



BRIEFING PAPER

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Employment by Country of Birth and Nationality

By Andrew Powell

1. Employment by Nationality

In April-June 2018, there were 3.55 million people working in the UK who were not UK nationals, 11.0% of all people in employment. This included:

- 2.28 million people who were nationals of other EU countries (7.1%)
- 1.27 million people who were nationals of countries outside the EU (3.9%)

The remaining 28.76 million people in employment (89.0%) were UK nationals.

The number of people working in the UK who were not UK nationals fell by 11,000 in the year to April-June 2018. The number of EU nationals fell by 86,000, which was the largest annual fall since comparable records began in 1997. This was offset by an increase in the number of employed non-EU nationals.

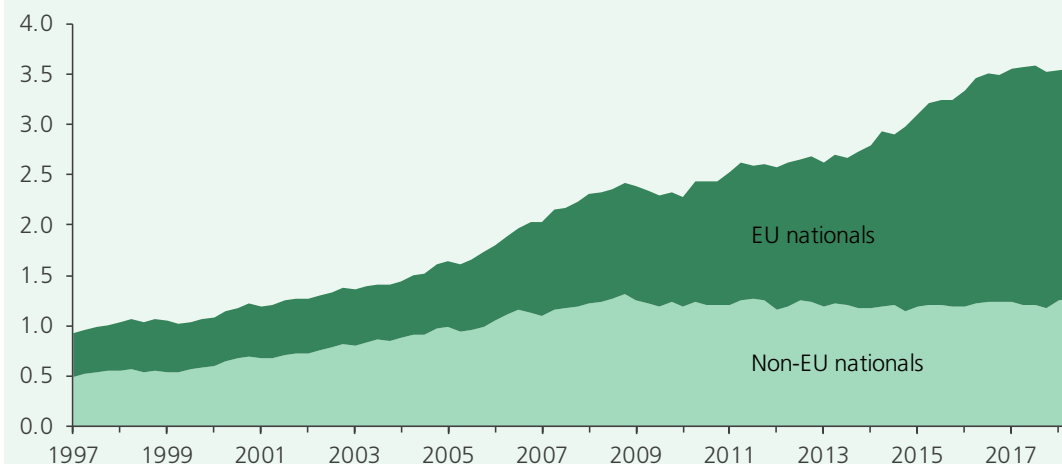
1.1 Change in employment levels

Employment of non-UK nationals has increased sharply over the past two decades, by 2.59 million since April-June 1997. Consequently the number of non-UK nationals in employment is almost four times higher than it was at the start of 1997.

Over the same period, employment of UK nationals has increased by 3.28 million, or 14%.

Number of non-UK nationals working in the UK

1997 to 2018, Millions



Source: ONS *UK Labour Market* statistical bulletin, Table EMP06

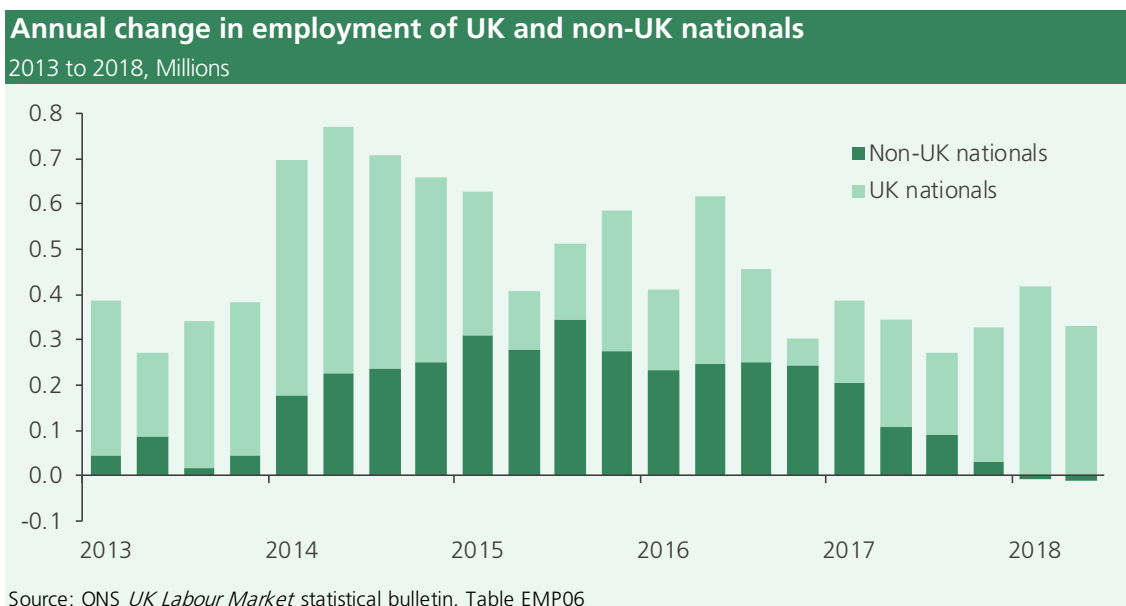
2 Employment by Country of Birth and Nationality

The share of all people in employment who are non-UK nationals increased from 3.5% to 11.0% between 1997 and 2018.

In contrast, employment of non-UK nationals fell by 11,000 in the year to April-June 2018. The number of EU nationals decreased by 86,000, but this was partly offset by a 74,000 increase in employment of non-EU nationals.

This contrasted with strong growth in employment of UK nationals, which increased by 332,000 from the previous year.

There was also a fall in the number of employed non-UK nationals in the year to January-March 2018, and this was the first annual decrease in employment of non-UK nationals since 2010. This is a marked departure from trends seen over the past few years: over the three years to January-March 2017, the number of non-UK nationals employed in the UK increased by around 250,000 per year on average. The chart shows the annual change for each quarter over the last five years:



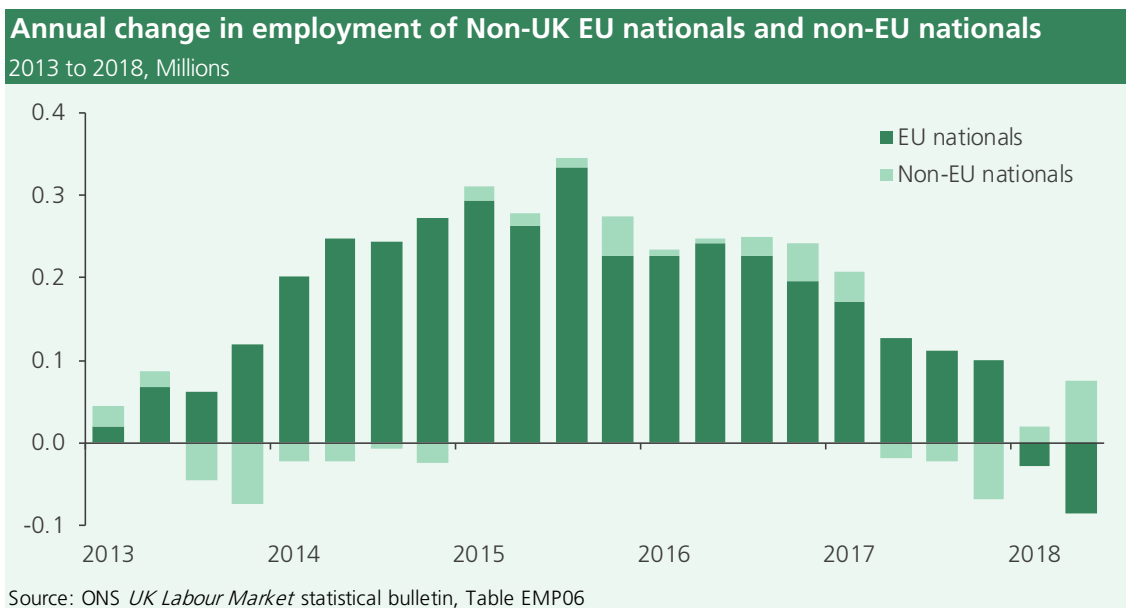
EU and non EU-nationals

The number of **non-EU** nationals working in the UK grew steadily between 1997 and 2008, but has since remained relatively flat. Employment of **EU** nationals was fairly steady up to the early 2000s, but grew strongly between 2004 and 2008 (following the accession of the A8 countries¹ to the EU) and again between 2013 and 2017.

This means that, between 2013 and 2017, the growth in employment levels for non-UK nationals was driven by the growth in the number of EU nationals in employment. Likewise, the fall in employment for non-UK nationals in the year to April-June 2018 was driven by the fall in the number of EU nationals in employment.

The decrease in the year to April-June 2018 for those who were nationals of other EU countries was the largest annual fall since comparable records began in 1997. In contrast, the increase in that year for those who are non-EU nationals was the largest increase seen since 2008. The chart below shows the annual change for EU and non EU-nationals over the last five years:

¹ Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovak Republic and Slovenia.



2. Employment by Country of Birth

We can alternatively look at employment levels based on people's country of birth rather than nationality. Some people who are UK nationals may have been born in other countries; similarly, some non-UK nationals may have been born in the UK. People can also change their nationality.

In April-June 2018, there were 5.62 million people in employment who were born outside the UK, 17.4% of all people in employment. This included:

- 2.35 million people born in other EU countries (7.3%)
- 3.27 million people born outside the EU (10.1%)

The remaining 26.69 million people in employment (82.6%) were born in the UK.

The number of people in employment who were nationals of other EU countries fell by 58,000 in the year to April-June 2018. This was the first annual decrease in employment of people born outside the UK since 2010.

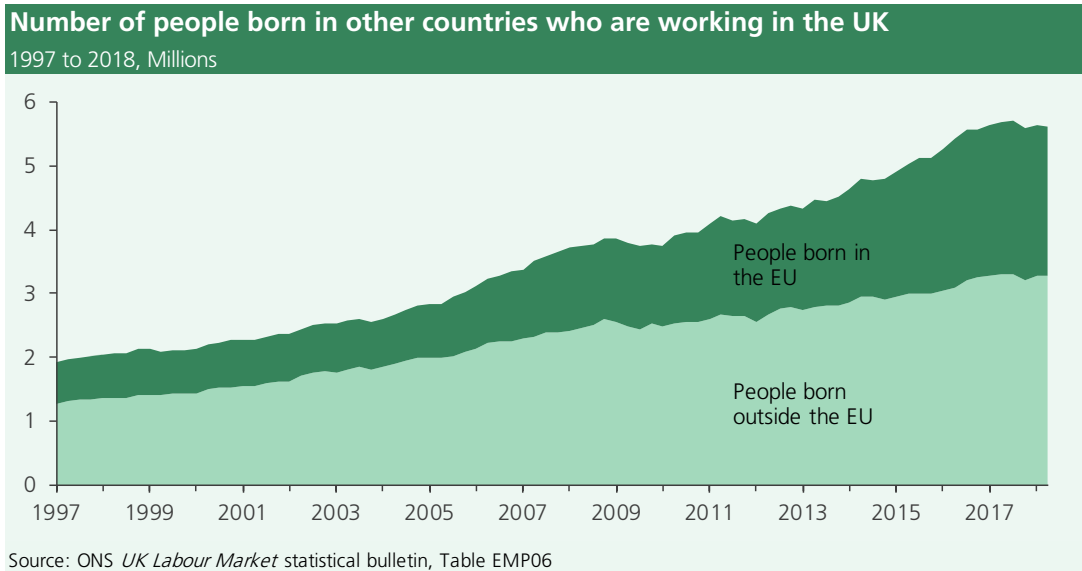
2.1 Change in employment levels

Employment of people born outside the UK has increased by 3.65 million since April-June 1997. There were around three times as many people born outside the UK in work in 2018 than there were in 1997.

The share of people in employment who were born outside the UK increased from 7.5% in 1997 to 17.4% in 2018.

Over the same period, employment of people born in the UK increased by 2.23 million, an increase of 9%. However, the share of all workers who were born in the UK dropped from 92.5% to 82.6%.

4 Employment by Country of Birth and Nationality



The most recent annual changes in employment by country of birth contrast with longer term trends (as is also the case for the nationality figures above).

The number of people born outside the UK in employment in the year to April-June 2018 fell by 58,000, compared to a 380,000 increase in the number of UK-born people in employment.

To put this in context, over the three years to January-March 2017, employment of people born outside the UK was increasing by an average of around 339,000 per year. The fall in the year to April-June 2018 was the first annual decrease in employment of people born outside the UK since 2010.

3. Employment rates

In April-June 2018, the employment rate for non-UK nationals was less than the rate for UK nationals, and similarly, the employment rate for people born outside the UK was less than the rate for those born in the UK.

Nationality

The employment rate for UK nationals was 75.5%, compared to 74.5% for all non-UK nationals.

Nationals of other EU countries had an employment rate of 83.1%, compared to 62.9% for non-EU nationals.

Country of Birth

The employment rate for people aged 16-64 who were born in the UK was 75.8%.

The employment rate for those born outside the UK was lower at 74.0%, although this varied by country of birth. The employment rate for those born in other EU countries was 82.8%, while the employment rate was 68.7% for those born outside the EU.

Interpreting these statistics

The estimates in this note are not seasonally adjusted, meaning differences between quarters could be down to seasonal changes that tend to occur every year. Therefore it is advisable to compare estimates for the same quarter in each year.

Consistent data on employment by country of birth and nationality are available back to 1997 from the ONS Labour Force Survey, hence this paper looks at trends from 1997 onwards.

Official employment statistics do not tell us how many jobs have been created but rather show net changes in employment. These net changes will mask larger gross flows of people in and out of work. So while we cannot say what fraction of jobs went to one particular group rather than another, we can instead look at the change in the total number of people from one group or another who are in employment.

All the data in this briefing paper is taken from [Table EMP06](#) of the Office for National Statistics' [UK Labour Market](#) statistical bulletin. Data on employment by country of birth and nationality are published on a quarterly basis.

Further reading

The figures in this paper do not measure how many non-UK nationals or people born outside the UK are coming to the UK, either to work or for other reasons. For statistics on migration levels, see the Library's briefing paper on [Migration statistics](#). This is updated quarterly when new data are released by the Office for National Statistics.

The Library's briefing paper [Employment of other EU nationals in the UK](#) (August 2017) provides statistics on EU nationals working in the UK and includes analysis by industry, occupation and region.