

Two cities. Two migrant protests spiral

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Contrasting scenes: Pro-immigration demonstrators gather in Los Angeles, while Northern Ireland experiences violent unrest believed to have been sparked by anti-immigrant anger.

Is immigration the biggest issue of our time? On both sides of the Atlantic, immigration protests have erupted into violence. It seems to provoke more passion than almost any other issue.

What's happening?

One is a Californian **metropolis** of 13 million people. The other is a Northern Irish town with 31,000 residents.

But this week, both Los Angeles and Ballymena have erupted into violence over **immigration**.

The LA uproar began as a reaction to Donald Trump's policies calling for all "undocumented" immigrants to be deported.

Protesters took to the streets in response. Many were peaceful, but some started looting and Trump deployed the **National Guard**.

Find out more

The Ballymena story is very different. It is an anti-immigration riot, fuelled by **far-right** online **misinformation**.

Rioters attacked police with bottles, bricks and fireworks. Police constable Ryan Henderson calls the riots "racist thuggery targeted at ethnic minorities and police officers".

It echoes last July's race riots across several British cities.

Even outside racist fringes, immigration sometimes seems like today's defining issue. An opinion poll last month showed that 30% of Britons intend to vote for Reform, an anti-immigration **right-wing** party.

Today's big issues are all connected. The economy creates inequality. Industry fuels climate change, which causes immigration.

Is immigration the biggest issue of our time?

Some think

Yes! From pro-migration Spain to Trump's deportation-fixated US, immigration is the hot issue of the moment.

Others say

No! The ongoing destruction of the Earth's environment and the depletion of its resources is the big issue, immigration is just a side-effect of this larger force.

Some people say

“As a global community, we face a choice. Do we want migration to be a source of prosperity and international solidarity, or a byword for inhumanity and social friction?”

Antonio Guterres (1949 –), Portuguese politician and UN secretary-general

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Have you ever been on a protest? Would any issue make you join one?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Has immigration always been seen as an important issue? Which countries have pro-immigration policies?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain about this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - A riot erupts in your town. What do you do?

5. Express

What do others believe? - “Immigration is a distraction from the issues that matter the most.” Discuss in groups.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Write a short reflection on what you think is the biggest issue of our time.

Glossary

Metropolis - A very large and busy city.

Immigration - The permanent movement of people into a country.

National Guard - Part of the USA's military reserve.

Far-right - A range of ideologies that emphasise social order, racial purity and the elimination of opponents.

Misinformation - Incorrect or misleading information unintentionally presented as fact. It can be contrasted with disinformation or deliberate lies.

Right-wing - Sometimes referred to as 'conservative', this is a range of political beliefs that emphasise the value of tradition, individual freedom and responsibility, low taxes and a hands-off approach to government.