

Article

# Response to the Migration Advisory Committee's consultation on international students

Evidence of the impact of international students in the UK, including new data at the local and regional level.

Contact:  
Niomie Warner  
migrationanalysis@ons.gsi.gov.  
uk  
+44 (0)1329 444097

Release date:  
2 February 2018

Next release:  
To be announced

## Table of contents

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Data sources](#)
3. [Number of international students immigrating to the UK](#)
4. [What are the fiscal impacts of migrant students, including student loan arrangements?](#)
5. [How much money do migrant students spend in the national, regional and local economy and what is the impact of this?](#)
6. [What is the impact of migrant students on the demand for housing provision, on transport \(particularly local transport\) and on health provision?](#)
7. [If migrant students take paid employment while they are studying, what types of work do they do?](#)
8. [Whether, and to what extent, migrant students enter the labour market, when they graduate and what types of post-study work do they do.](#)
9. [Further contributions to the evidence base](#)
10. [List of data sources](#)
11. [List of tables](#)

# 1 . Introduction

On 3 October 2017, the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) put out a [Call for evidence and briefing note on International students: economic and social impacts](#). Our response to this consultation is presented here.

We are the UK's largest independent producer of official statistics and its national statistical institute. We are responsible for collecting and publishing statistics related to the economy, population and society at national, regional and local levels. We also conduct the census in England and Wales every 10 years.

Since 2014, we have followed the UK Statistics Authority's '[Better Statistics, Better Decisions](#)' strategy and have established a work programme to improve evidence on the impact of migration on a number of topics, including international students. This work programme was recently set out in a [Public Policy Forum](#) in September 2017. In August 2017, we published a [brief report](#) and a more detailed [technical report](#) on what international students do after their studies, using Home Office Exit Checks data. Although this research does not directly answer any of the questions asked in the MAC commission, it does provide some additional information on international students' behaviour that might be useful.

Our response to this consultation consists of a number of our datasets that we consider provide useful evidence on the impact of international students in the UK. In our response, we have provided analysis where evidence is available to directly answer a question. There are some questions where we have no supporting evidence and have therefore not included them in our response.

## 2 . Data sources

All data detailed in this report have originated from one of four data sources, described below.

### Survey of Graduating International Students (SoGIS)

In 2017, we commissioned the SoGIS in collaboration with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Centre for Population Change (CPC) and Universities UK (UUK); a full [technical report](#) has also been produced. The survey provides data on post-study plans of international students and how certain they are of those plans, as well as use of public services, travel patterns, funding and courses studied.

The CPC has recently sent out a follow-up survey to approximately 1,500 respondents to SoGIS who agreed to be re-contacted. One of the aims of the follow-up survey is to establish whether what international students planned to do at the end of their studies was realised.

It is important to note that SoGIS data have been made available to researchers outside the Office for National Statistics so similar tables may have been produced by others with differing numbers. Respondents who were of UK nationality or who were based outside of the UK were removed in all SoGIS tables provided in our response.

### Annual Population Survey (APS)

The APS is an annual household survey covering the UK with a sample size of approximately 320,000. This survey provides data on topics such as employment and unemployment, housing, ethnicity, religion, health and education at local levels. One of the limitations of the APS is that coverage does not include student halls of residence. However, some students may be included in the sample if they are living at a private household address.

## 2011 Census

The 2011 Census covered all usual residents in England and Wales on 27 March 2011, and provides a rich source of data on the population. The census provides data on the demographics, housing, education and health of the entire population.

## International Passenger Survey (IPS)

The IPS is a sample survey taken at all major UK ports. It provides information on the numbers and types of visits made by people to and from the UK. The IPS is used to provide official long-term and short-term migration estimates, published quarterly in the [Migration Statistics Quarterly Report \(MSQR\)](#) and in the [Short-Term International Migration \(STIM\)](#) report.

## 3 . Number of international students immigrating to the UK

The most recent IPS figures estimated that in the year ending (YE) June 2017, [141,000](#) migrants immigrated to the UK long-term (12 or more months) for the purpose of study. In terms of short-term immigration (3 to 12 months), the IPS estimated that in the YE June 2015, there were [69,000](#) short-term immigrants who came to the UK to study. In YE June 2017, the APS estimated that there were 328,000 European Economic Area (EEA)-born, 806,000 non-EEA-born and 26,000 Irish-born individuals living in the UK whose main reason for coming to the UK was to study.

[Table 1: Student and graduate employment, Annual Population Survey, 2016 to 2017](#)

## 4 . What are the fiscal impacts of migrant students, including student loan arrangements?

When respondents of the Survey of Graduating International Students (SoGIS) were asked to indicate main sources of funding for their current course of study, provisions from parents, guardian, family or friends was the most popular source listed by both EU and non-EU nationals (51% and 50%, respectively). However, 31% of EU respondents also listed student loans as a main source of funding, compared with only 12% of non-EU respondents.

[Table 14: Survey of Graduating International Students, UK, 2017](#)

## 5 . How much money do migrant students spend in the national, regional and local economy and what is the impact of this?

According to the Survey of Graduating International Students (SoGIS), both EU and non-EU students were most likely to earn between £100 and £499 per month (38%, 43% respectively). However, it is important to bear in mind that these data do not confirm how much of the earnings mentioned were spent in the UK.

The majority of both EU and non-EU international students had spent no money on health-related costs in the previous 12 months (excluding private healthcare – 59% and 62%, respectively). Those that did spend tended to spend less than £100 (EU 31%, non-EU 23%). We have also provided regional analysis on spend on healthcare.

## **6 . What is the impact of migrant students on the demand for housing provision, on transport (particularly local transport) and on health provision?**

The 2011 Census estimated that 3% of all schoolchildren and students in full-time education in England and Wales were born in the EU (excluding the UK), 8% were born outside of the EU, and 88% were born in the UK (the percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding). When broken down by region, London had the highest proportion of both EU-born (7%) and non-EU-born (20%) schoolchildren and students, and collectively Wales had the lowest proportion of EU-born (2%) and non-EU-born (4%) schoolchildren and students. It is important to note that the census data confirms only a person's country of birth, and not whether that person immigrated to the UK for the purpose of study. Therefore the true numbers are likely to be lower than reported here.

As would be expected, the majority (55%) of students who responded to the Survey of Graduating International Students (SoGIS) were living in rented accommodation at the time of survey; the proportion of students living in rented accommodation was highest in Wales (66%), and lowest in the North East and Yorkshire and The Humber (46%). University accommodation was the second most popular choice regardless of region (27%). Interestingly, those living in the South East were least likely to live in private student halls of residence (6%), and those living in the East Midlands were most likely (24%). Unsurprisingly, students living in their own home were in the minority.

The majority of all respondents to the SoGIS described themselves as in very good or good health (86%), with little variation within nationality or region. When asked which NHS services they had used in the previous 12 months, international students living in all regions indicated they were most likely to have had a GP consultation (between 40 to 57%, dependent on region). Only 35% of international students living in the East of England indicated "none of the above", compared with 51% of those living in the South West, the highest proportion recorded. Small proportions of international students used Accident and Emergency (A&E) services or out of hours care. Those living in the East of England reported higher use of both A&E services (14%) and out of hours care (5%) than those living in other areas. Those living in Scotland were more likely to have seen an NHS dentist in the last 12 months (19%).

[Sheet 1: 2011 Census country of birth by age \(England and Wales\)](#)

[Table 13, Table 8, Table 9, Table 10: Survey of Graduating International Students, UK, 2017](#)

## **7 . If migrant students take paid employment while they are studying, what types of work do they do?**

Of those that responded to the Survey of Graduating International Students (SoGIS), 28% took on some form of work during their studies. Specifically, 19% had a part-time job or casual work, 5% had a full-time job, 2% were working on placement, and 2% worked during vacations. Of those that had a job, professional occupations were most popular (25%), followed by sales and customer service occupations (22%). Respondents were least likely to be in process, plant or machine operative occupations (0.4%). There was some variation displayed between regions for all types of occupation. The majority of those that worked did so for up to 20 hours per week (61%), and monthly income was most likely to be between £100 and £499 (41%).

[Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, Table 7: Survey of Graduating International Students, UK, 2017](#)

## 8 . Whether, and to what extent, migrant students enter the labour market, when they graduate and what types of post-study work do they do.

Of the EU nationals who responded to Survey of Graduating International Students (SoGIS), 26% planned to look for a job in the UK after graduating, and a further 9% planned to take up an existing job offer in the UK. By comparison, 19% of non-EU nationals planned to look for a job in the UK, and 5% planned to take up an existing job offer in the UK. However, it is important to note that only 55% of respondents were certain of their planned length of stay in the UK.

According to the Annual Population Survey (APS) (year ending June 2017), both European Economic Area (EEA)-born and non-EEA-born UK residents who held a degree were most likely to work in the education and health sector (27% and 36%, respectively) and were least likely to work in agriculture and forestry (0%). The same pattern was observed for UK-born residents. EEA nationals who held a qualification lower than degree level were more likely to work in manufacturing (18%) or distribution, hotel and restaurant (27%) sectors than individuals born in any other country. However, it is not possible to confirm whether these qualifications were obtained in the UK.

A higher proportion of recent graduates (17%) worked in the distribution, hotels and restaurants sector than non-recent graduates (8%), suggesting recent graduates may start off in this sector before moving on to other jobs; this pattern of behaviour was observed for all nationals. The reverse was true of those working in the education and health sector, where 35% were recent graduates and 43% were non-recent graduates. Interestingly, EEA nationals were more likely to work in the private sector (85%) than UK nationals (65%) or non-EEA nationals (74%).

[Table 2, Table 1: Survey of Graduating International Students, UK, 2017](#)

[Table 2, Table 3, Table 4: Student and graduate employment, Annual Population Survey, 2016 to 2017](#)

## 9 . Further contributions to the evidence base

The figures and accompanying datasets presented here are likely to provide some of the evidence required for a detailed understanding of international students in the UK. We would welcome the opportunity to collaborate further with the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) over the next year in advance of their report to government to identify evidence gaps and to work on solutions to fill these. We have set out an ambitious [work plan](#) to link data across government to provide better evidence on migration and we would welcome a continued dialogue with the MAC to see how this increasing evidence base can assist this commission.

## 10 . List of data sources

Where available, we have linked to quality, methodology and information documents on each of the sources listed below. These documents explain the source, relevant time period and a summary of limitations with the data.

[International Passenger Survey \(IPS\), ONS](#)  
[2011 Census, ONS](#)

[Annual Population Survey \(ASP\), ONS](#)

[Survey of Graduating International Students \(SoGIS\), ONS and the Centre for Population Change](#)

## 11 . List of tables

Survey of Graduating International Students, UK, 2017  
2011 Census country of birth by age, England and Wales  
Student and graduate employment, APS, 2016 to 2017