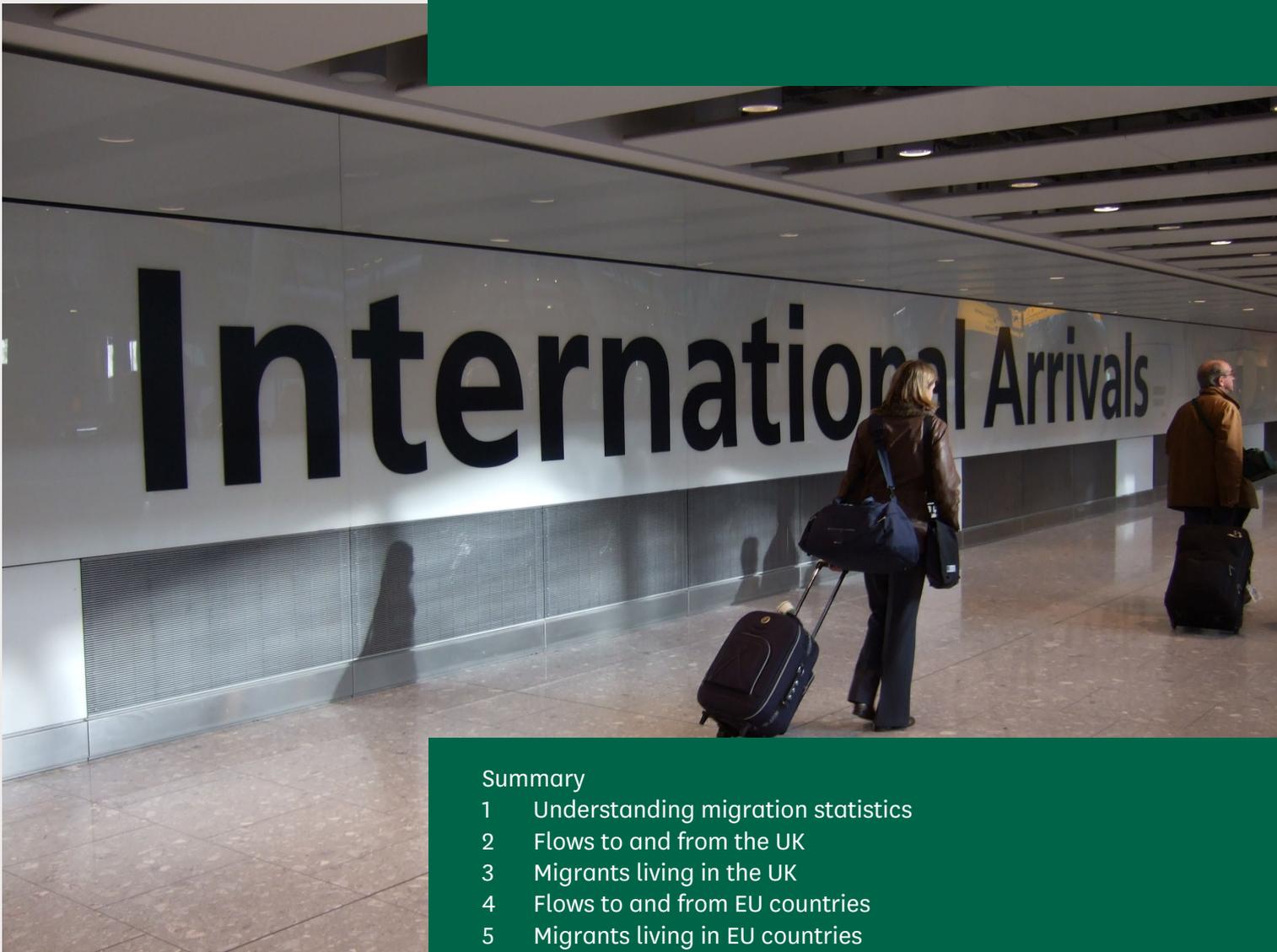


Research Briefing

By Georgina Sturge

24 May 2024

Migration statistics



Summary

- 1 Understanding migration statistics
- 2 Flows to and from the UK
- 3 Migrants living in the UK
- 4 Flows to and from EU countries
- 5 Migrants living in EU countries
- 6 Migration between the UK and EU countries
- 7 Appendix

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Summary

How is migration measured?

There are two main ways of looking at the scale of international migration:

1. Measuring flows across an international border
2. Counting how many people live in a particular country who are not nationals of that country or who were born abroad.

What are the UK's latest migration statistics?

The latest [estimates on migration from the Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) suggest that in the year ending December 2023,

- 1.2 million people migrated into the UK and 532,000 people emigrated from it, leaving net migration of 685,000. This represents the balance of long-term migrants moving in and out of the country.¹

The latest [ONS population estimates for the whole of the UK](#) suggest that, in the year ending June 2021, there were:

- 6.0 million people were living in the UK who had the nationality of a different country (9% of the total population).² This does not include dual nationals where one nationality is British.
- 3.4 million EU nationals (excluding UK) were living in the UK

As of 2019, there were around 994,000 UK nationals living in EU countries, excluding Ireland.

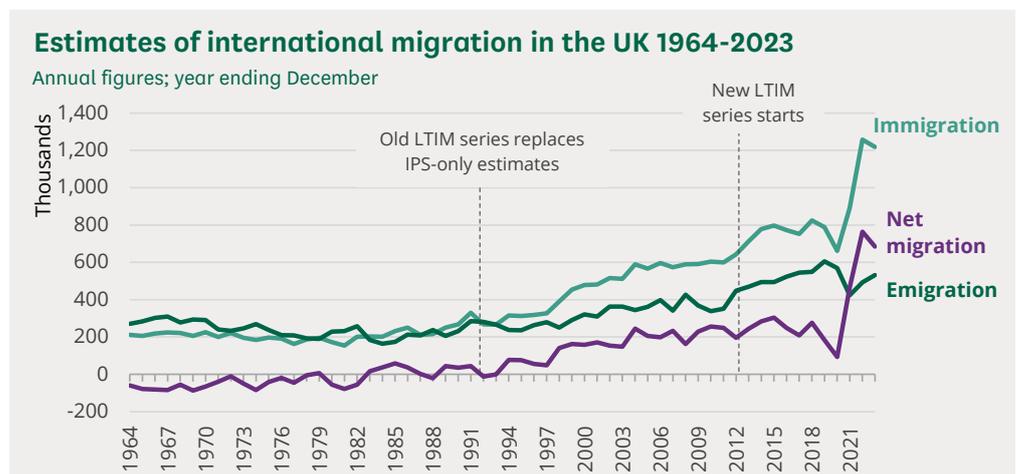
¹ ONS, [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending June 2023](#), 23 November 2023

² ONS, [Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality, July 2020 to June 2021](#). Note that this does not include people who had dual nationality where one of the nationalities was British. More recent estimates are available for England and Wales, based on 2021 Census results, but these are the most recent for the UK as a whole.

How has migration to the UK changed over time?

The number of people migrating to the UK has been greater than the number emigrating in each year since 1994. Before then, immigration and emigration were roughly in balance, with net migration slightly decreasing the population in most years. Over the last twenty-five years, both immigration and emigration have increased to historically high levels, with immigration exceeding emigration by more than 100,000 in every year between 1998 and 2020.

There was considerably less migration during the Covid-19 pandemic than in previous years. The pandemic also disrupted the way in which migration statistics are produced so the data from this period is subject to more uncertainty than usual.



Source: ONS, [Provisional long-term international migration estimates August 2020](#) and earlier editions; [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending December 2023](#), 23 May 2024

Notes: The ONS revised net migration between 2001 and 2011 following the 2011 Census. However, it did not revise immigration or emigration, so these do not match up with net migration during that period. All estimates from 2011 onwards have been revised at least once.

New ways of measuring migration

The UK's official migration estimates, which are produced by ONS are undergoing a transformation. The ONS aims to improve their accuracy and to do so it is trying out and refining a new methodology based on administrative data.

The latest estimates use a new methodology which has been backdated to 2012. Estimates from before and after this date are not fully comparable. The new estimates are classed as experimental and are likely to be revised as the method is honed.

This briefing explains the concepts and methods used in measuring migration. It contains current and historical data on immigration, emigration and net migration in the UK. It sets out the most recent estimates of the UK's foreign national and foreign-born populations and includes international comparisons of migration and migrant populations in European Union countries.

1 Understanding migration statistics

What do migration statistics measure? The idea of people moving to live in different parts of the world seems straightforward but defining what that means in such a way that it can be consistently measured raises difficult questions. Who counts as a migrant? Who is foreign to a given country? Under what circumstances can someone be said to have changed the country in which they live?

For many of these questions there is no definitive answer and the most appropriate answer depends upon the nature of the data that is available. This means there is no single measure of migration. Instead, there are several different measures which, taken together, can be used to build up a picture of who is on the move and how national populations are changing due to the movement of people.

Understanding migration therefore means understanding the different ways migration can be measured and the definitions that apply in each case.

1.1 Who is a migrant?

A migrant can be broadly defined as a person who changes their country of usual residence. Conventionally, there are three different ways of making this definition more precise.

A migrant can be:

- Someone whose country of birth is different to their country of residence.
- Someone whose nationality is different to their country of residence.
- Someone who changes their country of usual residence for a period of at least a year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes the country of usual residence.³

Each of these definitions has its strengths and weaknesses.

The first definition is consistent and objective, since country of birth cannot change. However, it does count as migrants people who were born while their mother was temporarily abroad or who moved to the UK so soon after birth that they do not consider themselves migrants.

³ This is the United Nations recommended definition of a migrant.

The second is limited in that it does not identify people as migrants if they moved to a country and then acquired the nationality there.

The third definition poses problems of measurement because it relies on there being data on how long a person has been or intends to be in a country and this is often not straightforward to collect accurately.

In practice, each of these definitions is used in certain circumstances, depending on the data in question. The United Nations (UN) uses the third way of identifying migrants – people who change their country of residence for more than one year – as do many countries in their statistics.⁴

1.2 Stocks and flows

In migration statistics, ‘stocks’ refer to the number of migrants usually resident in a country during a particular period, while ‘flows’ refers to the number of people changing their country of usual residence during a particular period. Immigration and emigration are therefore flow measurements, recording the number of people entering and leaving the country on a long-term basis.

Statistics on stocks and flows are based on different definitions of a migrant. Stocks are normally measured as the number of people whose country of birth or nationality is different from that of the country in which they live (the first two definitions above). Flows are normally measured as the number of people changing their country of residence for at least a year (the third definition).

In the UK, data on stocks and flows come from different sources. Stocks are measured through surveys of the resident population while flows have, in the past, been measured primarily through surveys of passengers arriving and leaving the country.⁵ The ONS is currently working on a new method of measuring flows using administrative data.

1.3 Net migration

Net migration is the measure of the net flow of migrants into or out of a country. Put simply, it is immigration minus emigration. If more people are arriving than leaving, net migration is a positive number, which means net

⁴ For a detailed analysis of the different definitions of a migrant see: [Who Counts as a Migrant? Definitions and their Consequences](#), Dr Bridget Anderson & Dr Scott Blinder, Oxford Migration Observatory, 1 Aug 2014.

⁵ Stocks are measured through the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Annual Population Survey (APS), which aggregates and supplements LFS data to improve statistical accuracy. Flows are measured primarily through the International Passenger Survey (IPS), which surveys passengers at UK ports, with additional data on migration to and from Northern Ireland and Home Office data on asylum seekers.

immigration. If more people are leaving than arriving, net migration is a negative number, which means net emigration.

It is important to recognise that net migration does not by itself indicate the full extent of population *change*. It is only a part of the picture. If immigration and emigration are roughly equal, net migration will be low irrespective of how many people arrive and leave.

1.4

The difference between migrants and asylum seekers

A migrant is someone who changes their country of usual residence. An asylum seeker is someone who does so “from fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, social group, or political opinion.”⁶ In this sense, asylum seekers can be counted as a subset of migrants and included in official estimates of migrant stocks and flows.

On the other hand, as is argued in the United Nations Glossary of Migration Related Terms, if we regard migration as the choice to change one’s country of residence then asylum seekers and refugees perhaps should not be considered ‘migrants’, since their movement is forced.

The glossary points out that:

The UN Convention on the Rights of Migrants defines a migrant worker as a "person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national." From this a broader definition of migrants follows:

"The term 'migrant' in article 1.1 (a) should be understood as covering all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned, for reasons of 'personal convenience' and without intervention of an external compelling factor."

It goes on to state that,

This definition indicates that migrant does not refer to refugees, displaced or others forced or compelled to leave their homes. Migrants are people who make choices about when to leave and where to go, even though these choices are sometimes extremely constrained. Indeed, some scholars make a distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration.⁷

⁶ This definition is taken from Article 1 of the [UN Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees](#). The complete definition is longer and more technical, but it is broadly consistent with the definition given here.

⁷ United Nations Glossary of Migration Related Terms, [Migrant/Migration](#)

So while asylum seekers are a component of migration, as measured in official statistics, it is not strictly correct under United Nations definitions to use the term migrant to refer to an asylum seeker or refugee.

In 2023, around 84,000 people who migrated to the UK were asylum seekers, 42,000 were Ukrainians arriving under the bespoke schemes, 4,000 were resettled or relocated to the UK and 10,000 were granted refugee family reunion visa.

Altogether this suggests that around **11% of immigration was accounted for by asylum seekers and refugees** (around 141,000 individuals in total).⁸

This is using a slightly larger estimate of total immigration to the UK (around 1,264,000 people in 2023) which takes into account the latest Home Office figures as well as the ONS's estimates but which is not as tightly defined as people who resided in the UK for 12 months or more.

⁸ There are several reasons for which this is a very rough estimate: firstly, not all asylum applicants arrived in the UK in the same year in which they make their application; secondly, the figures for Ukrainian and BN(O) arrivals are estimates and the family reunion figure is for visas issued, which may not represent the number of actual arrivals.

2

Flows to and from the UK

The most comprehensive estimates of long-term migration to and from the UK come from the ONS's long-term international migration (LTIM) series. These are official statistics which provide the headline estimates of immigration, emigration and net migration.

Box 1: How is 'long-term international migration' (LTIM) defined?

The ONS uses the UN recommended definition of a long-term international migrant. That is someone who changes their country of usual residence for a period of at least a year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes the country of usual residence.

The current series of LTIM estimates goes back as far as the year ending June 2012. These estimates are based on a new methodology (explained in a later section) which is still in refinement. They are not comparable with the previous series of LTIM estimates, which ran from 1964 to March 2020.

The earlier LTIM estimates are based on three sources of data: the International Passenger Survey (IPS), data from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) on international migration through Northern Ireland, and Home Office data on asylum seekers and "switchers" – people who remain in the UK for a longer or shorter period than they originally anticipated, thus falling into or out of the definition of a migrant.⁹

2.1

Immigration, emigration, and net migration

The latest immigration estimates from the ONS are experimental which means that the methodology for producing them is still a work-in-progress and it is likely that they will be revised. They suggest that in 2023, around 1,218,000 people migrated to the UK and 532,000 migrated out of it, leaving net

⁹ Further information on the methodology for the LTIM and IPS estimates is available in the ONS guide: [Methodology to estimate Long-Term International Migration](#)

migration of 685,000.¹⁰ The most recent figures suggest that net migration has been gradually falling over the most recent four quarters.

The current method for estimating migration has been used to produce estimates going back as far as 2012. During that time, **immigration** was lowest in the year ending September 2012, at around 630,000 and highest in 2022, at 1.26 million.

Since 2012, annual **emigration** was lowest in 2021, at 424,000 and highest in the year ending March 2020, at 645,000.

Net migration was lowest in the year ending September 2020, at 35,000, and highest in 2022, at 764,000. This peak of net migration nearly four times higher than net migration had been in 2012.

2.2

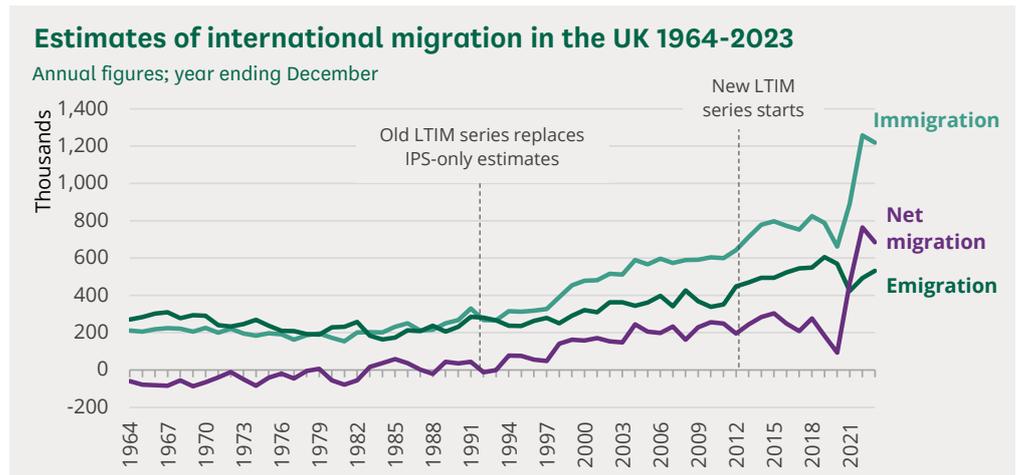
Historic migration estimates

The LTIM series begins in 1991, although the new method applies to estimates from 2012 onwards. Estimates of annual migration before 1991 are available from 1964, based on just the IPS. IPS estimates are considered less robust than the LTIM estimates (which incorporate other sources of data), but the IPS is the principal source of data for the LTIM estimates and the ONS publishes a series based purely on IPS data that shows migration trends over a longer period.

The chart below shows estimates of long-term international migration from 1964 to 2023, combining the IPS series, the old LTIM series from 1991, and the new LTIM series from 2012. Note that these different series are not perfectly comparable with one another but nonetheless illustrate the ONS's best assessment of migration during this period.

Between 1964 and 1983 the UK experienced a period of almost continuous net emigration, with net inward migration occurring only in 1979, when net migration was around 6,000. Since 1994, net migration has been consistently positive and has been over 100,000 per year since 1998, except in 2020 when it fell to 35,000.

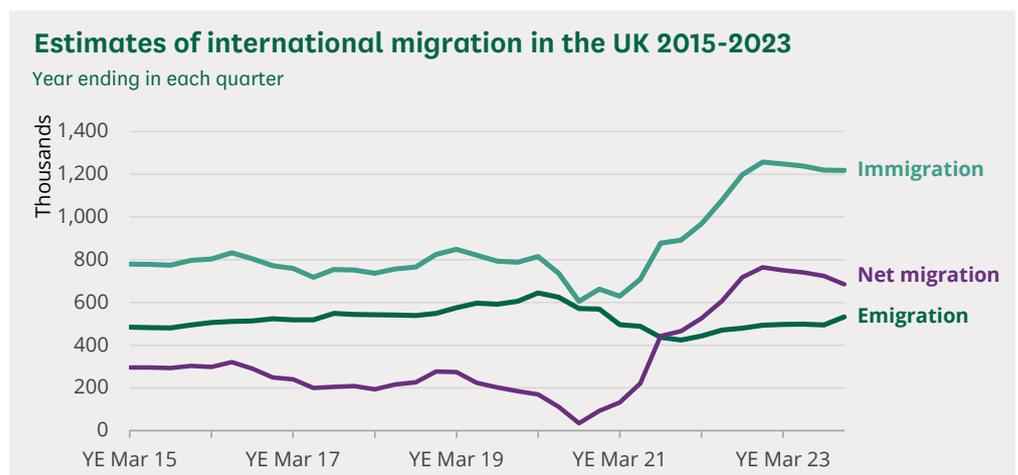
¹⁰ ONS, [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending June 2023](#), 23 May 2024



Source: ONS, [Provisional long-term international migration estimates August 2020](#) and earlier editions; ONS, [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending December 2024](#), 23 May 2024
Notes: The ONS revised net migration between 2001 and 2011 following the 2011 Census. However, it did not revise immigration or emigration, so these do not match up with net migration during that period. All estimates from 2011 onwards have been revised at least once.

A ‘close-up’ of the international migration estimates between 2015 and June 2023 is shown in the chart below. The figures here are annual totals for the year ending in each quarter. There was a dip in net migration during 2020 and the first half of 2021, due changes in movement patterns during the Covid-19 pandemic, before immigration rose to a record high in the year ending December 2022.

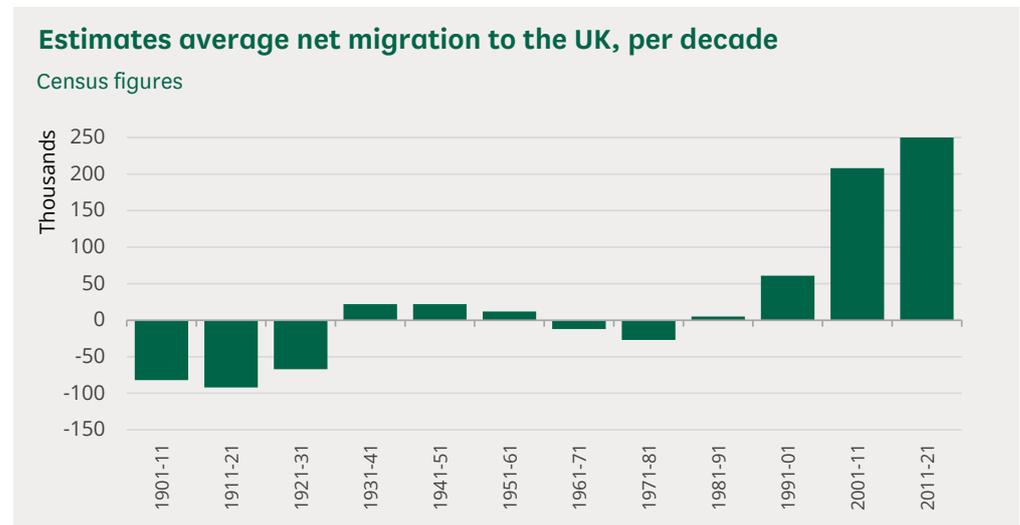
The ONS has described the period leading up to the end of 2022 as “unique”, in that it involved the start of two large-scale ‘bespoke’ migration routes – the Ukraine humanitarian schemes and the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) – as well as coinciding with resumed international travel after the pandemic.



Sources: ONS, [Provisional long-term international migration estimates, year ending March 2020](#); ONS, [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending December 2023](#), 23 May 2024.

There was no systematic attempt to measure the extent of international migration before the introduction of the IPS in 1964. Before then, the extent of international migration can only be loosely estimated from census data, by measuring the proportion of population change that is not attributable to

recorded births and deaths. Specifically, the change in the population due to the difference between the number of births and deaths is subtracted from the total observed change in the population and the remainder is assumed to be due to migration. This figure is then averaged over the period between the two censuses to estimate average annual net migration. These estimates are therefore produced indirectly and should be treated with some caution.



Source: ONS Annual Abstract of Statistics (various editions); [Long-Term International Migration Estimates](#), 2 series (LTIM calendar year).

Note: There was no census in 1941. ONS Abstract of statistics is not available online. The 2011-21 average has been revised based on the ONS's latest estimates for 2018 to 2021.

During the first three decades of the twentieth century the UK experienced net emigration of around 80,000 a year. For the next three decades, from 1931 to 1961, the flow of migration turned inward, with average net immigration of around 19,000 a year. Net emigration returned between 1961 and 1981, but at lower levels than earlier in the century, averaging around 20,000 a year. After 1991, annual net migration began to increase, reaching levels of greater than 100,000 a year in the first decade of the twenty-first century, as recorded in the LTIM and IPS estimates.

2.3

Revisions to net migration

The ONS has made major revisions to its original estimates of migration flows in the last few years.

The first revision came after the 2011 Census, which showed that the population of England and Wales was 464,000 higher than expected.¹¹ The ONS concluded that the “largest single cause is most likely to be

¹¹ This is based on the recorded number of births and deaths and the estimated level of net migration during the decade since the last Census in 2001.

underestimation of long-term immigration from central and eastern Europe in the middle part of the decade”.¹²

As a result, in April 2014 the ONS published a revised set of net migration estimates for the United Kingdom for the period 2001 to 2011. It could not revise immigration and emigration, so these do not sum to the revised net migration estimates between 2001 and 2011.

The second major revision came in August 2019 and consisted of two preliminary adjustments to the series since 2008. One was to increase the estimate of non-EU emigration during this period by around 25,000 per year. This was done after analysis of the Home Office’s exit checks data showed a higher proportion of non-EU students leaving after completing their studies than was estimated using the International Passenger Survey, even with its previous adjustments.

The other was to increase EU immigration by around 35,000 in each year between 2011 and 2016. The ONS did this following analysis of National Insurance Number (NINo) registration and activity which suggested that just over half (53%) of non-UK arrivals during this period became long-term migrants. This proportion was then applied to the number of EU8 nationals registering for NINos during that period and the resulting estimate of long-term migration was 48% higher than the number that had been estimated previously using the International Passenger Survey (IPS). Based on this, the ONS has adjusted the EU8 non-student inflow upwards by 48% between 2011 and 2016.

In August 2019, the UK Statistics Authority reclassified the ONS’s long-term international migration statistics as ‘experimental statistics’ where previously they had been ‘national statistics’. Experimental statistics are not expected to have completed stringent checks for robustness and accuracy. The ONS itself suggested the re-designation so as to be able to make changes to the series more freely.

Deputy National Statistician Iain Bell said of the change:

“We have confidence in our overall assessment of migration trends but recognise that development will be ongoing as we look to more data sources as set out in our workplan. We have asked the Office for Statistics Regulation to support our reclassification of international migration statistics to Experimental Statistics during this period of development and innovation to meet the public good.” ([Statement from the ONS on the reclassification of international migration statistics](#), 21 August 2019)

In 2021, the ONS has released several rounds of revised estimates based on a new ‘admin-based’ method, under a programme to transform its migration statistics and move away from reliance on the IPS. The estimates released under this new method are provisional and likely to be revised as the new

¹² ONS, [Methods used to revise the national population estimates for mid-2002 to mid-2010](#), 13 Dec 2012

method is further refined. The next section goes into further detail about these new estimates.

2.4 The new admin-based migration estimates

The most recent estimates of long-term international migration go up to the end of June 2023. These are based on the ONS's new admin-based approach and use a method which is currently still in development, as part of the ONS's [migration and population statistics transformation](#).

At the core of the ONS's new administrative data-based approach to estimating migration flows is the Registration and Population Interaction Database (RAPID), which is explained in the box below.

Because the pandemic interrupted the usual way of estimating migration flows (via the International Passenger Survey), the ONS also devised a method for modelling flows during the pandemic. This exercise to plug the gap in migration statistics during the pandemic was initially separate from the development of the new ABMEs however the two projects have now converged. The current experimentation is feeding into the process of designing ABMEs that can be used in the long-term.¹³

Box 1: Registration and Population Interaction Database (RAPID)

The Registration and Population Interaction Database (RAPID) is a record of everyone who has a National Insurance number (NINo). It was developed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to provide a single, coherent overview of people's interactions with the tax and benefit systems. At the point of registering for a NINo, a person's nationality is recorded, which make it possible to identify migrants in the data.

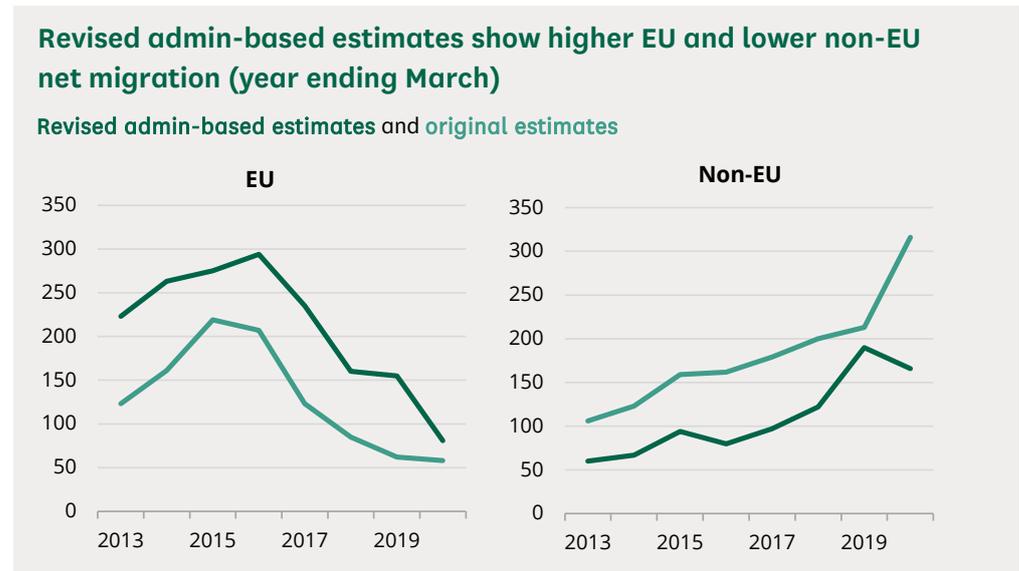
Both long-term and short-term migrants can be issued with a NINo. Because of this, the ONS has to also analyse people's continuing interactions with the tax and benefit system to determine whether they have remained in or left the country long-term (recall that the established definition of a long-term international migrant is someone who moves to another country for a period of 12 months or longer). This complex process is described in detail in Section 3 of the ONS's [April 2021 update on the ABMEs](#).

The RAPID data is also adjusted to account for the known and suspected under-representation of certain groups, such as international students.

¹³ For more on the latest method for modelling recent LTIM, please see ONS, '[Methods to produce provisional long-term international migration estimates](#)', 25 May 2023.

The current series of estimates have been backdated to the year ending June 2012 and show quite considerable differences in the scale of migration to previous estimates, particularly when looking by nationality grouping.

For example, in the year ending March 2013, EU migration was estimated at 123,000 using the old method but 223,000 using the new one. In the year ending March 2020, non-EU migration was originally estimated at 316,000 which was then revised down to 166,000.



Source: ONS, [Provisional long-term international migration estimates, year ending March 2020](#); ONS, [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending December 2023](#), 23 May 2024.

Across the eight-year period from 2013 to 2020, the new approach estimates that net migration of EU nationals added 1.69 million people to the population, not the 1.04 million as was previously estimated. By comparison, the new estimates suggest that non-EU migration added 880,000 people to the population, rather than the 1.46 million estimated previously.

These differences to a large extent cancel each other out when combined. According to the new estimates, overall net migration added 2.56 million people to the population during that period, compared with 2.50 million according to the old estimates (these figures also include British nationals).

Comparison of net migration estimates in the revised admin-based series and the original one, as of May 2024						
Annual estimates for year ending March; thousands						
	EU			Non-EU		
	Revised estimate	Original	Difference	Revised estimate	Original	Difference
YE Mar 13	223	123	-100	60	106	46
YE Mar 14	263	161	-102	67	123	56
YE Mar 15	275	219	-56	94	159	65
YE Mar 16	294	207	-87	80	162	82
YE Mar 17	235	123	-112	97	179	82
YE Mar 18	160	85	-75	122	200	78
YE Mar 19	155	62	-93	190	213	23
YE Mar 20	81	58	-23	166	316	150
Average	211	127	-84	110	183	73
Cumulative total	1,686	1,038	-648	876	1,458	582

Source: ONS, [Provisional long-term international migration estimates, year ending March 2020](#); ONS, [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending December 2023](#), 23 May 2024

Looking at immigration, the new admin-based estimates suggest that over 3.3 million EU nationals migrated to the UK between 2012/13 and 2019/20, compared with the 1.92 million previously estimated.

Comparison of immigration estimates in the revised admin-based series and the original one, as of May 2024						
Annual estimates for year ending March; thousands						
	EU			Non-EU		
	Revised estimate	Original	Difference	Revised estimate	Original	Difference
YE Mar 13	350	198	-152	224	246	22
YE Mar 14	414	243	-171	236	260	24
YE Mar 15	457	305	-152	240	290	50
YE Mar 16	490	296	-194	235	288	53
YE Mar 17	447	245	-202	239	299	60
YE Mar 18	399	230	-169	261	321	60
YE Mar 19	429	203	-226	346	334	-12
YE Mar 20	347	195	-152	388	437	49
Average	225	407	183	297	262	-35
Cumulative total	3,333	1,915	-1,418	2,169	2,475	306

Source: ONS, [Provisional long-term international migration estimates, year ending March 2020](#); ONS, [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending December 2023](#), 23 May 2024

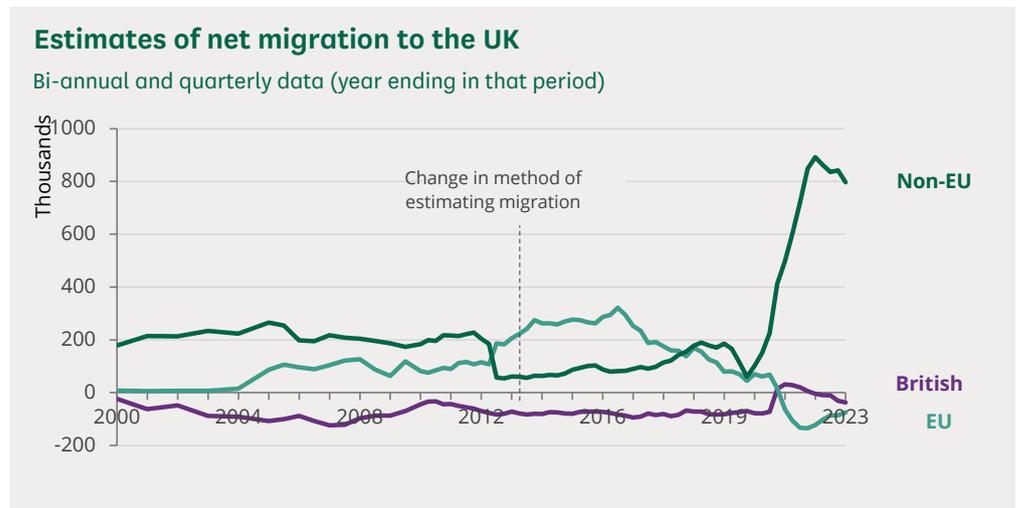
2.5

Which countries do migrants come from?

The origin of migrants coming to the UK is recorded in three different ways: by nationality, country of birth, and country of last residence. The first indicates the legal status of migrants, the second records their historical origins, while the third identifies the geographical sources of migration to the UK.

The official estimates of migration flows use nationality to categorise people according to origin. The latest estimates by the ONS suggest that in the year ending June 2023, 7% of people migrating to the UK were British nationals, 11% were nationals of EU countries, and 82% were nationals of non-EU countries.¹⁴

The chart below shows net migration by nationality grouping between 1991 and 2023.



Source: ONS, [Provisional long-term international migration estimates, year ending March 2020](#); ONS, [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending December 2023](#), 23 May 2024

The change in the method for estimating migration creates an abrupt switch in the trends for EU and non-EU migration in June 2012, which is when the revised estimates are currently backdated to. It now seems likely that net migration of EU migrants was being under-estimated prior to this point and that non-EU migration may have been over-estimated (as explained in section 2.4).

Focusing on the period since 2012, EU net migration rose gradually to a peak of around 322,000 in the year ending June 2016, before falling steadily and becoming negative (more people leaving than arriving) in 2021. Non-EU net migration is now estimated to have been considerably lower than EU migration between 2012 and 2018, before dipping during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021 and then rising to nearly 900,000 in 2022.

Net migration of non-EU nationals fell to 138,000 in the year ending September 2013, which was its lowest level since 1998. It began to increase after that, reaching 184,000 in the year ending December 2019, before dropping during the pandemic.

The highest estimate of EU net migration was 219,000 in the year ending March 2015. Throughout most of 2020, 2021, and 2022, the estimates suggest

¹⁴ ONS, [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending June 2023](#), 23 November 2023

that EU net migration was negative, meaning more EU nationals left than arrived.

The ONS also produces estimates of migration by country of birth and last residence. The table below shows immigration to the UK in 2019 (the latest year for which data are available), broken down by these categories.

Immigration to the UK by country of last residence, country or birth, and nationality, 2019							
Thousands							
	Number			Percentage			
	Nationality	Country of birth	Country of last residence	Nationality	Country of birth	Country of last residence	
United Kingdom	78	68	n/a	11%	10%	n/a	
European Union	198	178	208	29%	26%	31%	
EU15	114	95	131	17%	14%	19%	
EU8	32	30	28	5%	4%	4%	
EU2	50	52	46	7%	8%	7%	
EU Other	1	1	3	0%	0%	0%	
Non EU	406	435	473	60%	64%	69%	
Other Europe	19	19	25	3%	3%	4%	
Asia	286	299	310	42%	44%	46%	
Rest of the World	100	116	139	15%	17%	20%	
Total	681	681	681	100%	100%	100%	

Source: ONS [Provisional long-term international migration estimates](#); Long-Term International Migration Estimates 2 series (LTIM calendar year): [tables 2.02 and 2.03](#).

Notes: 1. Figures for thousands are rounded to the nearest thousand and may not sum due to independent rounding.

2. See Appendix 7.1 for country groupings.

2.6

Why do people migrate to the UK?

The ONS's latest estimates provide a breakdown by reason separately for EU and non-EU nationals. This is due to the estimates being calculated in different ways for these groups.

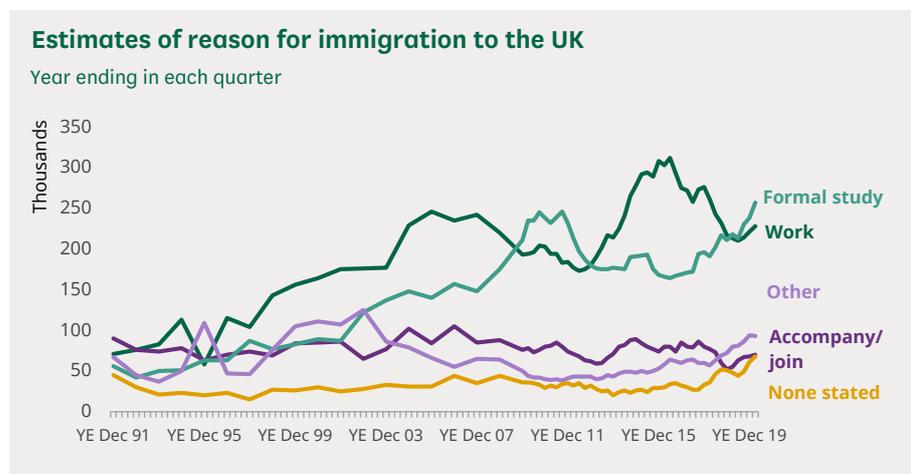
In 2023, the most common reason for **non-EU** nationals migrating to the UK was for work, with around 423,000 or 41% of non-EU migrants coming for that reason. This includes dependants of people coming for work and, for the first time on record, there were more dependants than main applications, meaning 'work dependants' was the largest single category of migrant overall.

The second main reason for non-EU migration was for study, with 379,000 people migrating for this purpose in 2023. This was down from 419,000 in 2022, when non-EU student migration to the UK was at its peak.

EU nationals migrating to the UK in the year ending June 2023 were most likely to have come for work reasons, with around 60,000 or 48% of EU nationals arriving for this purpose. Study accounted for around 16% of EU migration to the UK.

A longer and more detailed series is available up to the year ending March 2020. It shows that formal study was the most common main reason for immigration (36%) in that year, while work was the second most common main reason (32%).

As the chart below shows, study overtook work as the most common main reason in 2019, having also been the most common reason for a period between 2010 and 2012. The fall in work-related migration since June 2016 is accounted for by a fall in EU nationals migrating to look for work.



Note: Years ending each quarter. Link to [Provisional long-term international migration estimates, year ending March 2020](#) and [LTM data](#).

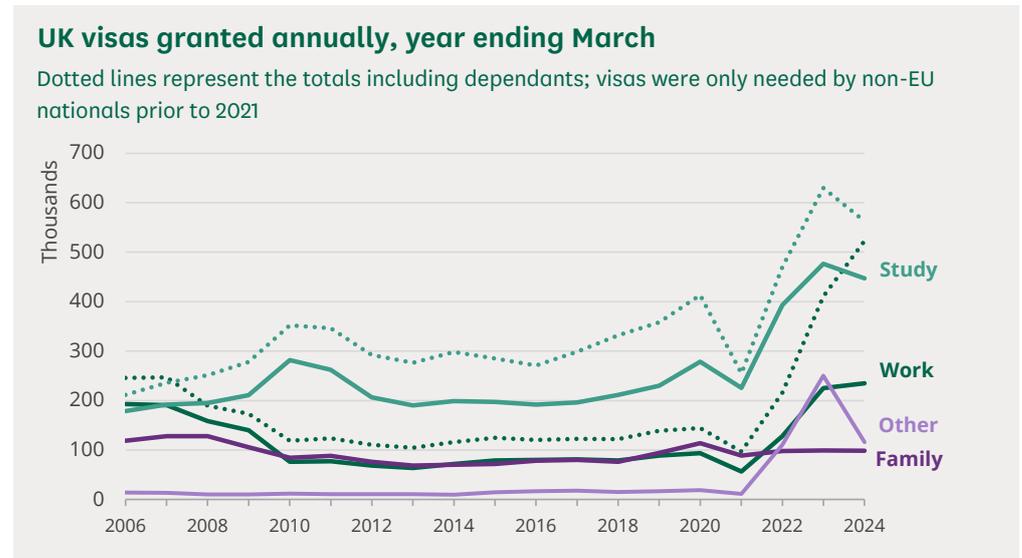
Study was the most common main reason for immigration during the period 2009-12, and the reduction in the number of people migrating to the UK to study after that point reflected a reduction in the number of Tier 4 student visas issued to students from outside the EEA and Switzerland. In 2019, study once again overtook work as the main reason for migration to the UK.

Visa statistics

Another way of capturing reason for migration is to look at visa statistics, although these only capture people subject to immigration control (i.e. they exclude British nationals and, in the past, excluded EU nationals who could move to the UK without a visa). Before the UK left the EU, only around half of all long-term migrants to the UK relied on a visa. This is likely to change substantially over time under the UK's new immigration system.

The chart below shows longer-term visas issued by broad category in each year from 2006 to 2024 (years ending March). These figures exclude short-term visas such as visitor visas, transit visas, and other temporary visas. The

number of visas issued rose from 2021 onwards partly due to changes in the UK's immigration system, including a visa requirement for new EU migrants.¹⁵



Sources: Home Office, [Immigration statistics quarterly March 2024](#); tables Vis_D02, Asy_D02, Asy_D04.

Notes: a) Excludes 'Other- temporary (mainly tourist visas)' and 'Student visitor/ Short-term study'.

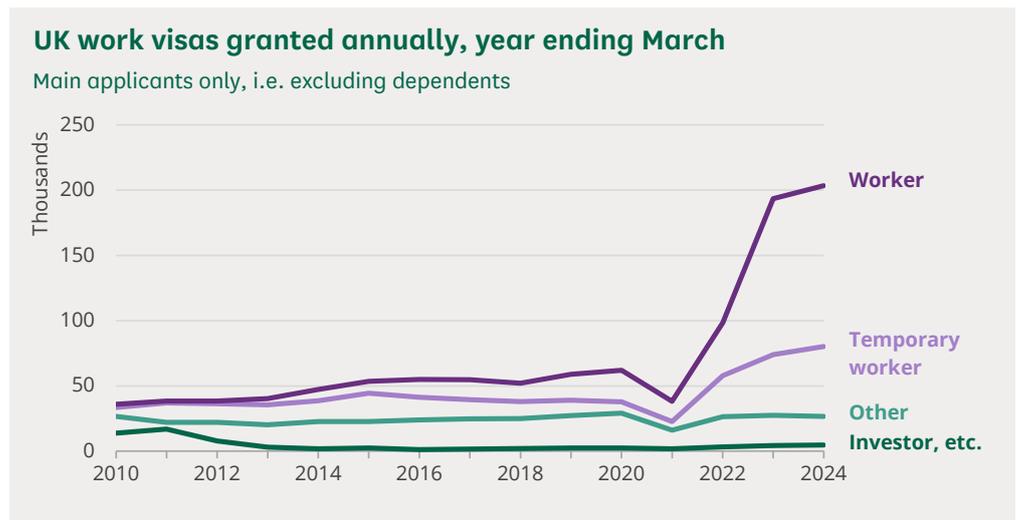
b) Other includes grants of asylum and resettled persons, as well as 'Other temporary visas'. Dependents are included within the main category of 'other' visas.

The category for “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. It also includes those joining or accompanying other migrants who already have a UK visa.

As the chart shows, study was consistently the largest category throughout the 2010s and did stay level during the pandemic, when work visas issued temporarily decreased. All visa categories saw an increase in 2021 and 2022 as a result of the new immigration system and the introduction of new visa categories. Of note are the BN(O) category and Ukraine visa schemes which account for the large increase in ‘Other’ visas issued in 2022.

The chart below shows visas issued in the **work** category since 2010, broken down by sub-type.

¹⁵ Section 7 contains more information about students in migration statistics.



Sources: Home Office, [Immigration statistics quarterly March 2024](#); table Vis_D02

Notes: This data is from the latest iteration of the Immigration statistics and uses the new classification. Previously visas were categorised in tiers (i.e. Tier 2 for long-term workers, Tier 5 for temporary) so the new classification has been backdated to categorise visas under the old system into the equivalent groups.

In January 2021 the UK's new immigration system came into force, the main features of which are the end of free movement for new EU nationals coming to the UK and changes to the criteria for work visas (sometimes referred to as a 'points-based system').¹⁶

Skilled work visas (formerly known as Tier 2) are the largest category of work visas. In the year ending March 2024, 203,000 skilled worker visas were issued to main applicants (i.e. not including dependents), around 119,000 of which were for workers in health and social care. The remainder were in the 'general' skilled worker category. Within the broader worker visa group there were also around 15,000 visas issued for 'intra-company transfers'.

Temporary work (formerly Tier 5) visas are the second largest category, with around 80,000 granted to main applicants in the year ending March 2024. Over half of temporary work visas issued were for 'seasonal work' and the second largest category was the 'youth mobility scheme'.

¹⁶ The Library's [briefing paper on the new immigration system](#) explains in detail the features of the new system and how it differs from the former.

3

Migrants living in the UK

There are fewer foreign nationals living in the UK than there are foreign-born people living in the UK. In 2021 there were approximately **6.0 million people with non-British nationality living in the UK** and **9.6 million people who were born abroad**. This difference is typical of countries with established migrant populations, as many long-term migrants acquire citizenship in their new home country over time.

In 2021 there were slightly more migrants with nationality of an EU country than had been born in an EU country. This is a change from previous years, when this pattern was observed only for EU8 countries. These figures could suggest a rise in people acquiring the nationality of another EU country while continuing to live in the UK.

There are many more people in the UK who were born in a non-EU country (6.1 million) than there are nationals of non-EU countries (2.6 million).

The UK's migrant population is concentrated in London. Around 35% of people living in the UK who were born abroad live in the capital city. Similarly, around 37% of people living in London were born outside the UK, compared with 14% for the UK as a whole.

After London, the English regions with the highest proportions of their population born abroad were the South East (13.4%), the West Midlands (13.9%), the East (12.9%), and the East Midlands (12.7%). In each of these regions the proportion of people born abroad was lower than for England as a whole (15.5%), which is skewed by London.

Of all the nations and regions of the UK, the North East had the lowest proportion of its population born abroad (5.8%), followed by Wales (6.5%), Northern Ireland (7.0%), and Scotland (9.3%).

Estimated resident population of the UK, by country of birth, 2021

Thousands

Nation/Region	Number					%				
	UK	EU27	EU14	EU8	Non-EU	UK	EU27	EU14	EU8	Non-EU
England	47,164	3,084	1,635	970	5,677	84%	6%	3%	2%	10%
North East	2,465	56	37	16	98	94%	2%	1%	1%	4%
North West	6,502	260	133	89	469	90%	4%	2%	1%	6%
Yorkshire & Hum.	4,911	203	76	92	319	90%	4%	1%	2%	6%
East Midlands	4,177	255	131	93	346	87%	5%	3%	2%	7%
West Midlands	5,030	276	124	99	566	86%	5%	2%	2%	10%
East	5,426	373	191	119	438	87%	6%	3%	2%	7%
London	5,724	995	570	248	2,352	63%	11%	6%	3%	26%
South East	7,832	456	265	142	830	86%	5%	3%	2%	9%
South West	5,096	211	108	72	259	91%	4%	2%	1%	5%
Wales	2,932	81	40	29	107	94%	3%	1%	1%	3%
Scotland	4,869	258	136	101	265	90%	5%	3%	2%	5%
Northern Ireland	1,723	88	60	25	54	92%	5%	3%	1%	3%
United Kingdom	56,689	3,511	1,871	1,124	6,103	85%	5%	3%	2%	9%

Estimated resident population of the UK, by nationality, 2021

Thousands

Nation/Region	Number					Percentage				
	British	EU27	EU14	EU8	Non-EU	British	EU27	EU14	EU8	Non-EU
England	50,559	3,013	1,571	1,005	2,350	90%	5%	3%	2%	4%
North East	2,512	48	28	19	60	96%	2%	1%	1%	2%
North West	6,738	253	131	90	240	93%	3%	2%	1%	3%
Yorks. & Humb.	5,095	190	57	99	149	94%	3%	1%	2%	3%
East Midlands	4,368	269	131	102	140	91%	6%	3%	2%	3%
West Midlands	5,388	258	115	92	224	92%	4%	2%	2%	4%
East	5,687	340	156	128	208	91%	5%	3%	2%	3%
London	7,128	1,053	646	254	890	79%	12%	7%	3%	10%
South East	8,389	416	230	140	313	92%	5%	3%	2%	3%
South West	5,254	186	76	81	125	94%	3%	1%	1%	2%
Wales	2,994	76	33	32	50	96%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Scotland	4,997	231	114	102	165	93%	4%	2%	2%	3%
Northern Ireland	1,737	88	58	27	40	93%	5%	3%	1%	2%
United Kingdom	60,287	3,408	1,776	1,167	2,605	91%	5%	3%	2%	4%

Source: [ONS Population by Country of Birth and Nationality July 2020 to June 2021](#)

Note: Estimates are the average population in the year July 2020 to June 2021. Figures may not sum due to independent rounding. See 'Background to Tables in Section 3' in the Appendix.

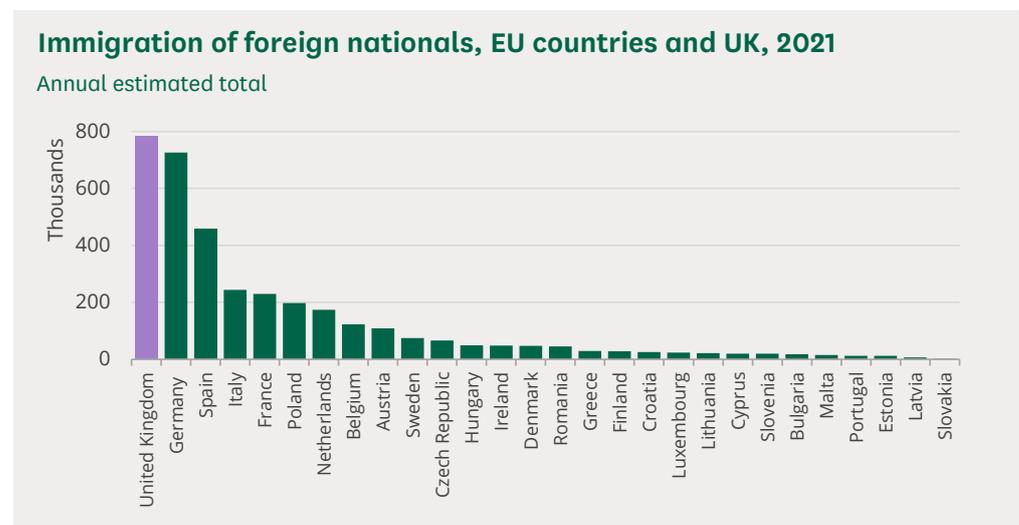
4

Flows to and from EU countries

Data that allow for international comparisons of migration flows in European Union countries are available from the European statistics agency, Eurostat. Each country in the EU has its own way of recording and measuring migration flows depending on its administrative arrangements.

EU countries have applied a common statistical definition to measures of migration since 2008.¹⁷ However, because of differences in recording practices, not all countries are able to comply with this definition in all of their statistics, so some caution is warranted in using this data to make comparisons between countries, especially where differences are small or where national methodologies significantly depart from the common EU definition.¹⁸

As of 2021, the UK has stopped providing data to Eurostat, and the last year for which UK migration data is available in Eurostat is 2019. The chart below shows the EU figures combined with UK Home Office data for 2021.



Source: Eurostat, [Immigration by sex, age group and citizenship](#) [migr_imm1ctz]

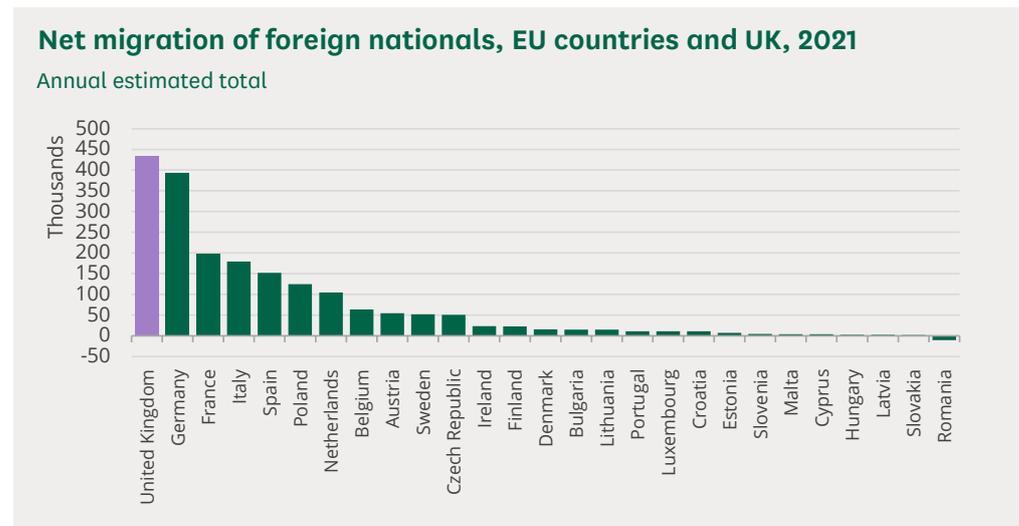
¹⁷ Since 2008, the collection of data on migration in EU countries has been based on [EU Regulation 0862/2007](#). This defines a core set of statistics on international migration flows, foreign population stocks, the acquisition of citizenship, asylum and measures against illegal entry and stay. Although Member States are able to continue to use any appropriate data according to national availability and practice, the statistics collected under the Regulation must be based on common definitions and concepts.

¹⁸ Details of exactly how migration statistics are compiled in each EU country and the extent to which they comply with Regulation 0862/2007 are available in the [Eurostat metadata](#) and can be accessed through the [Eurostat online database](#).

In 2021, the United Kingdom had the largest inflow of foreign nationals of any European country (around 783,000). The EU countries with the largest inflows of foreign nationals were Germany (726,000), Spain (457,000), Italy (244,000) and France (230,000).

In terms of net migration of foreign nationals (those arriving minus those leaving) the UK also had the largest annual total in 2021 (434,000). It was followed by Germany (394,000), France (199,000), Italy (180,000) and Spain (152,000).

The UK was one of seven countries in the EU and UK region with net inward migration of foreign nationals in the hundreds of thousands.



Source: Eurostat, Immigration by sex, age group and citizenship [[migr_imm1ctz](#)] and Emigration by sex, age group and citizenship [[migr_em1ctz](#)]

Germany has experienced particularly high levels of inward migration of foreign nationals in recent years. In 2009, it had annual net migration of around 100,000, which rose gradually and then sharply to a peak of 1.2 million in 2015, when a large number of people were admitted for humanitarian reasons. In recent years it has stabilised at around 400,000 and consistently had the highest net migration in Europe until overtaken by the UK in 2021.

5

Migrants living in EU countries

The table below shows Eurostat estimates of the number foreign national and foreign born migrants living in EU countries and the UK in 2021. The figures are presented both as counts and as a percentage of each country's total population.¹⁹

It should be noted that these figures may be quite different to the migrant population of these countries in 2022, given the large number of Ukrainian refugees who have been hosted in EU countries since February of that year. These figures will be updated in due course to reflect this.

The EU countries with the largest number of foreign national residents in January 2021 were Germany (10.6 million), the UK (6.0 million), Spain (5.4 million), France (5.2 million), and Italy (5.2 million).

The countries with the largest number of foreign-born residents were Germany (15.2 million), the UK (9.6 million), France (8.7 million), Spain (7.2 million), and Italy (6.3 million).

The countries with the smallest foreign national population were Lithuania (80,000), Slovakia (82,000), and Croatia (101,000); while the countries with the smallest foreign-born populations were Malta (120,000), Lithuania (165,000), and Estonia (198,000).

¹⁹ Note that these are estimates of the size of each country's migrant population on 1 Jan 2019, so the estimates given here for the UK differs slightly from those provided in Section 3.

Foreign national and foreign-born population of EU countries and the UK, as at 1 January 2021

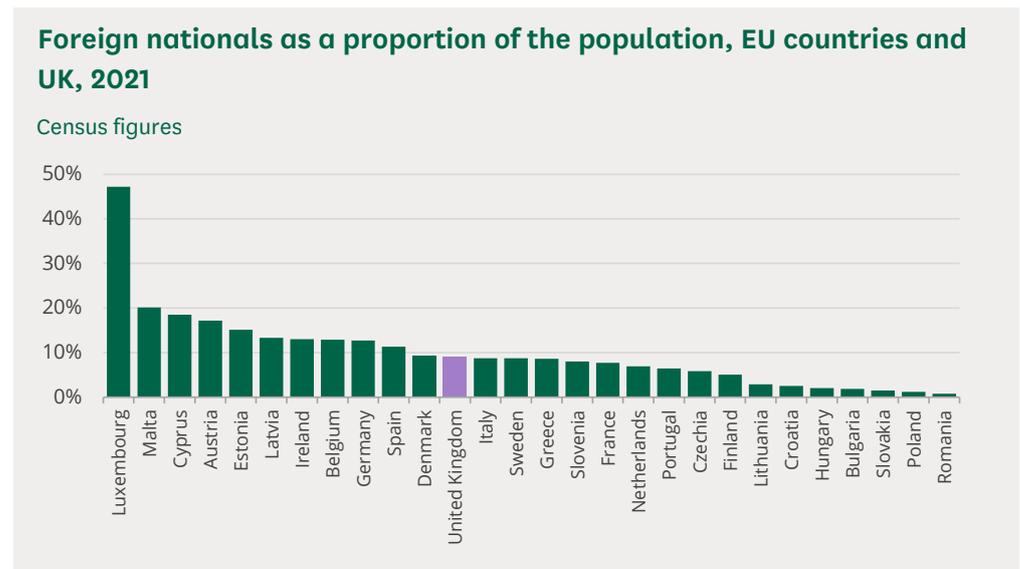
Thousands

	FOREIGN NATIONAL		FOREIGN BORN		Total population
	Number	As % of population	Number	As % of population	
Austria	1,531	17%	1,792	20%	8,933
Belgium	1,489	13%	2,076	18%	11,566
Bulgaria	129	2%	202	3%	6,917
Croatia	101	3%	532	13%	4,036
Cyprus	166	18%	201	22%	896
Czechia	625	6%	570	5%	10,702
Denmark	539	9%	721	12%	5,840
Estonia	201	15%	198	15%	1,330
Finland	279	5%	409	7%	5,534
France	5,215	8%	8,671	13%	67,657
Germany	10,585	13%	15,163	18%	83,155
Greece	921	9%	1,362	13%	10,679
Hungary	194	2%	597	6%	9,731
Ireland	650	13%	883	18%	5,006
Italy	5,172	9%	6,262	11%	59,236
Latvia	252	13%	230	12%	1,893
Lithuania	80	3%	165	6%	2,796
Luxembourg	299	47%	309	49%	635
Malta	104	20%	120	23%	516
Netherlands	1,203	7%	2,451	14%	17,475
Poland	457	1%	902	2%	37,840
Portugal	662	6%	1,181	11%	10,298
Romania	145	1%	689	4%	19,202
Slovakia	82	2%	202	4%	5,460
Slovenia	169	8%	293	14%	2,109
Spain	5,368	11%	7,215	15%	47,399
Sweden	905	9%	2,045	20%	10,379
United Kingdom	6,013	9%	9,614	14%	66,329

Link to sources: [migr_pop1ctz](#) and [migr_pop3ctb](#): ONS, [Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality – July 2020 to June 2021](#)

Notes: The UK figure is not from Eurostat and is the average population in the year ending June 2021, rather than a snapshot on 1 January.

When measured as a proportion of the total population, foreign nationals were 9.1% of the UK population, which places the UK 12th when combined with the 27 EU countries on this measure. Foreign born people were 14.5% of the UK population, which places the UK 11th among these countries.



Source: Eurostat, [Population by sex, age group and country of birth](#) [migr_pop3ctb] and [Population by sex, age group and citizenship](#) [migr_pop1ctz]

Notes: The UK figure is not from Eurostat and is the average population in the year ending June 2021, rather than a snapshot on 1 January.

The countries with the largest number of foreign nationals as a proportion of the population were Luxembourg (47%), Malta (20%), Cyprus (18%), and Austria (17%). Those with the smallest proportion of foreign nationals were Romania (0.8%), Poland (1.2%), Bulgaria (1.9%), and Slovakia (1.5%). These figures are as of January 2021 and could be very different now due to the mass migration of refugees from Ukraine in early 2022.

The countries with the largest number of foreign-born residents as a proportion of the population were Luxembourg (49%), Malta (23%), Cyprus (22%), and Austria (20%). Those with the smallest proportion were Poland (2.4%), Bulgaria (2.9%), Romania (3.6%), and Slovakia (3.7%).

6 Migration between the UK and EU countries

How many EU migrants are living in the UK, and how does this compare with the number of British migrants living in EU countries? The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020 but most of the data that is available on migration relate to when it was still a Member State.

The available data suggests that in **2017** there were around **785,000** British nationals living in other EU countries excluding Ireland, while in 2021 there were around **3.4 million** EU nationals living in the UK.²⁰

6.1 How many EU migrants live in the UK?

2021 Census estimates

The most accurate source of data on the UK population is the decennial census. The most recent census was in 2021 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and in 2022 in Scotland.

The most recent Census results showed that in 2021 there were **4.0 million** people born in EU countries living in the UK.²¹ Of these, around 3.6 million were living in England and Wales and around 110,000 in Northern Ireland.

It is important to understand that in this context “living in the UK” means the usually resident population of the UK, which are those people who on Census day were in the UK and had stayed or intended to stay for twelve months or more, or who had a UK address but were living abroad for less than twelve months.

Around 260,000 EU-born people were living in Scotland in 2021, according to estimates based on the Annual Population Survey.²²

²⁰ The ONS has a different method of estimating the British population in Ireland, since migration between the two countries is complex, and the latest estimate is given in section 6.2.

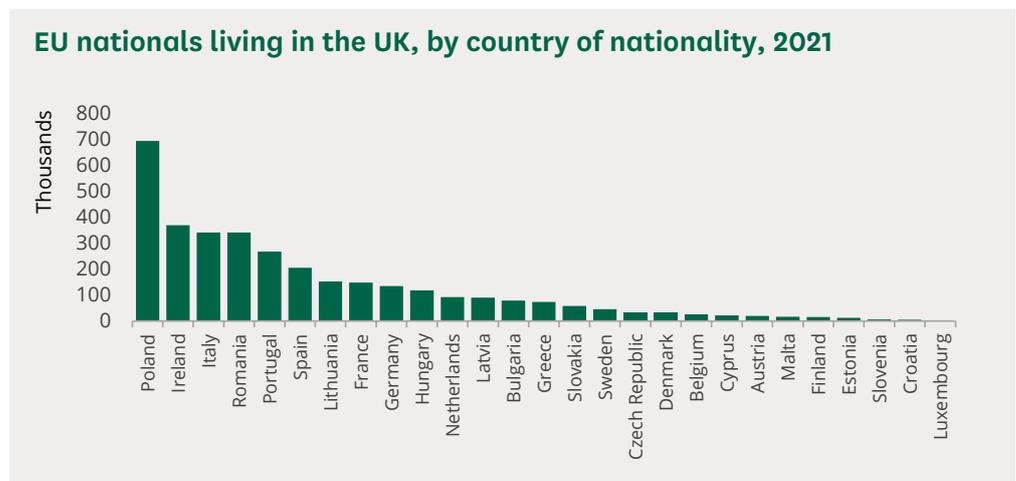
²¹ ONS, [2011 Census, Key Statistics and Quick Statistics for local authorities in the United Kingdom - Part 1](#), Table QS203UK

²² National Records of Scotland, [Population by Country of Birth and Nationality, Scotland, July 2020 to June 2021](#), 25 November 2021

Labour Force Survey estimates

The most recent estimates of the EU migrant population of the UK as a whole are available from the Annual Population Survey and are published in an ONS annual statistical release on ‘Population by Country of Birth and Nationality’. According to these figures, in 2021 there were around 3.5 million people born in EU countries living in the UK, and around **3.4 million** people who were nationals of EU countries living in the UK.²³

The chart shows the estimated number of EU nationals living in the UK in 2021 broken down by nationality. The EU countries with the largest number of nationals living in the UK were Poland (696,000), Ireland (370,000), Italy (342,000), Romania (342,000) and Portugal (268,000).



Source: ONS, [Population by country of birth and nationality: individual country data](#), July 2020 to June 2021: Tables C-D

These estimates are based on the quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS) and its annualised equivalent, the Annual Population Survey (APS). These surveys are designed to represent the usually resident household population of the UK, excluding some people in communal establishments, such as hostels and institutions.

One feature of the LFS is that respondents do not need to be usually resident at the time they complete the survey. However, the sample is weighted to represent just the usually resident population. In that sense LFS estimates do not reflect short-term migration, which may be why the census figures for 2021 were higher.

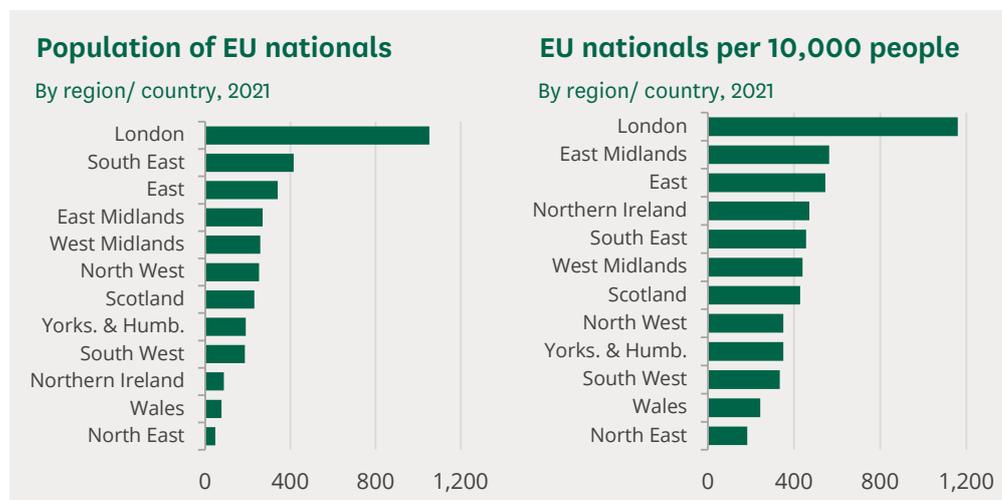
6.2

Where do EU nationals live in the UK?

The chart shows the estimated number of EU nationals living in each country and region of the UK in 2021. Around a third (31%) of EU nationals living in the UK were living in London, which was around 1.05 million people. Outside

²³ ONS, [Population by Country of Birth and Nationality, July 2020 to June 2021](#), Tables 1.1 and 2.1

London, the three regions with the largest EU national populations were the South East (416,000), the East of England (340,000), and the West Midlands (258,000).



Source: [ONS, Population by Country of Birth and Nationality, July 2020 to June 2021, Table 2.1](#)

6.3

What do EU migrants do for a living?

Data from the LFS can be used to generate a picture of the economic activity of EU migrants in the UK. In the first quarter of 2024, the LFS data indicates that 52% of EU nationals in the UK were employees, which was higher than the figure for British nationals in the UK (43%). EU migrants were also more likely to be self-employed (10%) than British nationals (6%).

The table shows the full breakdown for the population, as estimated using the LFS. Note that the estimated population size is different to that estimated in the ONS's 'Population by Country of Birth and Nationality' because it covers a different time period.

Basic economic activity of EU nationals in the UK				
Thousands; 2024				
Basic economic activity	EU citizens in the UK		UK population	
	Estimate	%	Estimate	%
Employee	2,010	52%	28,607	43%
Self-employed	381	10%	4,250	6%
Government employment & training	2	0%	47	0%
Unpaid family worker	1	0%	73	0%
ILO unemployed ^(a)	93	2%	1,482	2%
Inactive, seeking work	11	0%	292	0%
Inactive, not seeking, would like work	103	3%	1,548	2%
Inactive, not seeking, would not like work ^(b)	697	18%	18,744	28%
Under 16	561	15%	12,240	18%
Total	3,858	100%	67,283	100%

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Q1 2024: variable INECAC05

Notes: a) An individual is classified as 'ILO unemployed' if they are aged 16 or over and they haven't met the criteria for Employee, Self-employed, Government Employment & training scheme or unpaid family worker categories AND

they can start work within the next two weeks AND any of the following is true: i) they were looking for paid work in last four weeks, ii) they were looking for a place on a Government scheme in the last four weeks, iii) they are temporary away from paid work as they are waiting to take up new job/business already obtained iv) they are waiting to take up job. (LFS User Guide Volume 4)

b) The majority in this category are looking after a family/ home or retired.

In which industries do EU nationals work?

The table below shows estimates of the number of EU migrants employed in the UK by the industry sector of their main job. These estimates are taken from the quarterly Labour Force Survey for Q1 2024.

Sector of employment, EU nationals in the UK				
Thousands; 2024				
Sector	EU citizens in the UK		UK population	
Health and social work	291		4,763	
Manufacturing	268		2,701	
Wholesale, retail, repair of vehicles	240		3,339	
Prof, scientific, technical activ.	239		2,952	
Construction	207		2,075	
Education	203		3,436	
Transport and storage	187		1,607	
Accommodation and food services	132		1,503	
Admin and support services	131		1,481	
Information and communication	126		1,638	
Public admin and defence	94		2,519	
Financial and insurance activities	87		1,539	
Other service activities	63		925	
Arts, entertainment and recreation	30		866	
Electricity, gas, air cond supply	28		190	
Households as employers	14		60	
Real estate activities	13		431	
Water supply, sewerage, waste	13		253	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	9		293	
Mining and quarrying	7		145	
Extraterritorial organisations	5		84	
No answer	4		55	
Total	2,391	100%	32,856	100%

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Q1 2024: variable INDS07M

Note: EU citizens does not include UK citizens. Main sector is shown, although individuals may work in multiple sectors. Employed and self-employed only are shown.

In this quarter there were an estimated 2.4 million EU nationals working in the UK. Of these, around 291,000 were working in health and social work, 268,000 were working in manufacturing, 240,000 were working in wholesale, retail, or repair of vehicles, 239,000 were working in professional, scientific, and technical activities, and 207,000 were working in construction.

6.4

How many British migrants live in EU countries?

Office for National Statistics estimates

In response to rising interest in migration between the UK and the EU, the ONS in 2017 began to publish newly compiled estimates of the number of British nationals living in other EU countries.

It estimated that **in 2011**, there were around **890,000 British nationals** living in other EU countries in 2011, and around **1.14 million people born in the UK** living in other EU countries in 2011.²⁴

These figures are based on the 2010 to 2011 round of censuses in Europe and other data from European statistical offices.

In April 2018, the ONS produced updated estimates using Eurostat’s European Labour Force Survey (ELFS).

These estimates do not include Ireland, which was excluded because “...citizenship is not a suitable definition and so the data would not be comparable. Irish and British citizenships are complex. There are many dual nationals and there are further, unknown, numbers of those who have rights to citizenship in both countries but have not yet exercised one of them. There have also been increases in applications for Irish citizenship of which it is not yet possible to take account in the available data.”²⁵

These figures show that **in 2017, 785,000 British nationals were living in other EU countries excluding Ireland.**²⁶ In a separate publication, the ONS estimated that there were 277,200 people born in the UK and resident in Ireland in 2016.²⁷ These data are presented on the chart below.



²⁴ ONS, [What information is there on British migrants living in Europe?: Jan 2017](#)

²⁵ ONS, [Living abroad: dynamics of migration between the UK and Ireland](#)

²⁶ ONS, [Living abroad: British residents living in the EU: April 2018](#)

²⁷ ONS, [Living abroad: dynamics of migration between the UK and Ireland](#)

Source: ONS [Number of British citizens resident in EU countries 2017](#); ONS [Living abroad: dynamics of migration between the UK and Ireland](#).

Notes: For Greece there are no 2017 ELFS data, so 2016 ELFS data have been used. For Malta and Cyprus, census data from 2011 have been used.

Spain had the highest number of British nationals (293,500), followed by France (152,900), Germany (96,500), and the Netherlands (45,300). The ONS has not yet estimated the number of British nationals in Ireland although the number of British-born people living in Ireland (277,200) position it in second place among EU countries.

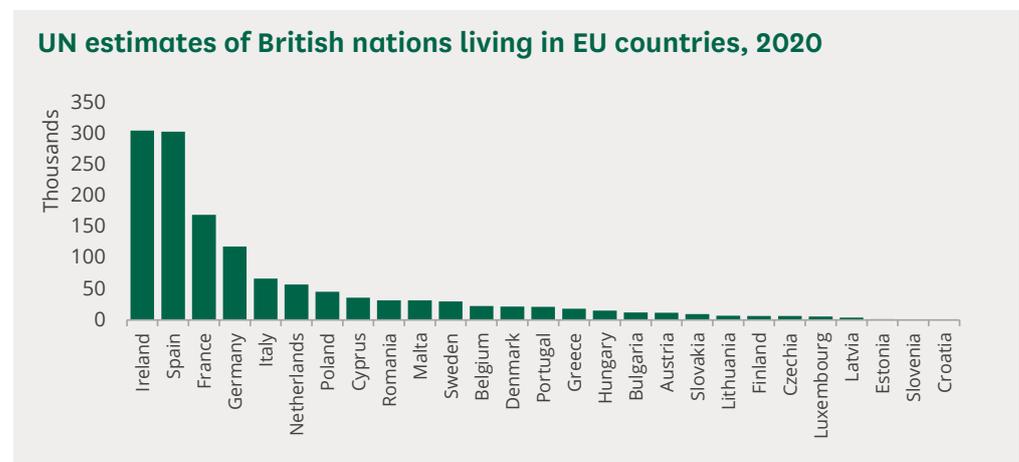
United Nations estimates for 2019

An alternative source of estimates for the number of British migrants living in other EU countries is the United Nations Global Migration Database. According to this data, there were an estimated **1.36 million British migrants** living in EU countries in 2021.²⁸

The United Nations dataset is based on estimates from national censuses and population surveys, which have been rolled forward to account for population growth among migrant stocks in years since the last available data. This is supplemented with information from population registers and nationally representative surveys.

One issue with the United Nations dataset is that, because different countries use different definitions of the migrant population in their official statistics, aggregating figures for migrants in different countries necessarily involves combining some figures that are not strictly comparable, mixing estimates based on country of birth with estimates based on nationality.

The ONS has pointed out that this approach may lead to an estimate of the number of British migrants living in other EU countries that is not an accurate reflection of the number of British nationals living in those countries, because the United Nations uses data on country of birth rather than nationality for 25 of the 27 EU countries.



²⁸ United Nations Global Migration Database, [International migrant stock by destination and origin](#)

Source: United Nations Global Migration Database, [Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin, 2019](#)

Notes: Figures for British migrants living in Belgium and Czech Republic refer to British nationals, while figures for all other EU countries refer to people born in the UK.

The chart shows United Nations estimates of the number of British migrants living in EU27 countries in 2020. The EU countries with the largest British migrant populations were Ireland (305,000), Spain (303,000), France (170,000), Germany (118,000), and Italy (67,000). Almost three quarters (71%) of British migrants living in other EU countries were living in these top five countries.

7 Appendix

7.1 Background to tables in Section 2.5 and Section 3

In this table, estimates for the European Union do not include the UK, regardless of the year being referred to.

- The EU15 consists of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, the Irish Republic, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.
- The EU8 consists of the Eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.
- EU Other consists of Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta, and Romania.
- The EU27 consists of the EU without the UK.

A complete list of countries in each of the non-EU categories can be found in the ONS release on country groupings used in the International Passenger Survey.²⁹

7.2 Background to tables in Section 3

The estimates in these tables are based on the Annual Population Survey (APS) which combines data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) with various sample boosts. It should be noted that the LFS:

- Excludes students in halls who do not have a UK resident parent.
- Excludes people in most other types of communal establishments (e.g. hotels, boarding houses, hostels, mobile home sites, etc.)
- Is grossed to population estimates of those living in private households that only include migrants staying for 12 months or more. An adjustment is made for those who live in some NHS accommodation and halls of residence whose parents live in the UK. For this reason the sum of those

²⁹ ONS, [International Passenger Survey 3.25, country of birth - current and old country groupings, UK](#)

born in the UK and outside the UK may not agree with the published population estimate.

- Records nationality only once. Where a respondent has dual nationality, the first-stated nationality is recorded.

The LFS weighting does not adjust for non-response bias by nationality or country of birth, which means it does not assume people are more or less likely to participate in the survey depending on their nationality or country of birth.

In the table, the category for UK nationals consists of just British nationals, apart from in Northern Ireland where it consists of British and Irish nationals. People born in Northern Ireland have the right to British and/or Irish nationality. Therefore in this nationality table, British and Irish nationalities have been combined for Northern Ireland, and this estimate has been placed in the British column.

Estimates for the European Union do not include those of British nationality, who are shown separately in the tables. European Union estimates are shown for the EU15, the EU27, and the EU8.³⁰

³⁰ For a full explanation of these geographies, see Background to tables in Section 2.5 above.

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