International Migration – How to interpret Table 4

Outflow of Migrants by Citizenship and, for Former Immigrants, Previous Main Reason for Immigration – New for August 2013

What's new?

The August 2013 edition of the Migration Statistics Quarterly Report (MSQR) includes a new data table, labelled Table 4, in the Provisional Long-Term International Migration estimates. Table 4 shows outflow of migrants by citizenship, and for former immigrants, previous main reason for immigration.

What does that mean?

'Outflow of migrants' refers to long-term emigrants. Long-term emigrants are people leaving the UK for a period of a year or more. This includes British and non-British citizens.

'By citizenship' means that the estimates are available broken down into a number of different citizenship groups, such as 'British', 'EU' and 'Non-EU'.

'Former immigrants' are those emigrating from the UK who in the past have immigrated to the UK. To use a fictional example, James moved to the UK from the USA in 2005 to work as a doctor and is now moving to Australia for three years to work in another job. He would be categorised as a 'former immigrant' because he previously moved to the UK, has stayed in the UK for more than one year and is now leaving the UK for more than one year.

'Previous main reason for immigration' refers to the main reason that a former immigrant came to the UK – to continue the previous example, James's 'previous reason for immigration' would be 'definite job'. It is also important to note that someone's main previous reason for immigration may not have been their only previous reason for immigration – James may also have had a family member living in the UK who he wanted to join, but would still have stated that his main reason for coming to the UK at that time was to work as a doctor.

What do the data in Table 4 show?

From the data in Table 4 we can see:

- **For a specified time period, how many long-term emigrants from the UK previously immigrated to the UK.** In the year ending December 2012, this was an estimated 209,000 people, who are referred to as 'former immigrants' in Table 4. It should be noted that former immigrants to the UK are not necessarily now returning to the country from where they came. We have already seen this with James, as he immigrated to the UK from the USA and is now emigrating to Australia.

- **How many people are leaving the UK for a year or more for the first time**. Although some of these people may have lived outside of the UK for less than a year in the past, they have never been outside the UK for a year or more, which is the length of time used to establish whether someone is a long-term international migrant. In the year ending December 2012, this was an estimated 89,000 people, who are referred to as 'new emigrants' in Table 4. Of new emigrants, the majority (87,000) were British citizens.

- **The number of people leaving the UK who previously immigrated to the UK for a particular reason, such as work-related reasons or formal study.** For example, in the year ending December 2012, 68,000 people emigrated from the UK who had previously immigrated for work-related reasons.

How is this any different to Table 3 – long-term international migration flows by citizenship and main reason for migration?

The estimates of outflows (emigration) shown in Table 3 by citizenship and main reason for migration are based on a person's current reason for leaving the UK. They allow us to see how many people are entering and leaving the UK for particular reasons. To demonstrate using another example, Grace moved to the UK from China in 2010 to study law at university. She is now moving back to China because she has got a job at a law firm in Shanghai. In Table 3, both James and Grace's reasons for emigration would be reported as 'definite job', because both are leaving the UK to work. Therefore, there is no way in Table 3 to distinguish between Grace, who was previously a student in the UK and James, who was not. By contrast, Table 4 enables us to identify how many people emigrating from the UK previously came to the UK for a particular reason, regardless of their reason for now leaving the UK.

Student migration to the UK

Immigration to the UK for study has received considerable debate and there is particular interest in how many students leave the UK having completed their studies. This section analyses what Table 4 can and cannot tell us about migration flows for formal study (this category includes those studying at higher and further education institutions and school students).

Table A shows that an estimated 67,000 people emigrating from the UK in 2012 had previously immigrated to the UK for study. This is a similar figure to the IPS estimate of emigration by usual occupation and main reason for migration for 2011 (Table 3.10), which was 64,000. However it should be noted that this estimate would not include students who were also working part-time or who had worked full time in the UK for a period having completed their course.

Table A. Estimating UK 'net migration' using immigration for formal study and emigration of those who previously immigrated to the UK for formal study, year ending December 2012.

Description	Estimate	+/- CI[1]
Number of people moving to the UK for a year or more for formal study in 2012 (Cell B264, Table 3)	175,000	16,000
Number of people moving out of the UK for a year or more in 2012, who previously came to the UK for formal study (Cell B26, Table 4)	67,000	9,000
Difference	**108,000**	

Source: Office for National Statistics – Provisional Long-Term International Migration estimates year ending December 2012

Notes:

1. A 95 per cent confidence interval (+/- CI) provides a statistically estimated range within which the true value of an estimate would be expected to lie 19 times out of 20. For an explanation of confidence intervals and how to use them, please refer to the MSQR Information for Users.

Table A appears to suggest that in 2012, there was a net inflow of 108,000 migrants for the purposes of formal study. Although there may be an estimated net inflow of 108,000 in 2012 for those who originally migrated to the UK to study reflecting increases in inflows in recent years, this may fall for future years when students complete their studies and depart. So this initial estimate should not be taken as a measure of the long term contribution of students to net migration. Table B shows the number of people who immigrated to the UK between 2002 and 2011 who stated their main reason for migration as formal study. Focussing on more recent migration patterns, between 2007 and 2011, an average of 196,000 people per year immigrated to the UK for formal study. This seems considerably higher than the 67,000 people leaving in 2012 who originally immigrated for formal study (it should be noted that some of these people may have immigrated to the UK prior to 2007). There are two main reasons for this difference.

Table B. International Passenger Survey (IPS) estimates of long-term international immigration for formal study, 2002 to 2011.

Year Ending December	Estimate	+/- CI[1]
2002	108,000	16,000
2003	126,000	16,000
2004	134,000	19,000
2005	124,000	18,000
2006	142,000	17,000
2007	140,000	17,000
2008	172,000	21,000
2009	209,000	16,000
2010	234,000	17,000
2011	226,000	16,000

Source: Office for National Statistics – Table 3.08 IPS Citizenship by Main Reason for Migration, 1977-2011
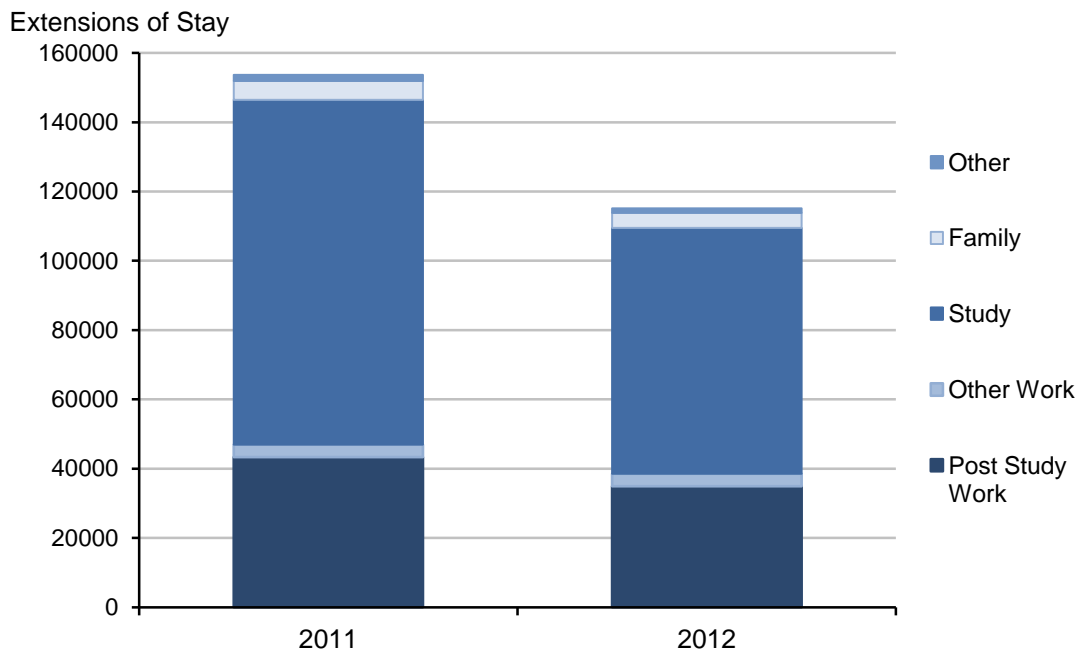Notes:
1. A 95 per cent confidence interval (+/- CI) provides a statistically estimated range within which the true value of an estimate would be expected to lie 19 times out of 20. For an explanation of confidence intervals and how to use them, please refer to the MSQR Information for Users.

Firstly, some of the people who arrived in the UK to study before 2011 may have already left the UK before 2012. The International Passenger Survey (IPS) did not start asking emigrants about their previous reason for immigration until 2012, so anyone emigrating before this year who had previously immigrated to the UK would not have been asked why they previously came.

Secondly, some of the people who arrived in the UK to study before 2011 may not have yet left the UK. This does not necessarily mean that they are here illegally. Nationals of European Economic Area (EEA) countries can live, work and study in the UK without a visa, although IPS data show that in 2011, only 18.1% of people (41,000) immigrating for formal study were EU citizens. However, nationals of non-EEA countries who come to study in the UK may be able to extend the length of their visa or settle in the UK for work or family reasons. The rest of this section provides information from the Home Office on student extensions of stay and settlement.

Figure A. Grants of an extension of stay to people who were previously students, by current category, excluding dependants, 2011 and 2012.

Source: Home Office – Extensions of Stay by Previous Category, Tables expc 01, expc 01 s and expc 01 w.

A short statistical article published by the Home Office on extensions of stay by previous category provides information on students who extend their stay. The report states that in 2012 (see Figure A),

'...there were a total of 115,106 extensions granted in 2012 to people who were previously students, 25% less than in 2011 (153,632). Of these 115,106 extensions, 70,962 (62%) allowed individuals to continue to study, a further 38,505 (33%) were granted for work, largely the Post-study category (34,895), and 4,312 were granted for family-reasons.'

This indicates that in 2012 around 44,000 people on study visas (who presumably previously immigrated to the UK for the main reason of 'formal study') extended their stay in the UK for non-study reasons.

Further research on student migration can be found in the Migrant Journey Third Report, also published by the Home Office. This research follows cohorts of migrants over several years. The report stated that for people who immigrated to the UK for formal study in 2006 (a cohort of 209,700), 17% (35,600) had some form of valid leave to remain after 5 years and 1% had been granted settlement (permission to stay permanently).

Therefore, both extensions data for 2012 and the Migrant Journey research suggest that many students have legally remained in the UK after their course of formal study has ended.

What else will we be able to find out about former immigrants' previous main reasons for immigration?

In November 2013, an additional data table will be published showing outflow of migrants by year of arrival and, for former immigrants, previous main reason for immigration. Over time, this will allow us to follow trends for different cohorts of immigrants; for example, looking at how many of those who immigrated for work in 2007, or for study in 2009, subsequently emigrated in 2012. Although it will be initially limited because we will not be able to see how many people arriving in a particular year left before 2012, in the future a time series will develop allowing us to see, by main reason for migration, how many people immigrating to the UK from 2011 onwards subsequently leave. This will be available for the quarterly provisional tables as well as annual crosstabulations. For example, in 2016, we will be able to see how many people who immigrated to the UK for formal study in 2012 subsequently emigrated in the years 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Where do these data come from?

All estimates of outflow of migrants by previous main reason for immigration are based on data from the IPS. The IPS is a large sample survey carried out by the ONS at all the main air, sea and tunnel ports or routes into and out of the UK, collecting information from passengers as they enter or leave. In total, between 700,000 and 800,000 IPS interviews are conducted each year for migration purposes and of these, between 4,000 and 5,000 interviewees are identified as long-term international migrants. The outflow of migrants by previous main reason for immigration estimates are based on information from emigrants only. In 2012, around 1,800 people were identified as emigrants (those leaving the UK for a year or more) in the IPS. A complex weighting system is used to calculate the estimates based on these interviews from the IPS.

For more information about the use of the IPS in international migration statistics, please refer to 'International Passenger Survey: Quality Information in Relation to Migration Flows'.

It should also be noted that outflow of migrants by previous main reason for immigration estimates are based solely on the IPS and do not include any of the adjustments used to calculate Long-Term International Migration, or LTIM, estimates. This is because the data used to calculate LTIM adjustments do not provide enough information in order for them to be applied across the different previous main reason for immigration categories.

For more information about how LTIM adjustments work, please refer to section 2 of the LTIM Methodology Document for further information.

Do you have a question or comment about what you have read? Please contact us:

This is the first time that Table 4 has been published, so if you have further questions about how to interpret it, or any feedback that you wish to share with us, please contact the international migration statistics team at migstatsunit@ons.gsi.gov.uk