



**BRIEFING PAPER**

Number CBP06077, 3 June 2019

# Migration Statistics

By Georgina Sturge

**Inside:**

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 other EU countries
7. Students in migration statistics
8. Appendix



# Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Understanding migration statistics</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Who is a migrant?	4
1.2 Stocks and flows	5
1.3 Net migration	5
1.4 The difference between migrants and asylum seekers	6
<b>2. Flows to and from the UK</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Immigration, emigration, and net migration	7
2.2 Revisions to net migration	8
2.3 The net migration target	9
2.4 Historic migration estimates	11
2.5 Which countries do migrants come from?	12
2.6 Why do people migrate to the UK?	14
<b>3. Migrants living in the UK</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4. Flows to and from EU countries</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>5. Migrants living in EU countries</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>6. Migration between the UK and other EU countries</b>	<b>23</b>
6.1 How many EU migrants live in the UK?	23
2011 Census estimates	23
Labour Force Survey estimates	23
6.2 Where do EU nationals live in the UK?	24
6.3 What do EU migrants do for a living?	25
In which industries do EU nationals work?	26
6.4 How many British migrants live in other EU countries?	26
Office for National Statistics estimates	26
United Nations estimates for 2017	28
<b>7. Students in migration statistics</b>	<b>29</b>
7.1 Are students included in official estimates of net migration?	29
7.2 Could students be excluded from estimates of net migration?	29
7.3 Should students be included in the net migration target?	30
7.4 How much do international students contribute to net migration?	31
<b>8. Appendix</b>	<b>34</b>
8.1 Background to table in Section 2.5	34
8.2 Background to tables in Section 3	34

The underlying data to the charts in this briefing are available as an [Excel file](#).

**Cover image:** Free for use with no attribution required under CC0 Creative Commons license. [Link to source on Pixabay](#).

## Summary

There are two main ways of measuring the migration of people: 1) flows across an international border, and 2) the stock of people living in a particular country who are not nationals of that country or who were born abroad. In the year ending **December 2018**:

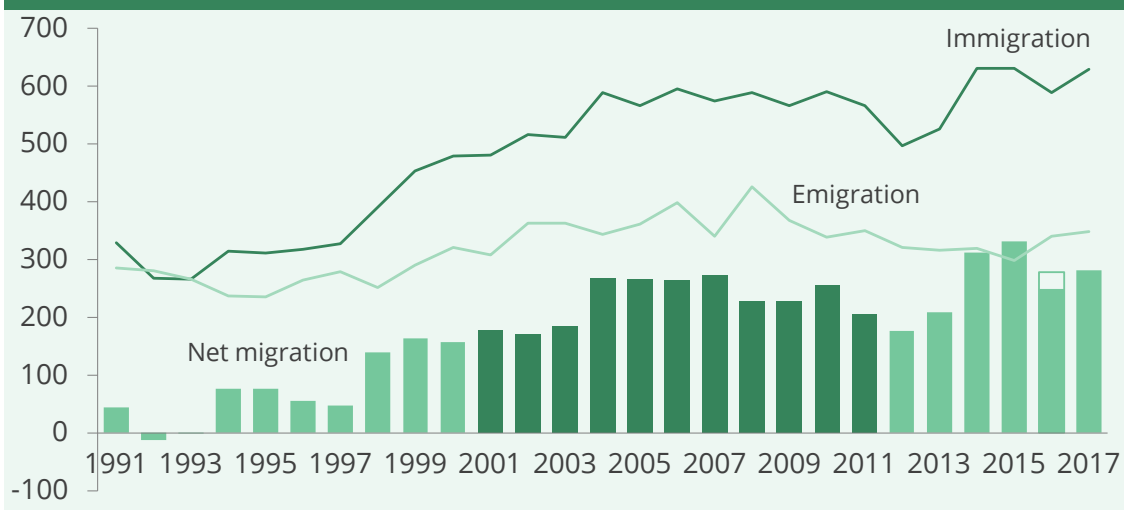
- **602,000 people migrated into the UK** and **343,000 people emigrated from it**, leaving a **net migration figure of +258,000**. This represents the balance of long-term migrants moving in and out of the country.<sup>1</sup>

In the year ending **December 2018**:

- 6.1 million people were living in the UK who had the nationality of a different country (9% of the total population)<sup>2</sup>,
- 3.6 million EU nationals (excluding UK) were living in the UK, and
- 785,000 UK nationals were living in other EU countries excluding Ireland.<sup>3</sup>

The number of people migrating to the UK has been greater than the number emigrating since 1994. For much of the twentieth century, the numbers migrating to and from the UK were roughly in balance, and from the 1960s to the early 1990s the number of emigrants was often greater than the number of immigrants. 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 since 1998.

### LONG-TERM INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE UK (000s)



This note 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.

<sup>1</sup> Long-term means that they migrated for a period of 12 months or more. The numbers do not add up due to rounding.

<sup>2</sup> This does not include people who had dual nationality where one of the nationalities was British.

<sup>3</sup> This figure is from the year ending December 2017. There were 277,000 British-born people living in Ireland in 2017 but this number cannot be added to the EU total since that captures people with British nationality.

# 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 that, 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.<sup>4</sup>

Each of these definitions has its strengths and weaknesses.

The first definition is consistent and objective, but it classifies as migrants people who were born abroad but automatically became citizens of the country in which they now live (e.g. children born to armed forces personnel stationed in foreign countries).

The second definition excludes nationals born abroad, but it also excludes people who have recently changed their country of residence and acquired the nationality of their new home country. There is also the possibility that when a person is asked their nationality, their answer may express a sense of cultural affiliation rather than their actual legal

---

<sup>4</sup> This is the United Nations recommended definition of a migrant.

status; a problem that does not arise when asking someone their country of birth.

The third definition is objective but it poses problems of measurement. People's intentions regarding their length of stay in a country are subject to change: those people who intend to stay longer than a year may leave more quickly, while those who initially intend a short stay may become permanent residents. This definition is used by the United Nations (UN).<sup>5</sup>

In practice, each of these definitions is used in certain circumstances, depending on the data in question.

### 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 refer 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 are measured primarily through surveys of passengers arriving and leaving the country.<sup>6</sup>

### 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 the difference between immigration and emigration: the number of people moving to live in a particular country minus the number of people moving out of that country to live elsewhere. If more people are arriving than leaving, net migration is a positive number, which means net immigration. If more people are leaving than arriving, net migration is a negative number, which means net emigration.

---

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

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”.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, asylum seekers can be counted as a subset of migrants and included in official estimates of migrant stocks and flows.

However, the United Nations Glossary of Migration Related Terms says:

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."*

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.<sup>8</sup>

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 the year ending December 2018, 37,453 people applied for asylum in the UK and 10,085 grants of asylum or leave to remain were made.<sup>9</sup> In the same year, immigration was approximately 602,000, meaning that the number of asylum seekers was equivalent to around 6% of immigration.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Glossary of Migration Related Terms, [Migrant/Migration](#)

<sup>9</sup> This excludes refugees who were resettled directly from another country

<sup>10</sup> The ONS produces an estimate of the percentage of immigration accounted for by asylum seekers [Table 1.01 Components and Adjustments](#) of its [Long-Term International Migration](#). Note that some new asylum claims will be made by people who have already been living in the UK for some time so are not necessarily 'new' immigrants in that year.



## 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.

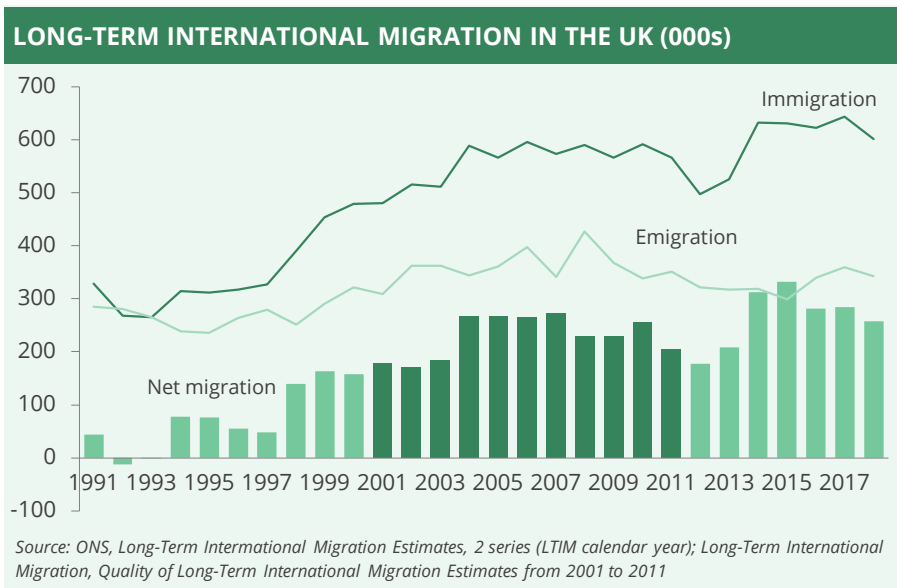
For this series, the ONS uses the UN recommended definition of a long-term international migrant. That is someone who changes their country of usual residence for a period of at least a year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes the country of usual residence.

### 2.1 Immigration, emigration, and net migration

The chart shows LTIM estimates of immigration, emigration and net migration in the UK from 1991 to 2018. During this period **immigration** increased 83%, rising from 329,000 in 1991 to **602,000 in 2018**.

**Emigration** increased between 1991 and 2008, but subsequently fell to around 299,000 in 2015, compared with 285,000 in 1991. **In the year ending December 2018, emigration was 343,000.**

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 294,000 in the period 2014 to 2018. **Net migration was estimated to be 258,000 in 2018.**



Link to [quarterly report](#) and [LTIM data](#).

Note: 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.

The 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" –

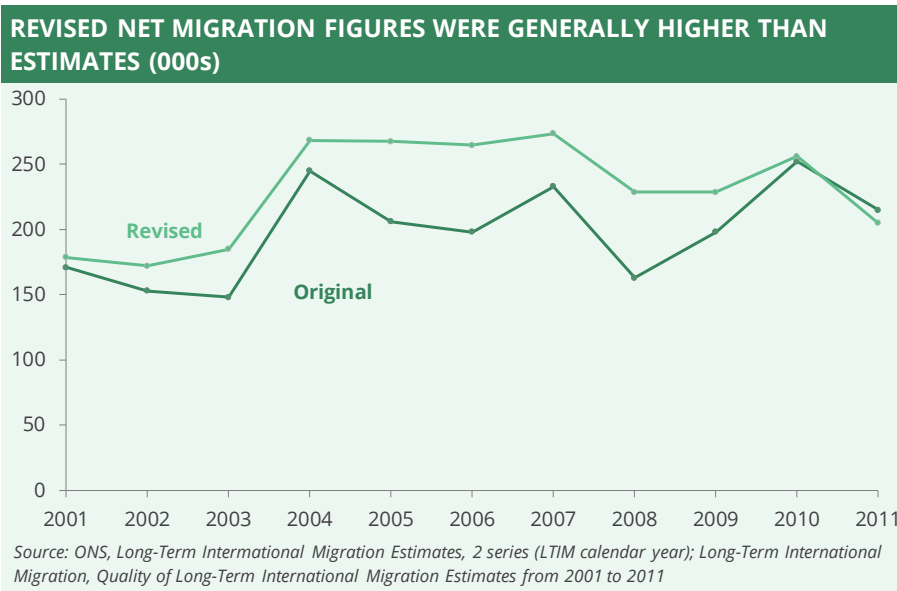
people who remain in the UK for a longer or shorter period than they originally anticipated, thus falling into or out of the definition of a migrant.<sup>11</sup>

Net migration estimates for the years 2001 to 2011 have been revised (see Section 2.1). These 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.

## 2.2 Revisions to net migration

The results of the 2011 Census showed that the population of England and Wales was larger than expected, given the recorded number of births and deaths and the estimated level of net migration during the decade since the last Census in 2001. The Census-based mid-year population estimate for England and Wales in 2011 was 464,000 higher than the equivalent estimate rolled forward from the 2001 Census. The ONS identified several possible causes for the difference but considered that the “largest single cause is most likely to be underestimation of long-term immigration from central and eastern Europe in the middle part of the decade”.<sup>12</sup>

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. Total net migration during this period is now estimated to have been 346,000 higher than was previously thought – the original estimate of 2.18 million having been revised to 2.53 million. The difference between the original and revised estimates of net migration in each calendar year are set out in the chart below.



[Link to source.](#)

<sup>11</sup> Further information on the methodology for the LTIM and IPS estimates is available in the ONS guide: [Methodology to estimate Long-Term International Migration](#)

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



Because the underestimation of net migration was identified indirectly from the Census, the ONS was unable to revise estimates of immigration and emigration as components of net migration during the same period. This means the revised estimates of net migration for the period 2001-2011 are not consistent with the available estimates of immigration and emigration in the same period. The ONS recommends that users of migration statistics should continue using the original LTIM series for immigration and emigration but should bear in mind that the headline net migration estimates have now been revised.

### 2.3 The net migration target

Under the 2010 Coalition Government, the Home Secretary announced a policy to reduce net migration “from the hundreds of thousands back down to the tens of thousands” by the end of the 2010 Parliament.<sup>13</sup> Following the 2015 General Election, then Prime Minister David Cameron said the new Conservative government still aimed to reduce net migration to this level.<sup>14</sup>

On 20 July 2016, Prime Minister Theresa May said she remained firm in her belief “that we need to bring net migration down to sustainable levels, and the Government believe that that means tens of thousands”.<sup>15</sup>

The 2018 Government white paper on the UK’s future immigration system reaffirmed the policy to bring net migration down to below 100,000 people per year.

“The UK’s future border and immigration system [...] must create strong borders, protect the vulnerable, enforce the rules and control the numbers and type of people coming to live and work here, in line with the continued commitment to reduce annual net migration to sustainable levels as set out in the Conservative Party manifesto, rather than the hundreds of thousands we have consistently seen over the last two decades.”<sup>16</sup>

During the 2005 Parliament average annual net migration was around 247,000 a year; so the Government would need to reduce net migration by around 150,000 from its level before the net migration target was introduced to achieve net migration of less than 100,000. So how has net migration changed since 2010?

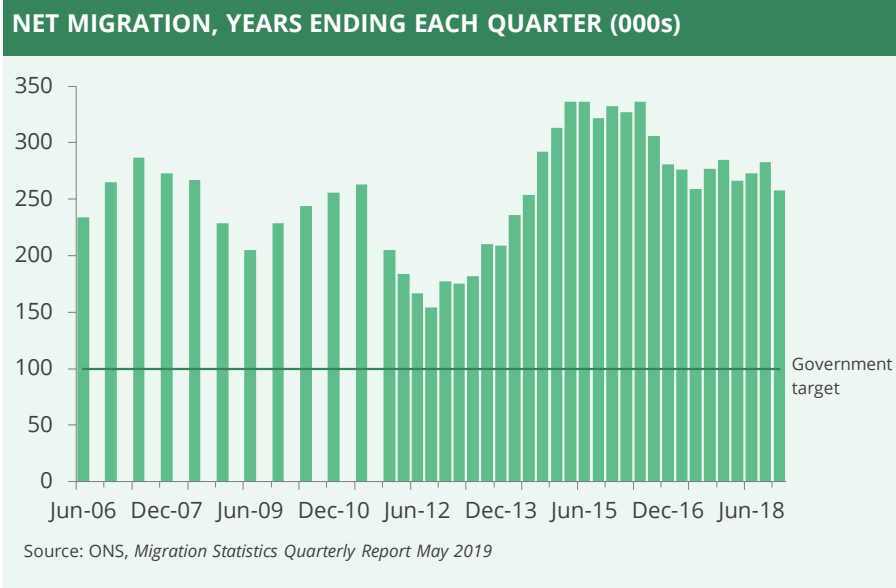
---

<sup>13</sup> [HC Deb 23 Nov 2010 C169](#)

<sup>14</sup> Prime Minister’s Office, [PM speech on immigration](#), 21 May 2015

<sup>15</sup> [HC Deb 20 Jul 2016 C826](#)

<sup>16</sup> HM Government, [The UK’s future skills-based immigration system](#), p.8



Link to the [ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, May 2019](#)

LTIM estimates of net migration are produced quarterly, with detailed breakdowns of the figures produced for migration in each calendar year. The chart shows estimates of net migration in the years ending each quarter, from the year ending June 2006 to the year ending December 2018.<sup>17</sup>

Consistent estimates for years ending in each quarter are only available from 2012, which is why there are some gaps in the chart. It is important to understand that **each of these migration estimates includes the preceding twelve months**, so even though estimates are produced quarterly, each quarterly estimate shares data with the preceding and subsequent estimates. Only estimates in discrete twelve month periods are fully independent of one another.

The periods within which migration is estimated do not correspond precisely to the dates of general elections. However, using the closest corresponding migration estimates (from the year ending June 2006 to the year ending June 2010), average annual net migration during the 2005 Parliament was around 247,000 a year, reaching a high of 287,000 in the year ending June 2007, and a low of 205,000 in the year ending June 2009.

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 over 300,000 in both of the calendar years 2014 and 2015. Net migration was 258,000

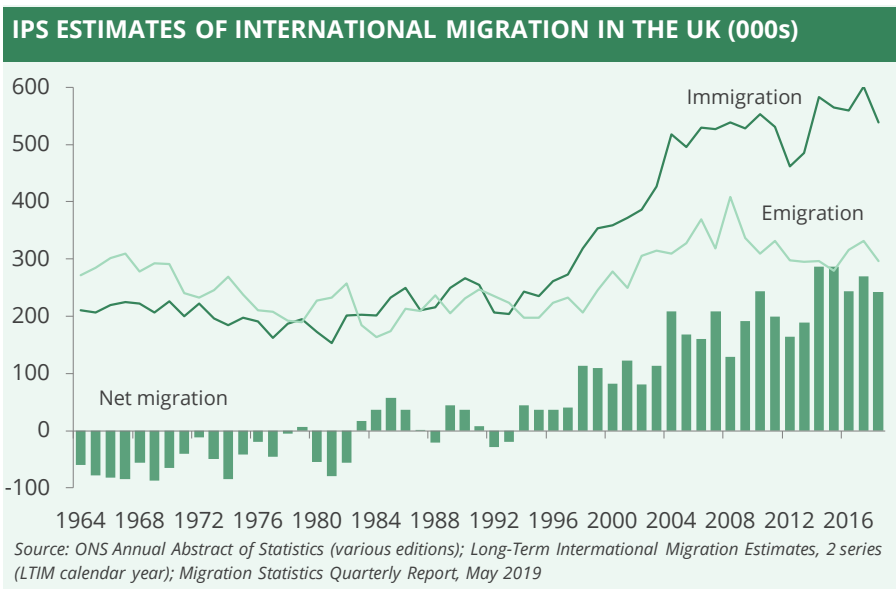
<sup>17</sup> These are the revised estimates, as explained in Section 2.1 above.

in the year to the end of December 2018 (the latest estimate at the time of writing).

## 2.4 Historic migration estimates

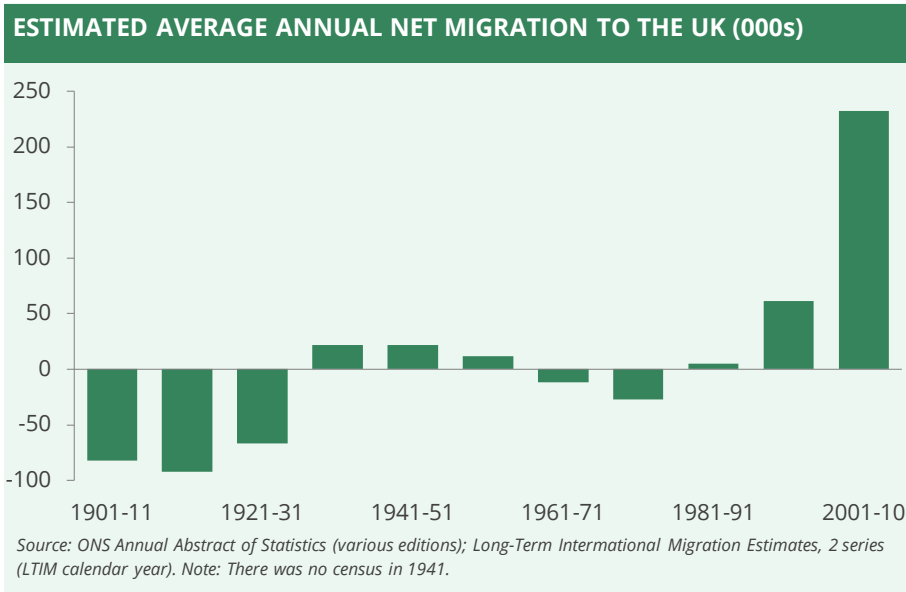
The LTIM series begins in 1991. Estimates of annual migration before this date are available from 1964, based on just the International Passenger Survey. International Passenger Survey (IPS) estimates are considered less robust than the LTIM estimates (which incorporate other sources of data), but the 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. Note that this series does not reflect the revisions to net migration since the 2011 Census (see Section 2.1 above).

The chart shows IPS estimates of long-term international migration from 1964 to 2018. 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.



Link to [quarterly report](#) and [LTIM data](#).

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.



Link to [LTIM data](#). ONS Abstract of statistics is not available online.

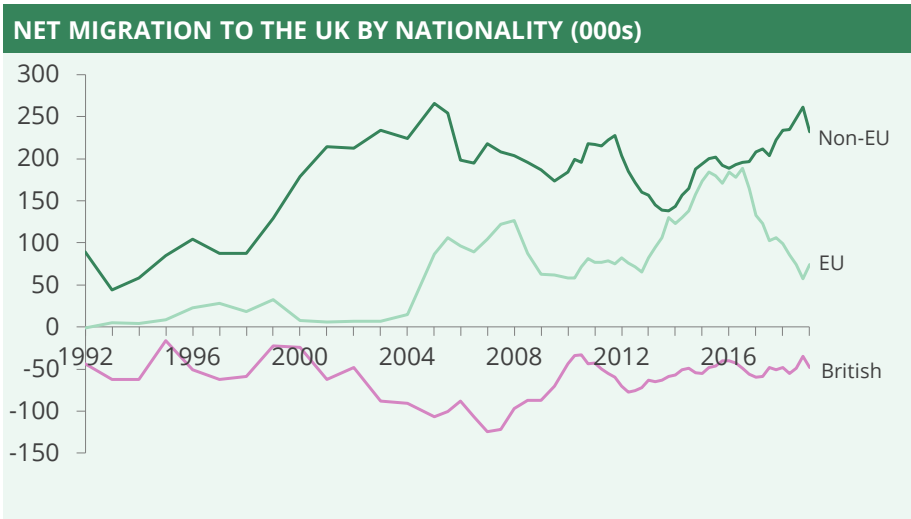
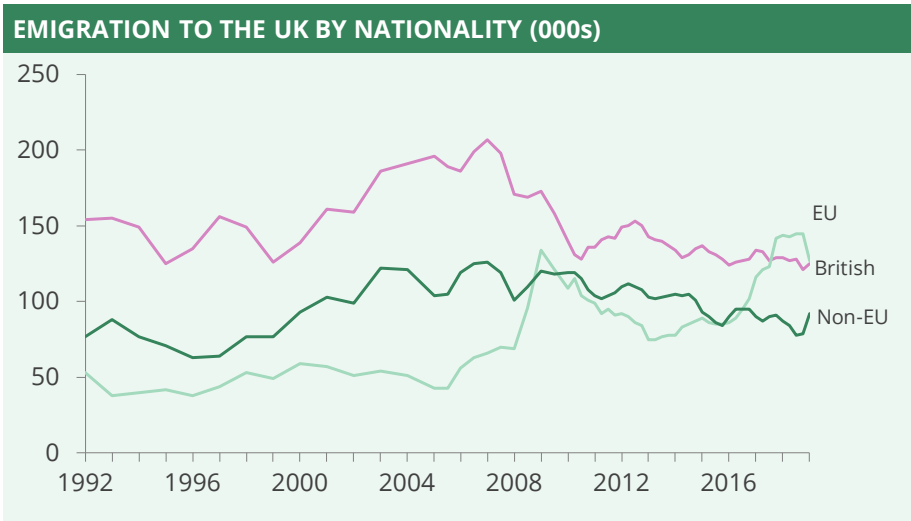
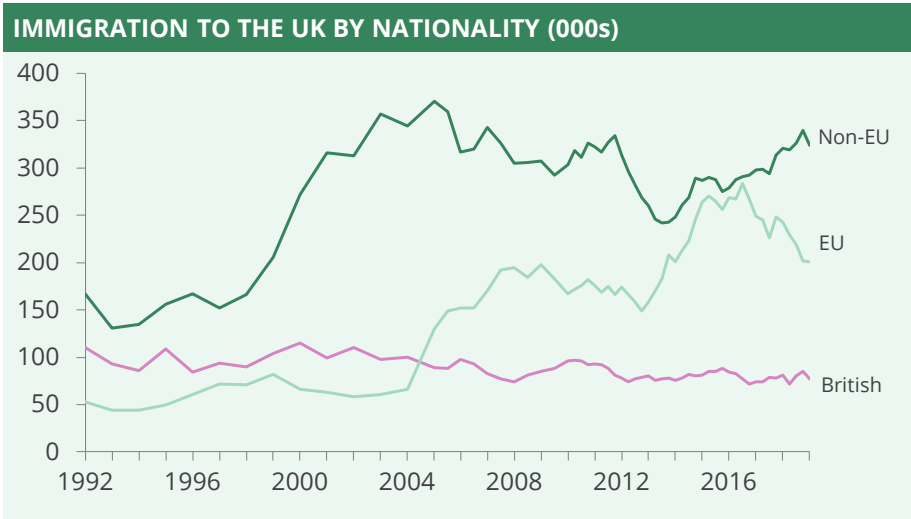
During the first three decades of the twentieth century the UK experienced net emigration of around 80,000 a year. For the next three decades, from 1931 to 1961, the flow of migration turned inward, with average net immigration of around 19,000 a year. Net emigration returned between 1961 and 1981, but 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.

## 2.5 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.

In 2018, 13% of people migrating to the UK were British nationals, 33% were nationals of other EU countries, and 54% were nationals of non-EU countries (these numbers are rounded). This means that just over half of migrants entering the UK in 2018 were subject to immigration control.

The charts below show trends in immigration and net migration by nationality from 1991 to 2018. 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 (see Section 2.1 above).



Note: Years ending each quarter. Sources: [ONS Long-Term International Migration Estimates 2 series \(LTIM calendar year\)](#); [ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, May 2019](#)

Net inward migration of non-EU nationals fell during the first half of the 2010-15 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. It began to

increase after that, reaching 261,000 in the year ending September 2018. This was the second highest level ever recorded, after the year ending December 2004.

Net migration of EU nationals was 74,000 in the year ending December 2018. This was slightly higher than the previous quarter's estimate of 57,000, which was the lowest level recorded since September 2012. The highest estimate of EU net migration was 189,000 in the year ending June 2016.

The ONS also produces estimates of migration by country of birth and last residence. The table below shows immigration to the UK in 2017 (the latest year for which data are available), broken down by these categories.

IMMIGRATION TO THE UK BY COUNTRY OF LAST RESIDENCE, COUNTRY OF BIRTH, AND NATIONALITY, 2017 (000s)						
	Number			Percentage		
	Nationality	Country of birth	Country of last residence	Nationality	Country of birth	Country of last residence
United Kingdom	81	67	n/a	13%	10%	n/a
European Union	243	231	261	38%	36%	41%
EU15	120	108	144	19%	17%	22%
EU8	52	54	51	8%	8%	8%
EU Other	71	69	66	11%	11%	10%
Non EU	321	346	384	50%	54%	60%
Other Europe	17	19	23	3%	3%	4%
Asia	204	215	225	32%	33%	35%
Rest of the World	100	112	136	16%	17%	21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: ONS 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.

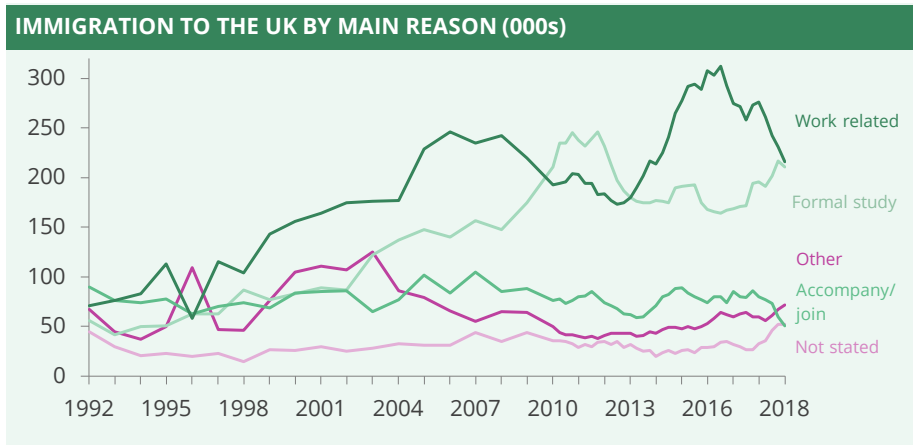
2. See Appendix 8.1 for country groupings.

## 2.6 Why do people migrate to the UK?

In the year ending June 2018, work was the most common main reason for immigration (36%), while formal study was the second most common main reason (35%).

The chart below shows ONS estimates of immigration broken down by main reason for immigration. The fall in work-related migration since June 2016 is accounted for by a fall in EU nationals migrating to look for work.



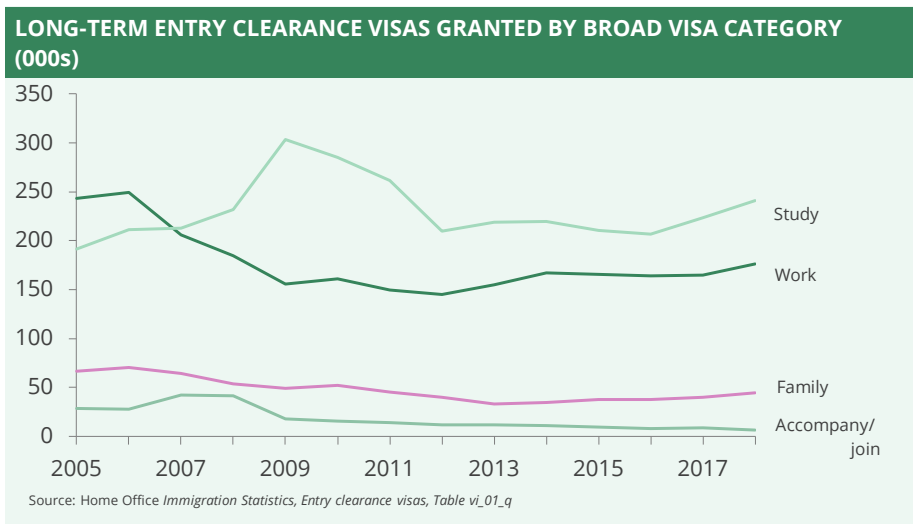


Note: Years ending each quarter. Link to [quarterly report](#) and [LTIM data](#).

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 since then reflects a reduction in the number of Tier 4 student visas issued to students from outside the EEA and Switzerland.

Another way of capturing reason for migration is to look at visa statistics, although these only capture non-EU and non-British migration (around half of all long-term migration to the UK).

The chart below shows longer-term visas issued by broad category in each year from 2005 to 2017. These are visas granted to nationals of countries outside the EEA and Switzerland.<sup>18</sup>



Source: Home Office Immigration Statistics, Entry clearance visas, Table vi\_01\_g

Link to [Home Office statistics](#).

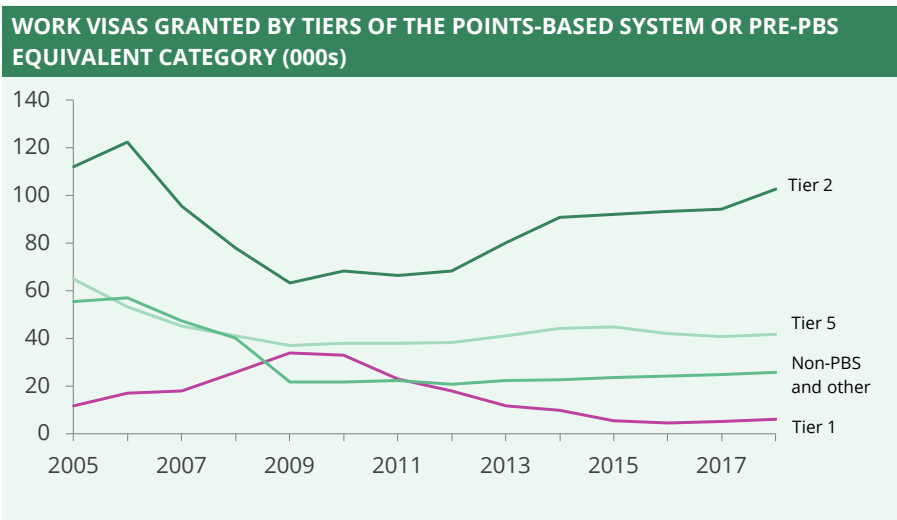
These figures exclude short-term visas such as visitor visas, transit visas, and other temporary visas. Similarly, the category for “study” excludes student visitor visas, which allow people to study in the UK on courses for up to eleven months, because people staying the UK for less than a year are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

<sup>18</sup> Section 7 contains more information about students in migration statistics.

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, while the category for “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.<sup>19</sup>

The chart shows visas in the work category broken down by the tiers of the points-based system (or their pre-PBS equivalent categories) from 2005 to 2018.



Link to [Home Office statistics](#).

Tier 2 visas are the largest category of work visas, with around 103,000 work visas granted to main applicants and dependants in Tier 2 in 2018. These are visas for sponsored skilled workers with a job offer.

Tier 5 visas are the second largest category, with around 42,000 visas granted in 2018. These are visas for temporary workers.

Tier 1 visas are for high skilled or high value migrants, including entrepreneurs, investors and migrants with exceptional talents in science, humanities, engineering, medicine, digital technology or the arts. By its nature this is the smallest category of work visas, with around 6,000 visas granted in 2018.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> An overview of the immigration policies introduced during the 2010-15 Parliament aimed at reducing immigration and net migration can be found in the Commons Library briefing [Immigration and asylum: changes made by the Coalition Government 2010 - 2015](#)

<sup>20</sup> Further information on the categories of the points-based system can be found in the House of Commons briefing [The UK's points-based system for immigration](#).

### 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 2018 there were approximately **6.1 million people with non-British nationality living in the UK** and **9.4 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 2018 there were slightly more migrants with nationality of an EU country (besides the UK) than there were people who were born in an EU country. This is a change from the previous year, 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 (5.7 million) than there are nationals of non-EU countries (2.5 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 36% 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 West Midlands (13.8%), the South East (13.4%), the East (12.7%), 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 (15.4%), 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 (6.1%), Northern Ireland (7.9%), and Scotland (8.8%).

ESTIMATED RESIDENT POPULATION IN THE UK BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH, 2018 (000s)										
Nation/Region	Number					%				
	UK	EU28	EU14	EU8	Non-EU	UK	EU28	EU14	EU8	Non-EU
England	46,730	3,187	1,504	1,136	5,350	85%	6%	3%	2%	10%
North East	2,463	56	25	24	97	94%	2%	1%	1%	4%
North West	6,476	257	120	106	459	90%	4%	2%	1%	6%
Yorkshire & Humbs	4,876	224	79	113	303	90%	4%	1%	2%	6%
East Midlands	4,123	271	85	145	328	87%	6%	2%	3%	7%
West Midlands	5,010	302	124	121	498	86%	5%	2%	2%	9%
East	5,363	364	144	154	417	87%	6%	2%	3%	7%
London	5,651	1,023	554	254	2,213	64%	11%	6%	3%	25%
South East	7,791	454	259	133	756	87%	5%	3%	1%	8%
South West	4,977	236	113	88	280	91%	4%	2%	2%	5%
Wales	2,913	87	41	33	102	94%	3%	1%	1%	3%
Scotland	4,893	229	98	112	241	91%	4%	2%	2%	4%
Northern Ireland	1,708	96	48	42	50	92%	5%	3%	2%	3%
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>56,245</b>	<b>3,599</b>	<b>1,691</b>	<b>1,323</b>	<b>5,743</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>9%</b>

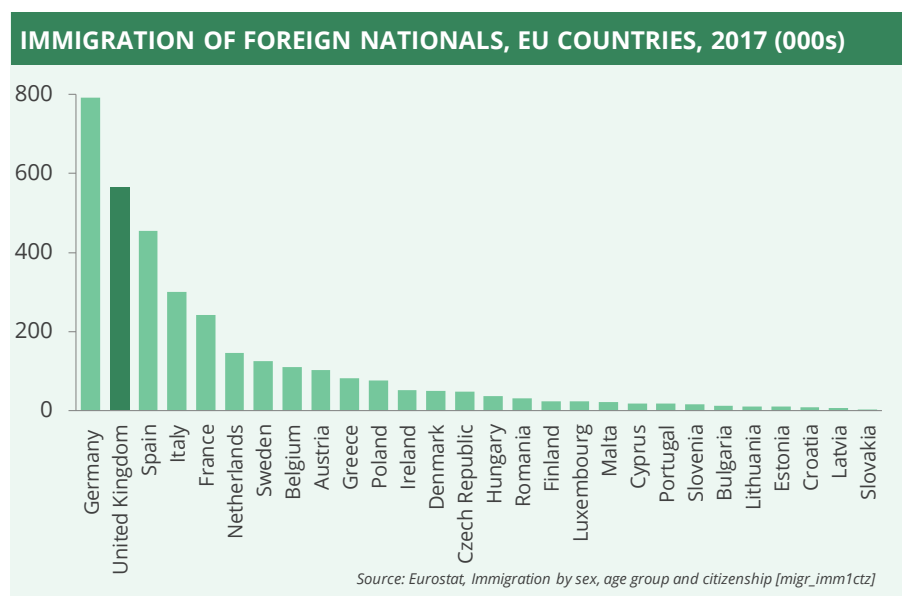
<b>ESTIMATED RESIDENT POPULATION IN THE UK BY NATIONALITY, 2018 (000s)</b>										
Nation/Region	Number					Percentage				
	British	EU28	EU14	EU8	Non-EU	British	EU28	EU14	EU8	Non-EU
England	49,775	3,246	1,510	1,227	2,243	90%	6%	3%	2%	4%
North East	2,517	46	16	24	53	96%	2%	1%	1%	2%
North West	6,718	259	115	113	216	93%	4%	2%	2%	3%
Yorkshire & Humbs	5,046	216	63	123	141	93%	4%	1%	2%	3%
East Midlands	4,287	290	87	161	145	91%	6%	2%	3%	3%
West Midlands	5,274	333	137	140	203	91%	6%	2%	2%	3%
East	5,587	375	144	171	181	91%	6%	2%	3%	3%
London	6,908	1,103	644	252	877	78%	12%	7%	3%	10%
South East	8,281	413	214	148	305	92%	5%	2%	2%	3%
South West	5,158	211	90	94	123	94%	4%	2%	2%	2%
Wales	2,968	80	32	35	55	96%	3%	1%	1%	2%
Scotland	5,010	221	82	122	131	93%	4%	2%	2%	2%
Northern Ireland	1,727	94	42	46	33	93%	5%	2%	2%	2%
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>59,481</b>	<b>3,640</b>	<b>1,666</b>	<b>1,430</b>	<b>2,462</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>4%</b>

Source: [ONS Population by Country of Birth and Nationality 2018](#)

Note: 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup>



[Link to source.](#)

The United Kingdom is among the EU countries with the largest inflows of foreign nationals, but it is not unique. In 2016, the EU countries with the largest inflows of foreign nationals were Germany (793,000), the UK (563,000), Spain (454,000) and Italy (301,000).

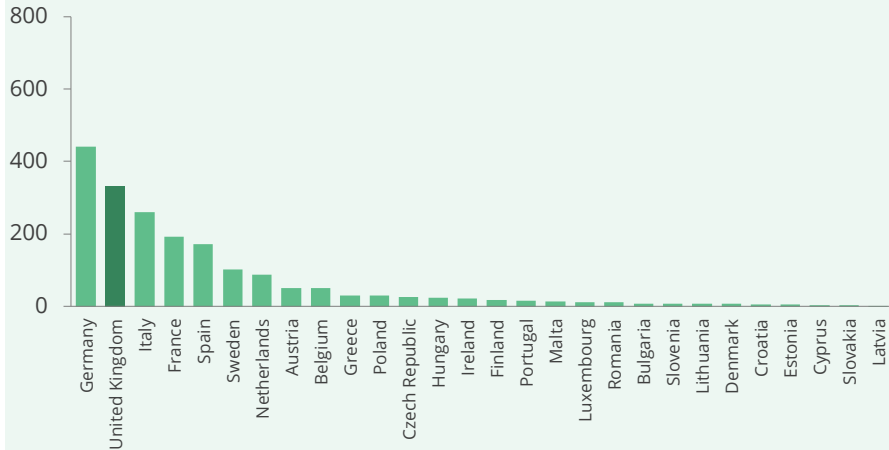
In terms of net migration (those arriving minus those leaving) the countries with the largest net inflows of foreign nationals were Germany (441,000), the UK (333,000), Italy (261,000) and France

<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> 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](#).

(192,000). The UK is one of six EU countries with net inward migration of foreign nationals in the hundreds of thousands.

#### NET MIGRATION OF FOREIGN NATIONALS, EU COUNTRIES, 2017 (000s)



Source: Eurostat, Immigration by sex, age group and citizenship[migr\_imm1ctz] and Emigration by sex, age group and citizenship [migr\_emi1ctz]

Links to sources: [migr\\_imm1ctz](#) and [migr\\_emi1ctz](#)

Germany has experienced rising levels of inward migration of foreign nationals in recent years. In 2009, immigration of foreign nationals in Germany was around 267,000, while net migration of foreign nationals was around 101,000. By 2015, immigration of foreign nationals had increased to 1.46 million, with net migration of foreign nationals rising to 1.22 million. It fell in 2017 to immigration of 793,000 and net migration of 441,000, less than half of the 2015 figure.



## 5. Migrants living in EU countries

The table below shows Eurostat estimates of the number foreign national and foreign born migrants living in EU28 countries on 1 January 2018. The figures are presented both as counts and as a percentage of each country's total population.<sup>23</sup>

FOREIGN-NATIONAL AND FOREIGN-BORN POPULATIONS OF EU COUNTRIES, AS AT 1 JANUARY 2018 (000s)						
	FOREIGN NATIONAL		FOREIGN BORN		Total	
	Number	As % of population	Number	As % of population		
Austria	1,386	16%	1,691	19%	8,822	
Belgium	1,366	12%	1,916	17%	11,399	
Bulgaria	86	1%	157	2%	7,050	
Croatia	52	1%	529	13%	4,105	
Cyprus	149	17%	181	21%	864	
Czechia	515	5%	468	4%	10,610	
Denmark	506	9%	691	12%	5,781	
Estonia	197	15%	196	15%	1,319	
Finland	248	4%	364	7%	5,513	
France	4,687	7%	8,177	12%	66,926	
Germany	9,679	12%	13,746	17%	82,792	
Greece	816	8%	1,278	12%	10,741	
Hungary	162	2%	536	5%	9,778	
Ireland	579	12%	811	17%	4,830	
Italy	5,144	9%	6,175	10%	60,484	
Latvia	273	14%	246	13%	1,934	
Lithuania	27	1%	131	5%	2,809	
Luxembourg	288	48%	280	47%	602	
Malta	67	14%	83	18%	476	
Netherlands	991	6%	2,216	13%	17,181	
Poland	239	1%	696	2%	37,977	
Portugal	422	4%	910	9%	10,291	
Romania	111	1%	509	3%	19,531	
Slovakia	73	1%	190	3%	5,443	
Slovenia	122	6%	250	12%	2,067	
Spain	4,563	10%	6,199	13%	46,658	
Sweden	886	9%	1,876	19%	10,120	
UK	6,286	9%	9,512	14%	66,274	

Link to sources: [migr\\_pop1ctz](#) and [migr\\_pop3ctb](#)

Notes: Estimates are as at 1 Jan 2018. Figures for the UK therefore differ slightly from ONS figures which are an average for the whole of 2018.

The EU countries with the largest number of foreign national residents in January 2018 were Germany (9.7 million), the UK (6.3 million), Italy (5.1 million), France (4.7 million), and Spain (4.6 million).

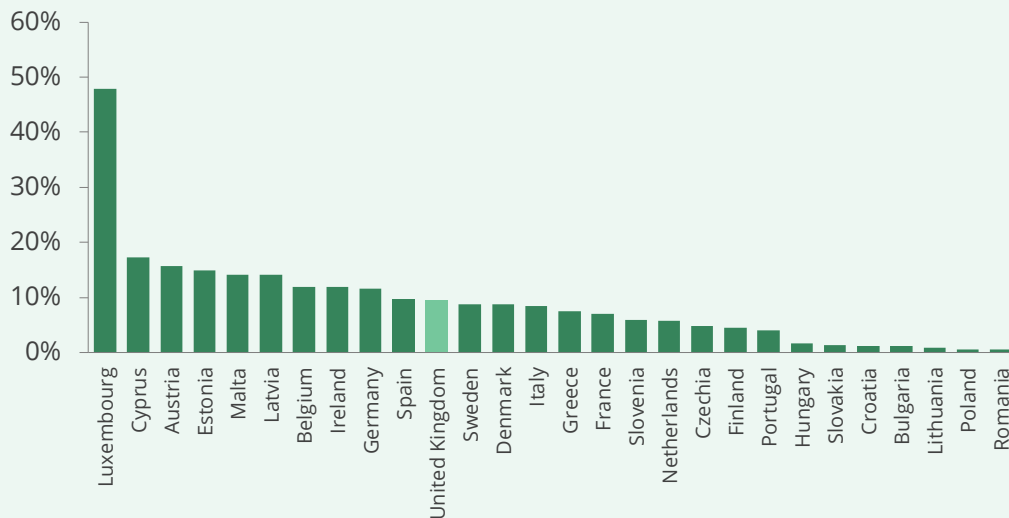
The countries with the largest number of foreign born residents were Germany (13.8 million), the UK (9.5 million), France (8.2 million), Spain (6.2 million), and Italy (6.2 million).

<sup>23</sup> Note that these are estimates of the size of each country's migrant population on 1 Jan 2017, so the estimates given here for the UK differs slightly from those provided in Section 3.

The countries with the smallest foreign national population were Lithuania (27,000), Croatia (52,000), and Malta (67,000); while the countries with the smallest foreign born populations were Malta (83,000), Lithuania (131,000), and Bulgaria (157,000).

When measured as a proportion of the total population, foreign nationals were 9.5% of the UK population, which places the UK 11<sup>th</sup> among the 28 EU countries on this measure. Foreign born people were 14.4% of the UK population, which places the UK 10<sup>th</sup> among EU countries on this measure.

**FOREIGN NATIONALS AS A % OF THE POPULATION, EU28 COUNTRIES, 1 JAN 2018**



Notes: Figure for the UK differs slightly from ONS figures which are an average for the whole of 2018.  
Source: Eurostat, migr\_pop1ctz and migr\_pop3ctb

The countries with the largest number of foreign nationals as a proportion of the population were Luxembourg (47.8%), Cyprus (17.3%), Austria (15.7%), and Estonia (14.9%). Those with the smallest proportion of foreign nationals were Poland (0.6%), Romania (0.6%), Lithuania (1.0%), Bulgaria (1.3%), and Croatia (1.2%).

The countries with the largest number of foreign-born residents as a proportion of the population were Luxembourg (46.5%), Cyprus (21.0%), Austria (19.2%), and Sweden (18.5%). Those with the smallest proportion were Poland (1.8%), Bulgaria (2.2%), Romania (2.6%), and Slovakia (3.5%).

## 6. Migration between the UK and other EU countries

How many EU migrants are living in the UK, and how does this compare with the number of British migrants living in other EU countries?

The available data suggests that in **2017** there were around **785,000** British nationals living in other EU countries excluding Ireland, while there were around **3.8 million** EU nationals living in the UK.<sup>24</sup>

### 6.1 How many EU migrants live in the UK?

#### 2011 Census estimates

The most accurate source of data on the UK population is the decennial Census. The most recent Census results showed that in March 2011 there were **2.68 million** people born in other EU countries living in the UK.<sup>25</sup> This estimate covers all countries that were EU member states in 2011, so it does not include a small number of people born in Croatia, which joined the EU in July 2013.

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.

In measuring the migrant population, the Census asked people about their country of birth and not their nationality. The Census questionnaires in England, Wales and Northern Ireland did ask respondents about passports they held, and this can be used as a proxy for nationality, but the question on passports was not asked in Scotland.

#### Labour Force Survey estimates

The most recent estimates of the EU migrant population of the UK are available from the Labour Force Survey and are published in an ONS annual statistical release on ‘Population by Country of Birth and Nationality’. According to these figures, in 2018 there were around **3.60 million** people born in other EU countries living in the UK, and around **3.64 million** people who were nationals of other EU countries living in the UK.<sup>26</sup>

The chart shows the estimated number of EU nationals living in the UK in 2018 broken down by nationality. The EU countries with the largest

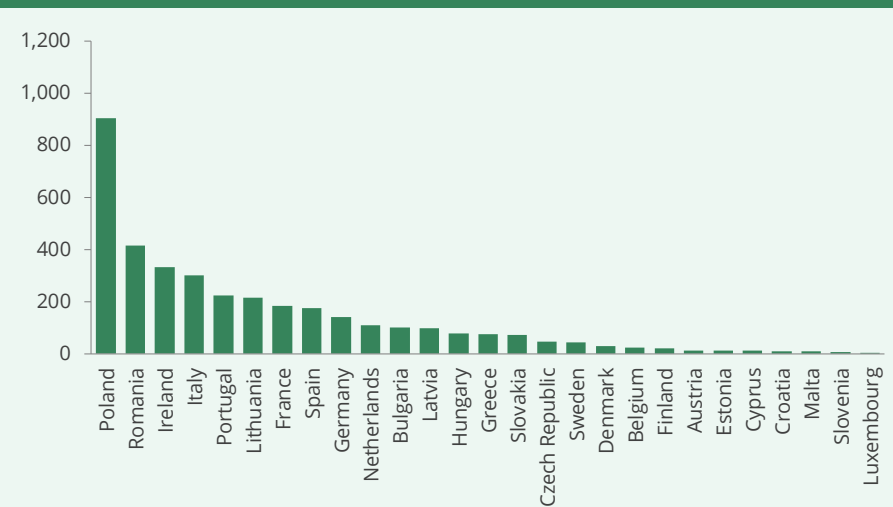
<sup>24</sup> The ONS has a different method of estimating the British population in Ireland, since migration between the two countries is complex, and the latest estimate is given in section 6.2.

<sup>25</sup> ONS, [2011 Census, Key Statistics and Quick Statistics for local authorities in the United Kingdom - Part 1](#), Table QS203UK

<sup>26</sup> ONS, [Population by Country of Birth and Nationality, 2018](#), Tables 1.1 and 2.1

number of nationals living in the UK were Poland (905,000), Romania (415,000), Ireland (331,000), Italy (300,000), and Portugal (224,000).

**EU NATIONALS LIVING IN THE UK BY NATIONALITY, 2018 (000s)**



Source: ONS, *ONS Population by country of birth and nationality, 2018: Tables C-D*

[Link to source.](#)

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.

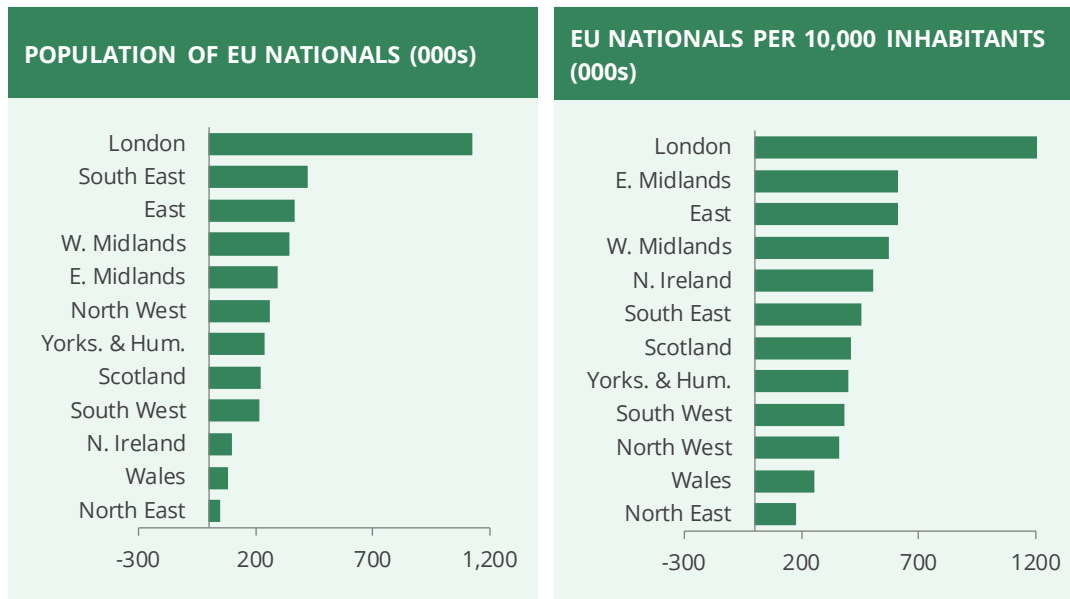
One feature of the LFS is that respondents do not need to be usually resident at the time they complete the survey. However, the sample is weighted to represent just the usually resident population. In that sense LFS estimates do not reflect short-term migration.

## 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 2018. Around a third (30.2%) of EU nationals living in the UK were living in London, which was around 1.1 million people.

Outside London, the three regions with the largest EU national populations were the South East (422,000), the East of England (370,000), and the West Midlands (346,000)

A different picture emerges when taking into account the different population sizes of the UK's regions. London still had the largest number of EU nationals per 10,000 inhabitants (1,200) but it was followed by the East Midland (614 per 10,000), the East of England (610 per 10,000), and the West Midlands (573 per 10,000).



[Link to source.](#)

### 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 last quarter of 2018, the LFS data indicate that 54% of EU nationals in the UK were employees, which is higher than the figure for British nationals in the UK (42%). EU migrants were also more likely to be self-employed (10%) than British nationals (7%).

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 CITIZENS IN THE UK (000s)				
Q4 2018	EU citizens in the UK		UK population	
	Estimate	%	Estimate	%
Basic economic activity				
Employee	1,961	54%	27,656	42%
Self-employed	347	10%	4,844	7%
Government employment & training	2	0%	48	0%
Unpaid family worker	7	0%	122	0%
ILO unemployed <sup>(b)</sup>	77	2%	1,328	2%
Inactive, seeking work	19	1%	257	0%
Inactive, not seeking, would like work	66	2%	1,653	3%
Inactive, not seeking, would not like work	533	15%	17,231	26%
Under 16	626	17%	12,637	19%
Total	3,639	100%	65,775	100%

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Q4 2018: variable INECAC05

















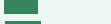
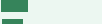

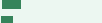
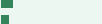
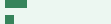
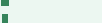
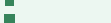
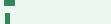
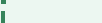
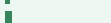
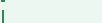
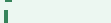
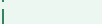
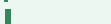
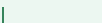
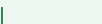
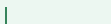
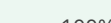
Notes: a) EU citizens does not include UK citizens.

b) 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)

c) 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 Q4 2018.

SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT, EU CITIZENS IN THE UK (000s)				
Q4 2018				
Sector	EU citizens in the UK		UK population	
Wholesale, retail, repair of vehicles	316		4,100	
Manufacturing	275		2,895	
Health and social work	235		4,321	
Accommodation and food services	221		1,726	
Construction	181		2,399	
Transport and storage	178		1,600	
Education	172		3,367	
Prof, scientific, technical activ.	166		2,423	
Admin and support services	157		1,583	
Information and communication	83		1,286	
Financial and insurance activities	82		1,368	
Public admin and defence	64		2,131	
Other service activities	59		888	
Arts, entertainment and recreation	36		828	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	23		324	
Real estate activities	17		391	
No answer	13		172	
Water supply, sewerage, waste	10		256	
Mining and quarrying	6		125	
Electricity, gas, air cond supply	5		219	
Households as employers	5		46	
Extraterritorial organisations	5		54	
Total	2,308	100%	32,500	100%

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Q4 2018: 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 2.3 million EU nationals working in the UK. Of these, around 316,000 were working in wholesale, retail, or repair of vehicles, 275,000 were working in manufacturing, 235,000 were working in health and social work, 221,000 were working in accommodation and food services, and 181,000 were working in construction.

## 6.4 How many British migrants live in other 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.<sup>27</sup>

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."<sup>28</sup>

These figures show that **in 2017, 785,000 British nationals were living in other EU countries excluding Ireland**.<sup>29</sup> In a separate publication, the ONS estimated that there were 277,200 people born in the UK and resident in Ireland in 2016.<sup>30</sup> These data are presented on the chart below.



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. [Link to the ONS data.](#)

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.

<sup>27</sup> ONS, [What information is there on British migrants living in Europe?: Jan 2017](#)

<sup>28</sup> ONS, [Living abroad: dynamics of migration between the UK and Ireland](#)

<sup>29</sup> ONS, [Living abroad: British residents living in the EU: April 2018](#)

<sup>30</sup> ONS, [Living abroad: dynamics of migration between the UK and Ireland](#)

## United Nations estimates for 2017

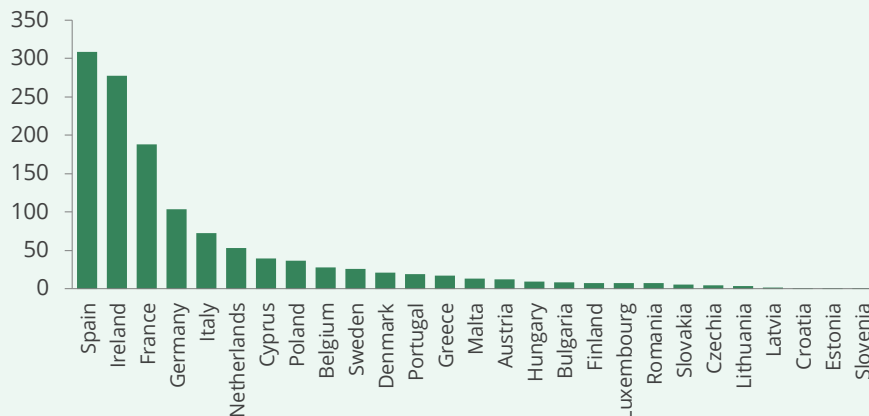
An alternative source of estimates for the number of British migrants living in other EU countries is the United Nations Global Migration Database. According to this data, there were an estimated **1.27 million British migrants** living in other EU countries in 2017.<sup>31</sup>

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 other EU countries.

### BRITISH MIGRANTS LIVING IN OTHER EU28 COUNTRIES (000s)



Source: United Nations Global Migration Database, Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin, 2017

Notes: Figures for British migrants living in Belgium and Czech Republic refer to British nationals, while figures for all other EU28 countries refer to people born in the UK.

The chart shows United Nations estimates of the number of British migrants living in other EU28 countries in 2017. The EU countries with the largest British migrant populations were Spain (309,000), Ireland (278,000), France (188,000), Germany (104,000), and Italy (72,000). Three quarters (75%) of British migrants living in other EU countries were living in these top five countries.

<sup>31</sup> United Nations Global Migration Database, [International migrant stock by destination and origin](#)

## 7. Students in migration statistics

### 7.1 Are students included in official estimates of net migration?

Under the United Nations definition, a long-term international migrant is someone who changes their country of usual residence for a period of at least one year. In the UK, estimates of long-term international migration are based on what respondents to the International Passenger Survey (IPS) say is their intended length of stay in the UK or abroad.

So students who come to the UK to study on courses lasting longer than one year are included in official estimates of net migration, while students studying on courses that are shorter than one year are typically not included, unless they expect to remain in the UK for other reasons.

Students who would not typically be counted in estimates of net migration include those who come to the UK on short-term study visas, which allow adult nationals of countries outside the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland to visit the UK for up to six months for short courses or academic research, or up to eleven months for English language courses.<sup>32</sup> People coming to the UK on these short-term study visas are only counted as long-term international migrants in official migration estimates if their intended length of stay in the UK is longer than one year.

### 7.2 Could students be excluded from estimates of net migration?

Strictly speaking, students cannot be removed from estimates of net migration because the figure that results from excluding students is **not net migration**. Net migration is an objective demographic quantity, which represents the change in the population that is explained by migration.

The change in the size of a population over a given period is made up of two principal components:

- **Natural change:** the number of births minus the number of deaths
- **Net migration:** the number of immigrants minus the number of emigrants

Population change in a given period is equal to natural change plus net migration during that period.<sup>33</sup>

Because population estimates are produced annually, it makes sense to define migrants as people who change their country of usual residence for a period of at least one year, because that means people are

---

<sup>32</sup> Home Office, [Short-term study visas](#)

<sup>33</sup> Statistical adjustments may also be included as a third component for reconciliation.

counted as members of the resident population of a country for the same number of years that they are usually resident in that country.

Removing specific groups from this time-based definition of migration breaks the mathematical relationships that underpin the population estimates and produces a figure that is not equal to net migration in the demographic sense.

### 7.3 Should students be included in the net migration target?

In November 2010, then Home Secretary, Theresa May made an explicit commitment to “reduce net migration from the hundreds of thousands back down to the tens of thousands”.<sup>34</sup> Since then there has been a debate about whether students should be included within that target.

The chart in Section 2.6 shows estimates of immigration to the UK by main reason for migration from 1991 to 2017. As that chart shows “formal study” was the most common main reason for immigration during the period 2009-12. 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.

In 2018, around 602,000 people migrated into the UK. Of these, around 211,000 (35%) migrated mainly for formal study. Students are therefore still a large component of immigration, even though the number of people migrating mainly for work is now larger.

Those who argue that students should be removed from the net migration target point out that while students are around a quarter of immigration, the public does not tend to think of students as migrants.<sup>35</sup>

Conversely, those who argue that students should be included in the net migration target stress that it only makes sense to discount student migration in so far as students return to their home countries after completing their studies, and if everyone who migrated to the UK to study left the UK at the end of their studies, the contribution of these migrants to net migration would be zero over the long term.

---

<sup>34</sup> Home Secretary, HC Deb, 23 November 2010, col 169

<sup>35</sup> See [“Thinking Behind the Numbers: Understanding Public Opinion on Immigration in Britain”](#), Oxford Migration Observatory, 16 October 2011

## 7.4 How much do international students contribute to net migration?

The International Passenger Survey, which is the principal source of data used to produce the long-term international migration estimates, has asked migrants about their main reason for migration since 1991.

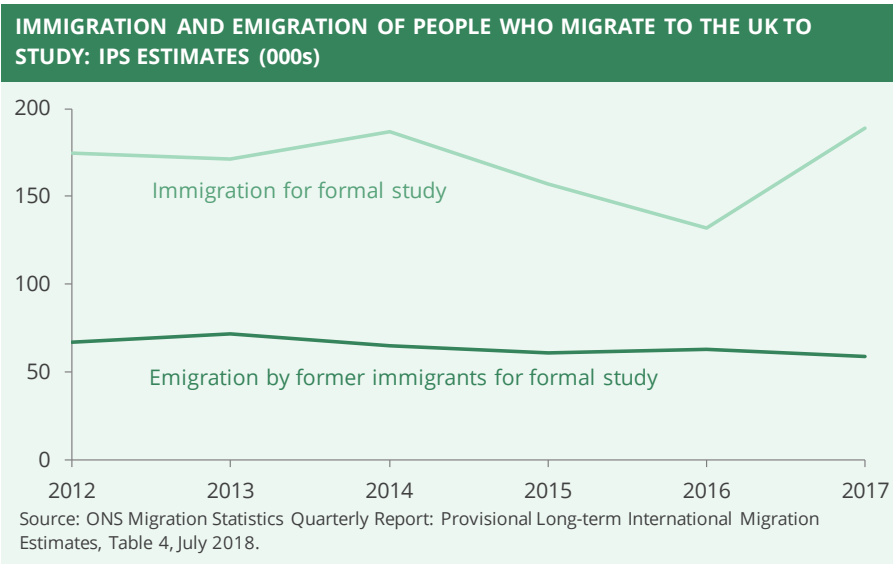
However, as a person who migrates to the UK in order to study may leave in order to work, or to join their family, it is not possible to estimate net migration of students using just this data.

In 2012, the ONS added a question to the IPS asking all emigrants who were former immigrants their main reason for coming to the UK when they originally immigrated.

In principle, this makes it possible to estimate the net migration of people who come to the UK mainly to study. However, the estimates of emigration by former student immigrants are experimental, and **the ONS advises against using them to calculate net migration of international students.**<sup>36</sup>

The chart and table below show the currently available data on the immigration and emigration of people who come to the UK to study. These figures are estimated directly from the International Passenger Survey and differ slightly from the figures shown in Section 2.6 as they have not been adjusted in light of other sources.

It is not possible to estimate the percentage of students who remain in the UK after completing their studies from this data, as the data on outflows relates to inflows in a different period.



<sup>36</sup> ONS, [What's happening with international student migration?](#), 24 August 2017

NET MIGRATION OF PEOPLE MIGRATING TO THE UK TO STUDY, YE DEC 2012- YE DEC 2017 (000s)								
Year	Immigration by people whose main reason for migration was formal study				Emigration by former immigrants whose main reason for immigration was formal study			
	British	EU	Non-EU	Total	British	EU	Non-EU	Total
2012	8	28	139	<b>175</b>	3	15	49	<b>67</b>
2013	9	40	122	<b>171</b>	4	18	50	<b>72</b>
2014	5	48	134	<b>187</b>	2	19	44	<b>65</b>
2015	9	36	112	<b>157</b>	4	15	43	<b>61</b>
2016	7	32	92	<b>132</b>	2	21	40	<b>63</b>
2017	5	56	128	<b>189</b>	1	18	40	<b>59</b>

Notes: 1. Figures since March 2016 are provisional.  
2. The figures on emigration by former reason for immigration are labelled as 'experimental statistics'.

**Source:** ONS, Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, July 2018, Tables 3 and 4

[Link to dataset](#). Note: these are designated as experimental statistics.

But comparing the inflows and outflows of people migrating to the UK to study during the period for which data are available suggests that the number of emigrants who originally migrated to the UK in order to study was less than half the number of immigrants coming to study during the same period.

However, in August 2017 the Home Office published its first analysis of data from a new system of exit checks which was introduced in April 2015. This analysis focussed on the departure of international students from **non-EU countries**, who require a visa to study in the UK.<sup>37</sup>

The exit checks data showed that the proportion of international student migrants from non-EU countries that left the UK after completing their studies was higher than the IPS implied.

According to an ONS analysis of the exit checks data:

- Exit checks data showed that 95% of the international students who immigrated on a long-term visa (12 months or more) either left before the expiry of their visa (69% of the total) or extended their visa to remain in the UK for further study or work (26% of the total). The remainder have no identified record of departure or extension or appeared to depart after their visa had expired.
- Exit checks data following up non-EU former students who departed in 2015 and 2016 indicated that 77% emigrated long-term after their studies (didn't return within 12 months); 15% returned on a short-term visit visa and departed again within 12 months; and 6% returned on a long-term visa (12 months or more) for work or other reasons.<sup>38</sup>

On the basis of this analysis, the ONS concluded:

We now know that there is strong evidence to suggest that the International Passenger Survey (IPS) is likely to underestimate

<sup>37</sup> Home Office, [Second report on statistics being collected under the exit checks programme](#), 24 August 2017

<sup>38</sup> ONS, [What's happening with international student migration?](#), 24 August 2017

student emigration, therefore any attempt to estimate the contribution that students make to net migration is likely to be an overestimate. There is evidence to suggest that for this particular group of immigrants, their intentions (as stated to the IPS) don't accurately reflect their actual migration patterns.<sup>39</sup>

ONS said that while this research provides evidence that the IPS underestimates student emigration, it does not provide evidence to suggest these findings affect total net migration figures.

The ONS investigated why IPS estimates of emigration by former student immigrants may not properly capture emigration of international students.

In order for an IPS respondent who is leaving the UK to be counted as an emigrant who previously immigrated to study, they must:

- Have previously immigrated to study
- Have lived in the UK for twelve months or more
- Be leaving the UK for twelve months or more

The ONS identified three reasons why someone meeting these criteria may not be properly recorded as such by the IPS:

- 1 Students may be likely to overstate their intentions to return to the UK compared with actual behaviour.
- 2 When departing, students may say that they have been in the UK for a shorter time than they actually have.
- 3 Emigrating former students may state a different reason for previously immigrating to the UK.<sup>40</sup>

The ONS said it is undertaking further research to better understand student migration, and is looking at what administrative sources of data may be linked to provide further information on what students do after their studies.

---

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

## 8. Appendix

### 8.1 Background to table in Section 2.5

In this table, estimates for the European Union do not include the UK, which is listed separately.

- 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 EU25 consists of the EU15 and EU8 groupings, plus Malta and Cyprus.
- The EU27 consists of the EU25 plus Bulgaria and Romania.
- The EU28 consists of the EU27 plus Croatia.

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.<sup>41</sup>

### 8.2 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 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.

---

<sup>41</sup> ONS, [International Passenger Survey 3.25, country of birth - current and old country groupings, UK](#)



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 Table 2, 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.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> For a full explanation of these geographies, see Background to tables in Section 2.5 above.

## About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email [hcinfo@parliament.uk](mailto:hcinfo@parliament.uk).

## Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).