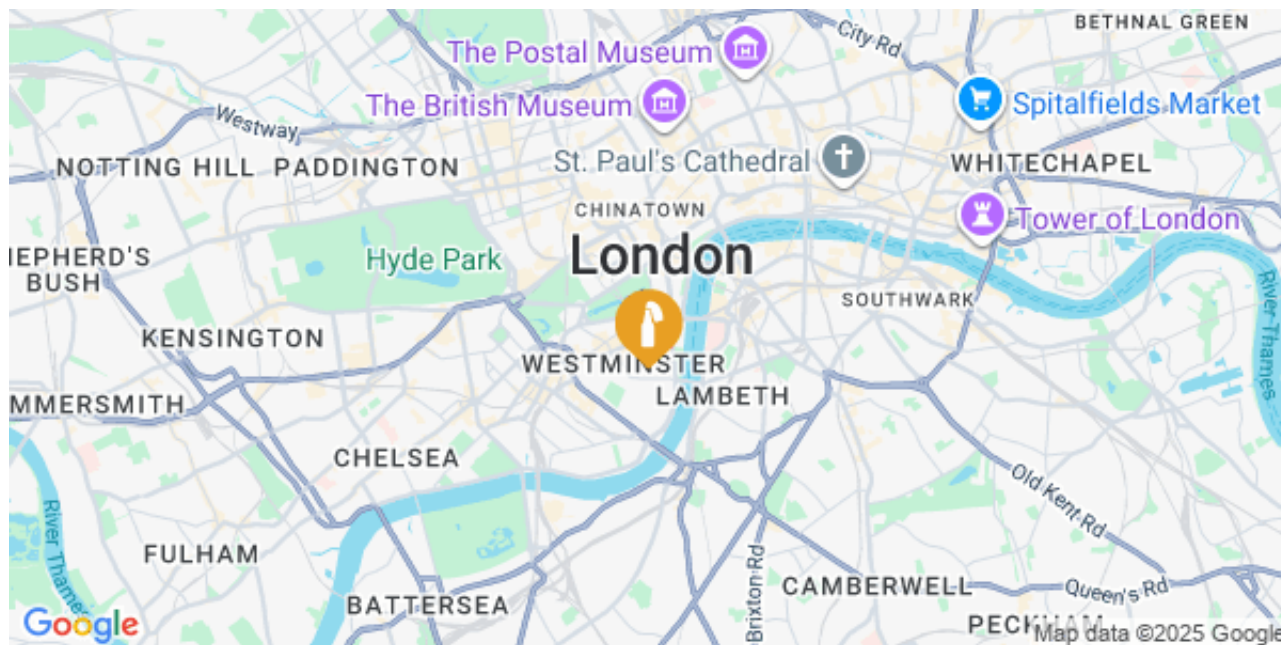


Civil Unrest



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UK Analysis: Growing far-right, anti-immigration activism to increase operational, reputational, compliance risks across businesses, institutions dealing with migrants

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Executive Summary

- The UK has witnessed a sharp rise in anti-immigration protests, with far-right actors leveraging economic grievances, crime-related fears, political institutional distrust, and online disinformation to mobilize supporters.
- Far-right networks' effective use of social media and disinformation campaigns to exploit persistent socioeconomic challenges, including housing shortages, cost-of-living pressures, and perceived competition over public resources, will keep the risk of anti-immigration activism elevated in the medium term.
- Sustained far-right and anti-immigration activism increases the risk of unrest at associated rallies, targeted attacks against immigration-linked establishments, as well as vigilantism activities, especially in smaller towns.

- The mainstreaming of anti-immigration rhetoric has also influenced national politics, driving increased support for right-wing parties such as Reform UK and Homeland Party, and prompting traditionally centrist actors to adopt stricter migration policies.
- The combined effect of public unrest, tightening regulations, and politicized migration narratives is expected to heighten operational, reputational, and compliance risks for businesses, particularly in labor-intensive sectors such as logistics, hospitality, and social care.
- **Travel across the UK can continue while maintaining heightened vigilance near anti-immigration protests, especially near asylum accommodation sites.**
- **Keep abreast of official updates regarding migration policies. Monitor digital platforms for early indicators of misinformation or mobilization campaigns against businesses.**

Current Situation

- Widespread anti-immigration protests have been recorded across the UK since July 2025. As of September 3, at least 55 demonstrations were confirmed nationwide during August, a 175 percent increase from July. The largest occurred on September 13 in central London under the banner “*Unite the Kingdom*”; over 110,000 people joined a march led by far-right figure Tommy Robinson. Framed as a defense of “national identity” and “public safety,” the event drew transnational far-right politicians and online influencers. Violent clashes erupted near Whitehall and Trafalgar Square, where bottles and flares were thrown at police, injuring 26 officers, and 24 arrests were made.
- The current wave of protests was triggered by a July 7 incident in Epping, Essex, where a recently arrived Ethiopian asylum seeker was charged with multiple sexual assaults less than 10 days after entering the UK by small boat. The case became a catalyst for nationwide outrage, amplifying anti-immigrant narratives that had persisted since the 2024 Southport riots.
- Protests have since concentrated in areas with significant asylum accommodation or visible migrant communities, including London, Epping, Liverpool, Manchester, Southampton, Aberdeen, and Glasgow. Demonstrations frequently occur outside former hotels contracted by the Home Office for asylum accommodations, council offices, and major public squares. In London, repeated protests have taken place at Parliament Square, Whitehall, and Canary Wharf.
- Most demonstrations follow a consistent pattern. They are typically coordinated through local social media networks and supported by far-right groups such as Patriotic Alternative, Homeland Party, White Vanguard Movement, and British Lads Alliance, along with broader networks like the Great British National Protest (GBNP), which calls for weekly actions at asylum sites. Protesters commonly carry Union Jacks and England flags, use flares and loudspeakers, and display nationalist banners. Clashes with police or counter-demonstrators are common, often resulting in vandalism, arson, assaults on officers, and damage to property or asylum facilities.
- Online far-right networks have promoted coordinated campaigns such as “*Operation Raise the Colours*” and “*Stop the Boats*”, encouraging simultaneous protests across towns and cities. *Raise the Colors* urged public flag displays as a symbolic act, while *Stop the Boats* called for direct action outside asylum accommodation and council offices.
- Far-right activists often justify their opposition to immigration through claims that migrants threaten public safety, increase crime, or strain social services. They also frame their stance as a defense of free speech and national identity, alleging that citizens are being “silenced” for discussing immigration or “defending British culture.”
- PM Keir Starmer denounced the violence, stating that anyone inciting or engaging in racist disorder “will face the full force of the law.” The Home Office described the unrest as “organized far-right extremism masquerading as community action.” In contrast, members of the right-wing populist Reform UK party, including Nigel Farage, defended protesters as “ordinary citizens expressing legitimate concern” while calling for stricter asylum policies and the closure of migrant hotels. Several Reform UK councillors attended local rallies in Essex and Kent, though the party denied official involvement.

NOTABLE FAR-RIGHT GROUPS/PARTIES ORGANIZING ANTI-IMMIGRATION PROTESTS IN THE UK

Groups	Description	Location
 Britain First	It is a far-right, ultranationalist political party and activist group, founded in 2011 by Jim Dowson, with current co-leaders Paul Golding and Ashlea Simon	Nationwide
 The English Defence League (EDL)	It is a far-right, anti-Islam protest movement founded in Luton in 2009 by Tommy Robinson and Kevin Carroll	Nationwide
 Reform UK Party	It is a right-wing political party, co-founded by Nigel Farage and Catherine Blaiklock in 2018 as the Brexit Party and renamed in 2021, with policies focused on limiting immigration, cutting taxes and opposing net-zero environmental targets	Nationwide
 The Homeland Party	It is a far-right political party founded by Kenny Smith in 2023 after splitting from the neo-Nazi group Patriotic Alternative, with policies centred on white nationalism, anti-immigration, and the promotion of "remigration"	Nationwide
 The Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA)	It is a right-wing, nationalist, anti-Islam, and anti-left protest movement that emerged in 2017. It is a splinter group of the far-right Football Lads Alliance (FLA), which was founded by John Meighan in 2017	Nationwide
 The Independence Party	It was founded by Alan Sked in 1993 and is currently led by Nick Tenconi, with policies focused on leaving the EU, restricting immigration, promoting British nationalism, opposing multiculturalism, and supporting conservative social values	Nationwide
 The Great British National Strike	It is a far-right-linked protest movement launched in May 2025 by ex-soldier Richard Donaldson. The group organizes nationwide demonstrations and "strikes" opposing immigration, Net Zero climate policies, and the Labour government	Nationwide

Assessments & Forecast

Exploitation of socioeconomic grievances, identity-based narratives, online disinformation campaigns by far-right remain the primary drivers of growing anti-immigration activism

1. Several overlapping factors drive the recent wave of anti-migrant protests across the UK. Sustained socioeconomic pressure within working-class communities – linked to housing shortages and cost-of-living crisis – being leveraged by right-wing elements to further their protectionist agendas, remains a central driver of rising anti-immigration sentiment.
2. Residents increasingly perceive asylum accommodation as limiting public access to affordable housing and worsening local living conditions. This pattern is noticeable across Greater

Manchester, which has recorded several anti-immigration demonstrations since mid-2024. In Horwich, on the outskirts of Bolton, the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) – residential properties subdivided and rented to multiple tenants, has risen to over 700, representing 0.56 percent of the total housing stock, roughly eight times the national average. Many of these properties house asylum seekers, prompting concern among residents about overcrowding, falling property values, and rising rents. In 2024, residents launched the “Say No to HMOs” campaign, successfully lobbying the council to tighten regulations. While these issues stem from broader structural housing and welfare shortages, far-right groups have reframed them as proof of preferential treatment for migrants. This framing channels genuine socioeconomic frustration into resentment toward migrants and authorities, enabling mobilization around claims of government neglect.

3. This narrative is further reinforced through the selective use of public spending data. Far-right figures cite projections that asylum housing costs could reach 15.3 billion GBP by 2029, up from initial estimates of 4.5 billion GBP, and that hotel accommodation consumes over 70 percent of spending while housing only one-third of asylum seekers. Presenting such figures as proof that public funds are being diverted from local services fuels anger toward the government and legitimizes protest action.
4. Another key factor sustaining anti-migrant mobilization is the disinformation that immigration contributes to rising crime and insecurity. Far-right networks amplify this view through deliberate disinformation, distorting crime statistics to imply a disproportionate link between migrants and violent offenses. In August 2025, far-right channels claimed that 40 percent of sexual crimes in London were committed by foreign nationals and that Afghan or Eritrean migrants were “twenty times more likely to offend.” Though subsequent analysis showed these claims were based on incomplete and misused court data, such narratives gain traction by blending selective facts with falsehoods, giving them an appearance of credibility. Similarly, the government’s June 2025 statement on “grooming gangs”, acknowledging an overrepresentation of Asian men among offenders, was reframed by far-right groups as proof of government failure on immigration and public safety. This framing allows such movements to present themselves as protecting communities rather than engaging in extremist activity, broadening their appeal among people already concerned about security and state competence.
5. Additionally, social media has further accelerated mobilization by amplifying and coordinating anti-migrant narratives. Reports from July 30 indicated that anti-migrant content on a major US-based platform rose by over 90 percent between 2023 and 2024, with more than 1.7 million posts in the first half of 2025 alone. Online discussions frequently promote conspiracy claims of an “invasion” by non-white migrants, the “replacement” of native Britons, and calls for “remigration” as a means of protecting national identity. August 23 media reports also revealed that members of the far-right Homeland Party used newly created online groups to coordinate protests under the banners “Stop the Boats” and “Women Wear Pink” in towns including Epping, Wethersfield, and Nuneaton, highlighting the central role of digital platforms in sustaining momentum.
6. **FORECAST:** Given the interplay of local socioeconomic grievances and their deliberate exploitation by far-right networks for ideological purposes, anti-immigration sentiment and associated mobilisations are expected to persist in the medium term. The persistence of underlying issues, housing shortages, economic pressures, and security concerns, and the far-right’s effective use of social media to spread disinformation and organize demonstrations further increases the likelihood of such protests.

MOST COMMONLY USED SLOGANS, HASHTAGS DURING ANTI-IMMIGRATION ACTIVISM IN THE UK

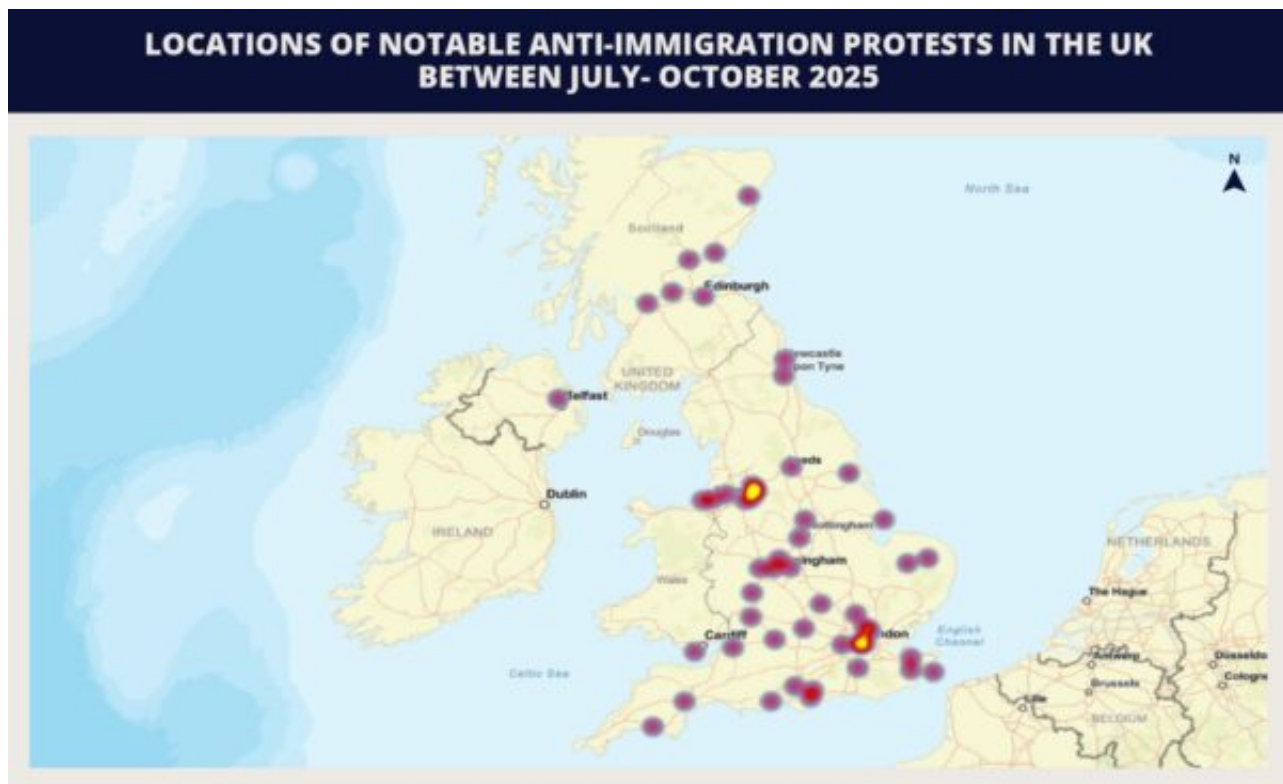
"Protect our kids" / "Protect our children"	"Stop the boats"	"Send them home"
"Abolish Asylum System"	"Get them out"	"Unite the Kingdom"
"We want our country back"	"Stop the invasion"	"#EppingIsEverywhere"
#CloseAllMigrantHotelsNow	"Get Starmer out" / "Starmer out"	"Save our children"
"#MassDeportations"	"Scotland is for the Scots"	"great replacement"

Sustained far-right anti-immigration activism increase risk of unrest at rallies, targeted attacks against immigration-linked establishment, vigilantism

- 1. FORECAST:** Protests are expected to continue, with sporadic large-scale demonstrations in major cities and more frequent small to medium-sized gatherings in towns and councils hosting asylum accommodation. Large-scale protests are likely to remain infrequent but will be triggered by high-profile incidents such as crimes linked to migrants, major government policy changes, court rulings on immigration, or international events involving right-wing figures or movements. These mobilizations are typically preceded by a surge in online activity, as sensational media coverage is circulated and amplified by far-right influencers and tabloid outlets.
- 2. FORECAST:** Major cities such as London, Manchester, Nottingham, Liverpool, Glasgow, Belfast, and Aberdeen will remain key focal points for large-scale protests due to their political and symbolic importance. These rallies are typically organized by prominent far-right figures and networks such as Tommy Robinson or the GBNP, as well as right-wing anti-immigration parties like Reform UK and the Homeland Party. They carry a heightened risk of counter-protests and disorder, including clashes with police or counter-demonstrators, along with incidents of vandalism targeting nearby property.
- 3. FORECAST:** Meanwhile, towns across northern England, the Midlands, and coastal areas such as Kent, Essex, and East Yorkshire, where asylum facilities are concentrated, are likely to experience more frequent, smaller protests and occasional outbreaks of unrest. Such unrest will typically involve confrontations with police or counter-protesters, harassment or intimidation of asylum staff and local officials, vandalism and arson targeting asylum accommodation sites, and obstruction of roads or entrances to these facilities.
- 4. FORECAST:** In addition to unrest during rallies, the growing influence of far-right activism heightens the risk of targeted attacks and intimidation against both immigrants and individuals perceived as "enablers" of migration. Those at risk include asylum accommodation staff, local councilors, refugee charity workers, journalists, legal advocates, and public or private establishments viewed as supporting migration. Such incidents, ranging from physical assaults and verbal harassment to vandalism and online intimidation, are likely to intensify during periods of heightened far-right mobilization or following alleged migrant-linked offenses. This was evidenced on July 20, when protesters assaulted hotel security staff and damaged police vehicles outside an asylum hotel in Epping, and again on September 7 in Canterbury, where a local councillor was attacked by protesters marching toward a children's asylum accommodation

centre.

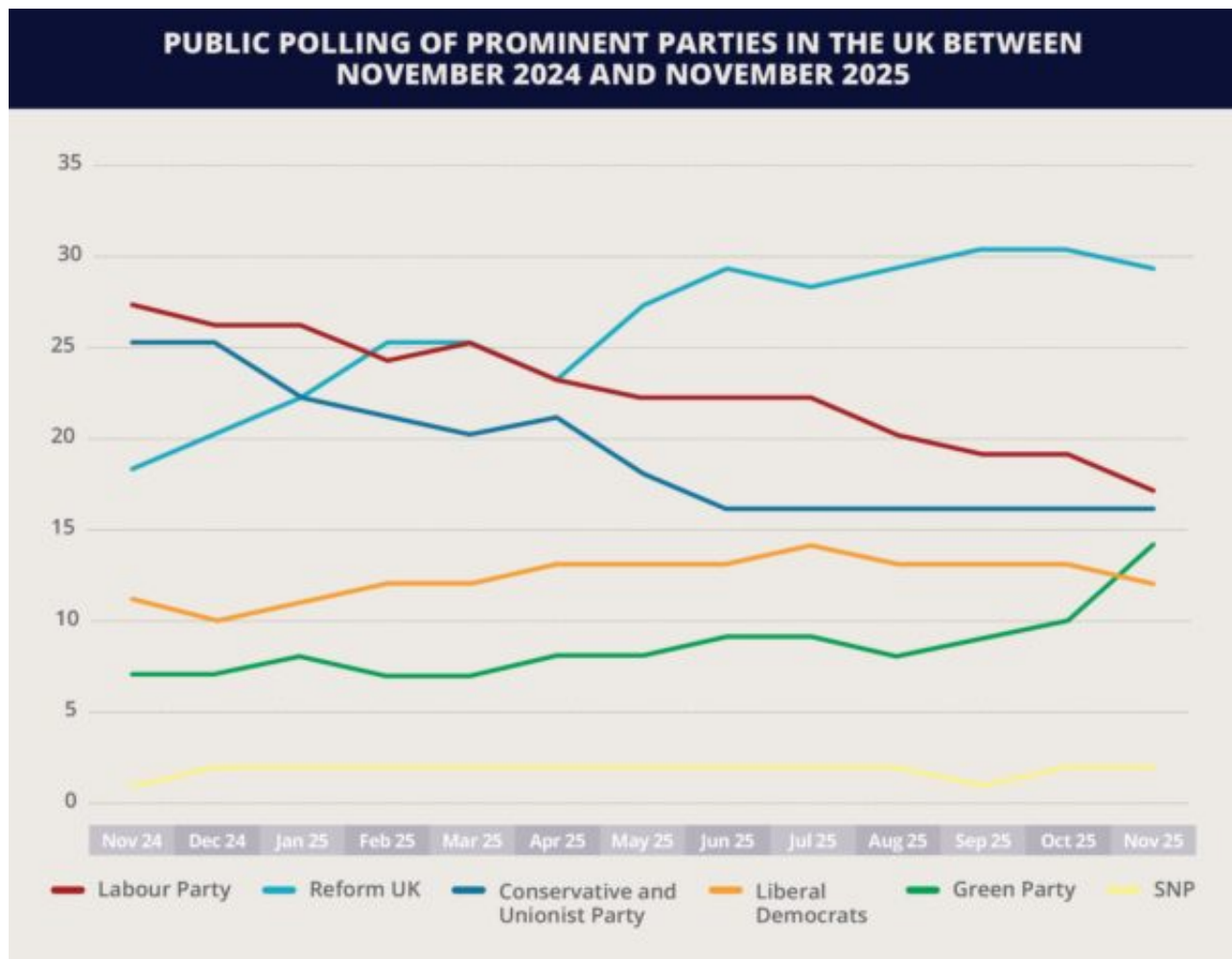
5. **FORECAST:** Looking ahead, the threat of far-right groups adopting vigilante-style tactics is expected to remain elevated. This threat is further evidenced by the August 21 reports from Belfast describing the “Belfast Nightwatch First Division,” a group patrolling streets and demanding identification from foreign residents, as well as the August 27 reports from Epping, Essex, where the so-called “Essex Spartans” began organizing community patrols under the guise of “child protection.” This mirrors the growth of similar far-right vigilante movements across Europe, such as the “Soldiers of Odin” in Finland, “Migrant Hunters” in Poland, and cross-border “citizen patrols” active in Germany and Hungary.
6. Such vigilante activity is likely to become more prominent in suburban, semi-rural, and coastal areas, particularly the eastern, southern, and northern regions of England and parts of Northern Ireland, where routine police coverage is comparatively limited. In contrast, major metropolitan centres such as London, Manchester, and Birmingham are likely to see fewer such incidents due to greater law enforcement visibility and stronger deterrence.



Rising anti-immigration sentiments drive far-right political gains, pressure Labour government, other mainstream parties toward tougher migration stance, policies

1. In addition to growing protests and risk of unrest, sustained anti-immigration activism is increasingly shaping mainstream political discourse, transforming immigration from a flashpoint for public protest into a defining issue of electoral competition and government strategy. This direction is evidenced by the deepening public scepticism toward migration control, as highlighted in September 10 media reports identifying immigration as the UK’s top public concern for the first time since 2015. Far-right groups have successfully capitalized on these sentiments, particularly following the 2024 Southport attack, by framing migration as both a national security and cultural threat, narratives that continue to resonate across political and social divides.
2. Politically, this climate has amplified the influence of far-right movements seeking legitimacy and political representation. Reform UK has become the primary beneficiary, leveraging populist

rhetoric to position itself as a mainstream alternative. Indeed, Reform’s popularity has surged significantly since the July 2024 Southport incident, with the party currently leading opinion polls at 29 percent compared to 14 percent in July 2024. Its “Operation Restoring Justice” platform, launched in August 2025, calls for the UK’s withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights, the suspension of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and the replacement of the Human Rights Act with a domestic “British Bill of Rights.” The party also advocates a “Mass Deportation Bill” mandating the removal of all irregular migrants and a permanent re-entry ban, policies reflecting mainstreaming of hardline public discourse once confined to the far-right fringe.



3. Overall, Reform’s growing popularity has come at the expense of the ruling Labour Party, which, despite winning a record 411 seats in the July 2024 general election, has since seen its approval rating decline sharply, from 34 percent in July 2024 to around 19 percent as of October 20. Mounting public concern over immigration and the political pressure generated by Reform’s rise have driven the Labour government to adopt tougher stances on migration. The October 1 policy announcement, removing automatic settlement and family reunion rights for asylum recipients while introducing new residency conditions tied to employment, English language proficiency, and civic participation, illustrates this shift. Additional proposals, including extending the qualifying period for Indefinite Leave to Remain from five to ten years and restricting welfare access for non-citizens, further underscore the government’s efforts to project stronger border control and stem the growing influence of far-right narratives within domestic politics.
4. **FORECAST:** Although the Labour government’s tighter immigration policies are aimed at easing public concern and countering far-right momentum, they are unlikely to fully achieve these objectives. Public attitudes toward migration are increasingly shaped not only by policy outcomes but also by a deeper distrust of political institutions—sentiments that far-right actors are actively exploiting through anti-establishment narratives, such as the “two-tier policing” claim, which

alleges that authorities treat right-wing activists more harshly than left-wing or minority demonstrators. As a result, Reform UK and affiliated far-right movements are expected to continue capitalizing on perceived institutional weakness, portraying migration as evidence of systemic failure and political deceit. Consequently, anti-immigration protest activity and far-right mobilization are likely to persist in the medium term, further pressuring the government and mainstream parties to adopt even stricter immigration and border control measures in an effort to regain public confidence.

Businesses, particularly in migrant-reliant sectors, to face heightened operational, reputational, and compliance risks amid rising anti-immigration sentiment and changing regulations

- 1. FORECAST:** Moving forward, the combined effect of public unrest, stricter regulations, and politicized narratives around migration is expected to increase operational, reputational, and compliance risks across multiple sectors. In the near-to-medium term, businesses reliant on migrant labor or perceived as linked to migration, such as those in logistics, delivery, hospitality, and social care, are likely to face increased public scrutiny, activist targeting, and intensified regulatory oversight.
- 2. FORECAST:** On-ground anti-immigration protests and related unrest will continue to pose direct operational risks through disruptions to business continuity, property damage, restricted staff mobility, and temporary closures of retail or service sites located near protest areas. Indeed, retail outlets, hospitality venues, and offices located near protest-prone urban areas are particularly exposed to temporary closures and loss of foot traffic. For instance, during the 2024 far-right riots, national high-street footfall dropped by nearly five percent within days, rising to over 12 percent in Northern England and Yorkshire as businesses pre-emptively closed or fortified their premises. Also, the August 31 clashes at Canary Wharf, where anti-immigration protesters forced the evacuation of several retail units, further support this assessment.
- 3. FORECAST:** Reputational and compliance risks are also likely to intensify, particularly for firms in the gig economy, such as food delivery and courier platforms. While intended to curb illegal employment, these measures have inadvertently reinforced public perceptions that gig platforms facilitate unlawful work, exposing companies to backlash from anti-immigration groups and segments of the public. Such reputational risks can translate into operational consequences, including restricted access to residential or commercial sites, suspended service contracts, and heightened scrutiny from local authorities or corporate clients. The August 9 media reports citing bans on delivery riders from residential complexes in Canary Wharf over alleged “undocumented” work highlight how suspicion and political narratives can escalate into tangible business exclusion and service disruption.
- 4. FORECAST:** Also, the increased use of social media platforms by far-right digital ecosystems to further their ideological and political agendas increases the risk of targeted online campaigns, boycotts, or harassment against businesses perceived as “enabling illegal work.” These campaigns, typically coordinated through encrypted channels and social media, can rapidly amplify isolated incidents into nationwide outrage. For instance, in recent months, far-right groups circulated claims that delivery riders in London are “illegal migrants,” prompting a surge in online calls to boycott major gig-economy platforms and vandalism threats against their local hubs. Similar patterns were seen following the 2024 Southport unrest, when businesses employing foreign staff were misidentified online as “asylum-linked contractors,” leading to waves of negative reviews and coordinated social media harassment. Such disinformation-driven campaigns can distort public perception, deter customers, and trigger reputational crises, as well as increased scrutiny from local councils or regulators.
- 5. FORECAST:** At the regulatory level, the government’s recent proposed policy changes, including raising English-language requirements for Skilled Worker visas, increasing the Immigration Skills Charge by 32 percent, and curtailing post-study work rights under the Graduate visa route, will strain labor-intensive sectors such as logistics, construction, agriculture, and social care. These

measures are expected to reduce access to skilled and semi-skilled foreign workers, potentially driving wage inflation, recruitment delays, and higher administrative costs. Employers may face longer visa processing times, more frequent sponsorship audits, and increased exposure to penalties for procedural non-compliance, reinforcing a compliance-heavy operating environment across key industries.

Recommendations

1. Travel across the UK can continue; however, maintain heightened vigilance in areas affected by recent anti-immigration demonstrations, particularly near asylum accommodation sites, government offices, and city centers.
2. Avoid participation or presence near ongoing or announced anti-immigration demonstrations due to the elevated risk of confrontation between protesters, counter-protesters, and police.
3. Minimize travel during weekends and evenings in towns with a history of far-right unrest, as Epping, Tamworth, and Southport, where spontaneous protests or vigilante patrols have been recorded.
4. Businesses operating in the vicinity of the asylum accommodations are advised to review site security, access control, and staff training procedures, as such facilities may face vandalism, intimidation, or online targeting campaigns.
5. Companies linked to asylum, housing, or gig-economy operations should prepare contingency communication and crisis response plans to address potential online disinformation, media scrutiny, or reputational backlash.
6. Monitor digital platforms and extremist-linked online ecosystems for early indicators of misinformation or mobilization campaigns targeting company facilities, partners, or staff, as these can precede flash protests or coordinated harassment.
7. Conduct operational continuity reviews for sites located in or near high-tension areas to ensure emergency access routes, backup staffing plans, and coordination with local law enforcement are established.
8. For further intelligence support or assistance in developing protective measures for personnel and operations, contact intel@max-security.com.