



## BRIEFING PAPER

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# Employment by country of birth and nationality

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### Note

The Office for National Statistics have suspended the publication of employment levels by country of birth and nationality from the beginning of 2020 onwards. They are currently carrying out a reweighting exercise of this data, which is expected to be completed in July. Further information is available in the ONS article [Labour Force Survey weighting methodology](#).

This Library briefing paper **will not be updated until these statistics are republished**. Please note that the currently published version of this briefing paper does contain the employment levels data that has subsequently been suspended. This information should be used with caution as it may change when the data is republished.

The ONS continue to publish employment rates by ethnic group and this is available in the ONS [Employment by country of birth and nationality](#) dataset.

## 1. Employment by Nationality

### Summary

In July-September 2020, there were 3.16 million people working in the UK who were not UK nationals, 9.7% of all people in employment. This included:

- 1.87 million people who were nationals of the 27 EU countries (5.8%)
- 1.29 million people who were nationals of countries outside the EU (4.0%)

The remaining 32.51 million people in employment (90.3%) were UK nationals.

The number of people working in the UK who were not UK nationals fell by 428,000 in the year to July to September 2020. The number of EU nationals in work fell by 364,000, and the number of non-EU nationals in work fell by 65,000.

There was a 142,000 increase in the number of UK nationals in work in the same year.

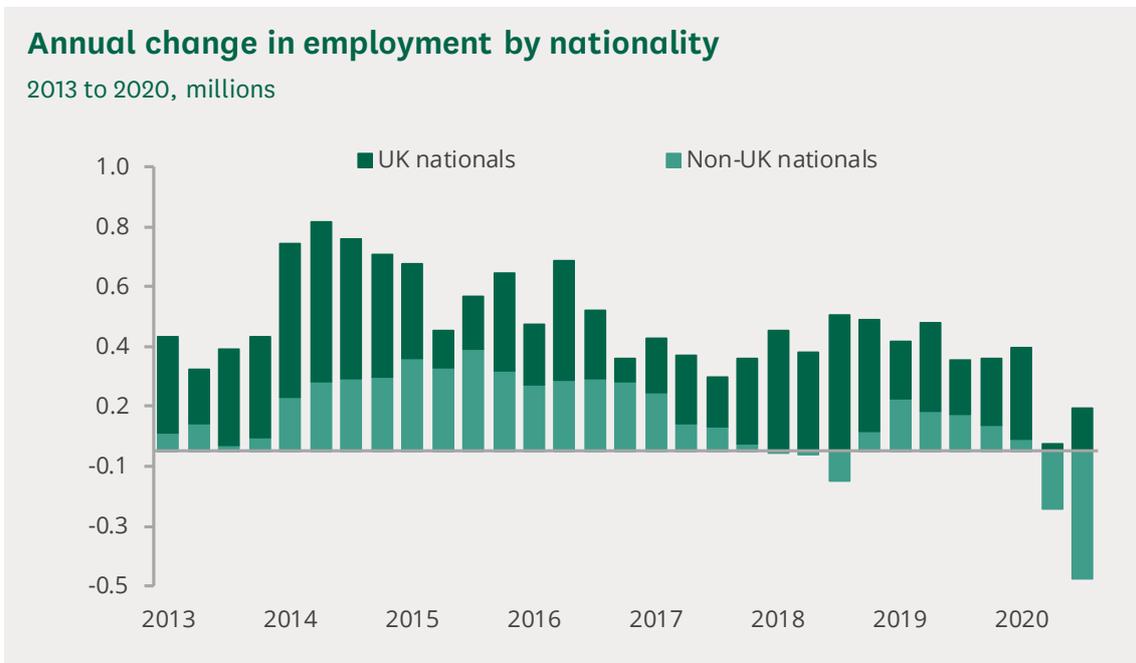
## 1.1 Change in employment levels

The number of non-UK nationals who are employed in the UK in July-September 2020 has increased by 221% from the same period in 1997. During this period the number of non-UK nationals working in the UK has increased by 2.18 million.

Since 1997, the share of all people in employment who are non-UK nationals has increased from 3.7% to 9.7%.

The number of **UK nationals** in employment has also increased, but at a slower rate. There were 3.63 million more UK nationals in employment in July-September 2020 than in 1997, a 14.1% increase.

Since 2012 there have generally been increases in the number of non-UK nationals in employment. However, in the first three quarters of 2018, the number of non-UK nationals in employment fell compared with the year before, as shown in the chart below. The second and third quarters of 2020 have also seen annual falls in employment of non-UK nationals, with the third quarter seeing the largest annual fall on record.

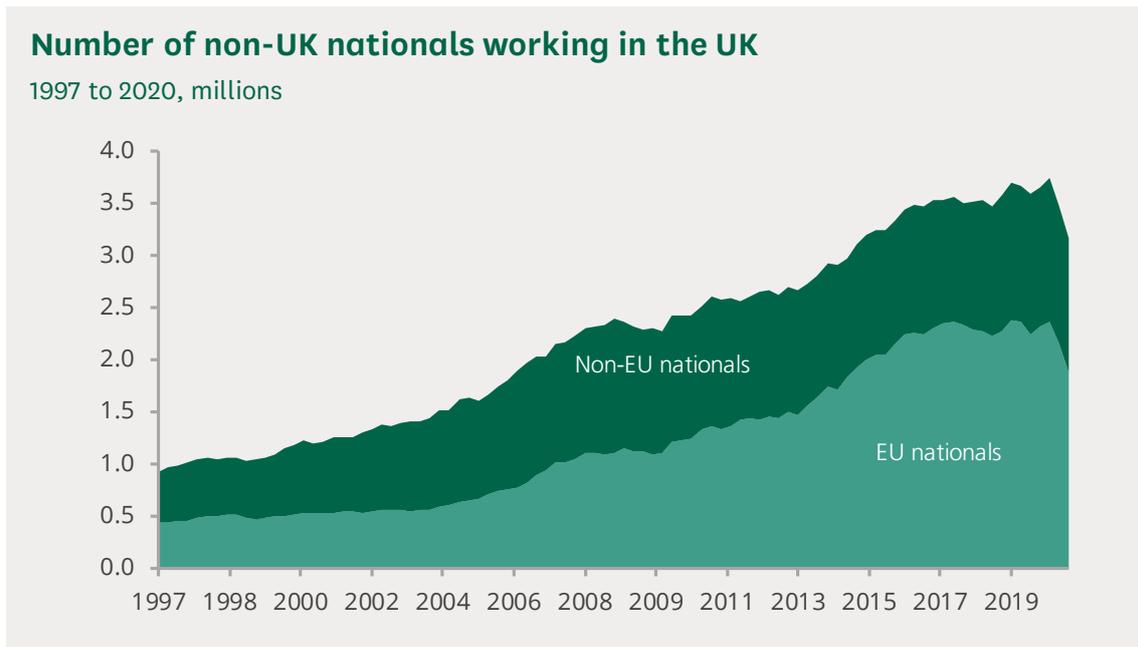


Source: ONS [UK Labour Market Statistical Bulletin, Table EMP06](#), 10 November 2020

### EU and non-EU nationals

Employment of **EU nationals** fell by 364,000 over the year to July-September 2020 to 1.87 million, while the number of **non-EU nationals** in employment fell by 65,000 to 1.29 million.

The chart below shows how the number of EU and non-EU nationals in employment has changed since 1997:



**Source:** ONS [UK Labour Market Statistical Bulletin, Table EMP06](#), 10 November 2020

The number of **non-EU nationals** working in the UK grew steadily between 1997 and 2008 but has since remained relatively flat.

Employment of **EU nationals** was fairly steady up to the early 2000s but grew strongly between 2004 and 2008 (following the accession of the A8 countries<sup>1</sup> to the EU) and again between 2013 and 2017. This means that the growth in employment levels for non-UK nationals between 2013 and 2017 can mostly be attributed to more EU nationals working in the UK.

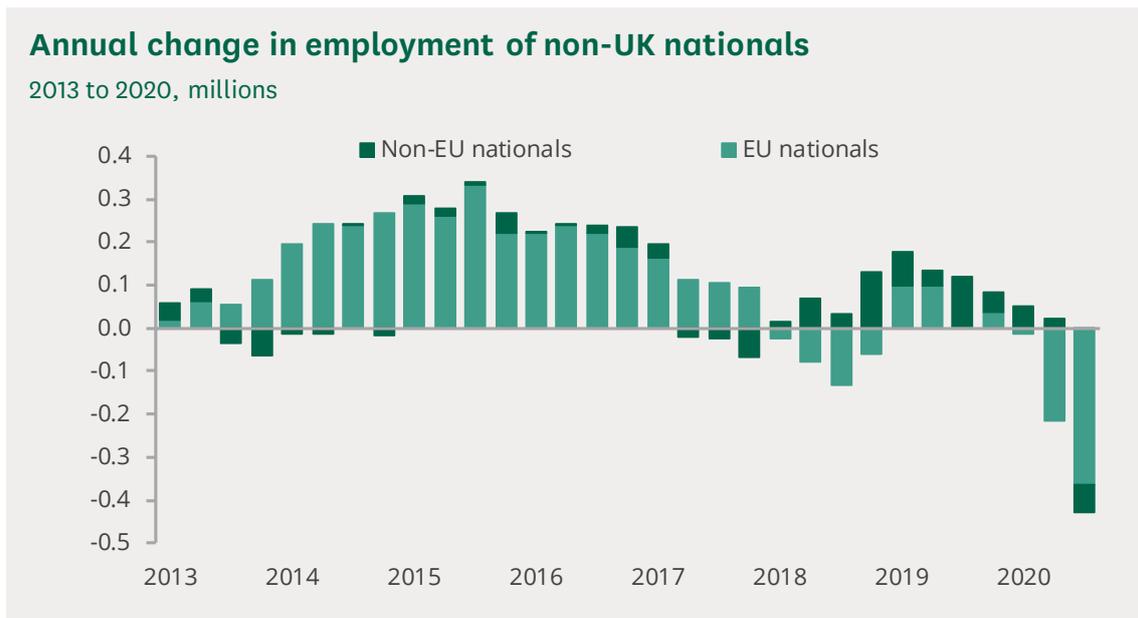
Likewise, the drop-off in the number of non-UK nationals in employment in 2018 was driven by falls in the number of EU-nationals. Throughout that year, there were falls in the number of EU-nationals in employment compared to the year before.

Whilst employment of EU nationals began to increase again in 2019, the first three quarters of 2020 have seen falls in EU nationals in employment in the UK. Quarter three had the largest annual fall on record, with 85% of the fall attributed to EU nationals in employment.

The chart below shows the annual change in employment of EU and non-EU nationals since 2013.

<sup>1</sup> Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

#### 4 Employment by country of birth and nationality



Source: ONS [UK Labour Market Statistical Bulletin, Table EMP06](#), 10 November 2020

## 2. Employment by Country of Birth

### Summary

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

In July-September 2020, there were 5.18 million people in employment who were born outside the UK, 15.9% of all people in employment. This included:

- 1.98 million people born in EU countries (6.7%)
- 3.19 million people born outside the EU (9.9%)

The remaining 27.33 million people in employment (84.0%) were born in the UK.

The number of people in work in the year to July-September 2020 fell by 594,000 for those born outside the UK, while the number born in the UK increased by 299,000. Employment for those born outside the EU fell by 208,000, while employment for people born in EU countries fell by 386,000.

### 2.1 Change in employment levels

Employment of people born outside the UK has increased by 3.20 million since 1997, to 5.18 million people in July-September 2020. Over two and a half times as many people born outside the UK were in employment in 2020 as in 1997.

The share of people in employment who were born outside the UK increased from 7.5% in 1997 to 15.9% in 2020. Over the same period, employment of people born in the UK increased by 2.86 million, an increase of 11.6%.

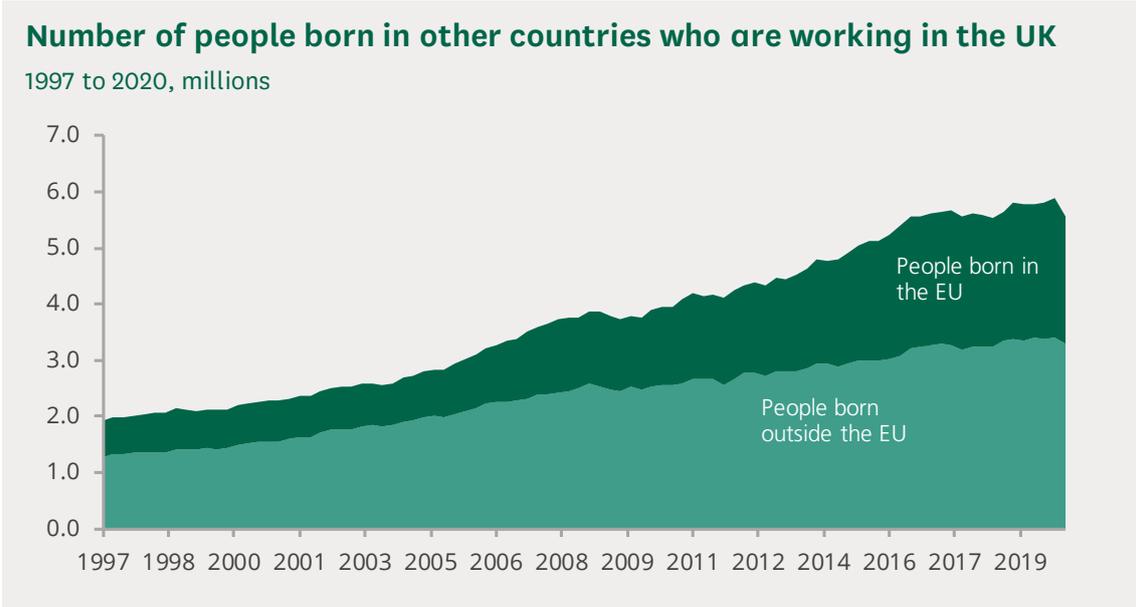
The proportion of workers who were born in the UK has fallen from 92.5% in 1997 to 80.0% in 2020.

There have been annual falls in the number of workers born outside the UK in two of the last three years to July-September. There was a fall of 594,000 in the year to July-September 2020, and a fall of 141,000 in the year to July-September 2018. In the year to July-September 2019, there was an increase of 238,000.

Between July-September 2010 and July-September 2017, the number of people born outside the UK in employment increased by an average of 252,000 per year.

In contrast, the increases in employment levels for those born in the UK have increased more in recent years compared to the increases seen earlier this decade. The number of workers born in the UK increased by 299,000 in the year to July-September 2020, and by 300,000 in the year to July-September 2019.

Between April-June 2010 and April-June 2017, the number of people born in the UK in employment increased by an average of 141,000 per year.



Source: ONS [UK Labour Market Statistical Bulletin, Table EMP06](#), 10 November 2020

### 3. Employment rates

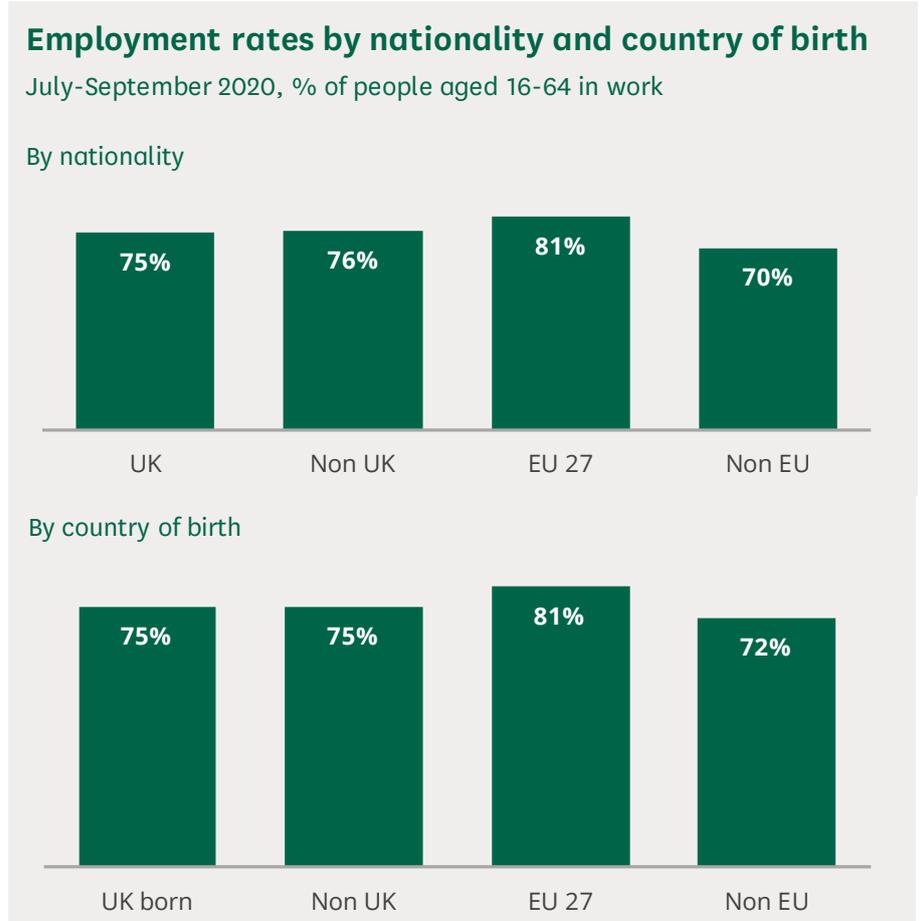
In July-September 2020, the employment rate for non-UK nationals, was 0.9 percentage point higher than the rate for UK nationals, and the employment rate for people born outside the UK was 0.2 percentage point higher than for those born in the UK.

However, looking more closely at the figures shows that employment rates vary significantly depending on which country a non-UK national or a person born outside the UK comes from.

#### Nationality

The employment rate for all non-UK nationals was 76.1%, compared to a rate of 75.2% for UK nationals.

Nationals of EU countries had an employment rate of 81.3%, compared to 69.6% for non-EU nationals.



Source: ONS [UK Labour Market Statistical Bulletin, Table EMP06](#), 10 November 2020

### **Country of Birth**

The employment rate for people aged 16-64 who were born in the UK was 75.3%.

The employment rate for those born outside the UK was around the same, at 75.4%, although this varied by country of birth. The employment rate for those born in EU countries was 81.1%, while the employment rate was 72.2% for those born outside the EU.

## Interpreting these statistics

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

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

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

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

### Further reading

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