



BRIEFING PAPER

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Migration Statistics

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Inside:

1. Understanding migration statistics
2. Migration in the UK
3. Migrants living in the UK
4. Migration in EU countries
5. Migrants living in EU countries
6. Migration between the UK and other EU countries
7. Appendix



Contents

Summary	3
1. Understanding migration statistics	4
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
2. Migration in the UK	7
2.1 Revisions to net migration	8
2.2 How has net migration changed during recent Parliaments?	9
2.3 Historic migration estimates	10
2.4 From which countries do people migrate to the UK?	12
2.5 Why do people migrate to the UK?	14
3. Migrants living in the UK	16
4. Migration in EU countries	18
5. Migrants living in EU countries	20
6. Migration between the UK and other EU countries	22
6.1 EU Migrants living in the UK	22
2011 Census estimates	22
Labour Force Survey estimates	22
6.2 British migrants living in other EU countries	23
Eurostat statistics	23
Institute for Public Policy Research estimates	23
Oxford Migration Observatory analysis of 2011 Census data	24
United Nations estimates	24
6.3 Conclusion	24
7. Appendix	26
7.1 Background to Table 1	26
7.2 Background to Tables 2-3	26

Summary

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 two decades, both immigration and emigration have increased to historically high levels, with immigration exceeding emigration by more than 100,000 in every year since 1998.

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.

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 how national populations are changing due to the movement of people around the world. 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.¹

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 who are nevertheless nationals of the country in which they 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 self-reported answer may express a sense of cultural affiliation rather than

¹ This is the United Nations recommended definition of a migrant.

their actual legal 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 also somewhat arbitrary; as the number of people meeting it would change were the minimum period of residence longer or shorter than a year.²

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 comes 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.³

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.

² 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.

³ 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”.⁴ In this sense, asylum seekers are generally counted as a subset of migrants and are 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. While certain refugee movements face neither external obstacles to free movement nor is impelled by urgent needs and a lack of alternative means of satisfying them in the country of present residence, others may blend into the extreme of relocation entirely uncontrolled by the people on the move.⁵

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 2014, there were 25,033 applications for asylum in the UK, covering 32,344 people comprising asylum seekers and their dependants. In the same year, immigration was approximately 632,000. The ONS estimates that asylum seekers were around 4.1% of immigration in 2014.⁶

⁴ 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.

⁵ United Nations Glossary of Migration Related Terms, [Migrant/Migration](#)

⁶ See Table 1.01 Components and Adjustments in the ONS [Long-Term International Migration](#) estimates.

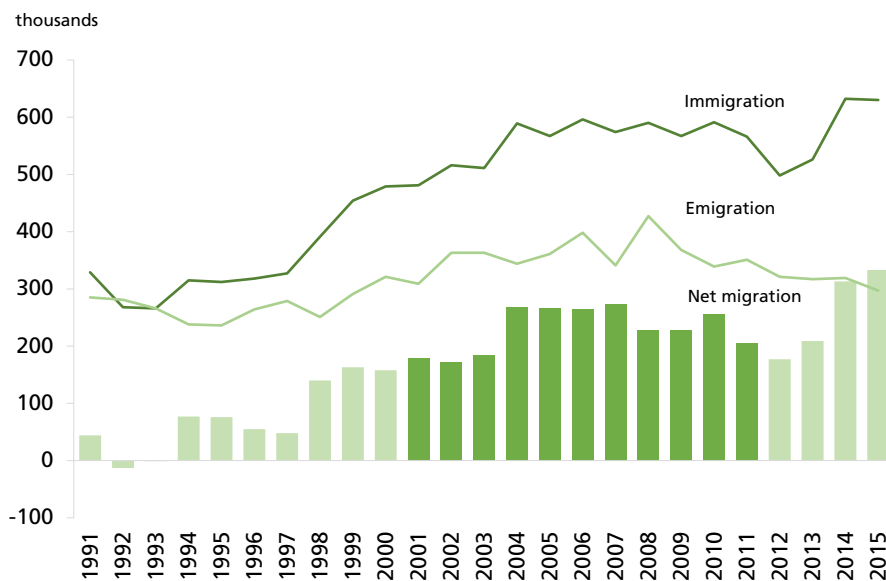
2. Migration in the UK

The most comprehensive estimates of long-term migration to and from the UK come from the ONS long-term international migration (LTIM) series, which provides 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.

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.⁷

Chart 1: Long-term international migration in the UK, 1991-2015



Notes: 1. Net migration estimates for the years 2001 to 2011 have been revised (see Section 2.1. below). Revised estimates are shown in a darker colour. Estimates of immigration and emigration in these years are unrevised and are not consistent with the revised net figures. Sources: [ONS Long-Term International Migration Estimates 2 series \(LTIM calendar year\)](#); [ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, May 2016](#)

Chart 1 shows LTIM estimates of immigration, emigration and net migration in the UK from 1991 to 2015. During this period immigration increased 91%, rising from 329,000 in 1991 to 630,000 in 2015. Emigration increased between 1991 and 2008, but subsequently fell to around 297,000 in 2015, compared with 285,000 in 1991.

⁷ Further information on the methodology for the LTIM and IPS estimates is available in the ONS guide: [Methodology to estimate Long-Term International Migration](#)

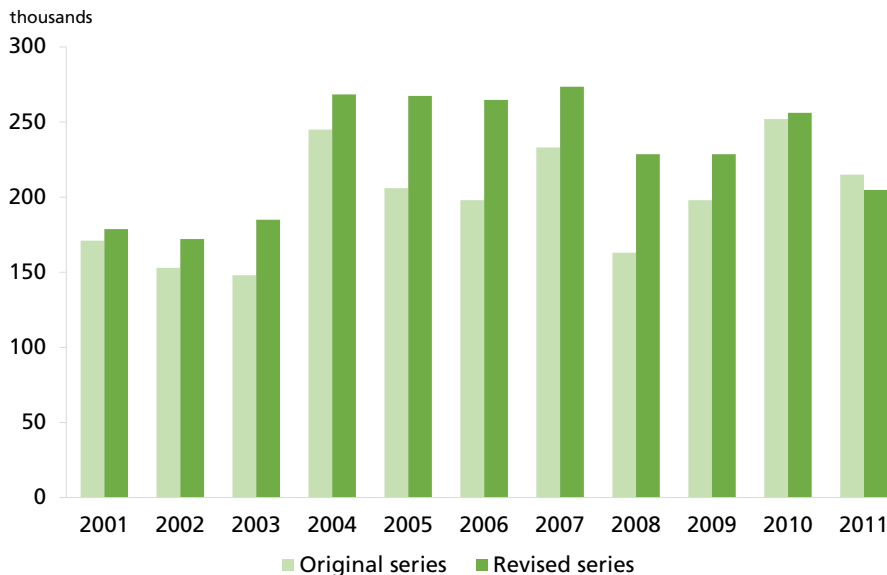
Immigration has grown faster than emigration, leading to an increase in net migration from an annual average of 37,000 in the period 1991 to 1995 to an annual average of 249,000 in the period 2011 to 2015.

2.1 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”.⁸

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 Chart 2.

Chart 2: Original and revised estimates of net migration, 2001-11



Source: [ONS, Quality of Long-Term International Migration Estimates, 2001-11](#)

Because the underestimation of net migration was identified indirectly from the Census, the ONS is 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

⁸ ONS, [Methods used to revise the national population estimates for mid-2002 to mid-2010](#), 13 Dec 2012

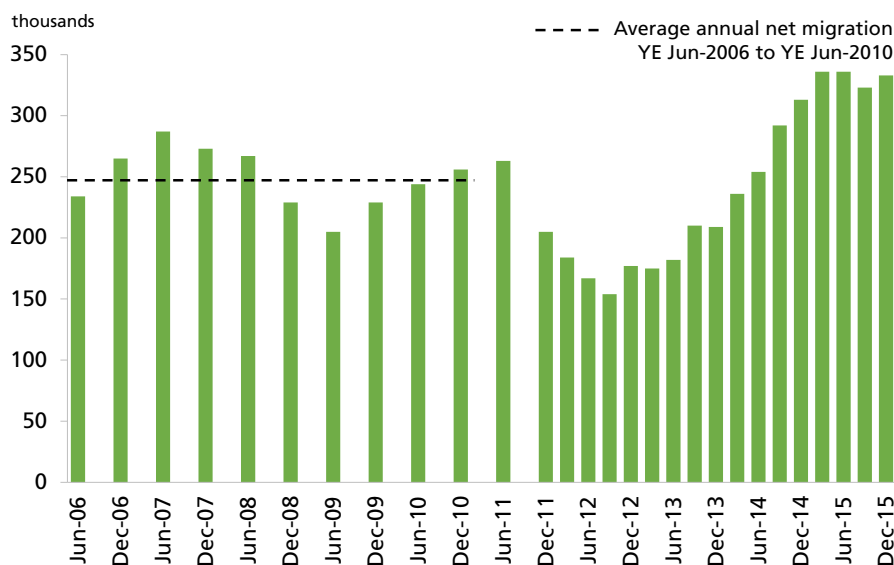
2001-2011 are not consistent with the available estimates of immigration and emigration in the same period. The ONS recommends that users of migration statistics should continue using the original LTIM series for immigration and emigration but should bear in mind the caveat that the headline net migration estimates have now been revised.

2.2 How has net migration changed during recent Parliaments?

Under the 2010 Coalition Government, the Home Office said that it aimed to reduce net migration “from the hundreds of thousands back down to the tens of thousands” by the end of the 2010 Parliament.⁹ Following the 2015 General Election, Prime Minister David Cameron said the new Conservative government still aims to reduce net migration to this level.¹⁰

During the 2005 Parliament average annual net migration was around 247,000 a year; so the Government would have needed to reduce net migration by around 150,000 from its previous level to achieve net migration of less than 100,000 by May 2015. So how has net migration changed since 2010?

Chart 3: Net migration, Years ending each quarter, 2006-2015



Source: ONS, [ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, May 2016](#)

LTIM estimates of net migration are produced quarterly, with detailed breakdowns of the figures produced for migration in each calendar year. Chart 3 shows estimates of net migration in the years ending each quarter, from the year ending June 2006 to the year ending December 2015.¹¹

⁹ [HC Deb 23 Nov 2010 C169](#)

¹⁰ Prime Minister’s Office, [PM speech on immigration](#), 21 May 2015

¹¹ These are the revised estimates, as explained in Section 2.1 above.

Consistent estimates for years ending March and September 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 is based on data for the preceding twelve months, so even though estimates are now 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 (as in Chart 1).

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.

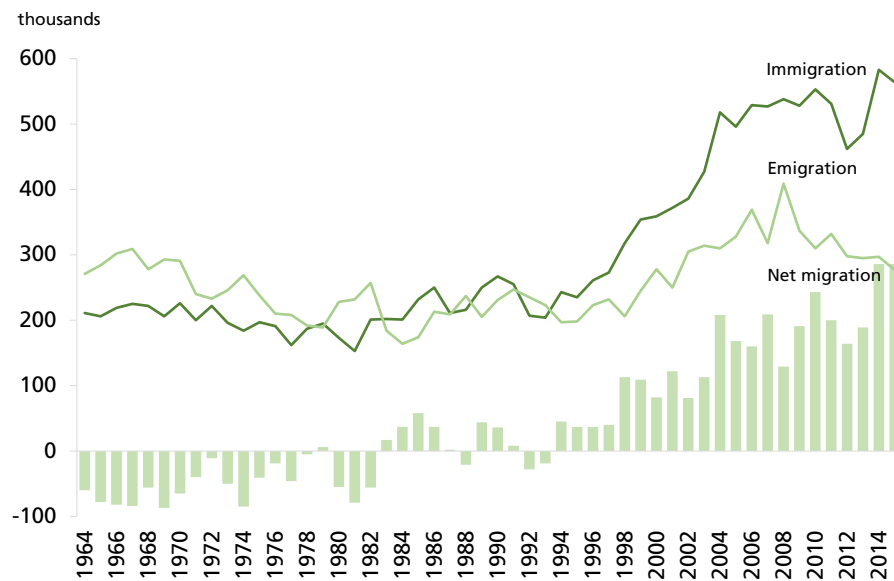
Since then, net migration has risen again, reaching 336,000 in the year ending March 2015, which was around 89,000 higher than annual average net migration during the 2005 Parliament. This was the highest estimate of net migration in any twelve month period. Before the year ending March 2015, the highest estimate of net migration was 320,000 in the year ending June 2005. The most recent estimate of net migration is 333,000 in the year ending December 2015.

2.3 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. 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).

Chart 4 shows IPS estimates of long-term international migration from 1964 to 2015. 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.

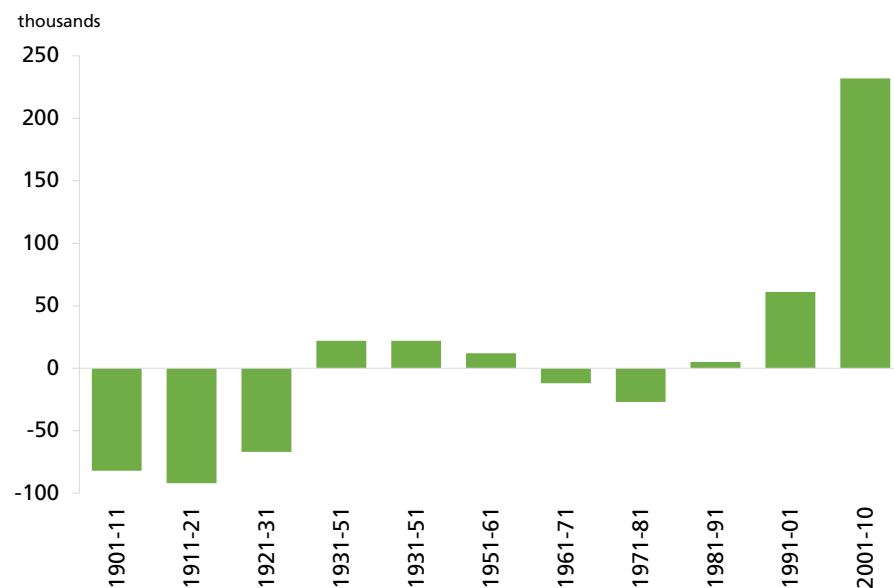
Chart 4: IPS estimates of international migration, UK, 1964-2015



Sources: [ONS Long-Term International Migration Estimates 3 series \(IPS calendar year\)](#); [ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, May 2016](#); ONS Annual Abstract of Statistics

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.

Chart 5: Estimated average annual net migration, UK, 1901-2010



Source: ONS Annual Abstract of Statistics 2004, [ONS Long-Term International Migration Estimates 2 series \(LTIM calendar year\)](#)

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.

2.4 From which countries do people migrate to the UK?

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. Table 1 shows immigration to the UK in 2014, broken down by these categories.

Table 1: Immigration by nationality, country of birth, and country of last residence, 2014

	Thousands			%		
	Nationality	Country of birth	Country of last residence	Nationality	Country of birth	Country of last residence
United Kingdom	81	68	0	12.8%	10.8%	0.0%
European Union	264	256	287	41.8%	40.5%	45.4%
EU 15	129	121	155	20.4%	19.1%	24.5%
EU A8	80	81	79	12.7%	12.8%	12.5%
EU Other	55	54	53	8.7%	8.5%	8.4%
Non European Union	287	308	345	45.4%	48.7%	54.6%
Old Commonwealth	37	39	59	5.9%	6.2%	9.3%
New Commonwealth	90	99	95	14.2%	15.7%	15.0%
Other foreign	160	171	191	25.3%	27.1%	30.2%
Total	632	632	632	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: See Background to Table 1 in the Appendix. Source: [ONS Long-Term International Migration Estimates 2 series \(LTIM calendar year\)](#)

In 2014, 13% of people migrating to the UK were British nationals, 42% were nationals of other EU countries, and 45% were nationals of non-EU countries. This means just under half of migrants entering the UK in 2014 were subject to immigration control.

Charts 6 and 7 below shows trends in immigration and net migration by nationality from 1991 to 2015. The data in these charts does not reflect the revisions to net migration since the 2011 Census, so estimates of immigration and net migration of EU nationals in the period 2004 to 2008 are likely to be underestimates (see Section 2.1 above).

Chart 6: Immigration by nationality, Years ending each quarter, YE Dec 1991 – YE Dec 2015

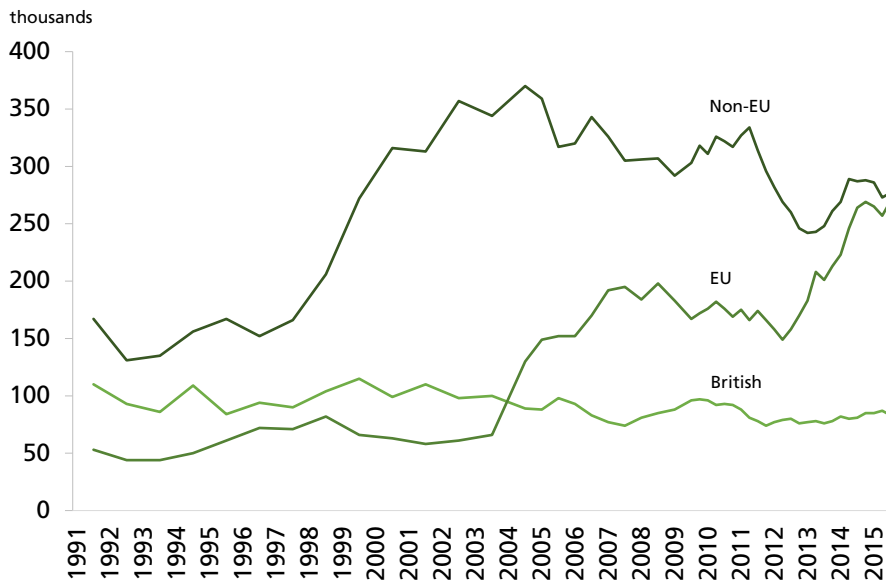
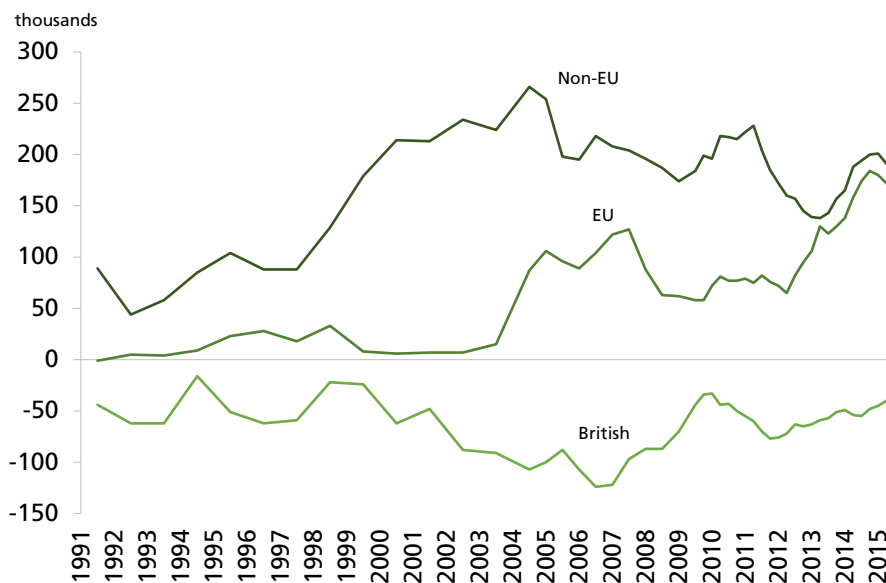


Chart 7: Net migration by nationality, Years ending each quarter, YE Dec 1991 – YE Dec 2015



Sources: [ONS Long-Term International Migration Estimates 2 series \(LTIM calendar year\)](#); [ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, May 2016](#)

As the chart shows, net inward migration of non-EU nationals fell during the first half of the last Parliament, as the criteria for obtaining student, family and work visas were tightened with the aim of reducing non-EU net migration.

Net migration of non-EU nationals fell to 138,000 in the year ending September 2013, which was its lowest level since 1998. However, net migration of non-EU nationals began to increase after that, reaching 201,000 in the year ending June 2015, broadly the same level as at the start of the last Parliament when net migration of non-EU nationals was 196,000 in the year ending June 2010. Net migration of non-EU nationals in the year ending December 2015 was 188,000.

Net migration of EU nationals rose from 65,000 in the year ending September 2012 to 184,000 in the year ending March 2015, and was 184,000 in the year ending December 2015.

Although these recent estimates appear substantially higher than at any other point shown in Chart 7, it is possible that net migration of EU nationals reached a similar level during the period 2005-2006, given the size of the revisions to net migration and the likely cause of its underestimation (see Section 2.1 above).

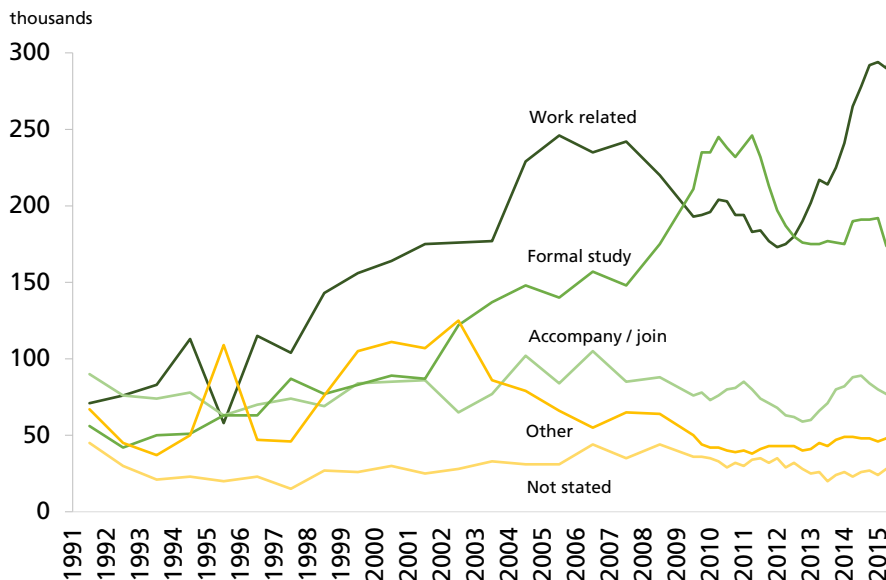
There has been net emigration of British nationals in every year since the LTIM series began in 1991.

2.5 Why do people migrate to the UK?

Chart 8 shows ONS estimates of immigration broken down by main reason for immigration. In the year ending December 2015, work was the most common main reason for immigration, while formal study was the second most common main reason.

Study was the most common main reason for immigration during the period 2009-12, and the reduction in the number of people migrating to the UK to study since then reflects a reduction in the number of Tier 4 student visas issued to students from outside the EEA and Switzerland (see Chart 9 below).

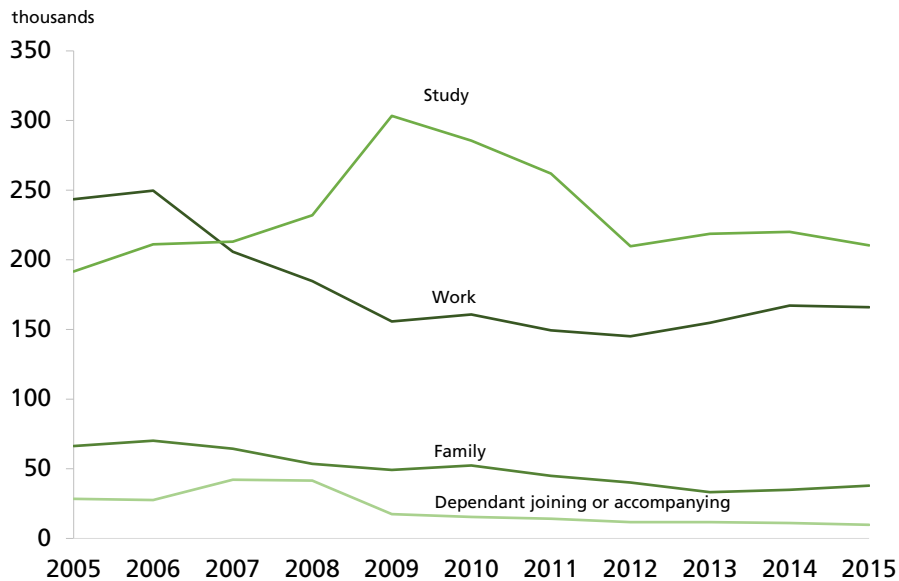
Chart 8: Immigration by main reason, Years ending each quarter, YE Dec 1991 – YE Dec 2015



Sources: [ONS Long-Term International Migration Estimates 2 series \(LTIM calendar year\)](#); [ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, May 2016](#)

Chart 9 shows longer-term visas issued by broad category in each year from 2005 to 2015. These are visas granted to nationals of countries outside the EEA and Switzerland that grant leave to remain in the UK for longer periods, for the purposes of work, study and family relationships.

Chart 9: Longer-term entry clearance visas granted by broad visa category, 2005-2015



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

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

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.¹²

¹² 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](#)

3. Migrants living in the UK

There are fewer foreign nationals living in the UK than there are people born in other countries. Between January 2014 and December 2014 there were approximately 5.3 million people with non-British nationality living in the UK and 8.3 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. The only migrant group that is larger by nationality than by country of birth are migrants from the eight "accession" countries that joined the EU in May 2004. This is because children of accession migrants born in the UK retain their accession nationality. Tables 2 and 3 show estimates of the foreign national and foreign born population in each nation and region of the UK.

Table 2: Estimated population of the UK by nationality, 2014

	Thousands					%				
	British	EU 27	EU15	EU8	Non EU	British	EU 27	EU15	EU8	Non EU
England	48,676	2,617	1,222	1,144	2,222	90.9%	4.9%	2.3%	2.1%	4.2%
North East	2,497	40	15	21	42	96.8%	1.6%	0.6%	0.8%	1.6%
North West	6,654	216	94	111	178	94.4%	3.1%	1.3%	1.6%	2.5%
Yorkshire & Humbs	4,998	156	49	101	143	94.3%	2.9%	0.9%	1.9%	2.7%
East Midlands	4,250	192	64	117	117	93.2%	4.2%	1.4%	2.6%	2.6%
West Midlands	5,232	199	66	116	208	92.8%	3.5%	1.2%	2.1%	3.7%
East	5,494	257	112	122	169	92.8%	4.3%	1.9%	2.1%	2.9%
London	6,493	1,024	578	315	930	76.8%	12.1%	6.8%	3.7%	11.0%
South East	8,034	361	175	158	318	92.2%	4.1%	2.0%	1.8%	3.6%
South West	5,023	171	69	83	117	94.5%	3.2%	1.3%	1.6%	2.2%
Wales	2,940	67	26	37	52	96.1%	2.2%	0.8%	1.2%	1.7%
Scotland	4,981	173	53	113	109	94.6%	3.3%	1.0%	2.1%	2.1%
Northern Ireland	1,715	81	38	42	24	94.2%	4.4%	2.1%	2.3%	1.3%
United Kingdom	58,312	2,938	1,340	1,336	2,406	91.6%	4.6%	2.1%	2.1%	3.8%

Table 3: Estimated population of the UK by country of birth, 2014

	Thousands					%				
	UK	EU 27	EU15	EU8	Non EU	UK	EU 27	EU15	EU8	Non EU
England	45,918	2,680	1,300	1,071	4,912	85.8%	5.0%	2.4%	2.0%	9.2%
North East	2,446	52	27	20	82	94.8%	2.0%	1.0%	0.8%	3.2%
North West	6,437	235	113	108	375	91.3%	3.3%	1.6%	1.5%	5.3%
Yorkshire & Humbs	4,820	179	73	94	298	91.0%	3.4%	1.4%	1.8%	5.6%
East Midlands	4,079	201	75	109	278	89.5%	4.4%	1.6%	2.4%	6.1%
West Midlands	4,987	212	82	110	441	88.4%	3.8%	1.5%	2.0%	7.8%
East	5,270	275	136	111	376	89.0%	4.6%	2.3%	1.9%	6.3%
London	5,359	929	484	294	2,153	63.4%	11.0%	5.7%	3.5%	25.5%
South East	7,647	398	213	146	665	87.7%	4.6%	2.4%	1.7%	7.6%
South West	4,872	199	97	78	244	91.6%	3.7%	1.8%	1.5%	4.6%
Wales	2,880	80	40	34	100	94.1%	2.6%	1.3%	1.1%	3.3%
Scotland	4,882	181	71	101	200	92.7%	3.4%	1.3%	1.9%	3.8%
Northern Ireland	1,696	84	45	36	40	93.1%	4.6%	2.5%	2.0%	2.2%
United Kingdom	55,375	3,025	1,456	1,242	5,252	87.0%	4.7%	2.3%	2.0%	8.2%

Note: Figures may not sum due to independent rounding. See Background to Tables 2-3 in the Appendix. Source: [ONS Population by Country of Birth and Nationality 2014](#)

17 Migration Statistics

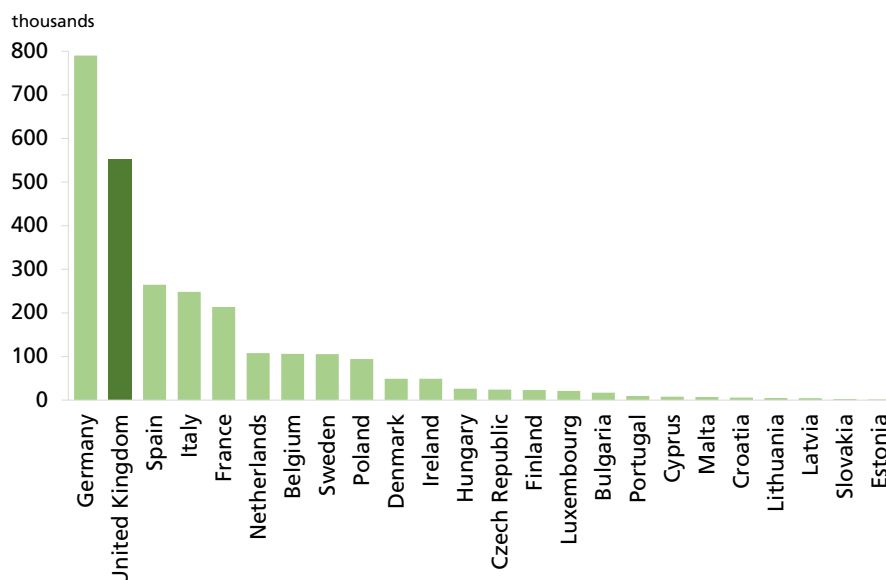
The UK's migrant population is concentrated in London. Around 37% of people living in the UK who were born abroad live in the capital city. Similarly, around 37% of people living in London were born outside the UK, compared with 13% for the UK as a whole.

After London, the English regions with the highest proportions of their population born abroad were the South East (12.2%), the West Midlands (11.6%), and the East of England (11.0%). In each of these regions the proportion of people born abroad was lower than for England as a whole (14.2%), where the percentage was pulled up by London. Of all the nations and regions of the UK, the North East had the lowest proportion of its population born abroad (5.2%), followed by Wales (5.9%), Northern Ireland (6.8%), and Scotland (7.2%).

4. Migration in EU countries

Data that allows for international comparisons of migration flows in European Union countries is 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 2008.¹³ 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.¹⁴

Chart 10: Immigration of foreign nationals, EU countries, 2014



Notes: 1. Data was unavailable for four EU28 countries: Austria, Greece, Romania and Slovenia. 2. Figures for Ireland are for April to March rather than January to December. Source: Eurostat, [migr_imm1ctz](#)

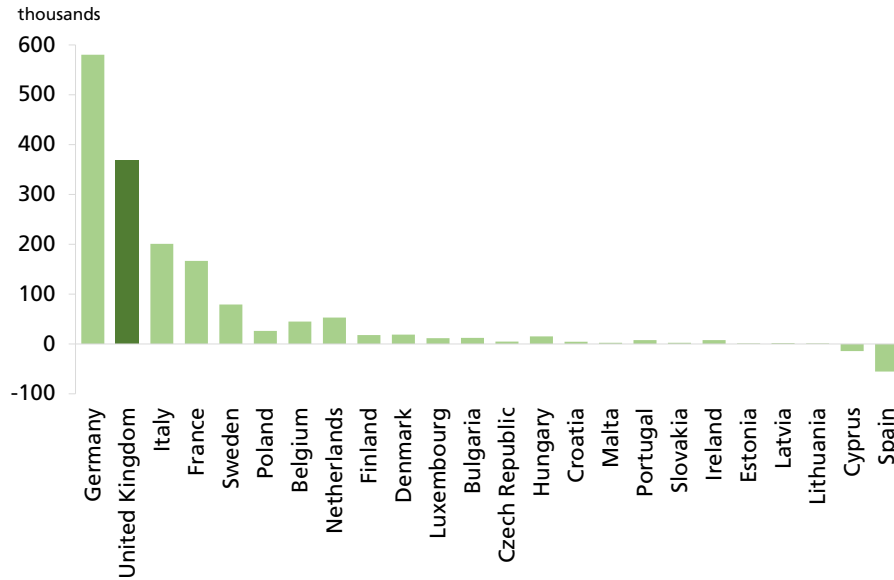
The United Kingdom is among the EU countries with the largest inflows of foreign nationals, but it is not unique. In 2014, the EU countries with the largest inflows of foreign nationals were Germany (790,000), the UK (551,000), Spain (264,000) and Italy (248,000).

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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 [Migration Metadata and Quality Reports](#), which are published in the [Eurostat metadata](#) and can be accessed through the [Eurostat online database](#).

In terms of net migration (those arriving minus those leaving) the countries with the largest net inflows of foreign nationals were Germany (580,000), the UK (368,000), Italy (201,000) and France (167,000). The UK is one of four EU countries with net inward migration of foreign nationals in the hundreds of thousands.

Chart 11: Net migration of foreign nationals, EU countries, 2014



Notes: 1. Data was unavailable for four EU28 countries: Austria, Greece, Romania and Slovenia. 2. Figures for Ireland are for April to March rather than January to December. Sources: Eurostat, [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 266,000, while net migration was around 100,000. By 2014, immigration of foreign nationals had increased to 790,000, with net migration of foreign nationals rising to 580,000.

The UK was the EU country with the largest net outflow of domestic nationals in the period 2000 to 2007. Net emigration of domestic nationals from the UK has fallen in recent years, from a peak of around 124,000 in 2006 to 43,000 in 2010. However, it has increased since then and was 55,000 in 2014. Poland, Italy and France had higher net outflows of domestic nationals than the UK in 2014.

5. Migrants living in EU countries

Table 4 shows Eurostat estimates of the number foreign-national and foreign-born migrants living in EU28 countries on 1 January 2015. The figures are presented both as counts and as a percentage of each country's total population.¹⁵

Table 4: Foreign-national and foreign-born populations of EU28 countries, as at 1 Jan 2015

	Foreign-national		Foreign-born		Total
	Number	% of total population	Number	% of total population	Number
Belgium	1,300,493	11.6%	1,808,993	16.1%	11,258,434
Bulgaria	65,622	0.9%	123,803	1.7%	7,202,198
Czech Republic	457,323	4.3%	416,454	4.0%	10,538,275
Denmark	422,492	7.5%	595,876	10.5%	5,659,715
Germany	7,539,774	9.3%	10,220,418	12.6%	81,197,537
Estonia	191,317	14.6%	192,850	14.7%	1,313,271
Ireland	550,555	11.9%	749,943	16.2%	4,628,949
Greece	821,969	7.6%	1,242,924	11.4%	10,858,018
Spain	4,454,354	9.6%	5,891,208	12.7%	46,449,565
France	4,355,707	6.6%	7,908,661	11.9%	66,415,161
Croatia	36,679	0.9%	561,093	13.3%	4,225,316
Italy	5,014,437	8.2%	5,805,328	9.5%	60,795,612
Cyprus	144,599	17.1%	176,693	20.9%	847,008
Latvia	298,433	15.0%	265,418	13.4%	1,986,096
Lithuania	22,470	0.8%	136,021	4.7%	2,921,262
Luxembourg	258,679	45.9%	248,888	44.2%	562,958
Hungary	145,727	1.5%	475,508	4.8%	9,855,571
Malta	27,476	6.4%	42,430	9.9%	429,344
Netherlands	773,288	4.6%	1,996,318	11.8%	16,900,726
Austria	1,131,164	13.2%	1,474,560	17.2%	8,576,261
Poland	108,279	0.3%	611,855	1.6%	38,005,614
Portugal	395,195	3.8%	864,814	8.3%	10,374,822
Romania	88,771	0.4%	281,048	1.4%	19,870,647
Slovenia	101,532	4.9%	237,616	11.5%	2,062,874
Slovakia	61,766	1.1%	177,624	3.3%	5,421,349
Finland	218,803	4.0%	314,856	5.8%	5,471,753
Sweden	731,215	7.5%	1,602,522	16.4%	9,747,355
United Kingdom	5,422,094	8.4%	8,411,021	13.0%	64,875,165

Sources: Eurostat, [migr_pop1ctz](#) and [migr_pop3ctb](#)

The EU countries with the largest number of foreign-national residents in January 2015 were Germany (7.5 million), the UK (5.4 million), Italy (5.0 million), Spain (4.5 million), and France (4.4 million).

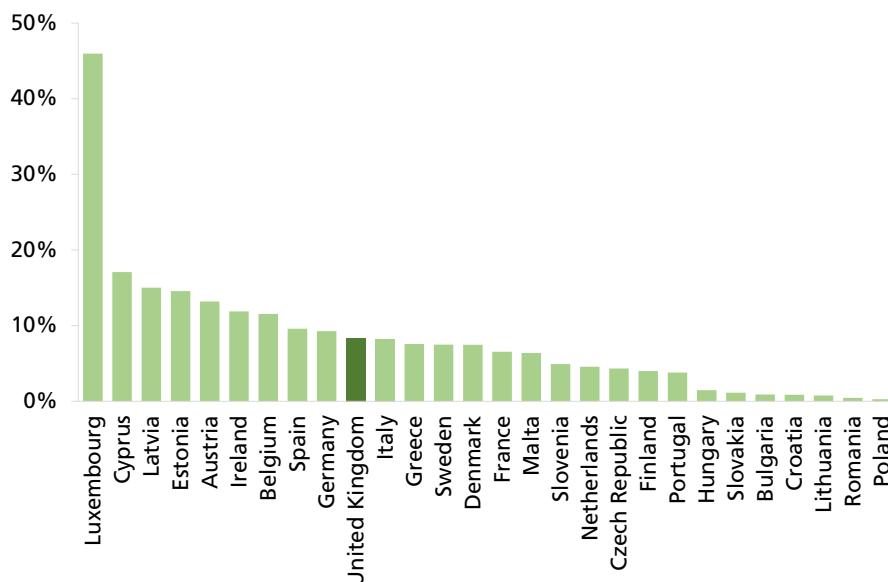
¹⁵ Note that these are estimates of the size of each country's migrant population on 1 Jan 2015, so the estimates given here for the UK differs slightly from those provided in Section 3.

The countries with largest number of foreign-born residents were Germany (10.2 million), the UK (8.4 million), France (7.9 million), Spain (5.9 million), and Italy (5.8 million).

The countries with the smallest foreign national population were Lithuania (22,000), Malta (27,000), and Croatia (37,000); while the countries with the smallest foreign-born populations were Malta (42,000), Bulgaria (124,000) and Lithuania (136,000).

When measured as a proportion of the total population, foreign nationals were 8.4% of the UK population, which places the UK 10th among the 28 EU countries on this measure. Foreign-born people were 13.0% of the UK population, which also places the UK 10th among EU countries on this measure.

Chart 12: Foreign nationals as a percentage of total population in EU28 countries, 1 Jan 2015



The countries with the largest number of foreign nationals as a proportion of the population were Luxembourg (45.9%), Cyprus (17.1%), Latvia (15.0%), and Estonia (14.6%). Those with the smallest proportion of foreign nationals were Poland (0.3%), Romania (0.4%), Lithuania (0.8%), Croatia (0.9%), and Bulgaria (0.9%).

The countries with the largest number of foreign-born residents as a proportion of the population were Luxembourg (44.2%), Cyprus (20.9%), Austria (17.2%), Sweden (16.4%) and Ireland (16.2%). Those with the smallest proportion were Romania (1.4%), Poland (1.6%), Bulgaria (1.7%) and Slovakia (3.3%).

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?

There is no single source of data that provides perfectly comparable and up-to-date figures on the number of migrants living in each EU country by either country of birth or nationality. However, by examining statistics from a range of sources, taking account of exactly what they measure, it is possible to make some broad comparisons.

The available data suggests there are roughly around **1.2 million** British migrants living in other EU countries, compared with around **3.0 million** EU migrants living in the UK.

6.1 EU Migrants living in the UK

2011 Census estimates

The most accurate source of data on the UK population is the decennial Census. The most recent Census showed that in March 2011 there were **2.68 million** people born in other EU countries living in the UK.¹⁶ 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

More 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 the most recent release, in mid-2014 there were around **3.03 million** people born in other EU countries living in the UK, and around **2.94 million** people who were nationals of other EU countries living in the UK.¹⁷

¹⁶ ONS, [2011 Census, Key Statistics and Quick Statistics for local authorities in the United Kingdom - Part 1](#), Table QS203UK

¹⁷ ONS, [Population by Country of Birth and Nationality, 2014](#), Tables 1.1 and 2.1

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.

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 up to represent just the usually resident population. In that sense LFS estimates do not reflect short-term migration.

6.2 British migrants living in other EU countries

Eurostat statistics

The European Union's statistics agency Eurostat publishes annual estimates of the population of EU countries by both country of birth and nationality. However, the availability of data for individual countries of birth and nationalities varies among member states. Data on the number of people born in Britain, and with British nationality, is missing for some countries, while for others it is out of date.

Adding up the most recent available estimates of British migrants in the Eurostat dataset produces an estimated **963,000** people born in Britain and **849,000** people with British nationality living in other EU countries.¹⁸ However, this can only be regarded as an incomplete estimate of the total number of British migrants living in the rest of the EU, which is likely to be lower than the true figure.

Institute for Public Policy Research estimates

In 2010 the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) published [research](#) which attempted to estimate the number of British migrants living in every country of the world in 2008. This research has sometimes been used to estimate the number of British migrants living in EU countries, leading to a headline estimate of **2.20 million** British migrants living in EU27 countries in 2008.

However, there are issues with using this research to compare the number of British migrants living in other EU countries with ONS estimates of the number of EU migrants living in the UK.

First, the estimate of 2.20 million British migrants living in other EU countries is not comparable with ONS estimates of EU migrants living in the UK, because it includes estimates of people living abroad for only a part of the year. When these people are excluded, so as to make the figures comparable with ONS estimates of the usually resident migrant population of the UK, the estimated number of British migrants living in other EU countries falls to **1.79 million**.

¹⁸ [Eurostat database](#), Tables migr_pop1ctz and migr_pop3ctb, accessed 23 Feb 2016

Furthermore, because of weaknesses in the availability of data on migrants living in EU countries at the time the study was conducted, IPPR made various assumptions to fill gaps in the data, assuming increases in the population of British migrants since the last official data was published and applying upward adjustments to account for under-registration. The need to make such assumptions is understandable but the validity of the resulting adjustments is unverifiable.

Finally, these estimates relate to the population in EU countries in 2008, and patterns of migration in European countries have changed since the onset of the financial crisis.

Oxford Migration Observatory analysis of 2011 Census data

More robust data on the number British migrants living in EU countries became available with national censuses conducted in 2011.

In May 2014 the Oxford Migration Observatory produced an [analysis](#) of 2011 Census data from 25 EU countries for which data was available.

Based on this data they estimated that there were around **1.1 million** people born in Britain living in other EU countries in 2011, compared with **2.6 million** people born in those countries living in the UK.¹⁹

United Nations estimates

The most recent estimates of the number of British migrants living in other EU countries come from the United Nations Global Migration Database. The United Nations Population Division publishes estimates of the number of migrants living in each country of the world broken down by country of origin at five year intervals.

According to the most recent estimates, in 2015 there were around **1.22 million** British migrants living in other EU countries, compared with **2.88 million** migrants from other EU countries living in the UK.²⁰

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. This is an unavoidable limitation with using the dataset for this purpose.

6.3 Conclusion

Estimates of the number of British migrants living in other EU countries differ among the available sources. However, taking into account the quality, coverage, and age of the different estimates, as well their

¹⁹ Oxford Migration Observatory, [Census Map: UK-born residents in other EU countries 2011](#)

²⁰ United Nations Global Migration Database, [International migrant stock by destination and origin](#), Table 16

comparability with data on EU migrants living in the UK, there are roughly around **1.2 million** British migrants living in other EU countries, compared with around **3.0 million** EU migrants living in the UK.

7. Appendix

7.1 Background to Table 1

In this table, estimates for the European Union do not include the UK, which is listed separately. European Union estimates are for the EU15 from 1991 to 2003, the EU25 from 2004 to 2006, the EU27 from 2007, and the EU 28 from 2013. Estimates are also shown separately for the EU15, the EU8, and other EU countries.

- 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.
- 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.

The Old Commonwealth countries are Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. The New Commonwealth countries are all Commonwealth countries not part of the Old Commonwealth, including those of the Indian sub-continent and African Commonwealth countries other than South Africa. From 2004 onwards, New Commonwealth excludes Malta and Cyprus, which joined the EU. Also from 2004 onwards, other foreign excludes the EU8 central and eastern states that joined the EU in May 2004. From 2007 onwards, other foreign excludes Bulgaria and Romania, which joined the EU in January 2007. From 2013 onwards other foreign excludes Croatia, which joined the EU in July 2013.

7.2 Background to Tables 2-3

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.

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 EU8.²¹

²¹ For a full explanation of these geographies, see Background to Table 1 above.

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