

Letter to the Spectator, 27 November 2025

Last updated: 27 November 2025

Sir,

It is misleading to describe the latest revision to migration statistics as a 'data mishap' (The net migration debacle, 18 November 2025). The new figures are the result of planned improvements to the measurement of UK migration, which previously relied on asking questions of a sample of passengers at ports of entry. The new system, while still in development, is based on government-held data showing people's actual behaviours rather than their stated intentions.

We are open and transparent when any issues are identified with ONS statistics and have been clear about our recovery and improvement plans. While we try to minimise revisions to historic data, changes resulting from improved methods and new data sources are part and parcel of producing statistics that are of the highest possible quality.

Yours faithfully,

Mary Gregory

ONS Executive Director for Population and Census