continue to undertake engagements as a member of the royal family.

General Sir Nicholas Carter, chief of the general staff, said: "I am very pleased that this first taste of civilian life later this year will involve a new role in support of our injured servicemen and women. He has raised their profile and boundless energy has shown them and they admire him hugely."

Text messages will urge students to vote in election

Tom Knowles

As soon as they walk on to their university campus, students across the UK will receive texts on their smartphones encouraging them to register to vote, in an attempt to encourage young people into politics.

The Electoral Commission is working with the country's biggest mobile networks to target 18 to 24-year-olds with geo-fencing systems, which will send a virtual barrier around a certain area, such as a campus.

Students will receive a text on their smartphone once they step inside the geotagging zone, which uses GPS to define the area. The message will ask them to register to vote. A link to the Electoral Commission's voter registration page will be included in the text, taking advantage of people now being able to use their handsets to register to vote.

The geo-tagging system is being launched today in some of the biggest universities in the country, including Sheffield, Nottingham and Lancaster. The system can "geo-fence" an area for a maximum of three days and can target as many as 30,000 locations a day.

The project was launched after changes made last year to the voter registration system by the government meant that nearly one million people, mostly students and young people, disregistered from the electoral roll.

"Individuals must now register themselves and cannot rely on a head of household, which included university addresses, to do it for them.

The Office for National Statistics said the changes had caused the biggest drop in registered voters on record, with the sharpest fall being in constituencies with a large university presence, such as Newcastle upon Tyne East, where there was a 13.8 per cent drop, or Cardiff Central, which recorded an 8.8 per cent drop.

Michael Abbott, the head of campaigns at the Electoral Commission, said: "This opportunity with smartphone phones feels like a great way to talk to young people directly and put the message right into their hands."

The campaign is being managed by Weve, a venture established by EE, Vodafone and O2, to use customer data to enable targeted marketing campaigns. The messages can be sent only to those who have chosen to register to vote and give consent to receiving messages through their mobile operators. Labour and the SNP, page 15

London homes worth £1.2trn

Jill Sherman Whitehall Editor

Homeowners in London and the south-east have garnered 97 per cent of the rise in property values nationwide since 2000, equivalent to £232 billion.


The report, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government show that between 2010 and 2013, the value of private property grew 7 per cent from £4.2 trillion to £4.5 trillion, with London and the southeast taking 69 per cent of the increase, the equivalent to £232 billion.

The study by the National Housing Federation, one of 300 organisations behind today's rally to boost house building, reveals that while London booms, values in the northeast and northwest dipped 3 per cent and 2 per cent respectively over the same period.

David Orr, NHF chief executive, said: "Housing in this country is increasingly a birth of the have lots and the have nots."

Migrant births

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Between 2004 and 2006 the number of births to non-UK-born women, with the highest proportion being 76.1 per cent in Newham, east London. Overall, 52 per cent of births in the capital were to foreign-born mothers.

3% wage rise for those on minimum pay

Francis Elliott Political Editor

The wages of Britain's 1.4 million low-paid workers will rise by an above-inflation 3 per cent this summer, David Cameron will announce today.

News of the largest increase to the national minimum wage in seven years comes on the eve of a budget the Tories will hope will convince voters the benefits of the recovery are being spread fairly.

The increase in the national minimum wage to £6.70 falls short of the 17-hour ambition set by George Osborne but is in line with advice from the Low Pay Commission.

Mr Cameron will also trumpet a 20 per cent increase in the statutory minimum hourly rate for apprentices, whose pay will increase by 37p to £3.30.

The Conservatives held narrow leads over Labour in two of three polls published yesterday and were tied in the third. A poll for ICM put the Tories one point ahead of Labour on 36 per cent, while Lord Ashcroft's latest poll put the Tories on 31 per cent and Labour on 30 per cent. Populus, meanwhile, had both parties on 34 per cent.