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# Immigration challenges that aren't demagoguery



Back around the turn of the century, a few of us who toil in the public-policy vineyards guessed that privacy was going to be the overwhelming public-policy issue of the decade to come.

Ten years later, many of us picked immigration as the central policy challenge of the decade we're now more than halfway through. This year's presidential campaign, the Central American children [stranded at our border in 2014](#) and recent European history all suggest it was at least a competitive guess.

According to [polling by Lord Ashcroft](#), a former Conservative peer in the House of Lords, opposition to multiculturalism, social liberalism, feminism, the green movement, the internet and capitalism all correlated with votes for Brexit. With the possible exception of capitalism, this goes a long way to explain why millennials were mostly voting on the "remain" side.

Millennials may be philosophically attuned to globalization, but there are costs associated with immigration. The melting pot doesn't always function in the idealized way many of us imagine it should.

In [Boston, Lincolnshire](#) – a town 110 miles north of London – about 13 percent of the population consists of EU transplants, largely Poles and Lithuanians, most of whom have settled there to work on nearby vegetable farms. According to official voting statistics, 77 percent of the eligible voters in what newspapers have referred to as the most divided town in the country voted in the Brexit referendum, and more than three-quarters voted to leave.

But one can also see similar tensions much closer to home. Bedford, New York is about an hour north of New York City, in the northern part of Westchester County. The Bedford Central School District's high school, [Fox Lane](#), is ranked among the top 400 in the nation. The school boasts 95 percent English proficiency and a [64 percent participation rate](#) in Advanced Placement courses.

The central district includes the town and village of Mt. Kisco, which has seen significant immigration in recent years. All students starting kindergarten this past year were enrolled in the Dual Language Bilingual Education Program, which teaches all of the core academic subjects in both English and Spanish to students whose primary language may be either one. It is, in part, a reaction to [state law that now requires](#) districts to create bilingual classes if they have 20 or more children of the same age who speak the same language other than English.

But naturally, this creates budget challenges. For the 2016-17 school year, the 4,300-student Bedford district faced an unprecedented \$8.9 million shortfall. Bilingual education isn't the only cost that's rising, but it is a significant one. Westchester County is one of the wealthiest in the nation, and the school district ultimately will be able to afford a solution. Scarsdale taxes itself

\$30,607 per pupil, while New Rochelle spends \$22,386 on each student. But other communities across the country would struggle to shoulder this kind of burden.

Concerns about immigration certainly can be prone to demagoguery and exaggeration, as we have seen too much of lately. The chances that your town will enact a municipal ordinance enacting elements of Sharia law are slim. But there are practical challenges associated with uncontrolled immigration. They are issues many of us will face in time and we had better plan for them.

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