



DEBATE PACK

Number 2015/67, 16 October 2015

Debate on an e-petition relating to immigration

By Benjamin Politowski

Westminster Hall Debate 19 October 2015 at 1630hrs

This is an 'e-petition' debate: following a petition uploaded to the Petitions website attracting over 100,000 signatures, the Petitions Committee has agreed that a debate would be held in relation to this petition. The petition in question is entitled, 'Stop allowing immigrants into the UK'.

The debate will be held under the motion, "That this House has considered an e-petition relating to immigration".

The debate will be led by Paul Scully MP, a member of the Petitions Committee.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most, but not all, non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced after the announcement of parliamentary business and are intended to provide a brief summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant or useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. A more detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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Summary

This Westminster Hall debate is being held in response to an e-petition uploaded to Parliament's petitions website which attracted over the required 100,000 signatures to be considered for debate in the House.

The petition, entitled 'Stop allowing immigrants into the UK', calls for an immediate halt to all migration into Britain by closing the borders.

The petition raises the following concerns in relation to immigration:

- access foreign nationals have to welfare and social security benefits;
- the cost to the UK;
- cultural change based on the religion of migrants;
- the future migrant population of Britain.

The petition also talks of videos showing foreigners destroying the graves of British soldiers. This appears to be in reference to the destruction of a cemetery near Benghazi in Libya in 2012 by an armed militia group (see *The Guardian*, '[British war graves in Libya desecrated by Islamist militants](#)', 4 March 2012). The graves in question were of British and Commonwealth soldiers who fought in North Africa in World War Two and the footage was shot by the militia group themselves. There is no suggestion in media reports that any of the militia involved were planning on migrating to the UK.

Debate Pack

The purpose of this debate pack is to provide some background information relating to the debate and the e-petition by providing details of recent debate, Government policy and the available statistics. It is not designed to support any particular argument nor the views expressed in the e-petition itself.

This debate pack provides a brief overview of the policy and relevant statistics relating to immigration in the UK. It also includes summaries and links to the most recent Parliamentary debates, ministerial statements and Parliamentary Questions. More information on the issues and debate surrounding immigration is available from the House of Commons Library Briefing Papers listed in section 6 of this pack.

1. E-Petition

A petition entitled, 'Stop allowing immigrants into the UK' was started on 25 August 2015. The petition reached over 100,000 signatures on the morning of Tuesday 8 September 2015, and as of 16 October it had been signed by nearly 198,000 people.¹

The following is the text of the petition as it appeared on the [Petitions website](#):²

Stop allowing immigrants into the UK.

The UK government need to prevent immigrants from entering the UK immediately! We MUST close all borders, and prevent more immigrants from entering Britain. Foreign citizens are taking all our benefits, costing the government millions! Many of them are trying to change UK into a Muslim country!

If the Government does not do anything, then Britain may take in 12 million more immigrants by 2060. There is footage of foreigners destroying British soldiers [*sic*] graves, which is a huge disrespect to us. Sign this petition to show the government what they need to do!

1.1 Government Response

The Government will respond to any petition which gets over 10,000 signatures. As of 16 October 2015, the Government had not posted a response to the petitions website.

1.2 Debate

If a petition gets over 100,000 signatures it will be considered for a debate in Parliament.

When it met on the 15 September 2015, the [Petitions Committee](#) agreed that a debate would be held in relation to this petition under the motion, "That this House has considered an e-petition relating to immigration".

The debate will be held in Westminster Hall on Monday 19 October 2015 at 1630hrs.

Paul Scully MP, a member of the Petitions Committee, will lead the debate.

¹ According to *BuzzFeedNews*, this petition was started by 17-year-old Kieran Worrallo from Walsall in the West Midlands: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/krishrach/we-spoke-to-the-person-behind-the-stop-allowing-immigrants-i> (accessed 1 October 2015).

² <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/106477> (accessed 1 October 2015).

1.3 Petition to accept more asylum seekers

A separate petition calling for the Government to accept more asylum seekers and increase support for refugee migrants in the UK, was started on 13 August 2015.³

The petition argued that the UK was not offering an equal level of support to asylum seekers to that of other European countries. It called for the Government to do more to help refugees who had fled conflict and come to Europe, particularly those in Calais.

This petition quickly attracted over 400,000 signatures and a response has been posted by the Home Office.

The Petitions Committee noted that the Prime Minister had made a statement on this issue on the 7 September, an emergency debate was held on the 8 September and the Opposition Day Debate on 9 September was also on the subject of the 'Humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean and Europe'.⁴ Because of this it was felt that there was not the need for more time to be given to debate this issue.⁵

In their response, the Government highlighted plans to expand the existing Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme to resettle around 20,000 Syrians by 2020 and pointed to the £1 billion commitment in humanitarian aid promised by the UK. The Government also pointed to the fact that the UK continued to contribute 0.7% of GDP to international aid – the only EU country to do so.

³ The full text of this petition, and the Government response, may be viewed at <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/105991> [accessed 15 October 2015].

⁴ See section 4.2.

⁵ Petitions Committee decisions on e-petitions (8 September 2015): <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/petitions-committee/news-parliament-2015/8-sept-committee-decisions/>

2. Policy Background

2.1 Types of Immigration

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

A person who fears persecution in their country of origin may claim asylum in the UK. Generally, a person can only claim asylum after they have entered the UK; it is not possible to obtain a visa with the express intention of seeking asylum.

Claims for asylum are assessed in reference to the UK's obligations under the UN and ECHR conventions relating to refugees.⁶ Asylum seekers who are found to meet the Convention's definition of a refugee are awarded 'refugee status', and those found to be at real risk of suffering serious harm, but for reasons not covered by the Convention, are awarded 'humanitarian protection'. Both give permission to remain in the UK for five years initially, with the right to work and eligibility for welfare benefits.

The UK also operates limited refugee resettlement schemes which enable people to settle in the UK without having to go through the asylum process: one such scheme is the Syrian Vulnerable Persons scheme which has taken 216 people so far.

EEA Migrants

EU, EEA and Swiss nationals currently enjoy the right of 'freedom of movement' under European law; they do not need to apply for a visa in order to visit another member state including the UK.⁷ Those visiting the UK may stay for up to three months for any purpose.

Should a national of another member state stay for longer than three months, they must be exercising their free movement rights as a worker, job-seeker, student or self-sufficient or self-employed person. This gives them certain rights as they are considered to have the 'right to reside', and includes potential eligibility for welfare benefits. After five years residence, a person acquires 'permanent resident' status.

Non-EEA Migrants

Non-EEA nationals who wish to come to the UK are subject to the UK's immigration laws. The specific visa requirements for non-EEA nationals can be found in the [Immigration Rules](#) which are made by the Government and laid before Parliament for approval.

Whether a visitor requires a visa to enter the UK depends on which country they are a national of. All non-EEA nationals must apply for a visa prior to travelling to the UK if they wish to come as a worker, student or a family member. Most visa categories give temporary permission to stay in the UK (leave to remain). There may be possibilities

⁶ The [1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#) and the [1950 European Convention on Human Rights](#).

⁷ See European Commission, [Free Movement – EU Nationals](#).

to extend this permission or change visa categories depending on the individual's immigration status and personal circumstances.

People wishing to stay may apply for 'indefinite leave to remain' after a period of residence in the UK – commonly five years, but this varies. An application for British citizenship may be made on account of residential or ancestral ties to the country.

Illegal Immigrants

An 'Illegal Immigrant' is somebody who does not have a valid immigration status: they may have entered the country unlawfully (by failing to apply for the correct travel documentation), or have stayed for longer than they were allowed without making another application.

People who are in the UK unlawfully are potentially subject to arrest, detention and removal from the country. They are not entitled to work and are not eligible for welfare benefits.

2.2 Access to Benefits

A person's eligibility for welfare and social security benefits is usually dependant on their immigration status. This is a complex area and has been subject to a number of changes over the past decade. More information is available in the House of Commons Library Briefing, [People from Abroad: What benefits can they claim?](#)

Asylum Support ⁸

Asylum seekers are not eligible for mainstream welfare support and social security benefits. If an asylum seeker is destitute, they may apply to UK Visas & Immigration for financial support and accommodation whilst they await a decision on their asylum claim. This is known as 'asylum support'.

The financial support available is currently £36.95 per person per week. Accommodation provided is generally away from London and the south-east, and there is no choice in the allocation process.

Asylum seekers are not allowed to work whilst they are awaiting a decision on their application.

Asylum support is terminated once a final decision has been made on an individual's asylum application. Those granted permission to remain in the UK are able to work and become eligible for normal welfare benefits. Refused asylum seekers are expected to leave the UK.

EEA Nationals

People coming to the UK from the EEA do not have unrestricted access to social security benefits and tax credits.

For income-related benefits (Income Support, Jobseekers' Allowance, Housing Benefit, &c.), Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Universal

⁸ More information is available from the House of Commons Library Briefing Paper, [Asylum Support: accommodation and financial support for asylum seekers](#), SN01909.

Credit, a person from the EEA living in the UK must have the 'right to reside'.

As mentioned above, this 'right to reside' means that a person must be exercising their freedom of movement rights as a worker, job-seeker or be self-sufficient. Broadly speaking this means a person should either be economically active or able to support themselves before they are considered to have the 'right to reside' and become eligible for welfare benefits.

EEA nationals who have resided legally in the UK for a continuous period of five years (or less in certain circumstances) acquire a permanent right of residence and enjoy the same access to benefits and tax credits as UK nationals.

Non-EEA Nationals

The eligibility of non-EEA migrants to access welfare benefits depends entirely on their immigration status.

Those with 'indefinite leave to remain' have no time limit on their stay in the UK and can generally access social security benefits and tax credits on the same basis as UK nationals.

Most non-EEA nationals in the UK only have limited leave to remain and are subject to the condition that they have 'no recourse to public funds' meaning they cannot access a number of benefits. This includes a wide range of welfare and social security benefits as well as rights to local authority homelessness assistance or a housing allocation.

There are exceptions to these rules which can apply in the case of people who have had their normal access to funds temporarily disrupted or couples who have different immigration statuses. The UK also operates a number of [reciprocal social security agreements](#) with other countries which can mean some people are eligible for certain benefits.

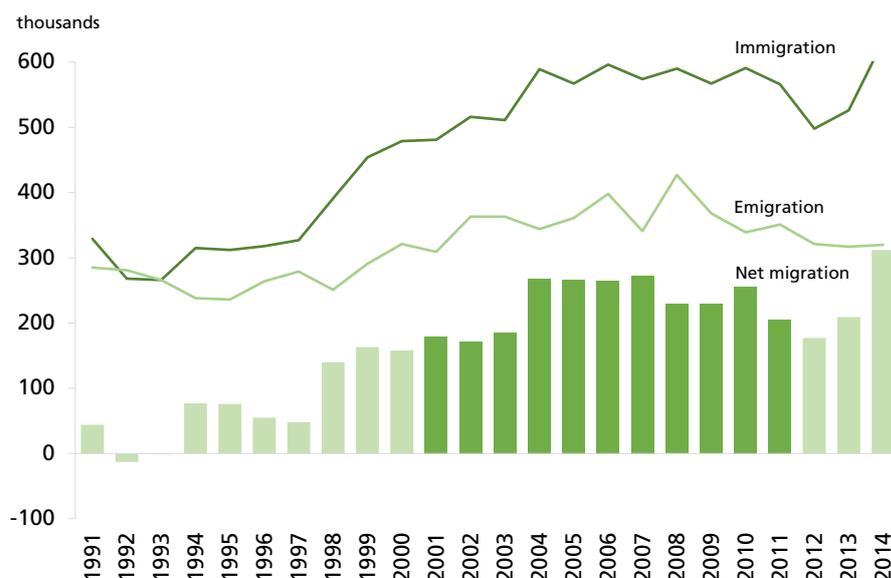
Even if an individual has the correct immigration status to be eligible for benefits, they may still be unable to claim if they are not deemed to be 'habitually resident'. Whilst there is no strict definition of habitual residence, this test may be applied to a number of benefit claims. For more information on this requirement, see the Library Briefing Paper, [The Habitual Residence Test](#).

3. Relevant Statistics

3.1 Net Migration

Long-term international migration (LTIM) is the migration of people changing their country of usual residence for a period of at least one year. The Office for National Statistics has estimated LTIM using a broadly consistent methodology since 1991.⁹

Long-term international migration in the UK, 1991-2014



Note: Net migration estimates for the years 2001 to 2011 have been revised. Revised estimates are shown in a darker colour. Estimates of immigration and emigration in these years are unrevised and are not consistent with the revised net figures.

Sources: [ONS Long-Term International Migration Estimates 2 series \(LTIM calendar year\)](#); [Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, August 2015](#)

The above chart shows LTIM estimates of immigration, emigration and net migration in the UK in each calendar year from 1991 to 2014.

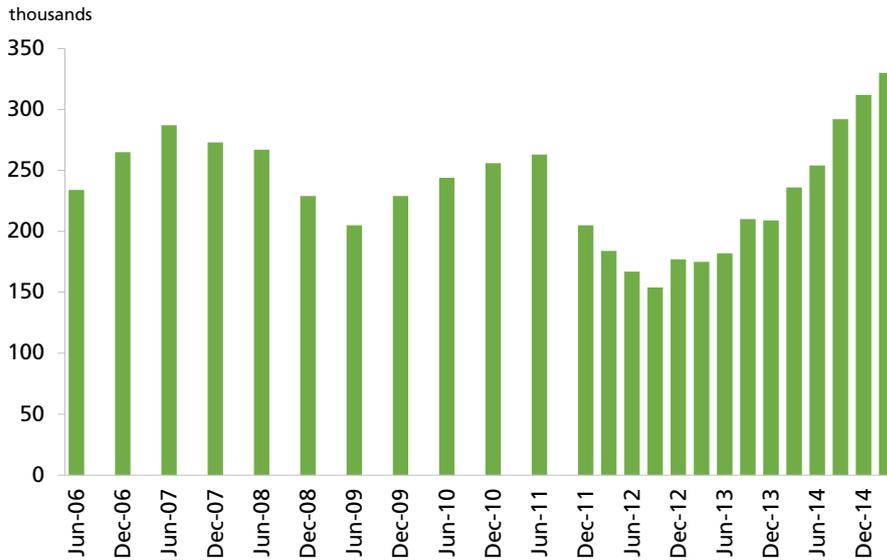
During this period immigration increased 95%, rising from 329,000 in 1991 to 641,000 in 2014. Emigration also increased over the period by 13%, from 285,000 in 1991 to 323,000 in 2014.

Immigration has grown faster than emigration, leading to an increase in net migration from an annual average of 37,000 in the period 1991 to 1995 to an annual average of 234,000 in the period 2010 to 2014.

LTIM estimates of net migration are produced quarterly, with detailed breakdowns of the figures produced for migration in each calendar year. The following chart shows estimates of net migration for the years ending each quarter during the previous two Parliaments, from the year ending June 2006 to the year ending March 2015.

⁹ LTIM estimates are based on three sources of data: the International Passenger Survey, data from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, and the Home Office. Further information on the ONS methodology is available in the ONS guide: [Methodology to estimate Long-Term International Migration](#).

Net migration, Years ending each quarter, 2006-2015 ¹⁰



Source: ONS, [Migration Statistics Quarterly Report](#), August 2015

Net migration increased during the first year of the 2010 Parliament, reaching 263,000 in the year ending June 2011. Following this peak, net migration then fell over the next five quarters, reaching 154,000 in the year ending September 2012. This was the lowest estimate of net migration in any twelve month period since the year ending December 1998. Compared with annual average net migration during the 2005 Parliament, net migration fell by around 93,000.

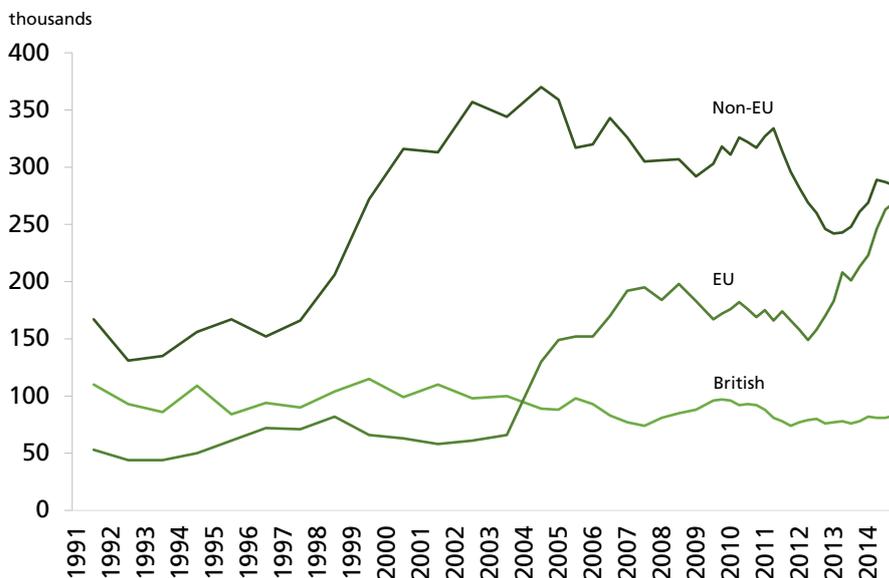
Since then, net migration has risen again, reaching 330,000 in the year ending March 2015, which was around 83,000 higher than annual average net migration during the 2005 Parliament. This is the highest estimate of net migration in any twelve month period.

¹⁰ These are the revised estimates of net migration. Consistent estimates for years ending March and September are only available from 2012, which is why there are gaps in the chart.

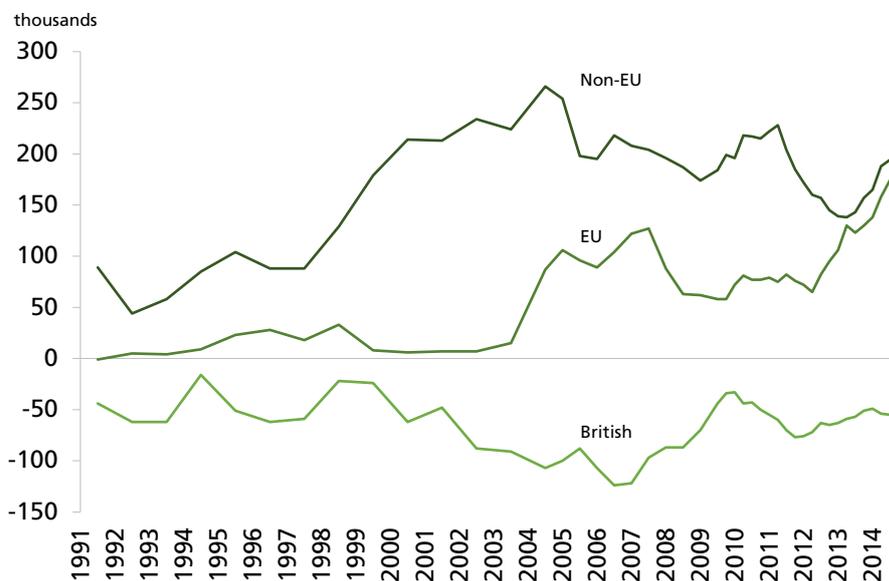
3.2 Nationality

The following charts show trends in immigration and net migration by nationality from 1991 to 2015:

Immigration by nationality, Years ending each quarter, YE Dec 1991 – YE Mar 2015



Net migration by nationality, Years ending each quarter, YE Dec 1991 – YE Mar 2015



Sources: [ONS Long-Term International Migration Estimates 2 series \(LTIM calendar year\)](#); [Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, August 2015](#)

The data in these charts does not reflect the revisions to net migration since the 2011 Census, so estimates of immigration and net migration of EU nationals in the period 2004 to 2008 are likely to be underestimates.

As the chart shows, net inward migration of non-EU nationals fell during the first half of the last Parliament, as the criteria for obtaining

student, family and work visas were tightened with the aim of reducing non-EU net migration.

Net migration of non-EU nationals fell to 138,000 in the year ending September 2013, which was its lowest level since 1998. However, net migration of non-EU nationals began to increase after that, reaching 196,000 in the year ending March 2015, the same level as at the start of the last Parliament when net migration of non-EU nationals was 196,000 in the year ending June 2010.

Net inward migration of EU nationals rose from 65,000 in the year ending September 2012 to 183,000 in the year ending March 2015. Although this appears substantially higher than at any other point shown in Chart 6, it is possible that, given the size of revisions made to the figures, net migration of EU nationals reached a similar level during the period 2005-2006.

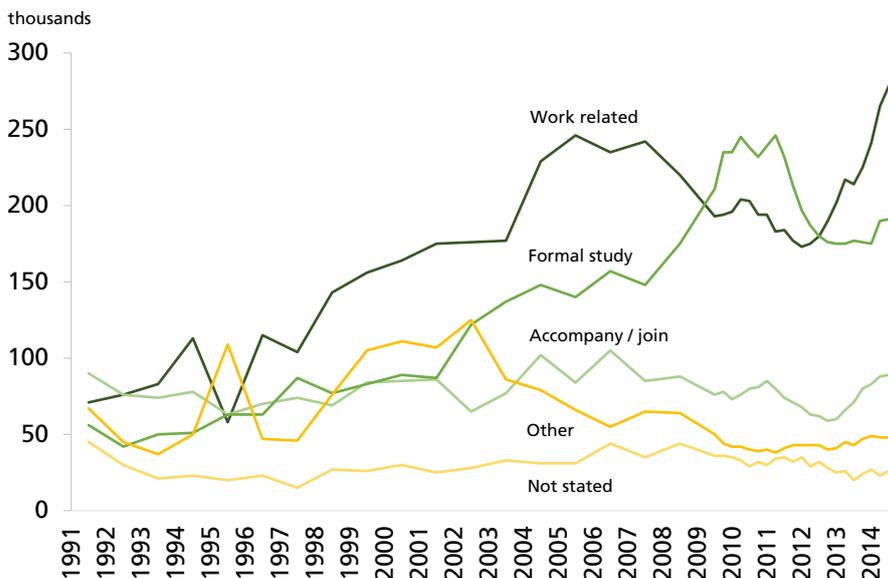
There has been net emigration of British nationals in every year since the LTIM series began in 1991.

3.3 Reason for Migration

The chart below shows ONS estimates of immigration broken down by main reason for migration. In the year ending March 2015, work was the most common main reason for immigration, while formal study was the second most common main reason.

Study was the most common main reason for immigration during the period 2009-12, and the reduction in the number of people migrating to the UK to study since then reflects a reduction in the number of Tier 4 student visas issued to students from outside the EEA and Switzerland.

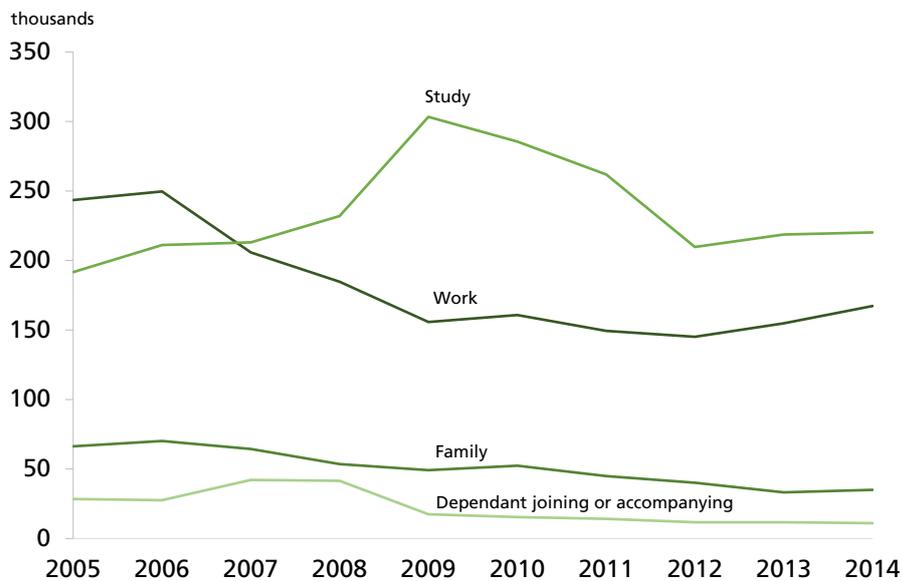
Immigration by main reason, Years ending each quarter, YE Dec 1991 – YE Mar 2015



Sources: [ONS Long-Term International Migration Estimates 2 series \(LTIM calendar year\)](#); [Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, August 2015](#)

The following chart shows longer-term visas issued by broad category in each year from 2005 to 2014. These are visas granted to nationals of countries outside the EEA and Switzerland that grant leave to remain in the UK for longer periods, for the purposes of work, study and family relationships.

Longer-term entry clearance visas granted by broad visa category, 2005-2014



Source: [Home Office Immigration Statistics, April to June 2015, Table vi_01_q](#)

These figures exclude short-term visas such as visitor visas, transit visas, and other temporary visas. Similarly, the category for “study” excludes student visitor visas, which allow people to study in the UK on courses for up to eleven months who are not classed as migrants.

“Family” covers cases where an individual has been granted a visa on the basis of their relationship to a person settled in the UK or a British citizen, whilst “dependant joining or accompanying” covers cases where dependants have been granted a visa on the basis of their relationship with another migrant, who is not a settled person or British citizen. Each of the categories includes all people granted a visa in that category, whether a main applicant or a dependant.

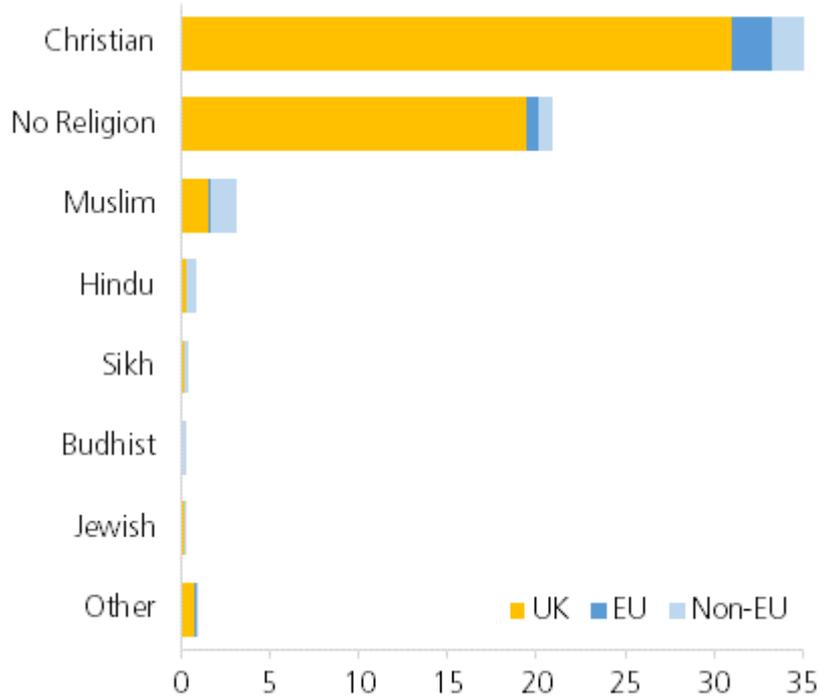
As the chart shows, the number of study visas granted has fallen since 2009 as a result of changes to the Tier 4 study route introduced by the Coalition Government at the start of the last Parliament. The number of family visas granted has also fallen.¹¹

¹¹ An overview of the immigration policies introduced by the 2010-15 Coalition Government aimed at reducing immigration and net migration can be found in the Commons Library Briefing Paper, [Immigration and asylum: changes made by the Coalition Government 2010 - 2015](#), SN05829.

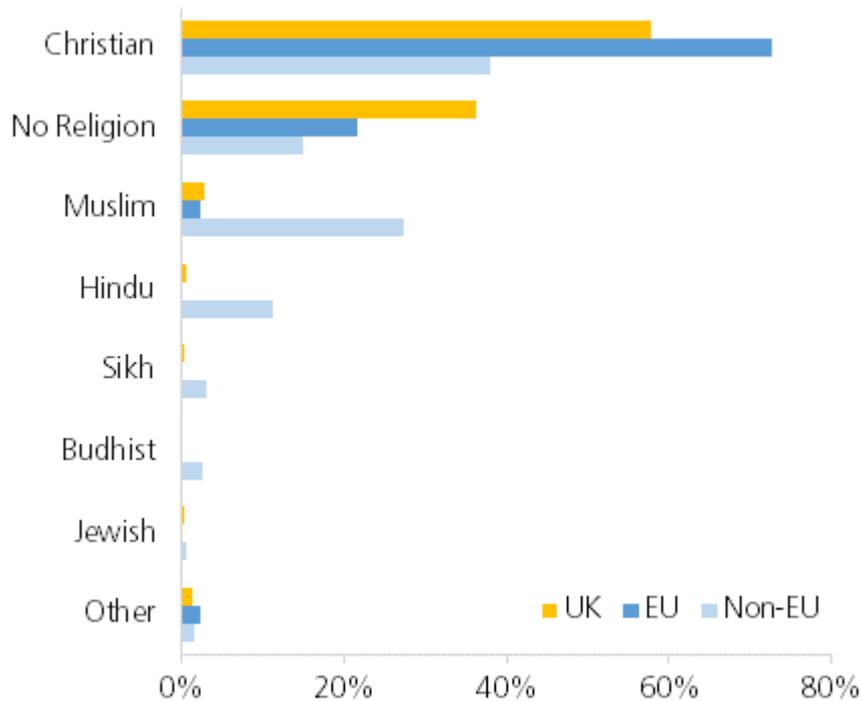
3.4 Religion

The following charts show estimates of the population of Great Britain by broad country of birth and religion:

Estimated population by religion and broad country of birth, Great Britain (millions), Q2 2015



Distribution of the population by religion for people born in different countries, Great Britain, Q2 2015



Note: Figures are estimated from survey data.
Source: Labour Force Survey, Q2 2015

Among the estimated 8.5 million people living in Great Britain in 2015 who were born abroad, around 4.2 million were Christian, 1.5 million were Muslim, 1.5 million had no religion, 0.6 million were Hindu, and 0.5 million were members of other religions.¹²

People born abroad were around 12% of the Christian population of Great Britain, 49% of the Muslim population, and 7% of the population with no religion.

The distribution of the population among different religious groups varies by broad country of birth:

- Around 58% of people born in the UK were Christian, compared with 73% of people born in other EU countries, and 38% of people born in non-EU countries.
- Around 3% of people born in the UK were Muslim, compared with 2% of people born in other EU countries, and 27% of people born in non-EU countries.
- Around 36% of people born in the UK had no religion, compared with 21% of people born in other EU countries, and 15% of people born in non-EU countries.

3.5 Projections of future migration to the UK

The Office for National Statistics produces population projections every two years, based on the population in a given reference year and a set of assumptions about future levels of fertility, mortality and migration. The most recent population projections are the 2012-based projections.¹³

Under the assumptions of the 2012-based projections, the ONS projected that between 2012 and 2037 the UK population would grow by around 9.6 million, of which 4.2 million would be directly due to the assumed level of net inward migration, and a further 1.6 million would be due to natural change arising from this net migration. Around 3.8 million of the projected population growth would be due to natural change among the population living in the UK.¹⁴

It is important to recognise that the population projections are **not forecasts**; they only reflect what would happen if recently observed demographic trends were to continue indefinitely into the future. They do not take account of government policy or future changes in the global economy that might alter demographic behaviour.

¹² Religious affiliation is self-defined. People belong to whichever religion they identify in response to the question: "What is your religion?" Some respondents refuse the question, so the estimated number of people born abroad with a self-defined religious affiliation is slightly smaller than the estimated number of people born abroad.

¹³ The 2014-based projections will be published on 29 October 2015.

¹⁴ ONS, [National Population Projections, 2012-based Statistical Bulletin: Births, Deaths and Net Migration](#), 6 November 2013.

4. Parliamentary Business

4.1 Parliamentary Questions

The following is a selection of recent PQs asked on topics related to immigration. To search for more parliamentary business relating to immigration please use [Parliamentary Search](#).

Immigration Controls: Nurses [9785]

Asked by: Colleen Fletcher on 9 September 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will include nursing on the Shortage Occupation List.

Answered by: James Brokenshire on 21 September 2015

The independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) advises the Government on changes to the Shortage Occupation List.

The MAC considered nurses in its February 2015 report, which can be read at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/partial-review-of-the-shortage-occupation-lists>. The evidence provided to the MAC by Government and other organisations is set out in its report.

The MAC recommended, based on the evidence it received, that nurses should not be added to the list.

Nurses: Migrant Workers [9967]

Asked by: Mr Mark Williams on 11 September 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of recent changes to immigration rules on retention and recruitment of nurses.

Answered by: James Brokenshire on 18 September 2015

Following advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee, the Government introduced an annual limit on Tier 2, the skilled work route, in 2011. In 2012 the Government announced that from 6 April 2016 Tier 2 migrants who apply for settlement in the UK will be required to meet a minimum annual salary requirement of £35,000.

The Home Office published full impact assessments on these changes when the rules were laid before Parliament. The impact assessments are available on the gov.uk website as follows:

Annual limit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migration-permanent-limit-tier-1-and-tier-2-impact-assessment>

Settlement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-affecting-employment-related-settlement-tier-5-and-overseas-domestic-workers>

Under the annual limit, NHS trusts have been given more than 1,400 Tier 2 certificates of sponsorship for nurses since April this year but over 600 of the places allocated to them in April and May this year have been returned unused.

Illegal Immigrants: France [\[8660\]](#)

Asked by: Mr David Hanson on 4 September 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much has been spent on additional security at Calais in each month since July 2014.

Answered by: James Brokenshire on 21 September 2015

Border Force has funded additional security measures for Calais at £9.46 million since July 2014 as below:

July 2014	£167,000
August 2014	£109,000
September 2014	£167,000
October 2014	£114,000
November 2014	£701,000
December 2014	£351,000
January 2015	£193,000
February 2015	£98,000
March 2015	£6.673 million
April 2015	£168,000
May 2015	£105,000
June 2015	£102,000
July 2015	£184,000
August 2015	£328,000

Note - In March 2015 bills for work undertaken to that point were accounted for at the end of the financial year including a substantial amount for the juxtaposed ports' grant to the value of £4.893 million. The figures for 2015 do not include all anticipated spend.

EU Countries: Refugees [\[9810\]](#)

Asked by: Andrew Rosindell on 9 September 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with her European counterparts on the possibility of closing country borders within the EU to refugees.

Answered by: James Brokenshire on 18 September 2015

The United Kingdom does not participate in the immigration and border aspects of the Schengen acquis and continues to operate border controls with other EU Member States. Schengen visas are not valid for entry to the UK. The UK has been a leading voice in recent cross-European efforts to understand and tackle the large flows of illegal migrants across the Mediterranean. That includes participation in European Council and other meetings, as well as bilaterally with key Member States.

Illegal Immigrants: Deportation [[8909](#)]

Asked by: David T.C. Davies on 4 September 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many illegal migrants have been forcibly deported in the last three years for which figures are available.

Answered by: James Brokenshire on 18 September 2015

The table below shows the published National Statistics for the number of illegal migrants removed in the last three years for which complete data is available. Most immigration offenders are removed under administrative or illegal entry powers from the UK. Deportations are a specific subset of removals which are enforced either following a criminal conviction or when it is judged that a person's removal from the UK is conducive to the public good. The deportation order prohibits the person returning to the UK until such time as it may be revoked. We have taken the question as meaning all enforced removals.

Year ending	Total
June 2013	14,159
June 2014	12,539
June 2015	12,609
Grand Total	39,307

These figures do not include those who left the UK voluntarily from within the immigration detention estate as part of our ongoing promotion of voluntary returns options, for example those who departed on the Assisted Voluntary Returns (AVR) Scheme whilst in detention, which was available to detainees up to April 2014, or those who choose to buy their own ticket once the subject of enforcement action. By way of context, these figures correspond over the same period with a rise in the number of departures facilitated by the Home Office without the use of detention, which has been realised by increasing contact with people who are in the UK unlawfully and limiting their access to services for which they are not entitled.

Social Security Benefits: Immigrants [[9020](#)]

Asked by: Gordon Henderson on 4 September 2015

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure that migrants entering the UK do not receive instant access to welfare benefits.

Answered by: James Brokenshire on 9 September 2015

We have strict measures in place to ensure benefits are only paid to those people who have a legal right to live and work in the UK. Additionally, people coming to the UK, or returning here, must demonstrate that they are habitually resident to be eligible for income-related benefits. Since 1 January 2014, most migrant jobseekers must also have been living in the UK for three months before any consideration can be given to whether they are habitually resident to be eligible to receive income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.

4.2 Debates

Emergency Debate: Refugee Crisis in Europe

On 8 September 2015, the House held an Emergency Debate on the motion, 'This House has considered the refugee crisis in Europe'.

The full text of this debate is available in Hansard: [[HC Deb 8 September 2015 c245](#)].

Opposition Day Debate: Humanitarian Crisis in the Mediterranean and Europe

For the Opposition Day Debate held on 9 September 2015, the Scottish National Party chose the motion:

'That this House recognises the funding the Government has committed to the humanitarian initiatives to provide sanctuary in camps for refugees across the Middle East; calls for a greater international effort through the United Nations to secure the position of such displaced people; recognises that the Government has committed to accepting 20,000 vulnerable people from camps in Syria over the next five years but calls for a Government report to be laid before the House by 12 October 2015 detailing how that number can be increased, encompassing refugees already in Europe and including a plan for the remainder of this year to reflect the overwhelming urgency of this humanitarian crisis; further notes that refugees arriving in European Union territory also have a moral and legal right to be treated properly; and, given the pressure on Southern European countries, further calls for the UK to play its full and proper role, in conjunction with European partners, in providing sanctuary to our fellow human beings.'

This debate is available at [HC Deb 9 September 2015 c412](#).

Westminster Hall Debate: Immigration

A Westminster Hall debate was held on 9 July 2015 under the motion, 'That this House has considered Government policy on immigration'.

The leader of the debate was Mr Andrew Turner: the full text is available at [HC Deb 9 July 2015 c191WH](#).

4.3 Statement by the Prime Minister

On 7 September 2015 the Prime Minister made a statement on the migration crisis in Europe and the plight of Syrian refugees:

Syria: Refugees and Counter-terrorism

The PM called the migration crisis, 'the biggest challenge facing countries across Europe today' and highlighted the aid the UK had been sending to the region.

The full text of the Prime Minister's statement is available from Hansard: [[HC Deb 7 September 2015 c23](#)].

5. Ministerial Speeches

The following is a selection of recent Ministerial speeches on issues relating to immigration.

Home Secretary's Speech to Conservative Party Conference 2015

On 6 October 2015, the Home Secretary, Theresa May, addressed the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester.

In her speech, the Home Secretary spoke of plans to reform the asylum system and reduce the number of asylum applications made by people already in the country. She announced publication next year of the 'asylum strategy' which would, 'set out where our help will be targeted – and how we will crack down on those who abuse it'.

The full text of the Home Secretary's speech is available from the [Politics Home website](#).¹⁵

Migration and EU reform: the Prime Minister's statement in Lisbon

On 4 September 2015 whilst in Lisbon, the Prime Minister made a statement on migration and EU reform. In his statement the PM called migration, 'the biggest challenge facing countries across Europe today.'

Specifically referring to the conflict in Syria, the PM said that Britain had a moral responsibility to help refugees noting that the UK had accepted around 5,000 Syrian refugees.

The PM said that under existing resettlement schemes the UK would accept thousands more Syrian refugees, 'and given the scale of the crisis and the suffering of the people...we will do more – providing resettlement for thousands more Syrian refugees,' by offering resettlement from refugee camps in the region.

The full text of the Prime Minister's statement is available on the [GOV.UK website](#).¹⁶

Prime Minister's Speech on Immigration (2015)

On 21 May 2015, in his first speech since the General Election, the Prime Minister announced Government plans to control immigration.

The Prime Minister said that it was important to control immigration to prevent undue pressure on public services. He warned that uncontrolled immigration could damage the labour market and push down wages.

In particular the PM pointed to the problem of people entering the UK legally, but then overstaying the length of time they are allowed to remain in the country.

¹⁵ <https://www.politicshome.com/home-affairs/articles/news/theresa-mays-speech-tory-party-conference> [accessed 9 October 2015].

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/migration-and-eu-reform-pm-statement-in-lisbon> [accessed 9 October 2015].

The PM said that the Conservative Government would take steps to stop people overstaying in the UK: they would make working without the right to do so a criminal offence so that wages earned illegally could be seized as proceeds of crime. They would also notify businesses when their workers' visas expire and require landlords to check that their tenants are in the country legally before renting out a property.

The PM also spoke about re-negotiating Britain's place in the EU, reducing the eligibility of nationals of other EU member states to access welfare benefits.

The full text of the Prime Minister's speech is available on the [GOV.UK website](http://www.gov.uk).¹⁷

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-on-immigration> [accessed 9 October 2015].

6. Further Reading

The following House of Commons Library Briefings provide further background on migration and the surrounding debate:

Gower, M., [*Asylum Support: accommodation and financial support for asylum seekers*](#), SN01909

Gower, M., [*Constituency Casework: Asylum, Immigration and Nationality*](#), SN03186

Gower, M., [*Immigration Detention in the UK: an overview*](#), CBP7294

Gower, M. & O. Hawkins, [*Immigration and Asylum: changes made by the Coalition Government 2010-2015*](#), SN05829

Gower, M. & B. Smith, [*Migration Pressures in Europe*](#), CBP7210

Gower, M. & B. Smith, [*Syrian Refugees and the UK*](#), SN06805

Hawkins, O., [*Asylum Statistics*](#), SN01403

Hawkins, O., [*Migration Statistics*](#), SN06077

Kennedy, S., [*Measures to limit migrants' access to benefits*](#), SN06889

Kennedy, S., [*People from Abroad: What benefits can they claim?*](#), SN06847

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